PERCEPTIONS ON DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A ROLE MODELLING CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN SAUDI ARABIA.

by

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Abstract

Role models have been used since ancient times to develop character through fictional and historical stories, but only recently have the effects of such interventions been studied. Research has shown the emotions elicited when exposed to moral exemplars can trigger the motivation to progress morally. Aristotle advocated the teaching of virtues to children at a young age through habituation, which would gradually develop into *phronesis*-guided virtuosity. He considered what is now referred to as 'role modelling' as having a significant influence on children through the emotion of emulation (*zēlos*). Based on this, the following project uses a mixed-method design to examine how a virtue-led role modelling programme could be used in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by answering the following research questions: 1) How could an effective role modelling character education programme be developed in that country? 2) How could a role modelling character education be feasibly implemented there? The first stage involved conducting a role modelling intervention to teach school-appropriate virtues to students in a school setting in The Kingdom. The virtues were presented through role models with each model presented in a lesson divided into three sections *Inspire–Action–Reflect*. A qualitative + quantitative research design was used to examine the intervention's efficacy and the school's character education background. The results then led to a qualitative study exploring how virtues, role modelling and character education in general are currently being taught in schools in Saudi Arabia; also, how it could be developed further, and what the enablers and barriers might be in feasibly implementing the programme in relation to the educational culture and policy environment. Overall, the study has shown there is potential for developing and implementing a role modelling character education programme in the Region, provided certain factors are taken into consideration and used to increase such a programme's efficacy.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The aim of this PhD thesis, *Perceptions on developing* and *implementing a role modelling education programme in Saudi Arabia,* is three-fold. Firstly, it uses a predominantly qualitative approach to explore whether character education, and more specifically role modelling character education, can affect school students' moral development; secondly, how it can be developed to increase efficacy; and lastly, the best methods to implement it considering the cultural, pedagogical and policy-related enablers and barriers.

The research questions have changed throughout the course of this PhD due to various obstacles, such as age and cultural appropriateness of the proposed programme, in addition to logistical issues with recruitment, which will be discussed further in *Chapters 3* and *4*. My research started with creating and piloting an Aristotelian based role modelling character education intervention in a school, evaluated through a mixed-method approach. Aristotle's theories were chosen as they involve a balanced combination of moral psychology and philosophy. Aristotle believed that virtues should be taught to children at a young age through habituation, which, in turn, gradually develop into *phronesis*-guided virtuosity. He also considered what currently is referred to as 'role modelling' as having a significant influence on children through the emotion of emulation (*zēlos*). The same intervention developed was then tested in a mixed-method Case Study, also presenting several barriers, which then steered me to the realisation that a more macro approach was necessary. Subsequently, a qualitative study looking into the feasibility of such a project was conducted. The methodology of each phase was based on the findings of the previous one, leading to the questions mentioned hereunder:

1.   How could an effective role modelling character education programme be developed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

2.   How could a role modelling character education be feasibly implemented in the Region?

My academic background includes a bachelor's and master's in English Literature, and a master's in Psychology. Through the analysis of various societal and psychological issues, both in the Middle East and internationally, a motivation to *fix* was triggered. Discovering a decreased quality of life, and various unethical actions, through these analyses, stimulated me to think of ways these could be ameliorated on an individual and societal level. And although character education may seem like a diversion or prevarication, it is what I believe to be one of many possible constructive responses to the problems explored for my previous degrees, because children are the future and character education could make a difference to students individually, and eventually, to society as a whole. The contention here is that this form of education is as important as, or more important than, academic studies because it teaches children 'the dispositions to seek and use knowledge in effective and ethical ways' (Shields, 2011, p.49). The present author wishes to argue that character education not only builds intellectual and moral character, but helps children acquire practical skills for the future.

Before applying for this PhD course, I was accepted for a doctoral degree in Middle Eastern literature, and while it was more aligned with my academic background, I continued searching for courses that would allow me to research practical solutions to people's moral development from a young age. This was because, from my observations growing up in the Middle East, and my educational knowledge, it is an overlooked necessity. During my search I was not only able to find the term I was looking for, *character/moral education*, but also the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, who were dedicated to it researching it.

At the time, the USA and UK were showing a great interest in character education and were exploring various methods that might be implemented in schools, while the Middle East showed no such interest. There seemed to be a large gap, which presented itself as an opportunity to shape and ameliorate the field, thus encouraging me to apply for the PhD at the Jubilee Centre, trusting my interdisciplinary background would be an asset to help me succeed in this new field.

Some schools in Saudi Arabia may teach character education, but from my personal observations living and studying in the Region, it seemed to be lacking in general, and no research had been conducted to gain a better understanding of it. Therefore, it seemed to me that a qualitative study could provide a more in-depth analysis towards implementing a character education project in that country. Many may argue that Religious Education is already taught, involving character-building elements, but it does not purely focus on moral qualities, as time has to be spent on Islamic History and Quranic reading. Introducing character education programmes is not intended to undermine Religious Education, or its efficacy, but simply to find and try new non-denominational methods that might add value to education in the Region.

Character education, however, is a broad concept, therefore, in order to create an intervention, it had to have a more specific focus. Resulting from my intensive search, I found there was a new interest in moral exemplars, but in education it was still mainly theoretical, thus, exploring people's behaviours and opinions might contribute to the current literature on moral exemplars by introducing new evidence. Furthermore, within Islamic education, a common topic is historical role models, whom students are expected to learn about and follow, such as the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and his companions, therefore with the positive theories on role modelling, it seemed to be an appropriate topic with which to make inroads into the character education domain.

Another reason role modelling appeared to be a significant topic was due to the sudden rise in social media influencers, which is a global phenomenon affecting the Middle East as well. Adolescents now not only have constant access to the lives of celebrities, but also have access to individuals who have gained sudden popularity due to their lifestyle interests, whether it be food, fashion or film, for instance. Therefore, in a time when there is a plethora of role models and no particular way to morally regulate them, it seemed necessary for schools to provide some guidance on who should be considered a moral exemplar and what virtuous qualities are important in such exemplars.

Since starting this project in 2015, the popularity and importance of character education has increased markedly. In the United Arab Emirates, a full moral education programme, with a focus on character, was created for all year groups and made obligatory for the nation. Saudi Arabia has recently found an interest too, as an education consulting agency contacted me with a semi-governmental proposal into how a moral education programme might be developed. In addition, the country currently has a national campaign organised by the Ministry of Education called كيف نكون قدوة, which translates as *How can we be role models?* It is geared towards parents, companies, and educational institutions to find techniques or people that represent admirable qualities or skills, and/or how these 'players' might improve such positive attributes. Therefore, this project comes at a momentous time for myself as a citizen of Saudi Arabia; I feel as though I can use established theories or methods from elsewhere and adapt them to my own region, an area of the world currently seeking similar research.

The aim of the project is to provide useful data for educators and researchers to gain a better understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of using role models in education. It also seeks to provide data on how culture affects the development and implementation of character education projects. Furthermore, the project's findings may provide a foundation for educators

and researchers to adapt and possibly conduct full studies to test the efficacy of using role

models in character education, in the Region and possibly globally.[1]

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[1] Some parts of this thesis, written by the same author, are published at: Osman, Y. (2019). 'The significance in using role models to influence primary school children's moral development: Pilot study', *Journal of Moral Education*, 48(3), pp. 316-331, doi:10.1080/03057240.2018.1556154, and Osman, Y. (2020). *How should a virtue-led, role modelling character education programme in Saudi Arabia be developed and what are the barriers/enablers in feasibly implementing it?* Available at: https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/conference-papers/VirtuesFlourishingLife/Osman_Full.pdf

Chapter 2 Background and Literature Review

The aim of this background-and-literature-review is to examine the theoretical and empirical framework for role modelling within character education as well as how it could fit into the Saudi Arabian educational system. First, character education is defined as a whole, in addition to why the project takes an Aristotelian virtue ethics approach. Second, the emotions associated with role modelling are discussed to explore how they can be effective; a discussion of the possible drawbacks is also included. The terms 'role models' and 'moral exemplars' are then briefly defined, followed by a section on the attributes of role models to examine the differences in using extraordinary versus ordinary exemplars for moral development together with the common characteristics exemplars might possess. Next, an overview of the empirical studies on who adolescents consider to be their role models is given. The aim here is to provide insight into the more effective models; this is followed by how role models could, and to some extent should, be used in classrooms. The penultimate section presents a brief outline of other philosophical and psychological theories on moral development and role modelling, while the last section explores character education and role modelling within the Saudi Arabian context. Subsequently based on the overall literature, concluding remarks are made as to how a programme might be developed; this latter constitutes the foundation of the current empirical project with a view to adding insight and thereby filling the current gap in the field.

2.1 Character Education as Applied Virtue Ethics

2.1.1 Defining Character Education

An interest in character education has recently re-emerged at various levels of the school system in various countries, as psychologists, philosophers and educationists try to discover how to best develop students' characters in order to help them develop holistically (Walker, Roberts and Kristjánsson, 2015). However, various concerns and misgivings obtrude, which are conceptual, theoretical and methodological in nature.

One of the primary controversies is around how character education is defined and the theoretical base on which it should be built. Using a somewhat generic specification as a basis, character can broadly be defined as 'an individual's set of psychological characteristics that affect that person's ability and inclination to function morally' (Berkowitz, 2002, p.48). A narrower definition would limit the psychological characteristics in question to stable and consistent traits or dispositions, sometimes called 'states of character' or *hexeis* in ancient Greek (Kristjánsson, 2015). Arguably, the characteristics to be promoted through educational interventions need to be positive, those one would justifiably admire or want to inculcate (specifically virtues rather than vices), implying, in turn, why 'a virtue' can be defined as 'a character trait that is for some important reason desirable or worth having' (Sher, quoted in Steutel and Carr, 1999, p.4).

With these definitions in view, a virtue ethics approach to moral education has emerged as a possible and plausible medium to teach virtues. Berkowitz (2002) suggests the debate on the exact details of the philosophy behind character education is not as important as the development of good character in children itself; therefore, the objective should not be to fuel a battle between competing theories but instead discover the best solutions that work in schools. Although this represents a strong practical argument, all educational models require a theoretical foundation, and for the purposes of the present study, an Aristotelian approach has been chosen as the guiding standard, for reasons that emerge below.

2.1.2 Aristotle and Virtue Ethics

Aristotle's virtue ethics encompasses all the vital virtues, and by exercising these virtues, the hope is that one would gradually gain *phronesis* or the practical wisdom, allowing one to adjudicate well in cases of virtue conflicts: thus, enabling the individual to act virtuously in all situations (Darnell *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, being virtuous overall is not simply about exhibiting behaviourally the right characteristics, but the agent 'must also be in the right state when he does them' (Aristotle, 1999, p.22 [1105a]), and to be in the right state, the individual must understand the virtuous nature of the action. So, in addition to correct behaviour, reason and judgement must be part of the virtuous decision. Thus, why being virtuous goes beyond simply being prosocial, as the latter is predominantly a behavioural concept.

Aristotle suggests there are three relevant conditions within the soul: feelings, capacities and states. A feeling is defined as that which brings pain or pleasure to an individual such as anger or joy, whereas capacities are the person's abilities to feel particular emotions. However, for both feelings and capacities, one cannot be praised or blamed as they are not chosen or deliberate; this explains why Aristotle excludes them as virtues. A state, on the other hand, is based on training (first by one's educators, then through self-education) and unlike the other two, one can be admired or criticised for it (p.23 [1106a]).

Aristotle further elaborates on what it means to be in a right state by defining it as the middle ground, labelled as the mean, between two vices, because virtue should not be excessive or deficient. On the other hand, it is not quantifiable across all human beings as each individual's situation differs (1999, p.24 [1106b]). This is an important observation, for although the examples Aristotle takes are usually about individual (developmental) and role-related differences, it could be argued that character education of the Aristotelian kind also

needs to take account of cultural differences, specifically, as in who happens to count as a relatable and admirable role model in the given culture. This observation is borne out, and its practical implications elicited, in the empirical part of this thesis.

All virtues include an emotional component, and Aristotle understands emotions not as something irrational to be suppressed, but to be used in the correct manner to motivate and guide one as a virtuous agent. For he says one should have 'these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue' (p. 24 [1106b 21-23]). A number of virtues are listed with their vices gauged by excess and deficiency, for instance the virtue of bravery is the mean between cowardice and rashness, temperance between insensibility to pleasures and intemperance, while wit's deficiency is boorishness and its excess is buffoonery (Kristjánsson, 2016).

The fundamental developmental-cum-educational question is, how could one come to embody these virtues*?* Aristotle's theory involves a journey of moral development through education, which is essential from a young age because its starting point is habituation rather than innateness. Aristotle theorises that souls possess a non-rational component, which is divided into two parts, one does not respond to reason and links us to animals, while the other has a rational capacity. This responsiveness includes desires and emotions but has the capability of sharing it with reason to make the right decisions and evolve into virtuous states. However, while humans are born responsive to reason, they are not born as either reasonable or moral as these capacities need to develop to various degrees. The ideal trajectory is via habituated virtue, developed through good upbringing by good educators and role models, which then progresses later (perhaps in adolescence or early adulthood, although Aristotle is not entirely clear on this) into the level of *phronesis*-guided virtue (Darnell *et al.*, 2019). Another, less ideal but still

morally acceptable, trajectory is from amorality through incontinence towards continence. Notice that incontinence and continence are not natural developmental levels between habituated virtue and *phronetic* virtue, as they are sometimes made out to be. Aristotle's theory is not a Kohlbergian stage theory where all stages need to be traversed in the same order. Incontinence and continence are rather aberrations or second-best paths for those who for some reason take a wrong turn in the developmental trajectory towards *phronetic* virtue. This might be explained in that while enjoying a decent upbringing, learners are not exposed to quite good enough moral exemplars or quite systematic enough habituation (or they are born with unusually uncontrollable urges), but still retain a vision of the right moral ends, ingrained in their moral identity. The next stage in the aberration is an attempt to force themselves, unsuccessfully, in one case (the incontinent) or successfully, in the other (the continent), to comply with the right moral ends. Continence may be a relatively stable state; it is not destined to degenerate into vice, although every lapse may debilitate the mind; nor is it likely to mature into virtue, although it may do so in the case of some individuals (Kristjánsson, 2015). In short, contra Kant, Aristotle clearly did not think that the best way to become virtuous was to fight temptations but rather to advance step by step by learning from educators, role models and good friends.

To progress from one level to the next, one must gain virtues of character and this does not come naturally because it is influenced by habit (1999, p.18 [1103a]). Since practising a certain skill can help one attain it, virtues can be acquired the same way as skills through habituation as 'we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions' (1999, p.18 [1103a – 1103b]). Annas (2011) describes the process as akin to learning a practical skill such as learning to play an instrument. There is a struggle for children to obey rules since it does not bring much pleasure, but if they are raised and

educated correctly, then they can adjust to the rules as they mature (Aristotle, 1999, p.168 [1179b]). Steutel and Spiecker (2004) explain how, during habituation, moral actions cannot be done merely once or twice but must be repeated regularly and even frequently because children have the capacity to be habituated into a vice also. Furthermore, it is essential that a child have a virtuous tutor to ensure the child is acting justly and eventually help the child understand the reasoning behind it. While teaching the child, pain-and-pleasure cues must be employed to encourage or discourage the learner from a certain action as well as improve the love and trust within their relationship. Ideally, at an early age, then, a child needs a personal moral educator/tutor (in most cases a parent) to guide it through the moral habituation. However, as the child becomes older, it can start to pick up cues from role models other than its immediate educators, for example models depicted in stories (Hart, Oliveira and Pike, 2019) or represented in the media.

Going back to Berkowitz's (2002) stance on debating philosophies, the present author is not arguing that Aristotle's virtue ethics is the only viable or indisputably superior background theory in the field of character education. However, it must count in its favour that it is inclusive and contains some sort of balance between conflicting intuitions, as reflected in its appeal to a liberal educator such as Berkowitz and a conservative one such as Lickona. Lickona (1991) considers moral character as possessing three essential and interrelated components: moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action, which might also be classified as cognitive, affective and behavioural. As the pioneering theorist in virtue ethics, Aristotle believed in including all three as part of moral education whereas other theorists choose to focus on one more than another.

A case in point here is Kant (2002) who deems that one reaches moral excellence through practical reason by following a moral law, without focusing on the nature of the action

itself but rather the intrinsic goodness of the intention behind it, and this is what defines good will. While utilitarianism, with Mill as representative, focuses on the maximally beneficial end result rather than the intention (Mill, 2009). Mill believed morality is about the maximisation of happiness, and similar to virtue ethics, Mill understands the importance of intention and character traits, but considers good character as the function of good action. If one's intention is good, but the conduct is bad, then the action and the person cannot be defined as moral, thus human action is what presents the standard of morality. Steutel and Carr (1999) categorise Kant and Utilitarianism as non-character-based, but rather based on consequences, rules and duties which divide actions into categorically right or wrong, while virtue ethics is aretaic and contains a scale of quality. Some critics argue that virtue ethics only directs one on how to 'be' rather than what to 'do', thus failing to satisfy the fundamental demand to be made on any moral theory of being a guide on how to act (Kamtekar, 2004). Hursthouse responds by saying the action guidance in virtue ethics is implicitly provided by imploring you to follow what a virtuous person does by asking them for advice and emulating them. Moreover, she quite vigorously defends non-action-guidance by explaining that a moral dilemma might have several adequate responses; hence full action guidance may be an unreasonable demand for any moral theory. Complete action guidance is not required because two people may be equally virtuous and yet react to a situation in different ways, allowing their individualised virtuous qualities to be their guidance principles (2013). If one has virtuous traits, he or she will inevitably be directed to perform the moral act, although it is not specifiable in advance or irrespective of socio-moral and personality-related circumstances, because virtue ethics teaches one what the traits are and how to achieve them. Thus, when looking at conflicting foci regarding intention and action, Aristotle attaches equal importance to each.

As explained in the foregoing, Aristotle also provides an appealing balance between emotion and reason by explaining how emotions should not be suppressed but used in the correct reason-infused manner to render one virtuous. Character education can ideally be used to teach virtues and guide students to find that mean or medial state within their own self and their own circumstances. However, there is a large step from the ideal to the practically feasible; the specific aim of this doctoral thesis is to explore one avenue towards a feasible method to teach good character in a culturally sensitive way.

2.1.3 Criticisms

Some critics are sceptical of the entire notion of virtue. A case in point are the situationist psychologists who claim that since a situation impacts a person's behaviour and is not related to character traits, there is no point in trying to inculcate character (Kamtekar, 2004). One could argue that Aristotle understands how situations can influence people. Hence, he explains how there are different levels of virtue and how one progresses from one to the next is very much dependent on one's educational circumstances and personal situation. However, he does think that having developed *phronesis,* one can overcome the particular thrusts of feelings and pressures during difficult situations and act virtuously (Kristjánsson, 2016).

Steutel and Spiecker (2004) touch on another controversial issue, in that habituation seems to be a paradoxical concept. Is it not paradoxical to say that one needs to act virtuously to be virtuous, yet cannot act virtuously unless one is already virtuous? However, they defuse this seeming paradox by claiming that Aristotle does not assume intention behind virtue at the younger (merely habituated) stages of development because it is not expected for the youngest moral learners to reason. Rather, as one progresses, intention and behaviour are included to instantiate morality. Kristjánsson (2013) also discusses the growth of reason through development but acknowledges Aristotle is not clear on how the transition occurs from

habituation to critical reasoning. Another issue raised on habituation is by Ryle (as cited in Steutel and Spiecker, 2004, p.538) as he suggests virtues cannot be learned like a skill because they are influenced by affective dispositions. However, Aristotle did not disagree with the idea of affect having an impact on virtues. Aristotle proposed that being virtuous involves knowing when to use the right emotions to achieve the right state of character as well as gaining pleasure from doing the right action; moreover, this is done through repeated actions. Aristotle uses bravery as an example, for instance if one tends to be afraid of everything but is consistently put in frightening situations, one will eventually become brave (1999, p.20, [1104a]). In addition, Kristjánsson (2016) contends that habituation seems to encourage indoctrination and limit critical reasoning, through Aristotle's form of habituation, one eventually learns to perceive situations in the proper way and understand the reasons behind these situations. This arises from experience and therefore does not admit of a purely theoretical explication. Furthermore, the end result of Aristotle's theory is *phronesis* and one can only gain such wisdom through critical reasoning. However, as stated previously, the transition from habituation to practical wisdom is rather vaguely expressed by Aristotle himself, judged by the standards of contemporary developmental psychology, therefore, some reconstructive work is needed (Darnell *et al.*, 2019).

One of the strongest critiques of Aristotle is levelled at his theory of the unity of virtues, which is especially relevant through a practical perspective in moral education because it seems unrealistic to reach such an ideal (Kent, 1999). However, Kent defends the concept by analysing it from a different lens, arguing that the unity of virtues means a person should be seen as a whole and that virtues co-exist collectively. Nevertheless, it is not suggested that that a moral exemplar cannot be flawed, because the unity thesis does not suggest a single vice ruining moral character. Similarly, Wolf (2007) claims the unity of virtues is in fact just the unity of human

knowledge because it requires evaluative knowledge of priorities, for instance the awareness needed to know how to be generous at the right time means one would also know how to be courageous at the right time, and so on. Notwithstanding, Wolf's point does not ensure that knowing how to behave in certain situations leads to the right action. Returning to the practical concerns of character education, the focus should not be on the children gaining all the virtues concurrently, but on teaching them to develop the best holistic balance between conflicting moral motivations, because, as Kent argues, 'virtue-centred moral education seems to require something more than the anything-goes view but something less than the all-or-nothing view' (1999, p.111).

2.1.4 Concluding Remarks on Character Education

From a moral educational perspective, Aristotle's brand of applied virtue ethics as character education appears to be the most suitable one for developing children as a whole since it includes moral intention and behaviour as well as emotions and reason, making his concepts more unified than the others. Although there are limitations to this approach, Aristotelian virtue ethics could provide a strong basis for a viable educational programme. This author would like to invoke the work of The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017) at this juncture as it has created a character education framework based on an Aristotelian approach, showing how various virtues, under different umbrellas such as intellectual virtues and moral virtues, lead to thriving individuals. From birth, moral development is expected to occur in and through education (involving virtues being *taught*, *caught* and *sought*) via habituation, understanding, critical reflection and reasoning. All these features are required to develop different components of virtues, including virtue perception, knowledge, emotion, identity, motivation, reasoning and action. The framework provides a practical method for using Aristotle's approach as well as a

means to overcome its limitations such as the possibility of indoctrination and the possible over-demandingness of the unity of virtues. The present doctoral study aims to follow such a framework by using one of Aristotle's preferred methods, role modelling. As the next section clarifies, role modelling allows for the cultivation of virtue knowledge, emotion and motivation, with the hope that they lead to virtue practice.

2.2. Emotions Associated with Role modelling

2.2.1 Emulation as an Aristotelian Method of Character Education

Moral exemplars and role models have been used since ancient times to cultivate character through fictional stories or historical precedents, but only recently have scholars begun studying the actual effects of such interventions. Bandura's experiments on social learning theory, for instance, showed a while ago that moral role models influence children's moral behaviour (Bandura and McDonald, 1963). One of the mains reasons role modelling is believed to help in moral development is due to the emotions elicited by being exposed to role models or exemplars. Various scholars use different terms and definitions for these emotions, such as admiration, elevation and emulation, and there is no one or definitive developmental story being told here, giving the impression of a process whose details are somewhat unclear or under-explored. The educational question also remains as to how admiration/elevation or emulation can be harnessed in the most effective way to train children's character in moral education.

Lickona says 'good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good (1993, p.9). Aristotle encouraged the use of role models to teach all three through the emotion of emulation *(zēlos)*. He defined emulation as 'a feeling of pain at the evident presence of highly valued goods, which are possible for us to obtain, in the possession

of those who naturally resemble us…emulation therefore is virtuous and characteristic of virtuous' persons (Aristotle, 1926, *Rhet.* II.11, 1388a1]). It is often considered a painful emotion, as it reveals one's own sense of lack of excellence compared with the admired moral exemplar. Yet is mixed with feelings of pleasure if there is hope or belief the admired trait can be achieved, for as Aristotle also says, 'all pleasant things must either be present in sensation, or past in recollection, or future in hope.' Notably, Aristotle did not seem to have considered any emotion wholly pleasant or painful (i.e. purely 'positive' or 'negative' in contemporary psychological terms), but saw all as being mixed in valence. A predominantly pleasurable process, defined by Aristotle, is admiration, which 'implies the desire to learn', therefore imitation also brings pleasure since something identically copied proves it has been successfully learnt (1926, 1371b21-23). Is admiration, then, not the same as emulation, and by copying the exemplar has one become virtuous? To some extent, Aristotle's admiration could be a part of his emulation, but only superficially because with admiration the object of imitation need not be a positive attribute (1926, 1371b21-23), thus the process may be pleasant but cannot be defined as virtuous (cf. Irwin, 2015). Kristjánsson (2007) explores this further and explains how with emulation and in role modelling education, one cannot mindlessly imitate an exemplar because several higher elements are required for successful moral development, which are explained further below.

Kristjánsson also discusses how the distress of wanting to be better is not enough for improvement, as three other steps are required. After the feeling of distress, one needs the ambition to progress, because ambition then brings self-understanding and reasoning with oneself, which leads to the action of trying to gain the qualities one appreciates in a role model. In addition, to practically using Aristotelian role modelling, the focus needs to be on the qualities the models possess rather than the models themselves, for role models must be

presented as a technique for children to understand virtuous traits rather than just as glorious idols to copy uncritically. Thus, a *cognitive* element is required to comprehend the admirable qualities, an *affective* element to ensure children's emotions are triggered when exposed to role models to be driven to success and a *conative* element to motivate them into developing in line with the model. Kristjánsson also discusses how emulation could be a virtue in and by itself (although not defined as such by Aristotle himself), as it has what characterises an Aristotelian virtue: that it contributes to *eudaimonia*, and it requires avoidance of the excess and deficiency forms to reach a mean. An excess of emulation, for instance would involve over-emulating others, which Kristjánsson believes could lead to an inferiority complex, while the deficiency of emulation would consist in not enough willingness to emulate (2007). Here one stresses one's fundamental belief that the role of education is to cultivate good character, it is therefore the teachers' or schools' job to ensure students have the right 'amount' of emulation and internalise it in the medial way as a virtue.

　　To understand the psychological and educational processes behind role modelling, at least on an Aristotelian or quasi-Aristotelian level of understanding, a recapitulation of the role of moral habituation in character education is necessary. To progress morally from one level to the next, it is necessary to gain virtues of character; this does not come naturally, however, as it is influenced by habit (Aristotle, 1999, p.18 [1103a]). Therefore, emulating a moral role model once only would not constitute an end in itself. Since practising a skill can help in its attainment, virtues can only be acquired through habituation (Aristotle, 1999, p.18 [1103a – 1103b]). There is a struggle for children to obey rules since it does not bring much pleasure, but if they are raised and educated correctly, then the relevant patterns of feeling and acting can become ingrained habits as they become older (Aristotle, 1999, p.168 [1179b]), and once something becomes a habit, then it becomes pleasant as it feels as if it's a natural state (Aristotle,

1926, [1370a 3-4]). Emulating a role model needs to become a skilful habit before it turns into a full *phronesis*-guided virtue. It must be noted, however, that Annas' (2011) model of virtue acquisition as a skill is controversial as it seems to under-estimate residues of pain and regret in the complex moral life of human beings, given how much more potentially conflicted moral motivations are than simply the motivation to learn to practise a skill, say that of learning to play the piano.

In considering Aristotle's theories, one can conclude that the emotion, and possibly virtue of, *emulation*, once habituated at an early age and then honed through the moral learner's developing reasoning faculties, can lead to moral development in role modelling character education. The following sections, however, show the process is not that simple as there are criticisms, conflicting theories as well as various peripheral concerns when looking at other emotions associated with role modelling. As always, the ancient theories of Aristotle need to be revised and updated in light of contemporary social scientific research. This is particularly true of the developmental aspects of his moral psychology (Darnell *et al*., 2019).

2.2.2 Defining Admiration, Elevation, Inspiration

Before examining the effects of role modelling in moral education, it is important to understand the emotions associated with witnessing moral exemplars as well as the benefits and drawbacks that follow these emotions. Some of those emotions have already been explained in the context of Aristotle's own theory above, but a closer look at more contemporary sources is now in order. There has been an increased interest in this topic and so scholars have explored the emotions philosophically while others have tested their social, psychological and biological effects. Although most scholars have reached similar conclusions, in that the emotions felt when exposed to moral exemplars, such as admiration or elevation, ideally lead to moral development

through emulation, their opinions differ regarding the processes and associated problems. Examining scholars' theories on this is essential as it represents the core concepts behind teaching students' virtue acquisition through role models, and additionally by having a better understanding one can create more effective programmes. Rubidge states: 'Emotions seem spontaneous and natural, yet we regularly train children how and when to feel emotion' (1998, p.317), so can admiration or elevation be controlled or used to train children in moral education? If yes, how so? If not, is exposing learners to role models the right thing to do? The present section will try to answer these questions as it tries to define the emotions of admiration, elevation and inspiration, what they lead to, their possible conflicts and how they can influence moral development.

Admiration can be labelled as an emotion, as it has an intentional object and an affective element (Zagzebski, 2015). Schindler (2014) focuses on admiration and adoration as both positive emotions, admiration is described as an emotion directed towards something a person views with wonder and astonishment, and can be classified further as a recognition emotion since it acknowledges others being higher or more superior than the self (Schindler *et al.,* 2013). In contrast, adoration presents exemplarity that cannot be acquired, as the adored exemplars are perceived as 'sacred' and beyond ordinary people's capabilities. The benefit the adored individuals provide is to project high-minded moral ideals and values, as well as to encourage social unity (Schindler, 2014, p.3), but since the aim of the current doctoral project is to explore the acquisition of virtues as a practical and feasible educational process for ordinary schooling, adoration will be not be studied further in the empirical part of this thesis.

By looking at different scholars' opinions, Schindler *et al.* conclude that admiration requires internal standards, as people will only admire that which they have previously internalised and approved. Furthermore, admiration can trigger the motivation to personally

progress by 'putting oneself in the place of the person who upholds an ideal' (p.111, 2013) and once an individual can imagine acquiring the quality, they can then imitate the admired individual, reach those ideals and possibly exceed them.

Supporting Aristotle's theory on emulation triggering mixed-emotions, Schindler found empirically that admiration has a small positive correlation with fear and shame and can be a negatively felt emotion when an individual begins to focus on the self and senses inferiority. On a more positive note, he found admiration to be positively correlated with personal growth, but not with purpose of life as that was more associated with adoration (2014). Further supporting admiration's relationship with personal growth, Schindler, Paech and Löwenbrück (2014) found significant effects of admiration through emulation on self-expansion as a kind of personal growth.

Fredrickson (2008) contends that negative emotions are narrow as they only point to the current issue needing solution, while positive emotions are more long-term as they broaden an individual's perspective and develop skills overtime. One could argue, therefore, that Aristotle's mixed-emotion of emulation could be more effective than mere admiration as it helps one focus on the problem at hand (the virtue one is lacking) as well as widening the outlook and skills through its positive element.

Similarly, Zagzebski (2010) describes admiration as a positive emotion causing an attraction that drives one to emulate the source. This complements rather than contradicts Aristotle's own theory as it simply explains psychologically how a prior emotion, admiration, is required to activate emulation. Her theory, *exemplarism*, is based on a causal theory of reference. In the sense that as water is designated as H_2O, an exemplar is designated as admirable. In philosophical jargon, this means that reference is grounded causally/historically rather than logically. The point at which one identifies a moral exemplar is where admiration

surfaces, because according to Zagzebski, this emotion is rooted in associations between people, and if one possesses a developed disposition towards admiration, then the right individuals are likely to be admired (2010). Zagzebski also confirms that admiration can deviate and 'misalign', as one may admire something not worthy of admiration or fail to admire something worth admiration, (p.207). However, no direct practical solution is provided as Zagzebski approaches the issue more from the perspective of moral philosophy and moral psychology than moral education. To ameliorate this shortcoming, one can follow Aristotle's theory in that people need to be trained and habituated to know what emotions to feel and the right time for it (Annas, 2011). Arguably, it is possible, with character education, that a student can be guided into feeling the right amount of admiration for the right person, subsequently correctly identifying a true moral exemplar to emulate.

Haidt recently resurrected the term 'elevation', based on Jefferson's definition, by describing it as a physical and emotional reaction to witnessing moral excellence (2003). His definition of elevation is similar to Zagzebski's definition of admiration for acquired excellence, but Haidt includes a physical sensation, 'an open feeling in the chest' (2003, p.1). The two differ, however, in the kind of moral excellence that appeals to an observer, because Haidt believes the emotion does not include good deeds that benefit the elevated agent, because gratitude would then replace elevation (Algoe and Haidt, 2009), while Zagzebski believes it may (2015). Moreover, they disagree on the emotion that is opposed to admiration/elevation, as Haidt considers it to be disgust whereas Zagzebski thinks it is contempt, while Aristotle advances 'contempt is the opposite of emulation' (Aristotle, 1926, 1388b7). Zagzebski and Aristotle's view seems more fitting because contempt is more associated with a vice while disgust is a broad term including numerous feelings of repulsion unrelated to morality. Algoe and Haidt's (2009) empirical studies show that elevation exists and does in fact motivate people

to be kind and caring and improves social relationships as well stimulating self-improvement. Schnall, Roper and Fessler (2010) studied this further and found that watching good deeds not only brought feelings of elevation, but also led to altruism (exemplified through actual moral behaviour).

Kristjánsson (2017) uses Zagzebski and Haidt's definitions for the terms moral admiration and what he terms elevation$_1$, which, he contends may be used interchangeably. However, his term elevation$_2$ differs from Zagzebski's and Haidt's because the emotion seems to be at a higher psychic level that involves being in complete awe of moral beauty as an abstract ideal of enchantment, regardless of the person exemplifying it (p.12). Elevation$_2$ involves an observer being moved by a 'transpersonal ideal (p.16) and going through a transcendental experience that generates the motivation to emulate it. This goes beyond the Aristotelian picture, as Aristotle (sceptical as he was of the idealism of his mentor Plato) seems to have been destitute of any sense of a transpersonal or transcendent urge, directed at ideals. Aristotle strongly believes in emulating moral exemplars but warns his readers the emphasis should be on the virtue, not the exemplar (Kristjánsson, 2007). However, the issue with Aristotle is his disregard for the emotions that trigger emulation, unlike Zagzebski who focuses on admiration. On the other hand, her view of emotion attaches significant importance to exemplars, possibly even more so than the virtue itself. Kristjánsson (2017) explains how both Aristotle and Zagzebski fail to acknowledge emotions that focus on ideals such as beauty, truth and goodness, while the Chinese philosopher Mengzi (Mencius), for example, surpasses both Aristotle and Zagzebski's thoughts by encouraging the use of exemplars and the essentiality of emotion, but goes beyond them, to include an awe-inspiring experience of ideals as an inspiration. Drawing on Mengzi, Kristjánsson offers the spark of a new route in moral education that involves teachers exposing students to moral ideals rather than solely ideal exemplars (2017).

One more related emotion needs to be mentioned here, namely inspiration. Inspiration, according to Thrash *et al.* (2014), is perhaps not an emotion entirely in and by itself, as emotion has a single focal object, but affect is a component of it. They have generally found inspiration to be positive because it does not lead to avoidance motivation, but can be negative when stemming from negative experiences, therefore, similar to Schindler and Aristotle's suggestion, it can be a mixed emotion. Thrash and Elliot's empirical study (2004) found inspiration to have two processes: inspired *by* and inspired *to*. The first is appreciating the qualities presented and the latter involves the motivation to extend the qualities onto themselves. Inspiration thus has three core characteristics: transcendence, evocation and motivation. Transcendence involves the process of seeing and understanding that there are better possibilities, evocation is that the situation was spontaneous and was not directed by the inspired individual, while motivation is the need to express what was learnt. Their empirical results showed that inspired *by* is associated more with transcendence and evocation, while inspired *to* is associated with the motivation to transmit or extend the inspiring traits. Thrash and Elliot's study (2004) acknowledges positive affect and inspiration are strongly correlated, but they also stress how the two tend to differ. One difference is that positive affect is achieving desired goals, thus gaining resources to satisfy physical and/or motivational needs, causing it to be defined as 'approach motivational'. While inspiration is under the same umbrella, its function is not 'acquisition' as much as it is 'transmission' which requires a trigger object (pp.970-971). Positive affect is working towards a goal, but inspiration is more of an awakening that happens in the moment, similar to Kristjánsson's (2017) elevation$_2$.

Overall, the fairly brief survey above shows there are various theories on emotions and/or processes associated with witnessing moral exemplarity as well as empirical studies confirming their existence and possible positive results. Additional empirical studies further

prove the positive effects of such emotions. For instance, Immordino-Yang and Sylvan (2010) conducted an experiment to see the physiological effects of admiration for virtue. The results, controversially and in an anti-Aristotelian way, convey admiration for virtue as not rational as there is a biological push behind the emotion, and this neuropsychological reaction to admiration, they argue, shows it is instinctive. Nevertheless, they believe it should be used by moral educators as a powerful intrinsic motivator towards being virtuous. From another perspective, Aquino, McFerran, and Laven (2011) studied the relationship between moral identity, defined as the degree in which a person places moral character to the self, and the effect of moral exemplarity. They found that the individuals with higher moral identity scores were more likely to remember moral acts and had stronger elevation reactions to them. In addition, they found that undergoing moral elevation is associated with prosocial behaviour.

By exploring the different theories and studies, it may be understood initially that the various processes by which being exposed to a moral role model may lead to emulation and thus facilitate moral development. No single authoritative answer is proffered on which theory or direction is best. However, although this project does not undertake a final answer, an interpretation on one possible route can be offered. It is argued that Aristotle's theories can still be used as a foundation, but since there are missing elements (especially on the emotional precursors of emulation), other studies may be used to fill in the gaps, for instance using an emotion such as admiration or elevation to explain the process leading up to emulation. But simply focusing on affect, as some current psychologists do, is not enough, for as mentioned earlier, Aristotle argues persuasively for the importance of reasoning and action as well as affect. Therefore, a cognitive process is required, in addition to admiration/elevation. This, it is suggested, can come from inspiration as it is having been 'empirically classified as a cognitive condition than emotion' (Thrash and Elliot, 2004, p.958). Inspiration also includes a

transcendent characteristic that goes beyond admiration, consequently, is it not best to use inspiration on its own? I would answer with no, because inspiration can transpire from any object, a moral exemplar, a piece of art or literature. However, this project seeks to examine emotions purely related to witnessing moral exemplarity, which admiration/elevation provides. Furthermore, it is proposed, inspiration is spontaneous, and for moral education, a longer progression is required as well. Aristotle explains this in terms of emulation and habituation.

Figure 1 below shows how witnessing moral excellence could trigger a positive emotion (*admiration/elevation*) or a negative emotion (*emulation*) or a process (*inspired by*). Subsequently, either naturally or with guidance, an individual could reach the stage *inspired to*, which is the motivation to act upon these feelings. Once motivated, emulation of a reason-responsive behavioural pattern can occur, allowing one to emulate the exemplar, and if repeated through habituation, could eventually lead to some level of virtue, later to be harnessed and refined through the guidance of the young person's budding *phronesis*. This figure is not provided here as the ultimate solution to the question of what psycho-moral processes are at work in all role modelling experiences, but it serves as an indicator of one potential route to learning to be good by means of learning from moral exemplars.

Figure 1 Possible reactions to moral exemplars

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Exposure to moral role model     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Possible Reactions:         │
│   Admiration/Elevation/Emulation/In   │
│              spired *by*              │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Inspired *to*            │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Emulation (Behavioural Pattern)  │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Habituation              │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                   ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Virtuousity              │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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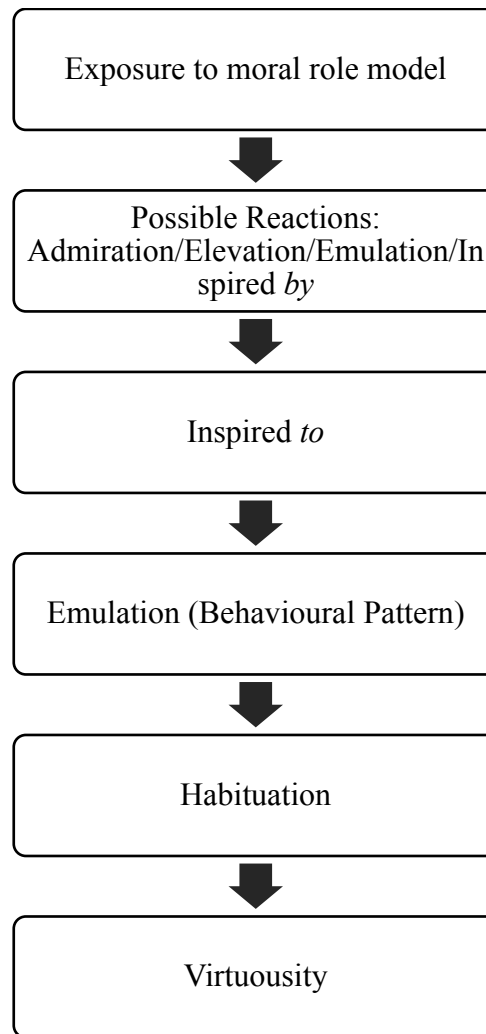
The academic intricacies of debates about the exact emotions involved in role modelling sometimes seem to obscure rather than enlighten, especially as some of those debates seem to be more about the theorists' preferred terminologies than substantive differences. The above Figure is not meant to cut through those debates but simply to clarify the potential process for practically minded readers.

2.2.3 Further Considerations

There are certain issues that could arise while being exposed to role models that need to be taken into consideration when planning or teaching lesson plans. For instance, similar to

Zagzebski and Haidt, Rousseau defines admiration as a positive emotion that initiates emulation and eventually moral development. However, he also acknowledges the risks of admiration such as the development of fanaticism or a lack of interest when learners fail to practise what they admire (Storey, 2011). Colby and Damon (1992) also mention the issue with fanaticism by explaining how some admired individuals and celebrities can be violent and fanatic, causing more harm than good. Conversely, learners' lack of interest, also termed *moral inertia,* is the demotivation or loss of interest in emulation because the exemplars are viewed as being too superior with unattainable skills. Monin (2007) describes this in more detail and explains how upward social comparisons could elicit self-defence mechanisms that hinder motivation, such as denial or resentment. Similar to Schindler's (2014) adoration, Kristjánsson refers to *hero-worship* as a drawback to role modelling as it involves blindly idolising the exemplars regardless of their flaws, thus preventing morally effective emulation (2017). Schindler also brings up the issue with fascination, suggesting sometimes it has nothing to do with the self-improvement, and provides no personal growth and can in fact cause an individual to disregard important aspects of their own life, through so-called celebrity worship (2014).

One of the most studied downsides of role modelling, however, is envy, which a number of scholars believe is a negative emotion that comes with a sense of injustice (Sarapin *et al.*, 2017, Schindler, 2014). Aristotle does not consider envy to include a sense of injustice (as distinct from what he calls righteous indignation, *nemesis*) but describes it as a spiteful emotion that causes one to obsess about equality with the exemplar rather than acquiring the skill. Additionally, 'equality' may equally be secured through the admired individual losing the perceived relative advantage, i.e. getting worse, 'if the envious man is pained at another's possession or acquisition of good fortune, he is bound to rejoice at the destruction or non-acquisition of the same' (Aristotle, 1926, [1387a5]). Through such spitefulness, however,

emulation cannot be triggered and therefore virtuosity cannot be reached (Kristjánsson, 2007 and Zagzebski, 2015a). This elucidates an important moral point about Aristotelian emulation. Although Aristotle deems it more painful than pleasant, he still thinks a morally engaged emulator will prefer not to gain the emulated characteristics than gaining them at the expense of the emulated person. This distinguishes emulation clearly from envy.

Irwin (2015), on the other hand, criticises Zagzebski's concept of admiration, by claiming the reason ancient Greeks avoided analysing admiration is because of its moral ambiguity. If moral characters are taken as moral ideals, people can deviate because sometimes characters with unmoral values can be seen as remarkable or admirable, as Irwin suggests. Therefore, he suggests admiration, as distinct from emulation, should be kept separate from moral judgement. His points seem valid, because by looking at his arguments in light of current films and TV programmes, numerous questionably moral protagonists are used to look appealing, and to some extent admirable such as *You,* focusing on a sociopathic stalker, or *Weeds,* a lying drug dealer trying to support her family. Perhaps role models should not, as Zagzebski suggests, be the logically prior foundations of morality, but emulation could nevertheless be used as a guide in moral education to ensure the right moral values are admired.

Although these concerns cannot be sidestepped entirely, it is essential that proper guidance is provided to students on how to handle the emotions associated with role modelling as well as the types of role models they are exposed to in order to reduce possible negative consequences. For older students, it might even be advisable to try to explain to them the subtle differences between concepts such as emulation, admiration, adoration and inspiration, to help such students to become more self-transparent about what it is taking place inside their minds when they become inspired by, and want to model themselves on, morally admirable exemplars. At least, it is proposed that teachers of character education, who want to use role modelling as

part of their educational strategy need to better understand the differences between these emotion concepts, and the experiences they can potentially evoke, in order to avoid some of the potential pitfalls of role model education which can, at worst, obfuscate and corrupt rather than enlighten and improve.

2.3. Defining the Terms Role Model/Moral Exemplar

This project uses 'moral exemplars' and 'role models' as key terms for moral development in education; therefore, their definitions need to be stated for clarification. After an individual develops morally and excels in moral excellence, they can be labelled as a moral exemplar. Different philosophical and psychological theories have various perspectives on what moral excellence is, but this will be discussed subsequent to the definitions. Subsequently, a couple of classifications from recent scholars will be examined to create an appropriate conceptual foundation for this study.

A moral role model could be defined in several ways. Kristjánsson (2006) for instance uses the terms role model and moral exemplar interchangeably. However, in personal communication with Damon and Colby, Damon views moral exemplarity and role modelling as points on a spectrum where role models are admirable but moral exemplars are more extraordinary (2015). Colby, on the other hand, has a different explanation and describes role models as indicating a more personal relationship between the individual and the model, therefore a role model does not necessarily have to be good or have positive values, and they can be modelled simply for a particular characteristic or disposition (2015). For the sake of the present research, Colby's definition will not be adhered to here because role models cannot, for moral educational purposes, only be based on an individual's personal connection as there must be a particular virtue to admire. All this linguistic variance is, however, a reminder once again

of how complex the landscape of role modelling is and how little consensus exists on how to define some of its underlying emotions and basic concepts.

In their first book, *Some Do Care,* Colby and Damon provided a list of requirements to include someone as a moral exemplar (1992). The criteria for a moral exemplar were commitment to moral values and principles; to inspire others into moral action; a balanced amount of humility which involves understanding their individual importance relative to the world and thus not prioritising their ego; consistency in one's morals, actions and intentions; and the readiness to choose morality over self-interest (1992).

Furthermore, during the personal discussion with Damon, he emphasised the importance of the action as much as the intention because that excludes fanatics who use immoral methods to achieve their goals (2015). They both highlighted that moral exemplars are human and it should be clear they could have flaws and imperfections (Colby and Damon, 2015). Even though it is difficult to find one objective definition for a moral exemplar, it seems the closest one is based on Colby and Damon's (1992) criteria. A moral exemplar should be an inspiring individual who can be emulated for moral excellence, which should include a commitment to one's moral values and goals presented through consistent moral actions and intentions. Since it is too demanding to expect anyone to have all the virtuous traits, it will be considered sufficient in this study for a moral exemplar to have some of the moral virtues.

2.4. Role Model Attributes

2.4.1 Extraordinary vs. Ordinary Exemplars

In *Section 2.2,* the different emotions associated with role modelling were discussed and explanations were given for how scholars found these emotions could lead to positive moral development by means of different pathways. Despite some conceptual and substantive disarray

in these explanations, a moderate consensus on the emotional mechanisms leading to emulation was reached. Now the more practical question beckons of what kind of role models can be effective, and furthermore which characteristics, if any, they possess that make them different from the average person. The former question is essential to answer within role model education so that children are exposed to the 'right' kind of models, while the latter provides a deeper understanding of what it is 'about' role models that puts them in a position to possibly facilitate the emulation process.

Scholars have differing opinions on whether moral exemplars should ideally be extraordinary, such as heroes and saints, or more ordinary and relatable, including local personal heroes or peers. Flescher (2003) defines extraordinary exemplars as those who are supererogatory when it comes to moral duty (i.e. go above and beyond what is normally expected of them morally) and he uses heroes and saints as examples of this. However, he differentiates between the two by explaining how heroes are not born extraordinary and are in fact part of the average population, but they build a sense of bravery that allows them to overcome self-preservation and fear when they are faced with challenges or 'costs', as Flescher classifies it. Saints, on the other hand, have an element of the extraordinary bred into them as they are incapable of conceptualising these 'costs' *qua* challenges and completely disregard any self-interest, causing them to 'transcend beyond human ability' (p.175). Both heroes and saints conduct extreme virtuous or altruistic acts, and so, whether hero or saint, lay persons perceive them as extraordinary because 'heroic or saintly morality does not reflect what is ordinarily expected of us' (p.2) This raises the issue of relatability when it comes to moral exemplars within character education.

Vos (2017) believes there is room for both extraordinary and ordinary exemplars within character education by calling the first representative of 'existential exemplarity' and the latter

of 'role model exemplarity'. With existential exemplarity, an exemplar such as Christ should be used to help students define their 'ideal self' (p.25) and find a way to use emulation in their own personal manner or situation. As mentioned, however, Vos also supports the idea of ordinary exemplars in character education, suggesting they provide depth by showing the complexities of their personalities within situations of everyday life, and this represents a more realistic understanding of morality, as he says 'exemplarity is no longer merely attributed to morally exceptional people such as heroes and saints, but also to those who express 'complexities and ambiguities of everyday life' (p.19). Vos admits that, with heroes and saints, there sometimes seems to be a gap that is too large for emulation. However, he thinks students have a need for the concept of an 'ideal self', as well as a 'real self', and that the former can subtly and gradually, albeit not directly, influence the latter; hence the need for exemplars that cultivate both 'selves'.

Whether an extraordinary or ordinary exemplar is used, Vos emphasises the importance that the emulator should not focus on simply imitating the models but should use them for moral self-discovery and understanding the values the exemplars embodied by personalising them. He contends that 'there is a significant difference between becoming like the exemplar and becoming what the exemplar exemplifies' (p.22). Students can then reflect on the kind of character they have in the present and how it can be modified to morally develop in their own way. When an exemplar is uncritically copied and idolised, the issue of hero-worship can arise (as discussed in *Section 2.2*), and when taking an Aristotelian view, as is adopted in this research, it is important to be aware of how to avoid or at least reduce those drawbacks. Kristjánsson (2019) explains that, in an Aristotelian account, not many are able to reach the top level of good character as that involves encompassing all the virtues. Therefore, the danger is that exemplars that are perceived as 'moral superstars' (p.29) are subsequently worshipped

rather than emulated. However, if one takes an 'anti-idealisation' approach (p.29) and acknowledges that many exemplars may not excel in all the virtues, but are particularly developed in one or two, they can be admired as imperfect but may still be emulated as role models, thus decreasing the possibility of hero-worship.

