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CHARACTER EDUCATION

Introduction

Character education comes first in the reforms, which are carried out or planned in all the countries, since more and more increasing immorality and degradation of values is the greatest problem of modern people. Increasing immorality and degradation of values are destroying social traditions. In the societies, which are run out of traditions, it is natural of individuals to be selfish and not to care about the benefit of others. It is impossible to provide a society only by law (laws). Society and individual achieves happiness by living according to a certain set of rules (traditions). Where values diminish, immorality can become a standard, and this life can turn to the basis of injustice. Thus, looking at our modern world in such a perspective, one would not see a joyous scene.

A half of the world's population is trying to live on a sum less than two dollars per day, one billion two hundred thousand people in the world are leading their lives on a sum less than one dollar per day. 80 % of all the world's capital is kept by 20 % of population of the world, 80% of the world's population lives, sharing 20 % of the capital. The fortune of the world's three richest persons is more than the income of 48 poor countries. The fortune of the world's 15 richest businessmen is above all the income of the African continent. 4 % of the world's 225 richest people's fortune could provide for the needs of all people in the world (Selcuk, 2000).

During 2003, 60 million people have been taken ill with HIV/AIDS. There are about one billion illiterate people, and one billion people more are deprived of clean water, 2.4 billion people are not provided with the basic medical help, 325 million children have no opportunity to go to school, and every year 11 million children, under the age of five, die from the illnesses, which could be prevented (www.un.org).

On the other side, every year 700 thousand women and children are kidnapped from Africa and the countries of the former USSR and sold to the European countries as slaves. In Thailand during the last three years the number of prostitutes among children has increased by 20 %, 15 % of people, kidnapped from the Southern Vietnam and brought to the other countries, are under the age of 15. In China 250 thousand women and children are kidnapped, and thousands of children from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, some of them being just five years old, are sold to the United Arab Emirates and made work as jockeys at the camel contests (www.milliyet.com.tr). In short, according to the United Nations Children's Fund annually 1 million 200 thousand children are sold for 10 billion dollars (www.unicef.org).

It is impossible that generally described such a wrong situation does not affect an individual. Since our time is the time when particularly social communication, being a very important part of our life, is prevalent and people are more influenced by events and other people. For this reason the point of this wrong development, having effect on an individual, does not raise any hopes for the future. Because some considerably important results were gained during the research, which was carried out in 2002 at Josephson Ethic Institute, located in the USA, one of the most developed countries in the world. Here are some important statistical data, which were obtained in the research, held on students, who are supposed to become the leaders of future society (www.josephsoninstitute.org):

-During 1992-2002, the number of students, cheating in examinations during the last year, has increased to 48 % in 2002, while being 46 % in 1992.

-The number of students, who have stolen something from a shop during the last 12 months, has grown up to 38 % in 2002, while it was 33 % in 1992. The number of students, who have made two or more thefts during the last year, is 20 %. Besides the number of students, who have stolen something from their own families and relatives, has increased to 28 % in 2002, being 24 % in 1992. 25 % of students, who go to religious schools, steal something from their families and relatives too.

-It is reported that 37 % of students and 38 % of the students, going to religious schools, tell lies in order to get a job, 93 % of them lie to their families and 83 % to their teachers, 46 % of students tell lies in order to earn money. Besides, it is known that one among three students is not trusted by the school, where he/she gets the education, 43 % of students have beaten those who made them nervous, one among 5 students at least one time during the last 12 months has brought explosive to school, 70 % of students can get drugs whenever they want to. It is also reported that at least one time 83 % of students have come to school, being drunk.

It is known that again in the USA every fourth girl and every seventh boy becomes a subject to sexual violence at least one time before reaching the age of 18 (Lickona, 1997, s.22-26). In the end, in a year more than 400 thousand girls become pregnant and have abortions to escape it.

The afore-mentioned statistical data, which can grow more, show that the loss of character is the most important problem of modern people.

