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Who is Responsible for the Child's Moral Character Education?

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Abstract

This paper tried to answer the question: 'Who gives the child's moral character education, is it a family responsibility, a collective responsibility or the sole responsibility of a certain institution? After the review of some theories of moral character development and or education, an effort was executed to investigate the various institutions that interact with the child as regards his moral character education. A conclusion was drawn that the moral character education of the child is not the sole responsibility of just a certain institution; rather, different social institutions must cooperate and interact effectively in order to provide the child a meaningful moral character education. Several suggestions were made on how these institutions should interact in order to provide the child moral character education.

Keywords: Moral Character, Moral Character Education, Social Institution, Child

1. Introduction

Moral education generally has been regarded as an integral part of institutions such as the family, the religious bodies and the school. However, in recent times the influence of these institutions on moral development has diminished greatly, and the moral confusion being reflected in these situations is obvious to any critical observer. In the following part of this writing, I will give reasons and evidence to clarify this claim.

First, along with developing society, some of the features characteristic of many families today that have contributed to the diminishing influence of moral education. Not only is the father absent from the family a great part of the day, but the mother (in many cases) works outside the home in situations that do not permit her to be home when the children return from school. This decreases the amount of time, and contacts parents have with their children; thus, the opportunity to influence the moral thinking of children is greatly reduced. Further, many families are broken, i.e., one of the parents is dead, or the parents are separated or divorced. Hence, the family's influence on moral development is diminished further. Even when families are united, moral confusion exists since different family members hold to conflicting moral values and are not united on traditional value ideals.

Second, the religious bodies (such as Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddha, etc.) manifest features that tend to point to its decline in influence and its relationship to moral confusion. The lack of religious body attendance and respect for the authority of the religious body indicate the declining influence of the religious body on the world today. Further, moral confusion is apparent when the traditional, fixed moral doctrines upheld by the religious body have given way, in many instances, to the view of further some religious bodies leaders that, each person is autonomous and therefore must make up his (or her) own mind concerning moral values.

Third, some brief comments concerning the relationship of the school and moral development should be noted. Since the time of many of the Greek philosophers, the teacher has recognized the function of the school as a moral educator. Many educational scholars have recognized the school's role in moral development. Dewey viewed moral education as crucial to the basic purpose of a school. "The child's moral character must develop in a natural, just, and social atmosphere. The school should provide this environment for its part in the child's moral development". This statement reflects the general notion that the school **should** help to develop students' morals. However, this function of the school has become a much-debated issue. It generally is held by many who believe, although in many countries are not, such as Indonesia, in a separation of religious body and state that it is not the school's role to function in the development of moral values. These people believe that moral values are matters of private opinion and should not be discussed in the classroom.

Along with the development of the society and concerted review of the literature has revealed that moral character education is becoming an increasingly popular topic in the fields of psychology and education. Media reports of increased violent juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, embezzlements, and human rights violation, numerous abuses and suicide have caused many people both within and outside the country to declare a moral character crisis in several countries. Though not all of these social concerns are the moral character in nature, and most of them have complex origins. There is a growing trend towards linking the solutions to these and related social problems to the teaching of moral character and social values in both public and private schools. However, considerations of the role of formal education, either preparation, elementary, and secondary schools) can and should play in the moral character development of youths are themselves of the subject of controversial debate. There are quite often that most of them give argument according to their personal views rather than informed opinion. So who are the responsibilities of the child moral character development/education? Related to the question, the purpose of this is to try to give an answer "*Who is Responsible for the Child's Moral Character Education?*"

2. Methodology

After the clarification of some theories of moral character development, an effort was executed to investigate the various institutions that interact with the child as regards his moral character education. Several suggestions were made on how these institutions should interact in order to provide the child moral character education.

3. Result: Overview of Moral Character Development and Theoretical Background

3.1 What is the Moral character?

For the purpose of this paper, moral character is defined as right conduct, not only in our immediate social relations but also in our dealings with our fellow citizens and with the whole of human race. It is based upon the possession of clear ideas as to what actions are right and what is wrong and the determination of our conduct by a constant reference to those ideals. It is worthy of note that the definition of what is right conduct is relative, it is taken for granted for the purpose of this paper that right or wrong conduct is defined by the society. In other words, each society defines for itself what is right or wrong. Therefore, moral character is defined as right conducts as guided by or defined by the respective society.

