The issue of teaching Character Education to Elementary and Secondary Education Level Students:

Are our teachers prepared?

Dr. Jane A. Crossley

Chicago State University

Graduate Program of Education Department

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A tremendous amount of research based on character education has been conducted, particularly related to the roles schools should play. Character education focuses on the processes and methodologies that educators should implement to develop students' behavior.   Derived from the Greek word *charassein,* character means "to engrave," such as on a wax tablet, a gemstone, or a metal surface. From that root evolved the meaning of character as "an individual's pattern"…his moral constitution (Ryan, 1999)." Many researchers believe character education should be taught with states' standards-based curriculum, and the academic curriculum has been a sleeping giant in values education (Lickona, 1992). This research focuses on the following question: Are teachers prepared to teach character education effectively to elementary and secondary school students?   200 teachers throughout Chicago-area schools were surveyed.   The results of this quantitative study, revealed that 80 percent of those surveyed were uncomfortable teaching values, and afraid of legal aspects. Additionally, survey participants had insufficient moral literacy and knowledge of psychological principles related to human development. There were also deficiencies identified in reference to appropriate character education teaching methodologies.

Introduction

Because of the decline in America's moral standards, parents, educators, organizations and politicians have summoned schools to assume responsibility for teaching character education. These stakeholders are aware of the drastically declining moral standards which shape our society. Greed, dishonesty, violent crime and self-destructive behaviors such as experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and suicide permeate the root of present day societal moral decay. As evidenced by stakeholders' communication, even the routine behaviors of our children illustrate the lack of moral standards.   It is common to hear students using profanity while walking the halls of

their schools. Additionally, (Lickona, 1992) stated, "Of all the moral problems that have fueled this concern, none has been more disturbing than rising youth violence. From 1978 to 1988, according to FBI statistics, rape arrests for 13-and 14- year-old males nearly doubled. Over a 20- year period (1968 to 1988), there was a 53 percent increase in all violent crime- murder, rape, robbery, and assault-for males and females seventeen or under (Lickona, 1992)." There is a plethora of research available detailing why schools should teach character education, but there has been minimal preparation of teaching staff to equip them with the proper tools and skills to teach character education. The researcher focused on the question: are teachers prepared to teach character? The researcher also examined two types of character education training models available to teachers.

Contextual Framework

This study's conceptual framework was grounded in the study described in (Lickona, 1992) *Educating for Character*, and the study described in (Murphy, 1998) *Character Education in America's Blue Ribbon Schools*. Lickona's character education model centers on a comprehensive approach. He suggested two great moral values that should be taught in schools--"respect" and "responsibility." (Murphy, 1998) based her model on Lickona's character education model. She defined good character as a combination of moral standards, which consisted of: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Her model gave attention to all areas of the curriculum.

What is character education? Character is a term that can be difficult to define. It is a term that one cannot feel. It comes from the root word charrassein, which means "to

engrave" (Ryan, 1999). From this root word evolved character which actually means an individual's pattern of behavior. Character could possibly mean actions and/or behaviors that are considered right when out of the purview of others. (Lickona, 1992) stated, "Moral education is not a new idea. Rather, it is, in fact, as old as education itself. Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become good." The article from (CEP, 2011) stated, "Character education is an educational movement that supports the social, emotional and ethical development of students. It is the proactive efforts by schools, districts, and states to help students develop important core, ethical and performance values such as caring, honesty, diligence, fairness, fortitude, responsibility, and respect for self and others."

Literature Review

To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.
-Theodore Roosevelt

Research has proven that there is a great need for character education in our schools but many teachers are not equipped to implement this teaching in the classroom. Organizations, liberals, conservatives, parents, politicians, and churches alike have summoned schools to assume the role of teaching moral education. These stakeholders realize that the morality of the United States society is decaying as every new generation matures. Schools must assume the role and responsibility of character education, and no longer serve as by standers at a time when our society is continuously facing moral issues. Schools must do what they can to help our young people secure the moral health of the nation (Lickona, 1992). Teaching itself should be considered a moral responsibility and have an impact on the behaviors, and achievement of

