Character Education Seeking the Best of Both Worlds: A Study of Cultural Identity and Leadership in Egypt.

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Character Education Seeking the Best of Both Worlds: A Study of Cultural Identity and Leadership in Egypt

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Abstract: Over the last decades, the Arab world has witnessed subtle changes to behaviors of human communication which have degenerated trust and eroded competence festering in the community as a major illness leaving no true leadership in view. In turn this has affected the understanding of cultural identity and purpose of many young Arab individuals. This study explores how theories of character education put in curriculum and practice at a privately owned school Hayah International Academy established in 2003 and based in Cairo- Egypt, is able to generate both a work and academic environment that carries a central role in the formation of competence and the generating of a solid cultural identity through four essential pillars: 1- the building of solid concepts, 2- the acquisition of academic knowledge, 3- the achievement of superior skills and 4- the establishment of character and behavior. The study examines and considers both Arab character education programs like Alruyah Program constructed by Nussiaba Abdel Aziz AlMutawaa and other well established programs within the field. The Character Education Program at Hayah which runs from early childhood to high-school, communicates high levels of moral development taking into consideration collective cultural codes, human behavior; components of identity and the causes of identity crises of young Arabs in order to promote effective social habits and cultivate ethical goal oriented productive future leaders. Hayah’s Character Education Program enriches the cultural landscape of its immediate community repairing the present for a better future for Egyptians and Arabs alike.

Keywords: Character Education, Cultural Identity, Leadership, Service Learning, Academic Competence, Behavioural Science, Education, Alruyah Program, Egypt

Introduction

IN A COMPETITIVE materialistic environment where everything is valued with money; every form of competition is allowed. In light of the world wide calls for a moral directive to abide by global standards of conduct; it was imperative for the Character Education team at Hayah International Academy, a private school located in Cairo, Egypt, to find a way to facilitate a mechanism that would allow the new generation to face these challenges without giving up their beliefs and values. The Character Education program designed at Hayah, is applied in elementary, middle, and high school with attention to student outcomes related to positive character development, pro-social behavior, and academic performance. Although Character Education is broad in scope and difficult to define (Otten, 2000), character education is as old as education itself. At this school, Character Education is viewed as an important asset for all its learners as it strives through a tailored program to achieve equity, efficiency, and excellence that is lateral to the cultural necessities of the Egyptian community.
Over the past years, schools in Egypt, have long focused on knowledge and skills targeting only the mind and body failing to produce self-motivated individuals who can live with the challenges and ambiguities of today’s world. It is from here that the need for a program which would deepen the students’ commitment to life-affirming values and an interest to take action on those values arose.

This is a preliminary study that attempts to trace the impact of the Character Education Program developed at Hayah. The general approach of the study allows it to be applicable not just in Egypt. This paper is divided into four main sections including this introduction. The second section serves as the literature review, the development and implementation of the program and the need for data collection. The third section is an analysis of the data and recommendations based on the findings, followed by the fourth section, which is the conclusion to sum up the whole argument of the paper.

The Background

Hayah International Academy (HIA)

Hayah International Academy (HIA), established in 2002 in Egypt, is a private American school from early childhood to high-school. It is supported by the Ministry of Education and is internationally accredited by CITA and NCA (North Central Association). The school’s language of instruction is English and supplements its international curricula with Arabic studies, Religious studies and Character Education. The total body of students is approximately 1000 students. HIA is a school that combines both the academic and social training concurrently. The Character Education Program runs at the backbone of its pedagogical theory. The mission of the school, pertains to deliver to society distinguished adults who honor their cultural identity, maintain personal growth, and strive for academic excellence; qualities that will enable them to live with purpose, fulfill their mission in life and make a difference in a challenging global environment.

Character Education

Character Education is an inclusive concept regarding all aspects of how families, schools, and related social institutions support positive character development. Character in this context refers to the moral and ethical qualities of persons as well as the demonstration of those qualities in their emotional responses, reasoning, and behavior. Character is associated with virtues as respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship in addition to other qualities that vary from one culture to the other. Character Education programs are activities and experiences organized for the purpose of fostering positive character development and the associated core ethical values. Character Education programs dedicate their lesson units or prescribed activities and events directly or indirectly to teaching core values.