Character and Personality

Either in our everyday conversations or in some scientific works the concepts of character and personality are mixed up and used one instead of another. Personality means feelings, thoughts, abilities, interests, behavior, attitude and actions. Personality includes the way a person expresses oneself and forms his/her relationship with the others. Personality contains the traits, inherent to a person, which distinguish each person from the other people. For example, good or bad memory, impressionability, irritability, sensitivity, the ability of taking fast decisions easily, good speech are the indicators of personality, and they differ from one person to another (Koknel, 1997, s.20,21). Heredity and environment play an important role in the forming of personality, which is the entirety of each person's own tendencies of behavior (GiingOr, 1997, s.35).

While being the entirety of the personal attitude traits, character is the value, attached to physical, emotional

and mental activity of a person by environment. The character of a person forms on the basis of value concepts of the environment he/she lives in. In other words, character is the way a person uses the concepts of values and moral rules, which are valid in the environment he/she lives in (Koknel, 1997, s.21-22). Regardless of man's extrovert or introvert personality, man's being honest or a liar, considerate towards others or selfish, respectful or disrespectful reveals his/her character. Therefore, one cannot expect people to be responsible for the traits of their personalities, but people can be considered responsible for the habits of their characters (Gough, 2002, s.8).

The Necessity of Character Education

The necessity of character education is brought about by such problems of modern youth as drug-abuse, band membership, drunkenness, pregnancy of girls at young age, brutality, deception, bad manners, indecency, impatience, indifference, etc. (Ediger, 1997). Character education develops realistic and positive student images, their respectful attitude to other people, ability to take decisions, necessary for participation in social activities. The main way of character education includes the interaction of disciplines, the process of rational thinking and the participation of students. In other words, character education has the meaning of being determined, attentive, reliable, knowing oneself, understanding, feeling and practicing such important moral values as decency, respect and courage. Character education forms the way of life, which provides the development of general ethical values and goodness of everybody's thinking. Character education provides with such universal values as decency, being honest, responsible and respectful, which form the basis of a good character. Good character forms by caring about the universal values, understanding and implementing them into life. In short, effective character education includes the perception and feeling of moral life and realizing it in behavior (Anonymous, 2003, s.40-41).

The following difficulties can be considered among the greatest problems of modern youth (Lickona, 1997, s.22-26):

1-More and more growing brutality (only in the USA from 1960 to 1992 the range of youth's crimes, based on brutality, has increased by 6 times).

2-More and more increasing indecency (telling lies, coping, thefts)

3-Growing disrespectful attitude towards the state executives,

4- According to the statement of many teachers, there is the increase of bad intentions among young people,

5-Increasing hatred and the rate of premeditated crimes,

6-Decrease in professional ethics,

7-The increase of such harmful tendencies of behavior as pregnancy before marriage, the rate of abortions, drug-abuse,

8-Neglect of morality, the increasing tendencies of youth's behaving harmfully to themselves and other people, without even thinking they are doing wrong,

9-The decrease of personal and civil responsibility,

10-Spoiled language, being spoiled.

On the other hand, the form of a traditional family and system of values being spoiled, descending values of important institutions, the joyless state of schools, which are the most important contributors to the development of children's system of values after their families, reducing professional ethics, decreasing realization of civil responsibility, disrespect to the governing bodies, indecency and brutality, widespread among young people, are the reasons, which have caused the necessity of character education (Demmon, 1996).

The researches, being made, show that children and young people neglect morality, stay indifferent to it and extremely self-oriented. For example, while coping, young people are ruled by the principle that everybody does so, being short of the feeling of civil responsibility, which provides control over anger, rising despite of sense of doing wrong (Gilbert, 2003, s.8).

Character education provides the roles for a civilized society and a cultured mature person and the development of attitude which forms favorable atmosphere for academic progress and successful studies, positive relations between people and personal success (Hoge,2002,s.103-108).

