USING HIDDEN CURRICULUM PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN KENYA

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Abstract

Character is a pattern of behavior, thoughts and feelings based on universal principles, moral strength and integrity. One's character is evidenced by one's life virtues such as self-control, positive attitudes, humility, and wisdom. Character Education is therefore understood as planned and systematized approach to Education that motivates self-respect, responsibility and honesty for being a good citizen. Further it embraces values, morals and ethics among the products of Education (Hamlin, 2016). On the other hand the Hidden Curriculum principles relate to a range of ideas which include attitudes, opinions and values that the students learn, not from formal curriculum but from the experience of being in an educational institution such as schools, colleges and universities (Humes, 2008). The aim of this paper is to outline the contributions of hidden curriculum in facilitating the development of Character Education among the products of Education in Kenyan educational institutions. The article is based on documentary analysis of various reports on educational based task forces based on students' discipline and unrest in Kenyan educational institutions and other roles of hidden curriculum in facilitating Character Education.

Keywords: Character, character education, hidden curriculum, unrest of institutional students

Introduction

This paper advises the teachers to use principles of hidden curriculum in teaching Character Education. Character Education is a process of teaching students in a manner that helps them develop various qualities such as self- respect, responsibility and well behavior that allow them to be socially acceptable beings (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2016). The trait of focus in Character Education is the concept of character, which is understood as an evaluation of a particular individual's stable moral qualities (Hamlin, 2016)

Character Education embraces traits such as values, morals and ethics. Values are the rules by which one makes decisions about right and wrong; should and shouldn't and good and bad, quality of an evident or a thing. Morals are then defined as a motivation based on ideas of right and wrong while ethics are referred to as rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or members of a profession.

The term hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten, unprinted, unofficial and often unintended lessons, values and perspectives that students learn in school (Abott, 2015). Further hidden curriculum also refers to a range of ideas (attitudes, opinion and values) that students learn from the experience of being in school, but not from formal curriculum. In most cases they are from implicit messages conveyed through the structure and organization of the institution, for example the relationship between teachers and students; disciplinary regime; assessment system and various sub-cultures that exist. (Humes, 2008).

The hidden curriculum is based on the recognition that students absorb lessons in school that may not be part of the formal curriculum, for example: how students interact with their peers; how they interact with teachers and other adults; how they should perceive different races, groups or classes of people and what ideas and behavior are considered acceptable or unacceptable. On the other hand formal curriculum consists of courses, lessons and learning activities that students participate in, as well as the knowledge and skills teachers intentionally teach the students. Further hidden curriculum is described as "hidden" because it is usually unacknowledged or unexamined by the students, teachers and the wider community while the lessons reinforced are often accepted as status quo by the community (Humes, 2008).

From educational perspective, hidden curriculum is viewed as ways in which cultural values and attitudes such as obedience to authority, punctuality and delayed gratification are transmitted through the structure of teaching and organization of schools. Formally in schools students learn subjects like Mathematics,

English, Social Studies and Sciences but most value lessons come from hidden curriculum. It makes subjects meaningful and the presented collection of facts through subjects form the purpose behind teaching and therefore the societies have used schools to shape the attitudes of students and therefore the schools would not have been useful if students don't learn to become model citizens (Debbie, 2015).

Further leadership cannot be measured in the subjects but it is measured by morals and values that turn ordinary people into caring and inspiring leaders and such values only come from hidden curriculum. The students are therefore required to debate, give speeches and write essays and get their points across in an articulate way in communication and the purpose of that communication is imbedded in the hidden curriculum (Debbie, 2015).

This paper basically advises the teacher trainers, especially the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kenya to train the teachers who may consciously use the hidden curriculum principles to teach Character Education to the students in schools. The paper is divided into four areas: General Introduction that covers the definitions of Character Education and Hidden Curriculum; the importance of Character Education in life and in Kenya; the role of Hidden Curriculum in teaching Character Education and the conclusion that focuses on the importance of Hidden Curriculum in Character Education.

Importance of Character Education in Kenya

The process of education through schooling has two major purposes: Cognitive Development and Character formation. Cognitive development contributes to enhancing youth's knowledge and intelligence skills. On the other hand Character formation helps the students to develop attitudes of thinking, feeling, behavior and learning mood with meaningful and demanding academic curriculum that assist them to succeed. It further shapes the students' behavior by reflecting on values such as honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality and respect (Johnson, 2005).