The modern roots of Character Education can be traced to the works of educational philosophers such as John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead, and psychologist E. L. Thorndike. In the early part of the 20th Century, both Dewey and Whitehead argued for the education of the “whole person” (Dewey, 1916), and for education to be useful (Whitehead, 1929). Character in the online dictionary reference is defined as the combination, features and traits that form the individual nature of a person. David Starr Jordan (2004) supports
this notion when he alternately states that there is no real excellence in this world which can be separated from right living. At HIA, we define Character Education as “the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values” (Lickona, 1991). Current theory and recent research have led to new understandings about moral development, knowledge, and learning, and their relation to the teaching of values/character education. Stage theories of development have yielded to theories that acknowledge the multifaceted nature of human development and learning. Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg have gained notoriety with their notions of multiple intelligences and the triarchic nature of the mind respectively. Gardner’s work identifies several distinct forms of intelligence, including “inter-personal” (social skills) and “intra-personal” (insight, meta-cognition) intelligence, both of which are central aspects of values/character education.

Employers around the globe today need people who are creative and adaptable (Goleman, 1997). More specifically individuals who possess:

• An inner appreciation of interconnectedness.
• A strong identity and sense of being.
• A sufficiently large vision and imagination to see how specifics relate to each other.
• The capacity to ‘go with the flow’ and to deal with paradox and uncertainty.
• A capacity to build a community and live in relationship with others.

In addition to the above, three other main goals, have propelled the initiation of a Character Education program for the need to live a stable and content life, to become a source of happiness to others, to have a productive role in building and developing the country and the world at large. The program is taught as a separate subject with specific lesson plans. The sessions at Hayah involve the students in readings, writings, discussions and role plays around respect, empathy, gratitude, loyalty, integrity, and responsibility.

Review of Literature

Character Education, a term that has become widely used since the late 1980s, according to Milson (2000), is “the long term process of helping young people develop good character . . . and acting upon core ethical values” (p.2). A number of writers and researchers such as Lickona (1991), Heenan (2002) and Brookes and Goble (1997) have indicated that it is important to trace the history of teaching ethics, morals, values, virtues and character in schools. Their common discovery can be summarised by what Stephen Covey (1989) claims, in his book ‘The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People’. Lickona (1991) is also insistent that character education must consist of “operative values – values in action” (p.51). A number of writers such as Aspin (2003) and Henderson (2002) and researchers such as Leming (1993) and Christenson (as cited by Brooks and Goble, 1997), claim that much in Character Education has failed because of the lack of any intended and actual behavioural outcomes. Brown, Bereznicki and Zbar’s Values Education Study (2003) cites the work of Titus (1994) in their literature review. Titus suggests that “the common features of schools that seem to have a positive impact on the development of student values include participation, encouragement to behave responsibly, provision of an orderly school environment and clear rules that are fairly enforced” (p.9). One of the findings of Neilson’s (2002) New Zealand research was that perceived, positive behavioural outcomes in schools teaching character
education were evident. His interviews with teachers, principals, board of trustee members and parents reveal a perception amongst the participants in his study “that the character education strategy has set a standard of behaviour within the school” (p.37). Neilson (2002) and Henderson (2002) suggest that Heenan’s Cornerstone Values approach to building character is a good example of meaningful character education that schools should consider.

Helping students understand their world is a generally accepted aim of education. However, this meaning differs depending on the part of the world one comes from. Cultural differences exist in the purposes of education and in the importance of values/character education. Cognitive knowledge is respected in some parts of the world only when it serves the moral aim (Cheng, 1998). This comes in dramatic contrast to the pre-occupation with individual rights and freedoms in Western communities as opposed to the Arab region.

“For example, Western culture places a great deal of importance on explicit knowledge about the physical world, and indeed this knowledge is central to much of the educational system. . . . However, at the same time, in such cultures as Japan and India, [Egypt] knowledge about the social world and how one negotiates one’s way within it is valued much more and harnesses far more.” (Gardner, 1984)

Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis (1996) have outlined “Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education” which can be used either to plan or assess a values/character education program. These principles address the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of values/character development, and also emphasize the importance of a “caring community” in the school. Leming (1993) also found significant gains in student achievement where there was a positive climate for learning. Character Education embodies the disciplines of a Learning Organization (Senge, 2000). Senge and others have shown that Character Education is correlated to the value of sustainable educational communities and their importance in societal change. Consequently, the teachers at HIA, are trained to acquire the art of ensuring that students master and retain what has been presented through tailored lesson plans (Bereiter, 2002).

Research Methodology

As this is a preliminary study on the impact of the Character Education program; only 559 students out of the total 1000 student body of Hayah participated in the school survey and interviews. This paper adopts the notion advocated by Johnson (2008) regarding using interview questions for different pedagogical reasons, particularly, in real life situations in order to determine several key aspects that usually would entail decision making of some sort.

