THE PLACE OF MORALITY/EDUCATION IN CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

The study tries to explore the place of morality/Education in the development of a child. Some researchers and scholars have given different views and opinions on the causes of child's negative moral development in spite of the application of modern technology in teaching and learning. They include among others, genetic factor and environment. The objectives of this paper are to examine the role of education in child moral development and to evaluate the need for guidance and counseling in the educational development of a child. Piaget's theory of cognitive development is used. The study employed exploratory research approach while data was collected through secondary sources. Historical and explanatory methods were used in its analysis. This paper found out among others that parents, peers and schools have lots of influence in the moral development of a child. The paper, therefore, recommended among others that there is an urgent need to review and restructure the educational system especially the primary and secondary schools as the present state do not objectively stimulate child's moral development.

Keywords: Morality, Education, Child's Development, Guidance and Counseling

Introduction

Understanding the values of society and regulating behaviour accordingly are among the important aspects of child's development. Children's concept of rights and wrongs change as they grow older. Children's ability to make judgment about moral issues is related to their cognitive development.

Alkinson, Smith and Ben (1990, p.97) in their research observed that "most 5-year old say that it is wrong to lie, to steal or to injure another person, but their understanding of these statements changes with age, only gradually do they begin to know what types of statement are lies, how borrowing differs from stealing, and that injuring someone intentionally evolves greater blame than accidental injury". They further stressed that "although maturing cognitive abilities play a role in the development of a child's sense of right and wrong as well as other factors such as the model provided by parents and peers are also important".

A child is born into a society of people with predisposing tendencies to behave as a human being. Sometimes after the event of birth has taken place, the child in society, using his natural tendencies, incorporates into himself the actions, the moods, the feelings, mode of perceiving of some other men in his surroundings. This is what confers on the child the human character. A child acquires his humanness in the society made up of other human beings; he is not likely to get this in the society of wolves or monkeys because humanness and wolfness or monkeyness are characteristics, but they are not the same.

From the above analysis, education in a very simple language is a process through which a person receives external stimulu that will lead to a change in his behaviour. The process of education includes all the capabilities of the learner such as intellectual, physical, and moral, in order to ensure that he develops the best in him. Thus the central focus of this paper is the place of morality/education in child's development.

The growth of physical structures can affect development. For instance a child who is physically handicapped may find it difficult to achieve effective development in some other areas such as social, language, intellectual and emotional aspects.

Probably, no psychologist today will want to know whether hereditary or environment is the prime determinant of any specific behaviour pattern. The question is, has the modern education negatively affected the moral development of a child?. Some researchers and scholars have given different views and opinions on the causes of child's negative moral development in spite of the application of modern technology in teaching and learning. They include among others, genetic factor and environment.

Thus, behaviour depends on the nature of personality formed, and personality depends on the nature of social interaction which a child undergoes. Whether or not children develop behaviour difficulties will also depend upon the nature of the interaction which they encounter, especially in the family (Ukeje, 1979).

The major key concepts to be examined are:

Morality: What do we mean by morality? According to Shaffer (1993), morality implies "a set of principles or ideals that help the individual to distinguish right from wrong and to act on this distinction". The term "morality" comes from the Latin word "mores", meaning "manner, customs or folkways". Morality therefore, deals with how behaviour should generally conform to cultural deals of right and wrong. It represents broadly based, mostly unwritten standard of how people should behave (Onyenwigwe, 2008; p.116).

Morality according to Hurlock (1972, p.543) is "conformity to the moral code of the social group". He stressed that "moral concepts are rules to which the members of a given culture have become accustomed over a period of time. They determine the expected behaviour patterns of all members of that culture".

Morality as perceived by Okafor and Ugwuegbulam (2000; p.53) is "one of the more prominent distinctions that separate human beings from the beasts of the jungles". Moral education therefore involves bringing to the awareness of children the values necessary for a good individual and social life, and also involves training the capacity to see and assess the nature and consequences of alternative line of action, and the will to choose responsibly (Okoh, 1983, p.209).

Education: An examination of the concept of education generally involves asking; "what is education?" From Platonic era attempts have been made at the definition of education,

Plato defined it "as… that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children… the particular training in respect of pleasure and pain".

