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HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION REALIZATION

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The article deals with character education realization process. Moral culture in the studying surrounding and personality development during the educational and studying process are analyzed. Peculiarities of extra-curricular activities included in an informal (hidden) curriculum are highlighted. The role of families, school staff and community in the effective character education realization process is pointed out. Service learning and community service are defined and their components are presented.

Key words: *character education, hidden curriculum, service learning, community service, service project, moral culture, educational process.*

Стаття присвячена процесу виховання характеру. Проаналізовано моральну культуру навчального середовища та розвиток особистості під час навчально-виховного процесу. Виокремлено особливості позашкільних видів діяльності, включених до неформальної (прихованої) навчальної програми. Наголошується на ролі сім'ї, педагогів та громади в ефективному процесі виховання характеру. Подано визначення практичного навчання на засадах громадської діяльності та громадської діяльності на волонтерських засадах, представлені їхні компоненти.

Ключові слова: *виховання характеру, «прихована навчальна програма», практичне навчання, суспільний проект, моральна культура, навчально-виховний процес.*

Олишкевич С.В. НЕФОРМАЛЬНОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ И ЕГО РОЛЬ В ВОСПИТАНИИ ХАРАКТЕРА

Статья посвящена процессу воспитания характера. Проанализированы нравственная культура учебной среды и развитие личности во время учебно-воспитательного процесса. Выделены особенности внешкольных видов деятельности, которые включены в неформальную (скрытую) учебную программу. Отмечается роль семьи, педагогов и общества в эффективном процессе воспитания характера. Дано определение практического обучения на основе общественной деятельности и общественной деятельности на волонтерских началах, представлены их компоненты.

Ключевые слова: *воспитание характера, «скрытая учебная программа», практическое обучение, общественный проект, нравственная культура, учебно-воспитательный процесс.*

Statement of the problem. Moral education of the youth is an ongoing process that combines classroom, extracurricular and outside the school activities. In this regard, an informal ("hidden") curriculum that contains various aspects which directly affect the educational process of students is equally important for effective character education implementation. The development of moral culture includes care outside the school; partner collaboration of schools, parents and community.

The relevance of the research is conditioned by the urgent necessity to improve the process of youth's moral values development during the educational process on the example of American school. American professor T. Lickona points out the importance of moral culture development and improvement within the process of common values formation. According to his way of thinking, school is the mini replica of community which possesses the ethical culture enriched with operative values which are called the norms of moral behavior, reflected in the work of the school, teachers' example and administra-

tion's policy. The moral culture of the school directly affects the behavior of students and members of the school community, as well as contributes to the formation of their character. According to the views of the scholars, the development of moral culture in the school environment makes it possible to identify, report, model, study and adhere to the basic virtues of the school; maintain the discipline that promotes particular values in all the spheres of school life. Consequently, we have scientific interest in the whole process of character education realization including informal ("hidden") curriculum.

The objective of the study is to study hidden curriculum constituents and analyze the importance of each in character education process.

Analysis of relevant research. It is necessary to mention that while studying this matter, we could not find accurate information regarding character education hidden curriculum. However, some general concepts were researched by T. Lickona, M. Berkowitz and M. Bier. Thorough examination of fam-



illies' involvement and home education in the student's moral development was carried out by A. Henderson and N. Berla. K. Hoover-Dempsey and H. Sandier reviewed the major aspects of parents' motivation and demotivation to be actively involved in the studying and educational process. A number of related matters were closely examined by K. Hoover-Dempsey and F. Caskey. They are: community service, service learning, service projects, etc. however, hidden curriculum and its importance for character education realization were not analyzed thoroughly enough.

Presentation of the results. One of the principal aspects of character education informal curriculum is the care for students outside the class or school. This is done by using models that inspire students to altruistic behavior and provide opportunities for community-based or school-based extracurricular activities and community service. Students need to learn how to understand the needs of others and to be ready to assist in such situations. Real life social situations are active means of transforming children's personality, as helping others give them the opportunity to feel personal contribution to changing human life and responsibility for their own actions. The first socially useful students' experience ought to be school extra-curricular activities. Such tasks may be even school duties, for instance, the class chooses one of the spheres of the school life where they can volunteer, the number of hours is coordinated with the principal, and then the schedule of duties is arranged [10].

The continuous process of students' character education is ensured by direct collaboration of school administration, parents and the community. According to A. Henderson and N. Berla, the only guarantee of the child's school achievement is the active participation of the parents in their education, since not only the level of students' education depends on this, but also the model of school behavior, higher motivation to study, attendance improvement and school drop-out rates decrease [6; 3].

M. Berkowitz and M. Bier analyzed number of effective curricula; their findings indicate that there are different types of parents within the studying and educational process: information receivers, partners and clients [1, p. 64–69].

