

The Centrality of Character and Integrity Education in Kenya's Institutions of Higher Learning

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ABSTRACT

Education remains an important enterprise and asset by which any society models and determines its existence. It consists in a process of propagating desirable survival skills to succeeding generations. Through education, society sets and defines its basic survival needs. Thus, besides other components such as cognitive, creative and dialogical, the overriding significance of education can be summed up in its normative definitions. This is due to the fact that its impact is to be identified in the extent to which it affects and modifies one's behavior in society. Based on this understanding, this paper focuses on the place of character and integrity education in institutions of learning. Its aim is to define, justify and affirm the importance of character as an irreplaceable component in holistic development of learners. Being a library-based study, its data is mainly obtained from internet sources and from discussions with educationists. A purely qualitative method was adopted so as to gain deeper understanding of the pertinent issues involved in character and integrity education. Thus, the principle methods used included critical analysis, speculative and dialectic methods of investigation. On the overall, the normative essence of education is critically discussed. Similarly, an exploration of various trends in character and integrity education has been made. Finally, the role of the teacher in character education of the learner is examined. The study concludes by making practical recommendations on possible ways and avenues through which character and integrity education can be enhanced in learning institutions.

Keywords: Character, Integrity, Moral, Morality, Higher Education, Teacher and Learner

I. INTRODUCTION

Among the most important goals of education in Kenya are the following objectives which are paramount: the sustenance of the true convictions on which the human society is founded; the preparation of citizens for the public work which is a crucial factor for human survival. Hence education has the duty of creating and sustaining public good; the training and education of a humane capital, and the enhancement and promotion of corporate objectives; that is, socio-communication objectives.

To achieve these objectives, educational institutions as centres of learning need to be knit together as humane institutions with a constant awareness of their noble responsibility to future generations. In their charge is placed the responsibility of insuring the societal posterity. Thus, these institutions must labour to bring forth holistic persons as endowed with sound character, quality and intelligence. On the contrary, schools and even the highest institutions of learning have generally reduced the learner to an object subject to market forces far away from his/her nature as a person. Seemingly, this is the general perspective in which the learner is viewed even by those in the teaching profession. Evidently, something seems to be going on seriously wrong with our educational institutions. There is a need therefore to go back and find out where the rains started beating us.

This paper suggests that the worst rains that have hit our institutions of learning can best be defined in the context of our departure from lofty goals of education, namely the development of learners' for life, in other words learners who should become critical, intelligent and good choosers and moral actors in the world. Thus, while maintaining the vital

traditional ideals, the purpose of education needs to be continuously redefined in the context of our contemporary consumerist situations. Let us for example reflect on what Daniel Webster said of education:

If we work on marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass time will efface it. If we erect temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work upon men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with the just fear of God and love of their fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something that no time can efface and that will brighten and brighten to all eternity (Gries, 1996).

For Webster, education is not principally about imparting knowledge in the sense of pouring facts into minds; rather it is all about imbuing minds with high principles, with a reverence for the sacred that institutes absolute things and concepts, and with a love for fellow men and women. On the contrary, as David Gries (1996) has further observed, education has been short-changed and instead has been used:

To pour facts into people, to prepare them with a particular skill to make a living and to earn money. These are important, but more important are the high principles, the high values, the search for a meaning to their life, the fact that only through loving all men, no matter what their culture, can the world be at peace.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Life in the society is about the decisions, choices, and actions that people undertake and not merely about what they know (cognitively). However, in a world fascinated by utility and practical sense, by efficiency and accountability, by management and control, the educational enterprise will often tend to be perceived and evaluated accordingly. Hence, instead of being seen as the overall process of propagating desirable survival skills and values from one generation to the next, education is likely to be compromised for mere marketable pragmatic definitions. This is often the case in institutions of learning where education is hardly directed towards the formation and development of civility in the learners.

Instead, the focus is on “pumping ideas into the heads” of learners who are supposed to reproduce the same for good certificates. Consequently, character development is often overlooked. It is this seemingly forgotten moral dimension of education that determines the quality of the people and the society which they constitute. There is therefore a need to re-affirm the centrality of character education in the broad structure of our educative processes in order to make education regain its principle role of forming holistic citizens that are able to choose, decide and act appropriately.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was principally a conceptual work. Thus it employed a conceptual approach of inquiry into the centrality of character education and integrity in the broad spectrum of education. In this context, it was purely a basic research in nature. Its aim was to critically analyze the extent and ways through which the educational process can be used in the enhancement of moral learning. Ultimately, as a basic research, the study focused on increasing the awareness of the importance of character education and integrity so as to open up more avenues for empirical inquiries into this subject.

