

# Emphasizing the role of parents in values education to children in their formative years during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## *Abstract*

This paper analyzes the shift in the modality of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on values education to children in their formative years. With this, the researchers present the way education is being done through distant learning, which is the modality of teaching done during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this study emphasizes the role of parents in guiding the students in a distant learning setup and in teaching them the essential values in life since they will be the ones who will help them in their values education classes. To conclude, this research paper highlights the role of parents in values education in this setup so that the children will be formed well. In the end, the parents are said to be the first educators to children.

**Keywords:** parents; values education; COVID-19 pandemic; distant learning; children; formative years

## **Emphasizing the role of parents in values education to children in their formative years during the COVID-19 pandemic**

### **1. Introduction**

Socialization is often defined as a process in which the society plays its role in integrating values and beliefs to an individual (Medina, 2001). With this, one might say that there are various social institutions which serve this function. Some of these social institutions are the school, government, religion, friends, and family. Among these social institutions, the family is the one which the child encounters first. Medina (2001, p. 71) emphasizes this claim by saying, “Through its socialization function, the family plays an important role in the transmission of cultural values, beliefs, and customs; in the molding of the personality and character of its members; and in ensuring conformity to norms.” Moreover, the family’s role in socialization is important because it is the social institution which the child usually spends more time with.

In addition, Tagle (1981, p. 31) states, “It is within the family that personality, character, emotions, sexuality, attitudes, values and opinions are formed.” This statement explains that the family has the most influence on the child since they are the ones which the child is more connected with. For this reason, a sense of responsibility among parents must be seen in regards with child formation (Gozum, 2019). Also, since children are born out of love of the married couple, children must be formed well because it is in this way that they become true to their role as first educators (Gozum, 2020). With this, it must be emphasized that parents must fulfil their educational function to their children by a profound parenting that will prepare them for the future (Ceka & Murati, 2016). To emphasize this point, John Paul II (1981) points out that parents must take this duty as essential in their vocation so that they can be properly refined with the essential human values.

Upon knowing that parents have a prime role in teaching their children with essential values in life, it is important to emphasize the said role in the modality of learning values education is done during the COVID-19 pandemic (del Castillo, 2021). Due to the pandemic, the way lessons are taught is not through the conventional classroom setting anymore. Rather, classes are done through modules or online. In this setting, students are asked to stay at home and, most of the time, study on their own. For this reason, parents have a greater responsibility to teach their children with their lessons in class. Also, since values education is also done through modules or online, parents have more responsibility in forming their children in this learning setup. Hence, this paper emphasizes the role of parents in values education in distance learning so that the goal of forming morally upright citizens by the school will find its new meaning with the aid of the parents. Hence, the objective of this study is to emphasize the importance of parents in values education in a distant learning setup which was done due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study does not only apply to a distance learning setup; rather, it accentuates the importance of parents in child formation. This parental duty must not be limited to the distance learning setup, but it must be applied in their daily lives.

### **2. Methodology**

This qualitative study utilizes content analysis as its method. The researchers surveyed different literature on values, education and the role of parents in child formation. The used documents in this paper were online journal articles downloaded from the world wide web through accessing electronic databases such as SCOPUS, EbscoHost, ProQuest Online, Google Scholar and other sources.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### *3.1 Modality of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic*

The educational system was forced to innovate in the way they deliver their lessons because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most countries were forced to halt school operations so that the transmission of the coronavirus will be mitigated. Hence, academic institutions around the world discontinued face-to-face teaching (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Due to the closure of schools, governments are asked to develop ways so that they can continue education amid the pandemic. For this reason, several academic administrators scrambled to convert their traditional classes to online classes (Oyedotun, 2020). With this, education professionals are forced to adapt frantically and abruptly so that they can deliver their lessons (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020).

