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**A CASE STUDY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF  
UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS  
TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF  
MORAL EDUCATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE  
ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This case study analyses the perceptions of upper secondary school students, teachers and administrators on the issues related to Moral Education. The study intends to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the philosophy, approaches and methodology related to the subject as well as possible strategies to be adopted to overcome possible shortcomings.

Using the questionnaire and interview methods, responses were elicited from students, teachers and administrators regarding Moral Education. The analysis of means and standard deviation was carried out to determine the perceptions of the students, teachers and administrators of Moral Education and the nature of their influence on the effectiveness of the subject.

The results show that upper secondary school students, teachers and administrators believe Moral Education to be necessary and useful to moral and personality development of the students. The effectiveness of the subject in attaining the social goals was however, not supported by the study. Delivery of subject matter, pedagogy and lack of training in “teaching” skills need to be given their due consideration as well.

This case study being a preliminary study, had involved only cursory examinations of data and results obtained from questionnaire and interviews.

Conclusions made from them are therefore limited only to the samples chosen for the study.

TITLE OF PROJECT PAPER: A CASE STUDY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF MORAL EDUCATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project paper is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by reference notes and a bibliography is appended.

Date: 31<sup>st</sup> October 1997

Signature ..... Rozita Othman

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Through out the years, and for many decades and centuries, many countries around the globe had successfully shaped their societies into model societies using education. Education had been a useful “tool”, to educate as well as to equip members of the societies with the necessary knowledge and skills vital for the smooth functioning of the whole societies. Education had also been the “tool” used to instil the traditionally held beliefs and convictions central to the maintenance of peace and harmony within the societies.

Malaysia has not been left behind in this endeavour. Education has always been an area of great importance in which much focus has been given. Much effort and money have been put into education so that the country would be able to keep producing intellectuals, skilled labour, and well-educated citizens. Of late, the new integrated school curriculum has been furnished with yet another added agenda; that is to produce individuals who are well-balanced emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally. Schools have now not only the responsibility of educating students with basic secular or worldly knowledge but they also have the added duty of inculcating in students feelings of basic societal obligations as well as sensitivities to humanitarian roles or duties and needs. Moral education has been introduced into the education system to assist schools in fulfilling this added responsibility.

## **Rationale for carrying out the study**

Recent developments have proven that managing discipline and students' behaviours are most challenging for both teachers and parents. Instances of lack of discipline, truancy, vandalism, drug abuse, and juvenile delinquencies have been frequently reported daily in various local newspapers. Misdemeanours, assaults, and thefts are no longer alien to Malaysian school students in fact they have become almost common everyday occurrence in Malaysian schools especially secondary schools. (Utusan Malaysia, March 21, 1997).

As a result of the much publicised negative developments in the attitudes and behaviours of students in and outside schools, moral education was introduced into both the primary and secondary school curricula. The main reason being, to bring positive changes to the school environment and students' behaviour.

This was in 1988, when the subject was taught and learnt in both the primary and secondary schools as a compulsory subject. Moral education is the complement of Islamic religious education and just as the latter is compulsory for all Muslim students, the former is a compulsory subject for all non-Muslim students.

( Moral education is believed to be a very useful tool and an effective means to improve attitudes and behaviours among Malaysian school students. Moral consciousness and the feelings of responsibility, justice and righteousness need to be

implanted in students effectively enough so that peaceful and harmonious environments could be preserved not only in schools but also outside schools. It is towards this end that the moral education syllabus had been developed and implemented.

Apart from this particular end, moral education had also been introduced into schools in order to meet the requirements of Malaysia's industrialisation plans. "Vision 2020" proposes Malaysia's achieving an industrialised nation status without having to compromise on any of her traditional, religious or cultural values. These values, which are moral values, have to be protected so that citizens will not lose "direction" in life even while they are enjoying affluent lifestyles brought about by modernisation and industrialisation. In other words, the threats of corrupt influences from Western industrialised nations must be kept at bay. Malaysia could only maintain and preserve her currently upheld values and "moral-living" through her younger generation. This younger generation need to understand what they have to maintain and preserve and they also ought to be made aware of what they are to avoid or keep away from. All these can be done with the help of effective implementation of moral education in the schools curricula.

Moral education then has the responsibility of inculcating and nurturing in school students values which are universal as well as local, and those which are relevant, accepted and practised within Malaysia and outside the country.

The aim of this study was to examine the perceptions that students, teachers and administrators of secondary schools have of moral education and to determine the effectiveness of its implementation in secondary schools. Also, it was hoped that the study would reveal ways to further improve the teaching and learning of values incorporated in the moral education syllabus.

