

Dilema Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Pendidikan Moral Dalam Masyarakat Majmuk Malaysia: Masalah Dalam Kalangan Guru

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ABSTRAK

Pengenalan- Perbezaan kepercayaan, nilai dan amalan menyumbang kepada perbezaan pendapat mengenai apa yang betul dan baik dalam masyarakat majmuk seperti Malaysia. Ini terbukti di dalam kelas Pendidikan Moral. Isu dan dilema digunakan untuk mengajar subjek ini dan memudahcara perkembangan penaakulan moral dalam kalangan pelajar terutamanya di sekolah menengah atas.

Objektif – Kajian ini menjelaskan dilema pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pendidikan Moral dari perspektif dilema guru Pendidikan Moral dalam menangani perbezaan pendapat mengenai perkara yang betul dan baik dalam masyarakat majmuk di Malaysia.

Methodologi – Menggunakan contoh dilema moral yang digunakan dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pendidikan Moral di peringkat sekolah menengah.

Dapatan – Mengkaji apakah sifat dilema, masalah guru, dan isu perbezaan pendapat guru tentang kemoralan dalam bilik darjah Pendidikan Moral di Malaysia.

Kepentingan – Latihan guru harus merangkumi penyediaan guru ME yang dapat menghadapi dilema moral dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran dalam kelas pluralistik.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Moral, Guru, Dilema

Dilemma of Teaching and Learning of Moral Education in Malaysia's Multicultural Society: An Issue for Teachers

ABSTRACT

Introduction- Differences in beliefs, values and practices contribute to disagreements on what is right and good in a multicultural society such as Malaysia. This is evident in the Moral Education classroom. Issues and dilemmas are used to teach the subject and facilitate

the development of moral reasoning among students particularly in upper secondary school.

Purpose – This study considers the dilemma of teaching and learning of Moral Education from the perspective of the dilemma Moral Education teachers' face in addressing disagreements of what is right and good in a Malaysian multicultural society.

Methodology – Using an example of a moral dilemma used in teaching and learning of Moral Education in a secondary classroom.

Findings – The paper examines what is nature of the dilemma, the problem for teachers, and the issue for teachers of moral disagreements in the Malaysian Moral Education classroom.

Significance – Teacher training should encompass on preparing ME teachers that can confront the moral dilemma in the teaching and learning process in the pluralistic classroom.

Keywords: Moral Education, Teacher, Dilemma

Introduction

The purpose of education, in general, can be understood in various contexts but the main focus is on the effort to produce individuals as human beings who can meet the aspirations according to the norms and values of their respective societies through character formation . The moral education programme introduced in several countries, especially in the Southeast Asia region, is due to the awareness of global challenges and problems, especially the increase in social problems among adolescent. Fundamentally, the moral education programme was introduced as one of the alternative approaches implemented to shape the character of a human being according to the needs of the community represented (AbdulRaheem, Bello, & Odutayo, 2018; Balakrishnan, 2017; Jeynes, 2017). The diversity of moral or character education programs in most American, European, Australian and Asian countries is synonymous and used interchangeably in previous studies (Bourke, Kinsella, & Prendeville, 2020; Haydon, 2004; Splitter, 2011; Thornberg & Oğuz, 2016) such as moral or character education, ethics education, religious education, values education as well as civic and citizenship education (Agbaria & Pinson, 2018; Berkowitz, 2011; Berkowitz & Bier, 2007).

Those programs aimed at instilling or forming certain desired character by focusing on psychosocial development to become functional and competent individuals contributing to the well-being and unity of society and nation (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Cohen, 2019; Jeynes, 2017; McPhail, Ungood-Thomas, & Chapman, 1972; Pandya, 2017; Sherblom, Marshall, & Sherblom, 2006). Besides, it is also aiming in promoting moral development and moral judgement that enables students to reason and considerate their action morally (Bourke et al., 2020; Lunn Brownlee, Scholes, Walker, & Johansson, 2016; Splitter, 2011; Wilson, 1996; Wringe, 2006) as well as to form a virtuous character in concordance to societal norms and beliefs. In the Malaysian context, Moral Education (ME) is a form of character education (Bambang, Mohd Tahir, & Abdul Rahman, 2012; Zulkifli, Abdul Razak, &

Mahmood, 2018) in line with its ultimate goal of forming a moral character (Vishalache & Nadarajan, 2017) portrayed as a virtuous human being. These diverse set of the desired character which decided as the goal of various moral education programs causing dilemma among the teachers to decide which ethical principles to choose in determining moral conduct.

