ASOS JOURNAL

The Journal of Academic Social Science

Akademik Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi, Yıl: 7, Sayı: 98, Kasım 2019, s. 65-72

ISSN: 2148-2489 Doi Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/ASOS.36813>

Yayın Geliř Tarihi / Article Arrival Date
29.08.2019

Yayınlanma Tarihi / The Publication Date
29.11.2019

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Nur SILAY

Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, Eğitim Yönetimi ve Denetimi
silayn@hotmail.com

KARAKTER EĞİTİMİ: KAPSAMLI BİR ALANYAZIN İNCELEMESİ

Öz

Eğitimde en çok araştırılan konulardan biri karakter eğitimidir. Karakter eğitiminin, değerler eğitimi ve ahlâk eğitimi gibi bazı eğitimsel yaklaşımlarla yakın bağlantıları vardır. Bu makale, çok sayıda yayından kısaca alanyazın incelemelerini sunarak karakter ve karakter eğitimi kavramlarına doğrudan değinmektedir. Ayrıca ortak özellikleri açısından ahlâk eğitimi ile değerler eğitiminden bahsetmektedir, zira hepsi birçok bakımdan birbirine benzemektedir. Karakterimiz aslında kim olduğumuzdur ve topluma saygıdeğer ve ahlâklı bir birey yetiřtirmek için, etkili karakter eğitimi almak oldukça önemlidir. Bu sebeple, karakter eğitime maruz kalmak tüm insanlar için öncelikli olmalı ve eğitimciler karakter eğitimi ciddi olarak ele almalıdırlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: Karakter eğitimi, değerler eğitimi, ahlâk eğitimi

CHARACTER EDUCATION: A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

Abstract

One of the most researched topics in education has been character education. It has close links with some educational approaches such as values education and moral education. This paper simply touches on the concepts of character and character education by offering literature review shortly from many publications. It also mentions moral education and values education in terms of their common qualities as they all resemble each other in a lot of ways. One's character is who we are actually and receiving effective character education is highly significant to produce a respectable, moral member for the society. Hence, being exposed to character education must be a priority for all human beings and educators need to consider it seriously.

Keywords: Character education, values education, moral education

Introduction

Character education has been an area of interest for many researchers for a long period of time. Throughout decades, it has been studied as well as very similar educational currents, two of which are known as moral education and values education. Most of the time, these terms are used instead of each other due to the high number of their common aspects they share. This paper is a kind of broad description of literature from several authors. Before the presentation of literature review, the method has been explained. Prior to giving condensed information about character education, it is best to think about the meaning of "character" and what is understood by different researchers. Following the part on character education, the two above-mentioned overlapping currents are presented in brief along with character education.

Research Method

In this paper, a combination of research review and systematic review methods have been used. Lambert defines systematic reviews as "critically appraising a range of research evidence or literature (or both) on a particular topic" (Lambert, 2012). He mentions that a systematic review does not require undertaking active collection of data in the field by nature. According to Menter et al., systematic review is a type of literature review and the aim is to produce an objective summary of existing knowledge (Menter et al., 2012). Since the title of this paper introduces a comprehensive literature review, this definition is consistent with it. Robson states that a research review has a goal of a general summary through "putting together and evaluating different kinds of findings in a particular field of interest" (Robson, 2000). As the aim of this paper is presenting a general overview of existent research results from various sources on character education, it should be understood that both systematic review and research review methods have been utilised.

Context and Review of Literature with Discussion

Definition of Character

Prior to the review of character education, it seems wiser to start with definitions of “character” by different researchers. So as to be able to grasp the focus of the paper, it appears sensible to revise how different sources regard “character” from their point of view. Thus, to begin with, in Berkowitz’s opinion, character is “the set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable the individual to function as a competent moral agent, that is, to do ‘good’ in the world.” (Berkowitz, 2011). Likewise, Elias thinks that “the application of social-emotional and character development in classrooms is about teaching, practicing, and modeling essential personal and civic life habits and skills that are almost universally understood as making people good human beings.” (Elias, 2010). He lists some of these habits as respect, responsibility, integrity, caring, and fairness. As one can see above, both researchers use the same adjective “good” for people to become good human beings and to do something good in life. Berkowitz believes that all the psychological features which make humans act morally are regarded as “character”. Similarly, Elias argues that the outcome of character development is the emergence of morally good people.

