

**TEACHER EDUCATION AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINEE
TEACHERS: THE CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the efficacy of teacher education for character development, its challenges and solutions. In doing this the researcher asked three questions. The population of the study comprised one hundred and fifty teachers (lecturers) and student-teachers. A structured questionnaire of thirty-seven (37) items titled “Teacher Education and Character Development Challenges Questionnaire” (TECEDCQ) was used to collect data. The reliability and validity of the instrument were established. The internal consistency measure of reliability was computed for the instrument using Cronbach Coefficient Alpha Formulae and internal consistency rating of .88 was obtained. Data collected in answer to the research questions was analysed using Mean statistics. Findings showed that character development there justifiable ways to achieve character development in teacher education, such as taking students through situations that will expose them to judging another person who is in a grave situation; Create a situation where students can discuss their thought, feelings and beliefs freely; ask students hypothetical questions e.g. suppose a friend begged you to help him cheat in a test what would you do; Lead students into engaging in establishing group goals, decide on rules of conduct , plan activities and solve problems; organise everything in the school around the development of relationship between and among students, staff and community etc the study therefore recommend among others that a board should be constituted to evaluate the teachers in teacher training institutes character wise (most secretly of course). This will help the teachers shelve their unacceptable characters and the learners will gain.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Character Development, Trainee Teachers, Challenges and Solutions

Introduction

Teachers are the architects of national development, leaders and masses (Dienye and Iwele, 2011). They understand or at least should understand the true goals of education which is to produce individuals who are rational. According to Lumpkin (2008), they are role models. It is the expectation of the stakeholders that teachers be morally upright individuals who displayed good character (since they are role models). They are expected to teach and discipline their students to be respectful of

authority and responsible in completing their lessons (Lumpkin, 2008). They should be trained well enough to shoulder the immense burden of bringing up morally and academically sound individuals. To this Narvaez and Lapsley (2010), opined that teachers should be trained for positive character formation. This will erase the question, 'should teachers teach values in schools (or not)? Lickona (1991), posited that schools and teachers should educate for character especially through teaching respect and responsibility.

To Mitchell (2011) a teacher's job extends beyond academics. Teachers, though, are hired to develop children skills and abilities in academics like reading, writing, history, geography, mathematics and others; they are engaged too to do a lot more. In the classroom they can help students develop hope, fairness, humour, valour, appreciation and many other character strengths that lead to fulfilling lives. Like the saying goes, no one can give what he or she does not have. In other words necessary character strengths and skills should first be seen in the teachers before they could be seen in the learners under them. To have teachers with good character strength implies that their education should be character-development friendly.

What then is character education or character development? Before defining character education let us try the definition of the term "character." Character is the culmination of habits, resulting from the ethical choices, behaviours, and attitudes an individual makes, and is the "moral excellence" an individual exhibits when no one is watching. It includes an individual's desire to do one's best, to have concern for others' well-being and possess cognition of critical thinking and moral reasoning. It also aids development of interpersonal and emotional skills that allow individuals the capability to work effectively with each other in everyday situations. Lickona (1991), defines *character* as "knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. Lickona went on to posit that character is a universal phenomenon descriptive of people who possess the courage and conviction to live by moral virtues. There are character traits worthy of acquisition. To Hereford (2015), these include: honesty, integrity, keeping promise, loyalty, responsibility, pursuing excellence, being kind and caring, ability to treat all people with respect, being fair, being a good citizen. In like manner there are skills that teachers need to acquire that will enhance their teaching job, these

include communication, listening, decision-making, leadership skills and others.

Character education broadly defined can include anything from "values clarification, "to citizenship, to moral guidance. More narrowly defined, character education refers to a specific style of moral teaching. Alfie Kohn (1997) quoted by Stedje (2004) defines character education as a reflection of "particular values as well as particular assumptions about the nature of children and how they learn. Consequently, character education addresses the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of education, and utilizes all dimensions of school life to foster character development. Lawrence and Richard wrote, whether we like it or not, schooling is a moral enterprise (Stedje, 2004). Values issues abound in the content and process of teaching. Whether designated to a specific time in the classroom or fully integrated into a school's curriculum, character education occurs each minute in the classroom. The presence or absence of a specific curriculum does not negate the fact that children learn character by observing how teachers and administrators handle conflict, interruptions, disruptive children, disrespectful students, schedule changes, and the myriad situations that occur each day (Stedje, 2004). Character education should not be considered a tool that conform children to unthinking compliance. Character development is more than developing good behaviour but rather identifying and cultivating a set of inter- and intrapersonal skills that provide the framework to build and execute ethical behaviour and build community. To Elkin and Sweet (2004), character education is everything one does that influences character of the kid's one teaches. Lickona (1991), defines character education as the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about and set upon core ethical values. In other words, one's character education should end up enabling one to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right and then do what they believe to be right even in