In the early years in Kenya, especially between 1950 –1970, Character Education was a deliberate aim of schooling and the students had education for good Character as well as intellectual development. As the years passed by the Kenyan society began to worship money and material wealth, with lesser regard for good character, the support for old-fashioned Character Edu-

cation in the society crumbled, with morality taking a dangerous nosedive. The schools in Kenya are today known with cases of vandalism, cultism, drug abuse, cheating in examination, disrespect for authority and other self-destructive behavior, most of the youth carry these antisocial behavior into adulthood (MEST, 2001).

In many morally upright societies, Character Education and moral education are introduced into the schools through the study of heroes, heroines and special teachers. The concerned schools invite the good role models to address the students. The students would use such opportunities to examine the character traits personified in the speakers and get inspired to emulate the same in life. Unfortunately in the current Kenyan's case the role models that the youths are exposed to are the corrupt and merchants of impunity who are wealthy without contributing to the development of the society. It is equally understood that those who grow up under a corrupt system tend to be corrupt because people are conditioned by the content of the character in their immediate communities (Chase, 2006)

Since independence, the Kenya Government set up a number of committees and task forces to review the Education system and tackle the emerging issues with the view of improving the quality of Education and delivery of education services. Recommendations from the reports of such committees and task forces are the set of demonstrations of the government's commitment to the provision of quality and effective education services. (MEST, 2001)

Some of educationally known committees and task forces in Kenya included:
- The Kenya Educational report of 1964 (Ominde Report),
- The Kenya African National Union (KANU and Sessional paper No. 10 of 1965),
- The National Committee of Educational Objectives and Policies of 1976 (Gachathi Report),
- Presidential Working Party on the Establishment of Second University of 1981 (Meckay Report)
- Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for next decade and beyond of 1988 (Kamunge Report)
- Commission of Inquiry into Education System in Kenya in 1999 (Koech Report), and
- Task Force on Students Discipline and Unrest

of 2001.

Despite the recommendations from all the above committees and task forces, the educational learning institutions have been faced with increased cases of students unrest, which have been in existence as far back as the beginning of 20th century (1908) (MEST, 2001). The increase in number of schools with students experiencing unrest took place in the seventies. These were basically in secondary schools, middle level colleges and tertiary institutions. The disturbances were characterized by violence and wanton destruction of school property. Between 1980 and 1990 the number of schools that experienced students unrest increased tremendously from 22 (0.9%) to 187 (7.2%). In the mid of 1991 a tragic students' unrest took a new dimension, for example at St. Kizito mixed secondary school the male students invaded the females' dormitory and violently raped a number of them and nineteen girls lost their lives. Many more schools came up with other kinds of students unrest, for example at Nyeri High school the prefects were locked in their cubicles, petrol poured and the cubicles set on fire, killing four of them; at Kyanguli secondary school, the dorms were burnt and sixty eight students were burnt to death. During the same period more students` unrest took place in tertiary institutions too.  With this wave of students` unrest in the institutions the President appointed the presidential committee on students` unrest and discipline in Kenyan secondary schools. The committee made a number of recommendations many of which have been implemented (MEST, 2001)

Despite the recommendations of educational committees way back from 1964 (Ominde Report) to the most current task force on students` unrest and discipline in 2001, not much evidence of improvement has been observed. It is possible that students who were in secondary schools between 1990 and 2001 and even beyond are the current government employees in both the current public and private departments. With their unrest attitudes in secondary and tertiary institutions, they have carried the same in their current offices and departments. Such an attitude could equally reflect the wave of corruption currently experienced among the Kenyan employees (Ochulla, 2012). This therefore requires a different mode in the development of Character Education among the Kenyan students in schools.

