

Teaching Moral Values Through Real-life Dilemmas

Vishalache Balakrishnan

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

*Corresponding Author: visha@waikato.ac.nz

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to contribute to contemporary debates about alternative ways of teaching Moral Education (ME) in Malaysia by including the voice of students. ME in the Malaysian setting is both complex and compulsory. The research is founded on a modified version of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), extended to suit the multicultural, multi-ethnic Malaysian setting, and here called the Zone of Collaborative Development (ZCD). This study uses qualitative research methodology consisting of a modified framework of participatory action research (PAR) as the methodological framework. Data was gathered for textual analysis through a modified form of participant observation, focus group transcripts, interviews, and student journals. Findings show that students were concerned about moral issues and values not covered in the current ME curriculum. The moral dilemmas that they identified were relational and context dependent. Multiple factors contributed to the problems they described.

Key Words: Research Competencies, Education Teachers, Mentoring Models, Digital Technology

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my study is to explore new ways of teaching Moral Education (ME) in Malaysia. So far, the cognitive development approach introduced by Kohlberg (1984), the value clarification introduced by Raths, Harmin and Simon (1966), and character education introduced by Lickona (1991) have been implemented in the Malaysian ME syllabus. However, the problem is that students study ME as any other content related subject and are unable to see the relevance of ME in real-life situations (Tong et al., 2022). There is a gap between what is in the syllabus and how the students approach real-life moral dilemmas. So far, in Malaysia, students' perceptions have not been taken into account when formulating or revising the ME syllabus. This study aims to focus on students' voices through participatory action research (PAR), that is, to involve students of ME in active communication and discussion to resolve the real-life dilemmas that they face in their daily lives (Saimon et al., 2023).

As I begin this journey of researching a pedagogical issue in ME, I start my reflection from the age of one and a half when my family moved to live in a church compound in Batu Gajah, Perak, Malaysia. About eight families lived in this church compound, as well as the priest who was managing the clergy work.

Growing up in an environment filled with priest, nuns, and brothers of the Catholic mission, I developed a passion for looking into the hearts of people from a very young age. My family was the only Hindu-Buddhist family living in that area. My parents were open-minded and my siblings and I were actively involved in church activities such as social visits to hospital and helping the needy. Then I went to an all-girls missionary school. At that time, ME was not yet in the Malaysian education system but the nuns and teachers in school taught ethics and catechism (Raftery & Delaney, 2022). In those early days I became very interested in morality, ethics, and the development of human personality (Asif et al., 2020).

As I attended a college of education to be a teacher of English, my passion for humanistic subjects grew. My English classes in school were always connected with stories of virtues. I strongly believe that teaching involves more than transfer of knowledge. It is always about the relationships between individuals in a school. I always reflected on my lessons and made sure that they made sense and were meaningful to my students. Vygotsky (1978) whose theory will be used later believed that our life experiences affect and influence our development (Vygotsky, 1978 in Saracho, 2023). My upbringing in a Christian environment, coming from a family of two faiths (Hinduism and Buddhism), and living in a pluralistic country influenced me and, ultimately, this research. This study is not only focussed on the education system of the country I love and take pride in, but it is also a self-mission that creates a sense of beginning for me to be able to conduct research on matters close to my heart. According to Wink and Putney's rendition of Vygotsky (2002), "Our use of language determines our learning; and our learning determines our use of language. None of this takes place in a vacuum" (Vygotsky, 2002 in Skyer, 2023).

The above quote provides deep insight into my experience as an English teacher in my earlier days. When I taught English language in the early 1990s, I used to reflect if my teaching was reaching the hearts of my students or whether it was just at a superficial level where students mastered the four basic skills in language and became competent in using the language. This was one of the main factors why I left Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) after doing three academic and professional courses in that field (my basic teacher education, my specialized teacher education, and my first degree) and embarked on ME which was introduced into the Malaysian education system in the late 1980s (Yaakob, 2020). I did my minor in ME during my entire undergraduate course and then fully embarked on Social Science, majoring in ME. Ever since then, there has been no turning back because ME in Malaysia (MEM) is dynamic and always changing. There is no completion period to say that we have the most ideal syllabus and that teaching ME has achieved its aim (Macalister, 2023).

