

Educating the Global Child: The Role of the Family

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes a look at the role of the family in education of the global child. The discussion focuses on the roles of the family in the child's education, namely, as the first agent of socialization, the foundation of moral education, the first teacher of language and communication, the builder of emotional stability, the promoter of cognitive and academic development, a teacher of cultural identity and respect for diversity, a trainer on discipline and responsibility, a guide in digital and media literacy, a model of peaceful living and conflict resolution, a nurturer of empathy and social responsibility, a partner with the school and society; and a provider of care, protection and nurturing environment. On the part of the global child, these ills are traceable to lack of good moral values since the family are experiencing the following: poverty and economic hardship, broken homes and family instability, poor parental education, excessive work schedules and absence of parents, harmful media influence, poor value systems in society, digital distractions, weak parent child communication, exposure to violence and insecurity. The discourse pointed to ten ways the family can effectively educate the global child and concluded that educating the global child is not the sole responsibility of the school, government, or society; it begins fundamentally in the family.

Keywords: Education, Global child, Role, Family.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, education has gone beyond merely teaching children how to read, write, and pass examinations. The modern child is expected to function in a world that is increasingly interconnected through technology, migration, trade, media, and global challenges such as climate change, inequality, conflict, and digital transformation. This child is often described as the global child, a child who is being prepared not only for success within their local community but also for meaningful participation in a wider global society.

The concept of the global child emphasizes the development of values, skills, attitudes, and competencies that enable children to think critically, appreciate diversity, communicate across cultures, solve problems, and contribute responsibly to the world around them (UNESCO, 2023). While schools and governments play important roles in this process, the family remains the child's first and most influential educational institution.

The family is where a child first learns language, values, behaviour, emotional control, relationships, discipline, identity, and worldview. It is the first environment that shapes how the child understands self, others, society, and the world. According to UNICEF (2024), the quality of early experiences within the family significantly affects a child's learning, emotional development, behaviour, and future outcomes. Therefore, if a child is to become globally competent, morally upright, socially responsible, and intellectually prepared, the family must play an intentional role in that child's education.

Meanwhile the global society is plagued by a lot of social vices that have found their way into the school system. These vices which have manifested into different disciplinary problems in schools range from truancy,

examination malpractices, cultism, and moral decadence to armed banditry and drug abuse. These problems have become so complex that school authorities alone cannot adequately tackle them. It therefore becomes paramount to involve all stakeholders in the educational system to collaborate and form a viable cooperation to give proper and quality education to the child. The emotional and personality problems that lead to dislike for school usually begin at home, though they are often fostered by the school. If the child comes from an authoritarian home where pressures are placed on him to achieve success in school, if he has been so overprotected at home, or if his parents attitudes are negative or indifference towards education, he is likely to develop an unfavourable attitude towards school (Hurlock 1972). The fact is that a child's home-experience usually affects his outlook on life which he projects to the school situation. Thus, the family should be a part and parcel of this effort to give better education to the child.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the roles of the family in educating the global child. To guide this review work, the following questions were raised: What is the meaning of the global child? What are the roles of the family in the education of the global child? What are the challenges facing the family in educating the global child? What are the emerging roles and responsibilities in educating the global child?

Meaning of the Global Child

A global child is a child who is being nurtured to understand and function effectively in an interconnected world. Such a child is not limited by narrow ethnic, tribal, or national boundaries but is taught to appreciate humanity, diversity, peace, innovation, justice, and shared responsibility. The global child is expected to possess: awareness of local and international issues, respect for cultural and religious diversity, communication and collaboration skills, digital literacy, critical thinking ability, empathy and social responsibility, adaptability in a changing world.

UNESCO (2023) explains that global citizenship education helps learners develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to contribute to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world. However, before a child learns these ideals in school, the family lays the foundation. In fact, the family background is a major determination of a child's performance. Thus is suggested by Jimoh and Aigboje (2003), with the complex problems confronting secondary schools in the country today, it has become imperative for schools to build and foster parental involvement in the education process of their children.

Education

Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of concerned with the preparation of the young ones of the society so that he can serve society's need as adults (Ijeoma 2004). Akpan (2009) explained that education facilitates realization of self-potential and latent talents of an individual. He said education could generally be seen from the three dimensions; Development of Knowledge, training of mental abilities and development of character.