The study was purely a conceptual study and therefore, the library became the major source of data. However, much of this data was obtained from internet sources. Besides these, subsidiary data was obtained through informal discussions with educationists on the issue of the necessity of character education and integrity. Meanwhile, critical analysis was employed to process and analyze the data obtained. Thus the study proceeded in a purely qualitative approach.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trends in Character Education and Integrity in Learning Institutions

As Splitter (2006) has argued the concept of character education and integrity can be located at the intersection of a number of familiar views, each of which is so important yet none is exhaustive or satisfactory on its own account. Character education and integrity can be characterized by three fundamental components. These perspectives are structured as follows:

- i. Character education and integrity as the inculcation or transmission of a set of ‘values’, beliefs, attitudes, rules, habits, skills, dispositions etc.
- ii. Character education and integrity as a kind of ‘lived experience’ which occurs in certain kinds of environments; it is something which is ‘caught’ rather than ‘taught’.
- iii. Character education and integrity as a set of procedures or tools designed to help young people think about moral issues (critical thinking and reasoning, ethical inquiry into assumptions, consequences, intentions, motives, etc).

A view which may seem to cut across these three aspects is that character education and integrity is in the province of the home, rather than of institutions such as the school, understood from a purely academic perspective. Hence, in so far as any of these institutions take on the task of character education and integrity, they are acting in some sense in *loco parentis* (the place of parents).

3.2 Character Education and Integrity as the Transmission of ‘Moral Substance’

There is no doubt that morality and living the moral life has something to do with values, beliefs, rules, habits, attitudes, skills and dispositions. However, there are many questions about which specific values, and rules, count as worthy of appraisal. Indeed, various moral thinkers and educators have attempted in different ways to describe ethical precepts that ought to govern appraisable actions. The Aristotelian thesis gives a central role to the development of character and virtue. In the Kantian framework, the consequences of one’s actions are subservient to the more fundamental deontological principles which constitute his Categorical Imperative namely, ‘act from motives which you could want to be general principles regulating everyone’s actions’ and ‘treat people always as ends, never as means’. On the other hand, the Confucian focus is on filial piety and modesty. All these along with a host of alternative views and positions, must surely play some role in thinking about morality and the moral life. However, the issue at hand is not morality per se, but character education and integrity, and it is far from clear how (or even if) such grand theories and noble traditions as those mentioned here translate in educational terms.

The first of the above three components of character education and integrity seeks to remind us that whatever we might say about character education and integrity, its content is strongly normative in nature; that is, a person who warrants being described as morally educated will, in both thought and action, behave in normative terms. Hence, character education and integrity is often termed in Aristotelian terms as “character or virtue education” or in Kant’s Categorical Imperative as the infusion of “universal moral principles” in the learner as a moral agent. It is not just that one’s actions can and will be appraised by others as right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust, but that she herself is willing and prepared to appraise her own actions (and those of others) in these ways.

The problem with this view is however not at the level of content, but at the level of procedure. For in so far as it relies on such dynamics as inculcation or transmission, it cannot be justified. It is fair to say that the so-called transmission model of education – called the ‘banking’ model by Dewey, and ‘pouring in’ by Freire (Splitter, 2006) is almost universally rejected by contemporary educational theorists – notwithstanding its stubborn persistence in practice. As with knowledge generally, we should reject the view that values can be transmitted from one generation to the next – like family inheritances, sacred and inviolable.

Character Education and Integrity as Lived Experience

Over and above any commitment to, or theory about, specific normative or meta-ethical rules, principles or beliefs, an appropriate pedagogy for character education and integrity has at its heart, an affective or qualitative dimension which guarantees students a ‘lived experience’. This notion of lived experience is not only consistent with, but actually models and, to some extent, exemplifies a paradigm of moral behaviour. In other words, if schools and all educational institutions and classrooms are to qualify as environments for character education and integrity, then they themselves must function as moral or ethical environments in which appropriate forms of action occur. For instance aspects such as fair, reasonable and self-correcting behaviour ought to be exemplified in as much as they are talked about. John Dewey powerfully captures an important element of this notion of lived experience, when he states that: “We always live at the time we live and not as some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything” (Dewey, 1916). Dewey’s contention is that we should never underestimate the power of our present experience in moral development and future moral possibilities.

It is partly for this reason that the classroom environment known as the community of inquiry is so appropriate when it comes to character education and integrity because of its ability to provide a lived experience. Moreover, in so far as it is not restricted to any specific subject area the classroom environment provides an ethical environment for teaching and learning in varied subject fields such as in science and mathematics, in history, in religious studies, in art, and so on.