### **Objectives of the study**

Moral education has generally been regarded as a less serious subject compared to mathematics and the sciences. School students, teachers and administrators (to a lesser extent) seem unaware of the importance of moral education to the inner development of the students. Apart from achieving excellent results in examinations, it is vital that students have equally excellent moral standards. Otherwise, their intelligence in the academic field would be a waste as society would not be able to benefit much from their “mental capacities”. Students who lack high moral principles would fail to identify opportunities or places where their contributions are needed most. Thus, they would fail to act as useful and responsible members of the society. As such, this study had attempted to measure the extent of knowledge of moral values among upper secondary school students (Forms 4 and 5), to find out their perceptions of the moral education subject and to find out the level of interest they have in the subject as well as the importance they place on it being a taught examination subject.

This study had also hoped to find out teachers and administrators perceptions of the teaching of moral education and their views of the impact made by moral education on the students and the school environment as a whole.

### **Research questions**

The survey study was carried out to address the following questions: -

1. Why is there a need for Moral Education to be introduced in schools?
2. What are the features of the Moral Education syllabus?
3. To what extent does moral education in school complement moral education in the home.

### **Definition of terms**

**Perception:** The way one thinks of something and the impressions one has of the particular thing. (Paradigm).

**Norms:** What is expected in one's conduct by society or group that one belongs to. The behaviour expected is specific and any deviations from the norm would be considered problematic.



**Values:** Those principles, objectives or goals that a person wants to have, to become, to be and in the process affirms the concept of himself. Therefore, behaviour reflects values that are expected but are more substantive and abstract..

**Morality:** The standards or abstract expectations by society at large that is imposed on a person as a social being. It concerns conduct which is significant in social life and is connected with right and wrong conduct. Usually one is born into a moral domain in which conformity is expected of values incorporated in the social system.

**Ethics:** A study that involves reflecting on the right thing to do through the use of reasoning involving ethical standards, concepts and facts in dealing with issues of right and wrong action as well as the extent of responsibility for any wrong doing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is devoted to the review of related literature and it explains the developments of thoughts on moral values, morality and moral education through the ages. Focus has been made on the connections and relevance of past thoughts on the present day views on moral values, morality and moral education.

The first part briefly discusses past thoughts on moral values and moral education. Distinctions between the views of past philosophical thinkers are highlighted. This part ends with a summary, which generalises the main ideas on moral values and education of the past.

The second part has been devoted to the discussion of present views on moral values as well as the reasons for the new need for moral education to be reintroduced. Also highlighted in this section are the current societal developments across the world.

The third part discusses current issues which have concerned the implementations of moral education in many countries. Focus has been given on the general aspects of problems that could be considered universal and relevant to both Asian countries as well as the West.

The final part of this chapter deals with the implementation of moral education in Malaysia. The rationale behind its implementation as well as the influence of other factors on its introduction have been discussed.

### **The Historical Background of Concepts of Moral Values, Morality and Moral Education.**

Morality and concepts of moral virtues and values had concerned philosophical scholars as early as B.C. 300. During this age philosophers in Greece such as Socrates and Plato were working hard towards understanding the nature of truth, virtue, knowledge and justice. Moral education emerged as a result of their hard effort (Carr, 1991).

As cited by Carr (1991), Socrates and his prominent student Plato argued against the Sophists about the idea of knowledge and the “ideal” human state. Both scholars believed that human beings would only attain true happiness and fulfilment in life by abiding by the laws or discipline of moral virtues. Moral virtues were believed to be part of knowledge. They concern manifestations of the victory of wisdom or reason over passion. Failure to control passion leads to vices and moral defects. As moral virtues form part of knowledge, they are therefore “teachable”.

Socrates and Plato believed that, human beings who erred were those who had been deprived of the knowledge of moral virtues. Thus, to gain perfect wisdom,

justice and fulfilment in life, it was necessary to pursue this special knowledge and practice the “Dialectics” or “Rational Inquiry” (Carr,1991). However, Socrates’ and Plato’s idea of moral virtues are only accessible to a few individuals who had been bestowed with the gifts of distinguished intellectual abilities. They also are the people who must have undergone a lifetime of mental training and exercise in subjects such as Mathematics and the “Dialectics” (Carr,1991).

The prominence of the Greek philosopher Aristotle emerged, after the deaths of Socrates and Plato. He continued the arguments on truth, wisdom, virtue and justice which were earlier propounded by Plato and Socrates, and added a new dimension to the pursuit of knowledge of moral virtues necessary for the fulfilment of and happiness in life. He argued against the idea that knowledge is only available to a selected few, as suggested by Socrates and Plato and pointed out that experience is also needed for the growth of moral wisdom provided by knowledge. Since this is the case and since experience is undergone by all human beings, moral virtue is then available to all people and not just limited to the intellectually gifted selected few (Carr, 1991). All people need the necessary education and practice on moral virtues so as not to be deprived of achieving the said fulfilment of living and experiencing happiness in life.