Teachers Dilemma in Teaching and Learning of ME in Malaysian Plural Society

Educating for morality in a plural society such as Malaysia is both complex and complicated due to the nature of morality in and of itself and in the idea that it involves educating about and in morality. Educating about morality refers to teaching and learning about what morality entails i.e. standards of good and right whilst education in morality refers to teaching and learning of the specific domains involved in morality which includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological aspects of morality. The content of ME curriculum in Malaysia focuses on holding universal values that should be appreciated and practised in daily life while enabling students to make decisions and solve problems in their real-life situations. Despite changes made in the curriculum content of Moral Education Secondary School Standard Curriculum (SSSC), the goal of ME still maintaining the teaching of 18 universal values (Board of Inspectors, 2019; Malaysia Education Ministry, 2018), this time implicitly within the discussion of moral issues to form a virtuous human being among students. The practised of moral issues discussion is in agreement with the notion of values educators role as facilitators to guide students in collaborative discussions and personal reflections (Revell & Arthur, 2007) of certain values, code of conduct, or other value-related issues, as well as to appreciate and adopt mutual respect when facing varying opinions (Abdul Rahman, 2014).

However, the process of educating for morality is complex because morality is about the standard of good and right adopted by an individual or group where the idea of standard and authority is still debated. The process is complicated because moral standards may differ from one individual or group such as family and peers (Cross, 2017) to another depending on what is taken by them to be a measure of good and right behaviour. Although moral dilemma discussion can encourage active engagement of students as it can develop students' moral reasoning in real situations (Joseph & Efron, 2005; Vishalache & Claiborne, 2017, 2012), Sporre (2018) states that discussion-based assignments which require students to suggest ethical alternative actions are difficult to assess through testing specifically in the learning context of a diverse social background of society (Balakrishnan, 2017; Thornberg & Oğuz, 2016). Moreover, moral reasoning ability is relatively inconsequential for determining moral conduct in everyday situations where what is right and wrong are largely unambiguous (Panter, Cohen, Morse, Kim, & Turan, 2014). Consequently, teachers face a daunting task as they are faced with a dilemma in dealing with the diverse and conflicting moral stances being expressed in the students' perspectives on moral dilemma during discussion.

In Malaysian ME classroom, students come from a diverse background with different beliefs, values and practices that inform their stances on moral dilemma and perspectives of what is right action in a particular issue. Thus, the first dilemma arises as the student may face different opinion among themselves based on their perspective on what is right

or good (Vishalache & Narvaez, 2016). At the same time, the teacher themselves hold a particular standard of good that may be different from the students perspective on what is right. Hence, the second dilemma arises as teachers must be aware of not to imposed students based on their own beliefs, values and perspective of what is right and wrong during a moral discussion for they may be confronting different opinion that comes from students (Halstead, 2011; Vishalache & Claiborne, 2017). Besides, moral dilemma discussion that is commonly practised in ME classrooms can cause difficulties in determining moral conduct as moral standard can be conflicting and different between society, age and situation (Fleischmann, Lammers, Conway, & Galinsky, 2017; Heiphetz & Young, 2017; O'Keefe, 2018). This may lead to the arising of the third dilemma because the curriculum may hold a standard which may stand in conflict with either the student and or the teacher.