It must be said, however, that while the second view signifies a necessary ingredient in character education and integrity, it too is not sufficient. We cannot assume that merely by placing students within a certain kind of environment, where central ethical concepts and strategies are actually ‘lived’, that they will become better people. On ingredient missing here is the issue of substance or content: the ‘what’ of character education and integrity, which is provided by the first view. Still it possible that learners in a positively lived moral experience can come out to develop negative personal responses even to those moral norms that have been lived positively before them. Similarly, learners can also grow to respond positively out of situations of negatively lived moral

norms (experiences). Once again, there is no guarantee that moral environments will automatically compel individual character and moral responses correspondingly. Thus, the provision of such an environment alone does not suffice for a character education and integrity.

Character education and integrity does involve moral practice, but such practice, if it is to be truly educational, must be reflective rather than mindless; reasonable rather than unreasonable; and self-corrective rather than dogmatic. Moreover, the process of reflection must yield morally appropriate judgments which are themselves, the outcomes of structured, criteria thinking.

Character Education and Integrity as a Set of Tools and Procedures

If students are to be in a position to make judgments based on criteria, they must be empowered to do so – and this is where the tools of ethical inquiry become crucial. From critical reflection on the values, ideals, beliefs and principles which provide a conceptual focus to ethics, learners are able to proceed to self-corrective thinking and a fallibilistic disposition. Thereafter, they will ascend to the self-conscious use of such strategies as empathy, moral imagination and building on different perspectives. Ultimately, it is the capacity to apply these tools that makes students of character education and integrity into moral agents, able to take charge of their own lives.

The capacity to inquire, as understood here, comes, in part, from traits that we develop in early childhood: specifically, wonder, puzzlement and a desire to make sense of things. If we want to motivate young people to think seriously about moral concerns, we must, in Deweyan terms, ‘begin where they are at’, by helping them to identify questions and issues which are genuinely problematic for them.

In practice, these questions and issues are not so different from those which puzzle us the adult members of the society. Wonder and puzzlement, like all modes of thinking and inquiry, have both substantive and procedural components. We cannot wonder, puzzle, think or inquire about nothing. However, we cannot satisfy our craving to solve the puzzles and make sense of things by expecting those who are more ‘expert’ to write the solutions on the blank slate of our minds. We have to do the wondering, the puzzling, the thinking and the inquiring, and to do this well we need certain tools: the tools of inquiry.

In other words, character education and integrity does not thrive in the context of John Locke’s idea of ‘tabula rasa’ whereupon mere experience and not otherwise, will write moral knowledge to the extent of compelling the same into a positive response. The learner’s critical-rational element is indispensable. To this extent, no level of a morally upright teacher can simply cause moral uprightness to learners in a classroom or any other educational environment. This fact is emphasized enough by Paulo Freire’s castigation of the oppressor’s intent to undermine the learner’s personal critical learning so that they cannot think and, or deliberate for themselves. In Freire’s words:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat...In the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. In the banking concept of education...the teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence (Freire, 1993).

This approach destroys the development of the relevant tools that insures the success of the educative process. Important of these includes the acquisition of a disposition for a critical inquiry.

We should however, not pretend that these tools come to all those who need them as naturally and inevitably as the child-like wonder that sparks off the process. In no other area of the curriculum do we simply assume that students implicitly know how to think and act – how to do arithmetic and algebra, how to analyze a piece of literature, and so on. Children from a young age might wonder about what it means to be good, or fair, or what constitutes a courageous act and whether they could be as courageous as their favourite super-hero. But they do not automatically come equipped with the tools needed for investigating that which they are wondering about. In short, the learners have to be taught how to think well, and how to inquire, or rather ushered into the process of critical thought and inquiry.

Rule-following which is driven by fear or threat of punishment or desire for reward may be one ingredient in the way we make judgments and decisions, but it is not the only one. The tools of reasoning, empathy, imagination, and dialogue, to mention just a few, are at least as vital. By and large an on-going system of character education and integrity which aims to produce persons who are habitually inclined to act well, or live according to some (perhaps flexible) set of moral principles, must at the same time invest in an approach whose pedagogy is inquiry-based rather than rule-governed.

Once again, however, the procedures which lie at the heart of the way we think about moral issues are necessary but insufficient with respect to character education and integrity. There is more to being moral, and to being morally well-educated, than sound technique. This is why a brilliant dictator or a brilliant corrupt senior public servant, or a criminal mastermind, may indicate an ill-oriented character education and

integrity. More topically, a computer does not qualify as a moral agent). There is, in addition, an adherence to ideals, values and principles which are, themselves, continually up for examination utilizing the tools of ethical inquiry, as well as the notion that moral agents are moved to act within certain kinds of moral environments which must themselves be experienced as part of the process of character education and integrity. In short, the third view must be complemented by the first and second.