Moral character is an evaluation of a particular individual's durable *moral* qualities. The concept of *character* can imply a variety of attributes including the existence or lack of *virtues* such as *integrity, courage, fortitude, honesty, and loyalty*, or of good behaviors or *habits*. Moral character primarily refers to the assemblage of qualities that distinguish one individual from another — although, on a cultural level, the set of moral behaviors to which a social group adheres can be said to unite and define it culturally as different from others.

Moral character can be also viewed as the "system of rules that regulate the social interactions and social relationships of individuals within societies and are based on concepts of welfare (harm), trust, justice (comparative treatment and distribution) and rights" (Smetana, 1989). This is how humans determine their actions based on their cognitive abilities to interpret a social situation. Issues of reasoning, problem-solving skills, self-control, and adaptability are components in exhibiting key components of the moral character process. For

some individuals, issues of values, personal feelings, and social norms are constructs for discussion and therefore can be seen as being influenced by the way in which moral character is taught or experienced in schools, churches, and other social institution settings. There are two approaches when dealing with moral character: *Normative ethics* involve moral standards that exhibit right and wrong conduct. It is a test of proper behavior and determining what is right and wrong. *Applied ethics* involve specific and *controversial* issues along with a moral choice, and tend to involve situations where people are either for or against the issue (Timpe, Kevin, 2007). V. Campbell and R. Bond (1982) proposed the following as major factors in influencing character and moral development: *heredity*, early childhood experience, *modeling* by important adults and older youth, *peer influence*, the general *physical and social environment*, *the communications media*, the teachings of *schools* and other institutions, and specific situations and roles that elicit corresponding behavior (Huitt, W., 2004)

In order to fully understand the development of moral characters, one has to consider the various aspects that exist within the moral character framework. For many, it is seen as a part of nature; others contend that it is a process of behavior development. From the naturalistic point of view, one sees moral character development stemming from a developmental perspective in that moral character is conceived through how children think, behave and feel about rules and regulations set forth within their world as a result of natural consequences. The moral character thought theorists perceive moral character development through a set of stages that build skills and then translate into a global perspective of the child. The moral character behavioral approach contends that reinforcement, punishment, imitation and situational presentation are factors that contribute to the moral character development of human being. Issues of self-control and cognitive capabilities play a key role in the moral character behavioral school of thought. All of these approaches connect to one assumption: that certain factors influence moral character development of the individual. It is the focus of this paper to explore these factors that are responsible for the moral character development of the individual.

3.2 Theoretical Background

Some might argue that concepts such as background, culture, or environment also greatly influence an individual's character. There are three primary factors influencing and shape character development or formation. These three factors are beliefs, experiences, and values (John F. Jensen, 2012). The experiences consist of culture, upbringing, background or environment). While backgrounds include religious, social life, culture, beliefs and education of the children family. So, an individual character is shaped by their *background, beliefs, education, and experience.*" In this matter, *background* and *education* stand alongside *beliefs* and *experiences* as character shaping factors. Are background and education then equal to beliefs and experiences as influencing factors in character development? Beliefs derive from upbringing, culture, religious backgrounds, and traditions." In other words, our upbringing, our culture, etc., are what informs and shapes our beliefs and our values; which in turn shape and inform our character. Moreover, our upbringing, culture, etc. are in fact experiences. Our family life and our culture are social experiences which shape our beliefs and our values.

When viewing the moral character thought approach, one could consider the psychoanalytical works of Piaget (1965) in that he postulated that formation of moral character development is viewed through stages of life that begin with the most basic needs and continues into a formal operational thought process that extends into adolescent years. Another psychoanalytical approach presented by Freud investigates the development of self through the Id, Ego and Superego and the various conflicts that arise during early stages of a child's development. The key within Freud's theory is how the child identifies with the parental figures and the way in which conflicts during those developmental years are solved by the child through the various aspects of the development of the self.

