

Strategies for fostering character development education by teachers in Kenyan schools

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ABSTRACT

For a long time since the banning of corporal punishment, character education is back on the agenda in Kenyan education policy. However, there is much uncertainty on how it should be implemented in schools and there is no one definition of what it means. This is not surprising since there has clearly been a long history of ill-conceived, ineffective and failed efforts at character education in Kenya and elsewhere in the world. The kinds of character goals that teachers and educational thinkers espouse and the teaching methods they use vary enormously. Although character education is seen as part of citizenship education by the government, there is no clear way on how this could be achieved. Even now, questions as to whether the current 8-4-4 educational system serves the purpose of education linger in people's minds. With the banning of corporal punishment, research has shown that there are currently no viable alternatives offered by the government to the various pedagogical methods used for maintaining discipline and teaching character education in Kenyan schools. Unfortunately, these gaps may well have prevented the emergence of a clear definition and working consensus on character education for schools. This perhaps sets the basis for the development of this paper. The aim of this paper is therefore to explore the role of teachers in character education development. It explores ways in which the teacher can enhance character education in the classroom. The paper utilizes desktop review of literature concerning the character education and how it can be inculcated in the school context. It draws on literature that depicts the implications of teaching content and skills on character education. Further, the paper addresses the implications of these aspects for the school curriculum and draws out some conclusions.

Keywords: Character education, character development education, moral development.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays the role of leadership in the society. The functions of educational institutions are to develop the people physically, mentally, psychologically, socially and spiritually (Karimi, 2015). The other functions also include improvement and promotion of the economic, social, political and cultural life of the citizen in the nation. Until now the role of schools in Kenya has been simply preparation of learners to progress to tertiary education, which in the minds of most people means strictly a university education.

The role of education is to enable learners in schools to grow spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially. To be a responsible member of society, a person must understand the world around him/her and recognize what

it needs. In this way, schools education help learners to be able to discern what is good and evil by imparting knowledge and wisdom which offers the learners the ability to communicate and understand each other despite their social, religious, cultural and intellectual diversities.

Despite this, most teachers in Kenya will commonly argue that there is little room in the school curriculum to educate for moral character (Karimi, 2015). Teachers often argue that moral character is the responsibility of parents together with faith communities and that in Kenya, which is not a religious state; there is no agreed way to teach character education. There also appears to be a growing culture of indiscipline in schools after

corporal punishment was outlawed in schools (Ogetage, 2012). With outlawing of corporal punishment in favor of positive - discipline ways, there has been no definite and clear way on how morality and virtue would be enhanced in schools. In her view, the Ministry of Education encourages teachers to practice 'guidance and counseling' as an alternative in the disciplinary process while abolishing forms of corporal punishment. As sexuality is a central aspect of humanity, it is inevitable that teachers time and again are needed to give sexuality counseling to their learners.

Traditionally, parents and teachers are perceived to be moral authorities by children and learners (Petallar, 2015). This means that the moral dimension in teaching should be clearly seen so that schools achieve a greater parenting role for pupils. According to Hunter, (2000), teaching has been turned into a cognitive function neglecting the parenting function of the teacher. This calls for a more implicit address into the role of the teacher so that the teacher sees education as a process of teaching learners how to live and survive in the society.

With teaching now focusing on the cognitive domain more prominently, it appears therefore that there is no one responsible for the development of a child's character. There is often support expressed for the notion of character education in schools by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology but the real challenge is often the lack of consensus about the nature of character education and how it should be taught by educators (Ogetage, 2012). Further, education is expected to foster national cohesion and integration with educational institutions expected to incorporate values in education into their teaching.

To date, there is little consensus about the nature of character education and how it should be taught among teacher educators (Allred et al., 2003). In this paper, we raise the question, what would you like to see practiced by teachers to enhance good character among pupils? This question leads us to the title of this paper, *Strategies for fostering character development education by teachers in Kenyan schools*. Before exploring this, we will define character education.

What is character development education?

According to Johnston (2002), character education is the intentional effort to develop in young people core ethical and performance values that are widely affirmed across specific and global societies. In his view, character education includes a wide range of concepts such as positive school culture, moral education, just communities, caring school communities, social-emotional learning, positive child development, civic education, and servant hood. As such, for character education to be effective, it has to permeate through the

school and curriculum and prepare the young person to become responsible, caring, and contributing citizens who play effective role in the society.

According to Campbell (2003), education promotes the intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical development of young people and share a commitment to help them become responsible citizens. According to us, it is this kind of education that helps young people to develop important human qualities and virtues such as justice, diligence, compassion, respect, honest courage, and to understand why it is important to live by them. To us, any quality education should create an integrated culture of character that supports and challenges learners and students to strive for excellence.