The upshot of the discussion so far is that character education and integrity is a complex business, involving a number of components which are each necessary but not sufficient in exclusion. These components may be summarily labeled as follows:

- i. The content or ‘stuff’ of character education and integrity
- ii. The affective or experiential dimension of character education and integrity
- iii. The procedures of character education and integrity (tools of ethical inquiry).

These three components described are jointly sufficient in the sense that, taken together, they capture what is most important about character education and integrity.

3.5 The Role of Educational Institutions in the Development of Character Education and Integrity

When the teacher takes upon him/herself the educational role of facilitating the development of holistic persons in and for the society, he/she is actually reassuming a responsibility traditionally assigned to teachers. Indeed, the role of the school is not simply to make children accumulate knowledge, but rather mould them into a well cultured citizenry.

Educational institutions must help learners acquire the skills, the attitudes, and the dispositions that will help them live well and that will enable the common good to flourish. The schools’ and teachers’ failure to strive towards this noble end and instead to do only half the job or even completely journey in the opposite direction only serves to put the individual child and all the rest of the human society in danger. Perhaps the most fundamental question is to start by inquiring into the possibility of teaching morality, and, or ethics.

Can Ethics be taught?

As Sheriff (1988), defines it, ethics is a study of one’s perception of what is right or wrong in a given context or a situation. It is an attitude of how one reacts or relates to an incident, happening or a stand one takes in ordinary day-to-day life experiences. It is an inherent quality learnt as a part of a development process of a personality. In other words, an individual learns the values of life as a part of an educational process of growing up without being separated as distinct instructional behaviour to be taught as a part of the curriculum.

Sheriff (2001) further notes that the imbibing of value system predetermines the ethical behaviour of an individual. These behavioural responses are dependent upon certain external factors like one’s culture, religious beliefs and regional

influences. In an Indian context, the institution of family as well as community system plays a major role in the embryonic nurturing of ethical attributes and judgment. An individual learns to respect the values imparted by the family in particular and society at large. Rather one's lifestyle embraces within its fold the ethical guidelines. Parents many a time become the role models for their children and act as vehicles of learning of life values.

Therefore, teaching of ethics may be an attempt to justify our actions or inaction in the name of science or medicine or humanities. Technology if simply stated could be defined as the manipulation of nature for human well-being (Schilpp, 1952). Universities or places of learning generally feel apprehensive about the sudden spurt of knowledge explosion which has outpaced the general understanding of a common man who has to reap the benefits and consequences of advanced knowledge of living. A common man must understand what is happening in the name of science which is going to penetrate the lifestyle of living.

The knowledge to decide which option is suited to the individual's need demands proper guidance and education. Therefore it is high time that we have proper dissemination of knowledge to the common man who will understand and follow what needs to be followed for his well being. That dissemination of knowledge depends upon true education of information to the consumer. Keeping these contradicting needs and apprehensions, education of ethics needs proper communication skills. This is an important indispensable responsibility for every true citizen of the world. Keeping all these in mind it can be argued that ethics must be more of an imbibed virtue rather than a taught science without minimizing the latter. Nevertheless, the moral formation of the learner within the context of an educational institution is an inescapable obligation for the teacher. Hence, the latter must constantly be aware of this sublime duty.

3.6 The Learner as a Moral Agent

In order to assist the learner to journey the path of moral formation and development, the teacher needs to have a vision of the moral person, in other words, some sense of the person as moral actor or agent. To this extent, the structure of the moral agent contends that the human character emerges from the workings of three components namely: knowing, affect and action (Ryan, 2006). These elements are central to the teacher's consideration in view of their interplay role towards a character development.

Knowing

Learners as persons should first be recognized as reasoning beings, as knowers. They have a natural *telos* to understand the world inside and outside themselves. Also, and quite important, they exist in community central to which is a moral heritage. Each community has found certain patterns of behaviour, certain human character traits or rather, a certain "bag of virtues" which is deemed necessary in the sustenance of the life of the individual and the community.

The moral person learns these values, not simply in a rote or passive way, but in a conscious, intellectual manner. Indeed, they are the stuff of social consciousness. For instance, what is courage and when is it needed, what happens to me and to my community if I become irresponsible, what is kindness and what are its consequences? The moral agent also knows the behavioural referents to kindness: what does kindness mean within my family or within my class situation? What does persistence mean in my life as a student, and later in life?