Kohlberg's social cognitive approach to moral character development combines the approach by Bandura in that moral character development is best understood through the context of social situations, judgments and cognitive factors that pertain to self-control and perception of self within the social setting.

3.3 Elements of Moral Character Development

It is quite wise to combine how each theory comes into play in the real world of the emerging child after having considered the influence of moral character development theorist. Moral character is part of a complicated reciprocal process that embodies within a social setting through interaction while conserving self-identity

(Smetana, 1989). Social interaction can be difficult to understand because, within every society, there are rules, but these rules may not have been written. Hence conceptualization of rules, uniformities, and behavior can be conventions that are difficult for a child to interpret without assistance. Social influence and its connection to moral character development can come from the interaction that occurs naturally such as through conflict where there are a victim and observer of certain actions within a social context. This can account for the understanding of fairness and how it plays into the social realm. Killen and Nucci (1995) believe that this type of interaction within a peer group can positively influence moral character development.

As mentioned above that an individual moral character is shaped by their *background, beliefs, education, and experience*. The closer of the children interacts with the more the children get information or experiences shaping the children's' beliefs. As usually, parents and or caregiver are of the closest contact and communication of children. So parents and or caregiver play an important role in their moral character development of children, especially the affective components of parents, caregiver and children interactions. The effective components of those interactions, such as parental warmth, involvement, and support, are related to moral reasoning development (Hart, 1988; Powers, 1988; Walker & Taylor, 1991). Therefore, a warm, supportive bond between parents and children may enhance the likelihood that children are motivated to listen to and respond to parental messages. The approach used by the parents and or caregiver has the greatest impact on how the child will internalize the moral character lessons being taught. Therefore, the level of bonding between child and parents/caregiver yields a more productive environment to receive information pertaining to the moral character issues. This yielding to moral character teaching is based primarily on the reactionary process of the caregiver through the level of affect presented by the adult. This, in turn, brings the moral character and social message to the child in a more concrete fashion. As with anything in the developmental lifespan, too much or not enough of something can create adverse or opposite effects which may or may not be the intention of the caregiver. The affective components, therefore, the level of moral character development within the adult contributes to the internalization of the moral character concept.

According to social domain theory, children construct different forms of social knowledge, including morality as well as other types of social knowledge, through their social experiences with adults (parents, teachers, and other adults), peers, and siblings (Smetana, 2004). Experience within the social setting will lead to comprehension of concepts. Through modeling, observation, and role-playing, children are able to make the connection between parental and peer interactions and how they fit into moral character schema. The results of several studies suggest that children actively evaluate social messages in terms of their domain appropriateness and reject messages that are domain inappropriate and inconsistent with the nature of the event (Killen, Breton, Ferguson, & Handler, 1994; Nucci, 1984). Social learning theorists have asserted that a "great deal of human learning and behavior is a function of observing and imitating the behavior of models and that this learning can be explained largely through operant conditioning principles" (LeFrancois, 1999). Therefore, the justice to be served to the child stems from "taking on the complex task of developing an adult's maturity and ethical capacities" (Weissbourd, 2003). "These qualities and beliefs emerge and continually evolve in the wide array of relationships that every child has with both adults and peers starting nearly at birth, therefore relationships play a key role in the development of the moral character aspect of empathy (Weissbourd, 2003). This is where schools, family and community merge together to create the moral character development climate that ultimately becomes the moral character development classroom for children. This becomes their phenomenological approach to learning moral characters based on how they perceived their world and the messages that are transmitted daily by those with whom they interact with consistently.

Another aspect of moral character development is empathy which is commonly learned through social interaction. Empathy can be defined as the ability to feel or imagine another person's emotional experience. The ability to empathize is an important part of social and emotional development, affecting an individual's behavior toward others and the quality of social relationships (McDonald & Daniel S., 2010). In order for a child to understand empathy, the surroundings of the child must model and recognize when empathy occurs within a social context. Empathy is expressed by reacting to another's feeling with an emotional response or statement that reflects the other feelings. This begins as a way of understanding that someone may have a different point of view which evolves into the development of various perspectives when faced with interactions with those

who experienced unfortunate situations. This in term leads to an open mind and understanding of the complexity of the array of human emotions.