Tyler (2010) defines education to include: thinking, feeling, and doing. According to Karimi (2015), good character involves understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical and performance values. To us, a holistic approach to character education development should seek to develop the cognitive, emotional, moral and behavioral dispositions required to do the right thing and do one's best work. As a result of this, learners grow to understand core values by studying and discussing them, observing behavioral models, and resolving problems involving the values. To Karimi (2015), learners learn to care about core values by developing empathy skills, forming caring relationships, developing good work habits, taking on meaningful responsibilities, helping to create community, hearing inspirational stories, and reflecting on life experiences. They learn to act upon core values by striving to do their best and be their best in all areas of school life. This position is shared by Petallar (2015) who argues that as children grow in character, they develop an increasingly refined understanding of the core ethical and performance values, a deeper commitment to living according to those values, and a stronger capacity and tendency to behave in accordance with them. The Bible also upholds this view. In Deuteronomy 11:19, God instructed the Israelites to teach their children at all times. Proverbs 22:6 further exhorts faith community to "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it". From these two texts, it is apparent that teachers and parents are the key agents of value development for children. They are therefore required to take up the responsibility of transmitting values to children. This is not optional, but it means that deliberate effort should be made to train children in the ways of the Lord and expose them to values that build them up later in life. Therefore, the Word of God should be used as a guiding principle by which teaching, reproofing, correcting, and training children in righteousness occur (2 Timothy 3:16). Both parents and teachers should therefore identify the values that they desire to have in their children and the strategies that are effective in transmitting them.

According to Githinji (2015), the school can help learners to acquire a developmentally appropriate

understanding of what the core values mean in everyday behavior and grasp the reasons why anti-social behaviors (e.g., bullying, fighting, destroying property and disrespecting others) represent the opposite of good character. According to Campbell (2003), character education development can be implemented in the school when teachers consistently:

- a) Explain why the core ethical and social values are important, how various behaviors exemplify those values, and why some acceptable behaviors (e.g., hard work, kindness, treating others as you wish to be treated,) are right;
- b) Help learners understand the core values through their teaching;
- c) Explain to learners how the core values can help them make choices that demonstrate good character;
- d) Help learners reflect upon the core values, appreciate them, desire to demonstrate/apply them, and become committed to them;
- e) Help learners to develop an appreciation for and a commitment to the core character values like developing empathy and a sense of responsibility for others, by supporting and challenging learners to work hard;
- f) Provide opportunities for learners to reflect on the core character values through discussions and use of real-life problems and situations relevant to ethical and performance character;
- g) Meet learners needs for safety, belonging, competence, and autonomy, since these form a foundation for developing a commitment to the core character values.

Although there may not be a commonly shared agreement on what constitutes the package of good character traits, values or virtues, there is agreement on the expectations schools have for desirable qualities they wish to foster among learners and students. According to Tyler (2010), teachers should, through their teaching, foster core character values which affirm human dignity, promote the development and welfare of the individual, serve the common good, define one's rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, and meet the classical tests of universally acceptable behavior traits. These, according to us become the core ethical values which form the foundations of universally good character to be established through education.

Although there may not be universality of character, it is possible for the teacher to understand and make it clear to the learners that the basic human values they teach to the learner transcend religious and cultural differences and express common humanity. According to Johnston (2002), core ethical values are caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others. Others include diligence, best effort, perseverance, critical thinking, and positive attitude. According to us, teachers can select and commit to teach and demonstrate these

values as the foundation for how people interact in the school and beyond. This means that teachers deliberately commit to learners character development and treat the core values as essential to the teaching role.

Why should character development education be emphasized in schools?

Throughout history, educationists have stressed the core values of respect, integrity, and hard work to help learners become capable people and good citizens (Macfarlane, 2004). This means that education serves two goals: to help learners attain knowledge (cognitive) and to help them become good (be endowed with good values). Based on these goals, we can deduce that the aim of character education is to provide effective solutions to ethical and academic issues that are of growing concern to the individual and society. According to us, character education is instrumental in transforming school cultures, increase achievement for learners and to develop global citizens, restore civility, prevent anti-social and unhealthy behaviors, and improve job satisfaction and retention among teachers.

Because children spend so much time at school, to us, schools offer a critically important opportunity to ensure that all learners get the support and help they need to reach their full potential. According to Rokeach (2008), education is the deliberate and systematic influence exerted by the mature person upon the immature, through instruction, discipline and harmonious development of the physical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual powers of the human being, according to individual and social needs and directed towards the union of the educated with his creator as the final end. This means that education serves a bigger role than just cognitive purpose and so there is need for devising of strategies that teachers could consider while transmitting values to children.