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students (Falkenberg, 2007).   Many schools are mandated to teach character education; however, are the teachers *really* prepared? According to (Williams, 2010), 18 states have mandated character education and several other states have significantly encouraged character education to be taught. But is character education more lip service than actually practicing character education? (Lickona ,1992) believes that character education could be lip service. He stated, "We are dealing with so many different cultures and family situations that teaching values may be easier said than done (Lickona, 1992)." Various factors indicated that teachers are unprepared to teach character education. According to researchers, many teachers have not received formal or informal character education training, which have caused them to be unaware of their role or responsibility in teaching character education. Their knowledge concerning the principles on human development morally is limited, and they have not experienced strategies, techniques and methods for teaching character education (Wynne & Ryan,1994). (Lickona ,1992) stated, "A lot of teachers are scared of this area. They're afraid of taking on vested interest groups. They worry about the legal aspects. Can someone take them to court if they don't like the way the teacher is teaching values? Will you have some people on your neck if you mention God and other people on your neck if you don't?" Lack of clarity is another reason it is difficult to teach character education. Many teachers don't comprehend how character education should be taught. Should it be taught formally or informally? Formal character education means creating a separate curriculum for character education; whereas informal character education means integrating character education with any state standards-based curriculum. There are pros and cons for both concepts. (Williams, 2010) believes that character education can be integrated and taught alongside any state standards-based curriculum, rather than adding a new course to over loaded school curriculums. She also believed that character

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education should be integrated with other subjects and taught by all teachers and implemented in all classes. The Blue Ribbon model includes both areas of the curriculum: the formal, and the informal (Murphy, 1998). "The formal curriculum is the intended or explicit curriculum, that is, the stated objectives, content, and organization of instruction as approved by the state and local boards (Murphy, 1998)." Murphy's informal curriculum emphasized interaction with students and teachers. It has been stated that most teachers have not received adequate formal preparation in character education at the undergraduate and graduate level. (Wynne& Ryan, 1994) discussed the findings of a doctoral dissertation of a student who sampled 30 middle school and junior high teachers. The students did not recall being told in college or in the district's in-service about the teachers' role or responsibility as a moral educator or developer of good character. (Wakefield , 1996) found that of the seven percent of all teachers educated in the United States, more than half of the programs surveyed found that character education was not taught.

Standards- based education also plays an important role in determining why our teachers are not prepared to teach character education. Many educators feel that since standards-based education is mandated, how will there be room to implement a new emphasis when the focus is currently placed on standards-based teaching?

A review of existing literature from 1996-2011 on preparing instructors to teach character education led the researcher to conclude that serious work must continue. This paper will discuss the traditional roles of character education and current models of teaching as they relate to the degree and level of teacher preparation.

Throughout this paper, the researcher has used "value education," "moral education," and

"Character education" interchangeably. All three terms refer to moral obligation, which means producing good character.

Moral education has existed in America for nearly 300 years. It had become common practice, however, educators gradually stepped back from the role of teaching moral education. With the rapid decline of moral standards in our society, there has been a call for the return to a curriculum that explicitly addresses moral or character education. The breakdown of family values and the lack of socialization for youth have had a devastating effect on school performance and moral standards in our society (McClellan, 1999).

Character education in the colonial school was prevalent, as the mission of the early American public schools emphasized a close relationship among reading, religion and character education. Books such as The New England Primer and the Hornbook helped students to learn the closeness among reading, religion and character education (Murphy, 1998). (Lickona, 1992) stated, "Energized by that belief, schools in the early days of the republic tackled character education head on. Through discipline, the teacher's good example, and the curriculum, schools sought to instruct children in the virtues of patriotism, hard work, honesty, thriftiness, altruism, and courage."

The early public schools were also seen as essential ways of socializing or "Americanizing" the majority of mostly working class immigrants coming to America each year (Kirchenbaum, 1995). Even during the nineteenth century, Americans defined the goal of public schools as accepting moral education as a proper means to achieve their ends (McClellan, 1999). Our Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson, endorsed character education. This was encouraged by training students in democratic citizenship. The Declaration of Independence and the preamble to the Constitution are evidence of the moral values we held in a democratic society.

Because of the ideologies of many of our philosophers and other forces, there was a great change in America's character education.   John Dewey, Hugh Hartshorne, Darwinism, Personalism, and Values Clarification created changes in character education in America (Lickona, 1992).

 John Dewey, America's chief philosopher of education and the father of Progressivism, greatly impacted the changing of value education in the public schools. "These progressives did not simply accept modernity; they believed that the new order offered hope of an unprecedented period of social and moral progress if only Americans would abandon the tyranny of traditional and strive for a just, productive, and democratic society through the application of science and reason to the complex problems of the day (McClellan, 1999)." Dewey was a moral relativist who believed that values depended on the outcomes of human responses to environmental situations (Murphy, 1998).