During the preparation for the shift to distance learning, educators are asked to become innovative. Since not all their usual teaching techniques can be done through online classes, they must think of effective ways to deliver their lessons. Accordingly, through innovation, educators are asked to implement alternative educational and assessment activities (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). In this modality of education, diverse online platforms were used so that video conferences can be done on conducting classes (Oyedotun, 2020). Some of the online conferencing platforms used were Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, and GoToMeeting. Also, learning management systems (LMS) were utilized for the modules and activities of the students. Some of the LMS used are Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle. In this setup, education professionals must be trained towards online teaching and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) must stand out so that classes will be delivered efficiently (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020). Thus, using these e-learning tools must be studied by educators for they are vital in facilitating learning in this setup (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

Aside from being innovative, educators must be flexible in accommodating the needs of the students. Online classes can be delivered through synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Thus, academic institutions must develop an effective blended learning approach (Oyedotun, 2020). Part of the educator's job is to consider these kinds of problems in online learning. Some of the challenges that this new setup presented are digital inequalities, lack of training, slow internet connection, inconsistent power supply, and reduced teacher-student engagement (Oyedotun, 2020). As one of the concerns of students and educators in distance learning, students who have difficulties accessing the internet can continue their education were given another avenue to learn. As a response to this problem, academic institutions also ventured preparing printed modules which will be delivered to the students so that they can continue studying. Moreover, to be effective in giving quality education, academic institutions must always be ready to provide technical assistance to those who are in need so that no student will be left behind (Oyedotun, 2020).

In addition, students and educators can encounter problems in their home since they are also needed to help in their domestic duties (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). These situations show that in this new setup, the demarcation between work and home has been violated. Yet, both students and educators must find ways to continue their education. Hence, self-discipline and self-regulation are essential in this new educational platform so that students will still learn. In distance learning, since the students are the one who can access the lessons anytime and anywhere, they are asked to be more responsible since they will be the ones managing, planning, and assessing their learning processes (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Thus, since this is the case, students are asked to be more self-regulated (Kocdar et al., 2018). These challenges that distance learning presents tell us that there must be several factors to be improved so that this new modality of learning will be effective. Hence, the shift from face-to-face teaching to online learning during the pandemic requires a collaborative effort among the students, educators, and parents.

#### *3.2 The role of parents in child formation*

Knowing that the family is a vital social institution in the socialization process of the child, it is important to

point out that parents, since they are the ones the child encounters first, must be made aware of their responsibility to form their children. In a previous study, it was accentuated that the parents are vital in social, moral, behavioral, and educational development of the child (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Because of this privilege, the parents have a duty to their children. They have an imperative to teach the children to become better individuals and teach the essential human values. Parents have a huge role in character education for they are the ones who first form the child. Hence, parents have certain formative influences on one's moral development which may be recognized in retrospect (Sanderse, 2013).

In the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II (1981) emphasizes that being married serves a unitive, procreative, and educative function. The married couple must be able to preserve their marital bond, produce offspring, and educate their children. To fulfil their educative function, it is essential to highlight the importance of being committed to raising morally upright citizens (Gozum, 2020). This responsibility is much highlighted today because different aspects have already changed the world. Thus, parents must be firm in their responsibility of shaping the moral character of their children (Carandang & Lee-Chua, 2008). Moreover, even though there are many social institutions that help in the child's moral development, it is still the parents which the child trusts the most and have a greater influence (Francis, 2016). This is the case because parents' upbringing of their children will greatly help in the formation of the moral conscience of the child (Francis, 2016). As Smetana (1999) emphasizes "...although morality is constructed from reciprocal social interactions, both affective and cognitive components of parents' interactions with their children may facilitate children's moral development" (p. 311). Parents may serve as moral exemplars to their children. As cited in Vos (2018, p. 23), "We develop our moral sensibilities by encountering the values and virtues that we find actually existing and experientially available in exemplary characters."

Moreover, parents are not only responsible in moral development, but in faith development as well. As Sarmiento (2018, p. 1) cites, "They also have the primary responsibility of the education of their children, both secular and religious." In forming the faith of the children, parental love and care must be seen so that the child will be able to feel the essence of the moral and gospel values which they are teaching (Frabutt et al., 2010). Also, in a previous study, it was accentuated that parents' role in moral and faith development is immense since it is an everyday task (Niekerk & Breed, 2018). This task must be highlighted because it is part of the duty of parents. Moral and faith development are essential in child formation because they lay down the foundations for the child's character. Parents must dedicate themselves towards proper child formation since this is both their role and duty to the society.