According to Komalasari, character is defined in two ways: “first, character is innate condition and people cannot avoid it. Second, character is an individual’s competence to be able to handle such conditions.” (Komalasari, 2012). In addition, she believes that character is not static, by contrast it is dynamic because it can change. It may well be perceived that people are born with character and it is also utilized to deal with conditions that are brought at birth. It is added that character changes during one’s lifetime. In other words, it is not stable and one can hope that it could be improved as it is very likely to change as time goes by.

Ecclestone argues that “the revival of an old discourse of ‘character’ incorporates concerns with morals and virtues within a psychological depiction that embraces all the constructs of well-being within a more inclusive set of character capabilities”. She concludes that capabilities and skills include moral choices, attributes, dispositions, behaviours and virtues. (Ecclestone, 2012). From this argument, it appears to be comprehensible that character involves well-being in general and furthermore, it has close connections with both virtues and morals. Here, the key words are virtues and morals because a good character is virtuous and moral. In other words, morals and virtues exist in good nature.

Lewis indicates that “for Aristotle, to be a person of character is to be a person who, over the course of a lifetime, cultivates the virtues, i.e., those habits of thinking, feeling and doing that enable persons to flourish.” (Lewis, 2012). He affirms that these intellectual and moral virtues are learned mostly by imitation of exemplars and they enable people to live in genuinely human ways. That is to say, good character necessitates virtues and role models are essential to imitate so as to learn these virtues. Virtues are vital as people can succeed in living as real human beings thanks to the existence of the virtues. Hence, as Ecclestone discussed above too, virtues and a combination of admirable and valuable qualities are inseparable in Lewis’s view.

Davis declares that character is defined as “an enduring feature of the person, a settled disposition, something that must exist over more than a small part of one’s life to exist at all”. (Davis, 2003). This definition suggests that character stays with an individual for a long time and it is a determined temperament. It needs to exist within an individual for longer than a short period of

that person's lifetime. It should be mentioned though that according to Davis, character is settled; "not likely to change". Thus, this meaning of character considers character as unchanging, remaining the same.

In Arthur's view, "character is who we are actually and who we turn into, either someone good or bad." He continues that "normally, character is made up of the whole of personal values that are connected and that guide our actions." (Arthur, 2003). This researcher underlines the identity issue and the fact of change when he defines the term character. He mentions the adjective "good" just like Elias and Berkowitz above and he adds its antonym "bad" as well. He points out that human beings could become a good or a bad person in time. Here, it is significant that values are highlighted as they lead human beings' actions, they are related and all of them constitute our own character.

Marshall et al. give the definition of character as: "Character is an acquired human quality derived from learned practices that achieve intrinsic outcomes, devoid of external rewards." (Marshall et al., 2011). From this meaning, one can understand that character is not innate; on the contrary, it is obtained. Furthermore, the motivation does not originate from other people or outside factors. Instead, it is the person himself or herself who aims at reaching results of his or her own actions. As someone succeeds at internal goals by taught acts, she or he possesses character.

Character Education

Winton attests that there has been an increasing interest in character education since the 1990s in schools in the United States, Britain, and Canada (Winton, 2010). She remarks that "Federal, state/provincial, and local policies and initiatives encourage, and in many cases mandate, formal character education". Therefore, character education has been taken into serious consideration at various levels in an organized way for about twenty years in the aforementioned countries. This systematic management does not only promote it, but it also governs it due to the rising attention towards character education.