Developing and Designing the Hayah Character Education Program

The Character Education (CE) sessions designed at Hayah are based on the concept of service learning to ensure the applicability of the program to real life situations and give the students hands-on experience as opposed to the traditional classroom lecture. Activities in the classroom promote cycles of empowerment and excellence, through a values-based atmosphere, which allow students to move to increasingly higher levels of moral development. Discussions around the core values of Hayah and case studies allow space for critical thinking and problem solving skills to develop. Kohlberg’s (1969/1984) theory of moral
development also promotes stages through which children must pass in order to move to a “higher stage” of development. He also popularized the use of “moral dilemmas” as one method for fostering increasingly higher levels of moral development.

The program’s initial design was based on Alruya curriculum. The Alruya curriculum is a self leadership and management character education program. There are six main pillars of Alruya that range from good character, social obligations, social etiquette, communication means and methods, student rights, diseases of the heart and milestones. The program also took into account international perspectives such as those of the five major theorists writing for the National Commission on Character Education (Wilson 2000) where all agreed that:

1. Educators must serve as role models.
2. School and classroom climates must be caring, collaborative, and civil.
3. Teachers must establish an interpersonal atmosphere where respect is continually practiced.

The Character Education Program Framework

The Hayah Character Education program framework is a welding between Alruya and the Hayah core values. Alruya is an educational vision and character education curriculum by Nussaiba Abdel Aziz Al Mutawaa. The main objective of the series is to present and apply methods of self leadership and management to achieve balance between personal and social harmony. The Hayah core values focus on thinking skills, life skills and career planning. According to Thomas Lickona (1993), schools must help children understand core values, adopt or commit to them, and then act upon them in their own lives.

In order to develop a program with a broader perspective than the one initially created by Nuseiba Abdel Aziz, the Character Education team consulted works by Dale Carnegie (2006) who points out that the individuals with the highest sense of responsibility are those most capable of adapting their character to their environment. Children, according to Carnegie are not born with an understanding of responsibility and it is then imperative that a child is trained to be responsible, cooperative and considerate. Cooperation is furthermore defined as respecting differences (Abul Saad, 2004). When done well, Character Education fosters both higher order cognitive skills and deeper intra-personal skills and emotional intelligence.

Describing the Hayah Character Education Program

Students at Hayah are between the ages of four and seventeen and are enrolled in grades K through 12. Implementing the Character Education program at Hayah begins from elementary, the K – stage which is “planting the seed” followed by the early childhood learning. The elementary school program is where the entire school becomes a community in which all participants—children and adults alike—work together to foster values of caring, helping, respect, and tolerance. The approach involves training the adults in a child’s life to model, teach, and embody core principles. Grade 5 material is embedded with morale behavior activities suitable to the age and experience of the students during the forty minute Character Education sessions. The classroom is not teacher – centered but rather designed to promote communicative learning and student engagement.
The Initiation Phase of the Hayah Character Education Program

The Hayah program is developmental and is adapted to fit the needs of young learners by incorporating theory and practice, thereby providing an integrated foundation on which to structure a coherent and comprehensive Character Education effort that permeates school life in a holistic approach or what Lickona (1993) describes as the bridge between judgment and action. Martin Berkowitz (2006) explains that the transformation takes over the culture and life of the school. Because the school was new, the team working on the Character Education program did not have to restructure the whole school (see Figure 1 for school website).

Figure 1: Hayah International Academy Main Page (www.hayahacademy.com)
The Development Phase

The implementation of the Character Education program required a significant commitment from the administration and the teaching staff. The Character Education team met on a weekly basis for one and half hours; this was supplemented with lesson planning, group activities, and staff development workshops which were integral to the success of the program. The Character Education teachers met with students for forty minutes weekly in class sessions. The academic year is divided into four quarters where each quarter consists of eight core themes. The intervention implemented in the elementary, middle, and high school is during the regular school day and academic year; after-school programs were also included (see Figure 2 above). The quarter is divided into three sessions where a goal is directly taught and two sessions for activities. The remaining three sessions introduce role modeling, general knowledge, laboratory, discussion and evaluation.

Character Education Activities

The purpose of a class activity (see Figure 3) is to increase student motivation and at the same time, indirectly communicate in a practical approach another of the remaining three dimensions of the Hayah Character Education program. One of the most successful activities with grades 4 and 5 is Garage Sale. The main aim of the activity, is not the actual sale process but rather the academic collaboration on tasks and cooperatively learning in groups to set up the garage sale and negotiate business deals with fairness, honesty and respect.
Out on the field, a game of *Silent Football* rules are simple, no talking (and thus avoiding getting exasperated or aggressive with one another) and a strike does not count unless the ball is passed onto at least two other members of the team. The field activity promotes and teaches team spirit, self-restraint and patience.
Role Modeling

Introducing students to a renown or appealing role model who demonstrates in their life or achievements the ability to differentiate between right or wrong and do what is right is one of the most successful Character Education tasks as it entails debate and ethical decision making. The school also exhorts parents: “If you want your children to be people of character, you need to be working on your own character on a regular basis” (Gauld & Gauld, 2002).

