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CHARACTER BUILDING IN EDUCATION: ITS REFLECTION ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE

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Abstract

This article deals with the description of character building in education. It suggests first, six pillars of character in education that discuss how it will be realized in development of character building not only for the students but also for the educator. Next, moral development in education that discusses vision, ethical values, quality of life and competence in school. This moral development in education takes a deep contribution to teaching-learning process as a guide in teaching-learning process. Finally, the approaches used in developing character building in education is introduced. The implementation of these approaches is aimed to get the caring community.

Key words: pillars, moral development and approaches

1. Introduction

Character education can be defined as everything we do that influences the character of the students we teach. It also can be assumed as a kind of deliberate effort to help people to understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. The main goal of character education is for educator, whether we are a teacher, administrator, custodian, or school bus driver, you are helping to shape the character of the students we come in contact with. It's in the way we talk, the behaviors we model, the conduct we tolerate, the deeds we encourage, and the expectations we transmit. It is the common denominator that will help schools reach all of their goals like the slogan says: **"character education is not one more thing on your plate but it is the plate"**.

Many people believe that simply getting children to do what they're told is character education. This idea often leads to an imposed set of rules and a system of rewards and punishments that produce temporary and limited behavioral changes, but sometimes they do little or nothing affection for the underlying character of the children. There are others who argue that the aim should be to develop independent thinkers who are committed to moral principals in their lives, and who are likely to do the right thing even under challenging circumstances. It is hoped that Character Education initiatives can be very modest, like one good

teacher doing a few things right, or they can be very elaborate, involving everybody and everything in the school.

2. Six Pillars of Character in Education

http://charactercounts.org/six_pillars.html elucidated that there are six pillars of character building especially character building related to education, they are:

1) Trustworthiness

Be honest, don't deceive, cheat, or steal. Be reliable, do what you say you'll do, have the courage to do the right thing, Build a good reputation, be loyal stand by your family, friends, and country. These expressions should be practiced in education systematically by all people who get engage with education and finally the teacher and the student have a good circumstance while doing teaching-learning process.

2) Respect

Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule, be tolerant and accepting of differences. Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone, deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements. These hopes perhaps will be practiced by the teacher or educator not only in formal school but also in family and society by using a good manners, not bad language, and consideration of the feelings of others.

3) Responsibility

Do what you are supposed to do. Plan ahead and Persevere: keep on trying. Always do your best, use self-control. Be self-disciplined, think before you act consider the consequences. Be accountable for your words, actions, and attitudes and set a good example for others. The teacher or educator is the one who practice these in front of the class and teaching-learning process. The teacher should keep these attitudes as a responsibility to the students and society.

4) Fairness

Play by the rules, take turns and share. Be open-minded and listen to others and don't take advantage of others. Don't blame others carelessly and treat

all people fairly. This fairness should be done not only by the educator, but also by all societies in achieving a good harmony in everyday life.

5) Caring

Be kind, compassionate and show your care. Express gratitude and forgive others. Help people in need. Caring in every situation may help someone to get a good relationship to other people. Use good manners, not bad language be considerate of the feelings of others

6) Citizenship

Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate and get involved in community affairs. Stay informed, be a good neighbor. A good relationship among the citizenship will determine the quality of social life. The better circumstances or condition of citizenship in society, the better quality life situation the people get.

3. Moral and Character Development

In my opinion there are three major issues in the education of young people today. The first is the development of a **vision** for one's life that includes the discovery and/or defining of one's life mission and desired lifestyle. The second is the **development of one's character**, dealing with concerns of direction and quality of life. The third deals with the development of **competence** that deals with concerns of how well one is able.

In terms of defining good character, L Nucci (1989) suggested that in developing a good quality of education, educators should have some moral character, they are:

1. moral responsibility and sound ethical and moral behavior;
2. capacity for discipline;
3. a moral and ethical sense of the values, goals, and processes of a free society;
4. standards of personal character and ideas.

There are many alternatives to deal with moral and character education in the schools (Watkins, 1976). *First*, we can ignore it completely which assumes the issue is outside the bounds of proper curriculum. The interest by professional organizations and the public suggests that this view is inappropriate. *Second*, we

can take a "values neutral" stance and provide opportunities for students to clarify and defend their own values without making recommendations or advocating a particular viewpoint. A *third* approach is to teach students a specific process to follow when making decisions and putting these into action. *Fourth* approach is to teach students a given set of values and accompanying appropriate actions. This is the position taken by the *inculcation* approach to values clarification.

4. Some Approaches to Character Education

1) The Holistic Approach

Everything in the school is organized around the development of relationships between and among students, staff, and community. The school is a caring community of learners in which there is a palpable bond connecting the students, the staff, and the school to build a **Caring Community**. Social and emotional learning is emphasized as much as academic learning. Cooperation and collaboration among students are emphasized over competition. Values such as fairness, respect, and honesty are part of everyday lessons in and out of the classroom. Students are given some opportunities to practice moral behavior through activities such as service learning. Discipline and classroom management concentrate on problem-solving rather than rewards and punishments. The old model of the teacher-centered classroom is abandoned in favor of democratic classrooms where teachers and students hold class meetings to build unity, establish norms, and solve problems.

