Character Education the Crème of Learning

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"Great learning and superior abilities will be of little value-unless virtue, truth and integrity are added to Them" Abigail Adams

ABSTRACT

Learning and educating will not be reasonable if it is not geared towards good character formation. Good character is not formed in isolation or automatically. It is developed over a while through a sustainable process of teaching, learning and practice. This is developed through character formation. Today both the young and old are bombarded with many negative influences of the Mass media and other external sources prevalent in our culture. Our educational systems must resume a proactive role in assisting families and communities in developing a caring, respectful environment where students can learn care and ethical values. This paper comes from personal reflections and readings on character education. This paper will provide a guideline for effective and comprehensive character education to help students develop good character, which will entail knowing, caring, and acting upon core ethical values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness and compassion. Character education should aim in shaping students to be rooted in good character formation.

Keywords: Character, Education, Crème Learning

INTRODUCTION

Education is said to be an important element both in the traditional aspect and western thoughts. With this in view both the western and traditional people have developed an educational system that help children to learn and develop. Etymologically, education derives its root from the Latin words "educare" and "educere". The word "educare" is interpreted to mean train or to form or to mould. Thus, "educare" implies that "educere" on the other hand, means to build, to lead, or to develop (NOUN,2018). Character education teaches values of values that we use everyday to make decision. it is a learning process that enables students to understand, care and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, virtues and responsibility for self and others. Character education helps in learning common attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that are important to people. Character education is integral to nature.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Webster's New World Basic dictionary of American English defines character as "all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks by which that person is judged as being good or bad, strong or weak".

While Ndubisi (2019) defines "character as something to do with an aggregate of the features that distinguish a person. It points to the quality of an individual's personality". Ndubuisi said, that character is the total of those traits in a person that sets him or her apart from others. It is a unique mark of personality identity".

Bransford, Brown & Cocking 2000) define "learning as an ongoing active process of inquiry, engagement and participation in the world around us". It is the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience or being taught. Lachman 1997 defines "learning as a change in behaviour that is due to the experience". While the Webster's New World Basic dictionary of American English defines learning as

"The act or process of getting knowledge or skill. Knowledge gotten from studying".

Education is a deliberate systematic and sustained effect to transmit, involve or acquire knowledge, values, skills and sensibility (Cremin, 1977). Fafunwa 1974, define "education as the aggregate of all processes by which a child or a young adult develops the abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to society". The goal of traditional African education is functionality of the child in the society. While Nduka 1975 sees "education as the process of cultural transmission and using culture to embrace people's art, music, literature, philosophy, religion, commerce, political organization, science and technology as well as all other ideas and values, implicit and explicit, that permeate a society and bind its people into recognizable unit".

Osokoya 1987, defines "education as a continuous process which the society establishes to assist its members to understand the heritage of the past and to participate productively in the future". Education develops human beings in the cognitive, practical, psychomotor and psycho-productive domains (Ogu, 2023). Amaele said that "education as the full development of an individual child, through acceptable methods and techniques, according to their abilities and interest".

THE NOTION OF CHARACTER EDUCATIONDEFINITION OF TERMS

A person's "character" refers to the disposition and habits that determine the way that person normally responds to desires, fears, challenges, opportunities, failures and success (Aynur, 2011). A person's character is described normally by his or her moral worthiness. To have a good, or honourable character is seen to be a person of merit, worthy of admiration and honour. Your character is the sum of all the qualities that make you who you are (Aynur,2011). It's your value, your thoughts, your words, your actions – – – in other words, it's You. Like it or not, you will often be judged by your character (Singla, 2009).

Character education is the notion of creating schools that foster ethical responsible and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share (Aynur,2011). Thomas Lickona sees "Character education as a deliberate effort to cultivate virtue" (2004). Children need adults to teach them through example and exhortation. Most psychologists, sociologists and social philosophers are generally of the opinion that the human personality is made up of nature and nurture. Nature has to do with characters inherited from one's parents (Ndubisi, 2019). All the experiences of a person constitute nurture. It has been argued that nurture plays a very vital role in the personality formation and development of an individual (Ndubuisi,2019). Thus, character formation is all about nurturing.

Character is the total trait in a person that set him or her apart. Character formation is a kind of education that focuses on the behavioural and moral development of an individual (Ndubisi, (2019). This is true when you look at the fruits of African traditional education way of training a child. Fafunwa (1974) points out that functionalism was the main target of traditional education in Africa in which education is generally seen as an immediate induction into the society and a preparation for adulthood. A child is educated to be responsible and employable in the society. Ndubisi (2019) said "It is a kind of learning experience that will help people develop variously as moral, civic, good, mannered, behave, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant, or socially accepted beings" (Wikipedia, 2018). It is the learning process that truly brings out the humanity of the human person.