Learner Participation

The general knowledge session allows students to work together in groups to brainstorm the question prompts set by the teacher. The students’ lose points if they do not consult other members of the team before finalizing their answer. This healthy competitive atmosphere broadens student knowledge in different fields (economics, science, technology) as students are required to search for up to date information in various areas of knowledge.

Multi-sensory Engagement

The laboratory session gives students the opportunity to discover their individual strengths and enjoy experimenting. The sessions held in the laboratory is a physical environment which prepares the students for experimentation with new and foreign ideas like origami,
cooking, or mechanics just to mention a few examples. The lab process is one of self-discovery and learning.

Debates and discussions administered in the Character Education sessions leave room for the program to become more subjective and more relevant to the students’ experiences. The sessions revolve around case studies as well as problems or issues the students may be facing in class, this gives them the space to take initiative to detect and solve their own problems.

Working with the older group of students namely middle and high school, required a more solid foundation based on mentoring for maximum effectiveness. The goal of the Character Education in all of the activities mentioned here was to cultivate model citizens, people who are responsible for and engaged with the well-being of their families, communities, the world at large, and who accept differences and cultural diversity.

Links to the Literature Review

Character Education with its emphasis of ‘values in action’ (Lickona, 1991, p.51) is well understood at Hayah. Teachers on the Character Education team at Hayah reinforce the view of Titus cited in Brown, Bereznicki and Zbar’s Values Education Study (2003) that a successful Character Education philosophy must include participation, responsible behaviour and clear rules that are enforced. Neilson (2002) also concludes as do the Character Education team at HIA that the connection between Character Education and the management of student behaviour is strong. One of the important aspects of Skinner’s behavioural theory is the connection between stimuli in the environment and behaviours (Collins, 2004). The responses given in the Character Education surveys and in-depth interviews at HIA suggest that where Character Education has become reinforced and embedded, an environment of conservative appropriate behaviour exists as a school culture.

Evaluating the Program

According to Dr. B. David Brooks (1993), a character education consultant, implementation of a character education program must include a pre-assessment of goals and a post-assessment of results. Despite the extensive efforts invested in designing the Character Education program implemented at Hayah, the Character Education team sensed the need to involve the parents of the students studying at Hayah in order to ensure that the Character Education core values advocated were extended into the home and beyond as indicated below (see Figure 5 for the Pillars of the Character Education Program). The benefits of a Character Education intervention program are expected to appear by the end of the intervention and to be retained past that point. Thus evaluation at the end of a phase and any time thereafter is appropriate.
The team created a newsletter that communicated to the parents the values being discussed on a regular basis offering tips and home activities. For some time, the Character Education team was content with the effort made and the quality of the material used, only to realize later that they had no way of really knowing if the students implemented what was taught in class at home with family members, neighbours and friends out of school.
Data Collection

The program’s data collection tools were deemed by the Character Education team as insufficient for effective and accurate evaluation of the program in order for the students’ needs to be taken into consideration and fed into the Character Education department’s annual development plan. The newsletter although was an appropriate tool to raise parent awareness, was also considered by the team as insufficient. It was a one way channel of feeding information into the home without requesting any interaction on the part of the parents to communicate back to the school. In order to be able to assess the program, the Character Education team’s weekly department meetings became discussions of teacher observations and impressions of how students in the classroom and around the school were applying the values taught in the Character Education sessions. It is important to note that data collection and observation has been on-going since 2003. The team believed that further gathering of data was the most important element for them at this stage, and which should include teacher impressions, observations, student and parent feedback. The Character Education team however, believed the tools used for data collection were insufficient and should be modified for more effective analysis.
The Survey

A survey was administered in the last quarter of the academic year 2009/2010 to students in middle and high school. Students were informed that the survey would remain anonymous and would not affect with their grades in any way. The purpose of the survey was also clearly explained to the students and informed that their feedback would be valuable to the assessment of the program. Students understood that this would be their opportunity to contribute to the development of the program. Collecting data from the higher grades was the easiest of the team’s tasks; what was more challenging was collecting data from the younger students and in particular the K and Pre-K.

Data collection methods included surveys prepared by the Character Education team for students to fill in as well as a survey for parents to accompany the newsletter that was sent home and an invitation for a monthly parent workshop/interactive session. The Character Education team used both formal and informal methods of data collection which ranged from teacher-parent meetings at the end of every quarter, peer observations, class teacher observations, teacher observation during recess, one to one discussions with students during teacher office hours, after school Character Education activities and the PTA (Parent Teacher Association).