the face of pressure from without and temptation from within. This confirms the need to make teacher education curriculum as effective and functional as possible. Lickona (1991), posits that character education (character developmental processes) should involve knowledge, feelings and actions. To him character should engage whoever is being trained (especially kids) in activities that make them think critically about moral and ethical questions that inspire them to become committed to moral and ethical actions, and give them ample opportunity to practise moral and ethical behaviour. To Elkind and Sweet (2004), the way one talks, behaves, the conduct one tolerates, the deeds one encourages, the expectations one transmits culminates in character education. As one undergoes such education one has his or her character developed.

It is necessary to note that quality character education creates a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment for every student and supports academic development. Quality character education in the long run will produce teachers who are effective and efficient in the classroom. Elkind and Sweet (2004), further pointed out that quality character education fosters qualities that will help students be successful as citizens in the workplace and with the academic curriculum; it lays foundation to help students be successful in all of the goals we have for our public schools; it is common denominator that will help schools reach all of their goals.

Several studies have been carried out to evaluate the extent of character education in teacher education. One of such is a recent publication by the character education partnership (2002), which highlighted details of a national survey of 600 deans of schools of education to determine what their institutions were doing to prepare future teachers in character education. 90% of the survey's respondents agreed that core values

should be taught in schools, only 24.4% of the respondents reported that their institutions "highly emphasized" content. Yet, for all the increased interest in implementing character education among school districts, state legislatures and academic researchers (Casel connections, 2005), it is a striking fact that few teacher education programs are intentionally and deliberately preparing pre-service teachers for the task (Schwartz, in press).

There seem to be problems militating against efforts at character development (education) in the institution of training. According to Lumpkin (2008), the increased emphasis on reading, mathematics and science to prepare students for a global, technological and information based market place seems to relegate the general well-being of students to a low educational priority. In Nigeria and in most places one of the missions for establishing public schools was to teach moral virtues. According to Mondale and Patton (2001), public schools were established in the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries with teaching of moral virtues as one of the missions. Yet, for all the increased interest in implementing character education, it is a striking fact that few teacher education programs are intentionally and deliberately preparing pre-service teachers for the task Schwartz quoted by Narvaez and Lapsley (2010.).

Teachers are expected to display behaviours reflective of moral virtues such as honesty and fairness and to adhere to professional codes of conduct. The most striking problem assailing teacher education is the inexplicitness of moral education in teacher education curriculum. According to Narvaez and Lapsley (2010) teacher educators should make explicit the hidden moral education curriculum and reveal the inextricable linkage between best practice instruction and moral character outcomes. They revealed the skills of moral character development. They are: supportive climate; ethical skills;

apprenticeship instruction; self-regulation; adopting a developmental systematic approach.

There is really need for resurgence of character education within teacher education programmes. Teacher education curriculum should really be developed to address the perceived and real need for addressing character-based issues in the classroom. In view of this need that is, beefing up character development (education) in teacher education, this paper seeks to air the challenges as perceived by in-service and trainee teachers as well as solutions to them.

Research Question

1. How can character development be achieved in student-teachers?
2. What are the challenges to character development in teacher education in Africa?
3. What could be done to face these challenges?

Method

Research design

The design adopted in this research was a descriptive survey because the researcher is interested in seeking what teachers and student-teachers opine about teacher education and character development. In other words descriptive survey refers to collection of data from a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables (Akuezuilo and Agu, 2004).

Population and sample

The population was made up of all the students and teachers (lecturers) of the five teacher training institutions in South-east part of Nigeria. They were chosen because they are involved in the training process. Three out of the institutions were selected via simple random sampling technique. A total of fifty (50) teachers (lecturers) and one hundred (100) students were selected through simple random sampling to participate in the study.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument was structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). The points assigned to the scales were 4,3,2,1 respectively. The mean of this 4-point scale (2.5) was determined such that $<2.5 =$ Strongly Disagree and $>2.5 =$ Strongly Agree The content and face validity of the instrument were determined by giving the questionnaire to two experts: one in Measurement and Evaluation Department and one in Educational Management and Policy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. They offered useful suggestions which helped to modify the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using Cronbach Coefficient and reliability co-efficient of 0.88 was obtained which was considered high. Thus, the instrument was considered reliable for the study. The data collected was analyzed using means (\bar{X}) for research questions and t-test at $P < 0.05$ for hypothesis.

