Research Article

MORAL EDUCATION OF THE SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Is it true that morality can be positively instilled into the minds of the children through education? This paper addresses itself to such kinds of questions. This paper is an attempt to find out whether it is really possible to develop the children morally by using education as a means to achieve it. The process of Education can be regarded as old as mankind. As very rightly said by Mahatma Gandhi, "By education I mean an all-round drawing of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit." Education has been recognized by a number of thinkers as a manifold process of aiding the individual to come into full possession of all the adjustment of man to his environment, which means his/her adaptation to and reconstruction of his/her surroundings for their own benefit and that of the society. The moral aim of education according to Johann Friedrich Herbart should be to train the child to recognize moral values. Moreover, Gandhi also stressed on morality in the sense of character building. He believes in the fact that the various innate and acquired powers should be so as to bring about complete development or perfection of nature. Aristotle also declared that, "Educated men are much superior to uneducated as the living are to the dead." Thus, the sole aim of this paper is to regard education as a means of achieving psychological and moral development of the school-going children.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of all-round development of every individual. Moral education is whatever schools do to influence how students think, feel and act regarding issues of right and wrong. The development of moral character has been the subject of philosophical and psychological investigation since Aristotle theorized three levels of moral character development: an ethics of fear, an ethics of shame, an ethics of wisdom (Kraut, 2001). Philosophers, psychologists, and educators as diverse as John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, and John Dewey, and as ancient as Confucius, Plato, and Aristotle have viewed the development of moral character as the primary purpose of schooling (Purpel & Ryan, 1976). From the beginning of American public education in the 1600s until the first third of the 20th century, our nation's educators working closely with parents and the community, performed this moral-educational role with commitment (McClellan, 1992). In the middle of the 20th century, moral character education in the schools (hereafter used interchangeably with the term character education) began to decline as a result of increased cultural diversity, perplexing and seemingly prohibitive First Amendment decisions, uncertainty about what values to teach and how to teach them,

a preoccupation with social movements, and a Cold War emphasis on increasing academic achievement (Vessels & Boyd, 1996; Wynne & Walberg, 1997). A few variants emerged out of social necessity including civic education, global education, multicultural studies, prudential education, social skills training, and values clarification. But as Heslep (1995) points out, these variants continued without moral education providing the "unifying context of principles" that is central to character education.

A renewed interest in character education and a willingness to find legal and culturally sensitive ways to carry it out emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s among educators who were interested in promoting all aspects of child development, and among most American citizens who believed their lives were being negatively impacted by decades of too little emphasis on moral values (Bennett, 1993; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993; Gallup, 1975, 1980). The public was out in front of the educational establishment on this issue and gave the new generation of instructional pioneers enough support to rekindle educators' interest in moral and character education. Programmes like the Basic School, the Child Development Project, the Character Counts Coalition, Character First, the Cooperating School Districts, and the Responsive Classroom

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gave renewed life and a new methodological diversity to character education (Vessels, 1998).

Since the early 1990s, the need to educate for character and community has been viewed as critically important by a majority of Americans, ranking ahead of concerns about academic achievement or other social pressing issues such as racial and gender equality (Myers, 2000). In spite of (a) extensive public support, (b) a variety of successful programs around the country, and (c) both politicians and educational administrators calling for character education in addition to higher test scores, most schools and school systems have adopted reform models that paradoxically narrow the curriculum, largely ignore critical areas of development besides academic and fail to effectively educate for character (Damon, 2002). Rather, most current approaches to whole-school reform reflect the current political push to accelerate students' academic learning and to raise test scores while failing to adequately promote other important aspects of child development including social, moral, intellectual, artistic, emotional, and personality (Huitt, 2004).

Objectives of the Study

The following are the main objectives of the present study.

1. To analyse the role of education in the moral development of child.
2. To study the role of teachers in moral education of the child.
3. To study the role of parents in moral development of the child.
4. To study religion as an instrument in moral development.

Theoretical Framework

Moral education is related to the Symbolic Interactionist Perspective which states that Symbolic interaction, also called "the interactionist perspective," is at the heart of the sociological view of social interaction at the microlevel. With attention to people's behavior in face-to-face social settings, symbolic interactionists explain social interaction as a dynamic process in which people continually modify their behavior as a result of the interaction itself. Herbert Blumer (1900–1987), who originated the term *symbolic interaction*, asserted that people do not respond directly to the world around them, but to the meaning they bring to it. Society, its institutions, and its social structure exist—that is, social reality is bestowed— only through human interaction (Blumer, 1969). Reality is what members agree to be reality.

Social Construction of Reality: Even if it is a micro level perspective, but it does take into account that social interaction is a process governed by norms that are largely determined by culture. Cultural norms offer general guidelines for role behavior, but symbolic interactionists assert that we have latitude in the way we act out our roles. The context of the interaction is usually a key determinant of role performance.

Historical background of moral Education in india

In ancient India no distinction was made between secular, moral and religious education as moral and spiritual aims pervaded all activities of life. Education was conceived essentially as a process of attaining spiritual emancipation which constituted substance of life. The ancient institutions of *Gurukula* stood for the realization of such an educational ideal. Moral Education assumed importance as an educational problem with the emergence of secular education under the British rule. Several social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen and Swami Dayanand Saraswati stressed the importance of moral education and drew the attention of the British government towards the problem.

However after the independence India set about recognizing her education system that the problem of moral education came to be considered seriously. The University Education Commission (UEC, 1950), the Secondary Education Commission (SEC, 1953), the Committee of Emotional Integration (CEI, 1962) and the Education Commission (EC, 1966) referred to the problem of moral and spiritual education in their reports and made recommendations thereon.