Lovat explains that "character education is done in and through the teaching and learning process" (Davidson et al, 2010 quoted by Lovat, 2011). He also reports that "it is not done parallel to academic instruction". Likewise, Langer et al. repeat that "the core of effective character education is built not upon curricula nor upon finite programs, but rather upon the social relationships that pervade a school's culture" (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005 quoted by Langer et al., 2010). Thus, while Lovat expresses the fact that the teaching and learning process is a fundamental tool for the delivery of character education, academic instruction is not the point of reference nor is it similar to the implementation of character education. Langer et al. echo Lovat and highlight the reality that the base of character education depends on the social relationships which spread through all the parts of a school's culture. Here, they would like to draw the attention to the significance of the social relationships present within a school.

Davidson et al. present character education as "providing the character and culture most immediately needed for teaching and learning, and ultimately for success in school, work and beyond." (Davidson et al., 2011). Hence, the expansion of the need for character education is presented in growing circles. In other words, this immediate necessity is required by schools, then the working life follows and more than that, an individual's life asks for character education until the end of it.

Robinson and Jeynes view that character education and virtues are connected (Robinson & Jeynes, 2010). They also think that character education is a vital practice. They reveal that “Christian higher education and character instruction flourished most when the church was the leader of culture rather than a follower”. From a religious perspective, the authors mention the relationship between virtues and character education and regard character education as extremely important. They also add that character education was in a better status when the church was the acting body as an independent organization.

In Espinalt’s opinion, “the most important influences on character are family, school, peer group, and media” in terms of character education (Espinalt, 1963 quoted in Gimenez-Camins & Gallifa, 2011). These are the main factors that affect character and the most influential one is at the beginning of the list. Moreover, Gimenez-Camins and Gallifa argue that suitable models are necessary for character education. That is to say, role models have to exist and also be appropriate for effective character education. Exemplary people need to be around and observed so that character could be improved.

Ledford points out that professional advancement in the character education field is necessary for the achievement of character education programs. (Ledford, 2011). Therefore, teachers are trained as character educators so as to succeed in character education. She writes that “teachers require this training in order to renew teacher certification and to provide them with the necessary tools to implement character education initiatives in the classroom”. So, the training is intended to equip teachers with the relevant techniques resulting in proper processes for character education.

Stiff-Williams expresses that for character education to take place, “the educational process should incorporate experiences that engage students in developing decision filters that enhance their ability to make sound judgments.” (Stiff-Williams, 2010). She believes that these filters help to communicate “our thought processes as we move through life.” The ability to make good decisions can be developed with experiences and these experiences should be provided by educators. Another point that she presents is the suggestion of merging the teaching of character with the instruction of standards-based curriculum simultaneously. This proposition simply offers to teach curricula at the same time as character by combining the subjects with character education.

Lin et al. posit that “many character education programmes promote caring as an important dimension of character; empathy could be a factor in the development of caring dispositions” (Lin et al., 2011). A good character needs to have positive qualities and therefore, character education programmes aim at encouraging such qualities. Caring is one of them and it is natural to include it in the programmes. Human beings should be concerned for other people as well. They should not only think about themselves selfishly and consider their own interest as the sole priority. So as to be able to become a caring person, one must have the ability of empathy. If someone can imagine what it must be like to be in somebody else’s situation, then showing care towards others will be easier.

Moral Education and Character Education

Cheung and Lee discuss that character education is a tool to develop students’ social competence and they acknowledge that “to supplement or complement the developmental effort

at home, character education in school is pertinent because of the grouping of students, teachers, and other personnel together in the classroom” (Cheung & Lee, 2010). In the light of their research findings, they show that “students would likely benefit more from a character education program based on lecturing, role modeling and storytelling around moral virtues and behavior”. Here, one can see the relationship between morals and character. According to the results of their research, a character education program that depends on morality is more beneficial for students. Therefore, it is best to take morals as the starting and guiding point for successful character education programs.