Emphasis upon the moral agent's knowing means that students need to come to know the moral wisdom of their culture, what has been learned over the years. It means that they need to know its best literature and the most important aspects of its history. They need to know these stories and accounts, not simply for the sake of cultural literacy, but to assimilate the moral lessons embedded in them. What is to be learned from say Gandhi's humble crusade about the power of a moral idea whose time has come? Students need to know where we have been and what we have learned as a moral community. This is not to be taken as the final word but as the unfinished repository of our moral successes and failures. On the strength of our successes, the learners hang-on to move forth to greater moral heights, whereas in the knowledge of our failures they recognize what ought to have been done, which indeed, they aspire to. This is why they need the best story, the best literature and the best history, rather than some hack attempt to socialize the young to the biases of the tribe.

To insure against moral passivity, the youth need to know how to think morally, how to reason through an issue or problem, rather than receiving someone else's decision. What is the good and the right in this situation, how do I choose between competing goods; what are the consequences of this course of action? To be moral agents, students need to be ethicists. Over their years of education they need to acquire the skills of ethical thinking. For instance, is this really a moral problem, what are the facts, what are the positive consequences for various courses of action and what are the negative consequences?

Also involved here is the formation of a moral imagination in order to enter within the world of the other and to consider possibilities without having to be presented with concrete events. Finally, part of developing the moral agent is to develop the quality of good judgment or what Aristotle calls, "practical wisdom", we need to cultivate in our students a judicious style.

Affect: The Affective Component. The moral agent is not raw intellect or disembodied reasoning, but has feelings, emotions and passions which play a great part in one's moral life. This affective component is one that many of us ignore or, at least, underestimate. In reality it is an energetic, vital moral engine which frequently takes over the life of the moral agent, drives him in directions his reason forbids, or gives energy to decisions to which reason points only timidly. We all know those who can talk a good moral game and can reason with the angels, but whose behaviour is all too human. We need to help the learner acquire not simply intellectual skills or habits of the

mind, but habits of the heart. In other words, one should grow up to love the good.

Part of this learning to love “the good” lies in developing commitments, and in particular, commitments to the moral life. This means developing a conscience or an inner voice, not merely of reason but of “affect” also, which calls us in a certain direction. It is a voice that can confront emotions of greed, self-interest and envy with a stronger desire to do what is right and good.

Another part of this moral affect is love of self or concern for one’s own well-being. Character education and integrity of affect involves the growth of self-love outward from the self, to family and friends, to communities seen and unseen, in order to develop a continually larger definition of what it means to love the good. Affect, though, has one other function, perhaps its most important, namely, to be a bridge between knowing and the third component, action: a link between thought and action.

Action. Any effort at character education and integrity or character development which fails positively to affect the child’s behaviour in some important way is doomed: moral action is the bottom line. Action has three elements or subcomponents: will, competence and habit.

The term ‘will’ in this context refers to what is needed to mobilize and channel our moral energy. It provides the strength to push beyond our self-interest and laziness and fears. It will spur us to moral action and carries us forward to do what our mind and heart tells us we ought to do.

Competence refers to a repertoire of behaviours and skills which the moral agent needs in order to act effectively in the world. For instance, one needs to be able to listen and understand, to empathize with the troubled, and to serve those in need. One needs to be able to lead others to see and do the good, and to be able to stand up to injustice. These competencies need to be learned the same way the skills of decoding and encoding symbols, and the scientific method are learned.

Good will and the competence or the capacity to act, are not enough; they must be habituated. Such moral action as telling the truth, when a comfortable lie is handy, or saying the right but unpopular thing when silence is easy, needs to be a practiced response. One cannot stop and weigh consequences every time a moral event arises; they have to be practiced, habituated responses to life situations.

This, then, constitutes an integrated model of the learner as a moral agent: a person whose understanding, emotions and behaviour are fully developed. This in turn can become an important foundation for the teachers’ own preparation for their roles in character education and integrity and character formation.

The Role of the Teacher as Moral Educator

The role of the teacher is almost indispensable if character education has to achieve the desired outcome. Nevertheless, although the general public strongly supports a more active role for teachers in the character education and integrity of the young, many teachers are uncertain about how to proceed in this effort. Hence, it is important to inquire into the teacher’s

preparedness, dispositions and approaches in character education and integrity. Teachers must therefore acquire and develop the necessary skills and competencies which will enhance their effective role in the domain of moral and character education of the young.

The following is a discussion on the six-way approach adapted from Kevin Ryan (2006) referred to as “the Six E’s of the Moral Educator and Character Developer”. These are example, explanation, exhortation, environmental expectation, evaluation and experience.

