DEVELOPING POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND VALUES IN CHILDREN USING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT
This paper examined the roles of teachers and care-givers in developing positive attitudes and values in children using the principles of educational psychology. The paper opined that values and attitudes can be taught and learned. It believes that the critical period for this learning experience is at ages 0-5 years. It posited that the pre-school period is the best time for teaching and learning new concepts, values and positive attitudes. It also believes that the task of shaping children’s behaviour is not an easy one, yet convinced that it is much easier at this level of development. The paper recommended that teachers should include core values such as honesty and responsibility in whatever subject they are teaching, schools should liaise with parents on the inculcation of good values by both parents and the school and teachers should disabuse the minds of their pupils on the pursuit of frivolities.

Keywords: Education, Educational psychology, Positive attitudes, Values

INTRODUCTION
By divine purpose, children are blessings and sources of happiness and strength to families. They are a source of joy, hope and prosperity to society. As the saying goes, “a happy child is the nation’s pride”. For social propagation of humanity, God instructed man to care and teach the child the law and virtues of love, peace and holiness (Deut. 6:9). Besides, it is a community mandate for adults to guide and serve as models of right values and good conduct to children.
Unfortunately, what we experience today is a direct opposite of positive virtues in children’s behaviour. Young people are now developing drug addiction; dishonesty; promiscuity and other vices; resulting in cardio-vascular diseases to themselves and their parents. The consequences of general moral failure have caused most children to become source of headache, disappointment and public shame to their families. This paper attempts to show how educational psychology will teach and promote the development of positive values and attitudes in children.

**THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION**

Education is the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all processes through which a person develops ability, skills, attitudes and other forms of behaviour with positive value in the society which he lives. Bellingham (2007) sees education as “any process, formal or informal that helps develop the potentialities of human beings, including their knowledge, capabilities, behaviour patterns and values”. He further stated that “it is the developmental process provided by a school or any institution that is organised chiefly for instruction and learning”. According to Okeke-Oti (2010) education is a lifelong process which frees a man from ignorance and to some extent, superstition. Education enhances the quality of an individual and enables him to build up his personality in such a way that he is able to play an effective role in the development of the society which he belongs.

Okoh (2003) sees education as an activity. To him education is the activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another. According to Kosemani (2000) education is a universal practice or phenomenon engaged in by societies at all stages of development. Also, Dosunmu (2006) asserts that whatever the case may be, the main goal of education is to prepare the right type of environment for the individual, to allow him grow physically, mentally and spiritually in order that he can develop harmoniously within himself and at the same time together with his fellow human beings.

From the forgoing, it can be concluded that education whether formal or informal is one of the most enduring legacies that any society can pass on to its younger generation. This is because all these definitions presuppose that education is the means through which the norms and values of a given society are transmitted to its younger ones. Therefore, to educate an individual is a necessary step in societal development. This is one of the reasons every nation ought to take its educational system and process with every degree of seriousness. Any error made in the education of a child becomes a perpetual fatal error which such an individual could transmit into subsequent generations. Therefore, the process of human and national development in any given situation is interwoven with the process and quality of education available in that society.
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

According to Mallum and Haggai (2004), Educational Psychology is that branch of Psychology which studies the ways children can be most effectively brought into successful interaction with the subject to be learnt, the learning situation and the teacher who provides the learning opportunity. They pointed out that it is the application of the findings and principles from general psychology, social psychology, child development to assist the teacher better understand the learning process and the children. Akinade and Adedipe (2004) define Educational Psychology as the application of the principles of psychology in the field of educating children.

Mukherjee (2002) opines that Educational Psychology is a subtle attempt at understanding and applying concepts that are crucial to the teaching/learning process. These concepts include perception, cognition and concept formation, learning styles, child development, self-concept and self-esteem, guidance and counselling, intelligence and creativity, research and statistics. Others include human learning, punishment and reward, reinforcement, remembering and forgetting among others. He also views Educational Psychology as that branch of psychology which studies the ways the child can be most effectively brought in successful interaction with the materials to be learnt, the learning situation and the teacher who provides and guides the learning opportunity and process. To Mangal (2006), Educational Psychology is a branch of applied psychology which tries to apply psychological principles, theories and techniques to human behaviour in educational situations. Here the focus of educational psychology are psychological ways and means of improving all aspects of the teaching/learning processes including the child, learning process, learning material, learning environment and the teacher.