Character formation could be fostered into the school system through the following traits: caring school community; social and emotional skills and possible implications. Caring schools and classrooms pro-

vide multiple benefits for the students. A child who is cared for will likely care for others. Such care encourages social and emotional bonding and promotional experience for better Character formation. Developing a caring school or classroom requires some skills. The quality of teacher – student relationship is a very strong influence in the development of Character Education. Developing care attitudes among the students requires some basic characteristics:

• 	Teachers should have model respectful behavior which is warm, accepting and supportive to students
• 	Students have influence in making important classroom decisions like choices that will facilitate self-development and participation in rule making activities in the classroom.
• 	Students have opportunity to interact, collaborate and discuss with the teachers and other students for the classroom activities (Solomon, Watson, & Battishtich, 2001)

It has been found that social and emotional learning programs pave ways for better academic learning. They guide the students on social and emotional skills that are intimately linked with cognitive development. Such skills facilitate social relationship and school achievement; skills in communication and conflict resolution. Further such social and emotional competencies are effective in preventing problem behavior such as violence and drug abuse. It is further implied that given the tight connection between best practice of instruction for academic expertise for moral development, the teachers are unwittingly engaged in Character Education when they structure their lessons and organize classrooms in ways that optimally support students (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2016).

The development of Character Education is a shared responsibility among the parents, teachers and members of the community. It is a process that enables students and adults in a school community to care about, and act on core ethical values like respect, justice and civic virtues. Upon such core values the students develop attitudes and actions that are hallmark of sake, healthy and informed communities that they serve (Solomon et al., 2001).

Despite the importance of Character Education, today in Kenyan schools, the emphasis is being placed on good grades or high test scores so much that the good schools are those with good grades rather than good Character. In life good Character is the most important asset one has, it takes long to build but can

be lost in instant. Once lost, it is difficult to regain (Hamlin, 2016).

The Role of Hidden Curriculum in Teaching Character Education

In most school systems, there are two types of curriculum. The first curriculum, the formal or official is prepared by educational authorities, such as Ministry of Education, Science and Technology as in the Kenyan case. It contains detailed description of objectives and activities of the official curriculum. The second curriculum has essentials which are not clearly and definitely laid out and often referred to as hidden curriculum.

The concept of hidden curriculum was invented by Phillip Jackson who realized that it constitutes about 90% of what goes on in the classroom. The hidden curriculum does not exist in form of written documents but has orders and regulations of the school; ensures physical and psychological environment and the non-official or implied messages that the school administrators or teachers convey to the students (Yuksel, 2005).

In the teaching profession, the teachers focus on teaching and learning elements that show a distinction between two areas: content which shows what is taught (official curriculum) and process/pedagogy which identifies how teaching is done. It is therefore understood that the process issues tend to assume greater importance in the act of teaching because it is concerned with developing attitudes and change of behavior (Atptor, 2008). In teaching and learning, as in other communicative activities, process is more basic than content, that is, without a minimally satisfactory process, content never gets to look in. That means process, however has to be tuned so that it helps rather than hinders learning. That is the transmission of the content is necessary, but not sufficient, for learning to take place because it depends on a suitable fit to be established between content and process (Atptor, 2008).

The curriculum for content involves the formal or official, while the one for process is the hidden. The process is concerned with methodology of teaching and learning or pedagogy or in general terms the way the content is transmitted in the classroom. In the process of learning the content, one also learns:
- which aspects of the content are to be learnt
- whom one must obey and respect
- how to address and react to different members

of one's class.
- whose favor one must carry, whose opinion to respect, and so on (Atptor, 2008).

It is understood that hidden curriculum of a school starts in each individual classroom and therefore the classroom culture is very important in understanding the context of hidden curriculum. Each teacher should have the opportunity to discuss the school's hidden curriculum at length, especially in a classroom because this would bring the concerned issues closer to alignment with the school's core ethical values to be practiced in the school compound. This would make the school to walk its talk and equally outline the specific classroom choices the teacher would demonstrate to the students, for example issues like honesty as core ethical values that the teachers believe in (Mirk, 2012).

The teachers should further demonstrate some of the following ideas in the classroom:
- make specific choices about the classroom set up in reflecting various values such as "respect" of each individual in the classroom, school and community at large.
- demonstrate "compassion" by setting up a variety of ways for students to reflect and celebrate their learning in the classroom,
- devising an assessment process that feels "fair" to each student and the teacher to be honest and transparent in implementing the system in the classroom,
- taking responsibility for the students' learning in the classroom and for the mistakes that are bound to happen along the way (Mirk, 2012).

The above are examples of practices that create a classroom culture of integrity for building high trust levels with students. Such examples allow the teacher to discuss teaching behaviors and choices that would signal each core value of the school, therefore engaging a simple evidence based assessment process about hidden curriculum of the classroom, using the schools' core values as the standards.