The dilemmas calls for the teacher to make decisions on what perspective is right; reconciling or rejecting a perspective that stands in conflict with the standard of morality as in the curriculum and explaining why an individuals' or groups perspective is acceptable or unacceptable. Therefore this paper considers the nature of the dilemma faced by teachers in teaching and learning Moral Education in Malaysia and the importance of a course in moral philosophy in for education of moral education teachers. The theoretical basis for this paper is based on literature that suggest that Moral Education teachers face a dilemma in dealing with different moral standards that inform students' moral stances in discussion and debates on moral dilemma in the Moral Education classroom. This perspectives draws on nature of plural societies in multiculturalism, the focus of multicultural education, the development of a morally educated person in moral education and the nature of moral theories in moral philosophy (Halstead, 2011; Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016). It assumes that in the pluralistic Moral Education classroom, teachers are confronted with differing moral stances that stem from different moral standards they have adopted (Nur Surayyah, 2009; Rissanen, Kuusisto, Hanhimäki, & Tirri, 2018; Wringe, 2006). This situation results in conflicts in perspectives on moral dilemma. The conflicts contribute to dilemmas for Moral Education teachers on how to cope with the different moral standards that stand in conflict with each other as a teacher whose main frame of reference is the societal moral standard as found in the school curriculum.

Relating Malaysian ME Teachers Dilemma in Conducting Moral Dilemma Discussion

The subject of Moral Education is studied by students who come from different social, and religious backgrounds because they are non-Muslim students. The non-Muslim students have various religions and beliefs such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and some still adhere to the traditional beliefs of their ancestors. Meanwhile, Moral Education teachers can be Muslims or non-Muslims and also comes from various religions and beliefs. (Balakrishnan, 2017). This fact allows for the existence of complexity between the beliefs of teachers and students in applying the basic principles of moral ethics, especially when conducting moral discussion activities in the classroom. This is because, each teacher and student has their views of moral conduct based on their background and environment (Schachner, 2019). Hence, there are possibilities of problems in applying moral discussion techniques in the context of Moral Education classroom in Malaysia.

There are some suggested issues listed in the SSSC Moral Education Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document as a guide for teachers to be discussed in class based on topics (MOE, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). At the upper secondary level, specifically form four, the content of the Moral Education curriculum begins to focus on the discussion of moral dilemmas to adapt to the development of students' moral maturity (MOE, 2018). Figure 1 shows an example of a moral dilemma found in the SSSC Moral Education Form Four textbook:

Figure 1: An example of Moral Dilemma



Source: SSSC Form Four Moral Education Textbook (pg. 12)

Based on the dilemma in figure 1 and the description in the textbook, the culture of hedonism is associated with a belief or view of life that focuses only on the pleasures of life. Based on the dilemma in figure 1 and the description in the textbook, the culture of hedonism is associated with a belief or view that focuses only on the pleasures of life. Besides, this moral dilemma requires students to choose either to attend a concert of a foreign artist for he has bought the tickets at a high price or not attend the concert for his friend has advised him that such a concert is prone to hedonism. In conclusion, this dilemma illustrates that the culture of hedonism is considered contrary to the Malaysian societal norms. If this moral dilemma is discussed in the Moral Education classroom, how do the teachers decide the appropriateness of different moral action standards according to the diversity of social, religious, beliefs and cultural backgrounds of Malaysian society? Could teachers make the right decision of moral conduct based on this dilemma by taking into account the students views?

Referring to the moral dilemma in figure 1, there are possibilities of teachers facing a dilemma in concluding suitable and acceptable moral conduct. Certain values or moral attributes often placed as a guide in policy, rules, cultures and curriculum (Alexander, 2016; Bleazby, 2019) as well as textbook. Therefore, teachers should always refer to the guidelines given in the textbook as well as the Malaysian societal norms to draw appropriate conclusions as to guide students to apply them in a real-life situation (Bourke et al., 2020). References to societal norms as the determination of moral action are in line with the ethical principles of social morality (Chowdhury, 2016; Parish, 2014; Thornberg & Oğuz, 2013). However, students as teenagers may have conflicts of interest with teachers as adults (LePage et al., 2011; Soussi, 2016) in determining moral conduct. Besides,

students might decide to act against the societal norms even though they are aware of it (Vishalache & Narvaez, 2016). Hence, the conclusion made at the end of moral discussion may not be fully mutually agreed by students due to conflicting moral standards among teachers and students.