One of the difficulties in assessing who is right and who is wrong in this debate is that the very concept of a role model does not have a uniform definition in the literature. For example, there is no consensus on how domain-specific the admired traits may be for the exemplar to still remain under the definition of role model. For example, would a person one admires and wishes to emulate for fighting against some very specific form of injustice be properly characterised as a role model, although they had no other positive traits deemed worthy of emulation?

Brook's book *The Road to Character* (2015) uses historical figures to represent moral exemplarism as he believes individuals in modern society are required to reflect on models in the past to help tackle the lack of morality today. One of the issues Brooks describes is the cultural shift that occurred in making career-based skills more desirable than moral ones, thus replacing humility, for example, with instrumentalised self-promotion and narcissism. Social media then advocates this further by allowing people to broadcast their personalities and measure their success through external praise. To further support this concern, Hart and Fegley (1995) found that, when compared to ordinary participants, moral exemplars were less concerned with social integration and with 'fitting in'. Brooks suggests moral role models are a possible solution to the perceived need to integrate, through their ability to stand out from the crowd, but similar to Vos' recommendation, he describes the nuanced details of these historical figures' lives, giving the reader a deeper understanding of the internal and external complexities they faced, thus providing an 'ordinary' view of extraordinary individuals. However, while

Kristjánsson endorses this, most of the exemplars in Brooks' book had experienced severe adversity in their journey to moral exemplarity, which Kristjánsson argues does not necessarily have to be the case and could put 'young moral learners off' by romanticising adversity (2019, p.35). It may therefore be beneficial to present not only extraordinary exemplars in schools, but ones who lead ordinary lives and develop morally through a natural and slow progression without any epiphanic events along the way.

Although Kristjánsson has an overall positive outlook on Brook's book, he finds Damon and Colby's (2015) *The Power of Ideals* more successful in dealing with the issue of moral inertia (see *Section 2.2* for definition), because even though historical figures are presented there as well, the authors are able to convey how the characteristics of these exemplars can be executed in ordinary life to allow for moral development. This can be done through reflective morality, as this requires thought about one's own moral values and weaknesses, and an extended learning journey. Once value is attained, namely internalised after reflection, it becomes habitual and an automatic source of thought and action. Damon and Colby acknowledge an individual's morality is not formed within a vacuum as all individuals are part of a bigger culture or subculture, but this should not undermine a person's moral judgement, as people are described as active when they are involved with the world, and so if they disagree with something in their own culture, they may argue with or act upon it, which is how cultures develop as there is an 'ongoing evolution of culture through individual action' (p.64). With this argument, one can make the case that, within role model education, even if relatable models turn out to be more effective in general, exposure to role models outside the learner's cultural 'box' may be beneficial, so inspiration can come from a place other than the immediate cultural surroundings, allowing for moral reflection and development. However, while such an argument may be credible theoretically, one always needs to consult the empirical evidence on

how this works, or does not work, in practice, and in *Chapter 4*, I report on how students in my research found it difficult to relate to role models from a different culture.

Empirical results indicate that relatable and attainable role models provide a stronger positive influence when it comes to actual moral behaviour. Lockwood and Kunda's (1997) social experiment tested whether superstars (or models) affect an individual positively or negatively depending on relatability and attainability, with 'relatability' defined as finding something similar between the self and the other, and the latter term referring to how achievable the skills or qualities the model possesses, are. Their results did in fact confirm that relatable and attainable models have a positive effect, but at least there was no evidence found indicating that non-relatable or non-attainable models had a negative influence. Han *et al.* (2017) support Lockwood and Kunda's findings, and they consider historical figures as 'extreme exemplars' (1997, p.2) since they do not represent any relatable skills, experience or background for school students. Relatability is defined as anything similar regarding culture, age, shared interest or some kind of 'belongingness', and without any of those attributes students may find it difficult to emulate the exemplar. Han *et al.* raise the concern of moral inertia and suggest a possible reason for this phenomenon could lie in historical figures being used as role models, and that this has a demotivating effect because their skills or actions seem unattainable. Similar to Lockwood and Kunda, attainability is seen as referring to the psycho-morally achievable. Therefore, the exemplar must show the learner that the moral behaviour requires a 'feasible amount of effort' so that the emulator is motivated by believing that even a small amount of good moral behaviour is meaningful. With that theory in mind, Han *et al.* conducted an experiment with middle school students in South Korea, using moral stories with historical figures for one group and (relatable and attainable) peer exemplars for another. Results proved relatable and attainable exemplars induced moral elevation, but there was no statistically

significant difference in elevation or perceived moral excellence between the two groups. Although the difference in the intention for service engagement was not statistically significant, there was a main effect on overall service engagement, activities in youth community organisations, as well as religion and art organisations (2017, p.10). In addition to increased service engagement, the peer examples were considered easier to emulate. Han *et al.*'s reasoning for this is that while exemplars such as Mother Teresa might be emotionally touching, because they are outside the scope of everyday life and therefore not relatable, they seem too superior, which could be seen as self-threatening, consequently decreasing the motivation for actual (as distinct from merely intended) prosocial behaviour.

Ruggeri *et al.* (2018) narrow down the concept of relatability further by connecting it with close proximity in addition to similar attributes, as their study explores *who* students consider role models to be and which qualities they look for in a role model. However, models are labelled differently in their study, so that *role model* is the larger umbrella of someone a student respects or admires and therefore wants to emulate, and under that umbrella, *champions* are defined as models the children personally know, while *heroes* are models they admire but only unrealistically emulate due to the differences in context. Their results showed most of the pupils described a role model as someone caring or loving and someone they personally knew (a champion), and over 35% considered one or both parents as their most important role model. Interestingly, however, close proximity was not the only factor, because only 2.4% considered their teacher as a role model and it is suggested that a reason for this is the lack of desire of wanting to be like their teacher (possibly in terms of profession although this was not established in the study), as will be discussed further in *Section 2.4*.

The (main) religion where this project takes place is Islam, and in Islam, religious models are often used to preach morality (Halstead, 2007), which includes stories about

prophets and their companions. However, Banner (2014) argues that if moral theology is to be used as a basis for role model education, then it needs to merge with social anthropology to account for the 'psychological and sociocultural depth' (p.23) of everyday ethics rather than just solutions to hard moral dilemmas as often described in religious texts. Inspired by this observation, the first stage of my research intervention included extraordinary exemplars, but also gave students the chance to think of personal ordinary ones to gain the best of both worlds. Extraordinary exemplars can represent and embody values theoretically, at least. Moreover, Colby and Damon believe the difference between extraordinary and ordinary exemplars has to do with degree rather than essence, as the personal attributes motivating average moral behaviour and extraordinary moral commitment are the same. It is the degree to which the morally right thing is done that differs rather than the quality of the commitment (1992). The advantage of ordinary exemplars is the option of having them in close proximity, whether they be community leaders, family members or peers, and this might influence students' moral behaviour. As shown in Rushton's study (1975), the exemplars physically being there had a positive influence, whether through direct modelling, which had a positive short-term effect on school children's moral behaviour, or through preaching, which had a positive long-term effect. Nonetheless, whether they be extraordinary or ordinary, it seems necessary that the details of the models' lives be shown and discussed to provide students with a deeper understanding of their 'social anthropology' as Banner (2014) advances, and help learners with their everyday, 'ordinary' lives. After determining what kind of role models are influential, it is essential to explore their moral personalities and the various attributes that make up their exemplary identities, because the inconsistency between moral judgement and action is bridged through moral identity, according to Damon and Colby (2015). Hence, making sense of the moral

identity of the role model may be the first step towards adopting a similar identity, and hence becoming a better moral agent.

This sub-section has again revealed a disconcerting lack of conceptual consensus in the academic literature on what is meant by a 'relatable' role model and how the concepts of 'relatability' and 'ordinariness' are connected. It could mean a model with feasible goals or similar attributes (Han *et al.*, 2017; Lockwood and Kunda, 1997), someone in close proximity (Ruggeri *et al.*, 2018), or even individuals performing extraordinary actions but who belong to and live among ordinary people (Flescher, 2003). For example, if relatability simply refers to the ability to make sense of the moral identity of the role model, then either ordinary or extraordinary role models could, in principle, count as 'relatable'. However, if 'relatability' refers to proximity in time and place and some sort of psycho-moral similarity to the student, then extraordinary exemplars seem to have the theoretical case stacked against them prior to any empirical investigation. The empirical results do not necessarily show that extraordinary exemplars fail to bring a positive influence within character education, but they do emphasise the importance of including ordinary exemplars to provide students with a multi-hierarchical combination, namely a variation of moral exemplars on different levels of 'extraordinariness', to provide them with different methods to morally develop through role modelling.

2.4.2 What Makes 'Ordinary Exemplars' Role Models?

Exploring and understanding moral exemplarity, whether it be ordinary or extraordinary, is essential for learners' moral development because exemplars should not be blindly imitated, as previously suggested, but used as a tool, so that through critical reasoning, learners can adapt and process the relevant information or exposure within their own lives. Walker poses 'how can we emulate if we don't understand their human psychology?' (2003, p.31), and by looking

at different theories and social experiments on moral exemplars, the common denominators seem to be the exemplars' stances on *self and morality*, *self and others*, and the *virtues* that these stances entail. Self and morality involve the connection between how the exemplars view themselves and their relationship to moral ideals (usually referred to as moral identity), while self and other is about how the exemplars view themselves in relation to those around them, whether it be friends, family or society as a whole. Hart and Fegley (1995) define social cognition as an understanding of the self, others, and the institutions that oversee the interrelations between self and others. The crucial point here is that, according to several findings, those understandings or stances differ between moral exemplars and the average individuals. Therefore, the following section will discuss how moral exemplars differ regarding their self and their surroundings, which particular virtues make them exemplary, as well as how their early experiences may have influenced their moral development.

2.4.2.1 Self and Morality

Although various scholars classify this area differently, it seems the common factor is that moral exemplars differ from others based on how they define their self in relation to morality. Colby and Damon (1992) define the category as the unity of self and morality. Flescher (2003) has a similar concept but categorises morality as duty. Hence, the more individuals place morality as a duty, the more advanced their moral development. When viewed through an evidence lens, Colby and Damon conducted a thorough study of 23 'ordinary' exemplars in American society who are nevertheless considered moral exemplars due to their extraordinary actions and the virtues they exemplify. The study aimed to explore the consistent virtuous actions exhibited throughout their lives, and what is shared among them in their moral personalities, because Colby and Damon believe it cannot simply be a higher level of moral

reasoning, as Kohlberg would have suggested, but rather their moral identity. Their results showed the exemplars themselves did not find their actions to be uniquely courageous or self-sacrificing, as there was a sense of certainty regarding issues of principle, which were embedded in their identity. This tallies with Flescher's (2003) concept, as mentioned earlier, of how exemplars fail to see their actions as supererogatory, but rather as an essential duty.

Colby and Damon's study is one of very few examining exemplars' moral personalities in depth through interviews and life stories, but several empirical studies have been conducted comparing moral exemplars to those considered 'regular'. For instance, Hart and Fegley's (1995) social experiment looked at adolescent exemplars, showing prosocial behaviour and care, versus an adolescent comparison group. The researchers hypothesised and confirmed that the ideal self is more aligned with the actual self (defined as one's present self) within exemplars, proving Colby and Damon's unity thesis of self and morality as possibly being correct. On the other hand, Reimer and Wade-Stein (2004) conducted, more recently, similar research to Hart and Fegley's, and found that care exemplars did not incorporate the ideal self into actual self-representation, but rather that the actual self is more embedded in social representations, as will be discussed in the following section. Furthermore, in Hart and Fegley's study, exemplars were found to have more stability and consistency in the self from the past to the future than the comparison adolescents, thus showing a greater sense of maturity. Although the study showed no significant difference in moral judgment, supporting Colby and Damon's claim of exemplarity not being based on moral reasoning, Hart and Fegley suggested the rationale for this could be due to the type of prosocial behaviour they were examining, which did not require higher stages of moral reasoning, as the activities were mainly about giving large amounts of time to social services, such as working at soup kitchens or community gardens. This suggestion could be true as Matsuba and Walker's (2004) comparison study of

adolescent exemplars showed that exemplars do in fact have higher moral reasoning abilities. Furthermore, the comparison group had more fluid identity development; therefore, their identity was not as steady as that of exemplars, which made them less likely to commit to anything.

An additional element found within the identity of exemplars was their faith and/or belief system. Matsuba and Walker (2005) conducted another study based on moral exemplars' life narratives, finding that in relation to the comparison group, exemplars had a more pronounced conceptual belief system and were more connected to a presence larger than the self, such as God or Nature. In addition, a positive correlation was found between ideological depth and future societal goals, so not only were exemplars found to have higher future societal goals and ideological depth, it was found that the stronger the belief, the higher the societal goals. Interestingly though, the exemplars were found to have less redemptive recovery, growth and learning scores than the comparison group, and the possible reason given for this is that exemplars do not redefine life goals in the wake of difficult experiences, but use traumatic experiences to gain a deeper transcendence, which then shapes their conceptual belief system, leading to current and future prosocial action. This then supports Brook's (2015) as well as Damon and Colby's (2015) concept, which Kristjánsson (2019) questions, namely, that adversity is one of the factors in the typical moral development of moral exemplars.

Supporting this further is that even though Matsuba and Walker (2005) predicted moral exemplars would have had a more positive childhood, allowing for a more positive moral development and perspective in life, their results disproved this. Other than Reimer and Wade-Stein (2004)'s experiment, discussed in the following section, most of the studies, whether quantitative or qualitative, have shown moral identity to be an important factor of moral development, and part of that identity is based on a sense of moral duty and/or reliance on a

conceptual belief system. Colby and Damon (1992) suggest that even within normal development, the self and morality tend to grow closer together. The difference is, however, that with non-exemplars these still stay uncoordinated, while with moral exemplars they are more fused together.

It should be noted that the moral identity hypothesis relies on ontological commitments that would have been fairly alien to Aristotle. The underlying commitment is one of anti-realism, according to which moral selfhood consists of *beliefs* about the self (and other factors) rather than as the realist Aristotle would have had it, *traits* within the self itself about which we may or may not hold beliefs, either true or false (Kristjánsson, 2010). These two sets of ontological commitments are not contradictory, however. It could well be true that to be a moral exemplar, one must both possess certain traits *and* hold certain beliefs about those traits and their associations with morality or other people.

2.4.2.2 Self and Other

As moral behaviour is shown towards others and/or the community, it seems necessary to explore how moral exemplars perceive themselves in relation to others or how others could influence their moral identity. Reimer and Wade-Stein (2004) consider social context to be an important factor in identity development; therefore, their study involved analysing self-other symbolic representations between care exemplars and comparison adolescents by analysing interviews with both through a computational language programme, which provides a more in-depth exploration based on language discourse. Similar to Hart and Fegley's research (1995), parental figures were found to be more incorporated in the self for exemplars, but surprisingly their findings differed from others when it came to peer influence, as Reimer and Wade-Stein found peer influence was not stronger in the comparison group. In fact, Hart and Fegley's

findings are quite different from Reimer and Wade-Stein's in this regard because the former found care exemplars were less concerned with social integration, while the latter found exemplars' social relationships were woven into their actual self, while in the comparison group those were more isolated. Although the results are different, they are not necessarily divergent because although exemplars may not be concerned with social integration, they may still be well integrated in reality, and the opposite for the comparison group, where they may care more about integration but are in fact more secluded.

Matsuba and Walker's (2004) study showed exemplars were more likely to seek closeness with others rather than avoid it, comparative to the other group, therefore again indicating the possibility that exemplars do not need societal acceptance, yet want meaningful connections. Interestingly, this concurs with Brooks (2015) theory, as he suggests that although society has become more individualistic, there remains a need for external praise and acceptance. As this individualism has made the true self the moral judge, rather than the community providing a guide to what's right or wrong, moral judgements are based on an individuals' happiness: 'I know I am doing right because I feel harmonious inside' (p.249). Colby and Damon (1992), however, do not view individualism as a negative aspect, if developed properly, as they believe fully developed individualism is when one is an individual within a social context and there is no conflict between the two, because although social relationships may have been a significant factor in the exemplars' moral development, they have identified their own autonomous moral responsibilities.

Flescher (2003) believes that in exemplary moral development, other-regard has to be prioritised over self-regard, thus putting others before oneself, which Matsuba and Walker's (2005) study indeed showed to be likely, as adolescent exemplars had higher self-sacrificing scores than comparison adolescents, and this was because they had early exposure and

experience regarding the needs of others. Playing the devil's advocate, however, Walker (2013) argues that even though exemplars are seen as other-regarding, they are in fact self-regarding because through taking a eudaimonic approach, their moral actions were not executed out of self-sacrifice but for the sake of their own self-fulfilment and progression. By conceptualising moral issues as a self-interest, it becomes 'self-enhancing' to act upon them and 'self-deflating' not to (p.31). This links to common worries about the so-called 'double benefit' of youth social action being mainly a benefit for the benefactor rather than the beneficiary – and, theoretically, whether Aristotelian virtue ethics is anything more than a form of enlightened rational egoism (Kristjánsson, 2020).

Walker suggests 'as moral agents, we can capitalise on the power of self-interest by refocusing it so that the self has a meaningful state in moral action' (p.38), which then creates a harmonised circle as it takes one back to moral duty and identity uniting with the self, as mentioned earlier. Walker's observations would also hold true in the case of Aristotelian conceptions of exemplarity, because the Aristotelian exemplar would be seen to be actualising her own development to a high extent by being moral in the supreme, rather than committing acts of self-sacrifice. To find moral theories that would see exemplarity in terms of forcing oneself to be good against the thrust of natural inclinations and beliefs, one would have to turn to Kantianism, but such a turn would be outside the parameters of the present thesis.

2.4.2.3 Exemplary Virtues

Other than the exemplar's beliefs about the interrelationships between self, morality and other, the exemplar's actual virtues are essential in moral education from a practical perspective, as those give insight into which traits are most common among real-life exemplars and thus can be feasibly included in role model education. Furthermore, as the present research uses

Aristotelian virtue ethics as a basis of the theory, it seems logical to focus on the virtues Aristotle emphasises. Aristotle listed the virtues he deemed to be essential for *phronesis*, and described how a virtue is the golden mean between two vices, which are the excess or deficiency of that said virtue. Some of the virtues mentioned include bravery, generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, patience, honesty, temperance, justice and friendliness (Aristotle, 1985, 1107a-1109b). While this historical backdrop is necessary, one should also keep in mind the virtues real-life exemplars acquire in this day and age, both in the West and within other cultures, as this gives role model education a more realistic and practical perspective on the relevant virtues in everyday ethics. For instance, although Brooks' work is in no way as philosophical or academic as Aristotle's, he provides a more contemporary perspective on society's morality today, and suggests that due to the high rise of capitalism, the character traits focused on nowadays need to accommodate the likelihood of worldly success, such as self-control, grit, resilience and tenacity, instead of generosity, self-sacrifice or selflessness. Brooks presents this in the form of a dilemma. We need to acquire virtues in order to improve society ('eulogy virtues'), but in order to stand a chance of improving society, we need to internalise virtues that make us thrive in that society ('résumé virtues'), although those may not be the ultimate virtues at which we aim. Brooks believes one of the most important virtues to dissolve this dilemma is humility because today the biggest vice is pride (2015). Colby and Damon (1992) support the idea of humility being a necessary trait and have also added truthfulness and faith (whether it be religious or not, e.g. faith in Nature) as they have found this to be the common virtues among the exemplars they studied in history and the present, contributing to their exemplarity (Damon and Colby, 2015). In Matusba and Walker's study, exemplars were considered more agreeable, willing to help, humble as well as empathetic (2004), while in Ruggeri *et al.*'s study, the

attributes ascribed to role models by young students were honesty, helpfulness, being hardworking, in addition to being loving and caring (2018).

2.4.2.4 Concluding Remarks

By filling in some of the missing pieces in the puzzle of what makes exemplars who they are, a better understanding of the kind of necessary moral development via emulation may be elicited. Exemplars' moral commitments and virtues transpire as being greater in quantity, but not necessarily in quality; therefore, role model education can be used to facilitate the development required to enhance learners' moral progression towards doing more good, more often. Although there is the risk of moral inertia when exposed to a role model, Colby and Damon explain how moral commitment does not necessarily have to be exemplary, and in fact there are daily occurrences of moral commitment by the average person that may not be recognised, for instance, a mother holding her child's hand as they cross the street or a teacher who cuts her lunch break short to help a student. Although those are everyday occurrences, they are still considered moral (2015).

Some of the findings from the studies explored above may have differed slightly, but they have all shown in one way or another that the exemplars' sense of self in relation to their moral identity and their community affects moral 'habit, emotion, perception, understanding, commitment, integrity and sense of purpose' (Damon and Colby, p.87), thus enabling exemplary moral character. Although this is not emphasised clearly in some of the studies of moral identity, it must be assumed that to count as a moral exemplar, one must possess a sense of moral identity that is authentic as opposed to being false. In other words, it is not sufficient to have a coherent set of beliefs about who one is, and how one's self-concept is related to morality and other people, if those beliefs are mere self-deceptions.

2.5 Young People and Role modelling

2.5.1 What Are Young People's Actual Role Models?

After gaining a better understanding of the kinds of exemplars that could be used in role modelling character education, as well as the common attributes exemplars possess, it is necessary to examine who children and adolescents actually consider to be their role models. Various types of role models have been explored in the literature. For example, Yancey *et al.* (2011) studied a subgroup of role models, as they define 'mentors' as a subset of role models who 'deliberately support, guide, and shape individuals younger or less experienced than themselves as they weather difficult periods, enter new arenas, or undertake challenging tasks' (p.37), therefore, implying a relationship that involves communication and possibly some sort of connection between the two parties. Furthermore, the empirical literature reveals an ongoing general concern with unworthy role models: especially non-exemplary celebrities who children respect and admire, and possibly emulate (Kristjánsson, 2019). Even though these concerns have not been confirmed in the empirical literature, which continues to identify parents and best friends as the typical actual role models, there are certain new-found celebrities who have not been studied much yet but should not be disregarded, for instance *vloggers* on platforms such as YouTube or *fashionistas* on Instagram and Snapchat. I hope to explore some of those new but 'unworthy' models in future research.

It is also important to highlight that although the relevant studies have been conducted in various cultures and with respondents representing varying socioeconomic status, none of the research has taken place in the Middle Eastern Region; therefore, the results are somewhat limited from a sociological perspective and with the focus of current thesis in mind. However,

the fact that most of the studies present similar results could suggest that there is considerable cultural universality with regards to young people's actual role models.

Hendry, Roberts, Glendinning and Coleman's study (1992) looked at significant individuals in adolescents' lives in two different groups, a group with people related to the participants and a group with non-relatives. Within the related members group, they found that 79% chose parents, 13% chose siblings and 8% chose adults who were mostly grandparents, but interestingly, mid-adolescents were more likely to choose their fathers, and females choose their mothers. Hendry *et al.* suggest this could be because they are growing into adulthood and therefore need more gender identification. In the non-related group, the concept of gender identification is raised again as 60% chose a same-sex friend, and thus showing gender needs to be taken into consideration when choosing certain models for certain ages within a role modelling character education programme. The majority of the participants preferred a peer friend over an adult in the non-related group, and this is somewhat supported in Ruggeri *et al.*'s study (2018), exploring the different effects between peer and adult role models with regard to fairness, by measuring how much the young participants thought should be shared (what is fair) and how much they actually did share after being exposed to a model. The results showed that although younger children were more influenced by adults than peer models, it was the opposite for 12-year-old adolescents. This again emphasises the importance of choosing different relatable models for different age groups, whether the relatability is connected to gender or age group. Another age group difference emerged when the adolescents who shared as much as or more than they considered fair mentioned that they felt happy, whereas the younger children did not, thus showing positive moral emotions may develop later than moral behaviour. After exposing young children to direct role modelling, educators and parents should manage their expectations regarding young children's emotional satisfaction when it comes to emulating the

moral act, therefore when they are made to share or to conduct some virtuous act, younger children should not necessarily be expected to be joyful as well.

Furthermore, in Hendry *et al.*'s study, various important attributes were given to different types of significant individuals, therefore showing different needs are satisfied by various people in young people's lives. Family members, for instance, were more likely than non-family members to be viewed as *believers, teachers, supporters* and *challengers*; additionally, early adolescents described them as *role models*. However, although 20% of the participants chose teachers from the unrelated group, teachers were not considered as role models or as supportive, but rather as challenging, while peers were seen as both supportive and as role models, but not challenging (1992). This further supports Bricheno and Thornton's results (2007), mentioned in the previous section, which showed that only 2.4% of the participants considered teachers their role models. Looking at the two studies, it could be said that teachers fail to present the qualities children and adolescents perceive as role model material. This is not to say teachers do not influence their students, e.g. by modelling and encouraging intellectual pursuits, but they may not be as effective *qua* role models as family members or peers.

This brings up the question of what counts as a role model on the respondents' understanding. Are they, for example, ignoring teachers because of a moralised understanding of role modelling, whereas the influence of teachers is seen more as intellectual or academic? The question for future research and intervention work is whether this impression needs to be changed or whether it is conducive to young people's development. The most important trait, however, in both the group with relatives and the group with non-relatives, is 'believer', meaning someone who believes in them, therefore the researchers concluded that young people find it important within their relationships with potential influencers that they feel appreciated

and that those individuals have confidence in them. This attribute seems to be associated with mentoring, as defined by Yancey *et al.* (2011), since it requires the learner to personally know the model, and although this study did not explore individuals outside the participants' vicinity, most of the studies have shown an interpersonal relationship is important for young people within role modelling, such as Bricherno and Thornton's study which found that children are more likely to identify close relatives who are considered mentors, or as they define it, 'champions', as their role models, whereas attributes that were related to celebrity and fame were deemed as the least important (2007).

Bucher's study (1998) was in part designed to investigate whether adolescents perceive celebrities as role models. The study was conducted in Germany and Austria to explore which role models influence adolescents' moral identity. The study was essential, as the author notes, because at that time, an ongoing media concern was about children's role models coming from the mass media, including stars or celebrities, who may not be morally influential in a positive sense. His study, however, proved this to be wrong as he found parents to be the most mentioned model, with 46% of the participants choosing their mother and 45% their father. Some examples of why they were chosen include a father being helpful when the child needed him, and a mother overcoming several obstacles from which her daughter was able to learn (p.621). The next most mentioned category after parents was relatives, including older siblings and grandparents, followed by religious models such as Jesus, Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. Interestingly, only a few chose stars from music or sports, and the least chosen models were politicians, therefore supporting the concept of role models' proximity being an influential aspect. These results, however, changed slightly when the participants were asked to think back on who their previous models were during their childhood, because even though parents were still the most mentioned, the next were heroes from television and children's literature, thus

showing that they had been inspired by models from the mass media, where the most given reasons were physical competencies or moral ones. Furthermore, Bucher claims one of the main arguments against moral role models is how models can inhibit children from forming their own moral identity, through the formation of which children would replace hero worship with autonomous choices. However, the study showed older adolescents accept role models less. A possible reason given is that children and younger adolescents identify with role models because of 'concrete interaction' and need that to develop certain skills, but as adolescents grow older, they have gained more independence and therefore do not require models as much to 'master developmental tasks' (p. 623). In addition, because the interaction needs to be 'concrete' to stimulate role modelling, mass media fails to provide that concreteness.

This study may have reduced the concerns about mass media models unduly influencing adolescents back in 1998, but today another somewhat recent issue is around, which is the rise of a new kind of celebrity labelled 'micro-celebrity' or 'social media influencer'. It consists of individuals branding their own self-representations on social media to gain more followers, and they can range from actors to regular high school students (Chae, 2018, pp.246-257). Since the term *influencer* is in the very name, it seems necessary to consider the moral effect they can have on adolescents who are using social media for significant amounts of time. In 2018 a study found 95% of teens have access to a smartphone, with 45% saying they use the internet almost constantly (Pew Research Center, 2018). Moreover, in the UK, in 2018, it was found that 35% of 8-11-year-olds have their own smartphone and 18% have a social media profile, while within the 12-15-year group, 83% have their own smartphone and 69% have their own social media profile (Ofcom, 2019). Research has shown that celebrities can have an effect on people (Fraser and Brown, 2002) in various ways, however, no studies have examined the effect of social

media celebrities *qua* putative role models on adolescents. However, it goes beyond the scope of this study, and therefore can only be highlighted here as an issue requiring further research.

Most of the studies mentioned have been conducted in Europe, but the following ones are from the USA, shedding light on a different kind of culture and possibly different socioeconomic situations. The first one by Bryant and Zimmerman (2005) explores psychosocial outcomes, including problematic behaviour, psychological well-being and academic engagement, and whether these particular outcomes are related to the presence of role models. The sample involved African American adolescents, and the role models examined were mentors. The results showed that most of the participants looked up to their mother as a female role model and their father as a male one, and that having adult role models in their lives is associated with positive health and well-being. Furthermore, no one in the study named famous people or friends as role models, and they much preferred family members. This is in line with Hurd, Zimmerman and Xue's study (2008), which looked at the protective effects role models can have on negative adult influences, as they found most of the participants in the study chose parents or other family members as role models, and only a small percentage named a famous person. Additionally, the results showed having a role model provides protective influence on adolescents, and in fact having both a female and male role model, rather than just one, is associated with more positive outcomes.

Referring specifically to Bryant and Zimmerman's research, the study showed how different models have different effects, for instance with both male and female adolescents. The lack of female role models was associated with psychological distress, but not so much for male role models, and the reason given for this is that young people may be more emotionally attached to their mothers. However, female role models were not associated with problem behaviour, whereas male role models were, therefore suggesting adolescents may copy bad

behaviours more from adult male role models than female ones. In addition, male adolescents who had no role models displayed the most problematic behaviour, while for females it was those with brothers as role models, which was worse than having no role model! The researchers pointed this out as a cultural aspect of the African American community. With academic engagement, both female and male role models had a positive effect, but male role models had a larger influence on male adolescents regarding academic engagement. The reason suggested could be that male role models generally gave more attention to their male mentees' academic achievement than females'. Although there are varying factors here at play and several results which may be culturally specific, the study generally shows that a different combination of who the learner is, who the role model is, and the situation or outcome explored can bring different results. Therefore, as normally is the case within social science research, there fails to be a one-size-fits-all ideal role model for children and adolescents.

Yancey *et al.* (2011) also conducted a study in the USA exploring how role models and, more specifically, different types of role models influence different health-risk and health-protective behaviours. Results showed 59% of the participants could identify a role model, and similar to the other studies, the most mentioned were family members, then came athletes, entertainers, friends and lastly teachers. The participants in the study were all from the USA, but with various ethnicities including African American, White, Asian and Latinx, each of whom generally have different types of culture; this culture affected the type of role model chosen, as the African American and White groups were more likely to identify with role models from the same ethnic group than Asians or Latinx. Socioeconomic status was also a factor, as teens from lower income households were less likely to report a role model, and as in the other research, gender was a differentiating factor, as males were more likely to identify with an athlete as a role model than females, while females were more likely to report family

members, teachers and friends. Overall, with adolescents, having any type of role model was associated with a more positive effect on health-promoting behaviours than having no role model, except for those who chose an entertainer as a role model, as they exhibited less physical activity. Teens, on the other hand, who mentioned a friend or an entertainer as a role model were more likely to engage in health-risk behaviours such as smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, as well as being involved in fights, more so than teens with no role models. This study differs from the rest, as it focuses on physical health effects of having a role model present, but it also conveys the importance of factoring in the type of role model based on age group and culture.

As all of the studies have shown, family members, particularly parents, are the most significant reported role models in young people's lives, especially for children and young adolescents. Although the samples of the studies are from various countries such as Italy, Singapore, Scotland, the USA and England, they all have a common thread, which is the importance of family. Furthermore, it seems that young people generally prefer mentors, or models within close proximity, rather than celebrities or famous people, possibly because there is an interpersonal reciprocal relationship between them. The researches have also provided insight into which role model attributes are important to children, including supporter, believer, and teacher (*qua* type, not profession). Surprisingly, however, actual teachers were the least mentioned role model in most of the studies. A number of possible reasons for this have been suggested above, and a further possible reason, which certainly requires further research, is that children do not spend as much time with teachers on a one-on-one basis, where they truly open up, as they do with their peers or family members, therefore, not enough time is spent for teachers to support students on a deeper and personal level, as opposed to simply an academic one.

Although the studies have common results, they all elucidate different causal factors, which attests to the fact that age group, gender, and to some extent culture, can affect who young people identify as a role model, how much the role model can affect them, and how it can influence specific elements such as emotional well-being, health-risk behaviour and academic engagement. Although no studies have been conducted in the Middle Eastern Region, the general thrust of the above results should still be taken into consideration when creating a role modelling character education programme in that part of the world. For example, what is generally known about Middle Eastern cultures would indicate that a successful moral role model there would also be part of the family, as strong familial relationships are an important element of their culture, and furthermore a role model would be expected to have some Islamic virtues that the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) presented such as kindness, generosity and a high respect for others.

Finally, a possible methodological shortcoming of almost all the research explored above should be mentioned, namely that it is typically based on self-report surveys only. Because of people's (not least young people's) lack of self-transparency and the threat of a social desirability bias in responding, those self-reports must be questioned critically. It is a reason for some surprise and disappointment that this sort of research rarely, if ever, studies the reports of best friends, siblings or parents about what they think of the participants. That said, some attempts at further objectivity have been made by asking older respondents to reflect on their younger selves and which role models influenced those selves, in retrospect.

2.6 Role Modelling and Classroom Education. How Does It Work?

Recognising who adolescents consider as their role models is essential for efficacy, but the next element is exploring how role modelling could be conducted effectively within a classroom.

This is not to under-estimate the value of role models (e.g. teachers) in what the Jubilee Centre (2017) terms 'character caught', namely character traits picked up non-explicitly from the institutional ethos and distinct individuals. However, for present purposes, the spotlight is mainly on the value of role models for 'character taught' explicitly in the classroom.

Several researchers have examined different aspects of this matter, mainly theoretically, such as Croce (2019) who believes human flourishing is stimulated through moral education via emulating exemplars, as when the educator finds an exemplar to help develop learners' ability to reflect. The way in which Croce thinks this should be done is first through direct instruction of the virtue, then through exposing learners to the exemplar, followed by practising the virtue. Exposure of the exemplar allows adolescents to see the virtue in action, while practising the virtue is operationalised through school assignments and discussions. In addition, Croce and Vaccarezza (2017) say there are four criteria that are important in choosing role models in a classroom setting, including moral saints (who have acquired all the virtues) and moral heroes (who present a particular virtue at its peak), and they include virtuousness, admirability, imitability and transparency. The first three criteria do not require further elaboration here, but by 'transparency' they mean the virtue or virtuous action by the exemplar is clear and manifestly recognisable for the students.

Croce and Vaccarezza (2017) suggest a variety of both kinds of role models should be used as each has their benefits and drawbacks. Moral saints provide more transparency and do not hold any risk of a student learning the wrong trait as do moral heroes. However, with moral heroes it is easier for a student to remember a specific virtue when it is associated with a particular person, furthermore, moral heroes provide more room for reflection and critical thinking. Han (2015) further supports this point by emphasising the importance of using moral exemplars in education, mentors in particular, to motivate learners to self-improve, and agrees

it should be done through critical thinking by using student-led and purpose-based activities from an early age to encourage habituation. In Han's work, as in various other sources, there seems to be a tension between the use of role models to scaffold habituation, on the one hand, and as a means of enhancing *phronesis* cultivation, through critical thinking, on the other. On Burnyeat's (1980) standard interpretation of Aristotle's moral developmental trajectory, those are two distinct stages, however, that cannot be confused. That said, not all of the research work here, for example as conducted by Han, takes an Aristotelian picture of moral development for granted.

Another significant factor to be considered in using role models in the classroom is the qualities of the role models that are to be understood and admired, not the actual person, allowing learners to use the taught virtues effectively in their own lives rather than just trying to copy someone else's life (Kristjánsson, 2007; Vos, 2017; Sanderse, 2012). This point has been raised at earlier junctures in this chapter but it bears repeating and elaborating here. Kristjánsson uses Aristotle's conceptualisations to explain that a role modelling programme should not encourage learners to copy the exemplars but provide 'the reasons why the given quality to be emulated is morally commendable,' (p.48) thus using moral arguments as a guidance, so that the virtuous traits are acknowledged as separate to the individuals exemplifying them. Sanderse supports this argument as he says it is more effective when students' cognitive skills are developed by giving them reasons why they are required to act on virtuous traits. An additional motive for developing cognitive skills or moral reasoning is to avoid or reduce indoctrination, which is a commonly mentioned drawback of moral education, and particularly role modelling (Kristjánsson, 2007; Rose, 2004; Croce, 2019).

According to Lickona (1991), character education was previously avoided in the USA because teachers were afraid of imposing their own beliefs onto children, and were brought to

believe they had no right to do so, but he argues there are basic universal values that ought to be taught. Croce agrees and acknowledges the risk of role modelling education's association with indoctrination and how it could lead to close-minded individuals, but his defence is that younger children are unable to attain the required critical skills on their own, yet still should be exposed to the basics of social morality (2019). Several self-help books on how to communicate with children disagree with this assumption, and although their research results are typically not scientifically grounded, they are based on anecdotal evidence gleaned from workshops with parents and educators (Siegal and Bryson, 2015; Faber and King, 2013). The authors suggest that children from the age of three onwards should still be given the opportunity to self-reflect and if they are too young, can be guided through questioning, allowing them to process the information rather than simply following what they are told. Whichever argument is correct, the consensus is that indoctrination should be prevented, and while some consider it unavoidable in the early years due to children's limited cognitive skills, it is better to be safe than sorry, and thus learners, no matter the age, should always be given the opportunity to reflect, to whatever degree this is possible, when exposed to teachings about virtuous traits and moral exemplarity.

Other standard problems with role modelling include hero-worship, moral inertia and envy, which have been discussed in previous sections (*Section 2.2.3*), as well as how self-abasing and defensive individuals would react to moral exemplars (Croce, 2019). Croce claims learners with a defensive self-esteem would think they are closer to the virtue than they actually are, while self-abasing individuals would think they are too far away. His suggestion is using attainable and relatable moral exemplars as Han *et al.* (2017) previously advised. However, regarding the former at least, Croce seems to under-estimate the extent to which deep self-reflection on moral ideals can be stimulated with guidance from the educator although the total

moral make-up of the role model may seem out of reach. Meanwhile, Vaccarezza and Niccoli (2019) suggest new possibilities in the classroom as they explore the negative emotions associated with being exposed to moral exemplars such as shame, envy and guilt, and so they advise that teachers should start with a distant role model and gradually go to a closer one, subsequently focusing on the hardship journey the exemplar experienced to gain this virtue. To further reduce negative emotions, the exemplars chosen should have other-regarding virtues including compassion, caring and selflessness as well as humility because envying the exemplars will then be self-defeating. Surprisingly, as previously noted at various junctures, in quite a few of studies of role modelling, teachers turned out to be the least recognised role models in children's lives, even though many of the role modelling education research focuses on the importance of teachers acting as moral models for the students to learn from (Fallona, 2000; Sanderse, 2012; Rose, 2004; Kindeberg, 2013). However, Sanderse theorises the reason for this is that students are unable to recognise the influence until they are older and look at it retrospectively; therefore, teachers need to be aware of their actions and teaching even if it fails to be acknowledged immediately.

Looking at teachers as role models involves a two-fold perspective, first looking at how the teacher can be a moral role model and teach values implicitly; second, at how the teacher can model a character education programme while teaching it explicitly, for example by showing the class examples of how to act honestly or compassionately (say, through role play) when teaching about those very virtues. The latter may seem artificial, but it is important also because character education is typically the medium through which role models will be presented in the classroom. Fallona (2000) focuses on the former perspective and in her study, she defines 'manner' as how teachers exemplify (express and apply) Aristotelian moral virtues such as bravery, friendliness, wit and honesty in teaching. Results of her observations conveyed

various *visible moral virtues* that one could easily see through observation and they included friendliness, wit, bravery, honour, mildness, generosity and magnificence. On the other hand, *invisible virtues* require interpretation of a teacher's practice, and this was done by interviewing the teachers after both the researcher and the teacher observed a recording of a lesson. For instance, temperance is a virtuous emotion that is sometimes not displayed except through the absence of certain intemperate behaviours. For example, the teachers did mention that at times they had felt angry, but this was not shown in the video. Overall, Fallona believes the results convey the necessity of including 'manner' in teacher training, not simply to provide teachers with pedagogical 'tricks' for particular situations, but actual methods in implementing moral virtues in their teaching. This conclusion goes against the tenets of values clarification theory, which was popular at the time when Fallona was conducting her research. According to this theory, teachers bear responsibility for ensuring children are aware of and identify values, but not necessarily exhibit them themselves (which could be viewed as indoctrination). Sanderse strongly disagrees with as he says 'moral education does not mean "teaching morality", but being a "moral teacher" which means extending everyday morality into the nuances of teaching' (2012, p.29), and this is what Fallona's *manner* is about, being a teacher who acquires and uses those values in the classroom.

Rose (2004) supports Fallona and Sanderse, and adds that students are able to recognise inauthenticity, if teachers do not represent the values they teach. However, Rose is also aware that teachers are human and imperfect, and so this apparent contradiction should be addressed by teachers acknowledging their own flaws (just as they acknowledge to students not knowing how to spell every word in the language), which could also make the virtues seem more attainable as teachers are not placed on a pedestal, which goes back to the point about moral heroes possibly being more effective, across the board, than moral saints. Teachers could here

potentially use Swennen, Lunenberg and Korthagen's approach (2008) of 'congruent teaching', which is first modelling, then explaining your choices while teaching (meta-commentary), and third connecting it to the relevant theory, thus providing channels for students' critical thinking. Therefore, when teachers are trying to model certain values, at least to older children, maybe they should explain what the value is as well as well as how and why they applied it. One should be aware, the process is time consuming and requires a certain amount of skill, but with the relevant teacher training it can arguably be developed and thus improve the overall quality of teaching, in its non-moral as well as its moral aspects.

According to Watson (2019), an intellectual virtue that typically fails to work through modelling by teachers is inquisitiveness because the more the teacher asks direct questions, the less the students do so on their own, according to studies showing a negative correlation between teachers asking questions and students asking questions. The reason for this is the students are habituated into answering questions rather than imitating the model and asking as well, therefore reducing their ability to inquire. And so, with this particular virtue, inquisitiveness, teachers need to be aware that students should be provided with the opportunity to ask instead of expecting them to learn it through imitation.

The insights from the literature referred to in this sub-section notwithstanding, empirical research on role model education in the classroom is limited. Conspicuously absent, for example, are any hands-on manuals about the A-Z of being a role model educator. Much of the research conducted in this area is speculative and anecdotal, rather than firmly empirically grounded, and the people interested tend to have background in philosophy or other humanities subjects rather than in actual classroom practice. Case studies are few and far between, and with respect to some cultures and school systems, simply non-existent. Hence, once again, the need for the present study is in evidence.

Despite this gap, what has been conveyed above emphasises the importance of choosing the right type of role models and how to use different types for different purposes, for instance moral heroes to teach a particular virtue and moral saints to reduce risk of teaching the wrong virtue, as well as when to use distant and when close role models. In addition, the general consensus within the studies is on the need to develop critical thinking and self-reflection while using role models so as to prevent indoctrination and have students understand the virtues and learn how to apply them in their own lives. Furthermore, it seems inevitable to acknowledge teachers as significant role models (despite rarely being mentioned by students as such, at least while they are still students). After all, the teacher is the medium in teaching. Most studies agree teachers' own actions should not contradict what they are teaching as inauthenticity could reduce efficacy, or even cultivate vices such as hypocrisy.

It is vital, when developing and implementing a role modelling character education programme, that the content, structure and activities all be taken into consideration to encourage critical thinking and reflection. However, being a role model educator, either explicitly or implicitly, does not come naturally to most people, and the relevant teacher training or guidance is therefore essential to improve the delivery and effectiveness of any role model programme.

2.7 History of Role Modelling and Moral Development

Thus far, the focus has mainly been on the theory behind role modelling from within a broad virtue ethical tradition, dating back to Aristotle. To give this literature review a better philosophical and psychological balance, some attention needs to be given to other traditions within moral philosophy and psychology where role models also figure, although often not as prominently or explicitly. This review will not be, in any sense, exhaustive, but I deem it

important to highlight the fact that role model education is not necessarily the uniquely privileged province of Aristotelian moral philosophy or moral psychology.

2.7.1 Kant

Kant's theory argues that one reaches moral excellence through practical reason by following a moral law. The focus is not on the action itself, but rather the intention as this is what defines good will. Kant acknowledges human instinct ignores reason in order to follow pleasure, since he argues, reason fails to satisfy people's natural needs. However, to be a truly good person and fulfil an action of moral worth, the action should not be based on one's contingent characteristics or natural emotions but on one's moral duty to perform it. In Kantianism, duty is regarded highly as well as the intention of serving one's duty, and since it is grounded on practicality and reasoning, if an action is completed due to love or any emotion, then it is not considered moral (Kant, 2002).

Furthermore, Kant (2002) emphasises the importance of respecting the law because even if someone follows the law but acts according to the consequence of the action or desire and not due to respect, then the action fails to be of moral worth. It 'is considered as an object neither of inclination nor of fear…the object of respect is thus solely the law' (p.17, Ak 4: 401). Moreover, Kant believes any action towards another individual should not be based on the purpose of achieving something else and one should treat another as he would treat himself and this is shown in one of his formulas: 'act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means' (p. xvii, [G 4:429]). Another factor of Kant's theory is objectivity because anything subjective can affect good-will in a non-moral way and with subjectivity it cannot be universal, which is the foundation of his theory. His first formula is 'act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (p. xvii, [G 4:421]). When

an individual is within a moral dilemma, they must contemplate whether the decision can be universalised, and if so then it is one's duty to perform it.

Kant's theory fits into moral education as reasoning needs to be taught, but his concepts on role modelling go back and forth because although he presents the advantages, he worries about the dangers reasoning could bring. Louden (2002) discusses Kant's stand on moral exemplars within education by explaining how Kant believes children are not skilled with moral judgement and tend to imitate what they observe; therefore, morality should be expressed through role modelling. The tutors should reflect what is right or wrong by being role models themselves and also use examples from elsewhere. Even though Kant thinks moral exemplars could provide people with hope that morality is possible, it could also cause one to lose autonomy, which is essential in Kantian ethics. A child must be taught how to reason independently and not rely on moral exemplars, by understanding the moral standard is not the exemplars, but pure reason. Therefore, it should be clear, moral exemplars are only presented as provisional examples and are not enough to use as a method of moral education (Louden, 2002).

Kant's ideas on role modelling in moral education seem appropriate, but the content of what students are taught is the issue. There are several problems with Kant's concepts, for as one of his main critics, Hegel, conveys, it is not natural for people to suppress their emotions and rely purely on reason (Singer, 1983). Hegel makes a valid point, as it also seems unrealistic to teach children to consistently ignore their natural instincts and emotions and base decisions on reason alone. Furthermore, Kant places too much focus on the intention of an action while disregarding the consequences, and a child cannot be taught to ignore the effects of their behaviour, especially if it is damaging to others. Kant's emphasis on intention and not consequence allows the concept of following a universal law to be more applicable, but it is an

abstract and unrealistic one because every situation is different. Although Kant may have somewhat supported the idea of role modelling, it would not be feasible to use it, based on his theory, for classroom purposes, because it is too idealistic to prove to children that all moral exemplars follow the same universal law at all times and in all circumstances. Moreover, the background moral theory is too extreme regarding reason and overly abstract to be practically conducted.

2.7.2 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism could be seen as the opposing view of Kantian ethics as it focuses on the end result rather than the intention, because what is determined as right or wrong depends on the amount of happiness produced or the reduction of unhappiness, and this should be the case on an individual and societal level (West, 2004). However, within utilitarianism itself, there are several divisions regarding moral action and moral rules. For example, act utilitarianism is based on labelling a 'good act' as having the most advantageous consequence compared to other acts, while rule-utilitarianism includes a moral code or system that encourages actions with the most beneficial consequences to the agent's society (Brandt, 1983).

John Stuart Mill is one of the main philosophers of utilitarianism as his theories incorporate virtue-ethics, rule and act utilitarianism to varying degrees and are far more advanced and complex than Jeremy Bentham's, thus filling in the missing components of the original Benthamite paradigm. For instance, his concepts include a qualitative analysis of utility and he understands that every individual's character, habits and external circumstances can create a subjective qualitative experience of what is considered pleasurable or happiness, as opposed to Bentham's quantitative formula on how to calculate happiness. Mill's process for deciding a right action involves calculating the 'tendency' it has to produce happiness and then subtracting the 'tendency' to do the opposite while comparing it with the results of other

actions. He differs from other utilitarians, as he uses the term 'tendency' and is aware there are future consequences that are not predicted. Future actions will not require calculations as the decisions can be based on past experiences. Furthermore, Mill acknowledges there are various paths for different parts of morality such as the law or personal conscience as some situations require rules, some moral reasoning, while others character development (West, 2004).

Some critics argue happiness cannot be achieved and so utilitarianism is pointless, but Mill defends it by explaining that even if that were the case, pain should still be minimised to prevent people from living in depressive and suicidal states. Nonetheless, he insists happiness is possible and should be every individual's moral obligation to himself and society to try and increase it. If an individual does not achieve happiness because he sacrifices himself, the sacrifice is only considered moral if it provides pleasure or happiness to other people, otherwise it is perceived as a waste. Although Mill somewhat understands the importance of intention and character traits, he considers the overall conclusion to prove that good character is actualised through good actions because if one's intention is good but one's conduct is bad, then the action and the person cannot be defined as moral (Mill, 2001).

Some of Brandt's criticism against utilitarianism is how can one bring maximum happiness when everyone has a subjective opinion on what is pleasurable; also, what if the opinions change over time (1983)? Mill suggests people should make decisions based on the quantity of people to whom it brings happiness, unless one is wise and understands that the quality of the happiness is more essential in that particular situation (2001). However, one could still argue the most favourable action may not necessarily be a moral one. This would be chaotic within societies because the moral code is not clear and everyone would simply behave according to what they believe would bring maximum happiness (Brandt, 1983). Clark criticises the terminology within utilitarianism and how it could consequently affect the

concept. First, she questions the difference between pleasure and happiness, concluding that utilitarians view happiness as long-term and pleasure as short-term, allowing happiness to consist of many units of pleasure (1954). To add on to Clark's analysis, one could argue the theory aims for a superficial kind of happiness because it is impossible to constantly experience pleasurable moments. Clark then questions whether for utilitarianism happiness means what is good for humankind or the psychological state. If it is the former, then it lacks clarity and provides no guidance on how this can be conducted, and while the latter is a narrower explanation, the actions required to follow it may not be moral.

With respect to moral education, Mill (2001) considers it necessary, because although altruism can be innate, he thinks it must be reinforced through the power of education and make 'the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole' (p.28). It is suggested children should be taught to feel the unity of all individuals and the world in order to maximise happiness, while also developing their own individual representation of good character (Carbone, 1983). It seems Mill encourages critical thinking as the path to morality, but he provides an elitist perspective by suggesting the majority are incapable of intellectuality for developing good moral understanding or intuition and thus need to be guided by a more superior person (Carbone, 1983). In that sense, moral exemplarity is touched upon, but details of emulation (how the inferior can learn from the superior if they cannot even understand *why* the latter are superior) are not provided. Moreover, Mill's theory indicates lack of faith in the influence of character education and in the cognitive skills of the masses. Moreover, it is not mentioned how precisely children should be educated, only implied one should be habituated into these motives.