Family

According to the Longman Dictionary of contemporary English, a family refers to any group of people related by blood or marriage especially a group of two grown-ups and their children.

Types of Families

There are two main types of family;

(i) Nuclear family

This family consists of the father, the mother and their children.

(ii) Extended family

This family consists of two or more nuclear families or it consists of nuclear family and relatives.

The Roles of the Family in Educating the Global Child

1. The Family as the First Agent of Socialization: The family is the first place where education begins. Before a child enters school, the home has already started shaping the child's character, speech, attitudes, habits, and understanding of life. Through daily interaction, children learn what is acceptable, what is wrong, how to treat others, and how to respond to authority. A child who is raised in a family that models respect, honesty, kindness, discipline, and responsibility is more likely to carry those values into wider society. On the other hand, if the family environment is characterized by violence, prejudice, neglect, or poor moral example, the child may struggle socially and morally. Therefore, one of the major roles of the family in educating the global child is to provide a sound foundation of values and social behavior that will prepare the child to interact positively with people from different backgrounds. In text reference: Early home experiences strongly shape learning, behavior, and social emotional development (UNICEF, 2024).

2. The Family as the Foundation of Moral Education: A global child must not only be intelligent but also morally grounded. Intelligence without character can produce a dangerous citizen. Families are responsible for teaching children right from wrong, truthfulness, fairness, compassion, humility, patience, self-control, and justice. Moral education in the home helps children develop conscience and ethical judgment. In a world where children are exposed to conflicting values through the internet, entertainment, and peer influence, the family must intentionally guide them toward sound moral standards. Parents teach morality both directly (through instruction, correction, and conversation) and indirectly (through personal example and daily conduct). Children often become what they consistently observe at home. Therefore, parents and guardians must embody the values they want their children to learn. A child raised with moral discipline is more likely to become a responsible global citizen who values human dignity and contributes positively to society.

3. The Family as the First Teacher of Language and Communication: Communication is a vital skill for global participation. The family plays a central role in helping the child develop language, confidence in expression, listening ability, and respectful communication. From infancy, children begin to learn words, tone, emotional cues, and social interaction through family members. The way parents speak to children influences not only their vocabulary but also their emotional and social development. Families that encourage healthy conversation, storytelling, reading aloud, questioning, and open discussion help children become articulate, confident, and thoughtful communicators. These are important skills for academic achievement, leadership, intercultural understanding, and digital participation in the modern world. UNICEF's child development guidance emphasizes the value of talking, singing, playing and responsive interaction between caregivers and children for healthy brain and learning development (UNICEF, 2024).

4. The Family as a Builder of Emotional Stability: A child cannot thrive globally if he or she is emotionally unstable locally. Emotional security begins at home. Love, acceptance, encouragement, attention, and protection from family members help the child develop self-worth, resilience, and confidence. The global child will eventually face pressure, competition, disappointment, diversity and uncertainty. A stable family environment helps the child build emotional strength to cope with such realities. Families educate children emotionally by helping them to identify feelings, manage anger and disappointment, show empathy, handle conflict peacefully, and recover from failure. Children who feel safe and valued at home are more likely to become emotionally balanced individuals who can build healthy relationships and function well in society.

5. The Family as a Promoter of Cognitive and Academic Development: Families play a crucial role in the intellectual and academic development of children. The child's educational journey does not begin and end in the classroom; it is strengthened or weakened by what happens at home. Parents contribute to academic development by creating a learning friendly environment, providing books and educational materials, monitoring homework, encouraging curiosity, asking questions, supporting school attendance, and valuing education. When the family shows interest in learning, the child is more likely to develop positive attitudes toward education. A child who is encouraged to ask "why," "how," and "what if" grows into a thinker rather than a mere memorizer. In preparing the global child, the family must help children become lifelong learners who are curious, informed, and capable of adapting to new knowledge and changing realities.

6. The Family as a Teacher of Cultural Identity and Respect for Diversity: One of the most important features of a global child is the ability to appreciate diversity while maintaining a healthy sense of identity. The family

plays a key role in teaching the child who they are culturally, socially, morally, and historically. A child must first understand and appreciate his or her own language, traditions, values, and heritage before effectively engaging with the wider world. At the same time, the family must teach the child to respect people of different races, tribes, religions, cultures, and nationalities. This is particularly important in today's world where intolerance, discrimination, tribalism, and xenophobia can easily be transmitted from one generation to another through family attitudes. If the family teaches children prejudice, fear, or hatred of others, such children may grow up socially limited and globally unprepared. UNESCO's work on global citizenship education stresses the importance of empathy, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence in preparing learners for today's interconnected world (UNESCO, 2023).