Example. The most obvious and indeed a very influential form of character education and integrity in the classroom is the example teachers provide for their students. However this reality remains quite troublesome and uncomfortable to many teachers. Those who came through the era of teacher-as-technician are put off by the notion that teachers are supposed to be models of moral excellence for their students. Nonetheless, research has now confirmed what humankind long ago recognized intuitively: people with power and prestige are imitated by those around them. And, though some teachers may not think of themselves as figures of power and prestige, the children they teach certainly see them as such. It is undeniable that one of the facts of school life is that children watch their teachers to discover how grown-ups act. Therefore, teachers need to be constantly aware of the powerful influence that their actions in the classroom have on students. While not suggesting that teacher must be saints, secular or otherwise, they should be people who take the moral life seriously. In the same way that teachers should be models of people using their minds, they should be seen as models of people responding to life in a moral admirable way.

There is yet another aspect to this moral modeling besides the teachers own personification. As already indicated, many of our most important moral truths are embedded in the stories, situations and circumstances and in the historical and literary figures that we encounter in the course of instructions. When young people read history, they are exposed to the heroes, the weaklings, and the villains of the culture; they see the consequences of human courage and cowardice, and they are inspired or repelled thereby. Meanwhile, many of the culture’s most profound moral ideas are embedded in its stories. Good literature gives pleasure and instructs. For example, the learners may need to know about Adolph Hitler and Martin Luther King among many other personalities in their local histories and traditional heritage. Hence, the teacher should strive to bring to the attention of the learners the wealth of such profound moral illustrations both in the classroom and in the general school setting.

Explanation. It takes years of poor teaching to subdue a child’s natural curiosity. Much of children’s inquisitiveness is directed at moral issues: “Why am I being punished, and he isn’t?” “How could great men like Jefferson and Washington have owned slaves?” “What do I owe my neighbour?” “Is it fair?” “Is it right?” “What should I do?” A major task of teachers is to explain the moral order to the young.

Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist, is often cited as a apologist for the school's socialization of the young. He saw the school as a social vehicle to instill in the young the society's dominant values and rules of conduct. However, Durkheim (1961), insisted that these efforts must be rational: "To teach morality is neither to preach nor to indoctrinate; it is to explain." This teaching starts on the playground when the teacher explains why we don't fight using sharp sticks, and it continues through the senior year when the teacher explains to the soon-to-be high school graduates what their duties are to the Republic.

We need to teach character education and integrity through explanation – not simply to fill the students' heads with the rules and regulations of society, but to engage them in the great moral conversation of the human race. Indeed, it is the very existence of this conversation that makes us human. The teacher's role of a continual explanation of the rules is, in and of itself, one of the most important messages of the school.

Exhortation. Explanations are a crucial part of children's character education and integrity, but teachers' urgings and exhortations also have a place in that process. Several examples can serve to dramatize this fact. A child who is discouraged by academic failure or by having been cut from a team, a cast, or a musical group often needs something stronger than sweet reason to ward off self-pity. A student who is quietly and simply moving-on through the school structure so passively may need a teacher's passionate appeal to inspire him or her to shape up and use the opportunity offered by education and study more diligently.

Similarly, a youth who is alive with thievery ideas may not question this kind of sloppy thinking until he feels the heat of a teacher's moral indignation. In the same way, a student who struggles so much academically and yet he/she is not rewarded while those who have not done as much are, may need more than the teacher's mere explanation that life is unfair. He may need to be inspired or even motivated if he is to endure and transcend his disappointment.

Thus, to become adults who are capable of standing up for their values, students need to see teachers who do so. However, exhortation should be used sparingly and should never stray very far from explanation. Nonetheless, there are times when teachers must appeal to the best instincts of the young and urge them to move in particular directions.

Environmental Expectations. A classroom is a small society with patterns and rituals, not only for relationships and standards for academic performance, but also for student behaviour. In classroom with a positive moral environment, students are respected and grow to respect one another. Moreover, specifically set standards of excellence are reachable, and students' satisfactions come from achieving those standards. The ability to establish such an effective, a purposeful and a civil classroom environment is what distinguishes the good, from the ineffective teacher.

A central factor in a classroom environment is its moral climate. For instance, are the classroom rules fair and fairly

exercised, does the teacher play favourites, does good balance exist between competition and cooperation, are individuality and community responsibility both nurtured, are less able students protected, but also challenged and are ethical questions and issues of "what ought to be", part of the classroom dialogue?