A landmark in the history of moral education was the appointment of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction (CCRMI) by the Government of India in 1959. It is the recommendation of this committee (1960) later endorsed by the EC that constitute the basis of current moral educational programmes in the schools of India.

For the purpose of this paper, *moral* 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 ideals as to what actions are right and what are 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 word, each society defines for itself what is right or wrong. Therefore, moral is defined as right conducts as guided by or defined by the respective society. Morality is viewed as the "system of rules that regulate the social interactions and social relationships of individuals within societies and is based on concepts of welfare (harm), trust, justice (comparative treatment and distribution) and rights" (Smetana 1999). 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 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 morality is taught or experienced in schools, churches and other social institution settings. In order to fully understand the development of morals, one has to consider the various domains that exist within the morality 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 development stemming from a developmental perspective in that morality is conceived through how children think, behave and feel about rules and regulations set forth within their world as a result of natural consequences (Campbell-Bishop 2003). The moral thought theorists perceive moral development through a set of stages that build skills and then translate into global perspective of the child. The moral behavioral approach contends that reinforcement, punishment, imitation and situational presentation are factors that contribute

to the moral development of human being. Issues of self-control and cognitive capabilities play a key role in the moral behavioral school of thought. All of these approaches connect to one assumption: that certain factors influence moral development of the individual. It is the focus of this paper to explore these factors that are responsible for the moral development of the individual.

Elements of Moral Development

Morality is a social phenomenon and has three elements: discipline, attachment to social groups and autonomy. The last element only exists in rational morality. Moral Education is the process of internalizing of morality in the new generation.

Moral Education

One of the most important interests of Durkheim was the new social order in modern societies which he called it "organic solidarity". In the absence of religious morality he suggested to replace a secular and rational morality. He thought to replace this moral system in society it is vital to internalize new morality in new generations. This process is named education and is needed for remaining all societies. Durkheim argues that the content of moral system should be adjusted for any particular society.

Who is Responsible for the Child's Moral Education?

Although socialization theorists have viewed moral 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 development. This has led to the predominant focus on the formative role of peers and social institutions such as schools in moral reasoning development and a relative neglect of the role of the family (Smetana 2004). Talking about who is responsible for the moral education of the child, Pakarsky (1998) "The Role of Culture in Moral Development in Journal of Parenthood in America) recognized the role of culture above other variables in the moral education of the child. He opines that a dogmatic conviction that schools are adequate to the challenge of making moral sensibilities and disposition into the child is inappropriate.

Moral Education and Parenting of the Child

Parents provide the most constant and visible models of behaviors associated with character development, 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 yields a more productive environment to receive information pertaining to the moral issues. The level of moral development within the adult contributes to the internalization of the moral concept by the child. 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 (Brethertion and Waters 1985). Parental warmth, involvement and support are related to the child's moral reasoning development. Therefore, a warm, supportive bond between parents and children may enhance the likelihood that children are motivated to listen as well as respond to parental messages. Parents' interaction with their children that may facilitate children's moral development. Parents' communication with their children is one aspect of children's social experiences that may be used in the construction of moral knowledge. By explaining the reasons for rules and responding appropriately to moral violation, parents can facilitate moral 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. Thus, according to Danielson parents are vital in the moral development of the child because they are the first moral teachers and role models that young people have.

Role of Teachers in the Moral Education of the Child

Teachers are influential and significant adults in the lives of children starting from the pre-school years. Teachers help children to understand character traits and values, 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 then closely and also try to imitate 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 long-term relationship with students and using children's literature in the classrooms that emphasizes positive values and heroic action. Teachers also gives reference the moral lessons that the children must have been taught at home. The inclusion of moral lesson in the curriculum and ensuring its full implementation/ delivery is yet another way in which teachers have contributed to the moral development of the child. Teachers are directly involved in teaching behaviors that are right or wrong to students in school. They also function as role models to student. This does not imply that all teachers are good role models to students .Teachers teach children to respect the right of others; they also promote the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions. They are responsible for the teaching of the importance of honesty, dedication and right behavior. Success or failure in the achievement of the building of a society that is made up of morally upright citizens depend more upon the adoption of education methods. These methods are being formulated, executed and evaluated by the teachers themselves.

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

The role of religious institutions in the moral education of the child cannot be overemphasized. Historically, moral teachings have been central to all religions. Religious institutions have a way of imparting moral lessons by recognizing religion as an important expression of human experience. Religious institutions develop respect for others and an understanding of beliefs and practices which are different from their own. Religious and moral education is therefore an essential part of every child or young person's educational experience.

CONCLUSION

In today's world moral education has become essential for a child for his/her all-round development. Moral education is whatever schools do to influence how think, feel and act regarding issues of right or wrong. Most of the schools have a long tradition of concern about moral education and recently this concern has grown more intense. Therefore it is the duty of the schools today to facilitate moral education. Schools should also convey clear messages regarding the role of the teachers as moral educators. From the above, it is impossible to say that the moral development of the child is a sole responsibility of only one socialization agent, and non 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 development to achieve the moral 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 models for children and they must behave accordingly. The teacher should not just teach morals, he/she should live it and be a role model for the students he/she is teaching. The same thing goes for the parents and religious leaders. They should try to create a moral community in their respective in which children can be involved in the decision-making and the rights and responsibilities of all are upheld. Each child is respected and is never neglected. Our job, as parents and educators, is to find that spark and nurture it to its fullest. Parents must try not to give contradictory messages to their children as they begin to form principles, values and ethics in life. Teaching Moral Education basically means reinforcing the values practiced at home and in society. It is high time that all the different agents of moral development must work as a team rather than remain divided. As everybody wants their children to grow up with high moral values, but failure to provide a conducive environment for the achievement of this goal will lead to a failure and so it is time to join hands and emerge as a winner.

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