



# EMPOWERING LEARNERS TO BE ETHICAL BEINGS THROUGH EDUCATION AMID COVID 19 CRISIS

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# How can education and educators empower learners to foster positive relationships especially in fragile contexts

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*Literary education is of no value if it is not able to build up a sound character by “Mahatma Ghandi”*

Q)How do we ensure our education systems molds learners into ethical human beings?

- Ethical comes from the Greek word “ethos” meaning "moral character" and describes a person’s behavior as right in the moral sense – behavior that demonstrates truthfulness, fairness, and honesty
- According Cambridge Advanced Dictionary, an ethical person is described as one conforming to accepted standards of social or institutional or professional behavior

- For the purpose of this presentation an ethical student is termed as one who demonstrates progressive adaptability and functionality. He /she is able to foster healthy intra and interpersonal relationships that promote the wellbeing of self and others. Being ethical therefore has a lot to do with one's character
- According several humanistic theories behavior is shaped significantly by environmental factors however this statement does not downplay the role of genetic factors.

# What shapes learners behavior?

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- Cognitive behavior theory purports that an individual's cognitions (values, beliefs, thought patterns and attitudes) that one has internalized over time play a key role in the development and maintenance of emotional and behavioral responses to life situations. Subsequently what a student thinks about her/his reality determines how they will react to that reality.
- Therefore the critical question here is what experiences (at family, school, community level) have our learners gone through and how are these experiences shaping their responses to their current situations? (of uncertainty, conflict, inadequacy)

# School as an agent of socialization

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- The learners cognitions are acquired through agents of socialization which include, the family, community, faith institutions, social media, school, peers, role models and significant others)
- The school is a key socialization agent therefore the curriculum, the educators and the rest of the school community impact on learners cognitions.
- A key area of concern for educators is whether our education systems are facilitating the holistic development of the learner? Are we educating both the mind and heart? Is there a key focus on values and life skills education?

# Elements of a value base education and learning institutions

- Relevance of the curriculum to the physical, cognitive and socio emotional development of the learners
- Effective Life skills & value education integration (formal curriculum, hidden curriculum and co-curriculum e.g. school ethos, clubs, inclusive schools and child friendly schools programmes, non violence promoting schools that embrace positive discipline approaches etc.)
- Proper role modelling of positive values by school leadership, teachers and other members of the school community
- Application of the correct pedagogy for teaching values and life skills, which practitioners identify as experiential approach

## How can educators promote ethical attitudes and behaviors among learners during this time?

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- Adequate staff self care, ensure educators have access to responsive support mechanism( updates, self management information and referrals where necessary). Who is reaching out to our teachers?
- Comprehensive COVID19 response plan that is effectively implemented-(one that enlists the engagement and participation of all stakeholders, especially the voices of children)
- Empower teachers with psycho social support skills to enhance their self management and facilitate them to reach out to the learners and their caregivers

- Provide safe spaces for learners where they can freely express their feelings, experiences and thoughts. Teachers can maintain contact with/provide support to the learners on the digital space, cell phones, radio/TV, safe face to face sessions.( In places where human displacement has taken place, child friendly spaces can be established in line with the government protective guidelines)
- Individualized and inclusive remote learning activities that focus on the holistic development of the child

- Institute parent and caregiver empowerment programmes on family wellness and remote learning.
- Incorporate layered interventions for different age groups.
- Embrace an integrated response to learners needs ( education, medical, livelihoods, safety, psychosocial needs).

### **3. Building the learners resilience**

- Work with relevant line ministries/partners to ensure learners are safeguarded from all forms of violence.
- Keep learner well informed about the crisis and key decisions affecting them

- Provide children with platforms to air their opinions and make recommendations to the challenges facing them.
- Support learners to express their views on COVID 19 and other disasters e.g. through Art, songs, poems, drama
- Support learners(or parents for young learners) to prepare daily schedules that incorporate opportunities to nurture their holistic development
- Empower learners to identify the challenges posed by COVID 19 and other social issues. Encourage and facilitate them to innovate/implement practical solutions to the problems.

- Mobilize learners to support their peers, ( in meeting their basic necessities, education needs, moral support, peer counselling, child accountability mechanisms.
- Empower children to be agents of peace and positive change in their communities.

*“Education is the most powerful tool that you can use to change the world” by Nelson Mandela*