EDUCATION AND CHARACTER FORMATION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Throughout history, and in cultures all over the world, education rightly conceived has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good (Mahabhebe, 2008). Character education is not new. According to Tutu (1999), emphasis in education today is simply a reminder of education's long history of stressing core values such as respect, integrity, and hard work to help learners become capable people and good citizens. This is because character education provides effective solutions to ethical and academic issues that are of growing concern. According to Johnston (2002), educators have successfully used character education to

transform their schools, improve school culture, increase achievement for all learners, develop global citizens, restore civility, prevent anti-social and unhealthy behaviors, and improve job satisfaction and retention among teachers.

According to Mahabhebe (2008), the traditional Africa, which is the unadulterated Africa, is the prehistoric Africa and not the Africa after the period of slavery, colonialism, and post-independence. Africa as a traditional society was perceived as a very dangerous environment. Thus, social patterns were developed around a communal and organic philosophy for protection and survival against adversities as well as preservation and transmission of communal values. Mahabhebe (2008) claimed that the climate, insect, and endemic diseases in many areas conspired against man's ability to populate the continent. They argued that the way of life that evolved was geared to facilitating social skills for self-survival and for sustenance of society and its values. The society was tightly organized, communal in nature, with kinship systems in extended families whose members made up a network of relationships that carried benefits and obligations to each other, to children and families.

Grobbelaar (2012) on his part noted that, in the African traditional family, children were viewed as precious communal blessings and great sacrifices were made to ensure their survival, well-being and adoption of communal values. African families and communities played a great role in nurturing and protecting their children. Children were always surrounded by family because in the traditional African village, people lived in the spirit of *ubuntu*. According to Tutu (1999), *Ubuntu* is an African concept carrying the idea that individuals exist in the context of others and have responsibility to care for each other. Further, all children were brothers and sisters and all adults were viewed as fathers and mothers and socialized in certain ways which upheld communal values (Grobbelaar, 2012). This view is shared by Olumbe (2013) who observed that children were valued in the community and taught values that embraced communal living as was seen in the special celebrations at birth and the emphasis on preparation for marriage and initiation ceremonies across cultures. According to Olumbe, in many cultures in Africa, marriage is validated through the birth of children and there is; therefore, deep sorrow at the death of a child and disgust when a member of society demonstrates anti-social behavior.

According to Boyo (2013), the African traditional practices provided a framework in which the community took care of its own, providing both nurture and moral training. The value of human life, and more so that of the child, formed the core of African existence entrenched in the cultural system of African communalism. The well-being and character of the individual was the concern of all. Each individual was expected, as a member of a given community, to respect the tenets and bonds that sustained the social fabric and the respect thereof.

According to Boyo (2013), character education was enhanced as a core ingredient in sustaining the social fabric. He argues that the African traditional customs put checks and balances that acted as foundational pillars upon which family, societal values and practices with respect to the care and training of the child was based.

Anthropologists, such as Kenyatta (1965) and Mahabhebe (2008) have written on the beliefs, customs and practices of the African people, and African childhood which demonstrate communal responsibility and cohesiveness of societal life and character formation and education. In the past, however, research has shown that the disruption of societal values has wedged a dent in the African societal equilibrium and escalated into anti-social behaviors (Hunter, 2000). As African societies increasingly moved into cities, traditional values and practices generally lost their hold on the way people lived, raised and protected their children. Many children are separated from their families. By their separation from family and community, many African children are cut off from vital physical, emotional and social roots which are very hard to replace. In the process they have become alienated from who and what they were and have developed anti-social behaviour (Mahabhebe, 2008).

Apart from erosion of many of the positive roles of the traditional family, village and community life, challenges of poverty, health; race, unrest; education, ethnicity and other conflicts abide many decades after. However, despite widespread poverty and limited access to basic services and amenities, families and communities remain the primary guardians of children's well-being and character formation and education in Africa (Olumbe, 2013). From history, children have been driven out of the safe and secure position they enjoyed in most traditional communities. This is mainly due to major events in the continent characterized by adversity and suffering. Among these events were slavery, colonialism, civil wars, industrialization, urbanization, corruption and other social evils. Cumulatively, these events have created situations that are neither fit nor safe for children and in which they are unlikely to receive the love, nurture, training and protection they need (Mahabhebe, 2008).