Furthermore, Oladele (1998) defines Educational Psychology as an applied psychology in which the child can be most effectively brought into contact with the learning process. It is geared towards investigating or exploring the factors that will stimulate and enhance or obstruct the learning process. Educational Psychology helps the teacher to understand the development of his pupils, the range and limits of their capacities, the process by which they learn and their social relationships.

Educational psychology is therefore the application of the findings, principles and techniques of psychology to the process of developing positive attitudes and values in children. It is also aimed at promoting effective positive attitudes and values in children.

Roles of Educational Psychology in Attitude and Value Formation

Nnachi (2003) has identified some of the roles of educational psychology in developing positive attitudes and values in children in the education process to include:
1. **The stages of development:** Psychology has clearly shown that human life passes through different stages of development before it reaches adulthood. They are infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Psychologists have also thoroughly studied the characteristic behaviour patterns in these different periods of life. Identification of these periods with different sets of characteristics and attributes as regards physical, mental and emotional development greatly help educationists to design curriculum and determine appropriate methods of teaching for students at different stages.

2. **Knowledge of the child:** The child is the key factor in the teaching-learning process. Educational Psychology helps the teacher to know his interests, attitudes, aptitudes and the other acquired or innate capacities and abilities; to know the stage of development linked with his social, emotional, intellectual, physical and aesthetic needs; to know his level of aspiration, his conscious and unconscious behaviour; his motivational and group behaviour; his conflicts, desires and other aspects of his mental health. With this knowledge, teachers can provide guidance and help for the formation of positive attitude or change of attitude.

3. **Individual differences:** No two persons are exactly the same. Pupils differ in their level of intelligence, aptitudes, likes and dislikes and in other propensities and potentialities. There are gifted, backward, physically and mentally challenged children. Thus, educational psychology tells the teacher about the individual differences among the children in the class and the procedure, methodology and techniques to be adopted in inculcating attitude and values in them based on their individual peculiarities.

4. **Solving classroom problems:** There are innumerable problems like truancy, bullying, peer pressure, ethnic tensions and examination malpractice. Educational Psychology helps to equip the teacher by studying the characteristics of the problem children, the dynamics of the group, behavioural characteristics and adjustments with view to adapting ways of changing negative attitudes and values of children with problem behaviour.

5. **Necessary skills and interest in teaching:** Educational psychology helps the teacher to acquire and develop necessary qualities and skills to deal with the problems created by the pupils, maintain a healthy atmosphere in the classroom and show concern regarding the progress of the child.

6. **Effective methods of teaching:** Educational psychology has discovered several new approaches, principles, methods and techniques of teaching which are very helpful in today’s teaching-learning process. Educational psychology tells us how significant play
and recreation are for the children and how play-way method turns learning into an interesting task aimed at changing negative attitudes and values of children.

7. **The influence of heredity and environment on the child:** Educational psychology helps the teacher to know that the child is the product of heredity and environment. They are the two sides of a coin. Both play a prominent part in the all-round development of the child. While the child is born with a number of hereditary qualities, environment helps them to be modified according to the requirements of the society.

8. **Mental health development of the child:** Educational Psychology helps the teacher to know the factors responsible for the mental ill-health and maladjustment of a child and to suggest improvement thereof. Besides this, it also provides the teacher with necessary insight to improve his own mental status to cope up with the situation.

9. **Provision of guidance and counselling:** Today guidance to a child at every stage of life is needed because psychological abilities, interests and learning styles differ from person to person. Similarly, what courses of study the child should undertake in future is also a vital question. All these can be answered well if the teacher knows the psychology of children.

10. **Inculcation of positive and creative discipline:** The slogan of the traditional teacher was “spare the rod and spoil the child.” Flogging the child was the chief instrument. Educational Psychology has replaced the repressive system with the preventive system. Now teachers adopt a cooperative and scientific approach to modify the behaviour of the children. Emphasis is laid on self-discipline through creative and constructive activities.

11. **Enhancing teachers’ personal and self-knowledge:** Educational psychology helps the teacher to know about himself/herself. His/her own behaviour pattern, personality characteristics, likes and dislikes, motivation, anxiety, conflicts and adjustment. All this knowledge helps him in growing as a successful teacher to inculcate positive attitudes and values in children.