Within utilitarian education, it could be possible to present moral exemplars to children who bring happiness, such as Mother Theresa, but the type of moral exemplars would be limited

to those who provide pleasurable results regardless of intention. For instance, Nelson Mandela might not be labelled as a moral exemplar because a large community in South Africa did not perceive his behaviour as agreeable at the time. Furthermore, allowing children to imitate others simply based on consequences could have a negative effect because in complex situations one needs to consider various factors other than merely promoting happiness. Mill acknowledges this, but how this complexity can be reasonably taught is not given, and in fact he believes not many people have the ability to learn it. Therefore, Utilitarianism in its simplistic form is ineffective as a means of character development, and in its complex form, too difficult to learn. Yet Mill's saving grace is that what he is really celebrating is morally inspiring individuality *qua* motivation rather than (great) individuals as such as practical role models.

2.7.3 Kohlberg

One of the most popular psychologists on moral development is Lawrence Kohlberg as he introduced the very term 'moral psychology' as well as the concepts of the stages of development form childhood towards adulthood. Behaviourism and psychoanalysis studied development in psychology, but Kohlberg included morality into the developmental psychology field (Gibbs, 2010). Based on Dewey and Piaget, Kohlberg's theory describes six moral developmental stages within three levels, the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional, with two stages in each level. At the first level the child only responds to consequences of actions and does not question authority, whereas at the second stage the intentions develop to conformity and loyalty to their community by obeying the rules. The third level involves the individual having separate opinions from the group and making moral decisions based on their own defined values and not on authority. Based on a Kantian perspective, as individuals morally mature and develop from one stage to another, they have a

better understanding of justice, which is one of the most essential features of moral judgement according to Kohlbergian theory (Kohlberg, 1975).

There are a few structural characteristics of the stages, firstly there is always a difference in thinking and problem solving between all of them and they always occur in a sequence, therefore external factors such as culture may affect the speed of the development but the order of the stages does not change. Secondly, each stage is whole and does not define a particular reaction for similar situations, but rather a theoretical and structural thought process, and thirdly the stages are hierarchal so although the previous ones are available to an individual, they may choose the highest level of thinking available to solve a dilemma (Kohlberg, 1984). Moreover, Kohlberg did not simply theorise moral development but also tried to validate it through empirical tests on school children of various ages using a moral dilemma to measure their moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1975).

As ground-breaking as Kohlberg's work may have been, it did have several limitations, which could have affected the validity of his experimental results as well as the assumptions in his theories. For instance, one of the most known critiques is Gilligan's feminist perspective on the stages of development, as she scrutinises the validity of his experiments by suggesting they mainly study the moral judgement of male participants. Furthermore, the stages themselves focus on justice while she believes women do not base right moral decisions mainly on justice but rather caring, therefore, leaving them in the lower stages of Kohlberg's theory (Gilligan, 1977). Other than viewing this from a feminist perspective, her argument can also demonstrate how the focus on justice disregards other characteristics, which may help one morally develop. For example, if someone (male or female) uses another disposition such as patience to make a moral decision, then they are likely to be placed at the lower stages of the Kohlberg model also, and be judged as less moral. From an educational perspective this may stop children from

learning other ways of developing and compel them to simply use justice as a means of moral judgement and reasoning.

Similar to Gilligan, Rest *et al.* (2000) are discouraged by Kohlberg's strong emphasis on justice and argue against his use of unrepresentative moral dilemmas to assume universality. It seems inaccurate to base one's moral reasoning on an unrealistic dilemma to which one cannot relate and then using those results to make universal assumptions about moral development. To add on to the critiques, Carpendale (2002) argues that studies have shown that when using different kinds of moral dilemmas from everyday lives, people do not tend to use their highest form of reasoning.

However, Kohlberg tried to deploy his theories to improve moral judgement through education, as he believed it is possible to help children develop from one stage to the next by exposing them to the reasoning of a higher stage. This was done by providing children with a moral dilemma and asking them to solve it, but after receiving their solutions and realising they are stuck within a particular stage, the teacher points out the 'more accurate' answer. Even though Kohlberg is against indoctrination and promotes reasoning, it is argued a child may be able to detect cues from the teacher on what the correct answer is and offer the teacher the expected answer rather than truly moving to the next developmental level (Aron, 1977). It seems Kohlberg understands the importance of a cognitive role model-based moral education and provides conceptual models for children to follow, but fails to consider external factors such as culture, which again causes him to generalise. Furthermore, his theories explain the effect family, friends and the community can have on children in the early stages, yet he reduces the importance role modelling can have for their moral development to simply the imitation of moral-reasoning strategies. Role modelling of the kind studied in this thesis is therefore not included in his theories, his experiments, or moral education interventions.

Although Kohlberg never mentions traditional (Aristotle-inspired) role modelling as such or argues against it, there are several possible reasons why he would not support it. Firstly, his theories convey the importance of reason and how moral judgment and behaviour should be purely based on reason and not emotion (Kristjánsson, 2000). However, standard role modelling requires emotions such as admiration or elevation to emulate the moral and would therefore deviate from Kohlberg's concepts. Secondly, Kohlberg believed in slow moral development where individuals improve their moral judgement as they move from one age group to the next, but role modelling is potentially transformative and does not necessarily depend on an extended time or a sequential pattern. Furthermore, Kohlberg's theories are abstract and based on universal Kantian laws or principles which are not related to specific situations or people, whereas role modelling is concrete as it focuses on moral occurrences or a morally exemplary person. Lastly, another reason why Kohlberg may disagree with role modelling is due to its conceptual link to virtues. He opposed the concept of character education, which he called the 'bag of virtues' approach (Kohlberg, 1973, p.4). He believed each individual has his own bag of traits, which are considered virtuous and every trait is defined differently by each person; therefore, there is no universal consensus. Overall, one can see it is doubtful Kohlberg could agree with the use of role modelling for moral development except in a narrow and fairly negligible sense in which children can pick up some cognitive reasoning strategies from more advanced moral reasoners.

2.7.4 Bandura

Bandura suggests a different route to Kohlberg in moral development as he focuses on the importance of imitation. Before Bandura, there were many opposing arguments in the behavioural psychology field, as one extreme supposed personality traits are innate and they

are what affects behaviour, whereas the opposing view believed environmental factors are the only cause regardless of inner forces. However, Bandura introduces a middle ground approach through social learning theory since it sees moral development as an interaction of various factors. His theory is largely based on learning through observation as one's emotional responses can be influenced by others' reactions to particular experiences. Although Bandura agrees behaviour is influenced by direct experience, he also argues it cannot be the only method as not all situations can be experienced and yet they are still learnt. He therefore proposes that, through observation and modelling, one can develop skills (Bandura, 1971).

Observational learning according to social learning theory can occur through four different modes; these include attention, retention, motoric reproduction and motivational processes. The attentional process requires the individual's attention to learn. People tend to be selective and only focus on what interests them, thus the exposure of the model is ineffective if the observer is not concentrating. Retention processes, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of the observer's memory of the model, as the situation or skill cannot be considered learnt if it is disregarded when the model is no longer present. Two ways to remember the observation is through imaginal and verbal coding and it can be further ingrained in one's memory through repetition and action. Motoric reproduction processes are when the observer acts upon the symbolic representations, but Bandura mentions how this is not always possible. Lastly, reinforcement and motivational processes is when learning can be developed into action depending on whether the consequences observed or received are positive or negative (Bandura, 1971). However, his ideas of reinforcement processes seem to be contradictory as one of his earlier experiments shows reinforcement of the model can affect performance but not learning (Bandura, 1965). A possible reason for this is the number of variables that affect learning. It is difficult to accurately measure the causal effect because there are too many confounding

variables. For instance, while studying the effect of reinforcement, it is difficult to judge whether the reinforcement had no influence on learning or in actual fact the modelling behaviour was too complex, or the observer failed to concentrate or remember what was presented (Bandura, 1965). From a conceptual standpoint, social learning theory is quite appealing, but from a practical one (for actual classroom practice) it seems a little daunting.

From a Kohlbergian perspective, one could argue social learning is considered a low-level strategy for moral development as it mainly depends on imitation rather than deep reasoning and judgment. According to Kohlberg, a person would use his highest form of reasoning before acting upon a situation, regardless of his observations, whereas Bandura suggests one's actions would depend on the actions he previously witnessed from a model. Nevertheless, Bandura believes reasoning would eventually develop through self-regulation. Self-regulation helps one monitor, judge and modify the self and it depends on the knowledge and moral structures the individual creates (Bandura, 1990).

A large influence on self-regulation is through self-efficacy, which is considered essential in education. It is suggested an individual's performance is based on how effective or successful the person believes he or she will be in completing the task; therefore, someone with high self-efficacy would work hard and do better while a person with low self-efficacy may avoid the situation or do it poorly (Schunk, 1991). In conclusion, imitation allows one to learn and develop morally, thus constructing moral standards, which would then influence their self-regulation and levels of self-efficacy and consequently affecting their behaviour.

Some have criticised the self-efficacy theory as having theoretical and methodological issues, for instance Eastman and Marzillier (1984) disapprove of Bandura's lack of clarity when defining the difference between outcome expectation and efficacy expectation. However, the main criticism of self-regulation and self-efficacy from a moral development perspective is the

focus on achievement and success rather than virtuosity or morality. Although Bandura mentions the importance of moral standards as they affect self-regulation, the final concern is not morality itself. His theories may be used within education, but one must be careful of using it within moral education because it is easy to err in focusing on academic achievement rather than moral development. It is essential to use his theories to convey the significance of role modelling in education in general but not necessarily using them as a construct to inform a *moral* or *characterological* role modelling curriculum.

2.7.5 Hoffman

Hoffman introduces a new form of moral development as it involves an affective perspective with empathy as the main emotion. Similar to Kohlberg and Bandura, Hoffman theorises that empathic development begins at an early stage through the internalisation of experiences (Hoffman, 1979). The basis of Hoffman's theory comes from the connection between empathy, justice and moral motivation. People act justly as it feels good to follow the rules and bad not to, consequently gaining positive or negative feelings towards others depending on whether they follow justice principles. The feeling is defined as empathy; that is therefore the motivator in justice related matters (Hoffman, 1990).

It is conjectured the distress caused by empathy would encourage one towards helping behaviour and altruism and this would be developed through several stages. Thus, the more cognitively developed an individual is, the more empathy is aroused in complex situations. The first stage, called *global empathy,* occurs within a person's first year and the infant is incapable of distinguishing between the self and other. Therefore, when seeing another person in distress, it is unclear whether the negative emotions are due to himself experiencing the situation or the victim. During the second state, *egocentric empathy,* children understand the self is separate to

the other and so someone else's situation may bring distress, but they themselves are not experiencing it. However, there is still some confusion as the child may try to help by providing his own comforter and Hoffman uses the example of a child bringing his own mother even though the other child's mother is present. *Empathy for another's feelings* is the third stage and is at a higher cognitive level than the previous ones as the child is able to understand other people's various emotions depending on the situation and the cues conveyed. Eventually empathy can be aroused though information about the situation or victim, without the victim being present. The final stage, *empathy for another's life condition*, can occur between the ages of 8-12 and is considered a mature stage as the young person comprehends people belonging to a larger picture and therefore another person's suffering may not depend on merely the specific situation seen, but rather a general life condition. This could then develop to being empathic to a class or group instead of one individual (Hoffman, 1979; Hoffman, 1990).

There have been criticisms of Hoffman's theory due to theoretical and terminological issues. For instance, as mentioned earlier, Hoffman focuses on how justice issues can arouse empathy and there are two main types of injustice, equity and equality. If an individual empathises with a sufferer due to the lack of reward received from his hard work, it is considered equity, while empathising because of the lack of resources due to need regardless of reward is equality (1990). Although, Kristjánsson (2004) agrees with Hoffman on the importance of empathy, he highlights terminological issues that could affect the theory itself. Kristjánsson argues that although Hoffman mentions different kinds of justice, the one Hoffman links with empathy is mainly equity, and by not involving the equality concept, a significant part of the caring emotion, which is also a component of the empathy-justice bond, is disregarded (2004). Further terminological issues are mentioned, such as the confusion between empathy and sympathy, as it is suggested after stage three the mature stage involves sympathy,

which is feeling pain at another person's suffering, but Hoffman continues to label it empathy, which is feeling the exact same emotions the sufferer feels (Kristjánsson, 2004). Gibbs (2010) briefly criticises Hoffman by mentioning the lack of logic in empathy as a motivator. Taking different perspectives and relying on reasoning may be an essential component of moral motivation, which Hoffman's theories fail to include. Gibbs suggests using it alongside Kohlberg's theories to gain a more comprehensive outlook on moral development (2010).

Hoffman also discusses the limitations of empathy motivations and mentions two: empathic over-arousal and empathic bias. The first occurs when the distress is severe and turns into personal distress, causing the person to avoid the victim and fail to contribute in helping. The latter involves the familiarity-similarity bias as well as the here-and-now bias. The familiarity-similarity bias is when an individual tends to empathise with victims they can relate to, either due to the situation or the group to which the victim belongs. However, the here-and-now bias involves empathy is aroused by present injustice, therefore decreasing pro-social behaviour towards other absent people in need. Reducing empathic over-arousal can be done through several techniques such as Bandura's self-efficacy theory, activating moral principles and or habituation. Empathic bias can be limited through consciously using the knowledge learnt (Gibbs, 2010). The different ways to lessen the limitations of empathy motivation seems to be best activated through moral education.

Although Hoffman presents empathy via innate biological stages of development, he also considers the importance of moral education to develop it further (Gibbs, 2010). In fact, by analysing his theories one can conclude moral education is required to help develop empathy, reduce its limitations as well as allow individuals to morally develop and therefore inspire them towards prosocial behaviour. One of the ways Hoffman believes children should be morally educated is through *induction*, by using disciplinary methods such as asserting

power and removing material the child likes. Through induction the child can feel distress and understand empathy and guilt, therefore avoiding being the cause of painful situations as well as empathising with others in future situations (Hoffman, 1979). Kristjánsson (2004), however, argues Hoffman fails to look at emotion education at early stages of development because he focuses on justice from an equity standpoint, which Hoffman believes children do not understand until after the third stage (age 8). Kristjánsson, on the other hand, considers moral and emotion education to be essential from an earlier age, as children can understand injustice from as early as 2 years (2004).

Within moral education it seems Hoffman's theories can accommodate role modelling. It is briefly mentioned that teachers and parents have to be good models by presenting their affective side, so that it is developed within younger learners (Hoffman, 1979). Furthermore, Bandura's self-efficacy theory is mentioned as a way to reduce empathic over-arousal (Gibbs, 2010). Self-efficacy is developed at a young age through imitation and observation; therefore, proving moral role modelling is important for future altruistic behaviour. Habituation and activating moral principles are also stated as methods in Hoffman's theory to improve empathy and decrease its limitations (Gibbs, 2010), and as numerous scholars and studies show, both can be done through role modelling (Sanderse, 2010). Overall, Hoffman's moral development theory can include role modelling within moral education to a greater extent than Kohlberg's. However, due to the limited advice on how this can be done, as well as the lack of details in some areas, such as about non-empathy related moral judgement and reasoning, Hoffman's theory cannot be used independently as a role modelling intervention in character education.

2.7.6 Haidt

Haidt also studies the emotional side of moral development but his theories differ quite drastically from the previous scholars mentioned as he focuses on moral intuition. His theories are based on principles from the affective revolution that occurred in the 1980s, including evolution, social psychology and neuroscience (Haidt, 2007).

The first principle mentioned is *intuitive primacy,* involving the idea of moral intuition preceding moral reasoning and how intuition represents one's true moral judgement. Haidt mentions studies proving people have immediate reactions to situations they cannot explain because the reactions are intuitive and appear quickly without reasoning. The second principle, *moral thinking is for social doing,* explains how universally people live within a 'gossip culture' and therefore moral reasoning is simply used to defend actions based on intuitions post hoc. Moreover, principle three, *morality binds and builds,* proposes human genes have developed throughout the years to oblige people to belong to a larger moral community bounded by rules, and within the community's altruism and justice are what keeps people moral. However, Haidt's own fourth principle indicates more research is required regarding altruism and justice because he believes morality goes beyond that, and this principle is named *morality is about more than harm and fairness.* Overall, Haidt's theories imply that moral intuition is stronger than reasoning and that what he calls system-one emotional processes are the real motivators, although system-two reasoning processes are used to justify those after the event and as embellishments of the real motivators (Haidt, 2007).

Arguing against Haidt's theories are Damon and Colby (2015) as they consider the idea of intuitions controlling one's moral judgement and behaviour inaccurate. They suggest the experiments on which Haidt bases his theories to be invalid due to the unrealistic nature of the hypothetical dilemmas which he employed (e.g. standard trolley problems) as well as how strong the sample bias is; only college students are chosen and may not have had enough

experience to reach moral maturity. Furthermore, Damon and Colby argue against Haidt by explaining how automatic decisions made by adults are based on habits formed since childhood (as explained e.g. by Aristotle) and because habits are educable, they cannot be simply biological. Haidt claims he examines everything empirically in his model, including emotions, intuition and reasoning (2000), but it seems moral reasoning is avoided and buried as much as possible.

Although the Social Intuitionist Model fails to realise the importance of reasoning and bases peoples' behaviour solely on subconscious reactions, it can still include moral education because it accommodates the influence of socialisation in honing and finessing the biological intuitions. Similar to many other scholars, Haidt claims childhood and late adolescence is when people are most susceptible to development, but he believes it is from peers rather than parents and teachers (2000). Either way, if people are morally educated, they can then help each other develop towards a more positive path. The Social Intuitionist Model could also include role modelling, provided other people's judgements can influence one's own, which connects with Haidt's other research suggesting role models can lead people towards prosocial behaviour (2009).

However, there are immense issues with using Haidt's concepts as the foundation of moral education. For instance, his lack of belief in individuality weakens his theory within education because according to his model, even if one is morally educated at an early age, one can be easily directed another way by a peer. However, there are people who are surrounded by negativity, yet are still able to make their own independent moral decisions, as shown in Colby and Damon's study of moral exemplars (1992). Unlike Haidt's suggestion, this proves the importance of reasoning for an individual to remain honest to their principles. Furthermore,

Haidt's underestimation of the effect parents and teachers have on children makes it difficult to use his theories in education.

Intuitions are the only significant moral motivator and those are essentially inborn, yet culture finesses them and some aspects of culture (e.g. peers as 'role models') can guide the intuitions in new directions. In addition, reason is completely inert in all of this (as are parents and teachers) except by providing self-justificatory *post hoc* reasons. Moral education is said to be important – but if it is not based on reasons, and even peers as role models only matter to the extent that one copies them into the direction of one's intuitions, then what is moral education at school supposed to be about?

2.7.7 The Historical Lesson

Considering the scholars discussed, Aristotle still seems to be the most appropriate one for character education, and particularly role modelling, as he includes emotions, reasons and observations in the process, thereby offering a sort of anticipatory synthesis of Bandura, Hoffman and Kohlberg. However, Aristotle's theory sets the bar quite high and it is not strong on explaining psycho-developmental trajectories (Darnell *et al.*, 2019). It is not easy for one to achieve *phronesis* and gain all the virtues; therefore, following an Aristotelian form of moral education creates high standards for students which may be quite daunting. Moreover, it can be daunting for parents and teachers to conceive of themselves as potential role models, making the Aristotelian grade. However, this does not mean one should avoid role modelling as a method of character education, because any step in the right moral direction, for students, may still count as progress, although they do not turn into fully developed *phronimoi*. In any case, I hope this fairly long historical detour has explained to readers why I chose an Aristotelian framework of role modelling for my study.

2.8 Character Education and Role modelling in Saudi Arabia

2.8.1 Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has changed drastically throughout the years and so has its education, even though the country was only founded in 1932. However, the economic boom that came from oil revenue started in the 1950s when Bedouins and farmers went to work in new cities, consequently creating a new middle class of professionals (Simmons and Simmons, 1994). The main cities include Riyadh, the capital city, Jeddah, the main port on the Red Sea, and Dammam, the main port on the Arabian Gulf. With the rapid growth, however, manpower was limited and therefore a surge of foreign workers migrated to the country, leaving Saudi with ethnically diverse locals and expatriates. Importantly, as the two holiest Islamic cities, Makkah and Medina, are in the country, Islam is the state religion and Islamic customs and values are at the heart of the country. Thus, when the country was established, religious scholars used the Quran and Hadith (listing traditional customs the Prophet promulgated and followed) to establish the law of the country (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). The start of Western influences, however, occurred during the Gulf War (1990-1991; see Simmons and Simmons, 1994), and it seems the decrees of the original scholars who informed the education system have lost traction over the years, thus affecting the education curriculum as well.

Quantitatively, Saudi's education has improved compared to some other Arab countries if one is looking at school enrolment plus literacy levels, but not enough information is available to assess the quality of the system as a whole (Rugh, 2008). There may be quantitative improvements, but the most recent Programme for International School Assessment (PISA) scores still show 15-year-old students' maths, English and science levels are well below the international average (OECA, 2019), mainly because Arab students were found more capable

of conducting tasks that require repeating what they are taught rather than thinking creatively. Nevertheless, simply participating in PISA conveys an interest in progressing (Bollag, 2019).

When education was first formally introduced in the country, Islam was the only subject and only available for boys, but the population fought for equal education, and so even though the schools are still segregated, the current quality of the education is now deemed to be more or less the same for both genders (Rugh, 2008; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015), in fact OECA's results show girls are outperforming the boys in maths and science (2019). Furthermore, various subjects and skills were introduced due to Western influences as well as an increase of private schools and opportunities to study abroad (Rugh, 2008). The PISA results found Saudi Arabia's school environment to involve slightly more bullying than the average, but surprisingly students were still found to be more satisfied with life and less sad than on average, while teachers showed above-average enthusiasm for teaching. On the other hand, there was a gap in growth mindset as Saudi students scored much lower on that variable (OECA, 2019), which could be influenced by how education has been developed in the Region.

The Ministry of Education is the body in charge of the education system for schools, but how much of the school's curriculum they directly inform depends on the type of school. For instance, public schools are fully under the Ministry's supervision, as well as private national schools, but the difference is the latter are allowed to include additional subjects, programmes and/or extracurricular activities, which is based on the school head's decision (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Jamjoom, 2010). International schools are not required to follow the Saudi curriculum as strictly, except for Islam, Arabic and social studies, as their system is based on Western programmes such as those adapted from the UK, USA or Canada. While embassy schools can follow their original country's curriculum and are not required to include the Saudi curriculum or follow all the rules, for instance, some of these schools are co-

educational. Both the international and embassy schools have a more diverse staff and student population than private national schools and public schools. However, there are some Arab expatriate students and teachers within the latter two (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015).

Although priorities and procedures differ from one school to the next, the central and prevailing theme within the Saudi curriculum is Islam, whether it is its own subject, history of Islamic civilisation, the Prophet and his companions or within Arabic literature based on Islamic teachings (Jamjoom, 2010; Prokop, 2003; Simmons and Simmons, 1994). The philosophy behind Islamic education is to 'provide children with a positive guidance which will help them to grow into good adults who lead happy and fruitful lives' (Halstead, 2004, p.523), and Halstead defines good adults as being wise and just as well as being able to balance physical, emotional and spiritual growth on an individual and societal level. The way in which Islamic education is implemented in practice has attracted criticism, and although there was an educational reform in the Arab and Muslim world after September 11, further changes in the pedagogy are desired by students and teachers (Jamjoom, 2010; Prokop, 2003).

Apart from strict governmental regulation and the high, some would say excessive, place given to religious studies, another issue the educational system face is the focus on rote learning and memorisation which fails to foster students' analytical and creative skills (Prokop, 2003 and Rugh, 2008). In Jamjoom's study, exploring female Islamic teachers' thoughts and experiences in Saudi, some teachers said they preferred using general and flexible teaching methods rather than specific lesson plans that rely on memorisation, but their lack of skills forces them to go back to the old teaching style. Due to mass media exposure, students are currently arguing points that were previously studied and practised without reflection, yet the lessons have only been modified to include indoctrination by persuasion rather than critical thinking. Therefore, while there are discussions taking place, the flow of information is one-

sidedly from teacher to student or through a teacher asking questions to receive the expected answer (2010). With reference to Watson's (2019) study on inquisitiveness, this type of intellectual virtue is not emulated by students. Rather they tend to develop demotivated passivity and dullness of mind rather than analytical, critical thinking. While the government itself acknowledges change is required and aims to encourage more open-mindedness, change in a country like Saudi Arabia, where the people have 'historically been habituated to a system within which change is rare', involves a slow process towards any big transformations (Jamjoom, 2010, p.547).

2.8.2 Character Education and Role modelling in Saudi Arabia

Character, or moral, education in Saudi Arabia is mainly taught through Islamic education. Interestingly, from the parameters of the present study, this is already being done through indirect role modelling as the subject teaches values and lessons through the prophets' experiences and actions mentioned in the Quran and/or Hadith. As mentioned above, this pedagogy is a central part of the Saudi culture as shown through Simmons and Simmons' study when comparing values between Saudi and English adolescents, because Islamic values influenced their life philosophies, morals and how they spend their time (1994). The other source of character development is through citizenship education, and according to Alharbi, citizenship education is integrated in social studies, and for secondary school has its own separate subject, but the focus is more on values that develop students' national identity rather than on how they can be good global citizens (2017). Faour and Muasher discuss citizenship education further in the Arab Region as a whole and argue it is outdated. The educational focus is more on 'technical aspects' which fails to develop the human side such as how to 'think, seek and produce knowledge' (2011, p.1) because again, assessment focuses on memorisation rather

than critical thinking. The main issues the Region is likely to face, when properly developing citizenship education, is the teachers' lack of skills and training, as ambitious schools would need to teach beyond the subject itself, or find qualified teachers brave enough to do it. In addition, funding was another mentioned challenge, which can be temporarily solved by embedding citizenship education into the curriculum within existing subjects rather than creating its own separate lesson.

Character/citizenship education has received an increased interest over the past decade with several conferences in the Gulf Cooperation Council based on this topic. For instance, the United Arab Emirates developed a national moral education programme for all schools in the country. The programme is taught as a separate subject and the curriculum includes four main pillars: *character and morality, individual and community, civic studies* and *cultural studies*, which are intended to foster morals on an individual and societal level. It also encourages an understanding and respect for the country's history and cultural values as well as universal ones. Although the UAE is similar to Saudi Arabia in that it is an Islamic state, the population includes many non-Muslim expatriates and thus a more cosmopolitan programme was required (Pring, 2019). Sbai (2019) conducted a qualitative study with parents and teachers to learn about their opinions of the programme and found a general positive outlook, but the drawbacks that appeared were parents' lack of information on the subject and teachers' lack of time and flexibility, as the resources require memorisation while teachers prefer more interaction and creativity, which relates to Saudi Arabia's issues regarding Islamic education. However, it is still considered a step forward for the UAE to create and implement such a programme, and although Saudi Arabia has citizenship education, it is not as precisely specified as in the UAE.

Alharbi (2017) says the main deficiencies with citizenship education in the country are its content, aims and teacher training, in addition to the old-fashioned pedagogy since the

subject focuses on a traditional lecture type class, resulting in learners taking a more passive role. This does convey a pedagogical gap in the arena, but not necessarily a fundamental lack of interest in more constructive methods, as the Region has shown an interest in role modelling by creating a national campaign called *How to be a role model? (Kef nkoon qudwa)*, and this encourages all kinds of leaders: parents, teachers, imams (heads of mosques) and government and private officials to act as role models for their society (Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, 2019). Although moral values have not been explicitly mentioned in the campaign, the *Saudi Vision 2030* declares: '…we intend to embed positive moral beliefs in our children's characters from an early age by reshaping our academic and educational system…' (p.28, n.d.).

This project may not have the capacity to create and implement an entire national character education programme, but it can start by exploring the best methods implementable today, based on the country's existing barriers and enablers. Although moral values are currently taught through Islamic education, the literature shows, however, that placing a character education programme fully within an Islamic curriculum or framework may not be effective, to begin with at least. The context will fail to provide flexibility and critical thinking, which may place teachers and students in a paradoxical pedagogical situation of being expected to develop critical thinking through uncritical methods. It is not hereby suggested that Islamic role models or values should be avoided, but at the outset at least, it may be best not to embed the project within an Islamic subject, so as to provide both teachers and students with an opportunity to openly discuss and reflect on moral values and dilemmas, similar to the moral education programme in the UAE. Furthermore, it allows for new and various teaching methods and activities without being attached to old teaching practices currently used within existing subjects. Change in Saudi Arabia is a challenge, but with the *Vision 2030* looking to transform many aspects in the country, now is arguably an ideal time to introduce new positive

educational programmes into the school system, such as a character education programme with a focus on role modelling, but one separate from traditional subjects and teaching methods.

2.9 Overall Conclusions

The purpose of this review chapter has been to examine the various concepts and ideas behind role modelling and to provide background for the empirical part of the research project on how it can be utilised to help ameliorate the current methodological and theoretical gaps within Saudi Arabia's character education system. Overall, the studies canvassed have shown there are concerns regarding the practice of character and/or citizenship education in Saudi Arabia, whether it is due to the pedagogy, teacher training or the curricular content itself. However, since research from other parts of the world has conveyed that role modelling can be an effective method towards moral progress, examining the development and implementation of a role modelling character education programme in the Region could be a viable undertaking.

One of the mains reasons role modelling has been proven to be beneficial is due to the emotions that arise when exposed to moral exemplarity. These have the potential to trigger the moral motivation to emulate the exemplar (where 'emulate' refers to critical engagement rather than just mindless copying). The emulated moral behaviour would then ideally vitalise the learners' journey of habituation and conceivably their path to virtuosity. Furthermore, after looking at various moral development theories such as those of Kant, Kohlberg and Hoffman, Aristotelian conceptualisations seem to offer the most fitting theoretical framework for a role modelling project. Using Aristotle's virtue ethics as a foundation provides a balance of moral intention and action as well as moral emotion and reasoning, which Lickona (1991) labels the head, heart and hand, and describes these as the three essential components for effective character development.

It is not suggested that virtue-ethics and role modelling are free from flaws. It is not possible to sidestep, for instance, the unattainability of the unity of virtues, the dangers of indoctrination with habituation, or the negative emotions potentially associated with the exposure to moral exemplarity, such as shame, envy or spite. Thus, it is essential the developed programme includes methods to avoid or at least reduce possible pitfalls through the activities and role models chosen. For instance, it is essential to have student-led discussions and assignments to encourage critical thinking and limit indoctrination, as well as including relatable role models with attainable virtues, where their journey and flaws are explicitly shown, rather than extraordinary saints or celebrities. The aforementioned elements not only fit with overcoming role modelling obstacles but also with improving Saudi Arabia's current educational pedagogy, which still depends on traditional-style teaching, involving teacher-led lessons and rote learning.

Furthermore, with the current sociological and political changes in the Country based on *Vision 2030*, now is an appropriate time to explore and introduce new character educational methods. The rationale for this is that there is an increased interest in moral values and improved education. However, although Islam plays a huge role in the Country's education and culture and already uses role modelling to teach certain values through Islamic moral exemplars, the project to be discussed in the following chapters focuses on using a secular programme, because involving religion may be too sensitive and not easily accepted in a country that is gradually becoming more multicultural. Based on the literature available, the empirical part of my research aims to explore the barriers and enablers in introducing a role modelling character education programme in Saudi Arabia and how it can best be developed and implemented.

I would like to end this long background and literary-review chapter on a personal note by noting what surprised me most when reading through all the available sources. First is the

lack of empirical evidence on conducting and testing role modelling character education programmes, even though role models are commonly used in education through stories, history or religious studies, for example in Saudi Arabia. Second is the amount of evidence showing how much more children and adolescents consider parents to be their role models than celebrities is surprising, especially since there seems to be limited research on developing moral education interventions to help parents.

In any case, my aim is to use the current project to add to the role modelling journey in education and shed some light on character education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, specifically.

Chapter 3 Methodology

To rehearse my steps, in *Chapter 1*, I presented the following research questions motivating my study as a whole:

> 1. How could an effective role modelling character education programme be developed in Saudi Arabia?
>
> 2. How could a role modelling character education programme be implemented feasibly in the Region?

In *Chapter 2*, I reviewed critically the background concepts and theories related to those questions. The empirical part of the study follows hereunder.

The study developed into two stages: the first involved creating and evaluating a role modelling character education intervention that could be implemented in schools in Saudi Arabia, including a Pilot Study leading to a Case Study. The main focus for Stage One was the Case Study while the Pilot was only conducted as a trial, with a smaller sample of one class size, to examine whether the role modelling intervention developed and whether the measurement tools for the Case Study would be appropriate for the sample population. As the Pilot study focussed on feasibility, the objectives were to:

- test if the methods employed were feasible for the sample population

- assess whether the intervention was appropriate for the sample population

As the Case Study focussed on gauging the intervention's efficacy in a school, the objectives were to:

- Explore how a virtue-led role modelling intervention could be effectively developed and implemented in a school in Saudi Arabia.

- Examine if the intervention could improve students' moral competence.

This first stage (Pilot and Case Study) sought to examine whether the intervention showed any efficacy based on student and teachers' engagement and perceptions, as well as possible evidenced moral development. It also intended to explore the reasons behind the results and how those could improve future developments. Answering those research questions involved undertaking a more in-depth evaluation of the intervention through the Case Study in order to not only test the efficacy of the intervention, but also gain a deeper understanding of the school's character education background as well as how the intervention worked. This stage of the project, therefore, described in *Section 3.3*, took a mixed-method approach as it tried to measure virtuous traits and virtue literacy pre and post intervention; as interviews, focus groups and observations were also employed. The chosen methods were intended to discover possible perceptions on the intervention within the relevant cultural context. Although there are various competing theories on the use of role models in education (recall *Chapter 2*), the number of empirical research findings is limited, therefore elaborating upon the successes and failures of the methods used is as important as testing the efficacy of the given intervention. Measuring character is not a straightforward process, and so any new information on what can be done or avoided should be acknowledged and critically reviewed.

After completing Stage One, the execution of the intervention and the results showed that a second stage would be beneficial in discovering the barriers and enablers to schools in implementing role modelling projects in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the research questions were modified to expand the understanding of how role modelling character education could be developed, through a purely qualitative approach, with participants in various schools, and with different roles in the school system. The objectives for Stage Two were:

1. To explore the prevailing perceptions on effectively developing a role modelling character education programme in Saudi Arabia.

2. To examine the barriers and enablers towards feasibly implementing such a programme in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter first explores the research assumptions and designs of both stages of the project, in *Sections 3.1* and *3.2*. The methods of each stage, however, are discussed separately, as Stage One is discussed in *Section 3.3*, which looks at the intervention design and measurement tools in both the Pilot and Case Study, as well as the sampling and data analysis. Subsequently, Stage Two is discussed in *Section 3.4*, and similar to the former, it looks at the processes in sampling, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Philosophical Assumptions

This section explores the philosophical assumptions behind both stages of the empirical study. There is a good reason why it is considered *de rigueur* to review those assumption in methodology chapters. One of the most complicated issues in the Social Sciences relates to the philosophical assumptions on which a study design is based, not only because the research questions and methods depend on it, but also because of the debates between conflicting meta-theories about research activities. One cannot simply disregard the philosophy behind the research activities, as the general research paradigm chosen defines how a researcher views the world; this, in turn, needs to be stated in order to gain credibility within the research community (Waring, 2012). Thus, the present section aims to locate the project's paradigmatic stance within the ontological and epistemological spectrum as well as the reasoning behind it.

Research philosophies seem to occupy different levels as one descends from abstract theories, starting with ontology, towards choice of more discrete research methods such as

interviews and surveys, (Gray, 2004). Ontology is defined as having to do with the 'nature of existence', while epistemology is the philosophy of finding out 'facts' about the nature of existence and what is considered reliable knowledge (Gray, 2004, p.16). Thus, on the ontological scale, the two opposing sides would be idealism and realism. According to William and Mays' definition, idealism posits that reality depends on an individual's perception, while realism posits the existence of a real world independent of peoples' consciousness (1996, p.42). At an epistemological level, realist ontology tends to be associated with positivism and idealism with interpretivism, with the former involving the acquisition of knowledge through direct observation or measurement; thereby using empirical inquiry to gain factual answers, not interpretations. In contrast, the latter, as its name conveys, posits the opposite and relies on knowledge based on people's interpretations since the validity of knowledge cannot be separated from social or human elements such as perceptions, culture and interests (Gray, 2004; Howe, 1988; Waring, 2012). This simple dichotomy is in many ways misleading, however, as one can subscribe to a realist ontology, in principle, while believing that knowledge of some parts of reality may not be codified and needs to be understood through interpretative lenses (cultural, historical, etc.). Conversely, one can be a non-realist about ontology but still acknowledge that quantitative measurements have a role to play in understanding the world of interpretation; for example, comprehending what is generally valued as distinct from what is objectively valuable (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

Some hard positivists believe that social-science research should be conducted in the same way as in the physical sciences, relying solely on a quantitative methodology. Therefore, the researcher needs to be detached from the participants and the study so as to avoid any biases and provide objective and accurate results. In contrast, some radical interpretivists consider detachment to be impossible, and for them, the only way to discover reality is through the

researcher using a qualitative methodology, therefore. Because the data are context-dependent, pure cause and effect cannot be found (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

This debate notwithstanding, many studies in social science research have been using a mixed-method approach, but the philosophy behind it is not as well defined and grounded as in the other two opposing paradigms in research design, namely, positivism and interpretivism (Gray, 2004). One of the paradigms mixed-method research stems from is critical realism, and as Scott (2010) explains, critical realism acknowledges there is an objective reality that is resistant to change in addition to a socially constructed reality. However, critical realists are aware that even though there is an independent reality, one cannot discover the complete truth because the social world is too complex. Furthermore, researchers can try to be as objective as possible to explain reality, but they will never be outsiders of the social world; hence, there will always be a margin of error in the research. Research can constantly be updated with something better and more accurate, therefore, if generalisations are made, they are only approximate and can change over time. Although this concept takes a more flexible approach in the positivism versus interpretivism continuum, it does not represent fully the current researcher's beliefs, which are about finding the best evidence, *for practical purposes*, based on the questions the research proposes to answer.

Reflecting on the research questions, the study does not favour explicitly either side of the positivism versus interpretivism dichotomy. In the first stage, the need arose to test objective cause and effect variables, the intervention being 'the cause' and moral development being 'the effect'. However, moral development cannot be measured in isolation, it is based on culture, beliefs and values; therefore, interpretive methods are required to understand the school and participants' backgrounds. Both forms of data collection are necessary to answer the research questions, and the theoretical model that most explicitly focuses on mixing methods to bring

the best evidence is *pragmatism* (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Many scholars are still trying to place pragmatism as its own ontological paradigm, with a distinct place on the philosophical spectrum. In my view, however, that betrays a misconception of the basis pragmatist insight, best expressed by Dewey, one of the fathers of pragmatism, that ontological debates on realities 'are just discussions about two sides of the same coin' (Morgan, 2014, p.1048). The arguments made in those debates, however philosophically salient, are not as essential, in many cases, as the practical research results. Since the present research focuses on practical change, rather than on proving a theoretical argument to be correct, pragmatism and a mixed approach seemed to be the best options to get useful results.

Before defining what a mixed-method approach involves, it is necessary to explain the theory behind pragmatism and how it led this research to its methodology and methods. Pragmatism has received criticism due to its lack of philosophical commitments, that is, with regard to epistemology and ontology (Morgan, 2013), and how it has been used as a convenient (some would say poor) way to avoid the philosophical debates to focus on the practical side of the research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Morgan, however, argues that even though it may not have as clear an ontology/epistemology as the other paradigms, it has a theoretical foundation, which he believes is based on Dewey's concept of inquiry. The concept of inquiry purposefully distances itself from abstract theories and is based on the idea of cyclical human experience where beliefs are interpreted to lead to action and action is then interpreted as leading to beliefs, which then develops a habit (Morgan, 2014). Interestingly, this harmonises with one of the theoretical elements of this project, Aristotle's conceptualisations of moral development, being based on habituation. Indeed, similarities between Aristotle and Dewey abound, especially with regard to Aristotle's view of the aim of moral inquiry being practical

rather than theoretical. With respect to Dewey, inquiry happens when there is an issue leading to reflection, which then leads to inquiry/research.

Thus, using Dewey's inquiring process, according to Morgan (2013, p.1047), the first step is *recognising the problem*, which in this study would be the lack of effective character development in the relevant region. The second would be *considering the difference it makes to define the problem one way rather than another*, and this problem could be due to either limited time and resources given to character education, or due to the methods in which it is taught. Within the first stage of this research, the latter issue was chosen to provide a link to the third step. This is: *developing a possible line of action as a response to the problem.* Here the idea which developed in this research was to create a character education programme to provide improved methods to those that already existed, in so far as they may exist. The fourth step is *evaluating potential actions in terms of their likely consequences*, and this involved, in the present case, thinking of different ways character education could be taught in schools or at home, and what its theoretical foundations would be. As already explained in the Literature Review, a virtue-ethical role modelling approach was chosen as it was seen to provide a balanced and effective method based on the research available. Schools were chosen as the medium since they are organised institutions and constitute the main channel through which knowledge is transmitted to a significant number of learners. Other potential actions included deciding where and how the programme should be executed, and due to limited accessibility and resources, the port city of Jeddah in western Saudi Arabia was chosen. The rationale for this is that the researcher was based in this location; additionally, international schools in the area were selected to overcome accessibility issues. The last step in the process of a pragmatic Deweyan inquiry is *taking actions that are felt to be likely to address the problematic situation*, and this involved, in my case, first creating a research project to examine whether the action of

developing and implementing a role modelling character education programme in schools could help improve children's character development in Saudi Arabia, and exploring whether any moral development had occurred.

However, as Morgan (2014) explains, the entire process could ideally be repeated, perhaps in a slightly amended form, in a research project for further confirmation. In my case, the second stage of the study involved the same problem as the first, but the chosen approach was different. The approach involved taking a step back to explore why the original problem exists and possible ways to overcome it, and was conducted by exploring themes that came up in the previous stage and discovering new themes on how an effective programme could be developed and implemented in the Region. As shown through those examples, Dewey's pragmatism, which focuses on social action more than abstract philosophy, proved to be an ideal strategy for the present purposes.

Many critics argue pragmatism simply follows *what works* and chooses what is considered a more appropriate method at the time, thus circumventing any theoretical epistemology (Howe, 1988). I suggested above that pragmatists cannot be pigeon-holed anywhere on the *ontological* spectrum (most specifically, like Dewey, by refusing to see it as a spectrum). However, pragmatists do have an epistemology, which is that knowledge consists in finding solutions to problems (Strübing, 2007). I believe this to be an apt epistemological position, particularly within the Social Sciences, because contrary to the Natural Sciences, where one can seek objective knowledge for the sake of knowing, in social science knowledge aspirations are usually directed at fixing or improving a current state. Gage (1989) elaborates on this further with regard to educational research, and emphasises the importance of pragmatism because it places social improvement as a priority over debating the best philosophical background. He states:

Educational research is no mere spectator sport, no mere intellectual game...it

has moral obligations. The society that supports us cries out for better education

for its children and youth (p.10)

And he believes better education can be achieved through the lens of pragmatism.

In conclusion, the project's philosophical assumption regarding ontology and epistemology cannot be clearly defined as black and white, as Hesse-Biber (2010) explains, if relying on a standard continuum with positivism at one end and interpretivism at the other. However, Dewey refuses to accept this very categorisation, and I continue to follow him in that below, as I lay out the design and methods used in this project, based on pragmatism.

3.2 Research Design

This section discusses why and how a mixed-method approach was used in this research project. As positivists aim for objectivity, quantitative methods are preferred, while interpretivists embrace subjectivity and require qualitative processes to produce appropriate results (Grix, 2010). There are strengths and weaknesses to both types of methodologies, it is argued. Postivism's strengths include the likelihood of generalising research results, test theories, creating quantitative predictions and testing for cause and effect. Quantitative methods are more useful when researching large populations and produce results that are somehow independent of the researcher's biases. However, they cannot convey local understandings and fail to apply results directly to small groups, as the findings tend to be too abstract: focusing on the 'how' more than the 'why', thus not providing an in-depth picture. As for qualitative methods, the researcher's biases are more likely, and do not provide generalisable results; nonetheless, the results tend to be deeper and show the complexity of a phenomenon. Qualitative methods can

also be more time-consuming, but they are more malleable as research can be modified based on results (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie define mixed-methods as a 'class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study', and so the aim for mixed-methods approaches is to use the strengths from both types of methods to help reduce their weaknesses and gain better quality results (2004, p.17). Since mixed-methods involve different methodologies, various methods can be used and, in many ways, allowing the researcher to be as creative as possible to achieve the best results. For instance, inductive approaches are defined as creating a theory based on the data collected, whereas deductive approaches prove an existing theory or hypothesis to be correct or not (Gray, 2004). Mixed-methods can therefore include both and have a cyclical inquiry process. Biesta (2012) contends that the methods do not start with the research questions, as others may suggest, but agrees with Dewey in that the questions must be based on the problems the research is aspiring to explore. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) explain the different designs of mixed-method approaches, including triangulation and complementarity, the former involving different methods studying the same phenomenon, the latter using different methods to examine different levels of the phenomenon and thus using them simultaneously, which can be described as 'peeling the layers of an onion' (p.258).

The current project can be described as being more akin to complementarity, as it used different methods to target distinct elements of the phenomenon. For instance, class observations were used to explore the teachers and students' engagement within the programme, while self-report surveys were used to look at virtue-specific development, and interviews with teachers helped understand the barriers and enablers in implementing such a

programme within the Region. Biesta further explains the different kinds of mixed-method research designs, for instance a sequential design is when one method leads to another QUAN→QUAL, but they are both written in capital because they have equal importance or are used at the same level in the research. Therefore, one can have a QUAL → quan, where it is mainly qualitative research but leads to quantitative methods to support the data.

The first stage of the present project, however, used a concurrent research design, where the methods were used simultaneously, but most of the tools were qualitative; therefore, it is QUAL + quan. The quantitative data explored a different aspect of the research, and tried to examine whether specific virtues were developed after exposure to the programme to look into cause and effect, while the qualitative approach looked deeper into which parts of the programme were or were not effective and why, in addition to the school environment, and how that could have affected the implementation. If one is looking at the entire research project including both stages, however, the best categorisation would be QUAL + quan → QUAL, as the results of the first stage led to a purely qualitative research method in Stage Two. The design is in fact similar to the Learning Lives Project Biesta (2012) described, where the research did not go as planned and changed from sequential to concurrent and instead of both quantitative and qualitative methods being equally dominant, qualitative ones predominated. He shows how mixed methods can be appealing in theory, but challenging in practice, due to limited resources, which is also what occurred in the present research project.

In sum, based on a pragmatic methodology, the research first applied a concurrent mixed-method approach, using mainly qualitative methods to see how and why a role modelling character education programme may or may not work. In addition, it applied quantitative methods to see if the programme (the cause) provided any significant virtue development (effect) and used further qualitative methods to understand possible reasons for the cause and

effect; whether there was positive, negative or no development from pre to post test. Both the Pilot and Case Studies were QUAL + quan, but the Pilot was conducted to test whether the intervention was appropriate for primary school aged children in an International school in Jeddah, while the Case Study used the Pilot results to modify the intervention and focussed on efficacy. The project then became sequential as Stage Two applied qualitative methods by interviewing participants with various roles from different schools to gain a wider and deeper understanding of the phenomenon than the Case Study in Stage One provided.

Table 1. Design of the Present Research (QUAL + quan → QUAL)

Stage One (QUAL + quan)	
Pilot study	May/June 2017

Stage One (QUAL + quan)	
Case study	May/June 2018

Stage Two (QUAL)	
Explorative study	May/June 2019
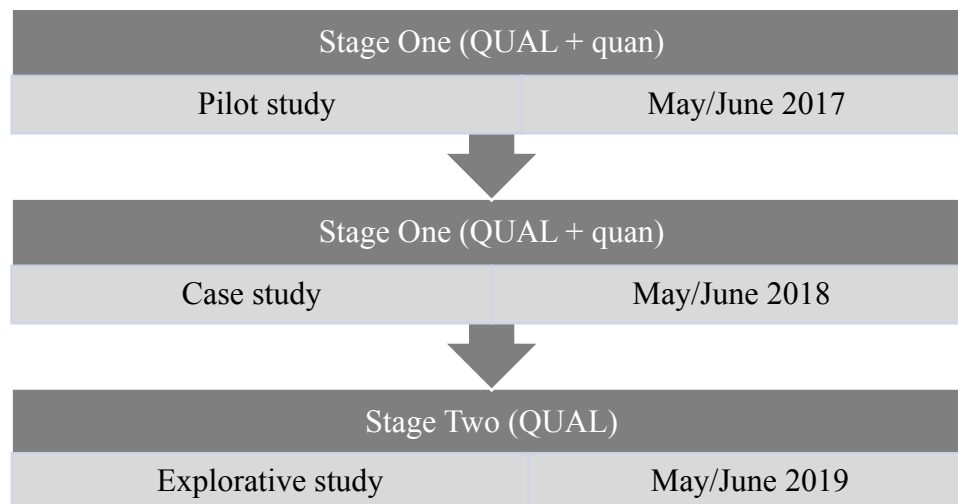
3.3 Stage One Methods

This section discusses the methods used in the first stage of the research, which involved a Pilot Study to test the feasibility of the measurement tools and intervention with the population, and then a Case Study testing the efficacy of the intervention as well as exploring perceptions on implementing character education in the school. Originally, this stage of the project was expected to be the only phase, but issues with the amount of data collected as well as interesting

themes that transpired in the data analysis proved a second stage was necessary to gain a better understanding.

A Pilot Study was executed because the intervention needed to be trialled before using it with a larger sample size, therefore significance was not tested but rather feasibility through response rates, interviews with the class teacher and observations of students' engagement and reaction to the intervention and measurement tools.

After the Pilot Study, a Case Study research in a school was conducted to not only measure the efficacy of the virtue-based role modelling programme, but also to understand the details of the context in which was being implemented. The Pilot was performed to discover which elements worked, which did not, as well as how and why. Gaining such a deep understanding, using several methods with different kinds of participants based on context, can be most effectively conducted through a Case Study approach. Although two schools would have been preferred for a cross-comparison and increased validity and reliability, due to access issues and limited resources, this was not possible. Thus, to overcome this, several tools were used to conduct a deeper study of one school. Bassey (1999) says educational case studies focus on either a particular time or space, while mostly within its natural context and/or it analyses elements of educational programmes in an institution. The following Case Study used a particular 'space', which is an embassy school in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and although the school was observed in its usual context, the possibility and effects of implementing an educational programme within the school were also explored. Although case studies cannot be as numerically generalisable as randomised controlled studies, Yin finds them to be essential in evaluating interventions because not only can case studies provide analytical or conceptual generalisations, they can also provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of an intervention and its results; hence have some predictive validity vis-à-vis future interventions

in similar contexts (2013). Additionally, Bassey (1999) explains how case studies can provide a theoretical starting point, as this study intended to do by presenting an introduction to how a character education programme could be developed and implemented in schools with common characteristics to this one.

3.3.1 Intervention Design

As previously mentioned, Stage One of the research project included a role modelling character education intervention, thus, this section describes the intervention used in the Pilot and Case Studies. The findings from the Pilot showed the intervention needed to be modified slightly by reducing repetitive questions and needed to be administered to a higher age group due to difficulty levels.