This study makes a substantial contribution by significantly expanding the understanding of Moral Education (ME) in Malaysia. It achieves this by not only prioritizing the viewpoints of students but also by implementing inventive

research methodologies, delving into the complexities of multicultural backgrounds, and redirecting attention from language-based education to the fundamental aspects of moral education (Putrayasa & Ramendra, 2021). These multifaceted contributions firmly advocate for a renewed, more enriched ME curriculum and innovative teaching approaches, aiming to enhance the educational landscape for future generations (Darmawan & Dagamac, 2021).

This research aims to explore new approaches in teaching Moral Education (ME) in Malaysia. The main focus of this study was to investigate the gap that exists between the existing curriculum and students' practical understanding of moral values in everyday life situations. Although various approaches such as cognitive development by Kohlberg (1984), value clarification by Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1966), and character education by Lickona (1991) have been implemented in the ME curriculum in Malaysia, students often perceive ME as any other content subject regardless of its relevance in real-life contexts. Therefore, this study aims to explore more effective and innovative ways of teaching ME in order to increase students' understanding of moral values and strengthen the connection between the ME curriculum and the moral situations faced by students on a daily basis.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology employed in this study is Participatory Action Research (PAR), differing from action research due to its collaborative nature among co-participants. This collaborative social process, as described by Habermas (1994), embodies an open communicative process facilitated by individuals collaborating to transform communication practices within a shared social world, thereby living with the consequences of each other's actions (Westin, 2022). PAR stands as a crucial methodology for intervention, development, and change within communities and groups, integrating research and action, thereby allowing everyone to engage as researchers (Camiré et al., (2022)). The research aims to prioritize the understanding and involvement of students in Moral Education (ME) classes in Malaysia, utilizing PAR to amplify the voices of often unheard students, with the aspiration that the information they provide will enrich the ME curriculum, fostering more meaningful learning outcomes and a more equitable distribution of power within the Malaysian ME pedagogical approach.

In Moral Education (ME) research in Malaysia using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods, various data collection techniques were used (Lateh et al., 2021). Participatory interviews engage students in structured discussions to understand their views and experiences regarding ME. Participatory observation allows direct monitoring of how students apply moral values in real situations. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) facilitate open conversations between students to gain a collective understanding of ME. In addition, case studies and participatory questionnaires are used to analyze students' decision-making and

their understanding of ME. The combination of these techniques provides a holistic picture of students' views on ME, enables them to play an active role in research, and supports a deeper understanding of the subject of ME in Malaysia.

In data analysis for Moral Education (ME) research in Malaysia using Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, several analytical techniques were used. Thematic analysis to identify thematic patterns from interviews, observations, and FGDs. Phenomenological analysis to understand students' individual experiences of ME (Meek, 2020). Grounded theory is used to develop new theories based on data. Case comparison analysis to compare moral scenarios and student responses. This combination of techniques allows for a holistic understanding of students' views of ME.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Young people in Malaysia face conflict when it comes to moral decision-making as there are so many factors to deal with. Moral conflicts which involve contesting ideas of what is right and wrong and good and bad becomes subjective according to the contextual complexities of the Malaysian educational realities. Students need to collaborate, negotiate their way through, and mediate between different values that inform different perspectives.

In the Malaysian context, many factors such as laws and regulations, tradition, ethnic culture, religion, and social norms need to be considered. characterises culture as a “toolkit of techniques” for coping with life situations (Bruner, 2006 in Mishchanchuk, 2022). It is a challenge for adolescents in Malaysia to face daily moral dilemmas when they are pulled in so many different directions.

The students in the research were clear about what moral conflicts were before reflecting upon the types of moral conflicts they faced or they knew that exist and would want further clarification on how to resolve those moral conflicts. Students were provided sufficient time to reflect upon one or two real-life moral conflicts which were disturbing and which they selected to share with their peers for discussion and direction.