7. The Family as a Trainer in Discipline and Responsibility: Discipline is essential in educating the global child. In a world full of distractions, speed, freedom, and technological influence, children need self-control and responsibility to function effectively. Families educate children in discipline by teaching them punctuality, orderliness, obedience, accountability, consistency, hard work, and delayed gratification. These habits are crucial for academic success, professional development, leadership and social integration. A child who is not disciplined at home may struggle with authority, deadlines, teamwork, and ethical decision making later in life. The family must therefore ensure that freedom is balanced with responsibility, and affection is balanced with structure.

8. The Family as a Guide in Digital and Media Literacy: Today's child is growing up in a digital world. Smart phones, social media, online learning, artificial intelligence, video content, and global information access have made digital literacy an important part of education. However, exposure to technology without guidance can expose children to misinformation, cyber bullying, addiction, pornography, violence, scams, and harmful ideologies. The family must therefore play a supervisory and educational role in helping the child use technology wisely. The family educates the global child digitally by: teaching responsible internet use, monitoring online activity, guiding screen time, discussing online safety, encouraging educational content and helping children distinguish truth from falsehood. A globally educated child must not merely know how to use technology but must also know how to use it ethically, critically, and safely.

9. The Family as a Model of Peaceful Living and Conflict Resolution: The home is the child's first classroom for human relationships. How family members handle disagreement, anger, correction, forgiveness, and reconciliation teaches the child how to relate with others in society. A family that resolves issues through shouting, abuse, intimidation, or violence may raise children who replicate those patterns. On the other hand, a family that practices dialogue, patience, listening, and peaceful problem solving equips children with essential life and global citizenship skills. Since the world today needs peace builders rather than conflict makers, the family must raise children who know how to disagree without hatred, correct without cruelty, and relate without violence. This is especially important in preparing children to live and work in multicultural, multi-religious, and globally connected societies.

10. The Family as a Nurturer of Empathy and Social Responsibility: A global child must not be self-centered. Such a child should be taught to care about others, respond to injustice, support the weak, and contribute to community wellbeing. These values are often first learned in the family. Families nurture empathy by teaching children to: share, help others, care for siblings and elders, show compassion, respect workers and neighbors, and respond to the needs of the vulnerable. Children who are raised with empathy are more likely to become responsible adults who care about poverty, inequality, environmental protection, peace, and human welfare. These are qualities needed in a global society. UNESCO's global citizenship framework identifies empathy, respect, responsibility, and social action as essential learning outcomes for children and young people (UNESCO, 2023).

11. The Family as a Partner with the School and Society: The family cannot educate the global child in isolation. It must collaborate with schools, religious institutions, community groups, and wider society. Parents should not abandon education entirely to teachers. Rather, they should remain active participants in the child's learning journey. Family involvement in education includes: attending school meetings, following up on performance, supporting school values, discussing school experiences with the child, reinforcing learning at home. When family and school work together, the child receives a more consistent and effective educational experience. The values taught in school are strengthened when they are also practiced at home.

12. The Family as a Provider of Care, Protection, and Nurturing Environment: No child can learn effectively in an environment of fear, neglect, abuse, hunger, or insecurity. One of the most basic but powerful educational roles of the family is to provide the child with care, safety, stability, and a nurturing environment. According to UNICEF (2024), healthy child development depends on nutrition, protection from harm, responsive care giving, early learning opportunities, and emotional security. These are primarily provided within the family setting. Thus, before discussing global excellence, the family must first ensure the child's basic developmental needs are met. A neglected child may survive, but may not flourish educationally, socially, or emotionally.

Challenges Facing Families in Educating the Global Child

Although the family has a vital role, many families face serious challenges in carrying out these responsibilities effectively. These include: poverty and economic hardship, broken homes and family instability, poor parental education, excessive work schedules and absence of parents, harmful media influence, poor value systems in the society, digital distractions, weak parent child communication, and exposure to violence and insecurity. These challenges can weaken the family's ability to raise a well-balanced and globally prepared child. Therefore, there is a need for stronger parental awareness, support systems, and family centered educational policies.