For the purpose of this study, let us look at some modern definitions that can be of interest to us. We have heard some expressions like "Education is life, education is the key to development". "Education is what happens to us from the day we are born to the day we die"; Education is a way of making people fit to live and fit to live with, all of which sound very crisp and handy.

But there are several intellectual definitions:

- Adiele (1975) defined education as "a desirable change in human behaviour…"
- Leonard (1967) said "To learn is to change. Education is a progress that changes the learner". While
- Ukeje (1973), asserted that "in general therefore the process of education occurs whenever any influence produces a change in the physical or mental behaviour".
- Furthermore, Omolulu and Kaita (NERC; 1969) maintained that "education is the art of training a person intellectually, morally and physically and "the word education has more than one meaning. It means learning, training and brining up". This is why people usually express some surprise if a supposedly educated person behaves in a way that does not depict him as having received any form of education.

Objectives of the Study

Arising from the statement of the problem, the objectives of this paper are as follows:

(i)   To find out the importance of morality in child's development.
(ii)   To examine the role of education in child's moral development.
(iii)   To evaluate the need for guidance and counseling in the educational development of a child.

Theoretical Analysis

For the purpose of this study, Piaget's theory of cognitive development is used. According to Jean Piaget's Theory (1932) of cognitive development, children's thinking goes through a series of stages. The early stages focus on what the child can see and hear, whereas the latter stages involve the ability to think in an abstract way about possible event that may never happen. In a similar way, Piaget argued that children's moral reasoning also proceeds through a number of different stages.

Piaget developed his ideas about moral reasoning by playing Marbles with children of different ages. He was interested in seeing how well they understood the rules, and so on. His observations led him to propose series of stages in his cognitive developmental theory of moral development.

Piaget theory of cognitive development is by implication an attempt to explain how children move from being irrational and illogical to being rational and logical (Eysenck, 1997). The notion that children learn certain basic operations, and that these operations then allow to solve a wide range of problem is a valuable one. According to Eysenck, (1997, p.139), "no one before Piaget had provided a detailed account of the ways in which children's thinking changes during childhood".

Methodology

In this paper, exploratory research method is adopted while data were collected from the secondary sources. A historical and explanatory method through content analysis is used in the data analysis.

Importance of Morality in Child's Development

Why is morality important? One key reason is that society cannot work properly unless there is agreement on what is right and what is wrong. There will always be some moral issues on which people in a given society will have different views which will lead to campaigns, marches, and other forms of protest (Eysenck, 1997; p.171). However, if there were controversy about all major moral issues, then society would become chaotic.

As Shaffer (1993) pointed out, there are three main moral components. They are as follows:

i)   **The Cognitive Component:** This is concerned with the ways in which we think about moral issues, and decide what is right and wrong.

ii) **The Emotional Component:** This is concerned with the feelings associated moral thoughts and behaviour; these feelings include pride, guilt, and shame.

iii) **The Behavioural Component:** This is concerned with the ways in which we behave, and includes the extent to which we lie, steal, cheat, and behave honourably.

As children grow up, most of them show much moral development. They understand moral issues better, their behaviour is more influenced by moral considerations, and they experience guilt and shame when they fail to live up to reasonable moral standards.

How do you think this moral development occurs? Does it depend mainly on parents or learning from other children, or moral fashion, or social media or schools?

Parents, Peers and Moral Development in a Child

It seems likely that a child's early stages of moral development depend very much on its parents. This was certainly the position adopted by Sigmund Freud (1959) with his emphasis on identification with the same – sexed parent. It is also the position of Jean Piaget (1932), who argued that young children in the parents and other authority figures.

In similar fashion, social learning theorists argue that young children use parents as models in their observational learning. In addition; parents are the major providers of rewards and punishments to young children.

As children grow up and start going to school, they are increasingly influenced by their peers. According to Piaget, interactions with peers force children to question their moral values, and this leads to moral development. Social learning theorists agree that peer groups play an increasingly important role in children's moral development, it is also important to consider in detail what is involved. Most of the relevant researches have concerned different parenting styles and so this will be one of our central focuses in this lecture.