The most numerous and the most passive group of parents in school education initiatives is the information receivers. Their participation traditionally means being informed by getting newsletters and brochures, emails or regular mail, invitations to school events,

reports on student's achievement at the end of the semester, etc.

Parents-partners have become the main criterion for effective character education. Projects and programs that can actively involve parents in the educational process and various school activities receive significant financial support from the US Department of Education. The most commonly used forms of parents' involvement in the process of character education realization include [11]:

- parents' membership in character education committees and advisory boards;
- participation in the forums on actual issues of character education and life of the school community;
- parental community mentoring during the school projects;
- parent community assistance in the development and implementation process of the character education programs;
- parents' participation in service learning with their children while completing the service projects [7].

On this account, it is rather important to point out the aspects that stimulate parents to be active in the educational and studying process or vice versa. K. Hoover-Dempsey and H. Sandier believe that first of all, the administration should help parents understand that their role is extremely important for the effective education of the children. Educational establishments must be creating a variety of opportunities that aim not only to help with educational material, but also enable parents to feel competent enough [8, p. 15]. Studying material, especially in high school, is quite complex which often leaves parents away from active participation in the children's educational process, so the school administration strives to help parents with that matter. It is equally important for parents to feel that the administration positively evaluates and supports their active participation in the school life of children and that the parents are always welcomed to come to school, communicate with school staff, since there is such a restriction in some schools when family members are not allowed to come without a special permit or prior arrangement.

As to our perception, one of the options to handle the mentioned situation that is really worth our attention – the experience of the Laclede Elementary School (St. Louis, Missouri). The school administration found the way how to involve parents in the educational process on the regular basis. A parents' resource center that enables parents to actively participate in school life and build partnerships with teachers and the administration of the educational institution was founded.



Parents were given a special place in the school's premises, where they can organize various meetings and trainings.

Scientists from the Josephson Institute of Ethics reckon that the formation of a positive character should primarily begin at home and in the community. In this case, the task of the educators is to continue and maintain the initiative of character education, but by no means take full responsibility for the moral education of the students. Children are constantly among other people and are exposed to social rules and norms of conduct. In this regard, the maximum effectiveness of values and positive character traits formation can only be achieved in a caring community [9, p. 1]. Non-profit organizations that provide a variety of collaboration opportunities for parents, schools, students and communities play not less important role here.

We tried to analyze the experience of non-profit organizations involvement on the example of "Topeka City of Character" organization in Topeka, Kansas. Its members designed character education program "Character First!" which teaches homeless children and other willing children in the town general values and help develop positive traits of character [5, p. 2]. Other organizations aim their activities to engage parents, students and teachers in service learning and community service, regarding them as the effective extracurricular means of character activities. This way the students help community members to cope with a variety of daily issues [5].

Community service includes any extra-curricular activities performed to meet other people's needs. The peculiarities of this method of character education realization are: the task can be both compulsory and optional; as a rule, it does not have well-set educational goals or reflection of the work performed; the activity contains both school and out-of-school tasks; it can take place as a school event or an individually organized project which is financially supported by a school club (e. g. "Girls' Club", "Boys Club" etc.).

The most widely used method of integrated educational activity is community service. It involves the integration of volunteer community activities into the school curriculum in order to help the community the students live in [2]. This method provides the basis for students and teachers to obtain valuable educational experience, providing intensive practical training on the basis of social work, and it is based on five compulsory components. Students are taught directly being involved in arranged tasks that are urgent for their community. Such activities should be integrated into public school curricula and contribute to

the improvement of students' achievement in core subjects. After the project is completed students have time to reflex on practical experience gained as a result of participating in community service project holding class discussions, working on their presentations or essays. In such a way they demonstrate the acquired knowledge and practical skills

J. Dewey believed that community service helps the students not only to successfully study, but also become responsible citizens of their country. Consequently, it became an integral part of the educational process in the 70s of the twentieth century. These days it is an important sign of the effective character education implementation in the American state schools. According to the National and Community Service Trust Act (1993), "Serve America Program" and "Learn and Serve America" programs, community service received state support in elementary and secondary schools. Moreover, the AmeriCorps program membership helped high school students or college students get scholarship or a student's loan. The National Education Survey (1996) indicated that 49% of respondents were involved in community service, and 56% confirmed that they had acquired similar experience through a curriculum [14]. According to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States (1996), 32% of public schools that participated in the survey indicated that they were practicing service learning as well. Its implementation was studied on different levels: in a separate school district, in a school (all pupils are involved), in a class and within a particular subject (when studying a separate discipline). It depends on the state, but community service may be both a compulsory requirement and an optional one. Nowadays, in seven states (Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Wisconsin) it is required in order to graduate high school. Meanwhile, in Virginia, for example, the Education Board gives the Diploma Seal of Excellence in social studies if the student has more than fifty hours of community service [12].