Result

Research Question 1: How can teachers in training be trained for character development?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of teachers and student-teachers responses on how teachers in training can be trained for character development.

S/N	Item	Lecturers = 50 X	Decision	Student teachers =100 X	Decision
1	Students should be involved in honest, thoughtful discussion and reflection regarding the moral implications of what they see around them, what they are told and what they personally do and experience.	2.7	Accepted	2.8	Accepted
2	Take students through situations that will expose them to judging another person who is in a grave situation.	3.0	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
3	Ask students what can be done when scientific discoveries conflict with religious beliefs or lead to dangerously political conclusions.	2.8	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
4	Encourage students to judge movies and other television programs and their effects on the masses.	2.5	Accepted	2.6	Accepted
5	Create a situation where students can discuss their thought, feelings and beliefs freely.	3.1	Accepted	3.6	Accepted
6	Ask students hypothetical questions e.g. suppose a friend begged you to help him cheat in a test what would you do?	3.0	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
7	Lead students into engaging in establishing group goals, decide on rules of conduct , plan activities and solve problems	2.8	Accepted	3.6	Accepted
8	Organise everything in the school around the development of relationship between and among students, staff and community.	2.5	Accepted	2.9	Accepted
9	Emphasize social and emotional learning as well as academic learning	3.4	Accepted	3.5	Accepted
10	Emphasize cooperation and collaboration among students in competitions.	3.4	Accepted	3.5	Accepted
11	Emphasize fairness, respect, and honesty because they are part of	2.9	Accepted	3.0	Accepted

	everyday life.				
12	Old model of teacher-centered classroom should be dropped for democratic classroom where teachers and students hold class meetings to build unity, establish norms and solve problems.	3.5	Accepted	3.2	Accepted
13	Discipline and classroom management should be made to concentrate on problem-solving rather than rewards and punishment.	3.0	Accepted	2.4	Rejected

Table 1 showed that the lecturers agreed with items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 while the student teachers agreed with items 1 to 12 and disagreed with item 13 which states that discipline and classroom management should be made to concentrate on problem-solving rather than rewards and punishment.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges to character development in teacher education?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of teachers and student-teachers responses on challenges to character development in teacher education.

S/N	Item	Lecturers =50 X	Decision	Student- teachers =100 X	Decision
1	Student teachers consider the task of influencing the values and behaviour of pupils as integral to the role of the teacher before they begin their training.	2.8	Accepted	3.6	Accepted
2	The majority of students are aware of some input on their courses in relation to this area but training and discussion about character or values is not uniform between courses or institutions	2.8	Accepted	2.5	Accepted
3	Student teachers believe that there are a variety of factors whose influence on pupils' values is greater than their own. Despite this belief student teachers persist in the perception that teachers should be involved in values and character education.	2.5	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
4	There is a difference between the approach to values education between students completing a teacher training course at a christian institution and those at a non-christian institution	2.3	Rejected	3.3	Accepted
5	The majority of student teachers think	3.3	Accepted	3.1	Accepted

	their role is to encourage pupils to form their own values, however they also think that pupils should be encouraged to accept the ethos of their school and that there are common values shared by society more generally				
6	Student teachers' views on values education are sometimes contradictory.	3.4	Accepted	3.8	Accepted
7	There is no common practice in relation to the formation of pupils' character or values education in schools in relation to teacher training.	3.5	Accepted	3.2	Accepted
8	The majority of students in both institutions thought that there should be greater provision of Accepted opportunities to study character education on their courses.	3.4	Accepted	3.1	Accepted
9	Some teacher educators exhibit direct opposite of laudable characters by indulging in sorting, sexual harassment, aiding examination malpractice etc	2.8	Accepted	2.8	Accepted

In table 2 above, the lecturers agreed with Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 but disagreed with item 4 that states that there is a difference between the approach to values education between students completing a teacher training course at a Christian institution and those at a non Christian institution. On the other hand the student teachers agreed with all the items on challenges to character development in teacher education

Research Question 3: What could be done to face these challenges?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of teachers and student-teachers responses on how to face these challenges.