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section analyzes the data from the surveys first and then complements the discussion with the data from the in-depth interviews held with the students during the Character Education sessions and parents during the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings (see Appendix for meeting minutes).

Data Analysis

A total of 559 students from Hayah contributed with their feedback. From middle and high school 249 girls and 310 boys participated. The students ranged from grade 6 to grade 10. The survey focused on two main questions, firstly whether the students understand the goal; secondly, whether they practically changed? An evaluation sheet was passed where the students answered questions that indicated that they understood the goal taught and whether they do or do not use it in their everyday life. Other data collection methods that were of great value were the afterschool outings, trips, and camps. Attendance of the after school outings was not obligatory. This functioned as a means to evaluate how the students see their Character Education experiences, how effective communication is with their Character Education teacher and the program activities as a whole (see Appendix for Camp Evaluation Report). Also communication with the parents during the parent-teacher conferences and discussions non-Character Education teachers helped provide feedback about some of the students’ progress.

The interpretation of the survey results are shown below:
Table 1: Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>Did you Understand the Goal</th>
<th>Did you Change Practically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>Did you Understand the Goal</th>
<th>Did you Change Practically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the students’ comments in the survey included the following: “You taught us how to have fun without having to break rules.” Another student understood that these school core values taught were life skills: “My teacher gave me my goals for when I get older – what I want to focus.” Another student realized the change that shifted his character: “Being more serious,” where this student’s comment shows the student has reflected on his own behavior with others: “Yes, I know how to speak properly to people.” On the other hand 16% of the students who participated in the surveys were not satisfied with the results of the Character Education program; as one student puts it: “We do not feel that it inter-relates with the other subjects we are studying,” another high school student pinpointed two important issues when interviewed about Character Education: “there isn’t enough communication between the teacher and us – we are many and there are few Character Education teachers and the Character Education session is too short to get much done.”

A member of the Student Council when interviewed highlighted that some of the Character Education teachers do not share his points of view about Character Education and do not necessarily agree with the way he applies it in his daily life. Character Education as the student indicated, for some of the teachers should be applied only in the way they prescribe it or it
does not count, but he clarifies that not all the Character Education teachers are like that – just some.

There were no interview sessions set for parents but feedback from parents came through the parent-teacher conferences and the PTA Character Education Parenting Lecture. Some of the parents’ comments include:

“Ms. Nevien’s lecture is an eye-opening experience. It handles daily situations with ease and simple solutions. I find myself rethinking my parenting strategies and empowered to nourish my relationship with my children.” Nora Saif, PTA Vice President.

“I enjoyed this lecture very much. It made a big difference in my attitude with my two boys. I hope to attend more of her lectures to benefit from her experience.”

Nesrine Samy, parent.

“The lecture was so fruitful it made the vision clear on the basis of the relationship between parents and children especially in tough situations, in the hope of bringing up children who are emotionally and socially healthy. I loved it!” Nadine Yehia, parent.

“Well structured, straight to the point, very lively and resourceful. More lectures are definitely needed to further explore the know-how of many parenting issues.”

Dahlia Harb, PTA President.

Discussion

The feedback from students was informative as it allowed the Character Education team to point out limitations such as the insufficient means used by the team to evaluate the program. The newsletter sent out to parents was a one way communication channel of tips and suggestions for parents to use with their children at home but there was no means by which the Character Education team could gather information as to how the students were applying the program’s core principles with family, neighbours and friends on a daily basis. K to grade 2 students were the most difficult to elicit feedback from; it was a challenge and the collected data that could be used for accurate evaluation of the program was limited. Although the tentative results from the above analysis are only evidenced within one schools’ experience, and the result of a limited study, the writer believes this study may provide a useful starting point for comparative research with a range of school types to be undertaken.

Recommendations

Based on the program review needs, the Character Education team drafted an action plan for the coming academic year of 2010/2011 where the following should be taken into consideration:

1. A newsletter to be sent out to parents with a questionnaire attached to be filled in and returned to the Character Education Department to allow for accurate data collection.
2. Invite parents to attend a monthly workshop held by the Character Education team to assist parents to become mentors and involve them in the comprehensive and holistic
effort made by the school to create what they call a “caring community” that involves students, teachers, parents and community leaders.

3. Collection of data should involve periodical surveys for all staff, students and parents to ensure for more accurate feedback that can be used to enhance and modify the Character Education program to best suite the needs of the students and the community.

4. Consult with experts in the field of Character Education in order to ensure a balanced program that is not closed on the Arab/Egyptian culture.