American Teachers define service-learning as a teaching and educational method that combines school-based theoretical knowledge with practical skills with service projects, helping students form social, civic and academic skills. This practice allows the student to demonstrate his or her civic position and readiness to be an active community member. According to F. Caskey, such education helps students not to be "passive learners but to form competent and capable participants of the educational process". A national study conducted by the Center of Statistics,



which involved more than 20 000 schools, confirmed variety of needs for service-learning: to enhance students' personal and social development (26%), to teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills (19%), to provide students' vocational guidance (18%), to increase students' progress in core subjects (12%) [3].

The success of a service-learning method is ensured by careful planning and implementation of the project which consists of three stages: preparation, implementation and reflection on the effectiveness of service-learning. To start with it is necessary to analyze the curriculum and determine to which subject it is the most appropriate to add service-learning and which topic would be the most effective for integrating into a practical project. After that, it is necessary to identify the topic of the project by selecting one of the options: the students can choose a topic themselves, brainstorm during the lesson and ask their classmates to express their ideas or address local non-profit organizations that can offer the most up-to-date tasks taking into account the needs of the community. The topic should meet the general requirements for service-learning in the state and the studying requirements for the chosen subject. The next step is to set the tasks, both educational and practical, for further evaluation of the effectiveness of this method. During preparation for the project, attention is focused on the study of specific theoretical topics at school in relation to the needs of the community where the service project will be carried out. The final stage is the division of class into working groups, assigning the roles and responsibilities, and finally the completion of the task.

When the project is completed, there is time to think about the work done and the stages the students passed individually and in a group. American teachers practice four methods of reflection [4, p. 84]: written (essay, articles, songs, poems, works-reflections, keeping a personal diary, step-by-step instructions for students who will participate in practical training); oral (class, group and pair discussions, reports, presentations); oral (class, group and paired discussions, reports, presentations); creative (photo essay, photo report, paintings, drawings, collages, dance orders, puppet show); practical activities (role games, sharing experience with other students, holiday to celebrate the successful ending of the project inviting community representatives where the project took place).

Student self-governing and school newspaper are other integral and effective components of the informal curriculum that provide effective character education within

extracurricular activities. The most common forms can include research and projects; representation in the school council; duties and responsibilities' delegation to students; membership in political clubs; discussion groups and blogging on the Internet, etc.

Studies confirm that school self-governing has a significant impact on the formation of social skills, as well as civic consciousness and student's personality. Senior pupils involved in such activities demonstrate active civic position and readiness for personal development outside the school. Participation in service-learning helps students to understand themselves and adjust to society better. Through a variety of projects and activities, the student council promotes the development and formation of a number of important moral qualities. This is primarily civic consciousness that helps to maintain and build democracy; to ensure student participation in meaningful activities; to help them learn to respect the laws and generally accepted democratic norms; to stay objective and honest covering students' points of view at the school level, etc.

Youth become more educated, making a personal contribution to improving the well-being of their school; promoting high standards of education; stimulating the development of an active students' attitude towards learning; demonstrating personal experience and ability to solve problems; working on their leadership qualities that will help prepare for the realities of the progressive society. Youngsters acquire leadership qualities, as they give their peers the right to speak and be heard; not allowing exploitation of students; coordinating sponsorship of students' activities; enabling leadership skills for other members of student council; supporting students in managing everyday school problems.

Students improve human relationships and mutual understanding helping to build friendly relationships with teachers, administration, student council and community; provide a number of school services for the common good; help young people to understand their personality. State school students acquire cultural values, focusing on school loyalty, patriotism and individual development of students; providing real experience and group development; helping students expand and protect their personal rights; selecting currently urgent and interesting projects in school community; assisting all students in their efforts to achieve maximum educational growth and development [278, p. 93].

Conclusion. Having closely investigated the peculiarities of the informal curriculum (hidden curriculum) and its place in character education realization process, we are bound



to affirm that there is a great amount of effective methods. Among them two groups – extracurricular and out-of-school activities, main goals of which are following: support for the comprehensive development of a personality outside the classroom and school; school collaboration with students, parents and community; practical activities of students. The most effective method of educational and studying activities is service learning. It is directly related to the curriculum and the development of a number of important moral values (kindness, willingness to help, humanity, mutual understanding, etc.), and the theoretical knowledge practically applied in real life. To sum up, the effective character realization can be achieved by complex approach working with students in class (using general curriculum) and outside the class or even school (hidden curriculum).

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