To us, when children are separated from their families, a fundamental aspect of African identity and society is violated. In traditional African society the individual could not exist apart from family in the spirit of *Ubuntu* (Grobbelaar, 2012). To Grobbelaar, despite the dramatic social changes in recent times, family remains the foundation of the African society, outside of which a child has little hope for survival. Therefore, there is need to focus attention on how we raise and train our children. These challenges facing the nurturance and training of children in Africa calls for discerning and development of strategies in the times in which:

1. Family systems are in an era of high transition passing the button of training children to schools;

2. Children and young people are seeking role models relevant to their concerns;
3. Children and youth need social and life skills development in addition to quality education;
4. The media and internet often promotes values contrary to positive attitudes and behavior in children and youth (Brewster, 2010).

In this regard, the child therefore becomes a fertile field through which the school can work to reverse the negative trends and impact facing the African child at risk and bring hope to the family and society. In our view, there is no greater role that the school can play than to ground the learner with the right education, character formation. This takes us to the next sub topic which is an examination of what role the school can play in character formation and development.

THE GAP - BETWEEN AFRICAN SOCIETY AND TODAY'S PRACTICES IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

According to us, a reflection on what was done in the traditional Africa and what is practiced today by schools in nurturing and training children demands that today's teacher uses an intentional approach to character education development. To us, teachers who consider character development education as part of their role often commit to a comprehensive approach that uses all aspects of teaching as opportunities for character development. This includes the formal academic curriculum and co-curricular activities, as well as what is sometimes called the hidden or informal curriculum. The hidden curriculum shows how the school procedures reflect core values, how teachers model good character, how the instructional process respects pupils, how learners' diversity is addressed, and how the discipline policy encourages learners' reflection and growth.

In our view, this means that the teachers commit to foster a holistic approach that integrates character development into every aspect of school life. With an intentional and proactive approach, teachers utilize the teaching moments as opportunities to integrate character lessons; therefore, taking deliberate steps to create opportunities for character development. The teacher therefore: defines character education clearly; plans for character education; documents a plan for character education which he/she follows to integrate character into all aspects of teaching in the various academic subjects; provides opportunities for learners to develop their moral reasoning through discussions of ethical issues in their content areas. For example, teachers can show how lessons in Christian Education and History guide moral choices as well as how new scientific discoveries have ethical implications.

According to us, character education is a priority in how

teachers conduct their classes. This means that classroom routines and procedures address learners need for belonging, autonomy, and competence. It also implies that teachers are intentionally respectful of learners and engage them in ways that develop core values such as responsibility, fairness, caring, diligence, and perseverance and hard work among other virtues. Teachers therefore should take it as their responsibility to explain to learners how the core values underlie classroom routines and procedures such as discouraging and resisting cheating in exams which undermine academic integrity. The committed teacher should deliberately infuse character education in lessons as well as in extra-curricular activities and clearly sets the expectations of good character through the lessons and outside class activities. That way, the teacher communicates the expectations of a civil, caring, and just society that helps all its members form respectful relationships that lead to caring relationships and responsibility for one another. This, concurs with Williams (2008), this often involves developing caring relationships among learners and between learners and teachers aimed at fostering relationships that enhance the desire to learn and be good learners with the right character. According to Williams (2008), education should aim at teaching and inculcating democratic values in the children. To Tyler (2010), democratic values imply respect for the individuality of each and every person, provision of free expression and fearless airing of differences of opinion, and cooperative and collective decision making.

The intentional teacher, who is focused on developing and inculcating values helps the learners to learn mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation in their relationships with each other, and provides them opportunities to develop the capacity to promote those values in their daily lives with other pupils. That way, the daily lives of the learners as they play, dine, learn, compete in the fields, board buses, among other activities portray a life of a caring environment imbued with a climate of concern and respect for others. In such caring environments, learners often perceive teachers as caring and are often willing to approach teachers when they have problems for help. This is because teachers in caring environments are supposed to set time aside to meet and advise learners in individual or small groups and are always be willing to provide extra help in academic work and counsel.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN CHARACTER FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

According to us, schools should always use the content of their academic subjects as vehicles for teaching values to children. This is based on the conviction that character education is not a separate subject, but rather it can be

taught through any subject. According to Malewski (2010), the highest purpose of curriculum is moral: to help the student develop a sense of what is noble and good and worth striving for in life. Based on this, then the teacher can utilize the curriculum to help the student think about the most fundamental questions in their lives; *How should I live my life? What goals are worth pursuing? What qualities in human beings are admirable and worth emulating? What brings about human fulfillment and what does not?*

To do so, the teacher is supposed to resonate their thoughts on what the intersections between the content they are teaching and the values they wish to teach are. A science teacher can emphasize the importance of precise and truthful reporting of data; a social studies teacher can examine prejudice and discrimination among other vices history and literature, can foster young people's emotional attraction to goodness. It can help them learn to love good people and good ideals. It does this by enabling them to: (i) develop an intellectual and emotional understanding of the lives and motivations of good and evil people, (ii) acquire a strong sense of justice and compassion and of greed and cruelty by studying literary and historical figures (iii) be emotionally attracted by some lives and repelled by others and (iv) to develop a storehouse of moral examples to guide them such as : human kindness which is essential to a fully functioning society; owing a special love to our parents and families; honesty and trust that are vital in human relationships; being obliged to help those less fortunate than ourselves and generosity of spirit, not selfishness, that brings happiness.