Character education includes any school programs or activities, which help children to become good peoples. Briefly speaking, character education fosters certain values in students (Robinson, Jones, Hayes, 2000,s.21). In character education, also defined by making all the efforts to foster morality, great importance is attached to compassion, courage, politeness, honesty, decency, faithfulness, being determined, responsible and respectful (Edgington, 2002, s.113-116).

Character education is the activity aimed at the development of a good character. The quality of a good character is defined by values. Each value has three aspects. These are: 1) knowledge of morality, 2) feeling of morality, 3) moral behavior. For instance, to possess the value of fairness, one should know what is fairness and what is necessary for being fair in relations between people (knowledge of morality). To feel guilty in case of unfair attitude, to feel indignation if one sees other people suffering (feeling of morality), and in the end, to be a citizen, realizing one's own responsibility by contributing to social peace, to behave oneself fairly in relations between people (moral behavior)... Thus, young people who want to develop their characters, know what is value, and appreciate its impact, wish to possess and realize it in their daily behavior. Therefore, character education can be summed up as the development of one's mind, soul and behavior (Lickona, 1997,s.22-26). Students' characters form by getting experience from the surrounding world. That is why the characters of children and young people are in general the responsibility of the whole humanity. But if being categorical, character education has three important foundation-stones. These are: family, school and community (Mckay, 2002, s.45-50).

The Role of Family and Community in Character Education

The relations built inside a family have an important place in the forming of character. There is a permanent fundamental connection between the relations formed in a family during the years of childhood and the relations formed during the following years with teachers, friends and colleagues.

The basis of character is formed during the first five years. Many surprising aspects of character can be revealed in the reactions of a child to his first social environment. For example, the intense resentment, fostered towards one of the parents, can last for the whole life in the form of protest against authority in general. The same way, childhood spent without love and care can be followed by extreme anger in maturity. It is worth saying that in the culture, which reduces the relations, necessary for the development of love between a child and his parents, and which allows bringing up children carelessly without paying much attention to them, typical mature character reveals the intense signs of lack of self-confidence and distrust to the others. An average man of such a society expects deception every moment, doubts of everything and stays in a permanent search of food and things. The social-economic conditions of a family influence the development of character too. Poverty, dissatisfied wishes, the rising feeling of inferiority while being among friends because of poorness, and again for the reason of poverty bad family relations, a mother's failure to show her maternal tenderness, unfavorable home and life conditions... can cause the negative development of character (Zangwill, 1990, s. 141-143).

Besides, in many cases adults set wrong examples to young people. If we look around, we can see that many adults fail to establish any contacts with young people. Let's think how many adults know the names of their neighbors' children and adolescents? How many conversations take place between grown-ups and young people, except their contact within the precincts of any organizations? How often do we look into the eyes of young people, wearing different clothes and making piercing? Children and adolescents learn to be responsible or irresponsible from grown-ups. We, adults, reveal and teach the values, which we learned in our childhood. In fact, we care not about the problems of youth, but about the problems of adults. The way, by which children and adolescents' values can be changed, is to make them see how we gain these fundamental values, realizing them in our lives. Children and adolescents watch the shortcomings of politicians, music and film stars, sportsmen's values. Children and adolescents watch and consider rather attentively the way we act, for example buying a ticket, avoiding the payment of taxes, our indecent behavior, jokes and talks, revealing our disrespect to people of different religion, race and sex. We, adults, teach values by the means of body language and intonation (Kinnomon, 2003, s. 38-39). Positive or negative character traits are brought about not only by family, but also by schools. (Storm, 2002, s. 6).