There may be not definitely defined rules of establishing and maintaining an environment of moral expectation, and, once established, it is always vulnerable to collapse. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the moral climate which exists within a classroom or a school setting has a steady and strong influence upon the formation of character and of the learner's sense of what is right and what is wrong. Indeed, a moral classroom environment is greatly affected by conditions and factors outside the classroom, such as a hostile school environment or a pleasure-oriented or a corruption inclined community. Thus, the building and maintaining of a moral classroom environment is a continuing struggle. But this daily, all-encompassing quality is also what makes the moral classroom environment such a powerful teacher in itself.

Evaluation. Another factor which is of importance for the moral teacher is the ability to allow learners to evaluate for themselves. In this regard the teacher should strive to create opportunities for students to reflect on what they value, what they think is the good, and what they believe is the right thing to do. This approach, sometimes referred to as "values clarification" has its focus on involving students in the kind of moral and value issues which have meaning in their lives. It may also take the form of involving learners in structured discussion of ethical dilemmas.

Experience. Sometimes in the last century, James Coleman, commenting on the enormous changes which had taken place among the youth in the society, wrote that: "The modern generation of American youth is information rich and experience poor" (Coleman, 1975). This seems to be the general case in many societies across the world. Going by the standards of any previous generation, today's youth exist in a self-focused and a pleasure-dominated world. Only rare and fortunate teenagers encounter the kinds of experiences that help them break out of this envelope of self-interest and learn to contribute to others.

Schools have a unique role of providing opportunities for these experiences through both academic and co-curricula activities such as sports and theatre. Such experiences enable students to provide services to the needy in the society besides promoting the ideals of mutual support. Meanwhile, teachers help students understand the moral lessons and experiences that such activities afford. Such service programs teach the skills of effective helping and cause young people to define themselves as individuals who are connected to others. In this ways, learners begin to appreciate the need to couple moral thinking with moral action.

This last "E" – experience – comes straight from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. According to Aristotle, a man becomes virtuous by performing virtuous acts; he becomes kind by doing kind acts; he becomes brave by doing brave acts.

Thus, a school that institutes a community service program is merely operationalizing Aristotle.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this study two issues come out very distinctly. First, is evident that moral values and norms have generally been relegated as unimportant in the practice of education. Secondly, the study has also emphasized beyond doubt that these same values remain the indicator of a healthy human society.

Based on these premises, the crucial importance of re-emphasizing the centrality of moral values in education has been affirmed. The justification of this position can be summed up by trying to respond to the question as to whether and, or why learners should acquire moral values or norms in and through education.

The Crucial Importance of Character Education and Integrity

To sum up this discussion, the importance of character education and integrity consists in the following:-

- i. Through the normative dimension, education deliberately attempts to form morally upright and cultured citizens. Hence, learners (youths) are developed into useful members of the society. To this extent, character education and integrity is important in the production of a morally apprehensive and upright citizenry. It is therefore the best investment if we want to insure the existence of a moral society, an adventure which depends critically on educating and, or enhancing the values or norms of the society in the learners.
- ii. The successful formulation of educational objective depends on their grounding in the values and norms that the society intends to propagate in its youth. Similarly, the achievement of such educational goals and objectives is largely determined by the society's commitment to character education and integrity. For instance, as it is the case in the Kenyan educational practice, education can hardly realize the objective of achieving national unity unless and not until we get convinced of the centrality of character education and integrity in our educational theory and practice. In other words, educational aims, goals and objectives are fundamentally normative in nature and so provide the normative definitions of education.
- iii. By way of sharpening critical thought, character education and integrity helps in cultivating in an individual a disposition to make good judgments, choices, decisions and actions. It affects an individual's thinking, willing and acting. Thus character education and integrity becomes the most effective way of reshaping a society towards good, worthwhile and desirable goals. By investing in the character education and integrity of the youth, a society can be able to redefine its culture and civility, thus, learners will be able to bring about positive change in the society. Ultimately, moral values and norms contributes to the development of the individual and the entire nation, thus leads to national development.

- iv. Finally, education is meant to promote good life, and so the need for character education and integrity.

Strategies and Recommendations for Character Education and Integrity

In spite of the clear importance of character education and integrity, numerous challenges still abound. These challenges range from utilitarian tenets which undermine moral values at the expense of other dimensions (especially the cognitive one) to the lack of preparedness and will to effect the demands of character education and integrity. Nevertheless, it is in the light of this realization that the following strategies and recommendations are made.

Making Character Education and Integrity Central to the Educative Process

In a society that is deeply inclined towards academic certificates and excellence, very few people would appreciate the centrality of value excellence. Indeed, school leaving certificates which used to carry a normative evaluation of the learner have since lost their significance. Many job seekers are no longer worried about poor school leaving certificates so long as they have an excellent academic certificate. Similarly, employers hardly inquire into the availability, or content of such certificates, or even the moral rectitude of job seekers as an aspect of their educational process.