SOME FACTORS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

1. **Nature**– our genetic makeup constitutes the basic structure for character formation
2. **Parents** -most of the cherished values we learn are from our parents e.g., honest, sincere, brave, neat,

etc.

3. **Techers / Guardians** – are the molders of character. The ways or manners students behave can be traced back to their teachers and guardians
4. **Role models** – A role model is an individual whose life inspires others. Role modelling plays a prominent role in character formation, especially among adolescents (Ndubuisi,2019).
5. **Religion** – is a powerful character formation: People believe what their teachers of faith in their respective religions tell them. They can go to lengths to defend their religion. Ndubisi (2019) said "Religion is such a force that cannot be toyed with as far as character formation is concerned.
6. **The mass media** -The revolution that the technology and communication sector presents can be both positive and negative. They have become a major factor in character formation in our contemporary world today. The youths depend heavily on technology and social media for their personality development.

EDUCATION / LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR CHARACTER FORMATION

The goal of education is to educate. And educating impacts knowledge and values that enable one to operate meaningfully in a society (Ogu, 2023). Ndubisi, (2019), affirmed that "education is seen as anything that has to do with knowledge acquisition". It is also important to know that mere knowledge acquisition does not make one educated. The ultimate goal of education is character formation which must be related to life. Socrates said "There is a serious nexus between education and character formation. For Socrates knowledge (education) is a virtue (Omoregbe, 2002). For him, one can not be educated and continue to do wrong. Socrates argues that ignorance is the root cause of wrongdoing in our society. Omoregbe (2002) in discussing Socrates' view, said that wickedness is due to ignorance; if a man knows what is right he would do it and if he knows what is evil he would refrain from it, for no one ever does evil knowingly. Virtue and good actions flow from knowledge, while wrongdoing is the result of ignorance (pp34-35).

It is important to say any form of knowledge (learning) acquisition that does not influence the character of an individual is dead (Ndubisi,2019). The question will be why learn in the first place? What is the knowledge being acquired meant for? Aristotle affirms that the goal of education is the moral and intellectual development of an individual. His emphasis is on moral development (character formation) as the basis of education. The philosophers of education John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau placed virtue (character formation) above mere intellectual learning. For them the goal of education is more of moral development than intellectual development (Lorvaa & Adejoh 2002) cit; pp 55-59. Ndubsis (2019) said "There is a huge difference between a learned person and an educated person. One can be learned without truly being educated. He further said "that education is value-laden; it is geared towards personality; education brings about all-rounded personality".

Wisdom is mental in acquisition and practical in application (Akam,1995; pp.135). it follows that one cannot claim to be learned when such claimed knowledge cannot be put into practice. E.g., A medical doctor whose duty is to save and protect human life but indulges in abortion at will or gives the wrong prescription cannot be said to be properly educated or learned; a civil engineer that uses inferior materials in building houses can only boast of pseudo-education; a lecturer who fails to prepare his or her lecture well or engages in examination malpractice or sex for marks is very far from being educated. A student who cuts classes or squanders his or her school fees, or engages in filthy practices cannot be said to be learning or being educated.

A person who is properly educated is capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, taking the right decision most of the time and averting dangerous situations (Akam, 1995, p.1370). True education or learning makes one to be selfless, patriotic, and humanitarian. However, in Nigeria, there are many who claim to be educated or learned, and yet they indulge in corrupt practices, tribalism, bribery, examination malpractice, misappropriation of public funds, and as well break the laws of the country.

CONCLUSION

Education involves the development of socialization skills and integration of character education as an important part of a child and adolescent academic formation. The major goal of education is character formation. Character formation comes through learning. We cannot remove morality which has to do with character from education. "It is also important for us to know that there is a difference between moral education and religious education" (Ndubisi,2019). In this paper, we lean on moral education. In education character and learning are the basic requirements for the award of degrees and certificates. However, it is unfortunate that most of our Nigerian educational institutions do not emphasize character formation.

Teachers, lecturers and school administrators must be people of high moral integrity since one cannot give what he or she does not have. This paper affirms that learning is not all about acquiring knowledge or degrees because any knowledge that does not have a positive impact on the character of an individual is pseudo-education. However, there is a difference between an educated person and a learned person. A learned person has to do with the simple acquisition of knowledge that is rooted in character formation while an educated person has both acquired knowledge and good character formation. A person who is properly educated must have two wings that glides very well on learning (intellectual) formation and moral formation. And so, education must be rooted in character formation.

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