Now that we already have teachers in the schools who are not effectively delivering character education to their pupils, this paper proposes two strategies as avenues for enhancing character development education in schools: (i) Sex education and (ii) Need for Genuine Holistic curriculum in Kenya. These are explained below.

Sex education as part of character formation

Today, parents as well as teachers worry about many areas of children's decision-making such as sex, drugs, drinking, drinking and driving. Wrong choices made by learners can carry a high cost now and in their future. Many children are most at risk emotionally as well as physically, in the sexual area of their lives. The damage to children's health, heart, and character from premature sexual involvement may go deeper, and last longer, than the effects of any other mistakes they might make (Government of Kenya and UNICEF, 2000). Because sexual decisions have such important life consequences, we feel that teachers can help children make wise choices in their lives.

In Kenya, sex is a delicate territory. Raising any sex-related issue such as premarital sex, abortion,

contraception, homosexuality, sex education in schools elicits emotive issues. This means that sex is the battleground for most of our country's culture and religious wars. Despite this, there is an emerging consensus that sex is not a trivial matter because it has strong consequences due to its power to create a new life, wreck a life, express a beautiful love and be the furthest thing from love. As a result of this power, societies around the world and down through history have sought to surround it with prudent boundaries that channel its power toward constructive ends, ones that serve the individual good and the common good, ones that build healthy families and a strong society (Rokeach, 2008).

Further, despite the continuing battles about sex education in Kenya today, there is agreement that sex is not for children which implies that there is a focus on upholding abstinence as the wisest choice. According to us, learners having a baby when they are teenagers is the surest route to poverty for them and their children. In addition, pre-marital sex often leads to unwanted pregnancies, abortion, exposure to HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (UNAIDS, 1997). Although sex for most human beings is about the physical body, to us, there are both emotional and spiritual dimensions of sex that make it distinctively human. According to Miller (2008), sex is essentially deep, involving the entire person, soul and body. To Miller, this explains why sex has uniquely powerful emotional and spiritual consequences and yet, there is no condom for the broken heart. This means that in order to educate adequately about human sexuality, both schools and parents must address the emotional hurts and regrets as well as the spiritual consequences that commonly follow temporary sexual relationships.

Without a deliberate effort to teach sex education in schools, there is a likelihood that there is no one responsible in preparing learners for the effects of irresponsible sex including the lowered self-esteem; the despairing sense of having been used; the self-contempt for being a user; the unease about having to lie about or at least conceal one's activities from family members and others; the difficulty of breaking the cycle of compulsive sexual behavior; and the self-hatred of seeking, after each break-up, someone else to fill the gap in after rejection .

We feel a growing recognition on the part of schools and society that sexual behavior, while a matter of personal values, is nevertheless subject to ethical evaluation because it affects the welfare of self and others. Ethical sexuality, acting with respect for oneself and others, is part of good character. Sex education should therefore be part of character education in schools. It should teach learners and students to see sexuality as an area of their lives that calls for the presence of virtues, a function which was upheld in the traditional society and emphasized in the Bible. In 1

Corinthians 6:19, the Bible teaches about self-discipline and the need to keep the body holy as it is the temple of the Lord. That way, they will uphold integrity and morality and prepare themselves for a deep, loving relationship as adults.

A proper upbringing, nurture and protection of children is therefore a significant communal responsibility for the assurance of preservation and moral sustenance from generation to generation. This is shown clearly in Psalms 78: 5-7, where God *“decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our patriarchs to teach their children, so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God, and would not forget His deeds, but would keep His commands”*. Boyo (2013) claims that it is unfortunate that the communal societies are disintegrating and the Church and other institutions such as schools have not taken up the responsibility to assist parents to provide responsive care, nurturance and protection to children.

The Bible also shows that God directs parents and teachers to care for, bring up, love, and teach children in the fear and obedience of God (Deut. 5:6,7; 11:18,19; 31:12-13; Ps. 78:3-4; Pro. 2:9; Is. 38:19; Mt. 22: 38,39). All this is indicative of the fact that the well-being of children is not only in the hands of parents and the entire community but that teachers have a role in the lives of children who are at the centre of God's design for his kingdom.