Each type of school in Saudi Arabia has a different environment and curriculum, and due to the difficulty in accessing government schools as well as the lack of flexibility, the curriculum was developed for international schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The aim of the proposed intervention was to increase students' knowledge of virtues as well as teach them techniques on how to use moral role models to help them develop their characters in morally conducive ways, while taking into consideration general risks involved with role modelling and the Saudi Arabian teaching environment previously discussed. The intervention included three lessons and each lesson was divided into three sections: *Inspire - Action - Reflect. Table 2* below provides a brief summary of what was included in the intervention.

Table 2. Intervention summary

Lesson Content			Lesson Structure		
Role Models	**Virtues**	**Resources**	**Inspire**	**Action**	**Reflect**
Dan Eley	Resilience and gratitude	Detailed lesson plan	Brainstorm	Mix of reading, writing and discussion activities on presented role models	Discussion/writing activities on their own virtues
Malala Yousafzai	Courage and justice	Activity Booklets	Presentation	Writing activity on personal/community role models	
Suzie Valadez	Love and kindness	Presentation			

Studies on moral exemplars have shown the ideal traits to be emulated and what we should aim for to reach exemplarity (Walker and Hening, 2004; Damon and Colby, 1992). In the present study, the three role models chosen were Dan Eley, Malala Yousafzai and Susie Valadez, while the virtues taught were resilience, gratitude, courage, justice, love and kindness. The role models are all real people, chosen to increase relatability and increase effectiveness, as Han *et al.*'s research advises (2017). Dan Eley had a diving accident while volunteering abroad and is now paralysed, but his *gratitude* towards those who cared for him allowed him to overcome his difficulties (*resilience*) and now he is the founder of the Dan Eley Foundation, which is a non-profit organisation that helps adolescents in need. Malala Yousafzai is the educational activist who showed *courage* when she went against the Taliban, and *justice* as she fought for girls' rights to an education. She is now the founder of Malala Fund and a Nobel Peace prize winner. Suzie Valadez is one of the moral exemplars Colby and Damon (1992) studied; she used to drive to the borders of Mexico almost daily to provide people in need with different resources, and did it out of *kindness* and *love* for them and humankind, in general. The virtues the role models present were considered age appropriate as they can all be related to situations at school and home, for instance promoting justice against bullying, resilience with

school issues or difficult home environments, kindness and gratitude towards those in their community, and so on. A further issue which guided the choice of virtues was their suitability to a Middle Eastern school context, and this was gauged originally through informal conversations with local school teachers. Nonetheless, on an Aristotelian understanding, the precise order or choice of virtues to be taught is less important than on many other virtue ethical paradigms, as with Aristotle the virtues fuse and ultimately stimulate each other.

The teaching materials also aimed to focus on reducing the issues that currently exist within Saudi Arabia's moral education arena such as the use of rote learning, and teachers' lack of training. Thus, the materials included: *a teachers' pack* to support and guide the teacher with each stage so as to avoid practical pitfalls and maximise effectiveness, a *PowerPoint presentation* to introduce the concept of virtues and the role models themselves, as well as an *activity booklet* for the students to complete. The first stage, *Inspire*, was when the students were introduced to the role model through a summary or a short video. To encourage critical thinking, the students needed to brainstorm what virtues they thought the role model presented before the teacher defined them. This was an important step because as mentioned earlier (in *Chapter 2*), an Aristotelian method should focus on the relevant exemplified virtues more than the exemplar exemplifying them *qua* person.

The next phase was *Action,* and this included activities to help students gain a deeper understanding of the virtues taught, by giving a reading comprehension based on the exemplar's life and some questions/discussion points to allow them to engage with the text. According to Vos (2017), if the moral exemplar's life and daily struggles are presented in some detail, the student will be more able to relate to those virtuous traits in their own lives. Therefore, the text provided the students with a deeper background on the role models. To further help the students understand the exemplar's situation, the next question allowed the students to empathise with

and put themselves in the exemplar's shoes, for instance: 'Imagine you are Dan Eley and write a Facebook post to those who helped you.' Once that was complete, the students needed to be aware of the exemplar's flaws so as they are not seen as perfect and therefore promoting hero-worship as well as moral inertia, for example: 'To prepare for the debate write down ideas on whether you are for or against Malala rebelling'. This activity was meant to encourage discussion and allow them to see that the exemplar also possibly made mistakes; as brave as Malala was, for example, she put her family in danger as well.

Subsequently, the students moved on from the role models presented and thought of someone they personally knew that possesses the same virtues, and how they possessed them. This followed Han *et al.*'s empirical study that proves relatable role models are more effective in moral development than historical or fictional models (2017). It also tried to reduce moral inertia by helping students see the virtues as more attainable, because they could relate to someone within their community who exhibits them, as well as understanding that the virtues do not need to be practised on a grand scale. This then led to the last section, which was *Reflect*. The rationale here was students had to think of ways to implement the virtues taught and how to improve them further. Before thinking of improving virtues, students needed to think of how they already presented these virtues: 'Can you think of a time you have shown justice? Explain your example.' Discovering ways in which they already have exhibited these virtues, could help them feel less morally inferior and hopefully reduce envy. The final few activities drew upon Vos's concept of using the exemplar as a true example and moulding it within their own roles and circumstances (2017), as they allowed students to picture themselves accommodating these traits to a greater extent in their lives, for example: 'How could you be more kind in your life?' Moreover, it should decrease the dangers of indoctrination or uncritical imitation because it did

not represent teachers supplying the information but rather the students using that information to relate to their own lives and to self-reflect.

3.3.2 Stage One Sampling

Sampling within a mixed-method case-study approach with qualitative tools cannot be randomised and so non-probabilistic sampling is required, which does not represent the whole population (Thomas, 2013). Robinson (2014) explains how the reality of recruiting can be challenging and unpredictable for social science researchers and therefore needs to be modified based on certain events, as well as the resources and manpower available. With this in mind, it is important to provide information on what mainly influenced the sampling methods: As Jamjoom (2010) claimed in her study, accessibility is not an easy process in Saudi Arabia, particularly with government schools, but since private schools are led by the headteacher, there is a higher chance for them to accept. Furthermore, international and embassy schools have less government regulation over their curriculum and are therefore more flexible with their programmes. In addition, this was a doctoral study with limited time, no funding and only one researcher, already located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Robinson (2014) suggests starting with defining the sample universe, which others call target population, and so for this study it included demographic homogeneity. A certain age group of 10-12 was required for the Pilot Study, as the intervention was developed with that age group in mind, but for the Case Study this changed to 11-14 years, based on the Pilot Study's findings and informal discussions with teachers. Geographical homogeneity was also required, as the school needed to be in Jeddah because the researcher was incapable of spending large amounts of time in a different city, in addition to having better access within that city. The school needing to be an English international school was another inclusion criterion, firstly

because the intervention was written in English and secondly international schools have more curriculum flexibility and easier accessibility compared to government and private national schools.

Choosing the sample strategy is another step a researcher needs to define, and in this case, it had to be convenience and purposive sampling when both recruiting the school and participants within the school. Convenience sampling is finding the most convenient participants who fit the criteria, by choosing them on a 'first-come-first-served basis' (Robinson, 2014, p.32), and so several international schools were directly contacted by phone or email offering an invitation to the study. Robinson (2014) raises an issue with convenience sampling in that it cannot be generalised past the local population whether it be demographic or geographical, and therefore this study needed to make it clear the findings are for a particular age group within a certain kind of school in Saudi Arabia. While purposive sampling is also a non-random method of sampling, it involves purposely choosing certain groups for the study because their perspective can be essential for the results (Robinson, 2014).

3.3.2.1 Pilot Study Sampling

When sampling for the Pilot Study, most schools provided no response or rejected the idea, while one showed interest but then cancelled. The headteacher of one international school finally accepted, thus leading to the following sample:

One female class teacher and 22 female primary school children, aged 11-12, attending an English international school in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with the participants chosen by the Head of the primary school. Information about each key informant is not provided because no codes or pseudonyms were given to the student participants and there was only one teacher.

3.3.2.2 Case Study Sampling

Similar to the Pilot Study, most schools either rejected the idea or did not respond and only one school showed interest. It should be noted the researcher had a connection to the school, but had never met or heard of any of the participants beforehand, other than two parents.

The types of participants were chosen beforehand: headteacher, teachers, parents, intervention teachers and students. The first three were selected as they could provide information on the school's background in relation to character education based on their own unique experiences, in addition to different perspectives on having a role modelling intervention, and how it should be developed. Further, the latter two, teachers and students, could do the same as well as add their opinions and experiences about being part of the actual intervention. The teachers and student participants were chosen by the head of pastoral care while the parents were recruited through word of mouth. The population for the intervention was participants studying at an embassy school in Jeddah, and from the ages of 11-14 because results from the Pilot Study showed a higher age group would be more appropriate. However, when examining the school in general, data were collected from various year groups and teachers. Since this was a case study in one school, random sampling could not be employed.

The table below (*Table 3)* shows the participants in the study and their code names, which will be used in the findings. The focus groups included 5-8 participants and the code names were based on their year group.

Table 3. Case-study participant information

Group	Key Informant	Gender
Student Focus Groups	Y7	Mixed
	Y8	Mixed
	Y9	Mixed
Intervention Teachers	ITA	Female
	ITB	Male
	ITC	Male
	ITD	Female
Teachers	TX	Male
	TY	Male
Head-teacher	HT	Male
Parents	PA	Female
	PB	Female
	PC	Female

Although there are certain limitations in choosing purposive and convenience sampling, it allows for a pragmatic approach to answer the research questions in the most effective ways possible, while taking realistic and logistical obstacles into consideration.

3.3.3 Stage One Data Collection

This section focusses on the quantitative and qualitative measurement tools utilised in the first stage of the project, as well as the reasons they were selected. The same measurement tools were used in both the Pilot and the Case Studies to test whether the tools chosen were appropriate for the intervention and the sample population.

A mixed-method approach is often recommended with measuring virtues as it helps increase validity and reliability, which can be easily lost within virtue measurements (Kristjánsson, 2015). For instance, the *My Character* project employed questionnaires as the psychometric tool to measure students' moral development, in addition to interviews with teachers, focus groups with students, and case studies (Arthur *et al.*, 2014a). By combining

outcomes of various tools, a more objective method could be obtained, and so similarly, this project has used quantitative and qualitative methods to measure the feasibility and efficacy of using an Aristotelian virtue-led approach through role modelling.

3.3.3.1 Quantitative Measurements

A comprehensive search of various quantitative measurements that could test moral development was conducted to find the most appropriate tool for this study in order to effectively answer the research questions. *Table 4* below shows the tools considered and the table thereafter shows the tools chosen and why. The search only included existing instruments to focus on the intervention rather than creating an instrument and testing it, as that would have constituted a study of its own.

Table 4. Quantitative measurement tools considered but not selected

(Table adapted from Walker, 2014)

Measure	Description	Pros	Cons
Adolescent Intermediate Concept Measure (AD – ICM) **(Thoma *et al.*, 2013)**	Moral judgment is measured by presenting seven moral dilemmas for participants to choose the best possible action and the reason for that action. It is based on a neo-Kohlbergian concept examining intermediate moral schemas.	It is a possible measurement tool for character education programs. It acknowledges the importance of moral reasoning and virtues.	It is unclear whether it is suitable for the target age group as it was tested on high school students and undergraduates. It is long and may not be suitable as a pre and post-test within four weeks. May be difficult for students to relate to the moral dilemmas.
VIA Inventory of Strengths for Youth (VIA Youth Survey)	It is a self-report with 96 questions measuring 24-character strengths	Some of the character strengths measured are clearly virtues. Psychometric testing so it is easy to score and produce quantitative results.	Self-reports can be biased as they involve the participants' own opinion of themselves; therefore, they require other measurements to exclude self-deceptions. Difficult to detect change of participants' perception of themselves within four weeks.

Social Cognitive conceptions of moral identity (Aquino and Reed, 2002)	Psychometrics measurement tool testing how much an individual prioritises moral identity. Apparently how one prioritises moral identity could affect his/her moral actions Nine characteristics are presented, participants need to show how much they are willing to emulate a person with those traits.	Some of the traits include Aristotelian virtues, which is what this study aims to measure. Psychometric test, thus providing a more objective quantitative analysis It focuses on emulation as it measures the importance of moral identity based on how much they want to emulate moral characteristics in an individual; this is directly related to using a role modelling intervention. The test proves moral identity is related to moral behaviour.	Unclear if it is age appropriate (but it is quite simple) Situational as it is based on an individual's previous experiences
Measure of Positive Youth Development - Student Questionnaire Short Version (Lerner *et al.*, 2005)	Self-report measuring competence, connection, confidence, caring and character	Designed for pre and post-test intervention It is age appropriate Easy to use for participants and researcher	Moral development is only partially measured. The other measurements are not related to the aim of the research as it examines matters such as risk behaviour.
Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form (SRM-SF) (Gibbs *et al.*, 1992)	Measures the maturity of sociomoral reflection, which is conducted by analysing the reasons for a particular moral action. It uses lead-in statements for a situation instead of moral dilemmas.	The participants write their own opinions rather than choose an option from a list. Participants can relate to it more than prepared moral dilemmas. It is simplistic and age appropriate	It may not produce valid results as a pre and post-test for an intervention. Focuses more on moral reasoning rather than character development, which deviates from the study's aims.

Sphere-Specific Moral Reasoning and Theory Survey (SMARTS) (Curzer, *et al.* (2014)	It includes twenty hypothetical situations and the participant is required to answer whether each scenario is ethically right or wrong as well as choose an answer justifying their response. It examines moral theory choice and moral reasoning separately.	It partially includes Aristotelian virtues. Examines one's moral thinking and therefore can measure part of moral development.	The scenarios and justifications are inappropriate and too complex for the target age group. Focuses more on the efficacy of ethics classes rather than character education programs. Analysing the data collected can be subjective, as it may depend on the person scoring it.

Table 5. Quantitative measurement tools selected

Measure	Description	Pros	Cons
Knightly Virtues Reading Booklet **http://www.jub ileecentre.ac.uk /1545/ projects/develo pment-projects/ knightly-virtues**	Two different versions of a reading comprehension exercise is given to the participants to complete before and after the intervention. The stories include moral dilemmas, the participants are asked to answer questions to test their virtue literacy and moral development.	It can be adapted to test the particular virtues chosen for the study. It is based on an Aristotelian framework. It is age appropriate. The data can directly address the study's aims as it can measure the change in students' understanding of virtue as well as their moral thinking. The tool can be used as a pre and post-test as there are two versions	It produces qualitative data that needs to be analysed quantitively. Therefore, how the answers are marked can vary from one researcher to another, reducing its reliability. New measurement tool that has not been used widely.
Index of Empathy Scale For Children and Adolescents (Bryant, 1982)	22 item Likert-scale self-report measuring cognitive and affective empathy	It measures a moral characteristic, connected to Aristotle's virtue of compassion, therefore allowing to test for moral change. It has already been tested for validity and reliability It is age appropriate Easy to use for researchers and participants. Easily accessible	It only measures one potential virtue. There is only one version, making it less effective as a pre and post-test. Difficult to detect change of participants' perception of themselves within four weeks.
Gratitude Questionnaire 6-Item Form (GQ6)	6 item Likert scale self-report questionnaire measuring participants' level of gratitude	It measures a virtue that is taught in the intervention. It is short and age appropriate. Easily accessible.	It only measures one virtue. There is only one version, making it less effective as a pre and post-test. Difficult to detect change of participants' perception of themselves within four weeks.

Firstly, taking logistics into consideration such as time, age and accessibility, as well as reliability and validity, the three most appropriate pre and post tests were the GQ6, Index of Empathy Scale and the reading comprehension test adapted from the *Knightly Virtues* project. Furthermore, the GQ6, measures gratitude, which is a trait taught in the intervention, and it includes questions such as *'I am thankful to a wide variety of people'* and *'If I had to list everything that I felt thankful for, it would be a very long list'*. Similar to the GQ6, the Index of Empathy scale is a short self-report survey that measures a moral characteristic, and includes questions such as, *'I really like to watch people open presents, even when I don't get a present myself'* and '*Sometimes I cry when I watch TV'*. so, using both tools together could arguably help detect moral development, but the main issue with both surveys is only one version exists which is repeated pre- and post-test, therefore making it difficult to detect change in such a short time period. However, as the KV tool is quite extensive, the surveys measuring moral development needed to be short for the goal of efficiency. The KV tool was chosen as it is the only measurement available that has two versions to measure virtue literacy, therefore allowing one to test the efficacy of the intervention. Although it worked effectively in a previous project, in Saudi Arabia using the tool with a single researcher proved to be difficult and interfered with the implementation of the intervention as it took away significant amounts of time that reduced participants' time and interest in the intervention. This occurred first with the Pilot Study, therefore, to avoid this for the latter the *Knightly Virtues* tool was used with participants in secondary school with higher abilities, however, it still showed similar consequences. The study tried to overcome the instruments' weaknesses through the qualitative measurement tools discussed next.

3.3.3.2 Qualitative Measurement Tools

As the study involved mixed-methods, qualitative tools were used to expand the understanding of how a role modelling character intervention can be implemented in a school in Saudi Arabia as well as why certain aspects were effective, or not. Qualitative methods include data collection in the form of words (Angrosino, 2012), and because there are strengths and weaknesses to qualitative methods, in general (*discussed in Section 3.1*), in addition to specific methods, this study proposed the use of a variety of tools to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses. One of the tools was semi-structured, in-depth interviews; these were chosen as they provide deeper understandings of a concept or situation, which other tools are incapable of reaching, such as surveys (Johnson and Rowlands, 2012). Interviews can be defined as 'purposeful interactions in which an investigator attempts to learn what another person knows about a topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced, what he or she thinks and feels about it, and what significance or meaning it might have' (Mears, 2012, p.170). Using this definition, the current Case Study utilised interviews with teachers and parents to understand how character education and/or role modelling was already executed in the school, participants' opinions on this, and how they would like it to be developed; also, if or how character education and/or role modelling can be significant. According to Rapley (2001), interviews should be perceived and analysed as interactions between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviews are a beneficial logistical approach as they provide a route to gaining information on particular topics using less time and money than other sources (Rapley, 2001).

Observations is another tool within qualitative methods and it is described as recording data through the five senses, but tends to be used at the start of a study, to provide the basis of what methods should be used in a study, or used simultaneously with other tools, such as in this

project (Angrosino, 2012). Angrosino suggests there are certain phases a researcher follows to collect information through observations: the first is descriptive which involves describing the situation and its surroundings, which then leads to the focussed phase that tries to find certain patterns to provide a foundation for the selective phase which, in turn, uses the patterns to search for particular information until saturation is achieved. The current project differed from this slightly, as it started from the focussed phase, and sometimes went straight to the selective phase because the observations were conducted to deepen the knowledge from the interviews/focus groups and possibly quantitative results. The observations were executed through some class observations of the programme, in addition to general observations of the school. The issue with observation is similar to in-depth interviews in that the researcher's biases can affect the validity of the results, but in this project a mixed-method approach was used to try and reduce the biases, as previously explained.

The third qualitative tool used in the Case Study but not in the Pilot, was focus groups. Focus groups are defined as 'an organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain collective views about a research topic' (Gibbs, 2012, p.186). The Case Study stage conducted focus groups with the students who took the role modelling character education programme so as to expand information on character education/role modelling in the school, which elements of the programme were effective or which could be improved. Gibbs also provides several reasons why focus groups are used in educational research, and this project includes some of those, such as evaluating a programme, gaining opinions and learning from experiences. Morgan (2012, p.163) explains that content-oriented projects are more common in focus groups as they are conducted to address or answer practical goals, and thus the *micro-dynamics* of the discussion are not as important. Although focus groups can be advantageous in that they can access information from a larger sample in less time and can gain an

understanding of shared viewpoints, there are certain obstacles to keep in mind such as managing conflicts in group interaction, collecting superficial data or complex data that cannot be easily analysed (Morgan, 2012). Focus groups can be particularly beneficial during 'sharing and comparing' as it is an interactive process where opinions and experiences are discussed and compared using similarities and differences as benchmarks. The rationale here is not simply to elicit what the participants think, but the reasons for their thoughts (Morgan, 2012, p.163). Furthermore, focus groups may contain more in-depth information when individuals take risks, which is more likely to occur in a group than individual interviews (Thomas, 2013). Thomas (2013) found, while interviewing adolescents for one of his projects, that they tended to be non-elaborative and struggled to express their opinions, which further supports Kennedy, Kools and Kruegers' contention that (2001) adolescent focus groups may be a productive method in understanding their experiences and insights because adolescents were found to feel more comfortable with peer audiences than adult ones. However, since some participants can be more dominant in character than others (Thomas, 2013), I tried to establish a balance by adding written activities where individual opinions could be facilitated. Therefore, this stage of the project used interviews for the adults and focus groups for the adolescents to gain a collective perspective from the participants who actually took the programme, and since the young participants are a larger sample than the adults, conducting focus groups was deemed more pragmatic.

The three qualitative tools discussed, interviews, observations and focus groups, could help provide more useful answers to the research questions, not only by collecting more data but by confirming or disproving certain patterns and themes, as well as validating results through reducing biases and overcoming some of each of the tools' weaknesses.

3.3.3.3 Summary of Stage One Measurement Tools

Although the same measurement tools were used, in the Pilot Study, the pre and post surveys were only tested for feasibility by examining difficulty levels and response rates. For the Pilot Study, the GQ6 and the Index of Empathy scale were slightly modified based on cultural appropriateness; therefore, questions about boys were not included as it was an all-girls school with limited contact with boys, in addition to questions about public displays of affection, and music (to avoid possible issues with parents). This process was not done for the Case Study, however, because the population was more diverse and it was a co-educational school. There was a pre and post-semi-structured interview with the class teacher to gain a deeper understanding of the school's relation to character education before the intervention and whether the intervention was suitable for the sample population. Moreover, semi-structured class observations were conducted to explore the benefits and drawbacks of the intervention.

The Pilot Study was conducted first to see if the measurement tools and intervention were appropriate for the sample population, namely, primary school children in an international school in Jeddah. Once the intervention and sample population were adapted based on the Pilot's results, the Case Study was conducted to test for efficacy. The Case Study focussed on two main aspects: first, the school's background, to see how such an intervention could work, as well as the perceptions of the institution, and second, the efficacy of the intervention itself. Following on from the foregoing, how each tool was used to answer the research questions is discussed next.

With respect to the school's character education background and perceptions of this strand of the curriculum, the following aspects were examined by means of the following tools:

School ethos

- Semi-structured interviews with teachers, head-teacher, parents and pupils.

- School observations and content analysis of mission statement.

Curriculum and Extra-curricular

- Content analysis of curricula in several year groups, including assembly plans.

- Semi-structured interviews with teachers and head-teachers.

Future developments on Character Education and Role modelling

- Semi-structured interviews with teachers, head-teacher and parents

- Focus groups with students

The two following categories were measured through a mixed-method approach using the following methods:

Evaluation of the intervention

- Semi-structured class-observations.

- Semi-structured interviews with class teachers before and after the intervention.

- Semi-structured focus groups with students after the intervention.

Effects of the intervention (moral development)

- Virtue literacy measured before and after the intervention through a reading comprehension adapted from the *Knightly Virtues* project (Arthur *et al.*, 2014b).

- Participants' moral competence measured before and after the intervention using the GQ6 gratitude measure (McCullough, Emmons and Tsang, 2002) to measure gratitude levels, and the Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents (Bryant, 1982) to measure empathy.

- Moral behaviour examined through class observations, interviews and focus groups.

Data were collected during the last month of summer term within school premises, interviews and focus groups were face-to-face and recorded through audio and written notes, while only written notes were taken for class observations. As the interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, the questions and probes were guided by an interview schedule, but the participants were still given the flexibility to direct the conversation (Thomas, 2013). The interview schedules were similar to Rapley's guidance in that the researcher started the topic by asking a question, the participant answered with the researcher asking a follow-up question, which, in turn, was answered by the participant; the pattern was then repeated (2001). Thus, in this study the interview schedules for the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups were original and somewhat directed by the interviewer to ensure participants provided relevant information on the school, students and the intervention while using Aristotelian virtues as keywords. However, the interviewee was given the opportunity to lead the discussion provided it was not out of context. Probes were also included to help the participants elaborate on certain topics if needed. The assembly plans were collected from the head of pastoral care and the mission statement from the head of the school.

The pre and post surveys were collected by the teachers and given to the researcher by the head of pastoral care as well as the head of the school's leadership classes to hide the participants' identities. For the GQ6 and Index of empathy surveys, a total of 171 participants were originally recruited, but only 68 participants were able to complete both the pre- and post-test *GQ6*, and 68 participants for the *Index of Empathy*, therefore the remaining number was not included in the quantitative data analyses. The *Knightly Virtues* tool faced the biggest issue, as only 12 participants completed both the pre and post-tests, mainly because it required more time and therefore had to be conducted after the exam period. It should be noted that the attendance rate in the school decreased dramatically after this period.

3.3.4 Stage One Data Analysis

This sub-section includes information about the data analysis conducted in the Pilot and Case Studies. The larger part of the data was analysed qualitatively, and used a qualitative content analysis approach. Drisko and Maschi (2015, p.7) defines content analysis as a 'family of research techniques for making systematic, credible, or valid and replicable inferences from texts and other forms of communication' and this includes basic content analysis that uses quantitative analyses from texts, and interpretive content analysis which can include both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to find information from the data that is based on a particular context and this could be to fulfil various aims such as presenting facts, new realisations and/or a plan for action (Elo and Kynga, 2007). As in Stage One, both Pilot and Case Studies took a mixed-method approach and looked at different themes, the data analysis was both exploratory/descriptive and explanatory (Drisko and Maschi, 2015): exploratory because it examined the school's current character education background in addition to perceptions on character education and role modelling and how it can be developed, but explanatory as it tried to explain why the intervention was effective or not.

Although studies label the processes in qualitative content analysis differently, they all follow more or less the same techniques (Bengtsson, 2016; Drisko and Maschi, 2015; Elo and Kynga, 2007; Graneheim and Lundman, 2003). First qualitative content analysis involves reading through the data and familiarising oneself with it, followed by creating meaning units or codes related to the research aims, then developing different levels of categories and themes based on the codes, and finally reporting the results either through a narrative form or matrixes. Thus, the current data analysis underwent several stages to reduce the number of words and make the data meaningful, the coding process was based on Graneheim and Lundman's coding system (2003). The coding system starts with first being immersed in the text, then finding

various meaning units called codes and then through interpretation are combined with other codes to make sub-categories that are placed under categories, which are then placed under an overarching theme.

3.3.4.1 Pilot Study

As the Pilot Study was executed first with a smaller sample population to trial the intervention and measurement tools, the pre and post-tests were not tested for significance. Therefore, descriptive statistics, as well as qualitative analyses, were conducted to measure difficulty levels, including response rate, time completion and observations of students conducting the surveys, and of the surveys themselves. Class observations and interviews were also analysed using qualitative content analysis, and although it was mainly a deductive approach because it explored feasibility, it had inductive elements as it was open to new themes that could influence the following Case Study. Data analysis was an ongoing recapitulation process that started during data collection, while the coding process, shown in *Table 11 in Section 4.1.3*, was based on Graneheim and Lundman's coding system (2004). The analysis did not require a computer software as the sample size and therefore data amount was small.

3.3.4.2 Stage One - Case Study

The main part of Stage One was the Case Study, and as mentioned earlier it was based on the schema QUAL + quan, thus, this section discusses the data analysis approaches for both during the Case Study together with the reasons they were chosen. For the quantitative surveys, *GQ6* and *Index of Empathy* scale, a paired sample test was used to measure any significant changes pre- and post-test, as is usually done to test interventions when the same participants are tested before and after (Gary, 2013; Tymms, 2012). Before any analyses, however, the surveys were

first filtered to remove participants who did not complete the pre- or post-test. Subsequently, each answer for each participant was recorded on an Excel sheet, and calculated manually as well as through Excel and compared to ensure mistakes were not overlooked.

As the *GQ6* and *Index of Empathy* are existing measures that have been previously used and tested for reliability, only an internal reliability was tested for this particular population, using Cronbach alpha through SPSS, as it is the most commonly used statistical analysis for reliability (Bonnet and Wright, 2015). Thereafter, Excel was used to calculate the total sums for each participant pre- and post-test for the *GQ6*, whereas with the Index of empathy survey, a few participants missed some questions and therefore an average sum was used to convey a more accurate score of empathy levels. Once all the data were cleaned through Excel and entered into SPSS, a paired test was required, and the aim was to conduct a paired t-test to measure any significant difference between the pre- and post-tests. However, prior to that, the data were tested to check if it had a normal distribution, because if not, a nonparametric test would be required. Thus, a Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted on SPSS for both measures in addition to a histogram to ensure accuracy. The results showed the data from the *Index of Empathy* scale had a normal distribution, therefore, a paired t-test was used, whereas the *GQ6* did not have a normal distribution and consequently, a Wilcoxon test was required to measure significance (Gary, 2013; Tymms, 2012).

The last quantitative measure, the *Knightly Virtues* (*KV*) tool, was not included in the data analysis, firstly because there were not enough paired samples to provide reliable and valid results. Secondly, the *KV* data were qualitative and needed to be transformed into quantitative data for statistical analyses, and while analysing it as an independent researcher with no detailed marking scheme, it seemed difficult to ensure reliability and reduce biases since another

researcher was not available for inter-reliability as done in the *Knightly Virtues Project* (Arthur *et al.*, 2014b).

For the qualitative content analysis, the Case Study was also both deductive and inductive. It was the former because categories and themes were chosen before the data collection, such as the context of the school and the efficacy of the intervention. However, the data analysis was open to new themes since it is a phenomenon that had not been studied in the Region prior to this study; therefore, an inductive approach was also required to fill some gaps of which the researcher might have been unaware.

Another characteristic of qualitative content analysis is that it can be manifest or latent; manifest analysis is when the researcher avoids going beyond the text by describing exactly what is said, while latent analysis finds the deeper meaning behind the text (Drisko and Maschi, 2015). In the present project, a manifest analysis was conducted first, followed by a latent analysis to establish whether an underlying meaning could be found, thus, re-reading the text several times was required. The initial step involved reading, re-reading and coding the interviews, focus groups and observations separately, and then finding common categories between the three groups. Similar to Thomas (2013), manual analyses through tables and mapping were preferred and conducted, as the software seemed to miss important codes. Furthermore, software programmes are only capable of conducting manifest analyses (Drisko and Maschi, 2015).

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study requires validity, reliability and generalisability, but the way in which it is achieved differs from quantitative studies. Researchers with an interpretive epistemology use the terms credibility, dependability and transferability, respectively (Graneheim and Lundman, 2003). As this was a mixed method study with qualitative and quantitative approaches, the terms validity, reliability and generalisability are

used, but it is not suggested, therefore, that the research is based on a positivist epistemology because trustworthiness is achieved within each method differently.

Similar to quantitative studies, in qualitative content analysis validity is achieved by proving the results truthfully show what has been studied, while reliability shows that if a study is repeated the same results are very likely to transpire. However, since qualitative studies can be subjective, it is recommended that two researchers analyse the results to increase validity, whereas if that is not possible different methods are recommended to reaffirm results, which is the method employed in this study (Bengtsson, 2016). An alternative way to increase validity within qualitative content analysis is through the quantity of data included in each code, for instance if a code is given to many paragraphs or only one word, then the real meaning is lost (Graneheim and Lundman 2003). Thus, in order to augment validity, in this study a minimum of one sentence or a maximum of one paragraph could constitute a code as shown in *Table 6*. Reliability is achieved by providing details of the analysis approach (Elo and Kynga, 2007), therefore, the coding process presented through categories and themes shown in (*Tables 12 and 13 in Section 4.2.1*). Finally, generalisability can be increased by providing details of the participants, data collection and analysis (Elo and Kynga, 2007).

Table 6. Example of coded quotes

Participant	Quotes	Codes	Sub-category	Category	Theme
ITA	There are lots of people in the world doing a lot of things, but people don't get to really know about them because they're not as glamorous. So, um, if they are taught about it in a classroom setting, their knowledge base would increase, they would probably be exposed to such things, and maybe then, to emulate them.	Role models	Significance	Future Developments in CE and RM	Current Context
HT	I think that they need to incorporate parents more into the school systems...We contact home when a teacher is misbehaving, when a child isn't attaining the right grades for a certain subject. I think we need to get them into school on a more regular basis, interacting with the teachers and tell them more how we could provide the life skills.	Parents	Curriculum	Future Developments in CE and RM	Current Context
ITD	I do also find the kids struggle with like, like with Dan Eley, he was like, they didn't, sometimes they don't quite get how sacrificial it must have been in his life to go from a very abled body to a person being in that position. I don't think they still can conceive the impact on his life. Sometimes, I don't think they can see so deeply into it.	Relatability	Improvements	Role Models	Intervention
ITB	Um, I did like the idea of there was, I think there was an activity or two where they were working together, in pairs, discussing something, and I think that's one of the ways forward, in terms of lessons and planning, for student learning, is that collaboration between the students where they learn off of each other.	Discussion	What worked	Materials	Intervention

Certainly, there are disadvantages to qualitative content analysis; for instance, while its flexibility is beneficial, it can also be a hindrance because an exclusive proper way does not exist. Therefore, the researcher needs to judge the best approach based on the context (Elo and Kynga, 2007). However, for a pragmatic methodology, qualitative content analysis seemed to

be the most appropriate method as it was viewed as possibly providing a balance between quantitative and qualitative methods, and could be both exploratory and explanatory as well as inductive and deductive; thus, allowing for more opportunities to discover new insights and knowledge.

3.4 Stage Two Methods

Completing the first stage of the project showed another phase of research was required to expand and deepen the understanding of how a role modelling project could be implemented in Saudi Arabia. This was due to new themes and categories that emerged from the results: for instance, barriers related to the school culture such as teachers and students' interests, leadership issues and learning methods. Furthermore, none of the quantitative moral development measures showed statistically significant results, which was supported by issues with the intervention that came to light through the focus groups, interviews and observations. Thus, it was hoped that conveying another exploratory study could explain the results from Stage One further. Hence the chart shown in *Figure 2* below presents the predetermined themes for Stage Two based on the results from Stage One.

Figure 2. Predetermined themes for Stage Two
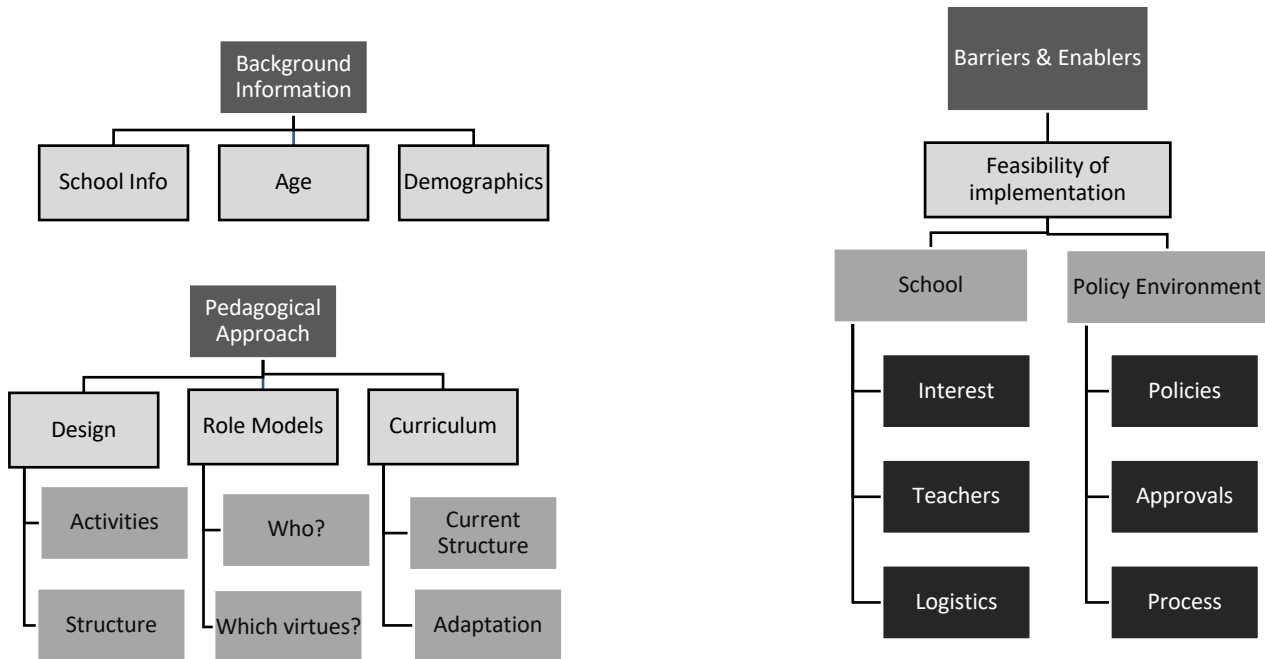
Based on the previous stage, the final data collection and analysis phase of the study was threefold: firstly, it used a qualitative approach to explore perspectives on whether character education, and more specifically role model character education, can affect pupils' moral development based on the cultural context. Secondly, mindful of the Saudi context, it proposed an exploration of how such an educational programme could be developed so as to increase efficacy. Thirdly, it aimed to identify and argue for the best methods to implement it, fully cognizant of the contextual cultural, pedagogical and policy-related barriers and enablers. Although it may be unconventional to take a micro and then a macro approach, the results directed the research project pragmatically, because it gradually transpired that a deeper and more expanded understanding of the phenomenon would provide more useful and generalisable results than simply ending the project at the first stage. In collaboration with the thesis supervisors, it was decided that only with a second stage could the study, as a whole,

possibly provide a starting point for the development and implementation of a role modelling character education programme in the Region.

3.4.1 Stage Two Sampling

This stage of the research required various sampling techniques, and at first a *sample universe* was specified, according to Robinson (2014), which included one inclusion criteria: that participants had to be involved in the educational system in Saudi Arabia. A heterogeneous group was chosen to increase diversity and therefore generalisability, in addition to speaking English being removed as an inclusion criterion. Prior to the recruitment, a sample size of approximately 20 was set as it seemed to be a realistic and practical number for a single researcher as well as enough to provide sufficient data. As expected, saturation was reached after 75% of the interviews were conducted. Purposive sampling was done as various participants with particular roles were preferred to provide a wider perspective and more generalisable results (Robinson, 2014). The groups included students, teachers and parents, as well as consultants and/or curriculum developers.

The recruitment methods changed throughout, as they began by communicating with school organisations, and when that stopped being effective, online advertising was done, followed by snowball sampling, which involves participants referring others (Robinson, 2014). *Table 7* below displays the participants, their code names and their characteristics.

Table 7. Stage Two participant information

Group	Key Informant	Characteristics				
		Age	Gender	Local/Expat	School	Job
Student Focus Groups	S1	10-13	3 F 1 M	Expat	Embassy	N/A
	S2	11-12	4 M	Local	Private International	N/A
	S3	10-11	7 F	Mix	Private International	N/A
Parents	P1	40-49	F	Expat	Embassy	Stay at home parent
	P2	40-49	F	Expat	Public	University administrator
	P3	30-39	M	Local	Private International	Business owner
	P4	30-39	M	Expat	Embassy	University lecturer
	P5	30-39	F	Local	Embassy and Private International	Life coach
	P6	40-49	F	Expat	Embassy and Private International	Life coach and University lecturer
Teachers	T1	30-39	F	Expat	Private International	Teacher
	T2	50-59	F	Local	Private national and Private international	Headteacher
	T3	50-59	F	Expat	Private national and Private international	Teacher
	T4	30-39	F	Expat	Previously private international	Former teacher, now therapist
	T5	50-59	F	Local	Private national and Private international	Headteacher
Consultants/ Curriculum developers	C1	50-59	F	Local	Mainly private	Curriculum developer/ Parent coach
	C2	30-39	F	Local	Mainly private	Education consultant
	C3	30-39	F	Local	Mainly private	Education consultant
	C4	30-39	F	Local	Private and public	Curriculum developer
	C5	50-59	M	Expat	Private national school	Education consultant
	C6	40-49	F	Local	Own centre	Curriculum developer

3.4.2 Stage Two Data Collection

The data collection for Stage Two was purely qualitative because it sought to explore the personal perspectives of various participants in the educational system within the Region. The method tools used in this stage were interviews with the adult participants and focus groups with adolescents, and although the tools were briefly discussed in *Section 3.3.3.2*, they will be elaborated upon further here. Interviews can be categorised in different ways, for instance whether they are structured, unstructured, or semi-structured or whether they are in-depth, informal or ethnographic. The type of interviews used depends on the research design, and as has already been mentioned, this project took a pragmatic approach by selecting methods to best answer research questions based on a certain issue or phenomenon. The second stage of the project was intended to expand the knowledge gained from the first stage through exploration. This choice immediately filtered out certain interview types. For instance, ethnographical interviews are based on an ethnography methodological approach where the researcher is more of an observer and the meaning from the interviews depends on culture (Maggs-Rapport, 2000). Although this project was conducted in a strongly cultured environment, the aim was not to find answers established solely on culture and thus the interviews were structured so that the researcher could act as an interpreter to create meaning based on preconceived themes. Therefore, I needed to be an interactive part of the interview process while also gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, a consideration that led to the choice of semi-structured in-depth interviews and semi-structured focus groups.

The three main types of interview commonly discussed are structured, semi-structured and unstructured, which are on a continuum of how directed and open-ended the interview questions and answers are expected to be, with structured interviews on one end and unstructured on the other. Structured interviews tend to be quantitative, with survey questions

that provide the interviewer with limited flexibility, as the same questions need to be asked in the same order and the results may be collected through a matrix and statistically analysed (Morse, 2012; Edwards and Holland, 2013). Meanwhile, semi-structured and unstructured are considered qualitative interviews as they involve producing knowledge through a two-way interaction between the interviewer and the participant with a particular approach or theme in mind (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Unstructured interviews can include a few questions to guide the researcher based on the aims of the project, but the conversation is mainly led by the participant with limited interruption from the interviewer (Morse, 2012). For instance, narrative interviews are unstructured as they focus on exploring individual lives through personal storytelling (Atkinson, 2012).

This leaves semi-structured interviews, which can be perceived as lying in the middle of the continuum because they involve the researcher having some information about the phenomenon, but unaware of the answers to the research questions and subsequently interview questions (Morse, 2012). Therefore, at Stage Two, semi-structured interviews were chosen, as information about the topic was provided from first stage of the project, but more details and a more in-depth understanding was required. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are expected to have the same questions and probes (Morse, 2012), and so an interview schedule was created for each participant based on their role, explicitly, teacher, parent or education consultant (*see Appendix B for sample).*

In-depth interviews can be used to ascertain different perspectives of a phenomenon from participants connected to the studied arena by means of an exploratory approach. In addition, if the researcher is not part of the community, then in-depth interviews are a way of gaining some of that knowledge (Johnson and Rowlands, 2012). As this stage of the project took an exploratory approach and as an outsider of the Saudi educational community, in-depth

interviews were deemed the most appropriate tool for collecting data. It was deemed that using in-depth interviews would help gain various perspectives on character education and role modelling in the country; in addition, how it might be developed in the future, based on participants' current experiences, values and interests. Educational researchers tend to use in-depth interviews to understand the situation in preparation for practical implications (Mears, 2012), and although the present project may not have immediate practical implications, it aims to be an initial pointer in that direction, allowing in-depth interviews to be a useful tool.

Focus groups for younger participants were used instead of individual interviews for several reasons, as already mentioned in *Section 3.3.3.2*. Focus groups with adolescents can be a useful method to understand their experiences and insights since they feel more comfortable around peer audiences than adult ones (Kennedy, Kools and Krueger, 2001). One of the benefits of focus groups is the opportunity for individuals to share opinions if they are similar, and compare them when they are different, in addition to learning group perspectives rather than individual ones (Morgan, 2012). With respect to identifying how students might prefer the pedagogy and methods of a role modelling project, I needed general ideas based on their experiences and opinions rather than deep personal ones, thus making focus groups a more appropriate tool. Furthermore, focus groups provide more convenient access to a larger number of participants, but how focus groups are conducted and designed depends on the research aims. There tends to be less interaction from the researcher (Morgan, 2012), but the researcher can use questions as a guide (Edwards and Holland, 2013). For this stage of the project, the focus groups had a much smaller interview schedule with general questions, and they were designed as a funnel (Morgan, 2012), starting with broader questions about character education and role modelling, their experience with it, followed by more detailed questions of how they would prefer the project to be developed. The way in which data from focus groups are analysed

cannot be quantitative or individualised or provide deep information; however, it can reveal important information on attitudes and beliefs (Morse, 2012).

All the focus groups were conducted in person, while the interviews were a combination of face to face interviews and phone calls, depending on participants' preferences. The locations included homes, offices and schools, again based on participants' and/or their guardians' preferences, while all the data were audio recorded and collected by the researcher. The interviews/focus groups were conducted in Arabic, English, or both depending on which the participant had greatest ease or fluency. English and bilingual recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher while the Arabic ones were given to a professional transcription service to save time, but were then re-checked by the researcher.

3.4.3 Stage Two Data Analysis

Similar to Stage One, a qualitative content analysis was conducted, which Drisko and Maschi describe as analysing any kind of content through coding and categorisation (2015). Qualitative content analysis is similar to grounded theory in that it uses open coding, but qualitative content analysis differs because it can be deductive, inductive or both as well as exploratory and descriptive (Bengtsson, 2016). This stage of the project contains these aforementioned features as it employed some predetermined themes from the Case Study's results. Furthermore, it took a descriptive approach by presenting some details on the current character education and role modelling context, as well as an exploratory approach to discover possible developments. Semi-structured interviews are usually analysed through content analysis or thematic analysis, but the general difference between the two is that the former creates categories based on the text, while the latter looks for predetermined themes in the text through metaphors and signs, thus making it a more deductive process than content analysis (Morse, 2012).

The aim of the second stage of the present project was also to include deductive and inductive techniques, because although it was based on themes from the Stage One, the next stage needed to explore new ideas, opinions and experiences to help answer how a role modelling project could be developed and implemented in Saudi Arabia. Thus, interview questions were based on the topics in the flowchart shown in *Section 3.4*, while the coding process took an inductive approach as it was open to new themes. Data analysis was an ongoing process of recapitulation that started during data collection, while the coding process, shown in *Tables 14 and 15* in *Sections 5.1 and 5.2* respectively was based on Graneheim and Lundman's coding system (2004). Before reaching the final result, however, I needed to go through several stages to reduce the number of words and make the data meaningful, and this involved first getting familiar with the text, finding various units of meaning, then through interpretation they were combined with other meaning units to make sub-categories and themes without losing the meaning (Bengtsson, 2016).

Table 8. Example of coded quotes

Participant	Quotes	Codes	Sub-category	Category	Theme
P3	Self-love is another one, you know, because society is very harsh on themselves, so self-love is important.	Self-love	Virtue	Content	Development
C2	We can't detach ourselves from our history, especially the Islamic history and civilisation. So, I think there are very good role models, but we shouldn't only focus on past role models, we have to also focus on nowadays role models, that are existing now.	Variety (Historical and modern)	Role Model	Content	Development
T3	Puts the student more in charge then they are governing what direction they choose to develop in, it doesn't have to be part of a herd mentality, which is what I think we are trying to get them away from.	Student-led	Methods	Pedagogy	Development

As there seems to be limited research on how to conduct translations when the data are in more than one language, finding the most effective technique was a challenge. Although

there is no right answer, quite a few studies, such as van Nes *et al.'s* study (2010), suggest the translation process should be delayed as much as possible because language is the medium in which information is interpreted in qualitative research and language differences could 'result in a loss of meaning and thus loss of the validity' (p.314). Although Santos Jr., Black and Sandelowski (2015) recommend early translation when there are many researchers, so everyone has access to the data, they did find meaning was lost in translation. Since the present project had a single, bilingual researcher who conducted the interviews in both languages, it seemed more appropriate to analyse all the data in its original source language with the same coding process, and only translate the quotes required to present the findings, therefore minimising the risk of meaning being lost in translation before the analysis stage began.

3.5 Limitations

As already indicated, difficult choices had to be made from time to time about which method to select and prioritise and, consequently, which method to discard. Each method has its pros and cons, so each exclusion choice involved losses of opportunity as well as mobilisation of opportunities. Given that I am an early researcher with limited resources and manpower, this project is not without its obstacles and limitations. In retrospect, the main limitations of the methodological choices made in this research project can be summarised, as follows:

- The quantitative tools used in Stage One should have had different versions pre and post-test or a longer time between them, as the participants were too familiar with the questions, thus repeating their answers.

- The Knightly Virtues tool was not appropriate for an individual researcher to use for logistical and reliability reasons, in addition it should have been shortened for this particular population.

- More schools included in the Case Study would have strengthened the study's reliability and generalisability.

- Adding another researcher to the project would have reduced researcher biases.

- Including more participants from government schools and from other cities in Saudi Arabia would have widened the sample population and thus the generalisability.

- Including individuals to recheck the translations or transcriptions would have improved the quality of data.

- Inter-reliability checks on the qualitative data would have strengthened the validity of the data.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Although the Pilot and Case Study did not involve the anticipation of any risks, there were several ethical issues that needed to be acknowledged and managed. Within a school, a gatekeeper usually needs to give permission for a study to take place (Angrosino, 2012). Therefore, the first step involved gaining informed consent from the school's gatekeeper (headteacher), confirming an intervention could be conducted that involved pre- and post-tests, interviews with students, teachers and parents as well as school and class observations. Secondly, because most of the participants were adolescents, informed consent from their parents/guardians was required for the pre- and post-tests as well as the focus groups. Detailed information sheets were given to parents explaining that pre- and post-tests were confidential so the researcher would not be able to identify them personally, but not anonymous as each participant would be given a code number to measure development before and after. However, for the Pilot Study no code names were used and therefore the data were completely confidential and anonymous.

With respect to focus groups, there is a higher risk of the topic diverging from what is

included in the information sheets with the facilitator having less control (Gibbs, 2012). Keeping this in mind, students were provided with the relevant information sheets (*see Appendix A for sample*); following this, the situation was explained. Furthermore, when personal information was disclosed, the topic was changed, with the information not included in the data analysis. The focus groups were still confidential, as personal information was not taken or disclosed, but it was not possible for these to be anonymous as the researcher conducted the focus groups.

Thirdly, consent for the interviews from the head, the teachers and the parents were needed, and similar to the focus groups, they were confidential but not anonymous. All participants had the right to withdraw their data before the data analysis period, except for focus groups, but participants were allowed to withdraw during the focus group if they felt uncomfortable. The data are privately stored and only accessible to authorised personnel. Furthermore, there were no control groups so as to avoid ethical concerns regarding some students not receiving the intervention; in addition, the school was given the programme to use with other year groups in the future, if desired. Ethical approval for the Pilot and Case Studies were given separately by the University of Birmingham (ERN_16-1221A and ERN_16-221B, respectively).

Similarly, for the second stage, all participants were provided with information sheets prior to the study explaining details about the project, their withdrawal rights, concerns regarding anonymity/confidentiality, who had access to the data as well as the researcher's contact details if they had any queries. After reading the information sheets, participants were given consent forms to sign before the interviews took place. Adolescents and their guardians were also provided with information sheets and both were required to sign consent forms beforehand. Ethical approval was provided by the University of Birmingham (ERN_18-1865).