Gilead reports that “character education might greatly benefit from providing a clear image not only of the virtues and the good but also of evil, vice and the immoral (Gilead, 2011). The author clarifies that when there is a presentation of a noticeable picture of vices and virtues, education ought to make it possible for an individual to know which character qualities somebody had better work towards having them and which ones one had better make an effort to stay away from. He remarks that “education should contribute to a knowledge of the vices, the way they affect us and how to control them” (Gilead, 2011). When one sees opposite examples, one can notice the contrast more easily and realization takes place faster. In other words, seeing both positive and negative sides makes learning more efficiently. Thus, for character education to happen more effectively, we need to make use of moral faults and weaknesses as well.

Marshall et al. contend that “within the moral education community, character education is often viewed as the process of establishing self control within students to habituate them to prescribed behaviour” (Marshall et al., 2011). One can understand that the aim of character education is to enable students to have the habit of behaviour which has been set by a rule and also make students possess self control in order to do so. They describe integrated character education as “a school and community process for educating the whole child in a healthy, caring environment.” In other words, firstly, character education is an effort by both a school and a community in which the school exists. Secondly, the objective is training students in a type of environment that is kind and well.

Values Education and Character Education

As noted by Lovat and Hawkes, “values education is known internationally by a number of names, including moral education and character education, among others” (Lovat & Hawkes, 2013). Hence, they mean that these terms are used interchangeably. However, they also assert that each of them has a little different meaning with another focus. For example, Lapsley and Narvaez express that they “distinguish the paradigms of moral education and character education” (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2011). In short, even though these educational approaches have a lot of similarities, there are minor differences between them in terms of their own foci. That is to say, each of them has its own point of concentration despite their likenesses.

Lapsley and Narvaez state that they examined the writings of traditional character educators and concluded that these writings are about character and virtues and “they are as much concerned about ‘What should I do?’ as they are with ‘Who should I be?’”. (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2011). Therefore, according to their findings, character education involves virtues and character and not only the kind of person students need to become, but also the actions they need to perform are important so as to acquire a virtuous character. Similarly, Cheung and Lee emphasize that character education “stresses the development of students’ moral character as a whole” (Cheung & Lee, 2010). They continue that it cherishes the improvement of students’ feelings

and values in a socially and morally satisfactory way. Hence, actually values education takes place as students advance their values in the form of character education.

Pike observes that the youth have to be assisted to crucially get involved with the origins of the values supporting their education (Pike, 2007 quoted by Pike, 2010). One can see that values education is a necessary tool to encourage students' whole education. He notes that "to seek to shape a young person's character without helping them to understand the sources upon which that education is based fails to model the honesty and integrity characteristic of quality character education." Therefore, it is essential to enable students to comprehend the sources of character education so that the values of honesty and integrity could be included in order to achieve a successful character education program.

Conclusion

To conclude, character education is an important tool to lead students to a moral life with values and it needs to be included in the general education of all children and young people. As the overall aim of getting education is growing into a virtuous adult who would be beneficial to society and oneself while acquiring general knowledge and life skills, the existence of character education is vital for human offspring. So as to possess an honourable life, individuals need to be laden with moral values and also act with them. Just believing in them is not sufficient; taking action with their guidance is critical so that "good" things may be done during one's lifetime. Besides, behaving according to these values and morality also means positive role modelling for everyone who witnesses such exemplary people. The outcome is imitating good actions as the observed behaviour can be repeated by others.