12. **Educational psychology helps in professional growth, changing attitude and innovative thinking:** Inside the classroom, educational psychology has enabled the teacher to achieve proper conditioning of pupils by achieving and directing classroom programmes on human lives. Not only this, educational psychologists are busy in finding out innovations in the field of education. These innovations will bring about professional growth of the teacher thereby helping him to inculcate positive attitudes and values in children.
The Concept of Values

Values are principles, standards or qualities that an individual or group of people hold in high regard. These values guide the way people live their lives and the decisions they make. A value may be defined as something that we hold dear, those things or qualities which we consider to be of worth. Kalusi (2006) also sees it as the essence of a society’s life. To Bolarin (2009), values are basic beliefs and attitude in a society whether of individuals or groups which are considered worthwhile and which serve as a guide to choices and behaviour in daily life. Esu (2009) also sees values as ideals that guide or qualify personal conduct, interaction with others and involvement in career. Bolarin (2009) seems to have captured all these definitions when he defines values as trait, practices, acts, ideals, beliefs, attitudes and principles that a group or society considers to be of merit, worthwhile, dear, acceptable and right. That is to say that values stand for the philosophy of life of a society, a people or an individual. Values are something that are held in high esteem or high regard by a society. This probably accounts for why Kalusi (2006) asserts that values are the essence of a society.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) identified respect for elders, honesty and accountability, co-operation, industry, discipline, self-confidence and moral courage as Nigerian core values. Bolarin (2005) further identifies some dominant values which formed the core values upheld by a larger section of the Nigerian society to include: Delisting laziness, dignity of labour, respect for parents/elders, hospitality, public spiritedness, and respect for authority, hard-work, and respect for sanctity of life, honesty and truthfulness. It is expected that all sound individuals hold these values in high esteem and embrace them as the society’s philosophy of life. This expectation is a very demanding one, bearing in mind that these values are grossly compromised in the present Nigeria socio-economic and political context. Kalusi (2006) points out that their excessive compromise has manifested in greed, corruption, dishonesty, violent crimes, political killings/thuggery, drug peddling and so many other anti-social behaviours that are capable of jeopardizing all sincere efforts directed at stimulating nation cohesion. Quest for easy money, ethnicity, religious intolerance, class conflict, political differences and hatred have been identified as reasons why Nigerians abused their national core values (FRN, 2013). Suffice it to say that most of this abuse is because education has not taken its rightful place in the Nigerian society.

The Concept of Attitudes

Attitude is a way of feeling, thinking or behaving. According to Chukwu (2010), attitude is what people think or feel, that leads them to be prejudiced, tribalistic or nationalistic. Attitude is therefore what propels a person to respond either positively, negatively or with indifference to situations. Positive attitudes bring national integration and development
whereas negative attitude or indifference negate national cohesion and development. Chukwu and Duguryil (2011) blame the so many social ills prevalent in Nigeria and their attendant effects on the citizens to bankruptcy in values and attitudes. According to them, the slow pace of national development and integration in Nigeria lies not in incapability of Nigeria to achieve these developments but on Nigeria’s low moral values and negative attitudes to national issues. This is manifests in corrupt practices, dishonesty, favouritism and the likes. Esu (2009) is of the view that the negative attitude of Nigerians and low moral values is a product of national mindset and acceptance/imitation of foreign culture. This attitude has to change for any meaningful development to occur. Attitudes are learnt attributes. The negative attitude which has become a dent on our values can be unlearnt hence the need for moral education.

**Attitudes and Attitude Formation**

The concept attitude is simply the way a person thinks or feels about others or issues. It is a two-faced word; on the negative, attitude means behaving in an unacceptable way for instance, being aggressive and not caring for others. On the positive, attitude has to do with being tolerant, patient, peaceful, truthful, and considerate to others. Attitude per se is a behavioural change which is achievable through a gradual process of teaching and learning. At the early stage of development, infants and toddlers focus on themselves and see the world as a matter of here and now. Through proper child care, they gradually develop interest in being with other children in a social group. As time goes on, the child experiences what Dewan and Dakun (2011) refers to as “autonomy versus doubt” and “initiative versus guilt” as the child seeks autonomy to learn self-control and self-assertion. Since his social development is related to his progress in cognitive development, his egocentric posture affects his social interaction. The child may not be aware of the effect of his action on others. For example, he may have difficulty with initiating a play activity with another child because he uses inappropriate behaviour to get the other child’s attention. However, as the child grows older, he becomes less egocentric and more sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others. This awareness can be successfully transferred into social successes, (Santrock, 2007).

Psychologically, social adjustment is a difficult task. Teachers should therefore teach children to appreciate that their peer relationship should be reciprocal and dynamic. Children need to learn that friendship is a negotiated relationship, involving working out acceptable boundaries. Children need to understand that for whatever boundaries are crossed, individuals should be accommodative enough to sustain the friendship.