   Hugh Hartshorne also contributed to the decline of character education. In 1930, Hartshorne supported Dewey's belief that character education was not effective. Hartshorne studied the behavior of approximately 10,000 children who were given permission to lie, cheat, or steal in different activities such as homework, duties, sport games, etc. The study of these children promoted the "doctrine of specificity (Lickona, 1992),"   which really meant: Honest or dishonest by a person is determined by the specific situation and not by character (Lickona, 1992). "It was generally concluded that character education programs, religious instruction, and moral training had no effect on the moral conduct of the students as measured by this study (Mulkey,)."

   Darwinism contributed to the declining of character education in America by encouraging the belief that biological life was the product of evolution. From this theory, people saw morality as evolving rather than fixed. Darwinism encouraged the thought that when it comes to right or wrong, it is all relative to your point of view (Lickona, 1992).

The 1960s and 1970s promoted a decline in moral education. This period emphasized, "Do your thing," and celebrated the worth, dignity, and autonomy of the individual person. Personalism promoted rights more than responsibility and freedom more than commitment. People saw themselves as free individuals (Lickona, 1992). During this period, many of the popular songs and music emphasized freedom for the individual. One of the popular songs during this period was, "It's Your Thing; do what you want to do." This song possibly meant to forget about moral values and do what makes you feel good.

Personalism gave birth to value clarification. During the year of 1972, value clarification was alive and well. There was finally a method that addressed values. Values clarification didn't emphasize the teaching of values, but teachers should instruct or help students to "clarify" their own values. Value clarification required very little teacher training. Teachers were given various activities to use in their classrooms to teach values. Many of the value clarification handbooks were on teachers' desks and not really used (Lickona, 1992). It was soon realized that this method did not change students' behaviors. Value clarification disappeared with a very short life.

Since a brief history has been given on character education, the researcher finds it necessary to discuss two types of character education methods that are available to teachers. These methods could possibly assist teachers in implementing character education effectively. These methods include the study described in (Lickona, 1992) *Educating for Character*, and the study described in (Murphy, 1998) *Character Education in America's Blue Ribbon Schools*. These methods were selected because they address formal and informal methods of teaching character education and they are universal agreed upon values.

The two types of methods used in teaching values education are formal and informal programs. Informal programs exclude goals and learning objectives on character education;

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whereas formal programs include a curriculum with goals and learning objectives. According to

Zubay (2007), most schools fall into the "informal" category. Lickona and Murphy's models

utilize both methods and concentrated on "universal" moral values.

Universal moral values are values such as respecting everyone lives, liberty, etc., and

binding people together. Universal moral values affirm our fundamental human worth and

dignity (Lickona, 1992). Universal moral standard, in the researcher's opinion, gives teachers

the comfort of teaching moral values. (Lickona, 1992) stated, "Schools wishing to do values

education, I believe , need to be confident that: (1) There are objectively worthwhile,

universally agreed-upon values that schools can and should teach in a pluralistic society; and (2)

schools should not only expose students to these values but also help them to understand,

internalize, and act upon such values. To be confident about those two propositions, schools

need first to get clear about the nature of values." Lickona (1992) believed that "Respect" and

"Responsibility" are the two great moral values that meet the universal moral values of students.

Lickona also stated, "These values constitute the core of a universal, public morality. They have

objectives and demonstrable worth in that they promote the good of the individual and the good

of the whole community. These values of respect and responsibility are necessary for:

- Healthy personal development

- Caring interpersonal relationships

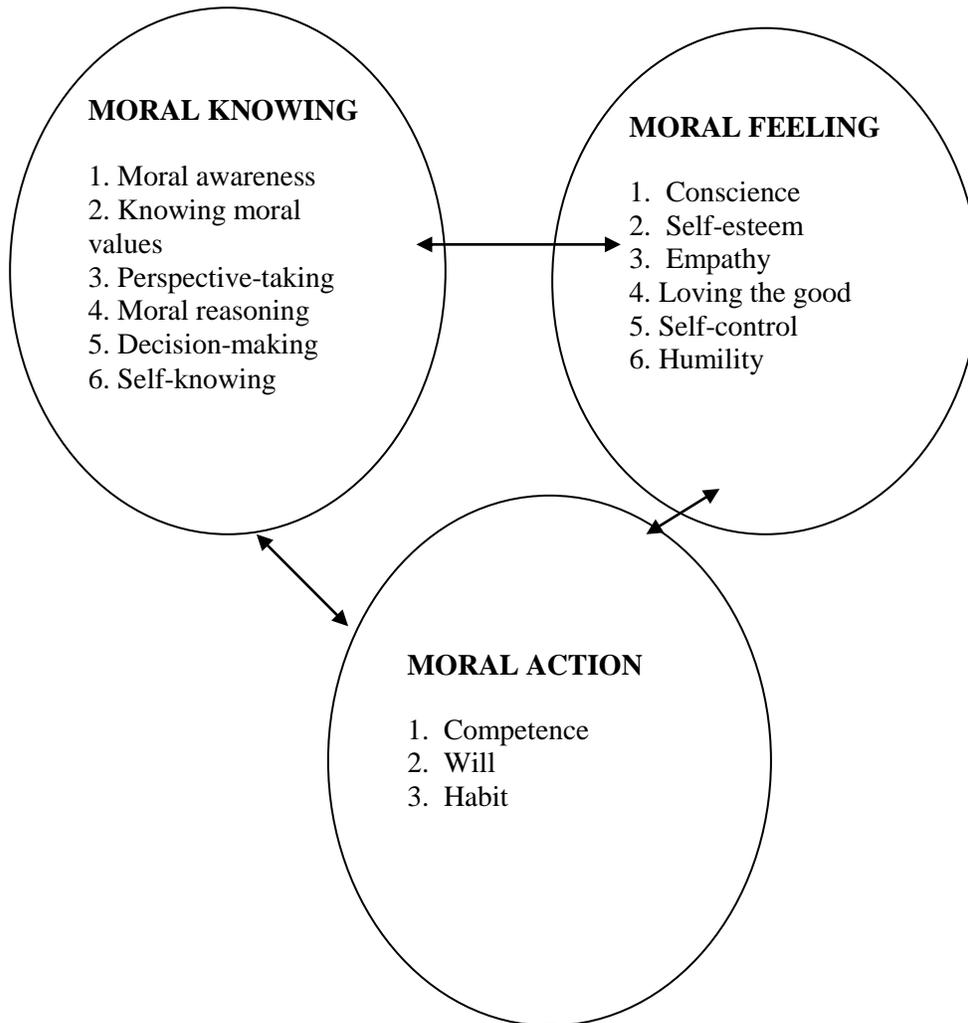- A humane and democratic society

- A just and peaceful world

(Lickona, 1992) believes that "Respect" and "Responsibility" are necessary in

teaching character education. He stated that it should be the "Fourth" and "Fifth" R's in

our curriculum. Respect was important because it showed regard for the worth of

someone or something. When respect is demonstrated, it manifests itself in all forms of life and the environment. Respect not only will cause one to respect others, it also would cause one to respect oneself. When one respects oneself, others would potentially see a decrease in self-destructive behaviors such as; drugs, alcohol, suicide and etc.

(Lickona, 1992) defined "Responsibility" as an extension of respect. When we respect others, we value them. When we value others, we are demonstrating responsibility, which refers to responding. When one is responsible, they are paying attention to others' needs. Responsibility also promotes positive obligations to the need and care of others.   Respect and responsibility, according to (Lickona, 1992) will include other values such as honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage, and a host of democratic values. These values will affirm our human dignity and promote the good of the individual and society.

   Good character is the behavior that we would like for our children and everyone to exemplify. Aristotle defined good character as the life of good conduct. This means giving your best conduct in relation to others (Lickona1992). Lickona's diagram of the components "Good Character" consist of: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action as indicated in the diagram below.

COMPONENTS OF GOOD CHARACTER

MORAL KNOWING

1. Moral awareness
2. Knowing moral values
3. Perspective-taking
4. Moral reasoning
5. Decision-making
6. Self-knowing

MORAL FEELING

1. Conscience
2. Self-esteem
3. Empathy
4. Loving the good
5. Self-control
6. Humility

MORAL ACTION

1. Competence
2. Will
3. Habit

In order to teach character education that is based on "Respect" and "Responsibility" and promoting Good Character to our students, (Lickona, 1992) listed twelve factors teachers must do to teach a comprehensive approach to teaching character education. This comprehensive approach calls on teachers to:

1. Act as caregiver, model, and mentor, treating students with love, and respect, Setting a good example, supporting pro-social behavior, and correcting hurtful actions.

2. Create a moral community in the classroom, helping students know each other, respect and care about each other, and feel valued membership in the group.

3. Practice moral discipline, using the creation and enforcement of rules as opportunity to foster moral reasoning, self-control, and a generalized respect for others.