Factors Affecting Moral Conflicts

From their students' conflict journals students in my PAR identified several issues where values were in conflict. A content analysis of his participants' dilemmas, categorizing them as either relational or non-relational (Pratt, 2015 in Vanluydt et al., 2022). He states that relational dilemmas focus on response and relationships, and non-relational focus on rights. In the real-life moral dilemmas presented by my research participants, all conflicts were relational. They were conflicting relationships based on interpersonal or intrapersonal clashes in values and relationships. Using the distinction made by Walker, de Vries and Trevethan (1997), the real-life dilemmas were termed as relational - which includes an ongoing significant relationship - and non-

relational, which involves persons whom the participants neither know nor are directly involved with (Walker et al., 1997 in Yuan et al., 2024).

Other than me, two independent raters (a developmental psychologist and a counsellor) were involved in generating the themes and the relational and non-relational dilemmas. Of the 22 moral dilemmas presented by my study participants, 19 dilemmas involved relational relationships with others whom they knew and 1 involved the environment which everyone is part of and 2 were not included as moral dilemmas. As far as my participants are concerned, they are more likely to identify relational than non-relational issues in their everyday dealings.

Later in the PAR cycles, students' voices reflected a consistency in relational values. Based on the moral dilemmas that the participants provided, several major themes emerged. These are identified in the diagram below:

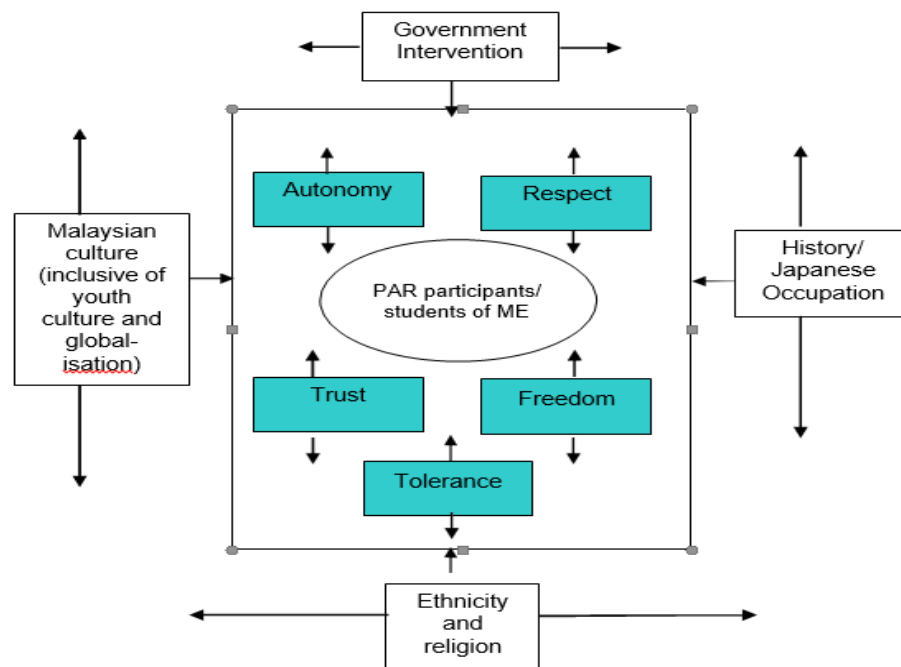


Figure 1. Types of Moral Sphere Where Students Have Moral Conflicts

In Figure 1. the sphere in the center of the diagram represents my PAR participants who are also students of ME in secondary schools. The five major themes that repeatedly emerged in my research include moral conflicts involving autonomy, respect, trust, freedom and tolerance. The arrows from the five themes indicate overlapping between these themes. The themes have been analyzed according to the different schools and presented in a table of conflicts.