2) The Smorgasbord Approach

a) Build a Caring Community

By "caring community" we mean that everybody in the school—students, staff, administration—treats everyone else with kindness and respect. To accomplish such a lofty goal, your students will need to play an active role in shaping the culture and environment of the classroom, as well as of the school at large. Here are some ways to make that happen.

Hold class meetings in which students establish group goals, decide on rules of conduct, plan activities, and solve problems. Have your students collaborate on academic tasks by working in cooperative learning groups. Give

them regular opportunities to plan and reflect on the ways they work together. Organize a Buddies program in which younger and older students get together to work one-on-one on academic tasks and other kinds of activities. Teach conflict resolution and other social skills so that students become skilled at resolving conflicts fairly and peacefully.

These strategies help students learn to establish and maintain positive relationships with others. They also turn the school into a laboratory where students practice the kinds of roles, and cope with the kinds of challenges, they will face in later life.

b) Teach Values Through the Curriculum

The curriculum you are currently teaching is undoubtedly filled with opportunities to engage your students in thinking about character and values. In history classes students should not only learn what happened, they should be given an opportunity to make ethical judgments about it. After all, history isn't just a timeline of events; it's about people making choices that affected other people. Those choices had ethical and moral dimensions, and often produced profound consequences.

c) Class Discussions

"The best forms of character education also involve students in honest, thoughtful discussion and reflection regarding the moral implications of what they see around them, what they are told, and what they personally do and experience".

It is difficult to overstate the benefits of a meaty, morally challenging classroom discussion. Properly facilitated, discussions like these develop students' critical thinking skills, provide a group bonding experience, and engage the students in deep, meaningful reflection about the kinds of people they are and want to be. Classic hypothetical questions include: What would you do if you found a lost wallet, or suppose your best friend begged you to help him/her cheat on a test? When a student's ethical sense is in conflict with his/her desires, the discussion can really take off. One sentiment we heard frequently after taping these discussions was, "I wish we could have discussions like this all the time in

school. I feel so much closer to these people now.” We think that kind of says it all.

d) Service Learning

Service learning is a powerful approach to teaching in which academic goals are accomplished through community service. Service learning takes the kids well past merely performing the service they also select it, plan it, and then reflect on their entire experience. In addition to academic content, students practice valuable practical skills like organizing, collaborating, and problem solving. And they exercise such important character virtues as showing respect, taking responsibility, empathy, cooperation, citizenship, and persistence. Service learning is, in a word, transformative. There are many different kinds of service learning projects for all age levels. A lot of them deal with community needs related to health, poverty, social issues, or the environment. Other good service learning activities involve students helping other students through mentoring and peer or cross-age tutoring.

e) Explicit Instruction in Character and Values.

Up to this point we've been talking about ways of educating for character through indirect means, i.e., by weaving character education into the structure of the school or by drawing it out through the existing curriculum. The direct approach is to teach it as a subject in itself, by creating specific character education lesson plans. This approach is often organized around a list of specifically named virtues like respect, responsibility, integrity, etc., and typically involves the kids in reading, writing, discussing, role playing, and other kinds of activities that help them understand and apply these values.

Also, there are many commercially available character education programs that you can use right out of the box. Most of these are flexible enough to be implemented in a variety of ways depending on your particular needs. You can find these programs, along with a good deal of other useful material, on the internet by Googling the search phrase “character education.”

f) Program Evaluation

Regardless of the scale of your character education initiative, it's a good idea to establish some means of evaluating it so you know whether you are achieving your goals. The implementation of a character education program must include a pre-assessment of goals and a post-assessment of results. Such an assessment may be as rigorous as a full blown longitudinal study, or it can be as informal as counting disciplinary referrals or gathering anecdotal teacher impressions. Assessments can be designed to measure changes in the students, changes in the school climate, and/or how well the staff is implementing the program.

5. Conclusion

In assisting students to develop their morals and character in education, we should acknowledge that the six pillars of character and the approaches to build character in education should come into play within a rapidly changing context and therefore, we cannot teach our students all the specific knowledge, values, or behaviors that will lead to success in all aspects of their lives. We must therefore acknowledge that some values are relative and teach students to develop their own views accordingly. At the same time, we must acknowledge that there are some absolutes with respect to morality and character as accepted by commonalities among members of specific communities, major world religions, and moral philosophers. We, therefore, have an obligation to teach these in the family, in our religious organizations, and to support this effort in our communities. Moral and character development is integral to the development of self and is as much the responsibility of early caregivers as it is of later educators.

In summary, the step of building character in education can be seen on the diagram below:

As a beginning effort to help a school or community identify those most important in a specific context, should develop a "Survey of Desired Values, Virtues, and Attributes". A preliminary study shows considerable overlap in beliefs among pre-service and practicing educators. There is enough evidence from a wide variety of sources to develop a consensus of a community around a

relatively small number of moral and character traits that can be the focus of educational program. It must be integrated into a curriculum that enjoins young people to strive for excellence in the attainment of both character and competencies. As a beginning effort in this direction, a webpage has been developed with links to lesson plans that combine academic instruction with moral character development and related values, virtues, and attributes that adults believe should be developed by students.

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