The influence of those within the context of the child's life moves beyond the emotional aspect to the cognitive development and its correlation to moral character development. Through the explanations made by the caregiver, caution and care must be taken to explain the consequences of actions. Kohlberg's theory of development takes on the assumption that fear and authority, satisfying personal needs, affection, and contracts and universal ethics are key steps that one must navigate through in life in order to become a moral characterized person, and this means that the intrinsic value of the learning experience must be emphasized in order that the experience becomes a part of the cognitive and social process of moral character development.

4. Discussion: Who is Responsible for the Child's Moral character Education

Although socialization theorists have viewed moral character internalization as stemming primarily from parents' influence on their children through their parenting practices, structural-developmental theorists generally have proposed that hierarchical nature of parent-child relationships constraint children's moral character development. This has led to the predominant focus on the formative role of peers and social institutions such as schools in moral character reasoning development and relative neglect of the role of the family (Smetana et al., 2004).

Talking about who is responsible for the moral character education of the child, Pakarsky (1998) "The Role of Culture in Moral character Development in Journal of Parenthood in America) recognized the role of culture above other variables in the moral character education of the child. He opines that a dogmatic conviction that schools are adequate to the challenge of making moral character sensibilities and disposition into the child is inappropriate. Tigay, H.Z. quoted in Smetana et all. (2004) on the other hand in addition to the roles of schools and parents in the moral character development of the child has also emphasized the role of religious institutions. Tigay, in fact, is of the opinion that the religious bodies have a major part to play in the moral character education of the child than any of the other agents. With these divergent views as expressed by authors, an attempt is made from hence, to begin to look at the roles of each of these agents in the moral character development of the child.

The Role of Parents in the Moral character Education of the Child

Most children ages 5 or 6 have developed basic components of conscience, a sense of guilt, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and the capability to be empathic. But none of these elements of a child's moral character development will become fully functional for years (Danielson 1998). This in-between period is the ideal time for laying a solid moral character foundation in the child, and the group of adults that are best suited for this jobs is the parents (who are being referred to as the first moral character teachers and role models that young children have). "At this early age, parents have the opportunity of teaching respect for life and for others to the child... this teaching usually occurs as parents explain and reason with their children." (Danielson, 1998).

Parents are centrally important by virtue of their concern with their child's development and welfare, their affective relationship and extensive interaction history with their child, and their ability to provide the types of interactions that facilitate moral development (Smetma, 2004). Parents provide the most constant and visible models of behaviors associated with character development, and they also help by identifying other models of the character traits they want their children to develop and by raising appropriate character-related issues in discussions of daily events. Parents also assist by exposure to examples of behaviors that negate their own views of positive values and virtues. The approach used by parents has the greatest impact on how the child and parents yield a more productive environment to receive information pertaining to the moral character issues. The yielding to moral character teaching is based primarily on the reactionary process of the care given through the level of affect presented by the adult. This, in turn, brings the moral character and social message to the child in a more concrete fashion. As with anything in the developmental lifespan, too much or not enough of something can create adverse or opposite effects which may not be the intervention of the caregiver. Therefore, the level of moral character development within the adult contributes to the internalization of the moral character concept.

A great deal of research suggests that the quality of the parent-child bond and the degree of warmth in the parent-child relationship affect many facets of children's development (Bretherton and Waters 1985). Indeed, one of the most consistent findings from research examining the family interactions that facilitate Kohlbergian moral character reasoning stages is that the affective components or those interactions, such as parental warmth, involvement, and support are related to moral character reasoning development (Hart 1988; Powers 1988; Walker and Taylor 1991). Therefore, a warm, supportive bond between parents and children may enhance the likelihood that children are motivated to listen to and respond to parental messages.