Chapter 4 – Stage One Findings: Pilot and Case Study

Chapter 3 examined the methodology and method tools used in the project. It explained how the project was divided into two sequential stages; the first stage had a Pilot and a Case Study which involved creating a role modelling character education programme and studying the possible effects of implementing it within a school in Saudi Arabia through a mixed-method approach (QUAL + quan). The second stage then involved using the results from the first stage to explore perceptions of how an effective role modelling programme was expected to be designed and how it might best be implemented in the Region, based on the existing barriers and enablers.

In this chapter, I present the empirical findings from Stage One of my study. First, *Section 4.1* looks at the results from the Pilot Study, which explains the feasibility of the measurements chosen to test the intervention *Section 4.1.1)*, and then the intervention itself through class observations and pre/post interviews (*Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3*).

Second, *Section 4.2* explores the results from the main Case Study of the first stage, which looks at the single school's setting and background to understand the context in which the intervention was implemented, in addition to the efficacy of the intervention itself. The findings were analysed by dint of various tools, including qualitative findings from the school observations, interviews, focus groups, class observations and lastly quantitative results from the pre and post surveys.

4.1 Stage One Pilot

The Pilot Study was a smaller version of the main Case Study in Stage One as the aim was to test feasibility and assess whether the intervention and measurement tools were appropriate for the sample population, and thus answering the following research questions:

- Are the methods employed feasible for the sample population?
- Is the intervention appropriate for the sample population?

4.1.1 Surveys

As the surveys in the Pilot Study only examined feasibility, they were analysed based on difficulty level through response rates and observations of the students completing the test. As Table 9 shows, the feasibility of the measurement tools was as follows:

Table 9. Feasibility of measurement tools

	Index of Empathy Scale	**Gratitude Questionnaire**	**Knightly Virtues Tool**
Time of Completion	10-15 mins	10-15 mins	60-80 mins
Level of Difficulty	Easy	Medium	Difficult
Response Rate	High (only 2 questions unanswered)	High (all questions answered)	Medium (61.2% pre-test/68% post-test)

Index of Empathy Scale

This was completed in 10-15 minutes and the difficulty level was termed 'easy' because students did not ask questions about the meaning. The questions that were reworded were mostly answered consistently, proving the students understood the content. Moreover, the

response rate was high as only one question by one student was left unanswered in the pre-test and one in the post-test.

Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ6)

This was completed in 10-15 minutes, but the difficulty level was termed medium because students asked about the meaning of a few questions, and some of the answers were not consistent when questions were re-worded. However, the response rate was 100%.

Knightly Virtues Tool

This was completed in 60-80 minutes, which was more than expected as it took two lessons instead of one. Students were asking questions throughout about definitions, the meaning of questions, and complained that it was difficult and long. Towards the end of the pre-test, they were completely distracted, and this was shown by how much they were talking to each other about unrelated topics. Response rate includes full, completed answers, which was 61% pre-test and 68% post-test. With the pre-test (booklet A) the response rate decreased throughout (as shown in *Figure 3*), but the reason for the decrease was unclear, whether it was due to the difficulty level or the length of the test or participants' lack of interest. However, response rate did improve in the post-test (booklet B), based on observation and response rate (as shown in Figure 4).

Figure 3. KV Booklet A response rate
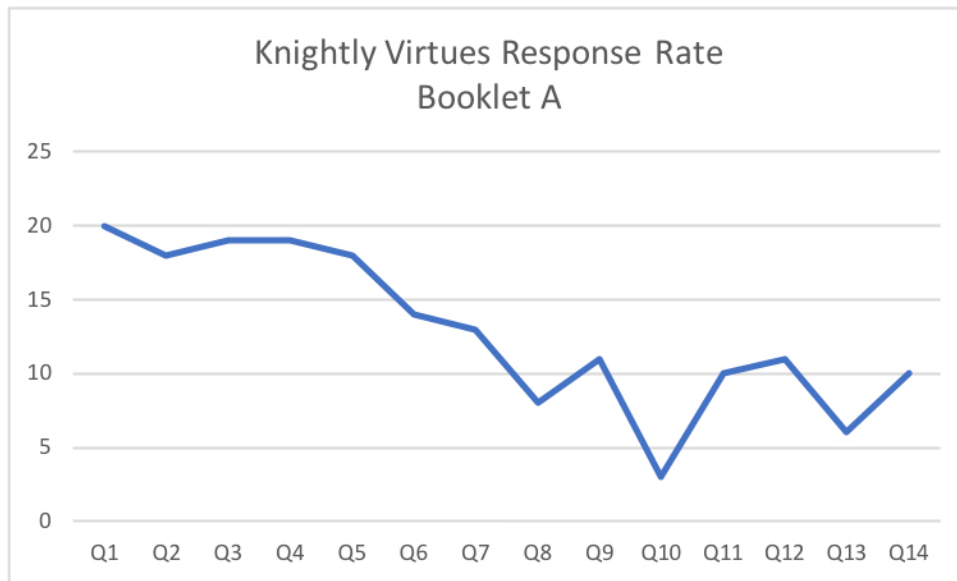
Figure 4. KV Booklet B response rate
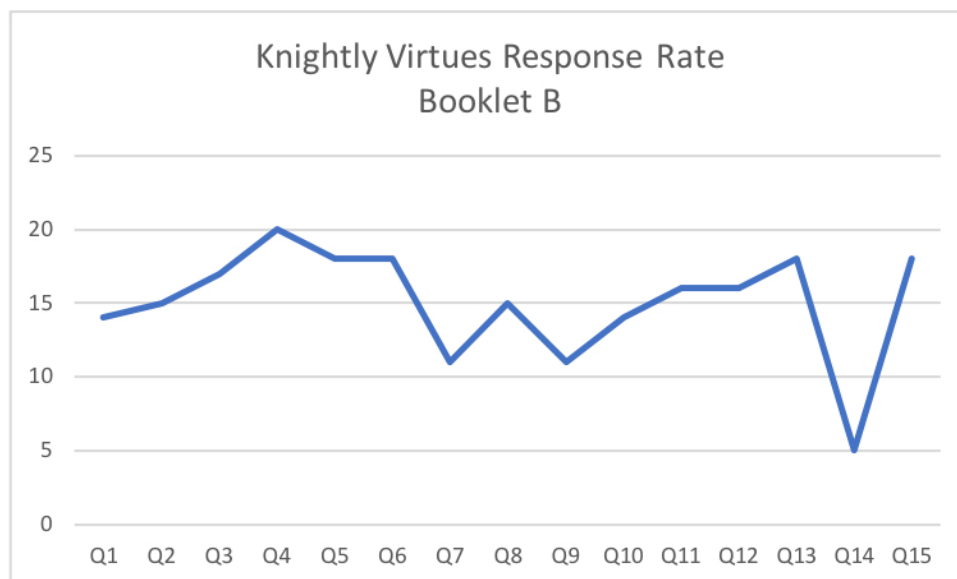
4.1.2 Class Observations

The class observations sought to explore the effective and ineffective components of the intervention by analysing participants' reactions, engagement and ability to complete the activities based on content and structure. *Table 10,* briefly summarises the results of the

intervention observations. Generally, the participants had successful class discussions during the PowerPoint presentations, as they asked several questions and showed interest. The reading comprehension on the moral role models may have been a little difficult, but while working in pairs, the stronger students were able to help the weaker students, and successfully answer the questions. In fact, pair work was encouraged throughout, which helped the class progress in tandem with the activities. Many were able to use what they learnt from the virtues to find personal role models who possess the same virtues, but almost all of the role models chosen were adults. However, they were mostly unable to relate those virtues to their own lives and self-reflect on how they could improve. The questions were understood as being repetitive; therefore, causing the participants to write down the same answers to different questions. The concept of a debate was new to the participants and therefore they were unable to successfully complete the activity.

Table 10. Pilot study observation results

Benefits	Drawbacks
Engaging presentation	Repetitive
Somewhat suitable for students' level	Difficulty with debate
Ability to connect virtues learnt to personal role models	Difficulty connecting virtues to their own lives
Interactive activities (successful pair/group work)	Difficulty finding ways to improve on their virtues

4.1.3 Interview Results

The pre- and post-interviews were conducted with the one teacher implementing the programme, and both interviews were analysed together. The themes of the interview were pre-

determined to answer the research questions of the Pilot Study and to test the interview schedule for the Case Study. The themes include *Character education and the school*, to understand the background of the school regarding character and role modelling; *What worked?* and *What could be improved?* in the intervention.

Table 11. Pilot study interview coding process

Theme	Character Education and the School		Intervention	
Category	Curriculum	Significance	What worked	What could be improved
Codes	Caught	Guidance	Teaching specific virtues	Role models
	Taught	Parents	Student engagement	Activities

Theme 1: Character Education and the School

Caught. Character education was a new concept to the school and virtues have hitherto not been taught specifically in lessons. The way in which teachers did try to teach character was by displaying positive characteristics around the school through posters and drawings, as well by the students catching it from their teachers. The teachers tried to act as moral role models for the students to emulate, as the teacher said:

> *It is the manner of teaching. The teacher should be a role model for the students.*
> *It's how I act in front of them. They imitate the things I do*

Caught and Taught. When asked whether character should be taught or caught, the teacher believed both could be effective, but also that directly teaching students virtues might have drawbacks, because sometimes their students might do the opposite:

I think children learn more through what they see and not just by telling them 'do this and do that.' They actually get repulsed when they are told.

Significance

Guidance. However, the teacher also believed at times students were unaware of what was right and wrong and that someone should direct them. Moreover, she considered using role models to teach virtues as a promising strategy, so students can be exposed to the outside world and see how good people handle various problems:

[through role models] they see different things, different actions according to different situations… if they know about [one] for example see a documentary, read books...Then they will know what he did. What virtues did he implement? What happened in his life to implement these kinds of things, like courage, resilience, and why he is a good man.

Parents. She also mentioned another point about why a programme such as this was important, which was that the parents with whom she engaged focus more on academic grades, therefore it was necessary to refocus their attention on character. Overall, she believed character education is important but was not aware of how it should be implemented.

I believe it should be taught, but unsure how it should be delivered

Theme 2: Intervention

What Worked

Teaching specific virtues. According to the class teacher, teaching specific virtues through this programme was positive, because although the children know they should be good people, they do not know how and what the virtues are. Therefore, by teaching students what each virtue means (i.e. cultivating virtue literacy), they can learn to self-reflect and discover what they already have and what they need to develop:

> *Being specific is good. Because people know I have to be good but good is a very general word… So, the girls must learn the different kinds of virtues so they can know oh I am doing that, and not doing that. What can I do to be better in something? Like exactly what we had in the activities. There were many activities [asking] how can I be better in patience. in resilience and so on.*

Role Models. The teacher found the role models relevant to properly showing the virtues chosen and also appreciated their different recognition and popularity levels, as it taught the students an important lesson, which is that one should not do good things for status:

> *[It] shows you there are different kinds of role models with different [levels] of popularity. This is good, because it's not about being popular. You shouldn't be good to be popular...It is not a reward to be popular.*

The fact that the role models' flaws were presented also taught the students a valuable lesson, namely that there is no such thing as a perfect person: therefore, increasing their motivation to strive to be better without demotivating them through unrealisable upward comparisons:

> *I like the idea that there isn't a perfect role model because most of the time in our old school we used to see oh this kind of girl for example, Malala, we have to be perfect like this kind of person and so on. But actually, it's not true. There isn't a perfect person, and the girls must know that because if we have this*

mindset, that there is a perfect person, we will feel demotivated because we can never be perfect. So, we won't improve ourselves in anyway.

Student Engagement. Overall, most of the activities were considered engaging and the pair/group work helped, but there were a few students who lacked interest and motivation. However, the teacher did find that some students' behaviour changed throughout the programme because at the start some were misbehaving, wasting time by interrupting the lessons and not working, but towards the end they were more motivated, completing tasks and showing engagement in the lessons:

> *A lot of girls actually showed a different attitude from the beginning. For instance, at the beginning they didn't want to do any work. They just wanted to talk, wanted to interrupt the lesson, just wanted the lesson to go by doing nothing. But at the end of the sessions they were well-disciplined, well-behaved and wanted to really work…Good for them. I feel like there was a change from the programme.*

What could be improved

Role Models. The teacher believed that even more relatable role models should be chosen, because when they are currently from a different culture; it forms a distance and makes the virtues seem unachievable:

> *[It] would be very nice to see Arab examples because you know, sometimes they feel like, we have nothing to do with them, and they have different lives.*

Activities. Some activities were difficult to adapt in class because some students became distracted and were being introduced to completely new concepts. The main example given was

the debate, as they had never had a debate before and were not interested in doing it, mainly because they did not understand what it involved.

4.1.4 Pilot Study Conclusions

Overall, the Pilot for the main Case Study demonstrated that, some manageable shortcomings notwithstanding, an Aristotelian role modelling intervention was feasible, and while efficacy and significance were not measured, it indicated that the intervention could be executed successfully. The Pilot Study was required to prepare for the next phase of research which looked at a single school in the Region as a Case Study to better understand the efficacy of the intervention within the school and Region's culture by exploring the school ethos, curriculum and so on. The Pilot Study showed that the role modelling programme could be engaging and that it is a potentially appealing subject matter for a school in the Region as a method to teach character. Furthermore, the interview schedule used in the pre- and post-interviews elicited the information required, including how character education was taught in the school, and perspectives on the intervention itself. Therefore, some of the same questions and the data analysis processes were repeated in the Case Study.

Based on the results of the Pilot Study, the intervention in the Case Study was modified and conducted with an older age group to avoid the issues faced in the Pilot. For instance, older participants would likely have more advanced reading and critical thinking skills that are required for the *Knightly Virtues* tool, the self-reflection activities and more advanced activities such as the debate, therefore allowing for a faster and more appropriate pace. The intervention was also adapted slightly to reduce repetitive questions, as through the class observations it had resulted in the loss of students' interest. In the Case Study, lessons also required spacing as this was also found to be an issue in the Pilot Study.

Although the next phase of research did not include a large sample size, it elicited some more insight into the effectiveness, significance and methodological issues faced when implementing an Aristotelian role model intervention with school children in the Region.

4.2 Findings from Case Study

The Case Study was the main phase of Stage One, as it studied the implementation of a role modelling character education programme with a larger population size than the Pilot Study and in more detail, using more interviews, class and school observations in addition to focus groups with students. Based on the results from the Pilot Study, as already mentioned, the sample population was modified to include an older age group and the role modelling intervention was adapted to increase its efficacy within the next phase of implementation. As discussed in *Chapter 3*, the results of the Case Study were analysed by means of mixed methods, including two self-report surveys representing quantitative data, in addition to interviews, observations and focus groups representing qualitative data. *Section 4.2.3* displays the survey results, while the previous sections focus on each theme from the qualitative results, presenting the various categories in each theme and combining data from each method, starting with interviews and focus groups, followed by observations. For instance, *Section 4.2.2* explores the theme (Current Context) and *Section 4.2.2* examines (Intervention). Each quote includes a code name, and the details of each participant can be found in *Table 3* in *Section 3.3.2.2*.

4.2.1 Theme 1 - Current Context

Table 12 below displays the categories and subcategories in the first theme: Current Context. This includes participants' perspectives on the current developments in character education and

role modelling in the school and if and how they believe it could be developed further. Another category elicits the perceived barriers and enablers in implementing a character education programme in the school and to some extent the Region as a whole. For the first sub-category, only the results of the interviews and focus groups are included as it focuses on participants' perspectives on how the programme could be effectively developed, while the second category includes the observations, in addition to the interviews and focus groups.

Table 12. Theme 1 – Coding process

Theme	Current Context					
Category	**Future Developments in Character Education and Role modelling**				**Barriers/Enablers**	
Sub-category	**Significance**	**Curriculum**	**Pedagogy**	**Role models**	**Barriers**	**Enablers**
Codes	Moral development	Taught	Student-led	Community	Leadership	PSHE
	Society	Whole school	Action-based	Representative	Pedagogy	Assembly
	Role models	Parents	Group work	Relatable	Teachers	Caught CE
		Community	Discussions	Historical	Parent involvement	Society
					Ethos	

The content of this table is explained in *Sections 4.2.1.1* and *4.2.1.2* below.

4.2.1.1 Future Developments in Character Education and Role modelling

Significance. One of the sub-categories discussed was the significance of teaching character in general and teaching it through role models, in particular. Out of the ten adult participants interviewed, nine mentioned the importance of having character education and four mentioned the significance of using role models to teach character. One of the reasons given for the significance of character education was the current lack of it because of no religious teaching in the school (secular and embassy school); parents not teaching it; and/or progressive changes in the Region and technological changes universally. One teacher found it to be particularly important in Saudi Arabia to introduce explicit character education, because it is a conservative culture with a lack of exposure to diversity, creating a discriminatory ethos. One focus group also mentioned that character education and role modelling would increase their exposure to global events:

I think the children of today, they need to learn about this. It's not, they don't observe it, they don't practice it generally. And uh, such things need to be taught because in our virtual world that they are living in, these things are sadly lacking (ITA)

I think it would have the most amazing effect on students because it's something that's missing in this sensitive age. And in a society at the moment with Saudi Arabia, being a developing nation, on the brink of being developed. (ITB)

Another reason for the significance of character education is that it provides life skills that are long lasting and considered as or more essential than academic competences:

So, we're not teaching them necessarily things that are certainly true and accurate in 70 years' time, but we are hopefully passing on character which will seem

through their lives. That I think is a fundamental part of education, and without that we aren't doing our job. (HT)

Personality growing and character building is more important than the degree or certificate. Because if the personality growing is good, then all aspects of life will be good. (PB)

Moreover, one parent mentioned an improvement in behaviour with character education, and two student focus groups agreed it would motivate them:

Bullying would be less. More acceptable of their peers. They'd include you know friends for who they are rather than anything. (PC)

It can help us be better people. (Y9).

The four participants who mentioned the significance of using role models to teach character education provided different reasons, including the fact that every individual needs a role model, as well as Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) being an important role model in the Islamic world, and the importance of seeing real life examples in front of them, as children tend to learn better through observation.

   Curriculum. This subcategory explores how the participants thought role modelling character education should be structured and placed within the curriculum. The focus groups did not provide any information, but the adult participants mentioned several ways. Four participants suggested it would be more effectively taught as a separate subject, for reasons such as emphasis and time, while two participants including a teacher and a parent said it should be taught through community involvement. Two teachers found it important to have a whole-school approach where role modelling character education is embedded in the curriculum through assemblies and all lessons. Meanwhile, one teacher and two parents suggested it should

be taught in collaboration with parents and take a school-home approach, which supports the students' points as in the focus groups a few participants mentioned learning character development in the home more than school:

> *And I think not just the kids, but the parents should really be involved in this because a lot of it is coming from home.* (PC)

> *That's also fine, like PSHE, because then you can concentrate on certain things. Because you gotta remember when you're teaching, if someone's got a story, you can't just say oh tell us this story, because you've got to get a move on. But PSHE there's no exam or specification, it's all about sharing and talking and discussing.* (TY)

Pedagogy. This subcategory focuses on what the participants believed the most effective activities to teach role modelling character education would be, and this included student-led activities, action-based activities, group work and discussions. Four participants suggested action-based activities including projects such as case studies or research and kinaesthetic learning (requiring some movement) through volunteering or hiking, and the focus groups supported this point by reiterating the need for outdoor projects and needing to learn through experience. One teacher suggested student-led activities, group work, and three teachers mentioned discussions. Students from all three focus groups also repeatedly suggested less writing, more group work and more discussions:

> *More like activities to do, instead of just sitting and watching on like the smart board, like what's happening outside, we can go and experience it, look how it's actually happening, and how people basically go through it.* (Y9)

> *...Maybe outside activities?*

- *Yea. More group activities.*
- *Social activities. More group activities, things shouldn't be repeated - and not that much writing.*
- *Yea.*
- *More speaking and teamwork, debating, more public speaking.* (Y8)

Role Models. The following sub-category explores the type of role models the participants would want to use to teach virtues, and this included four participants mentioning community-based role models who can physically come into the classroom, including alumni or parents. Meanwhile, two teachers suggested that relatable role models were important whether it be through a similar culture and/or age. One additional teacher discussed relatability, but then said it did not matter who the role model was, as long as they represented the right values, which supports the idea of values being transcultural:

Anyone who has an inspirational story regardless of who they are now, whatever they stand for. (ITB)

Only the Y7 focus group mentioned role models they preferred and this included two historical role models, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, and one famous relatable role model, Mohammed Salah, who is an Arab, and Muslim professional football player who represents resilience, gratitude and kindness shown through his childhood stories and his current charitable personality.

4.2.1.2 Barriers and Enablers

Barriers. This subcategory explores several issues faced by teachers, parents and students in the school and/or region which could affect the implementation of the programme. For instance, a couple of the teachers mentioned the issue of the *leadership* in the school,

especially with the PSHE lessons (the most obvious venue for character education), as the topics are not thought through and simply thrown at the PSHE teachers without discussion:

There's no incentive for them and it has had a very negative impact as far as PSHE curriculum goes. It's not being delivered with the good intent as desired by senior leaders or by curriculum or by governmental requirements. It's just there, it's been pushed out and then it's forgotten. (ITB)

We just get told by her [senior leadership], there's no 'right let's sit down, let's look at best practices, let's look at experience among the staff, let's look at what ideas people have.' That's really what should be, and even with PSHE, that could be a big discussion area. (ITD)

The next barrier is possibly connected to the last one, which is *PSHE pedagogy* because some of the students expressed a lack of interest in PSHE due to its content or how it is perceived:

It was basically a free lesson! It was kind of like a make-up lesson for other lessons. (Y7)

...because like what's the point of learning PSHE if the whole time we're just going to be learning about the same thing over and over again. (Y8)

A few teachers supported the students' arguments by mentioning the lack of commitment and attention given to PSHE in the school. The headteacher discussed character education's quality being limited internationally but more so in international schools in Saudi Arabia and in this particular school. Some of the teachers mentioned the lack of teaching virtues within the PSHE lessons, as they were being devoted to more practical topics such as healthy eating.

Another obstacle discussed were the *teachers* themselves, both their lack of interest and training, and this could also be somewhat related to the fact that lessons were forced upon them. Two further reasons were teachers' fear of doing something different or improvising the content of PSHE, and high staff turnover creating difficulties in implementation:

Many teachers are only here for the 2 year contract and they will leave, so it's very very difficult to embed things in. (ITC)

But most teachers are just very comfortable in their own bubble, I'll just do chess or I'll just teach football. (TX)

But I think they sort of look at it that they're forced to do it as an additional lesson, and they don't really want to do it. (ITD)

One more issue related to teachers, which was only mentioned by the headteacher, was the cultural difference between the teachers and the students in many international students because the teachers tend to be British, but the students are not, and so he explained how staff require help handling such differences, for instance when choosing role models.

One focus group also raised the issue of teaching styles and PSHE was viewed negatively:

The bad thing is the way they teach - the attitude towards it. (Y8)

This barrier was seen several times in the class observations when comparing teaching styles. One teacher showed a lack of interest and was more focussed on students completing tasks; therefore, writing was encouraged more than discussion, and in this class many of the students were either chatting, daydreaming or trying to finish the work as quickly as possible. Another teacher had many technical difficulties but used her own creativity and discussion to achieve

the learning objectives, so many of the students were then engaged and focussed on the topic at hand. This was also the case in another class, where the teacher expressed his awe of role models, and the students reciprocated by providing examples and ideas. In another class observation, a teacher came in shouting and expressing his anger towards the programme and the fact that it was thrown at him, in front of the students. Most of the students were then quiet and did not participate much, and for the other lesson with the same teacher they were told not to conduct the lesson and revise for exams instead. The observations supported the interview and focus groups' points on teachers' attitudes towards the lessons, as they were reflected in the students' engagement and interest in the topic.

Another common barrier raised by parents and teachers was the lack of *parent involvement*, which recalls the point mentioned earlier when both groups suggested parents should be more involved in a role modelling character programme if it is developed in the future. In the interviews, all three parents were unaware PSHE was a lesson taught in the school, and they all mentioned wanting to be more involved with the school's character development. One teacher was also a parent and explained she only knows about character education being taught because she is a teacher in the school:

> *Um, if I had not been part of this school, I would not know what's going on in PSHE because that's not something that goes home.* (ITA)

The *school ethos* was a barrier that appeared through the interviews, school observations and the mission statement. The ethos seemed to be more focussed on academics than character education, and this was firstly shown in the mission statement as it discussed students developing strong academic skills with only one sentence on good etiquette, but there was no mention of moral virtues such as gratitude, respect or kindness. This was supported further with

the work displayed throughout the primary and secondary sections of the school, as most of them were academic schoolwork. Some of the work displayed included character education such as learning virtues through literature or helping the environment, but this was limited to one or two boards in the secondary school with no other reference or emphasis to character education around the school. There was one poster on good behaviour, that again prioritised good etiquette more than moral character, except one point on the poster commenting on kindness which said:

> *Treat others as you would want to be treated. School poster*

As already mentioned in this sub-category, teachers found the school leadership to be an issue as the leaders failed to prioritise character education and PSHE, which also connects to the school ethos. While parents also discussed the lack of focus on character education, two parents explained the school may claim to foreground certain values but fail to motivate specific actions towards them:

> *They tell us they're teaching them, but I think, no. They do not teach them how to love each other, how to treat each other.* (PA)

Enablers. The following sub-category includes the current facilitators in the school that could help with developing and implementing a role modelling character education. Some of the elements conflict with the barriers, but this is because some participants' opinions conflicted with others, while sometimes their own individual points included both drawbacks and benefits. While listing the facilitators found in the interviews, focus groups and observations I will also mention how they clash with previously listed arguments.

The first enabler was the fact that there were *PSHE and Leadership lessons* within the curriculum, therefore an allocated slot to teach character already existed. Although some teachers previously mentioned that the topics were limited, two teachers found some elements

quite useful. For instance, healthy eating helped a teacher raise the issue of self-esteem and body issues. None of the teachers, parents or the headteacher mentioned Leadership lessons, except for the students in the focus groups, even though it seems the Leadership lessons are what the students preferred and included character education through role models:

> *PSHE it's our [deleted for anonymity] teacher, she shows us videos and tells us to write and doesn't take us outside. But our leadership teacher, he uses videos, he makes us write, he makes us relate to it, he takes us outside.* (Y8).

> *I think it was last year, with our previous leadership teacher, we took a look at leaders, what makes a good leader. And we talked about how certain people like Martin Luther King were good leaders, that's all I remember.* (Y9).

The next enabler was the *assembly topics* used in the school, and although the school ethos does not seem to promote character education as much as academics, the assembly topics mention it at times including:

- Cultural Dexterity
- United Nations Day
- Student Council (Student manifesto and elections)
- Remembrance Day
- Respect
- Behaviour

Even though the headteacher mentioned the limited quality of character education and role modelling in the school, he said he tried to compensate for it through his school assemblies by referring to various role models to present certain values, and at times physically bringing them in. One of his most preferred ones was bringing a school alumnus as a role model to convey how his hard work and values led to an innovative and successful career:

He's really produced something quite special. He's again an element of character education, from someone who has just left them. And I love that because that's very easy for them to think 'well how do I be like that, that guy, he was sitting in this room'. (HT)

Teachers and students confirmed the headteacher's comments by discussing character education and role modelling being presented in assemblies:

In assemblies we talk about, like, bullying, respect, sportsmanship and stuff. (Y7)

Values were taught explicitly in assemblies, but another perceived enabler is that character education was caught, so although it was not labelled as character education, values were taught organically. Two parents, as well as a couple of students in the focus groups, mentioned character being taught on the spot if the situation presented itself as a teaching moment:

I think during the day when they see anything they try to teach them through the things they see. (PA).

If a situation happens with a student, then the teacher tells us you should act accordingly, and tell us you should behave like this or like this. (Y7)

Although no parents or teachers discussed the Anti-bully Squad, the Year 8 focus group raised it as a method of learning about character in the moment. The Anti-bully Squad is a group of students who look out for any form of bullying and is also an organisation to which students can report bullying incidents. Furthermore, teachers discussed character being developed implicitly through extracurricular activities such as student council, drama and after-school

clubs. Moreover, the headteacher mentioned the sixth formers being mentors and role models to the younger students as they tend to respect them:

> *...we encourage students to join the council, and be part of trying to improve things in school. And we have a full enrichment programme in the school, which they can attend [such as] sporting, production, and that develops character.* (ITC).

The last perceived enabler was the *school culture*, a point which conflicts with some negative comments previously mentioned on the significance of having character education due to the current lack of diversity and understanding of global ideas. In contrast, others found the school culture to be advantageous to character education due to its diversity:

> *The student community is wonderful. 50 nationalities, in one mix, if you said this was Saudi Arabia, outside they would not believe it. I've never been in such a tolerant community, and it should be celebrated.* (ITC)

> *Of course, we've got a very diverse population so I'm quite happy with the idea of children being stretched outside their cultural box, that's a good thing* (HT)

4.2.2 Theme 2 – Intervention

The following theme uses the interviews with the intervention teachers, the focus groups and the class observations to understand the benefits and drawbacks of the programme. The theme and categories shown below were predetermined to explore particular aspects of the programme, unlike the codes, which were based on what the participants said and what the observations showed. Furthermore, the structure of the following analysis differs from the rest as there were no sub-categories

Table 13. Theme 2 - Coding process

Theme	Intervention			
Category	**What worked**	**Improvements**	**Difficulty Level**	**Teachers**
Codes	Discussion	Activities	Easy	Engagement
	Role models	Role models	Medium	Interest
	Learning development	Time	Difficult	Preparation

4.2.2.1 What worked

This category explores how the programme was beneficial based on the interviews, focus groups and observations. There were conflicting opinions on this matter, but the opposing views will be discussed in the *Improvements* category *(4.2.3.2),* as well as the observations that could explain the reasons for this.

Discussions. The most preferred element of the programme was the discussions, and this was conveyed in the interviews with the teachers and the class observations. The teachers found the students to be engaged to optimum level during discussions as they seemed able to freely exchange ideas together:

Discussions were very good. As you can see from that group, the students love discussions, they like to get involved, and that's always useful. (ITC).

Um, I did like the idea of there was, I think there was an activity or two where they were working together, in pairs, discussing something, and I think that's one of the ways forward, in terms of lessons and planning, for student learning, is that collaboration between the students where they learn off of each other. (ITB).

This connects to a category in the previous theme regarding how students wanted the programme developed, as the most popular type of activity was discussion. The class observations supported this further, because students were fully engaged during class or group discussions and brainstorming.

Role Models. The role models themselves was another advantageous element of the programme mentioned mainly by the teachers, and some of the students. Most of the teachers were unable to progress towards the third role model, Susie Valadez, due to time constraints; therefore, the discussions were only based on Dan Eley, Malala or both *(see Section 3.3.1 for details on role models)*. Dan Eley was the more popular role model as the teachers found the students engaged with him the most, and that he accurately represented the virtues taught such as resilience. Two teachers appreciated the variety of the role models as it showed diversity, while one teacher found Malala relatable to the students in terms of age:

> *I really liked Dan and I found the students also interested in him more...They watched it with interest, they discussed with interest.* (ITA).

> *I thought [Dan] was a really suitable role model, the resources, the story about it, the build-up, the inspiration. Everything about it was perfect, it couldn't have been any better.* (ITB)

> *Role models come in all shapes and sizes, and normal people that can inspire you, and they learned an important skill there.* (ITC)

> *I liked the diversity of the two role models* (ITD)

The students discussed why they found the role models effective and it included finding them inspirational, wanting to emulate them and finding nothing impossible.

Like, nothing is impossible, basically.

- *Amazing*
- *Inspired.* (Y7)

At first, I thought they were pretty normal people and then after you got to learn what they did, then you sort of had a new perception of who they are, they stand out amongst people around us. (Y9)

We also learnt that, we also understand that like, sometimes people see things as impossible but like when you wanna do it, you can. (Y9)

None of the students discussed what they disliked about the role models, but the teachers did have comments on how weaknesses could be improved, which are discussed in the next section.

Learning development. Whether or not the students' moral or virtue understanding developed was analysed qualitatively through the focus groups and class observations. During the focus groups, the participants were asked what they had learnt, and if it had any impact on them. Most of the students could recall the virtues taught in the programme and mentioned that they were new concepts. A few students said the programme did not impact them, while some participants in each focus group explained how the programme influenced them, including their view of other people in addition to more exposure to role models around the world. Some students mentioned how it would affect their moral behaviour such as being more grateful or resilient:

It would make me not give up so easily, like in Algebra. (Y7)

...we've learned about other people's backstories and their problems, and also other people here might suffer the same problems if we continue to do things like be mean or bully or stuff. (Y8)

I would be more fair to people regardless of who they are. (Y8)

...normally I would just let them handle it on their own. Now I feel like I should be getting involved, as I'm the oldest, I should be helping them instead of just leaving them. (Y9)

...we learnt a lot about the world, about yourself and the second is that it did teach us how we should respect other people, like it did teach us that we're lucky in this world because we're watching these like videos about these people who have really like struggle, a really hard life, and we're lucky to be here and study. (Y9)

Only three classes were observed, but within all of them the virtues were new concepts to them. However, many of the students showed understanding through their discussions in pairs and groups, and some conveyed it in their answers to the writing activities; therefore, achieving some of the learning objectives. This does not necessarily mean the programme was effective as a whole, as the next subcategory explores the elements that need to be improved, which may have negatively impacted upon the efficacy of the programme.

4.2.2.2 Improvements

The following category explores how the programme could be improved based on teachers' and students' opinions in addition to the class observations. Several issues were addressed concerning activities, role models and time constraints.

Activities. The main concern with the activities was the amount of writing they required, which both the students and teachers mentioned. This was also clear in the class observations because as soon as many students were made to conduct a writing activity, they would avoid doing it, whereas with discussions they were more likely to participate. One teacher mentioned

that it was not an academic subject, the students were not interested in writing and reading, while two other teachers suggested more student-led and active activities would have been more effective:

> *When I gave them the booklets, the response was 'well we're not in English so we're not going to be writing long answers'. (ITA)*

> *I think it was very kind of limited and we could have expanded on that a bit more. (ITB)*

> *We push for lessons to be student-led than teacher-led and that was more teacher-led than student-led, so how could we have made that more student-led? (ITC)*

> *They could have even done a skit on it, a role-play on it. So those are other options, you know, create a group of 3 or 4 and role-play around different things you might have discussed. (ITD)*

Most of the students in the focus groups supported these points as the biggest issue seemed to have been the writing and reading required, which they found repetitive, less engaging and not interesting. A few of the students also complained about the *Knightly Virtues* pre and post-tests because they were long with a great deal of writing:

> *We felt like the writing was a lot, for the tests especially, like they were really long. (Y7)*

> *If they teach it in one way, like, the child's kind of like mmm, learnt so many times, in the same way. (Y7)*

Because not everyone likes to copy down what they just learnt, they just want to get on with the activities, but then because of us writing we have to use up most of the time to do it. (Y8)

It was a bit boring at the end. (Y9)

The few class observations conducted, supported these points because during the pre- and post-tests many students were complaining to the teachers, and by the time the actual intervention started, the students had already lost interest. One of the biggest issues was that none of the teachers followed fully the *teachers' pack* included in the programme, which emphasises the importance of pair and group work; therefore, in some classes the teachers prioritised finishing the writing activities instead of ensuring students were brainstorming and discussing the content of the lesson or even conducting hands-on activities such as debating. The teachers who did focus on learning through pair, group or class discussions elicited more reaction and participation from the students than those only doing the writing activities. One teacher who encouraged discussion also tried to structure the lesson to ensure the students understood the virtues from the video before moving on to the activities, while another teacher simply showed the video and instructed the students to complete the writing activities with limited interaction between her and the students. The difference was reflected in the students' attitudes as the former class continued without complaining, whereas the latter had more students misbehaving and showing less interest.

Role Models. Although this was previously mentioned as a positive element of the programme, the teachers did face some issues with them and thought other kinds of role models might be more effective. Firstly, three intervention teachers suggested more culturally relatable role models would have been preferred, thus someone Arab or Saudi, while two teachers suggested role models who are closer to the students in age, also to increase relatability. Malala

imported more problems than Dan Eley as the students could not connect with the exemplar because, even though she was a similar age, her life was too different to theirs, so the focus was more on Malala's life than her values. Furthermore, one teacher said the students could not understand the virtue of justice through Malala, and therefore were unable to reflect on ways they could be just in their daily lives. A teacher also mentioned the difficulty the children had in absorbing and empathising with what happened in Dan Eley's life:

> *Malala, they didn't really discuss her as much as the controversy surrounding her.* (ITA)

> *So, it would be really nice and fresh to see someone within their own community that has done amazing things… and there are many out there.* (ITC)

Time. This was the biggest issue with the programme, as shown in the observations and discussed by the teachers and one focus group. The obstacles included how short the lessons were, the fact that the programme was conducted towards the end of the year, and for many students it was timetabled right after swimming and just before lunch, therefore short on time and interest. None of the teachers were able to finish all three lessons, or complete one lesson fully with all the activities. Two teachers mentioned it was too precipitous, and so they were not allowed preparation time to familiarise themselves with the resources properly, and this was mainly because it was towards the end of the year and so they needed to finish the programme before exams started:

> *And also, maybe the timing wasn't right. Because, end of the year, it was exam time, they were more focused on the other exam subjects, right now it's the end of the year.* (ITA)

Uh, I don't we got the best out of it, we were rushing for time, and we just didn't have enough time to communicate the relevancy of this, and then BAM, we're teaching this, this is your test, we're doing this. We should have had a lead up time to it. (ITC)

No, because of time constraint, which was a problem and getting familiar with the materials. It was a bit of a rushed job. (ITB)

One student mentioned that the lesson was after swimming and therefore meant he needed something more engaging:

Because we have swimming, maybe we could have more lessons where our teacher could interact with us because some of us would just fall asleep. (Y9)

The time issue was mainly shown during observations, because PSHE was only 40 minutes compared to other academic subjects that had 80 minutes, and when students were coming back from swimming, time was wasted changing and walking over, therefore leaving teachers with only 30 minutes to complete a lesson. Two teachers rushed through the activities and prioritised completing the work rather than eliciting interest and engagement from the students, while one teacher did the opposite and therefore only completed an activity or two. None of the teachers completed all three lessons, and all of them had to skip several activities that were time consuming, such as role playing and debate. Furthermore, the students seemed uninterested and tired throughout, which was explained by the teachers that it was the end of the year and thus causing them to disregard any subjects not related to their exams.

4.2.2.2 Difficulty Level

The following category is based on what students and teachers have said as well as what was noticed in the observations. The codes were placed into one of three categories: easy, medium,

difficult. Although a possible social desirability bias needs to be kept in mind, none of the focus groups mentioned that the programme was difficult; the Year 7 and Year 8 agreed it was an appropriate *(medium)* level for them, while Year 9 said it was *too easy*. To support this, during the focus groups, all three groups demonstrated an understanding of the virtues and the concept of role models. The teachers, however, did not fully align with this as three of the four interviewed intervention teachers mentioned the terminology and/or reading to be difficult for the students. One of the teachers explained literacy levels being a problem the school faced in general, thus affecting the programme's efficacy, while another teacher agreed by saying there was a language issue. It was suggested the text could be read as a group to help the students who might struggle and ensure they understood the meaning:

> *I found the definition very bold, especially for year 7, things need to be broken down for them. I think it would have worked well for KS4.* (ITB)

> *The literacy levels of students isn't strong. And we need to push reading...I wouldn't take that out, I would leave it in, but that did cause a bit of a problem because their comprehension wasn't all that good.* (ITC)

> *I think they struggled with some of the terminology sometimes, but then we went through the definitions.* (ITD).

During the class observations, the level of difficulty was placed as *medium* or appropriate, because even though the concept of virtues seemed new to all three-year groups, their discussions and answers in their booklets showed a sense of understanding. As the teachers mentioned, some words needed to be explained to the students, which slowed the lesson down, but once they were defined, many students were able to successfully complete the activities. Some students showed they were able to make a connection between the role models and the

virtues, but in one Year 9 class, the girls struggled; in addition, one teacher in the interviews mentioned the boys also found this difficult. Through the observations, the most *difficult* element of the intervention seemed to be the pre- and post-reading comprehension tests. Although not all of the classes were observed, the programme was generally found to be an appropriate level, but possibly requiring extra literacy support.

4.2.3.3 Teachers

This category explores the teachers' engagement, interest and preparation in the programme, and although the category will be discussed specifically based on interviews, focus groups and observations, it is strongly connected to other categories in Theme 1 such as *time* and *school leadership*. *Engagement* explores how much the teachers actually engaged with the programme such as providing a dialogue with the children, using various activities, showing examples of what they expect and feedback on the work they have completed. Two focus groups complained about teachers' lack of engagement and said the teacher did not engage in discussions or provide a variety of activities to make it interesting, as the students were simply expected to read and write the answers. This was also shown in the observations because, as already mentioned, a few teachers wanted them to complete the activities without providing feedback or sharing answers, and even the presentation/brainstorming, which requires discussions, was rushed by some teachers.

Regarding teacher's *interest*, this was also connected to engagement because teachers who showed enthusiasm towards the subject engaged with the students more. Teachers' interest was not discussed in the focus groups but shown through the class observations and interviews. A teacher showed enthusiasm in the class by explaining to their students how they personally felt towards the role models and expressing his interest in virtues. Similarly, another teacher

connected virtues to the Islamic religion, and how they felt being virtuous was important, thus trying to reflect how the taught virtues could be acted upon at school and home. A possible reason for teachers' lack of interest, however, could be due to how PSHE was perceived in general since it had failed to be taken seriously, as a teacher said:

> *There's been this kind of status with PSHE and staff, and the students thought it was just a buzz lesson.* (ITB)

One teacher came into the class expressing feelings of anger for doing the programme as he explained it was forced upon him and he was not prepared, hence receiving limited engagement or feedback from the students' work. In the following class the same teacher accepted the programme and initiated brief discussions, but for the final class he did not bring the materials, thus allowing the children to revise for their exams instead.

This leads to the next point on teachers' *preparation*, which could be related to the time constraints, as it showed barely any of the teachers were prepared for the lessons. Some teachers brought in the answer booklets and had the presentation ready, while others only had the presentation and thus used other materials to conduct the lesson. Furthermore, in the class observations no teachers' packs were seen in sight, and while the pack included tips and guidance on how to help students with understanding and engagement, none of the teachers followed it. This was proven further as one teacher seemed unsure of what some of the moral virtues meant, even though their definitions were provided in the teachers' pack. There were several reasons given for this, and one of the main ones was time constraints, as the lessons were thrown onto the teachers without time to discuss or read through the materials in detail; furthermore, because it was towards the end of the year, the programme was compressed to fit

it in, not giving teachers enough time to effectively prepare and conduct the lessons as well as engage the students.

4.2.3 Survey Results

As discussed in *Chapter 3*, three quantitative pre and post tests were used in the Case Study in an attempt to measure a modicum of moral development as well as virtue literacy, but the *Knightly Virtues* test was not analysed. Although the qualitative data about the intervention (*Theme 2 Section 4.2.3.3)* provided detailed information on what worked and what needed to be improved, the quantitative tests were conducted to examine whether the intervention had any impact on participants' empathy and gratitude levels and provide additional and possibly a more objective perspective on the intervention's efficacy.

4.2.3.1 Index of Empathy Scale

The statistical analysis used for the Index of Empathy scale was a paired t-test, but first a test of normality was conducted to examine whether a paired t-test was appropriate through a Shapiro-Wilk test and looking at a histogram. The histograms conveyed a normal bell curve and the Shapiro-Wilk test on both the pre- and post-results confirmed this further as the *p-value*s were greater than 0.05.

The paired t-test intended to test whether there was a significant change in empathy levels before and after the participants undertook the role modelling character education programme, through mean differences. Therefore, the following null and alternative hypotheses are:

Null Hypotheses (H₀): Undertaking the role modelling character programme has no effect on students' empathy level (mean difference = 0)

Alternative Hypothesis (Hₐ): Undertaking the role modelling character programme has a positive effect on students' empathy level (mean difference ≠ 0).

The intervention showed a mean increase of *0.162, 95% CI (-0.494, 0.819)*, but the intervention did not provide a statistically significant increase in empathy levels compared to the pre-test *t(67)= (0.493), p=0.624.* As the mean difference was not significantly different from 0, we failed to reject the null hypothesis.

4.2.3.2 Gratitude Questionnaire - 6 (GQ6)

The statistical analysis used for the GQ6 was a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, as the results failed to show a normal distribution using the Shapiro-Wilk test, therefore a non-parametric test was required to measure significant differences.

The Wilcoxon signed rank test was intended to test whether there was a significant change in gratitude levels before and after the participants undertook the role modelling character education programme, through median differences. Thus, the null and alternative hypotheses are:

Null Hypotheses (H₀): Undertaking the role modelling character programme has no effect on students' gratitude level (median difference = 0).

Alternative Hypothesis (Hₐ): Undertaking the role modelling character programme has a positive effect on students' gratitude level (median difference ≠ 0).

Of the sixty-eight participants recruited in the study, twenty-nine showed a positive increase in gratitude levels after taking the role modelling character education intervention, while twenty-seven showed a negative difference and twelve presented no difference. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test elicited there was no statistically significant increase in gratitude from the pre-test *(Mdn = 3.648)* and post-test *(Mdn = 30.678), z = 0.560, p = 0.576.* As the median difference was not significantly different from 0, we failed to reject the null hypothesis.

4.2.4 Summary of Case Study Findings

The first section and theme in the Case Study's findings were qualitative and looked at the school's background regarding character education and role modelling in addition to how participants believed a role modelling programme could be effectively developed and implemented, as well as the barriers and enablers faced in doing this.

Within the category *future developments in character education and role modelling*, all the participants who discussed this matter agreed it was significant to have such a programme, and some reasons included:

- helping with children's moral development
- the lack of values in their current society
- fast changing times with technology and the current social developments in Saudi Arabia.

However, categorised as an *enabler*, two participants disagreed and found the school to have a diverse population which positively influenced students' character. The use of role models was also favoured and while the adult participants preferred relatable and community-based exemplars, students mentioned historical or famous ones.

The curriculum suggested by a *few* participants for a role modelling programme included:

- a whole-school approach that embeds character education and role models within all subjects and assemblies,

- while *most* believed it should be taught on its own as a separate subject.

How the curriculum should be developed was connected to the *barriers* raised. By looking at the school ethos, it seemed the school failed to prioritise character education, and although PSHE existed as the main form of teaching character, the way it was implemented was *ad hoc* and not part of an interconnected school approach. In addition, teachers and parents mentioned parents should be more involved in character education, which again connects to another barrier which is the school's lack of teacher-parent relationship when it comes to character. In fact, the three parents were not even aware PSHE existed, and one teacher/parent said she would not have known about it if she were not a PSHE teacher herself.

The pedagogical approaches discussed incorporated various ideas, and the most popular among the students and teachers were:

- discussions

- and group work

While other suggestions by teachers, parents and students included:

- action-based activities such as going outdoors or volunteering.

The methods mentioned by the programme teachers and students could be connected to their experience in taking the intervention as the activities were considered limited and not engaging enough.

The *barriers/enablers* presented the positive and negative aspects in the school and community that could impact the implementation of the programme. Four barriers which seemed to be connected based on the interviews and observations were:

- the school's leadership,

- the PSHE pedagogy

- the teachers' skills and interest.

According to the participants, PSHE was created by a group of leaders in the school and the lessons were not researched or discussed with the teachers, and so both the teachers and students lacked interest in the subject. This was then supported further through the school ethos, as through the observations, interviews and focus groups it appeared that character education and/or role modelling was not emphasised in the school. However, there were existing *enablers* in the school that could provide opportunities to implement a character role modelling programme, such as:

- PSHE and Leadership lessons have their own allocated time

- Leadership lessons were previously taught through famous role models

- character education was already raised in the school by teachers and the anti-bully squad when a teaching moment arose in the situation

- some assembly topics already focussed on character and role models.

The last two sections of this chapter examined the intervention itself through Theme Two, which focuses on the qualitative interviews, focus groups and observations, followed by the quantitative pre- and post-surveys. The qualitative results possibly provided explanations for the quantitative findings as the pre- and post-surveys showed the intervention failed to evoke significant moral development in students, as judged by their gratitude and empathy levels. The

second theme explored was what was considered effective in the programme, and which elements required improvement, the difficulty level and the teachers teaching the programme. The first category within this theme conveyed the advantages of the programme, including:

- the discussions

- the role models representing the taught virtues

- some learning development such as understanding the virtues and the students reflecting on how to morally develop based on the role models' stories.

The second category discussed the issues faced, which involved:

- the activities not being engaging enough with too many teacher-led writing activities

- the role models, as some of the teachers found the students failed to connect the virtues with the role models and preferring more culturally and age-relevant role models.

- time was found to be a common issue because the programme was towards the end of the year and had to be compressed and rushed, it was also timetabled with the shortest duration and after swimming thus cutting it even shorter.

The following category focussed on the difficulty level, shown to be generally appropriate, but some terms were difficult for Year 7s, while many students struggled with the pre- and post-reading comprehension tests and some with the programme reading activities due to low literacy levels. The last category explored how the teachers were teaching the programme and it was found some teachers were engaged; this group showed interest to the researcher as well as the students, while teachers who were not interested failed to engage the students. The reasons for the lack of interest, given in the interviews, were due to PSHE lessons generally

being assigned to teachers without consultation, and in a precipitous manner. Based on the observations, none of the teachers were completely prepared for the lessons and based on the interviews this was ascribed to lack of time.

All the findings from the Case Study demonstrated that conducting a new role modelling programme in an international school in Saudi Arabia is bound to confront several obstacles which can negatively influence its efficacy. However, there also emerged various facilitators that can pave the way to a more successful implementation than was seen in this Case Study. These observations led us to conclude that a second stage of the project was needed to provide an expanded and more generalisable understanding of how a role modelling programme could be developed and implemented in the Region within other school backgrounds, i.e. national or government schools. Thus, the idea emerged of incorporating qualitative data from participants in multiple settings rather than a single one, as this Case Study did. The findings from Stage Two are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 - Stage Two Findings

As discussed in the literature review in *Chapter 2*, role modelling has been found to be a potentially effective method for helping with moral development due to the emotions and motivations elicited when students are exposed to moral exemplars. Furthermore, the lack of character education in Saudi Arabia showed a gap in the Region that could be ameliorated with a role modelling programme. Thus, the first phase of the project involved discovering how character education and role modelling might evolve in a single-school setting while studying the impact of executing a role modelling programme with three year groups in that school. After that intervention, a more macro-level approach was taken to gain a more generalisable understanding of how a role modelling programme should be developed and implemented, based on the Region's educational and cultural context. Although the first stage showed some interesting findings, it did show that were several factors yet to be explored at the macro-level that could make or break character education initiatives in this Region. Hence the need for a second stage of empirical research.

To anticipate, some of the findings in this stage further support the findings from the first stage; some are more detailed while others involve new interpretive categories altogether. The themes analysed in this chapter were predetermined based on the results from Stage One as they were intended to answer those two research questions respectively:

1. How could an effective role modelling character education programme be developed in Saudi Arabia?

2. How could a role modelling character education be feasibly implemented in the Region?

Thus, through interviews with relevant adults and focus groups with adolescents, the first theme analysed below explores what kind of content, design and structure would be effective for a

role modelling programme in the Region, while the second theme focuses on the practical implementation of the programme.

5.1 Development

The first stage of the project provided some insight on what an effective role modelling programme should look like, based on an assessment of the already developed pilot programme. However, a more general perspective would strengthen the results further; therefore, the first theme, *development,* explores different aspects of a potential programme and how participants believe it should be designed in a school.