4. Create a democratic classroom environment, involving students in decision-making and shared responsibility for making the classroom a good place to be and to learn.

5. Teach values through the curriculum, using academic subjects as a vehicle for examining ethical issues. (This is simultaneously a school wide strategy when the curriculum addresses cross-grade concerns such as sex, drug, and alcohol education.)

6. Use cooperative learning to teach children the disposition and skills of helping each other and working together.

7. Develop the "conscience of crafts" by fostering students' academic responsibility and their regard for the value of learning and work.

8. Encourage moral reflection through reading, writing, and discussion, decision-making exercises and debate.

9. Teach conflict resolution so that students have the capacity and commitment to solve conflicts in fair, nonviolent ways.

10. Foster caring beyond the classroom, using inspiring role models and opportunity for school and community service to help students learn to care by giving care.

11. Create a positive moral culture in the school, developing a total school environment (through the leadership of the principal, school-wide discipline, a school-wide sense of community, democratic student government, a moral community among adults, and time for addressing moral concerns) that supports and amplifies the values taught in classrooms

12. Recruit parents and the community as partners in value education, supporting parent as the child's first moral teacher; encouraging parents to support the school in its efforts to foster good values; and seeking the help of the community (e.g., churches, business, and the media) in reinforcing the values the school is trying to teach.

In conclusion, (Lickona, 1992) believes that schools teach good or bad values in everything they do. This includes, but is not limited to integrating character education in every aspect of the curriculum. This also should include rules, roles and relationships, etc. Everything that we do will have the potential of affecting a child's values and character for good behavior or poor behavior. Murphy's Blue Ribbon School Comprehensive model of character education is similar to Lickona's model, in character education (Murphy, 1998). (Lickona, 1992) listed 12 ways for promoting character education which included the role of the teacher, the importance of discipline, the curriculum, the classroom environment and the community (Murphy, 1998). (Murphy, 1998) model consists of the following categories: character education program, citizenship, conflict management, discipline program, drug education program, guidance program, motivation program, school developed program, self-esteem program, and others. The Blue Ribbon model differs from Lickona's model because it includes all areas of the curriculum; the formal, the informal, and the hidden. The formal curriculum includes the state's objectives, content, and organization of the instruction as approved by the state and local board. The informal part of the models dealt with interactions among students and teachers, which taught students how they should react toward others. For example, a teacher's classroom rules could teach a student how to act toward others (Murphy, 1992). The hidden curriculum

consist of the implementation of character education that was not actually planned.

"The Blue Ribbon Schools' Comprehensive Model for Character Development emphasized   the importance of parents, teachers, counselors, and principals working together to promote character in youth.   This model also shows how each subject in the curriculum can be used to promote character in youth (Murphy, 1992).   The Blue Ribbon character education model is considered comprehensive because it gives students a chance to develop in all areas. Just as Lickona's model, the Blue Ribbon model   allows students to develop in all characters: moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action (Murphy, 1998).

Summary

The literature review indicated that many teachers are not prepared to teach character education, and very few universities have prepared teachers to teach character education. Studies have also found that because of the lack of preparation, some teachers are uncomfortable in teaching moral values. However, two models sited in this literature review tend to add validity in teaching character education.   (Lickona, 1992), and (Murphy, 1998) approach to teaching character education focus on universal moral values. Universal values such as treating everyone fairly really bind all people everywhere, because they affirm our basic rights and dignity (Lickona, 1992).

Research Findings

Quantitative analysis was used to report findings in this project. The quantitative method was selected because of the data collected from the likert scale questionnaire. (Hedrick, 1994) used the term quantitative as associated with experiments and structural interviewing.   The participants in this study consisted of 200 teachers from the Chicago area. These teachers were from the elementary and high schools. There were eight questions   addressed on the likert scale

questionnaire. Each column was assigned a number value. After the data was collected, classified, and coded, the results were analyzed. The results of the study gave insights into the urgency of preparing teachers to teach character education effectively. 80% of teachers surveyed felt a lack of teacher preparation in teaching character education.

Interpretation and Limitations

This study was designed to serve as a resource in helping universities to analyze their character education programs. This study was also designed to help in developing the awareness of the need for character education in all elementary and secondary schools. The limitations of this study included: (1) Study limited to Chicago area, (2) The effect of hidden curriculum in teaching character education, (3) and the effect of classroom's rules on teaching character education. Because of the limitations, the researcher would like to extend this research to an awareness of a variety of Comprehensive Values Education programs.

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