According to Muola and Maithya (2015), for both schools and families, the task of teaching sexual wisdom and self-discipline is made much more difficult by the fact that young people today are growing up in a permissive society that pushes sex at them constantly through the media and other forums not to forget peer pressure. This means that in this kind of hostile moral environment, teachers need to safeguard children and teach them sexual self-control and help children to know how to make sexual decisions that will strengthen their character, increase their chances of a happy life, and build a healthy society.

HOW TEACHERS CAN INTEGRATE SEX EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

The statistics on teenage sexuality world over are troubling. In the U.S. for instance, about seven (7) percent of high school students reported having had sex before the age of 13. By ninth grade, one-third of high school students have engaged in sexual activity, and by 12th (form 4) grade, two-thirds of them will have done the same (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). Yet, the majority of these teens, 60 percent overall and 67 percent among younger adolescents, regret their first experience and wish they had waited longer (Albert,

2007). Early sexual activity is associated with a host of negative outcomes that can have lasting physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and economic impact on the lives of young people, particularly teenage girls and young women.

An intentional teacher who is keen to teach and inculcate good morals in her learners can utilize the already existing curriculum to foster a clear stand on abstinence and teach definite behavioral norms of sexual restraint. In order for young people to restrain from exploring on sexual acts before marriage, they need three things: (i) internally held convictions about why it makes sense to save sexual intimacy for a truly committed relationship; (ii) strengths of character - such as good judgment, self-control, modesty, genuine respect for self and others, and the courage to resist pressure and temptation; and (iii) support systems for living out this commitment. Such systems include the support from their families, schools, faith communities, and good role models.

Although support systems can go a long way in providing positive trends, they are not an end in themselves. Young learners need proper psychological insight into the reasons why some of their peers get sexually involved. According to us, knowledge is power. Schools can help them step back from the scene, get outside themselves, and understand the many factors, internal and external, that can lead to sexual involvement. To us, this calls for a clear vision on *what they are waiting for* and *why they need to wait*. We feel that they need to wait until they are mature to be committed in a relationship where sex makes sense because it expresses and deepens that genuine commitment which traditionally has been called a commitment in marriage. Although marriage can be ended through divorce, it is the only commitment that has any legal power to bind one person to another. In any other commitment, however much people might feel they love each other; either can walk out the door at any minute with no obligations whatever to the other person as it has been witnessed in cohabitating relationships and teenage relationships.

According to Wadsworth (2004), young persons are thinking human beings, and they need a way to think about sex that will ground them and make their decisions solid. This means that young people need education to understand the impact of treating others as sexual objects and committing lies to get sex. Young people need the right education to understand that they lose self-respect and corrupt their character in the process of engaging in pre-marital sex. According to Githinji (2015), young people who feel used or betrayed after a break-up of a sexual relationship may experience difficulty with trusting in future relationships. This shaken trust can happen to both sexes and leave them with a feeling that people are only interested in them for just one thing: sex.

According to Githinji (2015), most teenagers say they dream of being happily married someday. Teachers can

help teenagers orient toward this goal. Teachers need to prompt learners with questions that help them understand the journey they are taking to achieve their happy marriage dream. For any intentional teacher, the question, *If you have this dream, what sexual decisions at this point in your life will help you attain it? What problems might be caused by being sexually intimate before marriage?* can spark discussions on the topic. Therefore, teachers, as a matter of moral principle, should teach young people values that help them to treat every person, regardless of sexual orientation, with love, justice, and respect.

Although pre-marital sex is not the only subject learners will need to know, today's world is characterized with other sexual issues which require clear understanding among the young people. Pornography and homosexuality are hard issues which have been made more accessible to young people of all ages by the internet. According to Muola and Maithya (2015), sex education for children is very important now, more than ever before, given that AIDS has killed millions of young people and millions more are waiting helplessly for death. It is the teacher's duty to save children, and whatever children must learn should also come from their teachers. Research shows that well-informed children are more likely to delay sexual experiences and practice more responsible sexual behaviors (Schonpflug, 2005). However uncomfortable teachers may feel about sex education, it is important for them to know that the advice and guidance they offer on sex is critical in saving lives. Each stage of a child's development offers an opportunity to integrate sexuality concepts at an increasingly mature level. It may help if teachers think of sex education as a gradual, life-long process and as a way of preparing their learners to be fully human.