In furtherance, parental affective reactions in conjunction with reasoning may facilitate moral character and social rules. Research by Arsenio reviewed by Arsenio and Lover (1995) has shown that children may employ affective response to transgression, understand differentiate and renumber moral character and social reverb. Indeed, previous research indicates that material responses to moral character transgressions accompanied by in tenure feelings lead to greater reparation among children than when cognitive messages are not so embellished (Grusec et al. 1982; ZalunWaxler et al. 1979). Parents are more likely to employ negative effect, including dramatizations of distress. Such affective responses used in conjunction with explanations that focus on the welfare of others will increase effective reasoning because it will help the children to focus on the harm or injustice they have caused and make amends or desire to make amends. One must not hesitate to mention here however, that research also indicates that there are optional levels or affective arousal, too much anger may be negatively arousing and therefore may inhibit children's focus on other feelings.

There is also an important cognitive component to parents' interaction with their children that may facilitate children's moral character development. Parents' communication with their children is one aspect of children's social experiences that may be used in the construction of moral character knowledge. By explaining the reasons for rules and responding appropriately to moral character violation, parents can facilitate moral character development by stimulating children to think reflectively about their actions. This assertion implies that the more explicit parents are about the nature of the event and why a behavior is expected or a misdeed is wrong, the more effective such messages might be, particularly for young children. Though there are situations where and when more indirect approaches may be more effective (Grusec and Goodness 1994).

This suggests, in turn, that reasoning, explanation, and rationale will be more effective than other types of disciplinary strategies in facilitating children's moral character development as well as development in other domains. More specifically, to effectively facilitate moral character development, parents have to explain moral character rules as well as responses to moral character violation by weighting the consequences of the acts for other's rights and welfare support for this assertion has been found in previous research, which indicates that parental reasoning and in particular, other-oriented reasoning (Hofman 1970) is associated with greater moral character internalization and the development of concern for others.

Summarily, parents are vital in the moral character development of the child because they are the first moral character teachers and role models that young people have (Danielson, 1998). This they do by providing the necessary effective relationship and extensive interactions that facilitates moral character development. Parents' responses to children's transgressions and moral character dispute and their explanations of the reasons for rules and expectations may facilitate children's moral character development.

Role of Teachers in the Moral Character Education of the Child

The school has been identified as a vehicle of "direct instruction" (Pekausky, 1998), it is a social institution in which is embedded a rich of norms, customs and ways of thinking of which the teacher is a conveyor. Apart from parents who have been referred to as the moral character teachers, school teachers are also very influential and significant adults in the lives of children starting from the pre-school years. Teachers help children to understand character traits and values, and they also model desirable character traits in the students both within the school setting and in the larger society. Young children often idealize their teachers, watch them closely and also try to emulate their behaviors. In order words, teachers are models to the students. Young people may view their teachers as authorities on subjects and seek their advice on many issues related to character and values. Teachers can help by maintaining a long-term relationship with students and using children's literature in the

classrooms that emphasize positive values and heroic action. Teachers also reference the moral character lessons that the children must have been taught at home. The inclusion of moral character lesson in the curriculum and ensuring its full implementation/ delivery is yet another way in which teachers have contributed to the moral character development of the child.

Teachers are directly involved in teaching behaviors that are right and correct those that are wrong to students in school. They also function as role models to the student. This does not imply that all teachers are good role models to students and that all teachers teach good moral characters, yet the fact remains that teachers have very important roles to play in the moral character development of the child.

Teachers teach children to respect the right of others; they also promote the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions. Teachers are responsible for the teaching of the importance of honesty, dedication, responsibility, and right behavior. Success or failure in the achievement of the building of a society that is made up of moral character upright citizens depends more upon the adoption of education methods calculated to effect the change than upon anything else. These methods formulated, executed and evaluated by the teachers, hence the relevance of the teachers in the moral character development of the child. In other words that teachers should be role models teaching character and moral values in their students to have moral integrity, it means consistently doing what is right, even when it would be easier to do something that is personally more beneficial.