The categories, subcategories and codes that emerged from the first theme are conveyed in the table below *(Table 14)*. The findings are presented through a funnel vision as it looks at the overall structure of how the programme is expected to be within a school and narrowing it down to the actual content. The quotes or part of the quotes which are in brackets have been translated from Arabic to English. Meanwhile, the code at the end of each quote refers to which key informant said it, the P refers to parents, T are teachers or headteachers, C for consultants/curriculum developers and lastly S is for the student focus groups, and their details can be found in *Table number 7 in Chapter 3.*

Table 14. RQ1 Coding process

Theme	Development						
Category	**Structure**		**Pedagogy**		**Content**		
Sub-category	**Time**	**Curriculum**	**Teachers**	**Methods**	**Virtues**	**Role models**	**Activities**
Codes	Lesson duration	Whole School	Passionate	Student-led	Kindness	Variety	Stories
	Programme duration	Taught (separate programme)	Trained	Project-based	Honesty	Historical	Field trips
		Caught (situational)	Role Models	Action-based	Hard Work	Modern	Sports
		Embedded within academic subjects		Mentoring	Self-love	Local	Competition
					Self-actualisation	International	Volunteering/ social service
					Empathy	Known	Discussion
					Responsibility	Unknown	
					Citizenship		
					Faith		
					Commitment		

5.1.1 Structure

As the first category, *structure,* focuses on the programme from a wider perspective, many of the participants discussed the idea of a character education curriculum more than just a role modelling one. The two sub-categories found under structure were *time* and *curriculum* and this involved descriptions or opinions on when to conduct such a programme and for how long, as well as where or how it should be placed in the existing curriculum.

Curriculum

There were different perspectives on how such a programme should be set up in the curriculum, whether it should be taught as a separate subject or just expected to be 'caught' (through osmosis) within the school and be embedded in all academic subjects. Although the focus

groups did not discuss the curriculum to the same extent, the majority of the adult participants, including parents, teachers and curriculum developers, agreed the programme should be embedded into the curriculum, and therefore taught within academic subjects so that it becomes a whole school curriculum. This differed to the opinions from Stage One, as the teachers and parents there believed it would be best if it were taught as a separate subject. One possible reason for this discrepancy of opinion could be that the type of school differed, the programme was executed in a community school which had the most freedom from the Ministry of Education and thus were flexible enough to have it as a separate programme, and did not have an overload of work from the Ministry's humanities subjects. Furthermore, PSHE and Leadership classes were already timetabled as a subject in the school; thus, the concept of having a taught programme was not too implausible.

Out of the three parents who discussed it, all three believed it should be a whole-school approach so it is consistently part of their children's lives, while three out of the four teachers agreed with this for reasons such as that children rejecting something that it is dictated to them and that it is a topic that comes naturally but cannot be taught directly. The majority of the educational consultants also believed character education should be embedded into the entire curriculum, with two believing it should be both taught separately and embedded. In fact, one raised an interesting idea of having it taught through all subjects, while also having one main teacher in the school who would coordinate efforts:

My wishful thinking is to have something embedded throughout, through all subjects, because I think if you embed it, uh, (like) you will have more impact. (C3)

It has to be, um, kind of vertical integration into your curriculum, in several areas. Um, you can have it in several disciplines as well. It…I don't think it should be like a concrete

block in your curriculum, I think it should be weaved, (this is it), this is the word I've been looking for, it should be weaved into your curriculum. (P6)

The participants who rejected the idea of this programme being taught separately had various reasons. Firstly, teachers and educational consultants found the workload from other subjects was already a considerable burden, particularly Arabic, Islamic and Social Studies, as these are a government requirement irrespective of the status of the school, public or private. Thus, it was judged that adding another separate subject would increase the pressure on students and reduce its efficacy. Secondly, the way in which standard subjects are taught is typically via old-fashioned pedagogical approaches; thus, it was considered that adding another 'standard' subject might be rejected by students. Thirdly, several participants, including parents, said the nature of the subject should not be compartmentalised and labelled, but developed naturally:

So, they must have a certain number of Islamic studies instruction, they've got to have the Arabic instruction…there is also some kind of conditioning in terms of their culture, and the development of their culture. So, you bring in something else called character development, um, it could look to them, like another dictate. (T3)

(There has been a lot of) categorising a lot, and compartmentalising, a lot. So, like, for me, education is just about the relationships we have with the teachers, and having these conversations, and putting space whether it was in the classroom, or in recess or when they're travelling, to have these conversations, related to character education. (P5)

However, one teacher and one consultant in addition to one focus group as a whole disagreed and preferred character education to be taught on its own, with reasons including that it would be treated more seriously as a proper subject with grades, as well as the inability of schools

teaching it within academic subjects and thus needing its own time. In addition, a curriculum developer thought it was essential to give character education its own time to develop children's morality through critical thinking reflection and discussion, especially when it is separated from religion. This is not to suggest that religion should not be connected to it, but within Religious Studies there were certain normative expectations and little room for debate and discussion, which they found necessary to develop within character education.

> *If we put it under the context of, 'we're talking about morality here' rather than put it under the context of 'we're talking about (religion) or religion because children tend to, just, because its religion, you follow it, you don't discuss it, you don't have a conversation about it, we just, we know what Quran said and we do it.* (C4)

> *Because here the teachers and the students and even schools do not give, uh, attention to character or to any of the standards or to any of the, uh, content, unless it is a separate subject that has its own exams, its own standards.* (C2)

Time
Time includes lesson time, lesson frequency and programme duration. It was not discussed by all the participants as some believed it should not be timetabled on its own, but for those who did, it was suggested each lesson should be as long as the schools' normal lesson time, between 45 minutes to an hour. Six participants and two focus groups believed it should be taught throughout the academic year, for reasons such as the importance and efficacy of repetition and continuity, while others thought it was simply such a significant matter that it should not be stopped:

Consistency is the key to achieving whatever you are looking for…Because you know virtues, they are something we use every day but not on the top of our list, so you have to constantly remind them of what's important. (T1)

Lesson frequency varied from once or twice a week to once or twice a month.

And I told you before it depends, if it was a separate subject then, they will have (that's it) a separate time for it (for example) two periods or one period per week, and they will be evaluated for it, or assessed for it during the year. (C2)

5.1.2 Pedagogy

This category involved the 'how' and the 'who' in that it examines how participants thought a role modelling character education programme should be taught in the Region, and who should teach it; thus, the two sub-categories are labelled *methods* and *teachers.*

Methods

Within this subcategory there were no conflicting opinions, supporting findings from the first stage. It involves the way in which the participants thought the programme should be taught to make it effective. All the participants who discussed this matter rejected the idea of a theory-focus and/or encouraged the idea of practicality, either by creating spaces for students to embody these values, learning through movement/corporeal expression, choosing the way they learn or taking charge of it themselves. A total of nine participants and all three focus groups mentioned the programme being action-based. If terms such as 'act', 'action', 'doing' or 'practical' were used, this was placed under action-based learning. This was found to be the most popular opinion on students effectively learning the values, as they will be embedded and remembered more through action rather than theoretically:

But you only actually learn it when you do it. The mind, body, connection, the mind, muscle connection. (P3)

(Focus more on the programme being practical more than theoretical. I mean notice, mostly you teach religion, and you teach...but there's no impact, there is no application of what you're teaching). (T5)

Or it could be active learning, where you can go actually ask the student to go and model this kind of value or character in different situations and how, and they reflect on it for example. (C2)

Another common method mentioned among the participants was the programme being student-led, and this included the students controlling the learning process rather than the teacher, or the students choosing the activities/role models. It should be remembered at this point, from previous chapters, how traditional the pedagogy tends to be in this Region, so the idea promulgated here is looking for change:

Puts the student more in charge then they are governing what direction they choose to develop in, it doesn't have to be part of a herd mentality, which is what I think we are trying to get them away from. (T3)

(For me this point is very important, that you free the human mind, because I hate to bring children and dictate to them, I do not dictate anyone anything, I open the prospects of [said in English: achieving the minds]. I listen to them, and that is where you reach what we want, the objectives we want to reach) (C6)

One of the aims of the methods mentioned was keeping the children's interest; thus, for it to be effective, three of the five curriculum developers emphasised the importance of the programme being continuously engaging, which again supports the results from the Case Study, as students' participation was reduced when the activities or teachers failed to maintain students' interest.

Strangely, however, this was not directly mentioned but was brought up in relation to the activities being student-led:

(Now, we, this generation gets bored very quickly with the way it is automatically and traditionally taught, there has to be art in the way it's presented). (C1)

I think they need to be very engaging and interactive programmes, and I think they need to be student-focused. I believe you would have to come out of the classroom and put them into totally different environments which really allows the student to feel empowered, to be able to share thoughts and ideas in an altogether different environment. (C5).

(If they empathised with the situation and loved it, and there is a connection, and there is a bond, and there is passion, then the children will react because with children, this is their main language, passion). (C6)

It must be admitted that many of the comments about student engagement and student-led activities were not very systematic or easily operationalisable from the point of view of curriculum design. It is vital to read between the lines here, so to speak, and to bear in mind that these comments are made in from within an educational context that is very traditional pedagogically and hierarchical in terms of power relations. The above suggestions about 'engagement', 'interactivity' and student 'empowerment' are therefore more informative and radical than they might appear to a readership of, say, UK educators.

Teachers

This sub-category includes anything related to who the teachers should be or what characteristics they should encompass. Three of the participants, two teachers and one parent,

mentioned the importance of the teacher being the role model and embodying the virtues taught to their students because students can detect dishonesty and hypocrisy easily, and are unlikely to be as inspired by, or dedicated to, improving their own personal virtues if they fail to see in their own teachers who are preaching these values, not implementing them as well:

> *...represent herself in front of students, as yes, I'm a complete role model in front of you, and inspiring her students.* (P1)

> *(If the student is suspicious that you don't have these values she will not commit.)* (T2)

Some participants, including parents, teachers and curriculum developers/consultants, believed the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and/or the child is what's important, and therefore, the programme would not be as influential if the teacher is not motivated. It was believed teachers should be enthusiastic about character development and caring about each child as an individual, not simply ticking the basic boxes of their academic subjects:

> *There are teachers who teach the whole child...a teacher who's only teaching her subject, is not going to adapt her curriculum to include different types of learners or character development.* (T3)

> *But it doesn't exclude the other teachers who are passionate about this...about human development and this social aspect, so I don't think it should be, um, (like) the teacher should be specifically from a certain major.* (C2)

Although some participants found passion to be essential, others believed some sort of training or acquisition of a certain skill was required to teach a character education programme effectively, which relates to one of the barriers discussed in the next theme, as many mentioned a lack of teacher training as an issue in the Region:

> *(I feel he should have studied psychology, because with this he will be able to implant it in a more effective way). (P2)*

> *Uh, it has to be, you know, someone with social studies, entrepreneurship, who are teaching kids these skills...someone who is responsible for moral education, do these schools have, let's say, moral education teachers? I doubt it. (P4)*

Two of the focus groups mentioned wanting various subject teachers or someone close to them as the main character educator, mainly due to their relationship, and/or how influential they found them. Two teachers supported the children's point, in their needing to be a relationship between the teacher and students to effectively impart virtues. This relates to the previous two points, in that when teachers act as role models, the children connect with them more, and possibly when the teachers are passionate about the students, a closer relationship is formed:

> *I would like my maths teacher and my Islamic teacher because they are both very influential and they would be good role models to help kids. (S1)*

> *(...between me and them [students] there has become a completely open connection). (T2)*

Meanwhile, an additional teacher mentioned the relationship difference between an expatriate teacher, versus a Saudi one, with the students. With expatriate teachers, the students can be more open without judgement, in addition to gaining a perspective on how people from abroad judge them. This shows there can be different relationship dynamics between teacher and students based on nationality or culture, which should be considered when creating a character development programme:

> *I've observed, there are some conversations that I can have with students that they may not have with other teachers. You're from the outside, but you are Muslim, 'so can we tell you this' 'what can we tell you about this?' and 'do you think it's fair that people look at us and they see x, y, z but really that's not us?'* (T3)

5.1.3 Content

The *content* category explores what should be included in the programme and the three sub-categories are the *virtues*, involving which virtues the participants believed should be taught as well as the *activities* to help them teach those virtues, and the type of *role models* the virtues should be taught through.

Virtues. Several virtues were mentioned with honesty being the most frequent with six mentions, followed by responsibility, then respect, empathy and kindness. Other virtues that were mentioned once or twice were patience, self-love and authenticity. The virtues chosen were based on the lack of them being foregrounded currently in the Region or internationally, such as self-love, or the significance on a societal and global level. One parent considered the

current education regime to emphasise the importance of capitalism and prepare students for that system, while disregarding citizenship values connecting them to their community:

(You have to make the girl [student] understand that 'you are up for the responsibility, and you are responsible for your actions'). (T2)

Ah, um, because with authenticity comes, um, with authenticity comes honesty and, uh, with authenticity you can be yourself, and the, uh, society will benefit from the diversity that will come with authenticity. (P6)

So, if you wanted to teach students, you want him to also be a global citizen, so you can't only focus on values concerning your society, so you have to teach him character and values that are concerning the global society. (C2)

The reasons given for the virtues chosen differed slightly between the groups, because whereas the curriculum developers/consultants found it necessary to include virtues that would help with diversity and open-mindedness to expose students to global character values, parents and teachers preferred more personal and individual values such as responsibility, self-love and honesty. Possibly, educational consultants have more awareness of the bigger picture when it comes to the importance of focusing on virtues to develop moral global citizens, as opposed to parents and teachers who communicate with students on a day to day basis and have a narrower vision of character development.

Activities. Students as well as the various adult participants discussed the activities that should be included in the programme to teach learners virtues through role models. Two focus groups suggested sports, and two focus groups mentioned competitions. Other activities the students raised were field trips and real role models coming into the school, as well as writing

and discussions. The most mentioned activities by adult participants were stories with five mentions, followed by real role models and projects with four mentions and role-playing with three. Other activity examples included discussions, drama and journaling. Most of the activities mentioned require plenty of student engagement and involvement, similar to the Stage One results where both the students and teachers preferred more student-led and active tasks as opposed to how the intervention was, in fact, implemented.

Role Models. To explore what kind of role models should be used in a character education programme, the student focus groups were asked who their role models were and what kind of role models they would prefer in a school setting. Participants in all three focus groups mentioned a family member, with parents being the most popular choice, and their reasons were mostly about their role models' character or how they teach them about life: only one focus group mentioned the educational implications of this by suggesting parents could physically come into the classroom and act as mentors, however this could include finding activities which included parents or thinking about how their parents had taught them certain moral virtues.

> *My moral role models are my elder cousins and brother. They show me all difficulties I can go through when I grow up, they give me examples about how I can live life, also they give me advice about what to do and what not to do. My role models will also be my parents because they teach me what to do and how to take care of yourself.* (S1)

> *Our moms and dads...Cause like, uh, they make things right, and we need to, like, make the same things right.* (S3)

Two focus groups, S1 and S3, mentioned religious role models, particularly Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Focus group S3 mentioned that they preferred real role models to fictional ones, while focus groups S2 and S3 supported the idea of having famous or known role models, as they mentioned role models such as former President Obama, Civil Rights Leader Nelson Mandela and some current famous singers. Once again, this is similar to Stage One where students mentioned famous models, and a possible reason for this could be that these were the types of models they were already accustomed to, especially in international schools where international role models might be chosen more often than national/local schools. So, it begs the question if famous/known models are in fact effective for children because the models' virtues are universal. Or were the students simply mentioning famous models because that is line with their understanding of the term 'role model', although those models are not actually relatable? On the other hand, participants in S1 disagreed with this, and argued they preferred role models they personally knew because famous models would lack authenticity:

> *You usually know the people around you, like you know what their character is,*
> *on TV you don't really know, if they're really good or if that's just like their*
> *outer look or what they're like inside.* (S1)

The adult participants, however, chose a wider variety of role models with different criteria including, historical and present-day, or both; global, local or both; famous, not famous or both; religious, non-religious or both; and models with different job roles. The wide variety of type role models chosen was unexpected and showed a possibility of using different models for different effects/results in moral development. However, hampering all analysis of this data is the fact that people's understanding of the very term 'role model' seems to differ substantially,

which is not surprising, given that academics have disconcerting views on the nature of role modelling (recall *Chapter 2*).

Historical role models were mentioned by two parents and one educational consultant, but a parent and the consultant believed those should be presented alongside present-day ones so as to avoid the pitfalls that can come with using historical models. Historical role models and Islamic civilization are an integral part of Islam, therefore participants felt they were necessary to provide a base, but should not be the whole focus:

> *Historical is important because it gives you a good foundation, but historical won't actually tell you what they've done because it's just a story in the end. So, you need to tie historical with someone who is actually living, the model.* (P3)

Local/global role models were raised, as some participants named role models with that characteristic. There were conflicting views on this as there were participants from all three groups who preferred mainly local models, making them were more relatable in addition to students loving people from their own community. Seeing a model from one's own community makes them relatable because a learner can visualise themselves in the role models' shoes. However, one consultant and two parents preferred global models so students would become more open-minded and could see morality on an international level. Two participants also mentioned the importance of the model not being associated with their religion, so students do not end up believing certain values can only be encompassed within their own religion. An interesting point, as having an Islamic moral identity is key in Saudi Arabia, yet participants wanted children in society to understand how moral values go beyond their religion and are universal:

I think it should be definitely, global figures, I mean not tie it to religious or political view…Um, and it gives the child a wider perspective of morality. I mean to just think that the people I know from my background are good people and they are my role models, is ok, but to give them a bigger picture, is a much bigger lesson. (C4)

I think therefore it is essential that this society, that somewhat looks to the West in some elements, retains the values that we hold dear here, but also have role models, key, identifiable role models who implement those values, in the classroom, in the school, within society. (C5)

The idea of the role models being mentors or proximal (i.e. family members or friends) was repeated by some of the participants, including two teachers and one parent. It was seen that, with mentors, learners can gain a deeper understanding when they see the context in which the role model exists; furthermore, that can only happen effectively with those they know around them. In general, respondents did not make clear conceptual distinctions between mentors and role models, i.e. on when role models count as mentors or mentors as role models. The importance of parents being the moral role models was discussed, because that is what is seen in real life, and one participant mentioned peer-mentoring being an effective two-way learning model for the mentor and mentee:

I would be cautious of risks. I think that role modelling is best served through, um, the adults they already have around them. I asked some students recently, just towards the end of term to write about, we were doing a project on heroes and you know out of a class of 14 students, I think maybe 7 or more chose their mother or their father. (T3)

What can be done also, and this is one of the things that I implemented in, in, the previous school where I used to work in my country, a peer-mentoring

programme...So that kid, from a senior class, is, we are helping him, basically we are helping both of them, you know? (T4)

Five participants from the consultant and parent groups mentioned the importance of exposing a variety of role models to the students in the programme, for reasons such as providing them a broader perspective, to engage different learners and to show different values based on various situations. There are certain role models a particular student could relate to, which another does not, due to learners' different individual experiences and personalities; therefore, including a variety of role models seems essential so each student can find a model to personally connect, and thus effectively engage, with. This notion of individuality-tailored role models is very Aristotelian; yet it has not been highlighted sufficiently in the background academic literature (recall *Chapter 2*). Here, the views of the participants seemed more nuanced than much of the scholarly literature:

> *So, what I did is I created a hybrid role model…non-existent of course, in real life, (but) like, that kind of inspires me to take bits and pieces from each one in different areas.* (P5)

> *Um, so I think there should be a mix because this is what the students are going to be, they're going to be a mix of you know different professions, and different people when they grow up, so they need to see different role models in different aspects.* (C2)

Lastly, several of the participants who discussed types of role models mentioned known or famous models who can be used in schools, but two participants disagreed and similar to focus group S1, suggested unknown role models could be more effective. The idea of using unknown

models as opposed to famous/known ones is also to show learners that morality is not and should not be linked to fame or status:

> *I think something around oral history, something about like knowing, um, (not just) celebrities, (that's enough, there's an excess in) social media and (whatnot, that's enough).* (P5)

> *I would honestly look into low-profile figures who have accomplished things, uh, (like) I want to emphasise the message to people, it's not the number of likes, and it's not the number of followers you have, it's the impact you leave on yourself and your community.* (C3)

Throughout all the themes there was one underlying common consideration uniting most of the participants, and that was religion. This was not placed as a category on its own because it is included in the second theme, but Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was mentioned as a religious role model by two focus groups and several adult participants, saying that was their perfect role model and is the foundation of character development. However, the importance of bringing other kinds of role models to support the learning process was also discussed. As could be expected in this region, the subtle relationship between character education and religious education emerged. The underlying point that came to light was about not forgetting the religious background, nor severing the ties to religiously tethered virtues or role models, but on the other hand also appealing to more cosmopolitan core values:

> *There is only one true role model which the Prophet (PBUH), after that everything is relative and you take from different role models for different things.* (P4)

Without, without even thinking about it The Prophet (PBUH)…and as a Muslim, I'd like to reflect whatever I am having in my daily life to whatever God told us, or whatever God has sent us messages through his prophets. (T1)

And if those role models epitomise aspects of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) that's good, however, if they also epitomise and can show how to navigate in modernity, the society, fast changing world that we live in now, that helps. (C6)

Exploring the content of a prospective role modelling character-education programme is in fact the very meat of the programme. What should be included to increase students' engagement? Participants have a shown there is a need for interactive tasks to gain and maintain students' interests, while also having a balance of different kinds of role models to not only connect with more students but also to target different virtues and aspects of moral development. For instance, having historical and/or religious models to increase relatability for the learners, while also having global and modern role models to develop virtues that lead to global citizenship. Interestingly, however, none of the participants mentioned the need to increase understanding of, or adherence to, Saudi's national citizenship, and this could be because the national curriculum already includes these aims..

5.2 Implementation

The following section focuses on the second theme, which examines the next research question: *How should an effective role modelling character education programme be implemented in Saudi Arabia?* The categories and sub-categories shown below were extracted from the interviews and some of the focus groups, and the most pertinent findings from each sub-category are discussed by presenting the barriers, enablers and advice identified by the participants.

Table 15. RQ2 Coding Process

Category	Sub-category
Significance	Character Education
	Teaching through Role Models
Cultural Factors	Religion
	Generation differences
Schools	Teaching CE + RM
	Parents
	Management/Leadership
	Resources
Ministry of Education	Process/Approvals
	Interest

5.2.1 Significance

This category looks at whether participants find character education and role modelling significant, and why that was the case.

Character Education. With respect to teaching character, all of the participants, including the students, agreed it was necessary, but there were various reasons as to why. Three participants mentioned the significance of character education to raise awareness on moral values for the entire society. Moreover, several participants from all three adult groups and all three focus groups found character education to be as or more important than academics because it provides skills that can last a lifetime, yet are not systematically foregrounded presently in the Region:

(It's not just about academics, any school can give you a certificate...but what is important to me is whoever graduates from [names her school] has these basic moral Islamic values). (T2)

Everyone is saying we are fulfilling our duties. Our duties are just to teach them and burden them with books and studies and that's it. This is our duty. It is not our duty that we are going to make this person a productive part of society. (P2)

The most frequently mentioned challenge for character education was the perceived values gap in current society and thus the need to include some kind of character development in schools. For instance, a parent and a teacher discussed children of a certain class being spoiled, whether it was through material objects or having work or chores being done for them, while others mentioned children's lack of work ethic in schools and higher education. However, one teacher raised a different point to others, advancing the notion that there were different levels of morality evident in expatriate children compared to Saudi children, where the former could be considered more morally developed. Meanwhile, one parent believed the reason for the absence of certain values was due to increased individualism, as previously morals were indirectly taught through communities but because this had been eroded, moral or character education would now be required to compensate for this suggested lacuna. As in many of the conversations, it was often difficult to decipher to what extent the identification of a values gap in current society was perceived to be unique to the Region or just a facet of global modernisation overall:

And I'm all for moral education, I'm all for you know, I mean that is the tool that will give us the traction that we need, to maybe climb back up, yea. But the fact that we need to do that, is very concerning to me, as a person of this world. (P3)

I was really struggling with the, the, students, you know? Like the values were not there, you know? That, that, that kind of attachment to their education and development was not there. So, I believe that teaching values to those students is very important to make them understand, why are they studying in the first place? (T5)

Lastly, the next point was seen as an enabler for some and a barrier for others, and that involved changing developmental trajectories, regionally and globally. For some participants the changes were perceived as an enabler, because Saudi Arabia is progressing into a more open society, and therefore would potentially be more welcoming to new ideas. However, for others this meant new boundaries and values were unclear, therefore, children needed a channel to learn to handle those. Furthermore, in a more global sense, technology is developing fast everywhere, thus creating new moral situations or dilemmas children are required to confront. As previously, global and local perspectives were interlocked in many of the responses:

And you know we have the digital, um, we are in the digital age and we lack this digital intelligence, and there are a lot of values and moral issues coming up. (C2)

Because like now with all these transitions happening, (a lot of people are messing up), in terms of boundaries. (P4)

Teaching through Role Models. Almost all of the participants discussed their opinions on using role models to teach children virtues, and although most of them perceived those as enablers, a few mentioned possible barriers that could emerge with the use of role models and offered advice on how to handle those. The same reasons as before were repeated as to why role models can be vital, and these included the exemplars showing real examples of the virtues,

thus, making theoretical or abstract concepts more practical and relatable Some of the words included were *tangible*, *accessible*, *real examples, practical*. In addition, role models were seen as beneficial because children were described as visual learners and therefore copying what they *see*. Two focus groups supported this further by discussing how role models inspire and motivate students to emulate the models, and one focus group mentioned how role models can help students through challenges:

> *You've got these people here who can show that what is being learned can be done. So abstract versus actualisation.* (C5)

> *They inspire me to do it, because when they do it, I feel, um, good and I feel like I can do that too, and I can help people, and I'm going to feel good.* (S3)

However, as already mentioned, a few adult participants discussed issues with role modelling which mainly involved hero-worship and role models being expected to be perfect; therefore, when models' mistakes are revealed, they are no longer seen as role models resulting in admirers feeling disappointed or possibly even devastated. One parent added another barrier in that older adolescents, including her children, may not accept the idea of being told to copy another person as it is might be perceived as diminishing their own individuality. It is respectfully suggested that the parent was not familiar with the academic literature on the distinction between 'copying' and 'emulating'. Meanwhile, a parent, a teacher and a consultant mentioned the issue of negative role models being portrayed in social media:

> *One of the main, I think one of the main misconceptions that we have in our curriculum when it comes to role models, is that role models are idols who should be...I'm not going to use the word worshipped, but that should be followed 100%.* (C3)

There are some caveats that need to be put in there because if you're teaching character education and you are role modelling in real life, we have to remember we are flawed, none of us are perfect. So, there are some risks attached so I would be careful. (T3).

The advice provided to help overcome the barriers mentioned included showing children role models' struggles and letting their journey be part of the lesson, because showing no one is perfect might make the use of role models more effective. Moreover, the parent who disagreed with using role models with older children suggested that such a programme should be implemented with primary-school children to increase its efficacy.

5.2.2 Cultural Factors

The previous category touched upon some barriers and enablers within Saudi society regarding character education and role modelling. Although the following section is similar in that it also explores the barriers and enablers in that society, it differs because it focuses specifically on how religion and generational differences can influence the implementation of such a programme, rather than the significance of character education and role modelling more generally in the Region.

Religion. Not all the participants discussed religion, as they were not encouraged to do so unless they were comfortable with the topic. Therefore, out of the 17 adults, 12 participants mentioned religion and how it related to character development, whether as a barrier, enabler and/or eliciting advice. Most of the participants found Islam or all religions to be an enabler for character development, as religion or Islam is based on moral values, and this should therefore

be students' foundation for moral development. When it came to the students, two out of the three focus groups mentioned Islam or Islamic role models as their aspiration to morality.

> *(Something that depends on religion, regardless of what the religion is, all of us with kinds of religion from God, all the values from them are right).* (T2)

Currently, the main channel of teaching moral values is through Islamic education, and although most believe it should not create a conflict, some have noticed the way in which Islamic studies is taught is a barrier. For instance, it is based on simply passing an exam, and is extremely strict with its pedagogy and content, in addition to being overly traditional in its approach. One headteacher mentioned Islamic studies included too much rote learning rather than action-based activities:

> *They are so strict about what they're teaching, they take those four branches of religious studies and they're so strict towards doing it and they don't allow interference of any kind.* (T1)

> *So, teaching them and telling them, all the teachings of the Quran...but if you make them sit for an exam for this, they will never take it seriously, just for the sake of passing. So, they don't really get those values.* (T4)

Some participants provided opinions on how to overcome this, which included teaching morals as a separate topic to Islamic studies, or finding a way to connect the two or show the same moral values are part of Islam:

> *So, instead of them studying the same value in Islamic studies and in this character education, then there should be some kind of connection. They could do a project, you know? Related to the two subjects, maybe the two teachers can plan, like, co-led lessons.* (C2)

Others simply suggested that if Islam was taught properly, then it could be an effective tool for character development; however, what was considered a 'correct method' was not mentioned. A headteacher said she already used Islamic moral virtues as her school ethos, and at times did not follow the exact curriculum within Islamic studies so as to help her students have a more positive and spiritual journey to moral development:

> *You can use a hammer to build a house, build shelter for somebody or you can use a hammer to build something that destroys everyone. It's just a tool, how you choose to use the tool is based on your intention. So, religion is a tool.* (P3)

However, another teacher mentioned culture being confused with religion, regionally and universally. To avoid being negatively judged by the outside world, she found Saudi adolescents were discarding their religious values, when in fact Islam is based on good character development:

> *Because of the way they feel they're perceived by the outside world, I feel that for some of them, they feel the only answer is to let go of their religion. They make the connection between the religion and the culture that these are the same thing.* (T3)

Generation Differences. A 'generation gap' was repeated by several participants, yet was not a predetermined category as it was never mentioned in the previous phase of the project. However, according to the participants' opinions here, the parents' and teachers' ages could impact the implementation of a role modelling programme. Four participants discussed this and mentioned the older generation being a barrier for reasons such as not being interested in change, and feeling more entitled,

while targeting the newer generation would be an enabler because younger parents are more involved in their children's lives, and younger teachers have more energy, interest and hope:

If you are addressing 40 and above...they are more satisfied with where they are...they are not looking for further change. But if you want to target this...target teachers starting from like 24 up to the late 30s, where they still think there is hope in this world, and they can make a change [laughs]. (T1)

I really think the new generation, and the new parents, there's a change there and I'm very hopeful. (P5)

5.2.3 Schools

The following segment examines the various barriers and enablers one could face in schools in the Region while trying to implement a role modelling programme, which included how character education and role models are currently taught in schools, how parents are involved in character development, in addition to some information on resources and school management.

Teaching Character Education and Role modelling. The findings have shown that how character education and/or role modelling is taught differs from each school, and so it was difficult to generalise. The *enablers* involved how character education was currently being taught, and although very few schools had official programmes, the most common response given by teachers, parents and students seemed to be that moral values or character development was 'caught', and thus learnt through ethos and conversations based on the surrounding situation. One teacher said her school had daily 10-minute conversations with their students, while another mentioned it was taught through assemblies:

Some teachers just focus on their subject and they just talk about that, and some of them actually tell you about your character and like how to improve it. (S1)

For example, whenever we have a situation going on, or case, like for example, exams, how to face your exams, if we have sports day this week then we talk about sportsmanship. (T1)

Three participants explained that it was not necessarily taught as a separate subject, but was part of the school ethos, therefore helping with the children's moral development. For instance, a headteacher described the school's *tree of virtues*, which involved each class competing to fill their tree based on their virtuous actions, and so even though character education was not an official class, it was embedded as a whole-school approach:

(The school is based on the 'tree of virtues'...we have 16 virtues that are important in life). (T2)

An education consultant and a focus group mentioned that character education programmes existed within their schools, while a headteacher discussed a character education programme previously implemented in her school as a trial run by the Ministry of Education, but it had ended and was not repeated again:

Working in a very strong Saudi school [names school], where the religious ethic, the moral ethic, the character-building ethic is brilliant. They have Leader and Me programmes, they have twenty-first century skills, and they are implementing bot. (C5).

However, now looking at the barriers, four participants, including a parent, a teacher and two curriculum developers, disagreed with the above and believed character education was rarely

taught. In fact, the teacher had previously tried to implement a character programme in the school where she worked, but faced too many obstacles, such as a lack of interest and resources:

> *And one of the things that I wanted to implement was this life skills education, but unfortunately there was some restrictions from the school management for, um, life skills education. They found that it was too much, it was too much on them.* (T4)

What was understood from several participants was that the schools who follow the Ministry of Education's curriculum, taught character through the academic humanities subjects: Arabic, Social Studies, and Islam, and this was perceived as a barrier because these subjects' content could not be modified to accommodate an explicit focus on character. One educational consultant said the content of these subjects that included character development had strong areas, but were not implemented correctly and thus not effective:

> *So, the curriculum in principle is wonderful, but it all comes to how you implement that curriculum...you do have some concepts on collaboration, on embracing diversity...but if the student at the end of the day will have to memorise and just give it to you on a test, then really what difference does that make?* (C3)

Five participants and two focus groups mentioned how role models were used in the schools with which they were associated. Four said it was through religious role models, mainly different prophets, two mentioned it being taught through historical models and one focus group said exemplars were used through their leadership programme:

I'm pretty sure they do because every week she has a journal topic to write about these role models, about certain people, historical figures etc, etc and why they think they were better. (P5)

Oh, yes leadership, it's there.
Oh yes! Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and stuff. (S2)

Parents. There were not many differing opinions on whether parents were a barrier or enabler with regards to their children's character development, and the consensus was there should be more parent participation. Six adult participants found parents to be an issue because of their lack of involvement or lack of moral values. One parent found that parents in the school she is associated with are more concerned about academic achievement than character development, while a father mentioned sometimes nannies are more involved in the children's lives than the parents themselves. A headteacher and an educational consultant found the parents to be negative role models for their children, which might hamper their moral development, and a curriculum developer found that parents were involved but they wanted their children to be given 'information' rather than taught character skills:

(You can't come and destroy all my work, I've been working with your child for months and you just come and ruin it). (T2)

Parents' perception of learning, they don't realise it's a process and want their children spoon fed. (C6)

Another barrier mentioned mainly by the parents included the schools not involving them in character education due to limited communication and participation. One father explained that as a man he had limited access and communication with the school, while a curriculum developer found many schools do not involve parents and in fact some of them do not allow

mothers to enter the school. This could be a cultural situation as fathers are not permitted to enter co-ed elementary schools or girls' secondary schools, while mothers are not permitted in boys' secondary schools. Another issue one participant found was that there were many free extracurricular activities for their children, but there was no interest in having their children participate in them:

> *I'm sending my child to school, and I don't have any connection with them, with the teacher.* (P1)

> *As a parent I was not fully involved. And if I'm not fully involved then I don't think it is successful. Not fully involved, at least aware.* (P6)

However, the one enabler that was previously mentioned in *Generation Differences* was that some participants believed younger parents were more involved in their children's lives and were interested in their character development:

> *On a positive note (there are) lots of parenting workshops going on, there's so much awareness, parents are seeking help. (Because even the kids are changing on us) and we need to learn how to deal with them.* (C3)

> *So, parents now ask about everything, they want to know everything, and they want more, they always want more.* (C4)

The most common advice given by the majority of the participants was that the parent-school communication needs to improve so the same values are encouraged at school and at home. One headteacher discussed how essential she found communicating with the parents, and if she felt a student was learning the wrong values at home, she would speak to the parents

immediately. An educational consultant emphasised the importance of having a strong partnership between the school and home through a single path both could follow:

(It is necessary for us to work in partnership with the teachers and with the parents... There has to be one line that everyone walks on). (C1)

Several participants also suggested parents should participate more by increasing parents' awareness and even conducting parent workshops to teach them how to help with their children's character development. In addition, schools should have events where parents can join the school character-education activities or at least include parents in the decision process when designing and implementing such activities and/or programmes:

You need to provide them with reading material. You need to do a lot more workshops, after school workshops. Where you're having the parents participate in these activities as opposed to them being innocent bystanders. (P3)

I think there needs to be a factor where parents come in periodically to take part alongside their children...see what is being done regarding mentoring and, if they can't do it in the homes themselves, continue it by encouraging what they've seen being learnt. (C5)

School Management. Many participants mentioned the school's management as being a barrier with regards to implementing any new programme in a school. While advice was provided as to possible ways to handle it, few described it as an enabler. The first barrier involved the management's prioritisation of a character education programme (or lack thereof), because not only does management have the power to move decisions forward, implementation would only happen if there was real enthusiasm for the enterprise. The reason management's

interest was considered a barrier, in the estimation of several participants, was management may perceive a character education programme as an inconvenience and therefore a stressful undertaking. Therefore, even if parents or teachers were on board, management could impede such a programme. A curriculum developer also mentioned that in her experience with implementing a programme, the decision might be entirely at the discretion of one single individual. Furthermore, three participants found school management were generally more interested in academic grades than character. One participant explained how expatriate teachers might tend to be more restrained in their suggestions as they tended to focus on job security rather than risking disapproval:

> *They want more money, they want more, uh, more marks, they want their name to be on the, um, chart, the high achievers, A* star students, the A students, whatever the cost is.* (T1)

> *This is maybe to do with boundaries, and, you know, feeling safe and feeling secure. If we're all expat teachers, here, and we don't necessarily belong in that sense, then obviously we need to know what the boundaries are.* (T3)

Some parents perceived school management as a possible enabler in that the schools they were associated with would be keen on incorporating new ideas, while one curriculum developer found schools to be interested in the character education programme her institution intended to execute. Two headteachers were interviewed in this project and were part of school management. One headteacher was not necessarily interested in teaching character as a separate lesson, but was passionate about students' moral development and tried to embed it throughout the curriculum. The other headteacher had previously implemented a trial-run character education programme from the Ministry of Education and UNESCO. Furthermore, after the interview, she asked me to come back to her school and try and implement the role modelling

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programme developed in Stage One. Therefore, at least two schools found character education to be worthwhile and were willing to extend the extra effort into incorporating it in their schools. Another participant supported this by saying although there were few good school leaders, the ones who would travel abroad and try to bring in the best methods for their teachers and students. In addition, schools in the Region can be competitive and therefore might include a new programme or improve their character development methods to impress clients provided character education was seen as exhibiting something new:

> *Because they are eager for new ideas, I can feel they're hungry for new ideas. I know the administration of the school, they are always looking for new ideas.* (P6)

> *Yes, looking at what I'm seeing in the school that I'm in at the moment, and the emphasis, and teachers are being rewarded for implementing these programmes.* (C5)

A few pieces of advice were given on how to deal with school management when trying to implement a programme. The most mentioned point was to package or display the programme in a way to attract the school's interest. For instance, labelling or explaining how the programme could help with the school's particular weaknesses such as behaviour management. Moreover, two participants suggested making it 'bright' and 'engaging' to gain interest. Another two participants proposed showing schools how effective it was in other settings:

> *It depends on how you package the programme, or highlight some benefits over others depending on the priorities of that school.* (C3)

> *I think there might be a chance for them to be open to it, if it is painted very very brightly and colourfully in front of the management.* (T4)

The best way, trying to convince them, is not talking about the method very much, as much as showing them the results. (C4)

Other suggestions included going through a school's guidance counsellor and they would provide direction on what the appropriate next steps would be or getting feedback from higher management to give them what they wanted. One parent, who also happened to be an educational consultant, explained that gaining stakeholders' interest and developing the programme with them would be the most successful method for implementation:

(In every public school there is a guidance counsellor you can communicate to introduce the programme). (P2)

You want the project to fly, stakeholders should be aware and empowered...the more empowered they are, the more they're on your team, um, the better the results. (P6)

Resources. With resources, those were only described as a barrier, but again advice was given on possible ways to overcome it, and this was mainly provided by the education consultants or curriculum developers. The most mentioned issue was *time,* because whether it was a private, government or international school, either the teachers or the teachers and students were overburdened with work and had no time left for anything else in the curriculum. As already mentioned, this was especially the case with the three main subjects required from the Ministry of Education, including Social Studies, Islamic studies and Arabic.

40% of their work is admin, it takes away...they don't have the time, you know, time to do it. Uh, (yes), it's just going to be an extra burden, they're not going to be paid for it. (P4)

They have to abide by the, by the rules, laws of the Ministry of Education here with Islamic studies and um, Quran, and so on and so forth, and I think the geography of KSA. So that was, that was too much. So, there wasn't enough time to implement this. (T4)

Another mentioned issue was financial constraints, viewed as affecting both the management and teachers' desirability via-a-vis the programme, and this was mainly based on curriculum developers' experiences when trying to implement a programme:

I think one, the barriers, are really always logistical, like 'oh we don't have time' or 'oh they're a huge number of students' or 'oh, we don't have the funding' or so yea. (C4)

(They want to learn, they want to progress, but now with the economy, they don't want to pay). (C1)

Yea, it needs a lot of resources, for the school, they're already working under limited resources, financial or so you can say. (P1)

Lastly, the quality of staff was discussed as a barrier, whether it was a limited supply of properly trained teachers or expertise in leading such a programme. According to one consultant, there were numerous graduating teachers but without the required skills and therefore were not employed by schools, while a parent mentioned her child's school was interested in implementation of character education but did not have anyone to guide them in its correct execution:

The teacher education programmes, or the teacher college in Saudi, it's not meeting the requirements of the school. (C2)

They have the eagerness, but they need someone, the expertise...that comes and shows them how it's supposed to be done and guide them through it. (P6)

As I mention in *Chapter 6*, many issues regarding lack of teacher preparation echo causes experienced in various other countries, including the USA and the UK, so we may not be dealing primarily here with local barriers. Several participants provided similar suggestions as to how to overcome these barriers. Regarding time, many suggested making it an afterschool or extracurricular activity so that it did not conflict with the actual timetable, while others recommended including it in a session called *activity* or *club* session, which is usually a free session. A curriculum developer intended to implement her own programme within these lessons, and a headteacher said she could find an hour a week for it:

Um, I think what you can do is designate a few hours or (for example the hours of activity lesson that they have). (C3)

As for issues with finance and manpower, the most widely suggested piece of advice given was to get a sponsor for money and/or volunteers. The financial aspect would be to support the school and possibly given to the teachers for their extra time, while the volunteers would teach and execute the programme, thus taking the pressure off the school. A curriculum developer mentioned that she outsourced volunteers and they all came in together to implement her programme in various schools:

(In the beginning we depended on sponsors, we would get sponsorships from companies). (C6)

So, you need to outsource people, whether it's the school teachers, other teachers, volunteers. (There are) different models where you can do that. (C3)

5.2.4 Ministry of Education

Process/Approvals. The information provided about the Ministry was mainly through the teachers and consultants/curriculum developers as they have more direct experience. Here we enter a territory that is uniquely local. Approvals from the Ministry work differently for different types of schools. Based on the participants' accounts, there seem to be four types of schools, and how closely the school is required to follow the Ministry's curriculum, in addition to how much supervision is needed, depends on the type of school, which is listed from most to least approval needed: government schools, private national schools, private international schools and private embassy schools who are under their countries' embassies. Thus, government schools have the least flexibility in adding new developments while community schools have the most:

> *We really want to enter the public school sector, but because it's governmental*
> *it takes a bit more time to, uh, get into the meetings with them and like, there are*
> *a lot of logistics.* (C4)

> *They all have to follow the Ministry of Education but to different extents.* (C3)

The approval process being a barrier was agreed upon by most of the participants who discussed the Ministry, but the type of school also impacted the approval process, as one consultant mentioned how coming from a national school made it more difficult to gain approval for a new programme he wanted to implement while an international school received the approval for the same programme quite easily. However, whether a school is governmental, national or

international, they all require approval or a license to implement a new programme if it were to be included in students' final grade or certificate, but it was unclear whether this was the case for community schools. One headteacher explained how her school has two sections, a national section and an international one, and the former gets more 'attention' from the Ministry than the latter, but she did not seem to find this stressful:

> *That's why, unless it comes from the Ministry of Education itself, as a national project or a national initiative, um, then it's very difficult, uh, for a single school to get it approved.* (C2)

> *(Everything in schools is under the Ministry's umbrella, you can't implement any programme without it... for it to be accepted with grades).* (T5)

Other barriers experienced with the Ministry included conflicts that occurred with schools or being cautious to avoid issues for not following the guidelines provided. An educational consultant and two teachers explained how a supervisor from the Ministry visits schools during the year to attend classes and examine the curriculum for a review. Another headteacher described how she constantly had conflicts with the Ministry because she refused to follow the exact guidelines and followed her own ethos instead. One consultant explained how their job was to help support schools and ensure they do not face issues with the Ministry, but this can be difficult as an official document with guidelines does not exist; thus, the rules depend on each supervisor, which is an inconvenience when the supervisor changes. Another barrier mentioned by two participants involved the Ministry's curriculum being 'behind' those used in some private schools and behind those in the Middle Eastern Region with examples from the UAE and Kuwait. However, the fact that the Ministry was trying to progress was also acknowledged:

(They come from the Ministry, but I'm not afraid. Everything I do, I do it right...and they don't have clear and right objectives). (T2)

I think that, um, the Ministry of Education has done a lot over the years, but I do still feel as though they have a lot of catching up to do with the rest of the world, educationally, um, even regionally. (C5)

The Ministry of Education serves the whole kingdom, so many regions etc. to put that government into place, let alone everything else, to put that governance in place, it takes a lot of maturity, a lot of work. (P5)

The advice given based on this information included trying to get approval from the Ministry even if it was logistically difficult, as it would provide a programme with a strong backbone. However, to make the approval process easier, it would be beneficial to pilot the programme within a few schools, and preferably private schools as they have easier access and more flexibility. Once the programme's efficacy can be proven, the results should be shown to the Ministry, while making it clear it does not conflict with their vision and could fill a gap. Another suggestion recommended by three participants was receiving international recognition before going to the Ministry as they would be more likely to accept it:

How would it work? If I were you, I would be endorsed by an international entity ...Uh, so be internationally endorsed, do a sample, pilot it, prove success through your pilot. (C3)

I would say the way to do it would go to some good, strong schools, like we've done with Twenty-first Century Learning...show how it works in tandem with the Ministry of Education's work, that it's not being affected. (C5)

Interest. Eight participants provided their opinion on the Ministry or the government's interest in such a programme, and surprisingly all of them perceived it as an enabler, with only two participants who also mentioned a few barriers alongside the opportunities. The main reason they believed the Ministry would be interested was due to the country's current espoused agenda towards change and the 2030 Vision, which includes moral development as a priority:

> *(The Ministry and the Vision 2030, they understand the topic of moral values),*
> *so it is there on the agenda.* (C3)

Two educational consultants mentioned there were new character development initiatives being explored in the Ministry just then; thus, illustrating it was a matter they were leaning towards. While a parent named the governmental initiative *Kef nkoon qudwa? [How could we be role models?]* which already prompts individuals and institutions to think about how they could be role models to encourage character development. Furthermore, a participant described the Ministry as having decent workers who were genuinely interested in students' progress and would therefore support a role modelling character education programme:

> *But lately I've heard of many initiatives from the Ministry of education, uh, to,*
> *uh, have it [character education] as a separate curriculum.* (C2)

> *There are good people in the Ministry of Education, I know some of them, if they*
> *shared the vision and can see how this can enhance student development across*
> *the schooling, um, system, they will support you.* (C5)

Two barriers were mentioned, including the fear of the programme losing its integrity as bureaucracy often intervenes within the Ministry and schools; therefore, the focus would be on labelling the achievement rather than the development or journey itself. The other barrier was

the Ministry's dislike of change as they have a tight construct they protect and therefore quite strongly resist new ideas or programmes, and if they do accept, the Ministry would then try to control the new element so the new programme follows their own methods:

> *My concern would be whether or not there is enough, uh, deep understanding and um integrity within the Ministry. Between the Ministry and schools about what's being achieved...it could become a little bit overly bureaucratic, losing its ethos.* (T3)

5.3 Summary of Findings

The findings from Stage Two took a different approach to Stage One as I intended to gain a more expansive perspective on how a role modelling programme could be developed and implemented in Saudi Arabia from various schools and roles within the educational system in the Region. Therefore, the present section aims to provide a summary of what was collected in this stage. However, some of the findings from Stage One were repeated in the second stage, especially when looking at the design of the programme, while the information on the implementation brought new insights.

When it came to the *structure* of the programme, there were some differing opinions, but most participants thought it would be more effective if role modelling and character education took a whole-school approach where it was filtered through the entire curriculum. Moreover, the *pedagogy* preferred for a role modelling character education should be:

- Student-led
- Action-based
- Engaging

Although the three of these may seem obvious, this was emphasised due to the lack of engagement within the subjects coming from the Ministry's curriculum, i.e. Social studies, Islamic studies and Arabic. As shown below, the activities suggested for the *content* of the programme supported the methods preferred including:

- Discussions

- Projects

- Drama

- Role-play

- Journaling

- Stories

- Writing

- Bringing in real life role models

The virtues were mainly chosen due to their global and/or local significance and are listed from the most to the least mentioned virtue:

- Honesty

- Responsibility

- Respect

- Empathy

- Kindness

- Patience

- Self-love

- Authenticity

Within Stage One's findings, most of the participants suggested relatable role models based on ethnicity/culture, but in Stage Two a variety of role models were suggested, with some participants having differing opinions, for instance whether historical or modern role models should be used. This showed different kinds of role models could be relevant for particular virtues, and various role models should be chosen based on a school's characteristics or weaknesses. For instance, embassy or international schools may not need global role models as much as private or governmental national schools who are less exposed to internationalism. The types of models included:

- Historical versus present or both

- Famous versus. not famous or both

- Global versus local or both

- Religious versus non-religious or both

- Variety with different roles

Some of the participants discussed who the *teachers* teaching the programme should be or the characteristics they should encompass, and most agreed that for successful outcomes the teachers should be passionate about character development, while most of the students chose a teacher with whom they had a close relationship. A few participants also suggested proper training was required, and this connects with the results found in the implementation of the programme and in Stage One's findings as one of the barriers mentioned was teachers' lack of training as well as motivation. A possible reason for this could be because of another barrier mentioned, which was the limited resources schools have and how burdened teachers currently are.

The next theme involved understanding the possible barriers and enablers in implementation of the programme based on participants' opinions and experiences in the

Region. This raised new findings and insights that failed to show in Stage One as they involved different experiences from various schools. However, before exploring the implementation of a role modelling programme, first an understanding of whether it would be significant in the Region was discussed. All of the participants from all the groups found character education to be significant and the reasons given were:

- Raises awareness

- More important than academics

- Lack of values in the Region

- Progressive developments in the country

- Global advancements

The reasons given for the significance of role modelling were:

- Practical /tangible examples

- Children are visual learners

- Inspirational

However, some negative issues were raised including hero-worship, indoctrination for older children and the effects of negative role models. The advice given was to focus on positive role models but show their flaws and struggles so as to avoid hero-worship or perfectionism.

The second category explored the possible barriers and enablers regarding society in the Region, and unsurprisingly the topic that emerged was religion since Saudi Arabia is the prototypical Islamic country. Religion was generally viewed as an enabler because religion, whether Islam or any other religion, is believed to be based on moral foundations and the role models present moral virtues. However, the barriers would be the ineffective way Islamic education is currently taught to impart moral characteristics because of its:

- Content

- Rote-learning

- Inflexibility

The advice given was that religion needed to be perceived in a more positive light and character education/role modelling could be taught separately while still highlighting the connection between the two. Another topic which was repeated several times was the idea of a generation gap between the new and older parents and teachers in the society which could impact upon the desirability of a role modelling programme, as the former ones are open to changes and understand the need for character development as opposed to the latter. Some participants found parents to be an actual barrier when it came to children's moral development as they were not the right role models, or the schools were not involving the parents enough. Therefore, if a role modelling programme were to be implemented, then it needed to have workshops for parents and more activities involving them to help with the development process.