In our view, pornography debases sex and violates the dignity of the human person and the dignity of the body. It treats people as sex objects and puts images in their minds that may not be hard to forget and erase. Another problem facing young people today is masturbation. According to Githinji (2015), many teenagers use masturbation as a way to escape emotions of anxiety and depression, and end up feeling worse because the problem is still there. The challenge with masturbation is that once it becomes a habit, it is hard to stop and may lessen a young person's feelings of self-respect. Apart from religion, there are also psychological considerations. Carried into marriage, the habit of masturbation can weaken the attraction between husband and wife and cause problems in their sexual relationship.

In addition to masturbation is the challenge of homosexuality. Although there is no scientific consensus about the factors influencing sexual orientation, according to UNAIDS (1997), the possible factors include: genetic disposition, family relationships, peer relationships, and one's sexual experiences. Schools should therefore teach their learner son ways of solving sexual challenges.

Teachers can equip learners with knowledge and skills on how to control what they see and hear, how to stay away from pressure and tempting situations, how to prepare themselves for future relationships and how to surround themselves with positive friends.

Further, as gatekeepers of knowledge, teachers need knowledge to protect young people from aspects of sexual exploitation, abuse, early marriages, forced sex and female genital mutilation, which are all sexual risks that learners in Kenya face. Today, learners are bombarded by many sexual choices and issues. Teachers need to be in a position to offer proper guidance on sexuality matters to their pupils and from a knowledgeable point.

Need for genuine holistic curriculum in Kenya

Holistic education for character formation is a subject that has received ample attention in both secular and religious circles. This education is geared towards producing socially, morally and mentally developed persons. Learners are introduced to the sense of responsibility, ideas of right in relation to the surrounding world and are inculcated with skills necessary for life and service. Holistic education for character formation is the basic premise that education addresses the development of the intellectual, affective, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of a person (Greener, 2002). Teaching is one of the ministries of Christ on earth (John 3:2; Mark 1:22). When He instituted what has become to be known as the *great commission*, teaching was a major factor in His instruction. In spite of this, teachers who ought to model learners in the right character are not adequately meeting the objectives of holistic education today.

According to Karimi (2015), holistic education helps learners to attain satisfactory social adjustment, develop a responsible attitude towards life, understand the relationship of law and freedom, importance of physical work and to develop their God-given abilities, and fashion a biblical life pattern. According to Tyler (2010), teachers should ideally strive to produce socially-mature and competent children who can fit into society and participate in it productively. A teacher's nurturant behaviours are associated with children's development of pro-social behaviour and moral standards and the presence of higher self-esteem and higher intellectual and academic abilities (Karimi, 2015). The finding that children are more likely to imitate and identify with an affectionate model (Bandura, 1977) to us suggests a possible mechanism by which children might come to comply and adopt invaluable values held by their teachers.

Teachers are also supposed to be responsive to the needs of the pupils. Absence of responsiveness has been linked to an increase in the risk of disruptive behavior (Wakschlag and Hans, 1999). Responsiveness

involves teachers' prompt, contingent and appropriate reaction to pupil's behavior and needs. Until children develop ability to control their own behavior, the job of controlling it falls most often on teachers through a range of disciplinary measures. Attempts to foster desired behaviour and eliminate unwanted behaviour among learners should therefore begin early on as teachers try to inculcate the right values and character in children.

Although learners are taught risks and effects of drug abuse, sexual immorality, lack of discipline and negative peer influences, these vices continue (Muola and Maithya, 2015). The implication is that the teachings are not fully understood because there are many cases of drug and substance abuse, riots and indiscipline cases among students despite the perceived teachings. This further exemplifies the need for schools to ensure consistence in holistic development content for children. Karimi (2015) observes that teachers just like parents have a responsibility to form solid foundations for moral, intellectual, physical and emotional education in children.

For character education to be effective there is need for the curriculum to address aspects that produce holistic pupils. According to Greener, (2002), there are five paradigms which education for character formation should address to produce holistic persons. The five paradigms include: physical competencies, emotional competencies, spiritual competencies, intellectual competencies and social competencies. In our view, these competencies help learners in all aspects of their day-to-day living. They establish learners mentally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually to benefit themselves and society in general. This holistic approach to child development yields children with good character. Let us examine each of these paradigms briefly.

Physical competencies

According to Berk (2008), introducing children to physical activities helps them to develop competent activity habits. Physical education plays a central role in educating the whole child. It provides them with opportunities to become skilled mentally, develop fitness and gain understanding about the importance of physical activities. According to us, schools should strive to develop physical competencies in children as this provides them with opportunities to grow and develop.

Further, Berk (2008) argues that while playing together, children learn to cooperate, follow rules, develop self-control, and learn generally how to get along with other people. Playful children are popular and happy. Play helps accelerate psychosocial development in young children. Lack of play threatens children's personality development. Emotional self-regulation (impulse control) is developed through social play. Social fantasy play is especially beneficial for highly impulsive children. Thus

impairment of play skills may result in later adjustment problems (Hutt, 1989).