The Role of Religious Institutions in the Moral Character Development of the Child

The role of religious institutions in the moral character education of the child cannot be overemphasized. Historically, moral character teachings have been central to all religions. For instance, historically speaking, since the time of the Bible, moral character teachings have been central to Judaism. The Bible is, at its core, a book of ethical teachings. Talmudic sages are seen as moral character exemplars, and medieval writers such as Bahya bin Pakudah and Maimonides, Moses Hayim Luzzatto in the 18th century and the Musar Movement of the 19th century developed a systematic approach to the ethical teachings of the Bible and Talmud in order to teach moral characters. The same goes for the Islamic religion. Religious institutions have a way of imparting moral character lessons in their adherents, and this is no more news to many in our country today. In fact, the present in focus of both national and international organization to the exploration of involving and using religious leaders in the campaign against the hydra-headed monster called HIV/AIDS because it is believed that the religious leaders exercise a significant level of control/influence on many people's thought process and decision making further confirms the importance and relevance of the religious organization in the moral character development of the child.

Where do we go from here?

From the above, it is impossible to say that the moral character development of the child is the sole responsibility of only one socialization agent, and none of the agents can be discarded. It is on this premise that this paper is suggesting an eclectic approach. A situation where there is a combination of and cooperation of the different agents of moral character development to achieve the moral character development of the child. For this to be realized, this paper has deemed it expedient to suggest some strategies to be employed by every institution that has an input in the development of the child.

Educators, religious leaders, and parents must see themselves as moral character models for children, and they must behave accordingly. Children are quick to pick up the values that adults hold dear. It is therefore important that they behave in a way, which reflects moral character values, or the child will quickly conclude that they are hypocritical. It, therefore, follows that adults in the society should live above board by living as good examples for the younger generation to follow. The teacher should not just teach moral characters, and he should live it and be a role model for the students he is teaching. The same thing goes for the parents and religious leaders. Educators, religious and parents must create a moral character community in the classroom, home and religious centers, one in which children are involved in decision-making, and the rights and responsibilities of all are upheld. In such an environment, moral character discipline fosters fairness and opportunities for moral character reasoning and self-control. Each child is respected and is never the object of ridicule.

The teacher must try to discover, affirm, and develop each child's special talents and strengths, building the child's self-respect and self-esteem (Thomas Lickona, 1991). Only when a child values himself is he ever likely to show respect and empathy for another.

The moral character dilemma - a critical thinking approach - acknowledges that preaching and lecturing won't work. In the early 1920s, John Dewey developed a theory of moral character education, which emphasized reflective and critical thinking rather than didactic moral character lessons. Dewey's theory has been developed in recent years by Laurence Kohlberg (1969, 1969, 1977, 1977) in the area of moral character education. The theory holds that youngsters need training and directed practice in resolving moral character dilemmas and that with the skills learned, young people will become more capable of applying these skills to real-life situations and choosing the appropriate path of behavior. The underlying expectation is that such reflection will create moral character mature citizens and therefore, a moral character community. Children will be challenged to move to higher and higher levels of moral character development. Children involved in such an approach to moral character development would become as adept at using critical thinking skills in the realm of Jewish/Islamic/Hinduism ethics as in the sciences.

Stories are a potent conveyor of moral character values and children of every age love to hear a good story. According to Lickona, Stories teach by attraction rather than compulsion; they invite rather than impose. Stories talk to the heart and have the potential to make a child identify with the values portrayed. Storybooks with stories of characters that through simple righteous acts, become heroes worthy of emulation are good for the moral character education of the child. Like the Musar Movement of the 19th century, we should be creating small, informal discussion groups for adolescents to talk about moral character issues together. Such groups would be most appropriate in youth group and camp settings.

We should create and utilize music for the teaching of moral character lessons. Some religious and non-religious groups alike have produced excellent recordings, which employ catchy tunes, and repetitive lyrics that keep moral character values on the tips of children's tongues. This should be further explored and employed to teach moral character education to the younger generation.

We must provide opportunities for service learning and opportunities to meet important people who have exemplified themselves as those who uphold moral character values. Our schools, religious groups, and families must provide opportunities for social action, sensitizing children to moral character issues. Such an approach will teach the people, especially our adolescents, that moral character behavior and social action are humanistic.