5. Follow up on the initial email correspondence that took place in March 2006 with Marvin W. Berkowitz, Sanford N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education, University of Missouri-St. Louis. In an email correspondence, during the Character Education team’s participation in Budget Cuts Character Education online conference in 2006, Berkowitz stated:

“there is little of such expertise in your part of the world, at least that I know of anyhow. I have met some Israelis with moral education expertise and now, through the cyber conference, a group of Egyptians. That is all I am aware of to this point. I would be happy to help you if I can. We have just launched our Center for Character and Citizenship (www.characterandcitizenship.org).”

Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn from the previous sections suggest that the respondents are willing to develop under a tailored Character Education Program that takes the environment and student needs into consideration, however, in order for the students to be prepared for the future and be able to articulate effectively and confidently in a challenging world; each party at Hayah must fulfill its role. The Character Education team, have a massive task ahead of them of continuously updating the program. The students, on the other hand must be willing and open to use alternative solutions in their daily lives to be individuals with good character. The management team at Hayah, also have an indispensible role to play in maintaining its strong support of the Character Education program.

The Character Education team at Hayah, believe that their program has been successful and would be of great benefit to students across Egypt if it were to be applied in government/public schools. It is of utmost importance in light of the above, that teachers understand that they play an important role not only as role models but also as teachers. It is imperative that they understand the context in which they teach and the methods and strategies they use for effective instruction delivery; as Character Education has been proven to have important implications for larger societal changes by creating schools as learning communities. Despite the scarcity of resources in some of the government schools, the program can be tailored to the environment and supported by staff development workshops to train and raise awareness of the teachers involved in teaching the program.

Essential to the success of the program, whether at Hayah or at any other private or government school, is team spirit and the belief in the need for change. Change is not easy nor is the opposition and resistance to change any easier, particularly, in communities that have long been established and set in their ways. There has to be a conviction however, that change is the driving force behind the shaping of a new generation who are the living messages we send to a time we will never see (Whitehead 1983). Hayah’s Character Education Program,
enriches the cultural landscape of its immediate community repairing the present for a better future.

The Character Education team is by no means indicating that the Hayah program is a magic solution to world problems, but they view it as a pro-active step towards making a difference during the environmental challenges and economic difficulties sweeping the globe today. The team aspires to promote to the community a new generation that esteems both Eastern and Western values, respects traditions, cultural differences, is capable of ethical decision making and accomplished enough to preserve their identity in the midst of a global community.

Acknowledgment

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References

Appendices

1. Character Education Activities
2. Character Education Student Survey
3. Character Education Timetable and Lesson Plan
4. Character Education Camp Report
5. PTA Meeting Minutes

Appendix 1

Hayah Character Education Activities

Invitation to lunch
Objective: to teach children to show gratitude to cleaners and appreciate their work.

Materials

Paper
Colored pencils
Fruits
Cheese
Bread
Cupcakes
Cold cuts
Juice
Baskets to put the lunch in it

Description

First discuss with the children different ways to show appreciation for example making a card or bringing a present. Then ask them who do you think really help us and do many things for us and are the last people we say thank you to them. Lead the conversation until they reach that cleaners are our aim to thank this time and make them brainstorm ideas to show them our appreciation.

Usually children will suggest fixing them lunch and making for them thank you cards.
Divide them into groups each group is responsible to do something:

Group 1: will design the thank you cards and color them and try to be creative.

Group 2: will make the sandwiches

Group 3: will bring the cupcakes and decorate them and maybe they will be able to write on them thank you with icing.

Group 4: will put all the stuff in a nice basket and wrap it in nice way attaching the card to it.

Finally we invite the cleaners and give them the baskets after thanking them or if it could be arranged during their break they come and we serve them lunch.

*Going deeper*

How do you think cleaners feel when they are treated in a rude way or not thanked when they do a job for us?

Do you think they were happy with what we did?

Do you feel different towards them now?

How do you think it feels if you’re not thanked after you do something for someone?

---

**Garage sale**

*Objective*

To teach children responsibility, give them a chance to make money in a honest way and know what it feels to be responsible for a job. And learning to give part of their profit to the poor

*Group age*

Starting from grade 4

*Materials*

Each student is responsible to bring what he needs

*Description*

Discuss with the children what is meant by the saying that a person’s trash is someone else’s treasure.
What is a garage sale and how is it arranged? what do you need to bring?

Divide the procedures into steps to help children to work.

**First step:** students decide whether they will work as groups of two or alone.

Then they choose a name for their shop and design the fliers and slogans after they finish they use paint to write and draw their charts.

**Second step:** they decide what they want to sell that they don’t need anymore and take their mother’s permission. They have to take into consideration that prices in the garage sale must not exceed four pounds and they will be sold to young kids and must be affordable.