Hoffman (1970) identified three major styles used by parents in the moral development of their children:

i)   **Induction:** Explaining why a given action is wrong with special emphasis to its effects on other people.

ii)   **Power Assertion:** Using spankings, removal of privileges, and harsh words to exert power over a child.

iii) **Love Withdrawal:** Withholding attention or love when a child behaves badly.

The Role Education in Child's Development

Before any meaningful effort is made in the provision of education of children, they have to be identified. The goal of the identification of any exceptional condition is to use such information to modify programmes and adapt them to the need of the exceptional children (Agulanna and Nwachukwu, 2004, p.265). The identification of the gifted and talented or slow or handicapped child is very important because if a teacher knows the full range of a child's abilities, he will be able to provide appropriate measures that can take care of the child's educational welfare.

Identifying children and organizing them according to their several abilities is important, but it is not as easy as it appears. How does a teacher separate a gifted child from a hard-working or slow or a parentally pressured child? Again, how does one identify an under-achieving gifted child from a highly achieving normal child? Since giftedness is multi-dimensional, no single method is sufficient. However Agulanna and Nwachukwu (2004) suggested that in order to be more accurate teachers should combine two or more methods such as: (i) Intelligent test scores (ii) School grades/results (iii) Creativity test (iv) Parents judgment (v) Judgment by teachers.

Very often teachers are asked to supplement information about their class children through the use of behavioural checklist which can come in many ways. The teachers generally may be asked to rate class children based on the following 1 to 5 scales such as:

-   Learns rapidly, easily, efficiently;
-   Prefers to work alone;
-   Has a vocabulary above that of classmates;
-   Displays curiousity and imagination;
-   Goes beyond the minimum required with assignment;
-   Follow through on tasks;
-   Is original in oral and written expression.

The Need for Guidance and Counselling in the Educational Development of a Child

Ipaye (1983) defined guidance and counseling as "a helping relationship where the individual is helped to sharpen his perception of the issue at hand with a view to facilitating his/her getting into grips with the issue. The issue could be educational, vocational, social, personal, developmental or any other adjustment tendencies that could interfere in the life of the individual".

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981) in understanding the need and efficacy of guidance and counselling in child's development stated thus:

> In view of the apparent ignorant of young people
> about career prospects and in view of personality

maladjustment among school children, career officers
and counselors will be appointed in schools.

It therefore becomes imperative for adequate and proper provisions of guidance and counselling to be made to realize the objectives of a compressive school. It is in this perspective that Nwachukwu (1996:p.5) expanded the objectives of guidance and counselling, which the include the following:

i) Motivate the child to keep himself in an optimal state of mind;
ii) Enhance the children's understanding of themselves;
iii) Help the child to identify his interests, abilities and aptitude
iv) Promote increased self-direction, problem-solving and decision-making by the children
v) Help the child in planning his educational programme in such a way that it will be consistent with his post high school plans.
vi) Assist the child in developing his potentials to his optimum.
vii) To assist teachers and parents in understanding the needs and problems of their children.

Conclusion

The central hub of this study has been *the place of morality/education in child's development*. Morality implies a set of principles or ideals that help the individual to distinguish right from wrong and to act on this value. On the other hand, education is the art of training a person intellectually, morally, physically as well as learning and bringing up in order to conform a desirable change in behaviour. According to social learning theory, behaviour including moral behaviour depends on reward, punishment, and observational learning. One of the main aims of this paper is to enlightened the audience on the need for counselling to ensure that the best is realized from each child's potentials.

Recommendations

The researcher put forward the following recommendations for consideration. They are:

(1) There is an urgent need to review and restructure the educational system especially the primary and secondary schools as the present level state do not stimulate child's moral development.
(2) Parents and other members of the family should help to influence child's positive moral development at every to stage of his/her growth.
(3) A child should be allowed to develop the culture of moral discipline in form of self-control and self-direction.
(4) Every school, especially at primary and secondary levels should employ the services of guidance and counselors. The aim is to expose children to the basic subjects which will enable them acquire more knowledge and skills.
(5) The teaching of moral and religious instructions to children all through the stages of their education should be encouraged and sustained. This will reinforce their ideas about the importance of specific values and beliefs.

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