Debates on moral virtues and education did not arise again until the appearance of Rousseau in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and picked up later by Emmanuel Kant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both philosophers propounded the ideas that moral virtues are actually the result of the exercise of reason. According to them, human beings already have embedded within themselves the ideas of moral law and the right moral

conduct. It is just dependent on the individual “self” to use reason and determine the conduct preferred. However, according to Rousseau and especially Kant, the individual who is using reason to make moral judgements on the actions to be followed, need not necessarily obey the moral law and correct moral conduct as suggested by his “reasoning”. The individual has the freedom to make his own personal choices as dictated by his own personal inclinations (Carr, 1991). Right and wrong that have been determined by “reasoning” may be rejected by personal choice or preference.

After the demise of Kant, the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim appeared on the “scene” of the discussion on moral virtues and knowledge. He proposes a completely new “outlook” to the old debate with his theory of moral education as part of socialisation. He was a scholar who belonged to the 19<sup>th</sup> century post-enlightenment school of thought (Carr,1991). Carr cited that Durkheim propounded the idea that the human satisfaction and well being could only be achieved when people have been educated or informed enough about social norms and values. Only then would harmony, order, and co-operative social relations come to life. As soon as people begin to “lose sight” of these norms and values, they would totally lose direction in life. This would later result in the other “traumatic” social events and states of “anomie”. In other words, states of disorder would arise as a result of failure to take heed or observe social norms and values. Thus, according to Durkheim, it follows to say that moral education is part of socialisation whereby the society is being educated about its’ traditional values and norms that are a necessity

for protection against “disturbances”, “anarchy” and losing the direction for living (Carr,1991) and (Abdul Rahman, 1986).

Twentieth century moral philosophical scholars such as Homer Lane and A.S. Neill were very much influenced by the work of the founding father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. As cited by Carr (1991), Lane and Neill were preoccupied with the behavioural problems of disturbed and maladjusted children. This somehow had some relations to Freud’s concern with problems faced by the mentally ill and maladjusted adults.

As suggested by Freud’s psychoanalysis theory, much of adult mental and behavioural disturbances have their roots in bad childhood experiences within the home. Lane and Neill also came to the same deduction in their studies of emotionally disturbed children. Deviations of all forms from normal behaviours and all types of psychological conflicts in children, have deeply rooted causes in bad “exposures” experienced at or around the home. Based on these revelations, Lane and Neill concluded that the best way to help overcome such difficulties was by promoting “responsible freedom” on the part of children . This kind of freedom permitted children to act and respond to outside stimuli responsibly within the “limited” freedom allowed for them. They were allowed to act and behave as freely as they wished but within the prescribed limits. However, Lane and Neill required an educator to be present with the children to monitor their development and improvement. The educator then also needed to be extremely patient and determined to help change the abnormal behaviours of the children (Carr,1991).

Such would also be the case with the moral educator. The moral educator or teacher must have the patience and the strong desire to bring positive changes in children's or students' behaviours no matter how difficult and challenging the endeavour. Without such strong convictions on the part of the educator, the whole task of providing children and students with moral guidance and lessons on moral improvements would be futile.

### **Theories on Moral Development**

The twentieth century saw the emergence of three major sets of moral development theories that are applicable to the normal moral development of an individual, from his childhood right into adulthood. The first of these theories is the Psychoanalytic Theory, followed by the Social Learning Theory and ending with the Cognitive-Developmental Theories. The Psychoanalytic Theory and the Social Learning Theory regard moral development as a process that involves the internalisation and adoption of pre-existing standards for right action that have been specified by society as the individual's own moral standards for right action. The Cognitive-Developmental Theories on the other hand suggest that cognitive maturity and social experience will determine the advances that an individual will achieve in his moral understanding (Berk, 1994).

According to Freud in his Psychoanalytic Theory, children take into their personality the characteristics of their parents that at the same time are also the reflections of the norms belonging to the society. The process of adopting their

parents characteristics in the meantime also allows children to internalise standards already specified and accepted by the society. Freud believed that moral development in children takes place in a stage-like manner whereby the process is completed when children reach the ages of five or six years. Moral actions are mostly based on emotion and are interpreted as those which avoid punishment and the feelings of guilt and disturbed conscience (Berk, 1994).

The Social Learning Theory suggests that individuals especially children acquire understanding of morality and moral behaviour through modelling and reinforcement. Behaviours and characteristics of models (teachers, parents or other adults) are imitated and copied by children who observe them or learn from them. Positive examples and demonstrations given by models will elicit or encourage positive responses from the children who observe or learn from them (Berk, 1994). Children's moral behaviours are further reinforced and conditioned by the installation of fear of punishment for the violation of rules and regulations and the awarding of rewards for good behaviour (Bukatko and Daeler, 1992). According to this theory, moral behaviour is learned and not just taken or acquired from parents and the avoidance of guilty conscience as suggested by the Psychoanalytic Theory.

The Cognitive-Developmental Theories stress the importance of the intimate connection between individuals' (including children's) moral development and the development of their thinking abilities. Cognitive maturity and social experiences will determine the level of moral understanding an individual will have of moral problems. Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg are the two most prominent