KAYNAKLAR

- Arthur, James, (2003), "Character and the Litany of Alarm", (Ed. James Arthur), Education with Character: The Moral Economy of Schooling, s. 1 – 12, Routledge, London.
- Berkowitz, Marvin W., (2011), "What Works in Values Education", International Journal of Educational Research, 50: 153 – 158.
- Cheung, Chau-kiu & Lee, Tak-yan, (2010), "Improving Social Competence through Character Education", Evaluation and Program Planning, 33: 255 – 263.
- Davidson, Matthew, Khmelkov, Vladimir, Baker, Kyle & Lickona, Thomas, (2011), "Values Education: The Power2Achieve Approach for Building Sustainability and Enduring Impact", International Journal of Educational Research, 50: 190 – 197.
- Davis, Michael, (2003), "What's Wrong with Character Education?", American Journal of Education, 110 / 1, 32 – 57.
- Ecclestone, Kathryn, (2012), "From Emotional and Psychological Well-Being to Character Education: Challenging Policy Discourses of Behavioural Science and 'Vulnerability'", Research Papers in Education, 27 / 4, 463 – 480.
- Elias, Maurice, (2010), "Character Education: Better Students Better People", The Education Digest, March, 47 – 49.
- Gilead, Tal, (2011), "Countering the Vices: On the Neglected Side of Character Education", Studies in Philosophy & Education, 30: 271 – 284.

- Gimenez-Camins, Carme & Gallifa, Josep, (2011), “Espinalt’s Concept of Human Will and Character and its Consequences for Moral Education”, *Ramon Llull Journal of Applied Ethics*, 2: 121-149.
- Komalasari, Kokom, (2012), “The Living Values-Based Contextual Learning to Develop the Students' Character”, *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8 / 2, 246 – 251.
- Lambert, Mike, (2012), *A beginner’s guide to doing your education research Project*, Sage Publications Inc., London.
- Langer, Richard; Hall, M. Elizabeth Lewis & McMartin, Jason, (2010), “Human Flourishing: The Context for Character Development in Christian Higher Education”, *Christian Higher Education*, 9: 336 – 360.
- Lapsley, Daniel & Narvaez, Darcia, (2011), “Moral Criteria and Character Education: A Reply to Welch”, *Journal of Moral Education*, 40 / 4, 527 – 531.
- Ledford, Alice T., (2011), “Professional Development for Character Education: An Evaluation of Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy for Character Education”, *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, 5 / 3, 256 – 272.
- Lewis, Paul, (2012), “In Defence of Aristotle on Character: Toward a Synthesis of Recent Psychology, Neuroscience and the Thought of Michael Polanyi”, *Journal of Moral Education*, 41 / 2, 155 – 170.
- Lin, Wei Neng; Enright, Robert D. & Klatt, John S., (2011), “Forgiveness as Character Education for Children and Adolescents”, *Journal of Moral Education*, 40 / 2, 237 – 253.
- Lovat, Terence, (2011), “Values Education and Holistic Learning: Updated Research Perspectives”, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50: 148 – 152.
- Lovat Terence & Hawkes Neil, (2013), “Values Education: A Pedagogical Imperative for Student Wellbeing”, *Educational Research International*, 2 / 2, 1-6.
- Marshall, Jon. C.; Caldwell, Sarah D. & Foster, Jeanne, (2011), “Moral Education the CHARACTERplus Way”, *Journal of Moral Education*, 40 / 1, 51 – 72.
- Menter, Ian; Elliot, Dely; Hulme, Moira; Lewin, Jon & Lowden, Kevin, (2012), *A guide to practitioner research in education*, Sage Publications, London.
- Pike, Mark A., (2010), “Christianity and Character Education: Faith in Core Values?”, *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education*, 31 / 3, 311 – 321.
- Robinson, David. & Jeynes, William H., (2010), “Character Education in Christian Higher Education: A Historical Analysis and Contemporary Challenge (Part II)”, *Christian Higher Education*, 9 / 4, 316 – 335.
- Robson, Colin, (2000), *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Stiff-Williams, Helen. R (2010), “Widening the Lens to Teach Character Education Alongside Standards Curriculum”, *Clearing House*, 83: 115 – 120.
- Winton, Sue, (2010), “Character Development and Critical Democratic Education in Ontario, Canada”, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9 / 2, 220 – 237.