Parents are very much liable in the formation of the child. It is their duty to raise their child well. It is in the hands of the parents on how they will discipline and inculcate good habits and values to the child. There are parents who are overprotective while some parents are lenient to their child. There are parents who impose themselves through punishment to discipline their child while there are parents who are soft-spoken to always comfort their children. Whatever kind of parenting one does, it is a fact that parents are still the ones who are most influential.

### 3.3 *Values education*

Aside from the parents, the school has a role in molding the character of the child. This is the reason why academic institutions have a framework which focuses on forming the character of their students. Berkowitz et al. (2001, p. 7) state, "Character education is a national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share." With this, values education is taught to students so that educators will be able to contribute to forming morally upright citizens. As an academic institution, it is through values education that students are taught with moral values. This pedagogical approach is viewed as essential since it teaches students values and morality so that they can apply it to their daily lives (Thonberg, 2008). In the end, an academic institution must not only focus on producing intelligent students, but they must also form moral individuals.

Moreover, values education does not only manifest inside the classroom. Schools also organize activities which instill sound moral values to students as an avenue of teaching values (Thonberg, 2008). Also, school-based projects are done to develop certain skills and behaviors of the children (Lovat, 2017). In terms of approach in values education, there are two approaches that are usually discussed, namely: traditional approach and progressive or constructivist approach. Durkheim (1961) explains that traditional approach accentuates the adult transmission of the morals of society through direct teaching, exhortation, and the use of rewards and punishments. This approach aims to produce conforming and nice people (Thonberg, 2008). On the other hand, progressive or constructivist approach “emphasizes children’s active construction of moral meaning and development of a personal commitment to principles of fairness and concern for the welfare of others through processes of social interaction and moral discourse” (Solomon et al., 2001, p. 573). To add, Thonberg (2001) presents that there is a third approach, the critical approach. This approach claims that moral influence in school, especially in the practice of school discipline and in hidden curriculum, can be questioned and has far-reaching effects without being noticed (Thonberg, 2008).

To sum up, there are diverse approaches that can be done to effectively deliver value education. However, whatever the approach is, the academic institution has the responsibility to do their best in forming the character of the students. In values education, educators are asked to develop their moral reasoning so that they will be able to teach students on how they should act and respond to certain situations and moral issues (Thonberg, 2008). Having this socialization function, schools must uphold the values that they promote so that they can say that they are effective in teaching values education.

### *3.4 Emphasizing the role of parents in distance learning to children in their formative years*

As it has already been established, the parents and the school have a great role in child formation. Since the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the government to impose lockdowns and follow safety protocols, the educational sector was forced to shift from physical to virtual classes. Before the pandemic, classes were usually held in the classroom. However, the pandemic impelled academic institutions to venture different modalities to deliver instruction. Other schools went with delivering printed modules while others chose to deliver online classes. With this situation, children who are in their formative years must be given more attention since they are the ones that should be properly guided in this new undertaking. Thus, in their classes, even in values education, parents must be there to support them. For this reason, this paper explains the role of parents in assisting children in their formative years and the need for parents to value education in a distance learning setup.

***Role of parents in assisting children in their formative years*** - Children in their formative years are usually the ones who need support the most. This stage in the development of an individual is vital since it is where the child begins acquiring one’s perspective in life. Usually, children who are at the age of 2-4 years old are considered in their formative years (Kington et al., 2013). However, the formative years of the child can be extended to the early elementary years (The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). In these stages, the child is still trying to know certain human operations. There is still a need for assistance because the child is still new to some things that he/she encounters. For this reason, in another research article, it was identified that children must still be assisted in their development up to middle childhood (Rollè et al., 2019). Thus, these formative years of the children must be well-guided since these are the years where the child learns certain behaviors that will influence one’s life.