Thus, it is recommended that curriculum developers and implementers must take keen interest in structures that will enhance the holistic development of the learner with a focus on the normative dimension. Curriculum activities that will promote moral values such as elements of community, hard work, mutuality, among others ought to be enhanced. Elements which threaten to undermine this realization should equally be addressed. For instance, excessive emphasis on academic development at the expense of creativity, individually and moral development of the learner cripples the holistic mission of education.

Building a Sound Institutional Culture

It has been emphasized that "lived experience" forms a vital component of character education and integrity. Hence it is worth noting that educational institutions and schools which have any interest in character education and integrity will do everything possible to create an enabling environment towards this goal. In short, both the classroom and the general institutional environment should mirror what the learners are expected to become. Institutional culture will in this case go beyond what is merely stated in word. Instead, it will include both what is intended and expressed in action and in "silent speech".

This approach to character education and integrity re-echoes the Aristotelian contention that values or character education is fundamentally caught by the learners than taught in formal settings. Schools should have behaviour codes that emphasize civility, hard work, kindness and honesty among others. Hence, it is recommended that rich institutional

cultures must be enhanced in educational centres as an essential part of character education and integrity.

Investing in Teacher Education Programmes

Whether character education and integrity is to be conceived in the transmitting model, lived experience, or through the development of critical reasoning in learners, the teacher remains the focal person charged with the responsibility of mitigating the moral development of the learner. Several options rest on the teacher. For example he/she can choose to enhance the character education and integrity of the learners or not, and may do this either positively or negatively. Furthermore, even the setting of an enabling environment for character education and integrity /development may finally and entirely depend on the good will of the teacher.

It is for these reasons that any successful attempt to enhance character education and integrity in and through the educational system must have the teacher as the most practical starting point. For instance, mere formulations of curricula which are friendly to character education and integrity cannot bring about any desirable effect in the learners if such interventions are not owned by the teachers. It is therefore recommended that effective character education and integrity should have its preparatory stage not in school classrooms but in teacher education programmes. This is the stage at which we should seek to achieve both the preparedness and even the will of the teacher to become an effective moral educator.

Many teachers either have this role imposed on them or simply find themselves having to satisfy the demand of a moral educator while in the field yet many others may even have no idea of such a duty. On the contrary, teachers must move out of their training convinced of their obligatory role as moral educators. Thus, this must become one of the focal points of their training.

The moral culture that is expected to be cultivated by teachers in the field must find an explicit, if not the best expression in teacher-education programmes and institutions. Some teachers often fail to emphasize on moral values for fear that they could be accused of brainwashing learners when they insist on basic value such as civility, decency, honesty and fairness. Such fears can be countered through a deliberate preparation of teachers as moral educators.

Similarly, just as it is difficult to develop morally sound learners in a school programme and environment that is hostile to character education and integrity, so is it difficult to have teachers who will become effective moral educators from a training environment that is alien to character education and integrity. This is perhaps the underlying challenge to effective character education and integrity in the society today. The society of which teachers are part of may generally be convinced of the necessity of a just moral order; it may as well be convinced of the role of education in the realization of this end. However, it is until teachers get fully convinced and fully prepared both in theoretical as well as practical ways to regard themselves as irreplaceable moral educators that education will contribute to the growth and development of a rich civil culture.

Suggested Ways through which a Teacher and the School System can Enhance Moral Values in Learners

To conclude this study the following are suggested as avenues through which the teacher and the school system can effectively attempt to enhance moral values in the learners. It should be noted however, that the list below does not seek to exhaust such avenues.

- i. Guidance and counseling
- ii. A teacher as a good role model
- iii. Reference to life experiences
- iv. Encourage character education and integrity through problem-solving approach such as providing learners with real time moral conflicts and dilemmas for discussion and resolution.
- v. Allusions to moral lessons during both “in-classroom” and out of classroom instructions.
- vi. Rewarding good conduct and punishing bad conduct accordingly, always punctuated with explanations.
- vii. Correcting learners when they do wrong or contrary to moral expectations.
- viii. Organized instructions on good conduct.
- ix. Enhance character education and integrity through non-academic activities e.g. through clubs, societies and games.
- x. Organize for resource persons and talks on moral issues and guidance.

Finally, this study affirms that virtue can be taught, and that effective character education and integrity appeals to the emotions as well as to the mind. Thus, the best moral teaching inspires students by making them keenly aware that their own character is at stake.

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