When it came to examining character development in the educational system, most of the barriers and enablers seemed to be inter-linked, based on the curriculum and how it connected to the Ministry of Education. The more a school was required to follow the Ministry, the less time and flexibility was available to add new developments from both the school and Ministry's side. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the three main subjects from the Ministry: Social studies, Islamic studies and Arabic, were time-consuming and involved old pedagogical approaches, thus causing teachers and schools to lose interest in any extra work as it was seen as a burden. The way in which character development was currently taught differed in each school and was relative to the school ethos, but based on the participants' views, most schools failed to do this properly. However, private schools did have more freedom than governmental schools and therefore if a new programme was packaged appealingly and properly marketed to private schools and school leadership was passionate about character development, then there

was a likelihood that it might be accepted. Furthermore, since a lack of resources was the main barrier in schools, if a programme found sponsors for financial help or volunteers, then schools would be more willing to implement a role modelling programme. Another suggestion was to go through the Ministry of Education, as schools would then feel more compelled to take part, but the Ministry itself erects barriers, including a rigid system and long processing times. Nevertheless, according to many participants, the government is interested in prioritising moral development as part of Saudi's Vision 2030, and is already looking into new initiatives based on this; therefore, a role modelling programme would catch their interest.

Overall, the Stage Two findings provided some further understanding and fresh insight into how a role modelling character education programme would be perceived by some people in the Region, and how they believed it should be developed and implemented to increase its efficacy. As well as offering a further comparison of Stage One and Stage Two findings, the next chapter examines how the findings from this chapter and the previous one adds to existing research, and how they provide new insights that could be used for future research and practical initiatives regarding character education and/or role modelling in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

In this discussion chapter, the findings from the previous two chapters are interpreted in relation to the research questions and the existing literature on the topic discussed in *Chapter 2*. However, first a brief reminder of what the project involved: the study was divided into two phases and although they had different objectives, all the findings need to be combined to answer the research questions. The first section in this chapter discusses the significance of character education and role modelling in the relevant region, with reference to the evidence from previous studies, while the second section focuses on RQ1:

1. How could an effective role modelling character education programme be developed in Saudi Arabia?

RQ1 uses the findings from both stages and the existing literature to explore how a role modelling programme in the Region could be developed regarding structure, pedagogy and content. Subsequently, the third section of the chapter focuses on RQ2:

2. How could a role modelling character education be feasibly implemented in the Region?

Although RQ2 mainly uses the findings from Stage Two *(Chapter 5)*, findings from the first stage *(Chapter 4)* are used to convey how character education and role modelling can be implemented in a school rather than at a regional level, while alluding to the literature on character education and role modelling in Saudi Arabia.

6.1 Significance of role modelling and character education in Saudi Arabia

Before developing and implementing a role modelling character education programme, the interest and its significance in the Region had to be explored. Although the literature (*see Section 2.8*) has mainly shown there is a quality and quantity gap in character education, the following subsection examines whether my findings present conflicting or similar results and in which aspects. The sample size in this project may have been small, but it can be argued that it provides a telescopic view of people's perspectives in the Region. Most participants in both phases of the project showing an interest in character education and role modelling.

Firstly, participants considered that there existed a lack of focus on character education in the Region, believing it is rarely taught or not taught enough, and this could be because citizenship education in primary school is delivered through the humanities subjects (Alharbi, 2017); therefore, a specific focus on character or morals is found to be lacking. Many agreed, however, that morals are taught through Islamic studies. Yet similar to the existing evidence, as Jamjoom (2010) and Propkop (2003) have shown, change is desired in this field because the manner in which the moral component of Islamic studies is taught is outdated, as it mainly uses rote-learning and memorisation, which are not positively received by students.

Secondly, my findings convey a 'values gap' in the Region, with both children and adults needing a medium for morally laden character development, or at least an initial increase in awareness. Alharbi (2017) has slightly touched upon a values-gap by discussing society's increased materialism and lack of open-mindedness, but my results have added to this observation by suggesting society also lacks a sense of responsibility and a work ethic, with many parents acting as negative role models, possibly hindering children's moral development.

Thirdly, the Region is progressing rapidly; therefore, character education is essential in guiding children to adapt morally to the new changes, or, in a sense, to negotiate new moral space. Although the already mentioned *Saudi Vision 2030* repeatedly mentions the importance of maintaining Saudi Arabia's traditional values, it is aiming for a more modernised approach to become one of the top three liveable countries in the world by somehow emulating countries with higher standards of living. The nation aims to have an exponential economic growth by inviting global investors. In addition, the government aims to increase citizens' and residents' quality of life, as well as increase gender equality within the community and labour market (Saudi Vision 2030, 2020). Several changes to reach the Vision's aims have already started, such as less segregation within the community, the opening of cinemas in the country as well as women driving. For many nations, the mentioned changes may seem quite basic, but for a traditional country such as Saudi Arabia, sudden developments in a short space of time can be quite revolutionary.

Overall, it seems this moment is an advantageous opportunity to introduce a character education programme because the country is open to change and is aware of its educational gaps. The participants supported the existing literature by suggesting the government is genuinely interested in modifying the educational system and focussing on moral development through its *Saudi Vision 2030*, in addition to the new initiatives they are starting, which includes a National Character Enrichment programme (Saudi Vision 2030, 2020). The *Vision 2030*, however, still supports Alharbi's (2017) point in that citizenship education mainly focuses on national values and identities rather than global ones, because even though Saudi Arabia aims to be an essential player in the global market, it never mentions introducing the concept of globalisation or global citizenship education to the nation. All in all, although *Saudi Vision 2030* will be seen as quite a revolutionary document from the perspective of traditional religious

and educational visions, it does not embody a call for a secular or modern vision of education, along Western lines. Its break with traditionalism is substantial, as seen from inside the Region, but less so if viewed from the outside.

Although data collection was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic, and the effects of the pandemic go beyond the current research, the need for character development seems more important now than ever due to all the economic and social changes. Schools have moved to online learning in Saudi Arabia since March 2020 and will continue to do so in the next term. During an international crisis, where the instructional norm has been transformed, there is need for role models presenting certain virtues to guide children, virtues such as gratitude and resilience. Since the pandemic is a very recent event, there has not been any literature on how the pandemic has or could affect people's moral development in the Region, but the flexibility and situation-specificity of Aristotelian character education could be perceived as a major advantage in unpredictable and challenging times.

With reference to the significance of role modelling, participants from both stages of the project did not use exactly the same terms as existing research studies, but referred to similar underlying concepts as they perceived role modelling as an effective method for teaching virtues. Role modelling was seen as effective because it provides a practical technique with real examples, a method described as more useful than theoretical teaching. In addition, a common notion of experiential learning among the adult participants aligns with Bandura's theory (1971) that children are visual learners and therefore copy what they see. Precisely for that reason, being exposed to moral exemplars in real life, it is argued, could lead to emulation. Moreover, the findings supported theories suggesting certain emotions are elicited when exposed to moral exemplars (see *Section 2.2;* Haidt, 2003; Kristjánsson, 2007; Schindler, 2014; Zagzebski, 2015; Thrash and Elliot, 2004), as most of the students in Stage One and two explained feeling

inspired and motivated to do and be better when exposed to moral role models. However, some of the adults acknowledged the pitfalls of role modelling, which mainly involved hero-worship and perceiving certain exemplars as perfect without noticing their weaknesses, as discussed by Croce (2019) and Kristjánsson (2019), or possibly feeling devastated when certain flaws are revealed. The advice given by participants involves revealing the role models' full story and including their flaws and struggles from the beginning, which was meant to be done in the role modelling programme created at the start of the project but not emphasised in the implementation. Surprisingly, however, none of the participants mentioned the role models being too superior to emulate because of unattainable virtues (i.e. the problem of moral inertia), except for the one teacher during the pilot study. However, moral inertia is still an issue that needs consideration and is discussed further in *Section 6.2.3* to explain which type of role models should be used to try to forestall inertia.

As previous research and findings have shown, role modelling is already a method of teaching in the Region even if it is not labelled as such, because moral teachings are performed through Islamic history using the Prophet and his companions as models. In addition, the findings have shown that some schools even have leadership lessons that use role modelling as the foundation, but a possible concern with this is that the focus is solely on famous leaders who do not necessarily represent a well-rounded set of virtues. There was a noticeable absence of the mentioning of role models exemplifying intellectual virtues, such as *phronesis*; hence the recent buzz in moral psychology surrounding wisdom in all its forms (Darnell *et al.*, 2019; Grossmann *et al.*, 2020) has not had an influence on moral educators (let alone parents) in this region yet. When examples of the virtues of role models were given, they were most often of the moral kind. The connection between the moral and the civic was also rarely made, and a possible reason for this could be that the participants did not connect citizenship education with

character education, even though the two can be highly interlinked (Peterson, 2020). Nevertheless, participants from the Region accept role modelling as a concept, and now it is about modifying how it is currently executed with a more effective method, by means of the right pedagogy and content.

6.2 Developing a role modelling programme

The present section reflects on what are considered to be the most effective ways to develop a role modelling character education programme in Saudi Arabia, and how this contradicts, supports or adds on to the role modelling intervention originally created. This will involve reference to *Section 3.3.1* on the original design of the intervention trial, why it was designed in that particular way, and how it may be changed. The intervention was tested in Stage One by means of qualitative tools and three kinds of pre- and post-test to measure development in gratitude, empathy and virtue literacy. Unfortunately for the latter, the sample was not big enough to conduct any significant analyses. Moreover, the analyses for gratitude and empathy (shown in *Section 4.2.3*) failed to show any significant results, which leads to the question why? In addition to the fact that in some cases school interventions to develop moral virtues seem to fail spectacularly without any clear reasons (Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2017), there are many factors that could have impacted the current results, for instance the short duration and hence the insufficient amount of time to stimulate any development. The observations and focus groups showed there was some learning taking place (*qua* virtue literacy) because most of the content contained new concepts, which some students proved to understand through their writing and discussions in class as well as their responses in the focus groups. This should be viewed with some scepticism, however as there is no quantitative data to strengthen its validity.

Therefore, it still seems useful to question how Stage One's interventional trial could have been done differently to increase its efficacy and possibly evidence some moral development.

The layout of this section reflects that presented in Stage Two's findings (*Section 5.1*) and this includes the structure, pedagogy and content of the programme being discussed, respectively.

6.2.1 Structure

How the programme should be structured involves how it should be placed in the curriculum in addition to the lesson and the programme's duration and frequency. Considering the first element, the findings differed between Stage One and Stage Two, as most of the participants in the former were happy with such a programme being timetabled separately. Meanwhile, most of the participants in Stage Two believed it should be confined to what the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017) defines as *caught*, which is character education being part of the school ethos and culture so as to encourage moral development. Possible reasons for this, which are mentioned in *Section 5.3*, include the school in Stage One already having PSHE and Leadership classes on the timetable as well as being an embassy school and thus has minimal interference from the Ministry of Education regarding supervision and workload.

The Jubilee Centre's *Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017) recommends a *caught* and *taught* approach at the outset, with *sought* coming later after some form of moral habituation and understanding. *Caught* and *taught* emphasises the importance of not only having a school community that promotes character development, but also overt teaching opportunities inside and outside of the classroom, while *sought* involves continuous opportunities provided by the school for students to develop their character, critically and reflectively (cf. Darnell *et al.*, 2019). One headteacher in the project explained how she

effectively cultivated a culture of morality in the school without direct lessons and through general school projects and unplanned teaching intervals. On the other hand, one teacher from Stage One and an educational consultant from Stage Two mentioned a character education programme would only be effective if it was a proper class with grades. Drawing on the findings collectively, I would disagree with the last point and drawing on the background literature I would disagree with the headteacher only using a *caught* method. Having the programme graded would only add pressure to the students and teachers because there seems to be an issue with workload when it comes to certain subjects from the Ministry of Education; thus, including another subject with academic pressure would not be easily accepted. Secondly, having character education provided only through a *caught* approach would fail to reinforce virtue literacy and moral understanding. An educational consultant suggested having a whole-school approach where role modelling character education is taught through academic subjects, and one teacher uses a lesson to integrate all elements. Ideally, after synthesising my findings and the background literature, I would follow this suggestion, but I would propose most of the teaching being conducted through separate lessons and then reinforced through academic subjects, unassigned teaching opportunities and assemblies. This could reduce the issue with subject teachers having a lack of character education knowledge and needing to teach it on top of everything else, in addition to decreasing their workload.

The structure of the programme also called for an exploration of its preferred duration and frequency, through observations in Stage One and interviews in Stage Two. Originally, when the intervention was designed for this project, it included three lessons and each was structured as an hour-long session. However, this was not feasible for primary school children as each lesson took 80 minutes and most of the time the lesson was still not fully completed. Therefore, for the Case Study it was conducted with secondary school children, expecting a

faster pace, but the sessions were only 40 minutes long, and a lesson could barely be done in two sessions. Looking at this, in the future if a session is 40 minutes long, then each role model lesson should be extended over three sessions to ensure the children have sufficient time to absorb the information as well as enable clear understanding via the activities.

In both stages, most of the participants mentioned that a role modelling character education programme should be given consistently throughout the year to ensure repetition and continuity, and although the participants were not familiar with moral theories, this does tally with Aristotle's idea of moral habituation discussed in *Chapter 2*, which involves a similar concept to learning a skill, because repeating a virtuous action continually may lead to internalising the virtue. Thus, conducting the lessons once or twice a week for a term or two could be an effective structure for the programme. Another necessary element regarding timing that should not be overlooked is that the programme should start towards the beginning of term, because with the Pilot and Case Study in Stage One, those were executed towards the end of the academic year and close to exams; thus, students' interest and focus was more on their exams than on the programme, and according to the teachers their energy levels were low too. Perceived lack of time for role modelling lessons is often given as a justification for not being able to execute them (Damon and Colby, 2015), and although this excuse may often seem to be disingenuous (given that role modelling can be woven into already existing teaching materials), the interviews gave me a more sympathetic understanding of some of the actual time barriers.

Overall, using the participants' perspectives and the observations, the ideal role modelling programme should include three to four role models per term, introducing one main role model a month with four to eight lessons depending on whether the lessons are once or twice a week. With this structure the lessons are not rushed and there is enough time to prepare, which was the main issue observed in the lessons. Aristotle's concern, however, needs to be

kept in mind, as elaborated by Kristjánsson (2017), that the main focus of moral development through role models is not on the exemplars themselves *qua* persons but on their exemplary virtues. This is important when trying to use a whole-school approach because the virtues taught through the exemplars could be reinforced through academic subjects or projects presented in school assemblies, and this is essential not only in order to prioritise the virtues but to ensure students do not forget what they have learnt once they leave the classroom.

6.2.2 Pedagogy

After exploring a possible effective structure for a role modelling programme, the present section focuses on the preferred pedagogy and how it differed from the original programme designed, with regard to the methods and types of teachers. The most often mentioned pitfall of character education and role modelling, in particular, is indoctrination, as there is a risk of uncritically copying an exemplar (Croce, 2019; Kristjánsson, 2019; Rose, 2004); therefore, it is important to focus on the virtues more than the role models as well as encouraging critical thinking and moral reasoning (Sanderse, 2012). A few participants in Stage Two agreed with this concept, as one teacher was worried a role modelling programme could be yet another dictated element, which they already receive from other mandatory humanity subjects in the Region; and a curriculum developer recommended the programme being separate to religion so there was room for critical discussion, while a parent was worried older children would perceive role model education as an indoctrinating method requiring them to change their own personalities to copy the exemplar. This supports Vos (2017) who, similar to Aristotle, emphasises the importance of emulating the virtues presented by the exemplars and modifying them in accordance with one's own life pursuits and identity.

The role modelling programme developed in Stage One aimed to avoid the indoctrinating pitfall by providing students with the opportunity to brainstorm the virtues they believed the role models presented rather than the teachers simply telling the students what those virtues were, in addition to reflecting on their own virtues and lives to understand how they already exemplify the taught virtues and how they could improve on the virtues further *(*see *Section 3.3.1)*. During the Pilot Study, the students had difficulty self-reflecting and even with some support could not successfully complete the activity, while during the Case Study most of the classes were unable to reach this activity or it was rushed through. Unfortunately, how the programme was presented and implemented during the Case Study was not how it was intended as the teachers failed to follow the guidelines; thus, the essential components based on previous research studies were not executed. Croce (2017) and Han (2015) recommend using student-led activities to effectively use role models in classrooms, which was also a preferred pedagogical method mentioned by several participants in Stage Two. Although the programme developed tried to do this through pair and group work, this was rarely followed when conducting the programme, therefore it was no surprise when the teachers and students from the Case Study complained about the programme being teacher-led rather than student-led. Nevertheless, during the observations the lessons that included some group work brought more engagement and participation from the students, therefore in the future pair and group work should be mentioned as a priority when conducting the programme. The problems encountered here dispelled some of my romantic illusions about academic research studies in education, as I had not considered teacher non-compliance before as a significant risk factor.

Han (2015) also foregrounds project-based activities in role model education, and many participants, including students, agreed with this but added action-based activities that involved physical movement and fewer theoretical methods. This was an element lacking in the role

modelling programme developed, as most of the activities involved the students sitting their place (except the debate which was also not implemented) and thinking of theoretical or hypothetical situations. Another suggested method by participants in Stage Two was to make the programme more engaging for children by including activities they would be more interested in, and one parent suggested including learners in the development stage. In the future, a survey or focus group could be conducted with more students to discover the current 'trendy' activities that would garner their interest. That most of the student participants preferring pedagogical methods that are student-led, engaging and involve critical thinking may not seem surprising as it supports the existing studies on role modelling (Croce, 2017; Han, 2015; Sanderse, 2012). On the other hand, for Saudi Arabia this is a challenging concept because the prevailing pedagogy, particularly within the Ministry's humanity subjects, is based on rote-learning and memorisation (Alharbi, 2017; Jamjoom, 2010; Prokop, 2003; Rugh, 2008), therefore it seems important to be extra careful when developing a role modelling programme in the Region to ensure indoctrination is avoided as much as possible and not fall into the trap of replicating outdated methods.

Originally the programme was designed for primary school children, but since it seemed too difficult for the learners in the Pilot Study, it was conducted with secondary school students in the Case Study. A common concern from the teachers in Stage One, which they believed affected the programme's efficacy, was the students' low literacy levels. While the students disagreed, there is no denying the fact, that, as mentioned in *Chapter 2,* Saudi's academic levels, as measured by PISA, are below the international average (OECA, 2019). Therefore, it seems a better way forward could be to simplify the programme more in terms of literacy levels and include various methods which do not only involve reading and writing, thus providing students with different channels through which to learn.

The next item regarding pedagogy are the types of teachers and/or the characteristics that could positively impact the pedagogy of the programme. This is different to the barriers/enablers regarding the teachers in the implementation because even though those are related, in this section I focus on the teachers themselves rather than their surrounding environment. As discussed in *Section 2.6,* research studies on teachers and role modelling indicate how teachers need to be role models themselves and represent the to-be-emulated moral virtues through their manner/action so as to facilitate students' moral development through a mimicking effect (Fallona, 2009; Rose, 2004; Sanderse, 2012). Rose elaborates on this by mentioning students' ability to recognise hypocrisy, and therefore, if teachers 'fake' certain virtues, it may reduce children's' motivation to acquire them. Many participants from the second stage of the project supported this point further by discussing the importance of the teachers themselves being role models when teaching such a programme and that authenticity is essential for it to be effective. This was also shown through the observations in the Case Study because the students' interest reflected the teachers' interest. Yet, surprisingly, the importance of teachers being moral role models was only discussed by one participant in the Case Study, and a possible reason for this could be that the programme's efficacy was measured through pre- and post-tests; therefore, participants felt compelled to deflect the blame from themselves. Meanwhile, in Stage Two of the project there was no programme under scrutiny and so participants were giving their general opinion without feeling criticised. In addition, a sense of anger was felt from the teachers in the Case Study as they complained the PSHE lessons were not organised properly and thrown onto the teachers without considering their opinions. Interestingly, the idea of PSHE being forced upon teachers is also mentioned as an issue in the UK by some PSHE teachers on Twitter (McPhee, 2020).

For any pedagogy to work, teachers' motivation must be present. Several studies have shown that teachers and educators find moral aspects of teaching necessary and acknowledge that teaching goes beyond academic subjects (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2016). Several participants from Stage Two mentioned this also by suggesting some teachers are not interested in character development, or as one teacher described it, they are just running 'factory classrooms'. Lack of motivation is therefore a potential barrier and can impact the efficacy of the programme. Notably, only one teacher from Stage One discussed his deep interest in moral education, which showed through the observation of his class and resulted in the students' reciprocating the interest. The class observations in general showed a lack of teachers' interest in the topic, which negatively affected how the programme was presented, and this lack of engagement from the teachers was confirmed by some of the students who took the programme. Thus, showing a passion for character development is not an assumed trait to be found in many teachers, and so in choosing teachers for the programme one needs to be conscious of this. Some students from the focus groups in Stage Two mentioned wanting a teacher with whom they had a close relationship to teach them the programme, and although this was not confirmed explicitly, it could be because with a personal relationship there is more of a direct interest in the children's moral development. If teachers fail to express a deep interest in character development, the next best option could be choosing a teacher with whom the children are in contact often or with whom they have a positive relationship, such as a homeroom teacher or guidance counsellor.

Overall, it seems with regard to the pedagogy, there was more of a consensus than regarding the structure of the programme, because most of the previous studies and the findings from Stage One and Two recommend critical thinking and student-led activities. The findings also suggested an additional method, which includes active-based learning getting the children

moving, possibly outdoors. Moreover, although the term indoctrination was not explicitly mentioned, it functioned as the undeniable element in many interviews through participants' perceptions and experiences of the current traditional teaching methods in the Region. Furthermore, my findings supported studies that have shown the importance of teachers' themselves being role models and teaching moral values implicitly (Fallona, 2009; Rose, 2004; Sanderse, 2012), while also having an interest or passion in teaching values explicitly, in order to effectively deliver the programme (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2016). Comparing the findings to the role modelling programme originally developed, a greater variety of methods should be used for different kinds of learners as well as more student-led activities such as projects, presentations and student-led research that requires more student involvement and less teacher preparation so teachers do not perceive it as a burden imposed on them. Looking at the school context in the Case Study and the teachers' lack of interest, it may be worthwhile to include the teachers in the development of the programme and/or have them modify it with their own preferences; this could help with the delivery of the lessons, as the findings have shown that minimal passion can lead to limited engagement and participation from the students.

6.2.3 Content

The content of the programme is interlinked to the pedagogy, but the main distinction in this study is that 'pedagogy' focuses on how the programme should be taught and 'content' examines what should be included. Therefore, the content involves the relevant virtues and activities preferred in the programme, and those will be discussed in that order, according to what the participants chose, in comparison to the literature and the original role modelling programme designed in the project. Surprisingly, only the teacher from the Pilot Study

explicitly mentioned the importance of teaching specific virtues to cultivate virtue literacy. However, participants in Stage Two did discuss which virtues they believe should be taught. Participants did not and certainly were not expected to mention Aristotle or virtue ethics, but they were open to and interested in teaching children virtues through role models. Honesty was the most popular virtue among them followed by responsibility; responsibility seems predictable because according to several participants Saudi students have a lack of work ethic and are 'spoiled' according to one parent, therefore it could be possible they have been accustomed to not taking responsibility and having someone else conduct the work. This relates to Alharbi's point about the rapid increase of income in Saudi Arabia having created a materialistic culture and an unwillingness to work in particular jobs such as manual labour (2017). Interestingly, one teacher noticed a difference between the expatriate students and Saudi students, with the former being more hardworking and having more character skills; however, this needs more extensive research in order to be confirmed.

Virtues chosen by the participants that were in line with the Jubilee Centre's *Framework of Character Education* including respect, honesty and compassion, which participants labelled as kindness and empathy. Surprisingly no one mentioned courage, justice or gratitude, which were not only listed in the *Framework of Character Education*, but also included in the role modelling programme designed for this project. It is unclear why, especially regarding gratitude which tends to be the virtue of first choice in such interventions (Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2017) but a possible reason could be participants did not find it lacking in Saudi. For instance, in the Programme for International School Assessment (PISA) scores, students in Saudi Arabia were found to be more satisfied with life and less sad than the average, thus potentially acquiring some sort of gratitude. Even though virtues such as gratitude and courage were not mentioned, including them could be beneficial. Firstly, courage tends to be a virtue foregrounded in stories

of moral heroes and one that serves as a facilitator of other virtues, for without courage, virtuous people would not have the self-efficacy to perform their virtuous acts; which can be shown through famous exemplars such as Nelson Mandela or non-famous ones presented in Colby and Damon's study of role models (1992). I personally think courage is an essential virtue in school settings as some adolescents find social acceptance important and may let fear prevent them from acting virtuously, because as Hart and Fegley's study (1995) conveys, adolescent care exemplars are less concerned with social integration and conformity. Justice as a virtue or character trait has been emphasised by several Greek philosophers including Plato, Socrates and Aristotle (Huang, 2007), and is not confined to virtue ethics but also a key ingredient in Kantian deontology (Kant, 2002) and utilitarianism (Mill, 2009). Looking at this in a school setting, it seems necessary to ensure children are aware of how one should be treated equally and of standing up against injustice such as bullying. Lastly, gratitude may not necessarily be an essential Aristotelian virtue, but it has been studied extensively in psychology recently and has been found to be an empathic emotion that is linked to happiness and positive wellbeing and may lead to prosocial motivation (Emmons and McCullough, 2003), thus facilitating moral development. Another important virtue which was not mentioned by participants or included in the role modelling programme is humility, which Brooks (2012) believes is a virtue that will counteract society's biggest vice these days which is pride due to a capitalistic and individualistic jockeying for positions. As humility tends to be highlighted more in religious moral codes than secular ones (and even written off by Aristotle himself as a vice of deficient self-worth), it was slightly surprising not to be seeing it given pride of place among the participants. That said, one participant in this study used the same explanation as Brooks as to why moral values are deteriorating in Saudi Arabia, so it may be beneficial to include humility in a future role modelling programme in the Region.

Some of the reasons the participants chose particular virtues were due to their concern about them lacking on a local and global level, but most of the parents focussed on virtues that would affect their children on an individual level, while the consultants looked at the bigger picture and suggested values that would make adolescents more open-minded global citizens. This complements Alharbi's (2017) point on citizenship education in Saudi Arabia failing to teach students global values and focussing on a national identity with local values. Therefore, when choosing virtues for a role modelling programme, it is important to include virtues that would make students develop morally as individuals, both as part of a regional community and global one. This underpins the *Framework of Character Education,* which includes a variety of virtues divided into four umbrella terms that help students develop on all three of levels: *intellectual virtues, moral virtues, civic virtues and performance virtues* (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2017).

The next discussion point regarding the content of the programme is the type of activities that should be included, and this is mainly based on looking at class observations and participants' perspectives in both phases of the project to compare it to the role modelling programme created at the beginning of the project. As repeated throughout the thesis, in both the literature and the findings, most schools in the Region are obliged to adhere to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, to a significant degree. This encompasses traditional teacher-led lessons. Consequently, introducing a programme can be perceived negatively or as another burden or dictated agenda for students, teachers and the school leadership. In *Section 6.2.2*, the preferred pedagogy was mentioned, and this included student-led and active-based activities, therefore the suggested activities here are based on these recommendations as well as the content observed in the classes. Unavoidably, the below discussion contains references to issues

of pedagogy as well as content, as they two are invariably interlinked. A certain pedagogy often only works with a certain kind of content, and vice versa.

The most mentioned activity in Stages One and Two was discussions, which was supported further during the class observations as the discussions increased student engagement and participation. When the students were made to work silently and individually throughout the class, they were easily distracted, not listening and disrupting the lesson, but when class discussions were initiated, most of the students were involved. Therefore, discussions could help when incorporated in all lessons, which should vary between group and class discussions. Moreover, discussions would have to be more student-led than teacher-led because, as Watson (2019) explains, when the teacher is constantly asking the questions, the students fail to learn inquisitiveness and become more passive students, as a result. Jamjoom's study (2010) supports this further as the Islamic teachers in the school related that most of the discussions in the class involved the teachers asking questions, which this does not promote critical thinking, but rather persuades students to simply follow the content of the curriculum. This could be termed 'constrained participation'. Although discussions were encouraged in the *teachers' pack* of the programme, not many of the teachers used it, therefore those should be emphasised more in the future.

Further recommended activities include projects and drama/role-playing, and this is based on the action-based pedagogy that requires students to physically move around while learning. Within the role modelling programme, a role-playing activity was included but it involved writing what they thought they would do or say if they were the exemplar, so they could empathise with the exemplar's life. However, it may be more effective to turn this into an actual role-playing activity, since writing was not well-received, thus enabling students to act out certain moral dilemmas and see how they would act if they were other people. In

retrospect, the programme included a debate, which was not positively received in the Pilot Study and not implemented at all in the Case Study, therefore it seems necessary to allow a good amount of time to explain the concept of new activities and how to conduct them. However, other than the debate, the programme did not have many action-based activities and some of the students from both stages suggested going outside, and organising field trips or sporting events. Future projects in the theoretical stage of virtue literacy could include finding and researching their own role models, and if they are within the community, interviewing them and presenting their findings to the class or in school assemblies. Meanwhile, other projects could include acting on the virtues taught such as: planting a tree, volunteering, peer-mentoring, creating and managing a charity event. This also allows the students to see how virtues can be attained on a practical and smaller scale rather than seeming inaccessible through the exemplars and causing moral inertia, defined as the demotivation to morally develop because the virtues and/or exemplars seem too superior (Han *et al.*, 2017).

The students from Stage One of the study insisted there should be less writing in the programme, which is an appropriate comment because the *activity booklet* mostly had writing activities. Furthermore, the pre- and post-tests were quite long and required a good deal of writing; therefore, possibly negatively affecting students' perspective on writing. One teacher mentioned a student saying this was not an English class, therefore she was refusing to write long answers. Students already have academic burdens; therefore, if a new programme were to be implemented, it should take a less academic and more engaging route. Some participants from Stage Two did mention writing and one teacher suggested journaling. However, if writing activities are to be used, I recommend using those as a self-discovery journal and possibly for future discussion points rather than a question/answer type activity. The journals could be used as a self-reflection tool because moral exemplars' moral identities in relation to their inner self

and others are found to be stronger and better defined than ordinary people's; therefore, presenting authentic virtues *(*see *Section 2.4.2).* A journal could help learners understand what virtues they already have and how they could learn from the role models to improve their own morals. As Arthur *et al.* (2014a) suggest in the *My Character* project, journaling could be used for personal reflection to reduce indoctrination and help with character development through moral thinking. This is built on also ensuring learners are not simply uncritically copying exemplars but understanding how the virtues the exemplars present could be adapted to their own lives. Although this was included in the role modelling programme, it was not presented in a journaling style, and in the Pilot Study the students had difficulty thinking of what to write, therefore to start off could be a group discussion topic, allowing students to brainstorm before writing individually.

6.2.4 Role Models

The final discussion point on the development of the programme, which is also a component of the programme's content, involves the type of role models that could increase its efficacy. This was the issue causing most conflict when it came to the development of the programme because not only did some of the participants have different opinions, but some also gave their own various preferences. Extraordinary versus ordinary exemplars is a topic discussed in *Sections 2.4.1* and *2.6,* and although they were not labelled as such in the interviews, religious role models tend to be considered extraordinary as they are individuals who are shown to be almost perfect and have acquired all of the virtues, which Croce and Vaccarezza (2017) define as moral saints or Vos calls 'existential exemplarity' (2017, p.25). Flescher (2003), on the other hand, finds both moral heroes and saints to be extraordinary, while Han *et al.* (2017) also categorise historical models as extraordinary. Although the participants did not classify the models in the

same way, using religious models who are held in high esteem was mentioned, especially Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), but most of the participants who did mention this point said it was also necessary to include other role models with more 'modern' values. This is not surprising because, in Islam, following the Prophet's moral ideals is the foundation of the religion, but it is important to elucidate that participants did not believe this by itself would be effective. This finding concurs with Vos's (2017) point that extraordinary exemplars can give someone the chance to define their 'ideal self' (p.25), which prophets can provide as the highest moral image, but ordinary exemplars are effective in showing the regular everyday struggles to which learners can relate. Thus, as Banner (2014) suggests, moral theology should be used with social anthropology to present everyday ethics. Unexpectedly, when the students from Stage One and Stage Two were asked to choose what kind of role models they would prefer in a character education programme, most mentioned historical role models, such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King while one focus group added the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). It was assumed more modern and relatable exemplars would be preferred as shown in Han *et al's.* (2017) and Lockwood and Kunda's (1997) study, arguing that more relatable and attainable role models provided a more a positive effect because, as Han *et al.* explain, the historical figures tend to be seen as too extreme. A possible reason for these conflicting results is that the people mentioned are the role models currently used to teach students in the Region, whether in social studies, leadership classes or Islamic studies, and so they were repeating the models they already know are considered to be exemplars.

The idea of using ordinary exemplars was mentioned by a few adult participants and this includes role models who are not famous or popular, because as the teacher from the Pilot Study explained, children should know virtuous actions should not be executed for status or reward. Furthermore, other participants suggested using ordinary exemplars and showing their

flaws and struggles so as to avoid worshipping the model (hero-worship) or being so discouraged by their perfection (moral inertia), and this supports several studies' arguments about the pros and cons of using moral heroes or ordinary exemplars for moral development (Banner, 2014; Croce and Vaccarezza, 2017; Han *et al.*, 2017, Vos, 2017).

Another controversy that emerged in the project is whether to use global or local models, because although most of the adult participants from Stage One believed more culturally relatable models would be effective, many in Stage Two believed global or international role models should be used to expose learners to different cultures and enable awareness that good moral values go beyond their culture. One parent emphasised that religious role models should be avoided to ensure students do not end up believing their religion exclusively consists of good moral values, but that these are human values that exist universally. Damon and Colby (2015) advance this to a degree as they discuss how an individual's morality does not develop in a vacuum and is influenced by culture, but that equally culture should not compromise one's moral development. Therefore, based on this, it seems, as some of the participants mentioned, it is essential for learners to be exposed to role models outside of their cultural box.

A common criticism against character education states that it encourages indoctrination by pushing religious or conservative ideologies. However, as many scholars have argued, character education goes beyond cultural, religious or political boundaries because some values are esteemed in all societies and throughout history (Carr and Harrison, 2015; Kristjánsson, 2013; Ryan *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, some crises are global issues which all societies can relate to (Ryan *et al.*, 2011), and therefore evidence the need to develop the same values. Based on these arguments, it could be debated that certain role models are not required to be nationally or culturally relatable, in the fairly narrow sense which prevails in the background literatures (recall *Chapter 2*), because the concept of virtue development is transnational and/or

transcultural. Nevertheless, it is still important to note that particular virtues can be interpreted in different ways according to religious and cultural traditions (Kristjánsson, 2013; Ryan *et al.*, 2011), which still needs to be taken into consideration when choosing role models or designing a role modelling character education programme. We also need to avoid the opposite extreme of considering religious commitments as somehow antithetical to the development of character virtues. For one thing, moral virtues form the mainstay of all world religions, which was also suggested by several studies in the study. For another, many people seem to be able to successfully distinguish between their personal and public values. For example, the US president-elect, Joe Biden, endorses many personal values as a Catholic that he keeps separate from the civic virtues that need to guide a liberal democratic society.

One remaining question is: why did the adult participants from Stage One prefer culturally relatable role models more than those in Stage Two? There could be two possible reasons for this: the first is that in Stage One the participants were exposed to a role modelling programme, and when using the role models Dan Eley, Malala Yousafzai and Suzie Valadez, they found the students did not connect to them much and thus more relatable models would have been more effective. The second reason could be that the school in the Case Study was an embassy school, which did not use much of the Ministry of Education's curriculum and was already following an international curriculum; therefore, choosing more local models would have been a change. Meanwhile, some of the participants from Stage Two were from other types of schools that included a culturally based curriculum; thus, taking a more international stance would be more effective in increasing open-mindedness and tolerance. Taking this into perspective, it seems the geographical provenance of role models depends on the school and the curriculum it follows, to ensure learners are exposed to a good balance of local and global values and role models.

The notion of mentors was also raised in the interviews and focus groups, but mainly in Stage Two, as most of the students mentioned their relatives as their current role models, and even though this mainly involved parents, it also included siblings and cousins, while the adults suggested the idea of using nearby people as role models with whom learners can communicate. This supports several studies (see *Section 2.4.1),* finding that adolescents choose someone with whom have an interpersonal relationship (Ruggeri *et al.,* 2018) and that a model physically being there has a more positive effect (Bricherno and Thornton, 2007; Bucher, 1998; Rushton, 1975; Yancey *et al.*, 2011). Similar to Yancey *et al.* (2011), some of the students mentioned their relatives as role models because they help them with challenging situations and guide them through life. Even a few adult participants suggested using mentors or role models the children are close to as role models in the programme. In the original role modelling programme design, one of the activities included writing about someone in their own community who represented the virtues taught. However, this may not have been emphasised enough and could have been taken further by having the students interview someone they personally knew to see how that person thinks and acts upon these virtues, thus allowing learners to consciously reflect on how the people around them can be exemplary and make the virtues seem more attainable.

Another unexpected perspective from a parent, which complements Bucher's study (1998), is how older children were less likely to accept role models than younger children. The parent suggested it was because older children could perceive following role models as a threat to their individuality, which Bucher described as one of the pitfalls of using role models, and a possible reason older child do not need role models as much is because they are more independent and have mastered developmental tasks with which children still need guidance. Ruggeri *et al.*'s study (2018) adds to this as their results proved younger children chose adult role models over peers whereas older adolescents showed the opposite preference. This does

require further research in the Middle East, but it is interesting to see how a parent in this current study noticed this in her own children. Although Bucher's study (1998) showed children were not necessarily using celebrities as role models, as discussed in *Section 2.4.1*, this research was conducted in 1998 and at the moment there are new types of social media celebrities (e.g. so-called social media influencers) which need to be taken into consideration. A few participants in this study have suggested this as an obstacle that could negatively impact children if the wrong role models are chosen online. Again, further research on how much social media role models actually influence adolescents in Saudi Arabia is needed; however, it could be beneficial to use a character education role modelling programme to guide them into choosing positive moral role models.

The results also showed that several participants believed a variety of role models should be included as different role models represent different skills, which when looking at all the results seems to be the most effective answer because each type of role model could be influential in its own unique way. Therefore, models from different countries, religions, genders, ages, popularity levels and in different times could be used to show moral values do not appear through a particular type of person, thus allowing different learners an opportunity to relate to a model. This would also be in line with the Aristotelian emphasis on the individualisation of virtue to social standing, personal constitution and developmental level (Kristjánsson, 2015). This does not necessarily mean an excessive pool of exemplars should be launched at pupils, as this in itself could be overwhelming, but for instance after a main role model has been presented to the students, they could proceed to discover and do research on other role models with similar virtues as a project, and each group or student could have particular criteria, thus when presenting to the class, a variety of role models might emerge.

6.3 Implementation of the programme

This section now looks at RQ2: *how could a role modelling character education be feasibly implemented in the Region?* One of the biggest obstacles in conducting this project was logistical issues, such as recruiting participants/schools or managing the execution of the programme in a timely, yet effective manner through the teachers, students and school leadership. Moreover, the lack of emphasis on character education in the Pilot and Case-Study schools raised the questions: what are the barriers and enablers in implementing a programme in the Region, and how can that information be used to increase the feasibility in carrying out the programme in schools? The findings may not be conclusive, but a glance into possible obstacles and opportunities could provide future researchers or educators with an idea of what to expect, especially since the following subsection focuses on implementing character education programmes in general and not specifically on role modelling.

6.3.1 Barrier and enablers in the educational system

Before discussing the barriers and enablers, it is important to first understand how certain aspects of the educational system work in Saudi Arabia. My findings have confirmed Alrashidi and Phan's study (2015) showing there are different types of schools and the type of school depends on how much it is required to follow the national curriculum. Listing them from the most to least controlled there are 1) government schools, 2) private national schools, 3) international schools, 4) embassy schools. All schools are under the Ministry of Education's body, but the prioritised components of the national curriculum are the humanities subjects including Arabic, Social studies and Islamic education. A private national school is under an obligation to follow and spend more time on the national humanities subjects than international

and embassy schools. For instance, the embassy school where the Case Study was conducted included minimal Arabic classes and no Islamic education. According to my findings, private national schools can include some internationally accredited programmes, but the approval process is longer because they are expected to meet and follow government standards as much as possible. Although this was not found in the literature, my findings revealed that with the first three types of schools, if any subject is included in students' final grade, then it needs to be approved by the Ministry.

As previously mentioned, the participants from the Case Study belonged to an embassy/community school, while those in Stage Two were a mix of mainly private schools (national, international and embassy) with one parent from a government school. Not many obvious associations were found based on the type of school and the opinions expressed except for the type of role models selected and how the programme was believed to be developed. As discussed in (*Section 6.2.4*), participants from the Case Study emphasised the importance of relatable role models more than those in other schools from Stage Two, and a possible reason for this could be the fact that embassy schools' curriculum has more international content, while the other type of schools have more nation-related content. Therefore, participants in the latter found the need for more international role models, possibly because of the lack of internationalism, while participants in the embassy school were not as exposed to local models, thus causing teachers to want more of them. This finding therefore brought out the complex nature of context-dependence in educational research. A common intuition is that people in a given context want more of what they are familiar with and have already got in that context. However, my finding indicated that in some cases, agents in a given context (here the relevant type of school) seek what they are not familiar with in that context.

Furthermore, participants' views on the structure of the programme could have been impacted by the type of schools they were associated with because embassy schools, and to some extent international schools, did not have as much pressure to follow the national guidelines and heavily centralised curriculum, therefore they had more flexibility and time to include a separately timetabled character education programme.

The study also tried to gain a better understanding of how the Ministry's system works through participants' experiences. It seems the barriers include the governmental body having a rigid structure with long and difficult approval processes. Similar to the teachers in Jamjoom's study (2010), there were complaints about the national curriculum itself due to its outdated pedagogy, as previously discussed. One participant mentioned some valuable content, but the way it is implemented is not as effective as it could be. Even though many participants believed the government would be interested in character-education initiatives, trying to implement a programme through them would not be a straight-forward process. Furthermore, a couple of participants mentioned that even if the Ministry did accept the programme, they might try to control it and it would become bureaucratic, but this would potentially be the case with any governmental body around the world and not an issue an individual or even institution could easily overcome. The advice given included gaining international recognition for the programme and showing positive results after piloting it in several schools. Using this information, it seems international and embassy schools have the most flexibility; therefore, piloting the programme within their schools would be more plausible and then possibly providing those results to the Ministry if the aim of the programme was to be implemented on a nationwide basis. Grading the programme would contravene the preferred pedagogy, as the programme is not meant to pressure students, teachers or schools academically, and since only graded programmes need to be approved by the Ministry, a character-education programme

might be implemented in international/embassy schools at first without going through a bureaucratic process. However, gaining international accreditation or recognition for the programme is a daunting barrier since official role modelling programmes do not currently exist.

The next aspect affecting the implementation of the programme are the barriers and enablers in the school which include: the management, resources, teachers and parents. Alrashidi and Phan (2015) have explained that incorporating additional programmes/extra-curricular activities depends on the school head's decision, and in my own experience trying to implement the project's programme coincided with this because I needed to communicate with the heads and gain their approval. The findings support this further as the participants mentioned implementing a role modelling programme in a school would be based on the type of school leadership, including their passion and ethos. Whether schools would be interested varied, as participants had different views and experiences, therefore no consensual view could be generalised in the findings. However, a certain number agreed on barriers that could influence their decision, including perceiving the programme as an extra burden and not finding it useful enough, while the enablers included wanting unique characteristics to enhance their school's reputation and gain more 'customers', in addition to needing to reduce behavioural problems within their school. A few participants suggested packaging the programme based on schools' needs, therefore it could be beneficial finding what each school's main concerns are and slightly adapting the programme such as the type of role models, the activities and the virtues. Another common negative point concerning school leadership is the lack of teacher involvement, which was emphasised more in Stage One than Two, as it seems teachers' opinions are not taken into consideration by the typical school head, possibly reducing the quality of teaching and preventing introductions to new ideas or developments. Therefore, as

mentioned in the previous section, involving teachers in the development and the implementation of the programme and including their perspectives could improve the quality of the programme, as teachers communicate with the students more than management, and it could increase teachers' interest rather than having it forced upon them.

In fact, teachers are another barrier in the school due to their lack of training and their large workload. Islamic teachers in Jamjoom's study (2010) mentioned they were not happy with the current pedagogy of rote-learning and memorisation as it hindered students' creativity, but their lack of training forced them to revert to traditional methods. Faour and Muasher (2011) raised the same point by saying the Middle Eastern Region will have difficulty in effectively developing citizenship education because of teachers' lack of training, and several participants confirmed this (*mutatis mutandis* for character education) in both stages of the project. This may not be a region-specific issue as the Jubilee Centre for Character and Values supports this further by discussing how several studies in the UK and the USA have shown teachers feel as though they are inadequately trained for moral education and that it should be included in teacher training (2016). Finding solutions for teacher training goes beyond the scope of this project, but it could be useful to include several workshops for teachers throughout the programme to guide them and provide a space for them to share their concerns or 'tips'. During the class observations it seemed quite clear that several teachers needed help or some direction on how to handle various aspects of the programme. If continuous workshops cannot be provided, a session going through the teachers' pack could be helpful to ensure teachers have read through it and are aware how to acknowledge the pitfalls and increase students' participation and understanding. This could be particularly important because, as already mentioned, the observations showed students' engagement reflected the teachers' interest.

Teachers' frustration about their workload are often due to limited resources, which is another reason why there would be difficulty in implementing a new programme in a school. There are not enough teachers to conduct a programme, in addition to limited funding, which is not only mentioned by Faour and Muasher (2011) but by several participants as the main logistical issue schools may face. Suggestions included finding external sponsors for funding to give to existing teachers or hiring new teachers, or getting extra sponsors for manpower, for instance through volunteers. Faour and Muasher (2011) suggest not having citizenship education as a separate lesson and embedding it into existing subjects, so as to overcome the financial obstacle, but this may not be positively received by the teachers and the programme might not be properly evaluated. Time is another common barrier. Some participants suggested having the programme as an extracurricular activity, so as not to overload the existing curriculum, but it seems unhelpful to have only a certain number of students participating and at the end of a school day. However, this may be an option to temporarily test a characterological intervention with a small sample size because most schools have extra free lessons on the timetable or PSHE/Leadership classes in which it can be incorporated.

The next factor that could impact the efficacy of a role modelling programme is parents, as most of the adult participants find teaching character at home essential to children's moral development, while students typically consider parents their personal role models. Although there is limited direct evidence about this in the literature, several participants believe there is a current disparity as many parents are not representing the right values or not proving to be good role models, or at least prioritising academic study over character. Perhaps there are also here some mutual misunderstandings among stakeholders (teachers, parents) about what the other group prioritises and does, as has been shown to be the case in the UK (Harrison *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, many participants complained that parents are excluded from school-related

information or activities and thereby weakening the school-home connection. As already discussed in *Section 6.2.3*, studies have shown children are more likely to perceive their parents as role models, in addition to exemplary adolescents tending to have a closer relationship to their parents. Looking at the existing literature and the findings, it could be theorised that involving parents in a role modelling programme could be useful. For instance, parents could be invited to certain activities, could be interviewed or come to school as role models themselves. Conducting workshops for parents on teaching virtues or role modelling may also be beneficial to enable parents to keep abreast of the school's stance and provide parents with advice on guiding children's moral development. This could increase parents' interest in character education because not only would they be learning more about it, but the communication between school and home would not be purely academic.

Implementing a programme in schools in Saudi Arabia can never be a clear-cut process as there are several variables affecting it: policy-makers, teachers and school leadership, and although some aspects cannot be controlled or changed immediately, for instance the governmental rules, school culture or teacher training, there are ways to try to improve on them, such as finding more flexible schools, conducting pilot studies and supporting parents/teachers/management with guidance and possible external funding.

6.3.2 Cultural Factors

Other than a region's educational system, it is also necessary to have a modicum of understanding of the culture, or at least possible cultural factors that could impact upon the programme. In Saudi Arabia, it should be noted that religion is the prevailing cultural theme in the literature and the findings, as Islam is integral to the Region's traditions, education and politics. It should be pointed out, however, that in Stage One religion was not discussed much

because the Case Study was undertaken in a non-state school, therefore Islamic education was not taught and was not part of the school's ethos. This emerged as a difference between the focus groups in the two stages, as many students in Stage Two repeated religious themes, whereas in Stage One it was never mentioned. One teacher from the Case Study agreed with most of the participants in Stage Two, however, by suggesting that religion is as an enabler of role model moral education because Islam's core is based on moral values and on following virtuous traits from past exemplars. The participants' views align with the literature (Jamjoom, 2010; Prokop, 2003) explaining the negative side of the issue stems from an absence of space for critical thinking in a religiously motivated top-down model of value. The main suggestions included separating the role modelling programme from religion, thus allowing a place for critical reasoning, or using a conciliatory approach to connect the two so as to remind people that religion comprises a preponderance of similar values as those generally highlighted in character-education programmes. Here the writer wishes to revert to the initial claim (*Section 2.8*) that the programme should not be placed under a religious subject to provide teachers and students the freedom to discuss moral dilemmas without self-limiting religious scrutiny and traditional indoctrinating methods.

It is a positive step that the literature and findings show an awareness of the need for change, but implementing a sweeping change goes beyond a non-governmental initiative. Future research could look at how schools and teachers are currently managing these challenges; for instance, one participant explained how she is struggling to provide the students with a more spiritual and loving outlook on religion rather than using rote-learning and examinations to teach them ready-made values. Moreover, another teacher discussed her concern with Saudi students wanting to avoid negative judgements from those outside the country and therefore believing that abandoning their religious values is the answer to

acceptance. Although I was personally aware of this dilemma, since there is a disconnect between how the media portrays Islam, and at times Saudi Arabia, to the reality of it, it only now occurred to me how much this could impact Saudi adolescents' moral identity. It would be intriguing to see more research on this, but if it were to be true, then it could be beneficial to use a non-religious programme to remind learners that their foundational Islamic values are moral global ones. Some studies have shown exemplary individuals tending to have stronger faith or ideological values (Damon and Colby, 2015; Matsuba and Walker, 2005); therefore, following participants' suggestions on separating the programme from religion, but using it to complement religious values, could be positive advice.