Through the hidden curriculum several hidden and imposed messages are passed to the students unknowingly from the teachers, parents and the school administrators. For example when teachers, parents and school administrators put pressure onto the students to get better grades than their peers and when this is followed by better rewards for the good performance, then this would divert systematically the student' effort and look for ways of meeting this demand. Through the influence of hidden curriculum,

societal demand for good performance, the students may be made to cheat in the exams to gain good performance (Yuksel, 2005) and this is the current experience in Kenya. Further, in the classroom a teacher may announce that she/he would bring an examination or a test consisting of essay questions. The students may interpret such announce that such questions would call for broad interpretive answers, rather than detailed factual knowledge and therefore they would analyze the subject matter into a few major points and not bother to memorize the details. On the other hand, if a teacher announces that the examination would consist of multiple-choice questions then the student may interpret that the examination would concentrate on details of factual knowledge and would then devote their time on memorization the details.

A school may also have a cultural expectations where a teacher gives tough assignments and expect all the students to do well and another teacher gives comparatively easy assignments and award all students passing grade even if the quality of the work is low. With the first teacher, the students may learn much more and experience a greater sense of accomplishment, where as the second teacher may do just enough work to get by and be comparatively uninterested in the lessons the students are taught (Naeem, 2014). In some other schools the teachers may reward conformity and punish non-conformity behaviors. For example behaviors such as following the rules, acting in expected ways and non-questioning the adults – conformity are rewarded while the behaviors such as personal expression, taking initiative or questioning the adults/authority – non-conformity are not valued and rewarded. The students may embrace the accepted values either explicitly or implicitly by the adults (Naeem, 2014).

When the mission of the school declares that courses be carried out in a democratic manner and therefore the students are expected to think creatively. Despite this, the teachers may on contrary convey social and moral messages through punishing or rewarding students in line with the rules that they set up by way of authority. The teachers then pose as teacher-centred mode, where the created environment indicates that the only authority in the classroom or school is the teacher, therefore the school that officially seems to be democratic turns out to be ruled authoritatively by hidden curriculum. Equally some teachers have some teaching strategies where they reward students who turn in their homework on time, listening attentively in class, participating in class activities, raising their hands in response

to posed questions or generally, doing things they are told to do in the classroom. From these the students may learn that compliance is important and that certain behaviors will academically be rewarded or be allowed to compensate for learning deficiency (Abbott, 2015).

Some schools may also have some academic programs organized in some ways. For example, students with physical or learning disability may be enrolled in specialized courses or put in different rooms. Such organizational decisions may have unintended effects on the students. Other schools may also have some formal rules, for example the students may be required to put on or wear uniforms. Based on this, the school may even ban certain types of attire (short skirts, clothing with images). If the intension is to inform the students how they are expected to behave, it is therefore required that the degree to which the rule is enforced is important, otherwise it may pass other variety of messages (Naeem, 2014).

Conclusion

Very often hidden curriculum may reinforce the lessons of formal curriculum, but sometimes it may contradict, for example, it may reveal the hypocrisy or inconsistencies between schools' stated mission, value, and conviction and what the students actually experience and learn while in schools. A school may publicly claim in its mission or vision statement that it is committed to ensuring that all students succeed academically, but the review of its performance data may expose significant socioeconomic discrepancies when it comes to test scores. This then establishes that what is not taught in school can sometimes be an influential as what is taught. (Naeem, 2014).

Moral Education is whatever schools do to influence how students think, feel and act regarding issues of right and wrong. Morally mature person has six basic characteristics:
- respect human dignity
- cares about the welfare of others
- integrates individual interests and social responsibilities
- demonstrates integrity
- reflects on moral choices
- seeks peaceful resolution of conflict
- ascertains moral principles and accepts responsibility for applying them (Ryan, 1988)

The teachers, especially from Kenya, are not aware of the non-formal curriculum, hidden cur-

rriculum, and based on this ignorance the curriculum cannot be achieved. It therefore requires a deliberate commitment of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to reinforce it into the system. The current notion of the Kenyan government is the achievement of the formal curriculum and this therefore makes the teachers to worry about the coverage of the syllabus. It is therefore only the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology that should value to the product of non-formal curriculum, Character Education, and then motivate the teachers for the same, hidden curriculum (Mirk, 2012).

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