Character Education at Schools

Educators bear a considerable part of the responsibility for the revealing of students' character traits and their development. Educators provide the important skills, concerning the revealing and development of character traits, teaching students to be respectful to people and developing relations between people (Sharp, 2002, s. 303-304). Character education is the process, providing the widespread development of students in the way of behaving, interpreting and understanding in accordance with the ethical values. All the philosophers, from Platon and Aristo to Kant and Dewey, have noted the importance of character education in society. In character education teachers fulfil their duties by being a positive example, creating moral atmosphere in class, revealing the themes, concerning morality, in curriculum, providing opportunities to realize the traits of one's good character in out-of-class conditions. According to the results of researches, being made, teachers are the most important factor in the development of students' character education. The teachers of primary schools play a great role, being examples themselves, making students discuss right and wrong things, using the strategies, which give an opportunity to turn the development of students' characters to a positive direction (Andrew, 2002, s. 47). On the other hand, unfavorable school conditions, boring methods of teaching, teachers' indifference, tactless behavior, teacher's moral health can have a positive or negative impact on the character of a person (Ugur, 1979, s. 84-102).

From this point of view, character education should be performed with comprehension, involving all the school elements. In this regard, there are some principles which should be considered while performing character education at schools. Douglas (2002, s. 103-108) names and enumerates 11 of these principles:

- 1-Character education should provide real ethical values, which are the basis of a good character.
- 2-Character education should demand a comprehensive, systematic, purposeful approach, attaching a great importance to real values, within the whole school life.
- 3-Character education should develop thinking, feeling and implementing.
- 4-School should be an important establishment for character education.
- 5-It should be known that during the development of their characters students need the opportunities for implementing moral values.
- 6-Character education brings about the necessity of curriculum for all the students to be successful.
- 7-Character education strives for the development of students' natural motivation.
- 8-The whole school personnel should provide educational atmosphere, connected with the same values and sharing the responsibility of character education, guiding students through the educational process.
- 9-Moral leaders, both among personnel and among students, are necessary for character education.
- 10-School should provide the contribution of families and society to its efforts in character education.
- 11-To value character education, the activities of school, supporting students' character traits, should be appreciated.

First of the most significant points to which the schools attaching great importance to character education, should pay attention is the knowledge that character is developed by means of activities, demanding responsibility. For this reason, students should be permitted to encounter considerable matters within the programs of character

education. The second point is the knowledge that character is developed by the way of impact, and for this reason it is necessary that character education be concentrated on communication, connected with morality and ethics in social, cultural and ecological spheres. And the third important point is the knowledge that character completes the whole personality. Therefore, schools should organize many activities to develop a strong feeling of one's own personality. While performing character education two main principles should not be omitted. One of them is that society, school and every establishment should be considered the partner of character education, another is the fact of positive class atmosphere and a competent teacher (Burret, 1993).

Character education, carried out at school, is not a once-time-made course, a speeded-up program or slogan posters, hanging on walls. Character education is a part of school life. Society is depository of character education. Character traits appear in novels, the works of art, literature and historical biographies. In this regard teacher and school administrator are the central persons in character education (ERIC, 1996).

To develop students' character traits character education program should be established at schools, and they should be implemented both in the form of lesson and in a complex with the lessons of curriculum. Following this aim realization and development of character education demands a school program, based on 10 main principles. These principles are (Mckay, 2002, s.45-50):

1-Educators, families, students and the members of society should together work out the plan of character education.

2-The policy of character education is to be defined.

3-Character traits are to be defined.

4-It is integrated with curriculum; in other words, character education is the internal part of curriculum on all of its levels. Character traits are explained sometimes using some historical person as an example, or in a process of some scientific experiment, that is being connected with a class lesson. These traits should be a part of each class and each theme, being taught.

5-Learning by experience; students are giving the opportunities, providing them with character traits. These are provided more by feeling and seeing them being implemented (even practicing) than speaking about them. Real and social experiments, explaining character traits, are included into program. In this process much time should be spared for cooperative learning and asking classmates for advice, discussions and illustrations.

6-Assessment; the impact of character education on students should be permanently assessed. Assessment data are used in the development of program.

7-Adults' being examples; students learn by experience. For this reason, it is quite important that all the adults, being at home, at school, in society, keep permanent contact with students and show positive character traits. If adults fail to be an example of behavior, they are teaching, the program will be unsuccessful.

8-The improvement of personnel; sufficient time and resources should be spared for the activities of personnel's improvement. Since personnel is a permanent creator and performer of character education.