Another cultural factor, which did not resonate in the findings but should be considered, is the Region's demographics in education. As Simmons and Simmons (1994) and Alharbi (2017) argue, due to Saudi's rapid economic growth, manpower has been required from elsewhere, therefore a large number of expatriates have been settling in the Region. Alrashidi and Phan (2015) explain how there is some diversity in staff and students, but this is mainly the case in international and embassy schools. The headteacher in the Case Study discussed how this was a barrier in his school because of the culture clash between the predominantly British teachers and the mainly non-British students. Meanwhile, a British teacher in Stage Two found this to be an enabler because Saudi students were more willing to open to her than they were to Saudi teachers because they felt less judged. Why the students feel less judged by expatriate teachers was not explained, but it could be that because Saudi Arabia has a traditional culture, students believe their thoughts and perspectives may be considered too progressive for their Saudi counterparts. Moreover, the same teacher explained how she found a difference in students' work ethics, as the expatriate students were more responsible and had a stronger sense of moral identity than the Saudi students. There certainly are not enough data to make any

conclusive findings on this topic, but future researchers should be cognizant of the cultural dynamics between the expatriate and local teachers and students as well as between the students themselves, especially when the topic can be subjective and is not as unambiguous as the natural sciences, for instance.

Lastly, a common point raised in the findings was about the willingness to accept change based on age, as participants mentioned younger teachers and parents having more of an interest in the programme. Not much information on this was found in the literature about the Region, but this is an unsurprising finding because the country is progressing rapidly and the change is mainly affecting the younger generation, as they are the more active individuals in society. It could also be due to technology; the younger generation has more exposure to global ideas and events therefore tend to be more open-minded and more inclined to try new experiences. Although this cannot be generalised to the whole population, based on these findings the implementation could be more successful if it is targeted to younger teachers/headteachers willing to conduct the programme and younger parents willing to be involved and to encourage it.

The findings have shown if the discussed barriers and enablers are taken into consideration, there could be potential for effectively developing and implementing a virtue-led role modelling programme in Saudi Arabia.

To summarise the main points of this chapter, my findings in Chapters 4 and 5 supported the current background literature with regard to a number of points such as:

- the types of emotions elicited when learners are exposed to moral exemplars
- character education is taught ineffectively in Saudi Arabia due to traditional pedagogical approaches
- the lack of skilled teachers in character education.

- the possible moral pitfalls with role modelling.

On the other hand, my findings have also unearthed some points that have not been discussed previously in the background literature or clash with previous findings. Here are some examples:

- a values gap in the population.

- new insights on preferred structure, pedagogy and content for a role modelling character education programme in the Region.

- learners choosing historical role models for the programme.

At a more personal level, to return briefly to my observations in Chapter 1, what I myself have learned from conducting this project includes the following:

- the certain barriers and enablers in conducting a character education programme in the Region and the various ways to approach them.

- the significance and interest in using role models as a channel for character education.

- the importance of understanding participants' preferred methods before developing a programme by involving several parties from the educational system i.e. parents, teachers, students and school leadership.

The next chapter provides concluding remarks and conveys possible ways the findings could be implemented in the future.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

7.1 Conclusion

This project consists of two phases with various methods and tools of data collection and analyses to gain a better understanding of possible approaches to developing and implementing a role modelling programme in Saudi Arabia. First, to try and provide a summarised answer to RQ1, of how a role modelling programme should be developed in the Region, this will involve what could be considered an ideal example of a role modelling programme based on the literature and findings in this project. Firstly, it seems offering a whole-school approach is considered beneficial for students in order to understand the importance of moral values. Consequently, when developing a role modelling programme, it would be advantageous to include teachers in the development and preferably involve teachers who are passionate about character/moral development or who have a close relationship with that particular year group. Furthermore, the school should find a way to present students' projects in assemblies and throughout the school. The virtues and/or models chosen for that week or month could then be reinforced in academic subjects to strengthen their virtue literacy further. After looking at the observations, interviews and focus groups, it could be useful to include one role model chosen by the school each month to represent between one to three virtues, and throughout that month the students could find their own role models who represent the same virtues, while completing various activities guided by the teachers.

A possible balance between having a caught and taught programme is a less academic and more engaging, possibly via a playful pedagogical approach to using role models to teach virtues. In an ideal scenario, students would have an allocated time each week far from the examination period to conduct various kinds of activities that allow them to take a more hands-

on approach to their learning. Even though the students said they would rather not sit in a classroom, in the beginning there needs to be some sort of direct instruction, and so the teachers may still need to do some direct teaching when introducing the role models. Then at the next stage the proposal would be to keep the brainstorming element going to allow students to use their critical thinking skills to find out which virtues each role model represents. The activities following that could be more student-led and action-based. As mentioned earlier, activities could include: finding their own role models and interviewing them if they are in the community, or researching about them if not; volunteering; creating and managing groups with moral objectives; and field trips. Between each activity or within an activity itself there should be some form of discussion to engage the students and help them learn from each other. Students also need to be given the opportunity to self-reflect on the virtues learnt, so as to reduce indoctrination and help them discover their own moral identity. Self-reflection could be done through journals to take home so they are not pressured into writing something down in the classroom and sharing it with a peer, if they prefer not to. Furthermore, assessments could be peer-assessments and done through discussions so as to reduce teachers' workload and academic pressure on students in addition to providing students with an opportunity to learn from each other and become peer-mentors themselves.

The findings show that all participants were open to teaching virtues through role models; therefore, even if it was not explicitly stated, taking an Aristotelian approach would potentially be positively received. However, when looking at the virtues and role models that should be included in the programme, the best method would be to adapt it to each school or at least each type of school. There are some foundations that could be beneficial to all types of schools in the Region and that involves using role models that go beyond the usual religious or

historical role models used in schools, and trying to find a way to include a variety of role models, including some moral social media role models from the Region and internationally.

Since there is limited previous research on character education in the Region, trying to answer RQ2, regarding how a role modelling programme should be implemented, provides an opportunity to gain understanding of how character education and role modelling is perceived by certain individuals in the Region and the best steps to take. *Figure 5* and *Figure 6* below provide a summary of the findings on the barriers and enablers and possible approaches to effectively implementing a character education in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 5. Barriers and enablers to implementation

Barriers
• Values gap and lack of awareness
• Insufficient character education on offer at present
• Character education mainly taught through national curriculum's humanities subjects and perceived as limited due to traditional pedagogical methods
• Difficult policy processes/approvals
• Lack of school resources (financial + time)
• Shortage of trained/skilled teachers
• Limited parental involvement

Enablers
• Good opportunity now due to progressive changes in the Region
• Interest in character education shown by government (Saudi Vision 2030)
• Interest and significance in character education shown by students, parents, teachers, school management and educational consultants
• Younger generation have more awareness and willingness to accept change
• Some schools are not required to follow the national curriculum fully

Figure 6. Advice on implementation

Ministry

- Approach more flexible schools (international + embassy schools)
- Provide pilot study results
- Gain support from an international institution
- Connect to Saudi's Vision 2030

Schools

- Individualise for schools' weaknesses
- Conduct teacher + parent workshops
- Find sponsors for funding and/or manpower
- Develop a less academic and student-led programme to reduce pressure on students and teachers.

Cultural Factors

- Target younger population of adults for increased interest
- Use a secular foundation for programme but relate it to Islamic moral values

Compared to how Saudi Arabia used to be, because the current changes in the country under the new rulers are considered fast-paced, and adding to it the perceived gap in character education, now is a good opportunity to implement something innovative. There are several educational considerations to remember when planning to conduct the programme, such as bureaucratic and logistic obstacles within the Ministry, pushback from schools due to school management, lack of resources, insufficiently trained teachers in addition to parents' deficient interest, and traditional values. Feasible ways to go about this might include piloting the programme by approaching flexible schools such as international or embassy schools to prove its efficacy to the Ministry. However, if there is no intention to make it a national programme, going through the Ministry could be avoided if it is directed solely to private (non-governmental) schools and is not included in students' final grades. The findings and recruitment of the study has shown approaching and finding schools willing to implement a programme is not an undemanding process, but based on what was discovered, it may be best

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to package the programme to target schools' weaknesses and find methods to reduce its burden on teachers and students due to limited resources. This could be done by finding sponsors or designing the programme to ensure students are not feeling pressured with more academic work and teachers are not required to spend too much time preparing and marking.

Moreover, there seems to be a concern on the part of teachers and parents in relation to awareness and skills when affecting children's moral development. Therefore, it could be helpful to involve teachers and parents with the development and implementation of the programme in addition to providing them with workshops or sessions to update and guide them on the best practices they could perform at home and school. At the beginning of the project, a teachers' pack was included, but it was clear some teachers failed to follow it, and this could be either because they did not read it, understand it or endorse it. Thus, discussing the programme with the teachers could provide a space for them to ask questions, give their opinions and better understand how to effectively go about teaching it. Meanwhile, parents were not even considered when developing the programme, and the findings have shown this could be an influencing factor, so in the future parents should not only be informed, but actively involved and educated about it. Furthermore, the findings revealed targeting younger parents and teachers could be more effective as they were more willing to accept change and new experiences.

Lastly, when conducting the programme, one needs to be conscious of the country's culture and how much that should impact the development and implementation. Religion is the most prevailing cultural factor in Saudi Arabia, so how much of it should infiltrate the programme? Looking at the literature, the findings and my own personal experience conducting the study, religion should be avoided, at least in the beginning of the programme's journey. Firstly, religion is not taken lightly by the Ministry, schools and the population; therefore, it is

best to steer clear of possible debatable issues. Secondly, the programme could provide teachers and students with a safe space to critically discuss moral dilemmas and develop students' moral reasoning, which they would be incapable of doing in a religious class. It is also important to note that there is a diversity of staff and students, especially in international and embassy schools; therefore, on a par with the United Arab Emirates' moral education programme, there has to be a medium to include everyone. However, since the findings and literature have shown religion could be advantageous and help strengthen one's moral development and identity, and students in Saudi Arabia are already learning moral virtues through religion, it could be beneficial to see it through another lens and with guidance from their teachers use their critical thinking skills to connect it to religion.

Looking back at how the programme was first developed and the unexpected journey of the project, there have been numerous learning points, which I believe have brought insight into developing a role modelling programme that never existed in the Region but could possibly fill a knowledge gap regarding role modelling and character education in Saudi Arabia. The background literature that I reviewed in *Chapter 2* showed potential in role modelling character education for several reasons such as the emotions associated with being exposed to role modelling that could lead to moral development; the use of role models as a medium to teach moral values within classrooms; and the possible moral impact of close role models/mentors within learners' lives. This is not to say role modelling does not come without its issues, and again both the findings and literature have evidenced the pitfalls that come with using role models in education, including: blindly idolising role models (hero-worship); lacking motivation to emulate such high achieving morals (moral inertia) or having negative emotions that could hinder moral development (envy or shame). While keeping these considerations in mind to reduce role modelling's weaknesses and increasing its strengths, continuing research

on conducting an Aristotelian role modelling programme could be promising for future educators.

While the focus in the *Discussion* was on the relevance of my empirical findings, I would like to signpost here at the close the fact that my critical review of the background literature revealed various unresolved theoretical and conceptual controversies. For example, the heterogeneity of terms used, and the variety of developmental trajectories depicted, to describe the emotional processes behind role modelling indicates that a lot more theoretical work is required in this area. Although I offered a fairly simplified and conciliatory developmental story, that is only the first, but not the last, word on how a more consensual emotional model needs to be constructed. Furthermore, I critiqued the conflation of various terms used to describe ideal role models for educational purposes: relatable, attainable, local, ordinary, familiar, monocultural. I have shown how, for example, an extraordinary role model can be seen as relatable and a local one, from within the same culture, as non-attainable. I also pointed out the lacuna of academic research on a new type of role models: social-media influencers (e.g. vloggers and fashionistas) and how research in this area often seems to lag behind young people's actual experiences in a rapidly changing world.

7.2 Limitations and Future Research

This project is a drop of water in a deep ocean and certainly comes with its limitations, but despite those, it intends to be a small start for future research on character education and role modelling within Saudi Arabia or possibly internationally. Throughout *Chapter 3* different methodological issues were discussed, including how different tools can limit a study's reliability and validity. *Section 3.5* listed the obstacles faced within this project and how those

could have impacted the results; however, in this section each issue will be reflected on to see how it can be improved in future studies.

First, as already mentioned, being an early researcher in a new field means there were limited resources available, thus impacting the sampling method and size. Non-probability sampling was used since Stage One included a pilot and a Case Study; therefore, random sampling in choosing the school could not work because it included qualitative methods and due to recruitment difficulties, such as blocked communication or lack of interest from gatekeepers. This also led to a small sample size, as not enough schools accepted an invitation to be part of the study. Furthermore, random sampling within the school would have raised ethical concerns if some students were prevented from participating in the intervention trial, since the intervention could not be repeated the following year. As an individual researcher, there was a limit to how much data could be collected and analysed due to manpower and funding, especially since the project was a mixed-method design including observations, interviews, focus groups as well as three different pre- and post-tests. Similar issues were faced in Stage Two vis-a-vis recruitment and resources, except there was less pressure in finding a school and implementing an intervention, as only individuals or focus groups were needed for in-depth interviewing. Moreover, the sample was only from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia; thus, for future research if more researchers are available, having participants from all over the Region could increase reliability, validity, generalisability and scalability. Another limitation that could have affected sampling is the lack of participants from government schools, which would have not only provided insight from a different kind of school, but also included participants with a different socioeconomic status.

Second, the time given to implement the study was one of the biggest limitations because it needed to be during school period, and by the time ethical approval was given and

an interested school/participant were found, it was already towards the end of the year. Consequently, for Stage One the intervention was executed under time severe constraints and not enough post-tests were collected, while for Stage Two recruiting teachers and students was difficult. Moreover, the time available between the pre-test, intervention and post-test was short, and so for the pre- and post-Index of the empathy scale and GQ6 repeated answers were given as there was insufficient time for a change and the questions were familiar. In addition, the pre and post Knightly Virtues tool was perceived as a burden because a large amount of work was required in a short time period.

As with most studies, various quantitative and qualitative tools are not free of limitations and the general issues have been discussed in *Chapter 3*, but now will be reflected on after completing the project. In Stage One, the different methods employed strengthened the reliability and validity because findings from various perspectives were given, but there still could have been some improvements. For instance, because the Index of empathy scale and GQ6 are self-reports, there is a possibility of social desirability, which could be one of the reasons there were repeated answers in the pre and post tests and no significant results were shown. In the future, pre and post-tests with different questions to test the same virtue should be used, including a tool which does not purely depend on self-reports. The *Knightly Virtues* tool was the main obstacle when it came to the quantitative tools, as it had the least number of completed tests and seemed to be difficult or time-consuming; therefore, it was done under less than ideal time limits and took time from the intervention itself. In addition to there being a small sample size of 13 completed pre and post-tests, they needed to be completed qualitatively and measured quantitatively, which would require another researcher for an inter-reliability check as well as an experienced teacher/marker of students' literacy work. Subsequently, the *Knightly Virtues* tool was not included in the data analyses, thus impacting Stage One's results

because virtue literacy could not be measured and could have been a valuable tool to measure efficacy.

Third, the fact that there was only one researcher affected several aspects of the project. For instance, another researcher could have increased reliability through inter-reliability checks with the transcriptions, translations and the analyses to reduce existing biases. For this project, reliability and validity were increased by conducting a mixed-method design, using the same content analysis method, as well as reading and rereading the data numerous times. Although being fully immersed in the data helped with the analysis, it could have increased biases, therefore the data were left for a period of time to gain some distance, and then analysed again.

If given the opportunity to repeat the project and answer the same research questions, I would start with Stage Two to gain a better and more expansive understanding of what is expected from a role modelling character education programme. If more resources were available, a survey would be conducted in addition to the in-depth interviews and focus groups. Based on those results, an intervention would then be developed and tested in different cities and in different types of schools i.e. international, government and private national schools. A mixed-method design would still be implemented to provide a more holistic perspective, but it should be longer, for instance a pre-test at the beginning of the year and post-test closer to the end, thereby giving students time for possible moral development. Moreover, if self-reports are to be used, the teacher and/or parents could complete a survey based on the children's moral development, and possibly include measurement tools that might include several virtues. Virtue literacy is still an essential component for study; therefore, the Knightly Virtues could be adapted for the population or possibly if a longer time is given between the pre and post-test, it could be received more positively.

The fact that there is limited information on conducting character education programmes in the Region with no existing literature or empirical data on the topic, starting from the bottom was both a challenge and an opportunity. It meant not being propelled or guided by previous research, but on the other hand light was being shed on a certain gap. Since starting the project, new initiatives and interests have appeared including Saudi's national campaign: *How to be a role model?* and the United Arab Emirates developing their own national moral education curriculum. However, even with this study's limitations, it still has findings that future researchers can use, because character-education research interventions are still limited in the Region while role modelling ones are non-existent.

Future research could take a broader approach by examining how character education currently exists in the Region and how it could be improved. Furthermore, a more focussed approach could involve increasing the quality of these findings with a similar research study by taking account of the limitations such as increasing the sample size and modifying the measurement tools. The findings can be used to develop and implement an improved role modelling intervention or a starting point for other character education programmes in the Region. Moreover, on a more global level, there is limited empirical literature on the efficacy of school role modelling interventions on moral development; therefore, the findings could be adapted, then conducted and finally tested in other countries and the results could be expanded through comparative studies based on region, age or gender.

An interesting notion repeated throughout the literature and the findings is the idea of parents being role models, as past empirical studies have shown adolescents perceive their parents as role models in addition to exemplary adolescents having a closer connection to their parents. This was supported in the findings as the students mentioned their parents as role models, while several teachers, parents and educational consultants agreed parents are

children's most influential models. Unlike teachers, however, parents do not receive training on parenting; therefore, it is surprising that role modelling parental interventions have not been empirically researched to help parents become better role models for their children. This is a gap in the role modelling arena that could be researched further to help parents, and possibly schools, by creating better communication between school and the home with regard to moral education.

Another gap that was revealed while conducting this project was the lack of research on how adolescents currently perceive online social media role models and how it could influence their moral development. Could moral social media role models have a greater impact on emulation compared to other kinds of exemplars, and if so what kind of role models are more influential and why? If they can help with moral development, how could they be used to strengthen character education within schools or at home? The ever-accelerating change incorporating social media role models, now classified as *influencers,* has given adolescents limitless access to all kinds of positive and negative role models in various fields through pictures, videos, written texts and games. Thus, the amount of research that could be done on this topic is vast, yet essential, because it may become the main or most popular channel towards accessing role models out of one's own proximal community.

There has been interest in role modelling recently, and this project may seem microscopic when looking at the current large gaps in the field, but I hope it can initiate future interest in character education in Saudi Arabia and the use of virtue-based role modelling for moral education on a global level.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Sample Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for Parents Interview

Title of Study: How can role modelling character education in Saudi Arabia be developed and what are the barriers/enablers to feasibly implementing it?

Description of Study: This is a PhD project through the University of Birmingham, which intends to study the possibility of implementing a character education programme in Saudi Arabia that teaches character and virtues to children through role models. A pilot study of the programme was conducted and based on those results, the project aims to explore the best methods to developing and implementing such a programme and how it could be made effective.

Invitation to Participate: You have been invited to participate in an interview for this research. Before you decide whether you would to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve. Please take the time to read the information carefully and see whether you would like to ask questions for further clarification.

Why have you been invited? You have been chosen as your child attends a school in Saudi Arabia.

What will be required? You will take part in an interview, which will require you to answer questions that are opinion and situation based. The interview will begin with basic background information on your child's demographics and school (names of both will not be disclosed). It will then involve discussions regarding your opinion on the current and best ways to design a role modelling programme as well as how it can fit into your school's current curriculum. Further discussion points include possible barriers/enablers such as, schools' and teachers' interest as well as logistics if you are aware of them.

Do you have to take part? Participation in the interview is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any stage before the data analysis period (30 days after the interview takes place).

It is your choice to decide whether or not you participate. If you decide to take part in the research then you will be asked to sign a consent form.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, contact the main researcher and the data collected will be removed and destroyed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part? A role modelling character education programme aims to improve students' understanding of virtuous characteristics and how it can

make one a better person. In addition to improving their understanding it could help them reflect on their own characteristics and possibly morally develop. Therefore, it would be interesting to understand how such a programme can be implemented in the Region.

Furthermore, you will be the first to take part in a research aiming to introduce developing students' morality in Saudi Arabia, therefore, the results from the research would be contributing new knowledge to the field.

What are the possible risks of taking part? There are no anticipated risks. Any information disclosed by participants that can pose a risk will be removed and destroyed.

Will you taking part in the study be kept confidential? All data from the research project will be kept confidential and will only be available to the main researcher and co-investigators. The data will be kept in secured servers and/or locked away in filing cabinets. Data from the study will only be used for research purposes in the future and will be stored for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the project and then it will be destroyed.

Your information will not be anonymous as the main researcher will conduct the interview but will be kept confidential through pseudonyms and secure servers. Participants personal information (such as personal/school names, and contact details) will not be available to anyone but the main researcher, and pseudonyms will be used from the very beginning of the data collection process. If a participant discloses information that can pose any risk, it will be not be included in the transcriptions or research results.

A translator/interpreter may be present depending on the participant's English language proficiency, but s/he will not have access to the data and will treat all the information heard as confidential as well as sign a confidentiality agreement.

Results of the Study: The results of the study will be used for the final PhD thesis. Participants can be provided with a summary report upon request.

What if there is a problem? If you have any problems, questions or complaints about this study you should ask to speak to someone from the research team.

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Appendix B – Sample Interview Schedule

Interview with Teachers

Introduction Script.

Thank you for taking part in this project. If you are unaware, I am Yousra Osman, the student researcher of this PhD study. A pilot study was conducted to test a role modelling character education programme, and based on that the aim of this phase of research is to answer the question:

How can role modelling character education in Saudi Arabia be developed and what are the barriers/enablers (cultural, pedagogical, policy-related) to feasibly implementing it?

The research objectives are:
   a. To explore which are the most appropriate populations for role model CE in Saudi Arabia.

   b. To explore the most effective pedagogical approach.

   c. To explore schools' barrier/enablers regarding implementation in the Region.

   d. To explore the barriers/enablers within the Region's policy environment.

This interview aims to understand your outlook on teaching virtues or character strengths through role models to children in schools.

Even though it is already stated in the consent form you signed, I would like to remind you the interview will be audio taped but all the data will be kept confidential and anonymised so no personal data will be published.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

1.

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  What type of   │
                    │  school do you  │
                    │    teach in?    │
                    └────────┬────────┘
              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
         ┌─────────┐                    ┌─────────┐
         │ Private │                    │ Public  │
         └────┬────┘                    └─────────┘
    ┌──────────────┐  │
    │ International ├──┤
    └──────────────┘  │
    ┌──────────────┐  │
    │  Community   ├──┤
    └──────────────┘  │
    ┌──────────────┐  │
    │    Arabic    ├──┘
    └──────────────┘
```
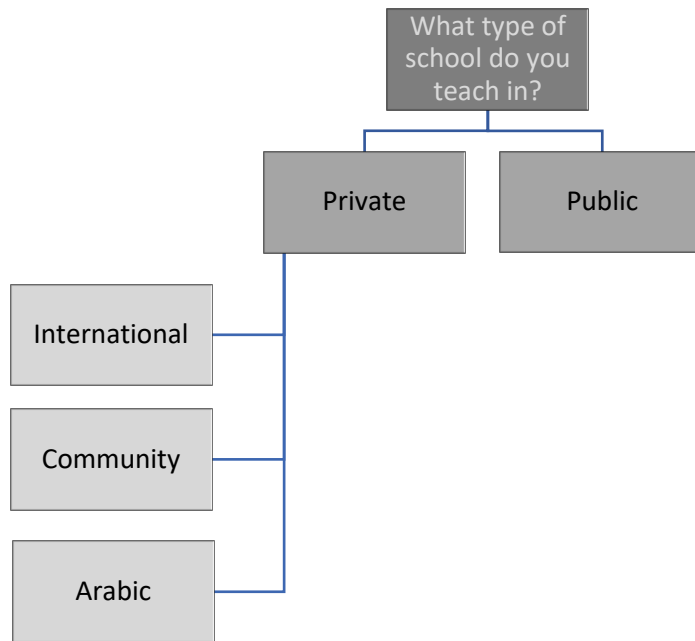
2.

Which section do you teach?

3.

```
              ┌──────────────────────┐
              │  Have you heard of the│
              │  term character/moral │
              │      education?       │
              └───────────┬───────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┴──────────────────┐
┌───────────────────────┐        ┌───────────────────────┐
│ If yes, let them define│        │ If not, try to provide a│
│          it.           │        │ brief definition or key │
│                        │        │         words.          │
└───────────────────────┘        └───────────────────────┘
```

4.

Does your school teach CE?

Yes — How? — Do you agree with this approach? — Why?

No — Why? — Do you agree with this approach? — Why?

5.

How would you define a role model?

How do you feel about teaching CE through role models?

Positive

Negative

And do you think its the best approach, or are there more effective ways?

Why?

How do you think CE should be taught?

Yes

No

Why?

What is the best approach to teaching CE?

6.

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Does your school│
                    │  teach CE through│
                    │  role models?   │
                    └─────────────────┘
                              │
              ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
        ┌───────────┐                   ┌───────────┐
        │    Yes    │                   │    No     │
        └───────────┘                   └───────────┘
              │                               │
        ┌───────────┐                   ┌───────────┐
        │   How?    │                   │   Why?    │
        └───────────┘                   └───────────┘
              │                               │
   ┌──────────────────┐           ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Do you agree with│           │ Do you agree with│
   │ this approach?   │           │ this approach?   │
   └──────────────────┘           └──────────────────┘
              │                               │
        ┌───────────┐                   ┌───────────┐
        │   Why?    │                   │   Why?    │
        └───────────┘                   └───────────┘
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7.

If the school were to implement teaching CE through role models?

What virtues should be chosen?

Why?

Which role models?

Why?

What kind of activities should be used?

How do you think it should be structured? (As a short programme/throughout the year/through academic subjects?)

How long should it be for?

Who should teach it?

And how should that be structured?

And when?

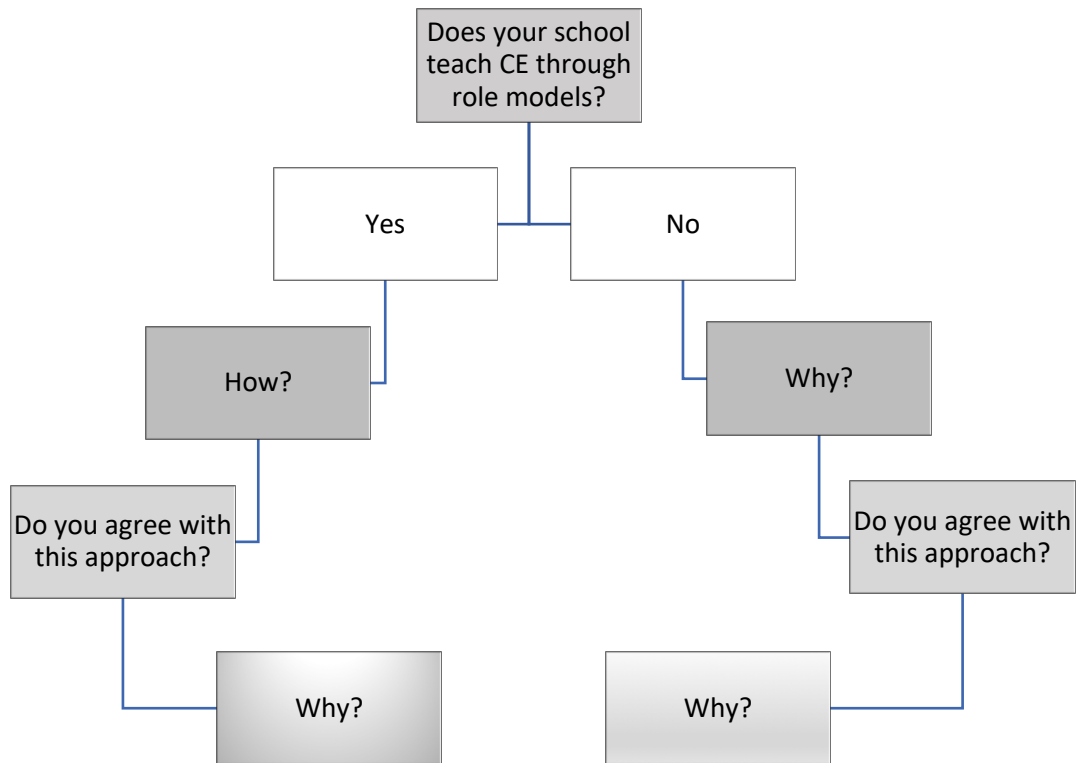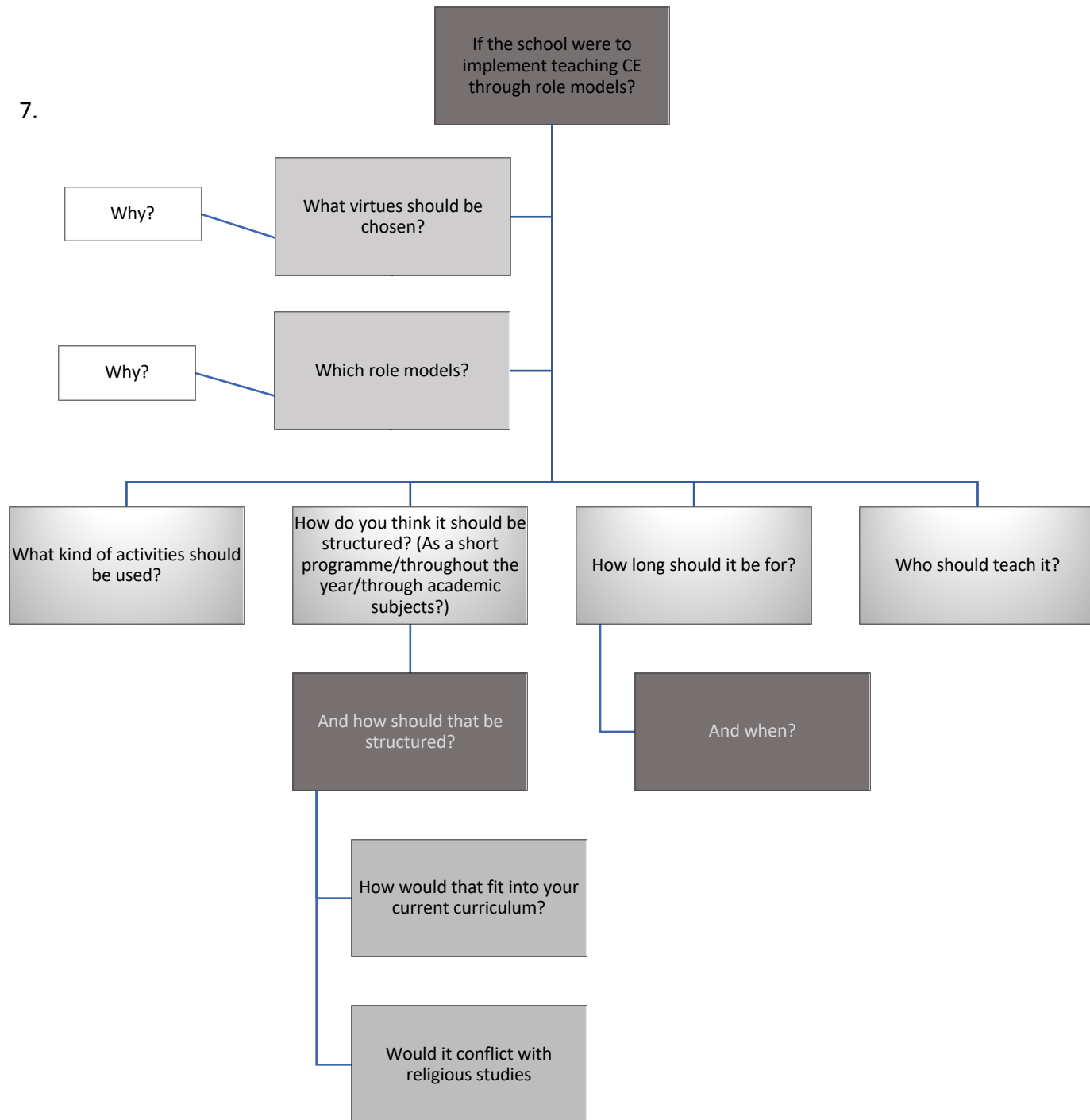How would that fit into your current curriculum?
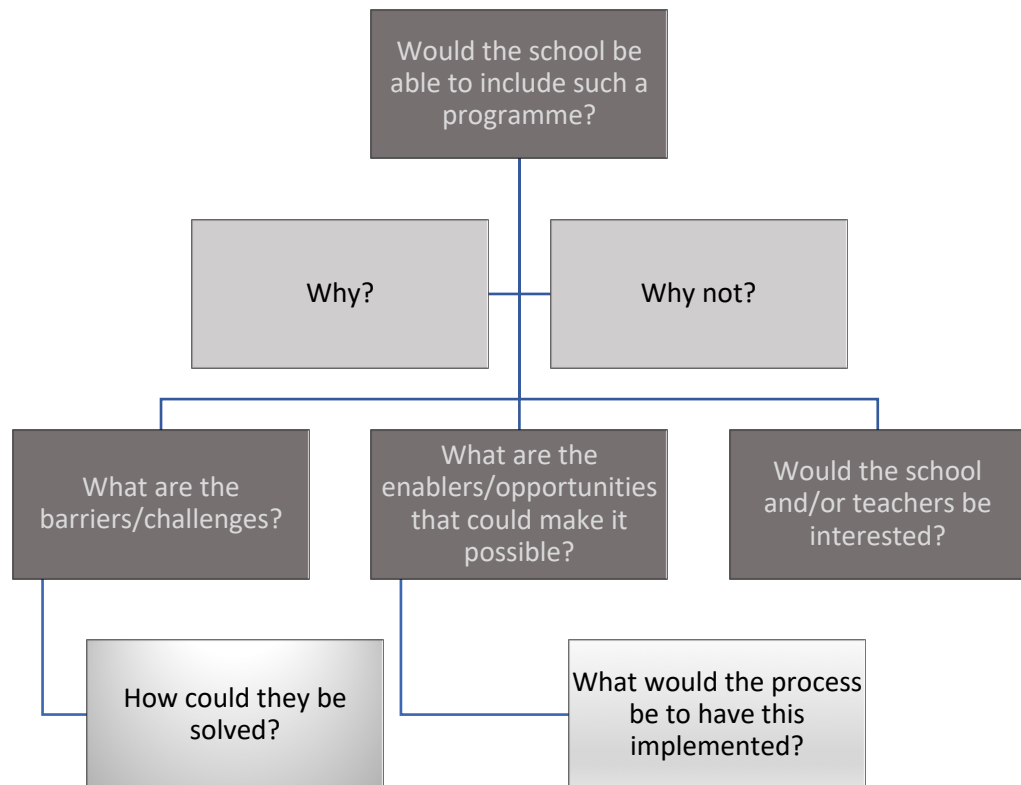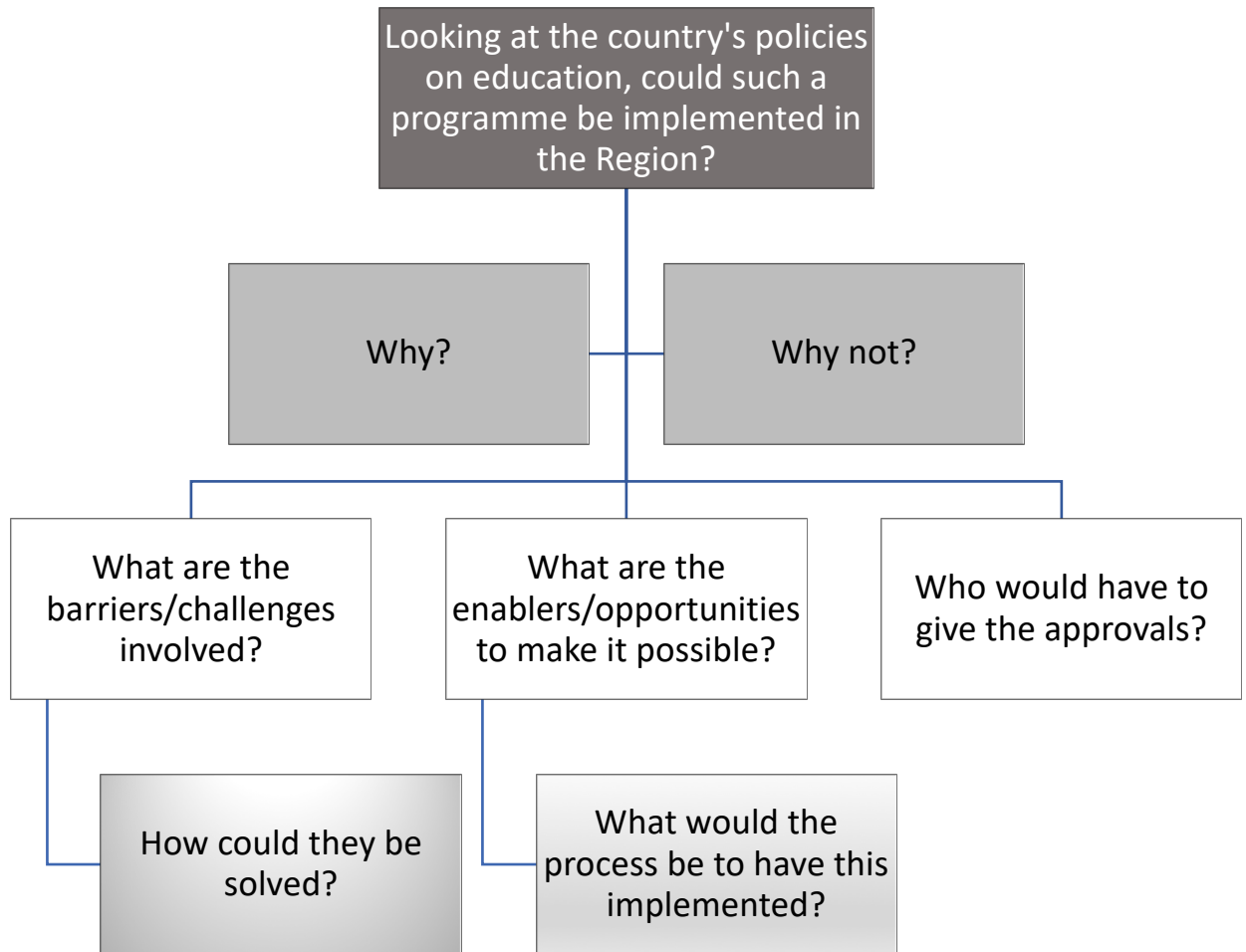
Would it conflict with religious studies

8. Provide a brief description of the programme created in the previous research phase, and show them one of the lesson plans/activities as an example.

Would the school be able to include such a programme?

Why?

Why not?

What are the barriers/challenges?

What are the enablers/opportunities that could make it possible?

Would the school and/or teachers be interested?

How could they be solved?

What would the process be to have this implemented?

9.

Looking at the country's policies on education, could such a programme be implemented in the Region?

Why?

Why not?

What are the barriers/challenges involved?

What are the enablers/opportunities to make it possible?

Who would have to give the approvals?

How could they be solved?

What would the process be to have this implemented?

Appendix C – Sample Transcript

Parent 1

Interviewer: Right, just to start off with, how many children do you have?

P1: I have three daughters.

I: Do all three of them go to school?

P1: Yes, the three of them are going to school?

I: Ok, what type of school? Private or public?

P1: Uh, its private you may say.

I: Private school? Is it international or Arabic?

P1: It's the [names school]

I: Which curriculum?

P1: Its British curriculum, they're teaching the British curriculum.

I: Ok, excellent. So how old are your children?

P1: The eldest is 12 years, the middle one she is 10 years and youngest, she is 7 years.

I: 7 years, ok. Ok, so have you heard of the term moral or character education before?

P1: Uh, yes, I have heard of these terms and I'm practicing it at home.

I: Ok, so how would you define it.

P1: Uh, yea. Teaching moral values, up to me, it's totally building, uh whole personality of a child, like what I consider, yes, what I consider teaching moral values is building character of a child. And this will help that child for their whole life. Ok, so uh, means making them responsible, making them caring, sense of citizenship in our children, from, means when they are young enough, like 1 year of age and have some sense, we need to develop these character, our focus as parents should be developing these characters, more than learning literary skills or like that.

I: Like academic?

P1: Yes, exactly.

I: Um, so what do you think of teaching character education through role models? So, through other people who are seen as higher…

P1: Mm, yes. That plays an important role, yes, as a role model. We are Muslims, yes, we can give, um historical, narrate the stories, historical stories, by quoting examples of our leaders from history, our famous personalities, that build up the society.These moral values, of how these values are important, in building positivity, in ourselves and in serving our society. So, giving examples of personalities who are successful and influential, that plays an important role, yes.

I: What about current role models that are not just historical, do you think that's good or you prefer historical?

P1: Yes, currently, I think teens when we are exposing them to TV channels, they're impressed by the celebrities, you know, and they're watching cartoons, even the cartoon characters, they're famous, yea, like Barbie and Cinderella, they are taking inspiration from these characters and that's why I prefer that we should expose our children with positive personalities, on TV, whether they're watching cartoons, they're watching movies, they're

highly inspired by celebrities, what they're doing, their hairstyles, how they're presenting themselves, they definitely get inspiration from these personalities.

I: Yea, does your child's school teach character education?

P1: I don't know actually (laughs), because, why? There's a reason behind it. I'm sending my child to school, and I don't have any connection with them, with the teacher. The big problem that I've felt is that they're not communicating with the mother. Like yes 'your daughter is having this problem, we have to address this area, they're not communicating, I haven't gotten any notice from the teacher, like your daughter needs to focus on this area.' Other than studies, they're working on their own pace, they're just teaching them studies, and they're not telling us how they're motivating our children, how they are giving a sense of respect. Is the teacher becoming a role model? I don't why, there's no communication. This is why I consider a weak point in the institution. There must be communication between parent and teacher. The reason behind is, that yes, our schools are overcrowded, teachers are working under tough conditions, they don't have time to teach them and send them back. Personally, I think that educated parents are doing this at home, are trying to, but even then, when the child is exposed to a school environment where there are different kinds of kids, from different kinds of cultures, they are coming from different family backgrounds. So how are they behaving? I don't know.

I: Um, what about other schools? Do you feel like it's the same?

P1: Uh, as I think, yes, it's the same. Because I've worked as a teacher in a school before, and I have seen, I worked up to my honest level, I was very honest with the students, I was giving attention, but you know, in the the higher management, was asking for results in the terms of result of copy work, and student performance, parents are happy with higher scores, they're less concerned with the moral values. They're highly concerned with the higher scores, you know…'my child has scored 100%,' you know. I mean mostly I read the parents minds, they are more concerned about the grades. What about the character? They're least concerned.

I: So, the school responds to this? Or what happens? What about the schools? Do they care?

P1: Parents are less concerned, management is less concerned. There are problematic children, one or two. For example, there was a girl who had bad behaviour, and I even tried to handle her with her psyche, that she needs attention, I gave her attention, and she was a little bit nice at that time, but then she was getting worse, the management was telling her 'we will expel you from school', but I considered that child was special, she needs special attention. School management needs to communicate with her mother, 'what is the problem, why is your girl behaving like this at school, what are you teaching her at home, how is she behaving at home, what is the reason, what is the main cause for her behaving like this?'

I: They didn't do that?

P1: No. They were just warning her, in the last year they did that, they expelled her. The next year, they said 'yes, we are not going to take you'. This is the dilemma of our society, or the system, if the person or the child is a problem, they make her or him, the worst part of the

society, they reject them, they don't work on it. Means, they don't have enough time, and everyone is saying we are fulfilling our duties. Our duties are just to teach them and burden them with books and studies and that's it. This is our duty. It is not our duty that we are going to make this person a productive part of society.

I: Very interesting point. Um, if the school, ok, were to make a programme for example. Teaching character education through role models, ok. What virtues or values do you think should be chosen to teach these students?

P1: I think all are important, like respect, responsibility, respect for others, responsibility in herself, sense of responsibility is very important for a child. And, citizenship.

I: What do you mean by citizenship?

P1: Citizenship means cooperation, how to work with their peers, how to work with other members in society. And, social work and volunteer work. This is what we lack in our system, the volunteer work, schools are not teaching, this isn't part of our education. A sense of citizenship is not being developed. They are developing, how to make money. You are getting an education, to make money. You studied well, you got a good education, you'll earn well.

I: Yes, business.

P1: Yes, business and commercial. This is wrong, they need to develop citizenship, I'm elaborating on that, they need to develop how to serve society, how to serve human beings, human kind. They have to develop a sense of humanity. Volunteer work, social work.

I: And which role models do you think should be chosen to show these values?

P1: Uh, currently, Bill Gates, the life of Bill Gates. I was once listening to an interview, with the husband and wife, saying 'what we have, we have earnt enough money, we have to give to society now.' This is philanthropy, you have heard of the term philanthropy. How we are serving others, if you have enough money. Even, a good point, in your personality how are we helping others? A lot of examples, celebrities, from America, they are involved in volunteer work.

I: So, you think these are good role models to present to the school, to the kids?

P1: Yes, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs has died, who else? Oprah, you heard of Oprah, she has her show. And even in the Islamic world, there are…a lot of other examples if we search on TV. Ah, another example in Saudi, is Waleed Bin Talab, involved in volunteer work.

I: So, you think these are good role models then?

P1: Yes, good role models.

I: What kind of activities do you think should be used to expose these role models to the kids?

P1: Of course, physical interaction is not possible, but electronically, video clips for inspiration. Show our child how they're working voluntarily, we can show on the projector video clips. Already teachers are doing it in the class, through powerpoint, slides. The internet is accessible in the classrooms, we can teach them. And yes the other way, in the elementary level, they can teach through moral stories, the internet is full of these kinds of stuff. The cartoonist moral stories, electronic.

I: And if there was such a programme, how long do you think it should be for?

P1: Programme, like they need to organise for fundraising, or?

I: No, like lessons, like citizenship lessons.

P1: Ah, ok. Yes, it depends on the duration of the clip.

I: Yes, the clip but what about the lessons.

P1: Then the teacher needs to formulate, make a lesson plan according to that clip. Or physical work, what are the thoughts of kids. The brainstorming session, their interest, after watching the video there's a question/answer session, what did they understand, and need to discuss...student interaction, teacher interaction. Teacher needs to elaborate by giving examples in the classroom.

I: And how many lessons do you think should be given?

P1: I think with every subject, every teacher can prove herself to be a role model for their students, it means she needs to change her personality (laughs) and represent herself in front of students, as yes, I'm a complete role model in front of you, and inspiring her students and creating temptation for the students, that they also can follow the teacher. So, the teacher can be a role model, throughout her 30 or 40 mins or throughout her life *(laughs).* A teacher should be like this, they imprint on the child, how they are behaving… because I've noticed the teacher's psyche, its uh, 80% psychology and 20% is the mechanics. What are you projecting? Why are kids impressed by parents? Because parents are mentoring them, each and every step of their life, and hard time. So, teachers, yes, after parents, they're coming to school and teacher is the person taking care of them.

I: And who do you think should teach such a programme? Any specific teacher? Or any teacher?

P1: It's not important, teacher can select voluntarily, kids can come forward and if suppose we organise a programme for fundraising, for poor children, students can come forward, they have talent. Teachers know, singing is talent of this person, this is a talent of this, and this child is good at painting, all the kids and make paintings, or acting, interested in sports. They can come forward, students can come forward for fundraising, and some students, like who are in the higher level. She is interested in painting and cooking, so what I encourage her, with your talent you can make money and with that money you can serve humanity.

I: So, you think that then children should act upon these values and not just learn it?

P1: Yea, yea. They should come forward and act upon this character, make a role-play.

I: So, this is how you think it should be taught?

P1: Yes, yes.

I: This school, for example, that your kids are in now, do you think it would be able to include such a programme?

P1: Yes, they are doing other activities.

I: They are?

P1: They are doing this, but mostly they're doing songs and poems at the elementary level, and at the higher level there's no such system of arranging programmes and dramas. No such character-building stories, I haven't seen, except they're celebrating their national days and that's it. They are promoting their culture, which we are already aware of, so (laughs), they are not concentrating on building these character values. Once, I would like to mention over here, that recently they did this storytelling for these skills, 1, 2, 3, and they invited mothers, which was my idea. I had spoken to the principal and voluntarily, 'why don't you invite the educated mothers in your school' because there will be a communication channel, and the mothers will come and be able to see how their kids are performing. So, yea they considered

my idea and they invited mothers, and they selected a story and these four skills, respect, and uh, trustworthiness, and truthfulness, they selected mothers and invited them, it was a good experience.

I: Oh, so the mothers were the role models?

P1: Yes, the management selected their stories, they come forward, and they acted on it, that was a good experience, it was the first time.

I: I was going to ask, so they don't do this a lot?

P1: Yes, first time.

I: So, what do you think are the barriers or challenges a school would face if they want to do a programme like this, teaching moral values through role models?

P1: Mm, challenges, that everyone wants to participate. No, not everyone is able to participate, even I wasn't selected, I sent my story and was not selected. I was busy with other tasks, but even then, I received a certificate that even I have participated in writing a story. Challenges that really, are with the management. What challenges are they facing?

I: So what challenges?

P1: Uh, I'm not sure, but maybe the time. Time is a bit of a constraint. They need to allocate more time for such activities, then our curriculum, and things will be left behind. Parents will be saying 'our child is learning moral values and they are leaving the syllabus. Yea, that could be…

I: Oh, so parents can be a challenge.

P1: yes, yea, parents could be a challenge, why are they doing more activities. We are not demanding they should spend all the time teaching it, but yes they should make this part of their system. Teachers can do this.

I: Um, how do you think this challenge could be solved?

P1: Mmm, balance, work/time balance. Like they need to balance, they need to design a system where once a month they can conduct such shows, so everyone can participate even if they could give all children a chance to participate. So once a month or twice in two months, you could say.

I: What are the opportunities that could make this possible? Like let's say now I wanted to go and implement this programme in your school, do you think there would be an opportunity to do that? This is hypothetical. Would there be an opportunity?

P1: Uh, opportunities, we need to create these opportunities. Like you know when they are changing policies regarding fees, regarding curriculum, so of course they are not consulting

parents. So for this opportunity we need to create. Obviously it depends on the management, and we need to communicate with the parents that first conduct a survey, how much are they in favour of teaching moral values, elementary level and even in the higher schools. We need to consult the parents first, then create these opportunities.

I: Do you think it's possible to create these opportunities?

P1: Yes, of course it is possible, nothing is impossible in this world. (laughs). Just keeping in mind one example of my children's school so they are just making policies and implementing...

I: Ok, so last question. Could such a programme be implemented in the Region, do you think? Like in different schools here, teaching character through role models.

P1: Mm, yes. It would be productive. It does need a lot of resources, we are inviting a celebrity, once in a year. And the team of that gathering is fundraising or something. Yea, it needs a lot of resources, for the school, they're already working under limited resources, financial or you can say. So it depends on the school's reputation and their finances, how much they are entrusted in teaching these values, but uh, instead of organising such a big event, they could make this part of their inside system and through their teachers they can do this job. Teachers can be role models for their kids, and it could be part of the system, which is difficult, I think, it's not an easy job.

I: But it's possible?

P1: We can make it possible.

I: How could we make it possible?

P1: Through educated, through people who have awareness, through the management.

I: And do you think on a regional level there are opportunities for us to do this?

P1: It will be a bit difficult, because you know first of all the mindset matters, because maybe people will disagree that it is not the teacher's duty but the parents, and we can blend this with the education, teaching moral values through teacher, but no need to organise big events. Could be challenging, acceptance and we can see through particular examples. We need to interview higher management if they, we need to inform them and then see their feedback, and what thoughts they have.

I: Excellent, thank you so much.