Ozoji (1993) defines attitude change as “acquisition, reversal or intensification of attitudes”. He went further to draw attention to a number of facts about attitude change which include: that as we learn (acquire) a new attitude about an object; there is a displacement of an
earlier attitude; that a positive attitude can be reversed to be negative and a negative one reversed to a positive one; that a mild attitude can be made stronger or intensified; that attitude change does not necessarily imply that the present attitude is negative.

It is a generally accepted fact that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2013). However, it is rather unfortunate that teachers of today do not appreciate the powerful influence they can have on their pupils and the society through their conduct and instructional activities. It is in this light that Tahir (2000) observed that:

Teachers are the ones that make or mar the growth of any nation through education. Teachers therefore have a role to play in the development of the nation, especially in bringing up leaders and intellectuals of tomorrow, who will sustain the nation’s development. Thus, the abilities of the teachers are crucial determinants of quality education and invariably, the development of any society. In this direction, the teacher occupies a strategic position in helping the young realize his dreams. Thus, the home and society expect the teacher within the school setting to build the intellectual and moral development of their children. (p.30)

Mohammed (2000) reiterates the fact that teachers can really bring about the desired change when he states as follows:

Teachers should never lose sight of the fact that they act as role models to their students. This entails a heavy burden of responsibility. Whatever they do in the school, whether proper or improper, good or bad, is liable to be copied by the young learners. It is, therefore, necessary for the teachers to cultivate good habits and exemplary behaviour. (p.30)

It is therefore concluded here that attitudinal change would have to involve the acquisition, intensification of positive attitudes and the reversal of negative attitudes. In Educational Psychology different approaches may be adopted to bring about attitudinal change in an individual. Some of these approaches include: cognitive, behavioural, consistency and self-perception theories.

**Ways in Which Educational Psychology Can Be Used in Developing Positive Attitudes and Values in Children**

Solomon, Schaps, Watson and Battistich (1992) posit that educational psychology helps teachers and parents enhance children’s positive attitudes and values through the following ways:

1. Supportive adult-child relationships: children are inclined to emulate adults with whom they have positive relationships.
2. Exposure to societal values: not only social customs and conventions but also the accumulated moral wisdom of adult society; expose children to pro-social models and explain the reasons for moral action;
3. Opportunities for peer interaction and pro-social action: help children to develop self-control, increase their moral and social understanding and concern for their fellows;

4. Opportunities to think about and discuss moral issues: work of structural developmentalists has demonstrated that children strive to develop coherent moral systems, and that this is fostered by providing opportunities to discuss and think about moral situations; as children approach adolescence their trust in adult authority weakens and they strive for independence; at this stage they will need to have reasons for moral action that they regard as their own;

5. Experiences that promote understanding of others: the ability to take the perspective of others has been proposed by cognitive-developmental theorists as a central ingredient of pro-social action.

According to Huitt (2003), educational psychology enables the teachers adapt the following measures with a view to developing positive attitudes and values in children: Have a sound knowledge of the subject matter; Think about how his pupils perceive him; Model what he/she wants his pupils to do; Reflect on his/her teaching methodology; Think about his/her pupils’ future; Recognize that pupils are complex individuals; Know that his/her students are individuals and Acknowledge pupils academic and non-academic strengths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should include core values such as honesty and responsibility in whatever subject they are teaching

2. Schools should liaise with parents on the inculcation of good values in children.

3. Teachers should disabuse the minds of their children on the pursuit of frivolities by being examples of morals and values.

4. Teachers need to appreciate the fact that teaching is a deliberate and goal oriented activity, therefore they need to be purposeful and deliberate in planning their instructions.

5. The learning environment should be such that it enables the child to associate, play and express self freely. Doing so will enrich the psycho-social or affective development of the child.

6. The teachers can complement the role of clergymen by relating children misdeeds to what is written in the Bible. The children should be asked to point out the fault in the unacceptable behaviour exhibited, and to suggest the ‘punishment’. The school can also plan and observe prayer sessions and lessons.
7. Students can be taught values by giving them the opportunity to examine their personal actions and that of others. This can be done by giving children experiences where they can become more reflective and analytical about what they do.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that educational psychology has contributed considerably to the creation of the modern system of education. In teaching, we are dealing with three elements – the teacher, the child, and the subject. If effectively used by teachers, headmasters, administrators, inspectors, guidance and counselling workers and social workers it will significantly develop positive values and attitudes in children and form them into useful personalities in the future. Aspects of educational psychology that can be used for developing positive attitude include learning or learning themes, motivation, personality (self-concept and self-esteem), perception and how the teacher can influence attitude formation using them.

REFERENCES