For instance, if a student decides to attend the concert because he has spent a lot of money to buy tickets and not attending the concert will be a waste, then what conclusions and responses should be given in such an answer? In this context, teachers will face a dilemma of whether to refer to the content of textbook stating that the culture of hedonism is contrary to the norms of Malaysian society or be open to any possibilities of contradicting answer from students. If teachers chose to refer to the textbook content alone, there are possibilities of indoctrination by teachers (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2019) because whatever the reason was given, the action of attending the concert can cause exposure to the culture of hedonism that should be avoided. Therefore, teachers may conclude that attending the concert is morally wrong. Such indoctrination will reduce student autonomy in making moral judgments and choices (Abd. Rahman, 1984; Alexander, 2016; Blinkova & Vermeer, 2019) that might indirectly reduce the effectiveness of Moral Education aimed at educating for morality (Wringe, 2006).

However, if teachers are more open to students responses based on the above dilemma, there might be possibilities to determine whether attending the concert is morally wrong or vice versa depending on the reason given by students. If students provides a reason that attending the concert does not necessarily cause him to be involved in the culture of hedonism, then, the choice of attending the concert will be considered as morally right if they can keep himself from engaging in the culture of hedonism. Therefore, the student's choice to attend the concert is not the only way to determine the moral conduct, but rather the reason that was given behind the action taken. Although Moral Education is depicted in the context of providing individuals who can make moral judgements and choices autonomously (Joseph & Efron, 2005; Splitter, 2011; Wilson, 1996; Wringe, 2006), the curriculum content delivery will be inconsistent if teachers are too flexible in evaluating student responses on actions based on the discussed situation (Bourke et al., 2020). Thus, the complexity in achieving the final decision on moral conduct through moral dilemma discussion causing dilemma among ME teachers.

Implications

This paper reveals that there are possibilities of ME teachers having a dilemma in determining moral conduct based on moral dilemma discussion specifically in the context of multiculturalism society that consists of various social, religious, beliefs and cultural backgrounds such as Malaysia (Noraini, Mohd Aderi, Mohd Isa, & Latifah, 2015; Nur Surayyah, 2009). Each society or individual has their own views (O'Keefe, 2018) that makes it quite difficult to reach an agreement on certain moral conduct. Hence, the complexities of determining which action is morally right or wrong will always happen when it comes to promoting reasoning through moral dilemma discussion. Moreover, teachers are reported having received no or insufficient training to prepare themselves for dealing with cultural diversity in the classroom (Schachner, 2019) as well as lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept of multicultural education (Noraini et al.,

2015). Therefore, enhancing the usefulness of teacher training (Schachner, 2019) in promoting appreciation as well as an awareness on different views of morality based on their understanding of basic principles in ethical theories and current societal norms and cultures is crucial. The understanding of different moral standard will avoid indoctrination of teachers' beliefs that may cause students to fail to make good moral judgements. Besides, ME teachers should have specific skill to deal with the arising dilemma in making decision and conclusion of moral conduct during discussion. Only with sufficient and comprehensive training content, teachers will have confidence in dealing with different or conflicting responses from students during the teaching and learning process particularly in practising moral dilemma discussions.

Conclusion

Based on the Malaysian context, a moral discussion is, maybe one of the best teaching method in promoting students moral judgments. By implementing this method, both teachers and students are aware of different ethical standards which exist in determining moral conduct. Although the current curriculum of ME may have not given a broader perspective of making a decision and problem-solving in a real-life situation, through a better understanding of the differences in determining moral conduct, ME may still be relevant in forming a virtues human being. Furthermore, a basic knowledge of diverse principles in moral-ethical theory is important in enabling teachers to understand such diversity during the teaching and learning process of ME in the context of multicultural Malaysian society (MOE, 2018; Vishalache, 2016). Various ethical theories are also included in the learning syllabus of prospective ME teachers that enable them to apply their knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of those ethical theories in the T&L process in the classroom (Abdul Rahman, 2018). Hence, realising about different standards and principles in various ethical theories and different cultures may help teachers to confront a dilemma of moral disagreement in multicultural and pluralistic ME classroom.

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