9-Students' leadership; students should be engaged into planning, implementation and evaluation on all the levels of program.

10-Program support; character education program should be supported by sufficient funds, help of district administration, provision of highly qualified personnel, internet service and teachers.

According to Bulach (2002, s.79-83), character education involves school, family and society. Everybody is the part of this program, from a deliverer to a cook, from a school cleaner to teachers and school administrators. For this reason, a short-period (a week or a month's) character education programs are not effective. Since the traits of each student's character differs. In the end, there are a lot of differences in students' behavior. That is why, instead of concentrating on a month or a week's period education, one or two behavior tendencies should be discussed per week.

On the other hand, such things as puppet theatre, stories, handicraft activities, social projects, academic works should be used in character education. Character traits can be connected with mathematical or scientific works along with the other educational activities. On the other side, animals and their traits can be used in the works of students' character education. It is considered how animals gain their traits in their natural environment, and what benefit these traits provide animals with. And after that, this knowledge is connected with students' daily life. For instance, students are taught the natural traits of a beaver, the way it builds its home and completes its work. As a result, beaver has a shelter and is protected from enemies. Students are influenced by the example of a beaver and discuss the advantages of being responsible. Students can transfer the gained knowledge onto people's relations and have it as an example (Charlene, 1997, s.19).

McKay (2002, s.45-50), notes that there is improvement of students in such matters as compassion and interest, respect and responsibility, reliability and honesty in schools that practicing character education. According to this, the forming of such character traits as compassion and interest, such things as students' establishment of positive relations with each other, organization of "welcome"- aimed activities for new coming students, their not making unpleasant jokes to other people are considered. Concerning the matters of "respect and responsibility", students' solving their problems at school without quarrels, being respective to school property, responsible in their actions, speaking politely, being respective to teachers, considering being a good citizen important, every day and all the time keeping to school rules are considered. And as for the points of "honesty and reliability", they include treating people well, telling the truth, helping to establish school rules, showing the behavior, by which the established school rules and right things are implemented. Along with all these, the students of schools, practicing character education, has proved themselves to be decent, honest, keeping to the rules, trusting people, attentive and consci-

entious personalities.

Conclusion

Now in all the countries, character education comes first in the reforms, especially at elementary schools. According to Mary (2000, s.32), in the end of the researches that concerning the matters of students' studying and children's development, co-operative learning and highly cultured education, character education has been attached advanced importance. With time, life has lowered to material basis, which is the reason of degradation of people's values. The implementation of character education as a lesson of curriculum, being incorporated in all the lessons, should be provided by school personnel and especially by teachers.

The most effective method of character education is the knowledge, feeling and implementing character traits. The creation of positive climate at school and in class by school- administrator and teachers is of great importance for providing students with character traits. Another significant point is the necessity of sparing much time for practicing character traits instead of teaching them theoretically. In this regard, it is necessary that everybody at school reveal character traits in his behavior and attitude. Besides, stories, novels, cognitive books, poems, illustrated books and lives of historic persons can be used effectively to provide character traits.

Another important matter in character education is the increase of school-administrators and teachers' contacts with families and provision of their active participation in school matters. It is rather difficult to develop a person's character without family help and support. For this reason, on each level of character education there should be established cooperation between schools that having character education as their aim, and families.

The building, equipment and stock of school should be kept in a certain order, teachers' walking in school yard and passages, and the growth of students' educational activities can be considered an important part of character education, performed at school.

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ABSRTACT

In this study, the subject of character and character education, which has taken on a great significance in Europe and the USA during the last years and become the biggest problem of modern people, is considered. As a result of growth of negative development tendencies in the world that affect an individual, the subjects of the necessity of character education and the duties of family and society are among the themes, being investigated. Besides, the role of schools in the development of individuals' characters, where and how character education is to be held, the duties of teachers and school administrators are considered in this work. In the article there are particular suggestions of the way, how character education should be performed. **Key World:** Character Education, Character Development¹²