**Third step:** they arrange their stuff the way they will do on the day of the garage sale and do the pricing.

**Fourth step:** they send invitation to everyone who can come to the garage sale stating the time and place of the garage sale.

**Fifth step:** the day of the sale, calculating at end their expenses and profit they made and deciding how much will they give to the poor.

**Sixth step:** an evaluation is done for their work and what mistakes they did that need to be avoided in the future. Finally what they learned from this experience.

---

**Recycling**

**Objective**

To teach children how to respect the environment, appreciate nature around us and make them realize the consequences for not paying attention and care to resources around us.

Introducing the three concepts: reuse, reduce and recycling.

**Description**

This project is divided into several steps.

**First step:** take the students for a walk and make them notice the harm we can do to earth if we’re not careful. When you return to the class let them watch a movie explaining how to respect our earth and what it means to reuse, reduce and recycling.
Second step: divide the class into groups, each group is responsible to write ten ideas for recycling. The other group is responsible to come up with ideas for reusing and the last for recycling. And share their ideas with class.

Ask them to bring recycled stuff from their home to share with others next time.

Third step: children share their stuff and ask questions. Then you watch a movie showing step to recycle paper. Tell your student that you’ll be recycling paper next time and ask them to bring old magazines and newspapers to use for next time.

Fourth step: Cutting old newspapers into small pieces then adding water and blending it together until you’ve got a gooey stuff. Put in a basin full with water and using flat screens get out and leave it to dry.

Fifth step: on the recycled paper let the children design charts to be hung in the school to increase awareness and ask others to respect our environment.

One day camp

Objective

- To build relationships between children and teachers.
- To work together to accomplish a difficult task.
- To increase the comfort level in the group through fun interactive play.
- For team members to problem-solve when working together.

Description

- The day starts with some ice breakers then the children are divided into groups.
- The groups are given time to choose the name of their team and design their nametags.
- The goal of the day is mentioned and the program is stated for the kids to know what will happen through the day. In addition the rules and the expectations are explained to the children.
- Children fix breakfast and eat together then clean up.
- The groups then play various games to build teamwork.
- Next, they cook dinner together and everyone eats together and then clean afterwards.
- The games are continued with increasing difficulties to teach children problem solving.
- At the end of the day prizes are given to the winner teams whom exhibited team work throughout the day. An evaluation is distributed for the children to fill in.
- One of the most important tips for the success of the day is: enough supervision, good planning before the camp.
Teaching k.g children

Objective

- For children to realize effort that teachers exert.
- To learn organization skills.
- To learn responsibility through preparing lesson plans and teaching young children.

Description

- First, discuss the characteristics of good teacher and how should she be well prepared. Then discuss ways to show respect to the teacher and why rules are important in classrooms.
- Secondly, show children how to plan a simple lesson. Let them choose a topic and plan a lesson to teach to younger kids. Usually I give them choices of two or three topics.
- Next, they write their lesson plans and bring any supplies they need as it’s their responsibility as teachers.
- Finally, they go and teach kindergarten children.
- As usual the project is evaluated by both the children themselves and the teacher and discussion about the outcomes of the experience.

Cleaning classrooms

This isn’t a one month project, it’s an ongoing one to teach children responsibility and showing respect to properties.

Group age

Any age

Materials

- Sprayers
- Brooms
- Sponges
- Cleaning cloth
- Mild detergents
- Mops
Description

- First, the children watch a video comparing a clean school and another one which is not clean. Then the children are asked which school is better? whose responsibility is it to keep the school clean?
- When you reach the conclusion that this is our school and we must keep it clean, start showing them how to respect properties and clean our school.
- Next, show them a demonstration how to use the mop, sweep the floors, wipe the tables and organize the tables and cubbies.
- Ask the children to divide themselves into groups each group is responsible to clean a certain place.
- After they finish cleaning, suggest that we do this on a daily basis for five minutes to keep our school clean.
- You can also arrange a competition between classes, tell them that you will be checking classes during the day throughout the month to find out which is the cleanest class and it will be given the Golden Cup for being the cleanest class.

Appendix 2

Character Education Student Survey questions

C.E Quarter Goal evaluation

Grade:  , Class:  , Name (optional):

Curriculum evaluation:

What was your quarter goal in the C.E?

Do you feel it's suitable for your age and that you needed it:  Yes  -  No

Did you understand the goal:  Yes  -  No

How was the goal presentation techniques: Excellent - good - fair - bad

What did you gain after this goal?

Was the P.S a good training for you on this goal:  Yes  -  No

Was that goal a practical one or just talking and theoretical:

Can you please summarize what you understand after having this goal:

Do you feel or gained any practical change in your life or any incident after this goal, can you mention one:
**Teacher evaluation:**

What does your character education teacher represent for you?