Emerging Roles and Responsibilities of the Family in Educating the Global Child

- 1. Informal Education:** Family education is the informal which comes from the home that includes knowledge and skills learned and refined during the course of life. Children learn from their parents certain actions, attitudes and behaviour upon which later ideals are built upon. And children go to school with the values and attitudes from their homes. According to Mannheim and Stewart (1970), "The primary attitudes of sympathy, love, resentment, ambition, vanity, hero-worship, sense of social justice, or right or wrong in general, kindness, equity, honesty deference to public opinion, fear of ridicule, these and many other primary attitudes are developed spontaneously in the family because without them people cannot live together in any degree of amity or happiness". The school only helps to encourage those attitudes thought to be helpful in the teaching learning process and also, even more importantly provide extra-curricular guidance on cultural values, taught and modelled by parents." He continued that "Family education does make a big difference on the children's development and success. Because parents know their children best and can act the key role to help their children to achieve high IQ, which is the key factor to achieving success. Family education plays an essential role in helping children moral and spiritual development, and nurturing the child's natural curiosity and eagerness to learn.

With the myriads of social vices plaguing the Nigerian society, the importance of family to the education of the Nigerian child cannot be overemphasized. As it ensures that the children imbibe the right moral values or help to develop in the child the right moral values, attitudes and character that will enable him or her to live an outstanding life irrespective of the high level of moral decadence in the society. Parents play a very unique role in helping the child identify and respect his or her own learning strengths, interests, talents and needs. It helps the child discover his or her dreams, passion and goals, give him or her wings of motivation and purpose for becoming an eager, self- directed learner. For a child to achieve academic success, his or her interests, talents, expectations and goals are best motivators.

- 2. Support in School Academics:** Another role of the family in the education of the child is parental commitment to the child's school work. The school is a social institution which acts as an instrument in the society for the teaching and grooming of the young (Edobor, 2005). One very important role of the family in the education of the child is giving the child moral encouragement by sacrificing enough of their time to be with the child and teach the child at home, ensures that they do their assignment correctly and timely as well as spending time to check the child's school work to ensure that the child is attentive in class. Whitmore and Chay (1989) reported that more parents get involved in homework, the higher students performed in their studies, the revered is the case when parents keep aloof of their children homework. A study commissioned by the Toronto board of education found that parental encouragement at home and participation in school activities have a more significant effect on children's achievement than socio- economic status (SES) or student ability (Martox 2008).

3. Co-operation with School Authorities: Parental commitment gives emphasis to the role parents play as their children's guide and teachers. As the growing awareness of the benefits of parental involvement in the education process is becoming evident, it becomes important that at all times there should be a close contact between the school and home, and a sense of common purpose between home and school. (Cook [1970] in Mannheim and Stewart [1970]) differentiates antagonistic- to- school homes and average homes between these extremes; he explained that the co-operative -to-school home seeks to ally itself with the purpose of the schools, to send the child on time, dressed as required, and with the necessary equipment. It takes an interest in what goes on in the school and wants to find out how the child is getting on and the parents make a point of becoming acquainted with the children's teachers.

In the average home, there seems to be a fragmented and incomplete view of what education is, by handing over so much to the school and by ignoring their complementary responsibilities, such homes assume that education is a matter of instruction which can be carried out by trained people only which prescribe the exercise and see that they are carried through. Also as parents take a deliberate interest in the school, educators should endeavour to become more committed to overcoming barriers and areas of misunderstanding that can arise between parents and school personnel.

According to Black (1998) in Jimoh and Aigboje (2003), schools need to build both 'bridges' need to be built so that parents can help their children succeed in the school while 'buffers' should be in place to allow teachers and administrators to do their jobs and exercise their professional expertise. Maltoz (2008) stated that in 1994 report issued by the U.S. Department of Education noted that thirty years of research show that greater family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high quality education. That differences in school learning stem significantly from the values, habits, and relational dynamics at work within the household.

4. Creating a Conducive Environment for the Child's Educational Advancement: The family provides the right and favourable environment for the child to develop his abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour. A friendly home provides protection, security and emotional stability in a child. A child from such friendly homes show greater independence and is friendly with his classmates and teachers, which enhances better performance in school work. But an unfriendly home result in slow development of age appropriate behaviour and language difficulties such as baby talk and some reading difficulties, such a child has more fear, guilt and anxiety to contend with. He or she is characterized by uncertainty and indecision which appears in unsettled attitude toward their school work. Such a child show greater dependence and is more quarrelsome in the school.

