


Chapter 15

Building Character Through Teaching Values:


A Positive Youth Development Model for Student Engagement and Development

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ABSTRACT

Character development is a fundamental aspect of whole person education, fostering ethical responsibility, resilience, and social-emotional competence in students. This chapter explores the role of teaching values as a cornerstone of Positive Youth Development (PYD), emphasizing how structured engagement in academic, extra-curricular, and community activities shapes students' moral and personal growth. Grounded in PYD theory, this chapter presents a framework for integrating values-based education within higher educational institutions, highlighting key strategies such as mentorship, service learning, and student leadership. By cultivating essential

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virtues like respect, integrity, and empathy, educators can enhance student engagement, promote civic responsibility, and contribute to a thriving society.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a significant role in imparting knowledge to individuals. Higher education serves as a significant phase in young people's lives not only in imparting academic knowledge but also providing opportunities for personal growth and development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Traditionally, adolescence and young adulthood are considered as a period of storm and stress (Hall, 1904; Arnett, 1999), however, the modern perspectives emphasize the strengths of adolescents and young adults and postulate that providing opportunities to strengthen their capabilities will lead to their development (Lerner et al., 2005; Damon, 2004). The understanding that character is an underlying basis for the development of mutually beneficial relationships between individuals and their surroundings has led to the growing research on character development within the youth development settings. Such research includes families, schools, and structured out-of-school programs (Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015). Character development serves as the foundation for fostering essential aspects of personal growth, including competence, confidence, connection, and caring (Lerner, 2018). Youths, therefore, should be empowered to engage in activities that promote the development of these character strengths, to make meaningful contributions to their well-being and the well-being of others around them. Research consistently shows that nurturing character development paves the way for both individual success and the advancement of a thriving, flourishing society (Berkowitz, 2012; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lerner, 2004; Lickona, 1991).

Character development can be fostered through the support that youths receive from the community. Such support can be provided through programs that incorporate three important elements as suggested by Lerner (2004), which are expected to create a safe and supportive environment that positively impacts youth development. The first element is strong and lasting adult-youth relationships between youth and caring, competent adults such as mentors, coaches, or teachers who provide consistent support for at least a year (Rhodes & Lowe, 2009). The second element involves life skill development through activities that help youth cultivate essential skills, such as goal setting, optimizing strategies to achieve these goals, and resilience-building techniques to deal with obstacles and setbacks which might arise in the process (Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2008). Ensuring active participation and leadership opportunities through purposeful engagement in meaningful family, school, and community activities to empower youth to take initiative and lead, is the third es-

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