Did your character education teacher succeed in explaining the goal to you?

Is your character education teacher a role model to you?

What can your character education teacher help you in?

What do you need from your character education teacher?

**Activity evaluation:**

Did you gain anything from the Learning game?

Did you gain anything from the T6IT?

Did you gain anything from the camp?

Did you gain anything from the Lab?

Did you gain anything from the Character?

**Sample 2**

1-What are the practical and actual changes you see in yourself this year because of C.E (Lesson, Games, Camps, T6IT):

2-Did you benefit anything from your C.E teacher, if you did, mention what:
Appendix 3

Hayah Weekly Lesson Plan

Hayah Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Lesson 1</th>
<th>Lesson 2</th>
<th>Lesson 3</th>
<th>Lesson 4</th>
<th>Lesson 5</th>
<th>Lesson 6</th>
<th>Lesson 7</th>
<th>Lesson 8</th>
<th>Lesson 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Qur’an</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Math</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Qur’an</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Qur’an</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade five CAMP EVALUATION REPORT

*Our Character Education Department requests your input which is extremely important to us as we continually work to improve the program and meet our learning objectives.*

1. Did this camp meet your expectations? ___ Exceeded ___ Yes ___ No
   *If NO, please tell why?*

2. **Camp Content/Activities**
   What did you enjoy most about the camp?

   __________________________________________

   What did you like least about the camp?

   __________________________________________

   What additional topics and/or activities would you like to see covered by this camp?

   __________________________________________

   Was the camp program useful? Why?

   __________________________________________

   What recommendations do you have to improve this camp?

   __________________________________________

   Was there enough time for each activity during the camp? ___ Exceeded ___ Yes ___ No

   __________________________________________

   Do you feel there was sufficient cooperation between us at this camp? ___ Exceeded ___ Yes ___ No
3- Experience
What did you learn from this camp?


What would you like to change or improve about yourself after this camp?


List the steps you intend to take towards achieving this improvement:


4- How would you rate the following:
- The overall camp experience?  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Reservation  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Sand boarding  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Bowling  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Soccer  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Accommodation  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Transportation:  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
- Meals - Breakfast  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
  - Lunch  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5
  - Dinner  ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

5- Additional Comments:


Thank you for taking the time to fill out this evaluation.

Character Education team
PTA Meeting Minutes
Date: January 13th, 2010
Time: 10:00 AM
PTA Board Attendees:
President: Dahlia Harb
V. President: Nora Safi
Head Class Mom: Reham El Asaar
PR: Sahar Moussa

Agenda:
1- Plan for the Sports Appreciation Day
2- Lectures
3- Plan for a fundraiser dinner gala for raising money for MRC
4- Activities

1. Sports Appreciation Day
   Coach Wessam attended the meeting briefly and the date and time were confirmed, December 14th, 8:00 am. We agreed on making custom made t-shirts for all the Sports department members. Reham will have them made. Sahar will have a plaque made with our words of gratitude and appreciation.

2- Lectures
   Suggestions where made of the following topics.
   1. Parenting
   2. How to deal with your struggling student academically
   3. Anger Management for students and parents
   4. Problem resolution. Coaching students and parents to solve their own problems
   5. Dealing with teens
   6. Children nutrition

   Our next lecture scheduled on December 16th, 10:00 am will be given by Ms. Nevien Matar (Arabic & Religious Studies Director and Head of CE Dept). We were honored by her presence last year and the lectures proved to be a big success among parents. Many parents have demanded for more lectures. A Q and A session was also suggested.
Ms. Honaida (Head of Early Childhood Dept.) will shortly provide us with her available dates for lectures in February, 2011.

We have approached Dr. Maysa (Prof. of Nutrition, Cairo University) to give us a lecture in March, 2011. Exact date and lecture title and content are yet to be decided.

3- Fundraiser for the MRC
Fundraiser Dinner for the library can be done through a big dinner event. We need to send an email to all the honorary members for their help. We might find so many who can help with this dinner. A number of board members are currently researching possible venues and possible public figures who would be willing to participate.

4- Activities
The PTA will be volunteering for the coming Banana Split Lunch for Middle school students. It will take place on December 21stm 2:00 pm.

Next Meeting:
Date: February 12th, 2011
Time: 02:00 PM
Location: Room M005

Thank you for attending and making a difference.

PTA Board

About the Authors

Nevien Mattar
Nevien Mattar is the Head of the Character Education Department and Director of Arabic Studies at Hayah International Academy in Egypt. She is the only certified Alruyah program trainer in Egypt and editor to Alruyah program book series with thirty years of experience in the field of education and self development. Her conference participation includes Kuwait, Germany, UK, the US and Egypt.

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