Children who are brought up in home where the parents are separate or divorced (broken homes) are emotionally imbalanced faced by sleep disturbances and thus become irritable, fearful, and aggressive and withdrawn. Such children do poorly in school. The white house conference study considered the influence of what is called accord 'homes and 'discord 'homes. They concluded that the accord home provides the child with protection, security, guidance and encouragement. Discord homes have much the opposite effects because discord homes are marked with persistent conflict and divergence of aims between the parents, the child hardly gains a sense of family unity and he develops a sense of insecurity and may become disruptive in class (Mannheim and Stewart 1970).

Milne (1970) in Maltoz (2008) reports that research consistently shows that both males and females from single-parents families performed less well than those from two-parent families. The home environment is a most powerful factor in determining the school learning of the students – their level of school achievement, their interest in school learning, and the number of years of schooling they will receive (Coleman 1960) in Maltoz (2008).

5. Financing the Child's Education: The family provides the material needs of the child up to a point he can continue. The inability of the family to provide all needed textbooks, writing materials and other educational materials and good study environments because of poverty affects the child's learning abilities and performance in the school. Children sent out of school from time to time because of the parent's

inability to pay school fees and meet with the school demands can never perform well in the work. Studies according to Douglas (1964) have shown that children from poor home background lagged behind in most aspects of school learning as parents find it difficult to provide financial and material assistance for them.

The choice of school is normally influenced by financial status of the parents. The financially buoyant parents look for long term benefit for their children. They are more interested in the quality of school while the poor parents look for short term benefit, for example nearness of school to the house rather than quality of school. Maltoz (2008), stated that the number and variety of learning tools (books, tapes, puzzles, encyclopaedias, computers, and the like) in the home have profound effect on student achievement, and is a much stronger predictor of academic achievement, because this determined the learning of materials that will be available for the development of intelligence and competence in the child.

Ways of Enhancing Family Contribution to Children's Education

We are not emphasizing the obvious importance in obtaining a sense of common purpose between the home and the school. It is understandable that the school and the home develop a co-operative partnership program. This partnership may include a formally organized parent-teacher association or fellowship, parent board advisors, parent school task forces, volunteer programs, booster clubs, parents training seminars and much more. (Demuth and Demuth 1975). In addition, the school should reassure parents of their concern and support as well as draw attention to the concern shared for the students. When this is done, more confidence on the school will be placed by parents.

Furthermore, the school should stress the benefits of parent's involvement; encourage communication of observation to bring about better understanding. This will make the parents in the progress in the education of their children; encourage parent's participation in assignments schedules for the evening and on weekends and very busy parents should be encouraged to spend short period on an irregular basis. This school should provide a description and objective for each area of involvement with criteria for success and acceptable standards of performance to guide parents who may not know how to do certain tasks. In addition, there should be appreciation of parent's involvement no matter how small their involvement is. This is very important to motivate the parents. Where there is a grateful heart, there is a giving hand.

Ways Families Can Better Educate the Global Child

To effectively raise a global child, families should:

1. Create time for meaningful interaction with children;
2. Model the values they want children to learn;
3. Encourage reading, curiosity, and critical thinking;
4. Expose children to positive knowledge about the world;
6. Teach respect for others and appreciation of diversity;
7. Guide children in technology and media use;
8. Support school learning consistently;
9. Build children's confidence and emotional resilience;
10. Train children in responsibility and discipline;
11. Raise children with both local identity and global awareness.

CONCLUSION

Educating the global child is not the sole responsibility of the school, government, or society. It begins fundamentally in the family. The home is where the child first learns values, identity, discipline, language, emotional control, empathy, and worldview. These early lessons form the bedrock upon which formal education and global citizenship are built. If society desires children who are academically sound, morally upright, emotionally stable, digitally wise, culturally sensitive, and socially responsible, then the family must be strengthened and empowered to fulfill its educational role. The family remains the first classroom, the first school, and the first training ground of the global child. Therefore, the education of the global child must be understood not only as a school based process but as a family rooted and society supported responsibility.

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