Educators, Religious leaders, and parents must help children to develop the coping skills of self-control, so they can just say no to resist temptation or use methods of conflict resolution. Rather than think out or devise an unethical or immoral character way of handling the situation. Summarily, therefore, these strategies for teaching moral character education to the child is stressing the importance of (a) knowing the good, a cognitive approach. (b) doing the good, a behavioral approach) (c) feeling or internalizing the good, which is an emotional and spiritual approach. Moral character education has the best chance of succeeding only if all three approaches - the cognitive, the behavioral and the emotional spiritual are used.

5. Conclusion

Someone has said that the role of moral character education in schools is to reinforce values gained at home. Each child from birth, by virtue of his environment, belongs to a significant group. Family members, friends, relatives, teachers, religious body and administrators play a major role in the formation of the character of each child. To expect the teachers solely to shoulder this important task is appalling. Although teachers traditionally have been expected to be "moral character giants" in the communities in which we live, the extent of their appropriate social status in the community has been questioned. One need only glance at newspapers to realize the manner in which teachers are viewed in this country by certain quarters. We need the right mandate and acknowledgment from society to allow teachers to mold its citizens.

To teach moral character education in today's schools is no easy task. We are being challenged by society itself

in upholding the values. When the society at large is not really committed to leading a good and moral characteristic life, what can we expect our youngsters to follow? We teach responsibility, the joy of sharing and a moral character code of conduct when dealing with the poor and helpless. We also strive to teach that there is dignity in one's labor and the like. However, the child is growing amidst unfairness, vulgarity, cheating, lying, deviant behavior, arrogance, torture, and tension. The children who are taught these values in school cannot see the relevance of this subject in their lives. Thus, they reject it by saying it is boring, not logical and irrelevant to them. Every child comes to us with a different world of varied experiences behind him that affect his learning. Many come with anxieties that overwhelm adults. When we impart the values to these students, some actually sneer or laugh at us. They even say how ignorant we are over what's happening in the society we live in.

Our children will not accept platitudes and lip service statements anymore. They are intelligent due to their exposure to various areas in life. They can see and read for themselves the discrepancies between the actions and dictums of many adults. Moral character leadership at home and school can only be offered by moral character persons. The children have failed to see such values being practiced in family life and in society. We must be mindful that each generation sets its own background, creates its own values, decides upon a plan of action and makes a contribution to society accordingly. The family unit plays a vital role in molding such a generation. But, truthfully, how many parents (educators included) practice the right values with their children? We have students telling teachers the vulgar words exchanged at home, types of VCD being watched in their living room lies told among them and getting away with it and demands and tantrums by adults. The crimes committed by adults are mind-boggling to our youngsters. They are watching silently and, soon enough, if they are not careful, they will join the bandwagon.

A clash of values has emerged lately. If left unchecked our younger generation will act without much conscience and fear for their fellow men. Superficial and trivial ways of living deny our human dignity and undermine integrity and truthfulness. We need to be an example to our children (irrespective of color, creed or religion) that life is not dependent on petty pride and contentment with illusions, buttressed by self-esteem. Instead, one should examine the deepest desires of one's heart and face up to reality and be able to complement emotions with good thoughts and sincere intentions. My personal philosophy is center on the fact that every young person is a living person with the tremendous potential to love and to hate, to succeed and to fail, to live or merely to exist. He has within him a spark of talent, accomplishments, of creativity and of love for his fellow man. Our job, as parents and educators, is to find that spark and nurture it to its fullest. In doing so, the adults in their lives, need to speak the same "language." Parents must not give contradictory messages to their wards as they begin to form principles, values, and ethics in life.

Teaching Moral character Education basically is reinforcing the values practiced at home and in society. It is high time all the different agents of moral character development worked as a team rather than push it to one party and expect any magic overnight. The observation is that everybody wants his children to grow up with a high moral character standard, but failure to provide an enabling environment for the achievement of this goal will lead to an inability to realize this goal. Therefore, the moral character development agents should work together and provide an environment where the young personality thrives and emerges a winner in every aspect of life.

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