S/N	Item	Teachers = 50 X	Decision	Student- Teachers = 100 X	Decision
1	Flushing the teacher education programme of any corrupt practices, unqualified teachers, and hypocrisies on the part of the trainers.	3.4	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
2	Expelling any teacher that engages in unethical acts like examination malpractice, sexual harassment or sorting	2.4	Rejected	2.8	Accepted
3	School authority should not exonerate or cover ill-behaved teachers or students of rich parents	2.5	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
4	In-building necessary values into each and every course of study in teacher education programme	3.2	Accepted	3.0	Accepted

5	Promote core ethical values as the basis of good character.	3.4	Accepted	2.9	Accepted
6	Define character comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behaviour.	3.1	Accepted	2.9	Accepted
7	Use a comprehensive, intentional, proactive, and effective approach.	3.3	Accepted	2.6	Accepted
8	Create a caring school community.	3.5	Accepted	3.0	Accepted
9	Provide students with opportunities to engage in moral action.	3.7	Accepted	3.8	Accepted
10	Provide a meaningful and challenging curriculum that helps all students to succeed.	3.1	Accepted	3.3	Accepted
11	Foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn and to be good people.	3.4	Accepted	3.5	Accepted
12	Engage school staff as professionals in a learning and moral community.	2.8	Accepted	3.3	Accepted
13	Foster shared moral leadership and long-term support for character education.	3.0	Accepted	3.1	Accepted
14	Engage families and community members as partners in character education.	2.9	Accepted	3.3	Accepted
15	Evaluate the character of the school, its staff, and its students to inform the character education effort.	2.5	Accepted	3.3	Accepted

Table 3 showed that the lecturers agreed with all the items except item 2 which states that any teacher that engages in unethical acts like examination malpractice, sexual harassment or sorting should be expelled from the system. Student teachers on the other hand agreed with all the items on what could be done to control the challenges to character development in teacher education.

Discussion of Findings

According to the response to Research Question 1, the lecturers and the student teachers agree that the thirteen ways listed in table 1 can be used to achieve character development in teacher trainees except where the student teachers disagree with the thirteenth item which states that Discipline and classroom management should be made to concentrate on problem-solving rather than rewards and punishment. This is in line with Narvaez and Lapsley (2010), Lickona (1991), Hereford (2015) and Stedje (2004) reiteration that teachers should be developed character wise. In essence no one gives what he does not have. It is only when the teachers are developed adequately character wise themselves that we can be sure that the

learners placed under them will be developed character wise too.

In researcher question 2, the respondents all agree that character development is faced with some challenges except item 4 which disagreed with and which states that there is a difference between the approach to values education between students completing a teacher training course at a Christian institution and those at a non-Christian institution. This response may have been biased out of human ego. Since no one will accept that he does nothing good just because he does not belong here or there. The findings on the data gathered through Research Question3, indicates that those challenges to character development are

surmountable. This is supported by near 100% agreement by the lecturers and the student teachers that all the 15 items could ameliorate the challenges. It is true that the lecturers disagree with item that states that expelling any teacher that engages in unethical acts like examination malpractice, sexual harassment or sorting should be done to serve as a deterrent to persons with bad character. Perhaps it is the fear that agreeing to that would put their jobs in jeopardy. Nevertheless the truth must be told. Expel any lecturer or student teacher found guilty of any unacceptable character.

Conclusion

It is obvious that character education definitely faces countless challenges which seem to have little attention in the name of ameliorating them. But we have solace in the fact that there are as many solutions to these challenges as trainers may wish to apply in teacher education. However there is no turning back from forming characters positively if our world will continue to be habitable.

Recommendations

Based on the data collected on the research questions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teacher trainees should be evaluated character wise from time to time. This will help free the teacher training institutes of teachers (lecturers) with questionable character.
2. There is need to encourage student teachers whose characters are worthy of emulation even to the tune of scholarship or any other encouraging reward.
3. Moral character requires individuals to act on their moral convictions. There should be absolute and uniform practice in the formation of pupils' or students' character all over the nation so as to avoid different value orientation that can throw the nation into chaos. Example is what is

obtained currently in Nigeria's religious/ethnic crisis.

4. A board should be constituted to evaluate the teachers in teacher training institutes character wise (most secretly of course). This will help the teachers shelve their unacceptable characters and the learners will gain.

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