To Hutt (1989), children who do not play, or who do not play as often as other children, are at increased risk of psychological, intellectual and social deficits. This means that for children to reap the full benefits of play, teachers should recognize the value of play and encourage children by providing a safe play environment and sufficient playthings and toys to permit a wide variety of play activities. Schools should also provide opportunities for sports, games and athletics to maximize the benefit of physical activities.

Emotional competencies

Children are constantly faced with various challenges which affect their emotional development. This means that there is need for schools to provide children with skills needed to manage their emotions. Such skills are needed in providing children with a set of competencies in their daily lives to increase their abilities consecutively to maintain superior relationships with others and to develop a better outlook on life. According to Berk (2008), emotional competency development helps children to understand why human beings react differently to given situations, times and circumstances. This makes children acquire skills on how to cooperate and co-exist with others despite diversities. Further, emotional competences enable them to know how to survive through the challenges which interfere with their emotional wellbeing. Teachers can play an intentional role in enlightening children on effects of uncontrolled emotions, haste reactions to various issues and the importance of self-acceptance, self-worth, self-forgiveness and self-esteem.

Social competencies

According to Berk (2008), social competence refers to the social, emotional and cognitive skills that children need for successful social adaptation. It describes a child's effectiveness and ability to establish and maintain a high quality of mentally satisfying relationships with others. Social competence among children is attained through interaction with others. Many of these skills are important for successful participation in society. Games give children practice with societal rules. The development of social skills for participation in a democratic society should be promoted in schools which include: controlling one's behaviour, assuming responsibility for one's behaviour; working alone, alongside, and with others, accepting individual differences and the ideas of others, supporting others, sharing in decision making, and assuming leadership roles.

Additionally, socialization for participation is extremely

important as it fosters respect for authority, playing fairly, accepting losing, and being a gracious winner. According to Berk (2008), social skills for participation in a democratic society include controlling one's behavior whereby children are taught to act responsibly and respect the rights of others. They are taught how to control their own behaviour and take responsibility for what they say and do. They are taught how to work cooperatively and not to interfere with the learning of others. In order for schools to offer holistic education for character formation, teachers need to strive at enabling children to establish and maintain social connections during and after school. This in effect also increases tolerance and cohesion among learners to reduce hatred, malice, antagonism and other social pressures witnessed in schools nowadays.

Spiritual competencies

According to Meyers (1997), spiritual competence enables children to interpret meaning of education in their present and future lives, developing in them a sense of purpose, value of belief in God and solutions to their day-to-day dilemmas as well as teaching them the role of religion in their lives. According to us, spiritual competence makes children more caring, tolerant, convicted and actively engaged in the spiritual quests. In the light of this, schools should intentionally embrace the integration of faith and learning for moral formation which inculcates the aforementioned values.

Cognitive competencies

According to Wadsworth (2004), cognitive development is based on the idea that children learn by connecting new knowledge to previously learned knowledge. It entails children using scaffolding to organize new information. If children cannot connect new knowledge to old knowledge in a meaningful way, they may with difficulty memorize it (rote learning), but they will not have a real understanding of what they are learning. To Piaget, the development of cognitive skills affects a child's language abilities. In addition, children must understand something about an object or idea before using words in a meaningful manner. Linguistic growth necessary parallels cognitive growth. Children may learn language first by understanding the meaning of words spoken in the social interactions. This contributes to language development as a result of need to communicate. Schools should therefore provide the right opportunities for children to acquire certain abilities that are necessary to reading ability. In our view, the classroom teacher needs to work hard to foster strong teacher – learner and peer relations and encourage the strategies whereby small groups of learners and peers work together to achieve a common goal.

CONCLUSION

Education plays the role of leadership in the society. The functions of the educational institutions are to develop the people physically, mentally, psychologically, socially and spiritually. Education improves and promotes the economic, social, political and cultural life of the nation. Educationists agree that the role of education is to enable learners to grow spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially. To be a responsible member of society a person must understand the world around him and recognize what it needs. In this way, education helps learners to be able to discern what is good and evil by imparting wisdom which offers them the ability to communicate and understand each other despite their social, religious, cultural and intellectual diversities. We consider schools as avenues and foundations of pupil's future career development as well as centers for their character formation. In view of this, the school has an educational mandate for character formation. This therefore implies that schools, through their teachers should be intentional in equipping learners spiritually, physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. That way, schools will produce holistically developed children who possess the right character and competencies required in the society. To achieve this, this paper has proposed two strategies which if followed could yield great results inculcating right values and character.

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