Moreover, a previous study accentuated that, “Early childhood and early child education are an important basis for later development, educational performance, and pathways as well as for lifelong learning and well-being” (Weinert et al., 2016, p. 1). This statement explains why it is crucial that children should be guided in their early years. Thus, in the children’s early years, there should be a guide in their formation and development. The guide that should be the one to give attention to the children’s formation and development are their parents. Having said this, parents should provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of children (Sarmiento, 2018). Bandura (1993) states that parents can play a crucial role, contributing to stimulating and

supporting children's self-regulatory and cognitive development. Moreover, different professionals that focus on child development encourage that parents must be actively involved in the academic and social development of their children especially in their early years (El Nokali et al., 2010). Moreover, a report pointed out that parental involvement during their early years positively affects their children's performance in school (Clark, 2007). A previous researcher even suggested that responsive parenting must be done in the child's formative years so that the child's development will have better outcomes (Landry, 2014).

Indeed, children in their formative years need a guide so that they will be guided very well. As they discover many things around them, they need proper guidance so that they will be formed well. In these years, it is important to emphasize that parents are the ones who should be guiding their children the most because they are the ones whom they spend the most time with (Gozum, 2020). With proper guidance, the children in their formative years will really experience character formation. Hence, parents have a great role in assisting their children during their formative years.

### *3.5 The need for parents in values education in a distance learning setup*

Since children in their formative years need more parental assistance, to ensure that the lessons in values education are taught, parents must take this role seriously. Aside from self-discipline and self-regulation in distance learning, parental involvement is essential to children who are in their formative years. In a previous article, it was emphasized that, "Parent involvement typically involves parents' behaviors in home and school settings meant to support their children's educational progress" (El Nokali et al., 2010, p. 989). In a distance learning setup, this role of the parents must be emphasized. As it has been known that an increased parent involvement during elementary school improved literacy growth, the task of being involved in values education goes beyond academic excellence (El Nokali et al., 2010). Thus, the lessons taught in values education must be communicated well to the children by their parents so that character formation at home will be effective.

In a previous study, it is emphasized that this role to be involved in values or religious education of the child must always be emphasized to the parents (Bunnell, 2016). This is the case because values education is a subject which emphasizes the teamwork between parents and school so that the transmitting of essential human values will be successful (Comer & Haynes, 1997). This cooperation must be done in distance learning setup as well so that efficient quality values education will be given to the children. Since children in their formative years will be learning values education through online platforms or printed modules, there is a necessity for parents to be more involved. By being involved, they must be the ones to teach and explain to the children the values that are needed to be taught. Parents must be role models in this endeavor so that the commitment of the academic institution to teach values education will not be disregarded.

Moreover, this active involvement that is being required to the parents reignites their duty to their children. As parents, they must be exemplars of moral values to their children because they are the ones whom the children will follow. Hence, distance learning can be a good avenue to remind parents of their roles as value educators. It is not the teachers who should be the ones to only have the moral ascendancy to the students; rather, parents should also have this moral ascendancy so that their children will aim to imitate these moral values. In the end, parents are the first teachers of their children.

## **4. Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic changed various ways humans operate in their daily lives. With this, the educational platform used by educators was also changed to comply to the safety protocols given by the government. To comply with these protocols, students and teachers venture distance learning which can be delivered through modules or online. Given this situation, children in their formative years must have assistance in their classes since their teachers are not by their side to answer their queries. Thus, parents, since they are the ones with the child at home, have a greater responsibility towards their children's education. One of the subjects

that students need to learn in class is values education. In essence, this subject aims to elucidate the students with the essential human values so that their character will be formed.

Since the children are at their home while learning values education, parents must always tend to their children for their queries in the lessons that they have. With this, because values education teaches moral values, it is a greater challenge for parents to live the values that they are teaching their children. They must become role models of sound moral values to their children. Thus, as distance learning requires more involvement for parents to the child's education, it is important that their role in values education must be emphasized. As parents form their children with moral values, they contribute to the betterment of the society. Hence, even in a distance learning setup, the goal of values education continues because of parents who are fulfilling their duties as prime values educators.

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