Based on my findings of this study, four factors have had a particularly significant influence on morality and moral development for these participants at least. These include mainly the government, history/Japanese occupation (between 1942 and 1945), the culture of the students and the nation, and the existing different ethnic and religious groupings. It is important to understand

that these influencing factors are unique to the Malaysian setting and cannot be seen as generic or be generalized to other multicultural countries. The arrows from these four factors represent the potential for conflict between the four and with the five themes mentioned earlier. For example, the present culture might conflict with ethnicity and religion or values originating from the culture established during the Japanese occupation or the rule of law (government intervention). Before turning to the students' dilemmas, I will briefly review the four external constraining influences.

Government Intervention

The government, through the MOE, implements ME in schools throughout Malaysia. The top-down system of implementing subjects in the education system, which is exam-oriented, makes students focus upon examinations even for subjects like ME. This is clearly seen in discussions presented later which show the students' struggle between the notion of expressing themselves as adolescents in the moral sphere, and the constraints of ME implementation as well as societal and cultural expectations within the moral domain.

The Changing Nature of Malaysia Culture

The culture in Malaysia is unique and is changing every day. Investigating students' moral decision-making, seem to differ from my current findings (Vishalache, 2006 in Steć & Kulik, 2021). In 2006, most of the children and adolescents' responses or moral choices were directly based on religion but my current research shows that religion and culture are already a way of life for my PAR participants and they are more concerned about moral pluralism. Moral pluralism provides a comprehensive view of moral complexity and moral conflict (Beal, 2020). To further understand the moral conflicts faced by adolescents in Malaysia, an understanding of Malaysian culture and how various current issues influence the cultural factors is important.

Almost all participants from Kekwah, Orkid, and Seri Pagi agreed that the culture and upbringing of their parents played a crucial role in most of the conflicts that they faced now. The strict upbringing in certain families, due to cultural beliefs and tradition, and to the effects of the Japanese occupation is seen as one of the reasons why there was such a conflict. The exchange below describes the participants' assumptions of their parents and the older generation.

Participants were aware that their parents were in a different time when growing up and they have become accustomed to being over protected because of this. The following excerpt from a student journal relates the frustration that this participant had to convince parents about their school activities:

No use talking to parents who belong to the last generation. It is better to get the sports teacher or the principal to send a letter allowing the student to take part in sports. Then parents might listen. (Seri Pagi)

The culture brought by the different ethnic groups from their land of origin blended with some of the local culture in Malaysia and has been a yardstick to set the norms for the younger generations. This culture is still changing every day due to the influence of several factors mentioned earlier. Furthermore, globalization and youth culture in the Malaysian context also influence the dilemmas faced by my PAR participants and other adolescents. The influence of the internet and media has become the issue being discussed daily by religious bodies and the government. The wide spread of Western and other cultural influences which conflict with the Malaysian way of life is constantly debated in public. Adolescents are caught in this conflict and are struggling to be global and local at the same time.

Ethnicity and Religion

In my research, the participants outwardly mention ethnicity and religion during their discussions. Comments, examples, and opinions put forward showed the influence of ethnicity and religion. Being an Islamic country, students have been exposed to the Islamic code of conduct in schools and public places. Coming from different religious backgrounds, they are also exposed to their own religion and traditions through ritual and spiritual practices. The difference of practices and decision-making based on these two components should be clearly understood by students and teachers.

The participants accept the notion that parents or other older members of the family seem to conflict with them due to different upbringing at different times. However, they feel the need to have more autonomy due to changing times and different culture. This leads to the conflict attributable to the different cultures and religions within the different ethnic groups and the arising “youth culture” that cuts across ethnicity, religion, and culture within the society.

The diversity of culture within the different ethnic groups in Malaysia sometimes causes clashes between the participants and members of families, especially older members. In some instances, participants mentioned the issue of conflict in culture when I further questioned them about communicating with their parents over dinner:

For the Chinese, dinner time is to eat and you cannot talk. My grandma always asks us to keep quiet. The fear that you can choke on your food. (Orkid)

In traditional Chinese homes, members of families are not allowed to speak unnecessarily during meal time together unless they have something important to tell. However, in current times, meal times are one of the few precious opportunities for all members of the family to get together and communicating with others or sharing important family matters can take place. It is a situation of conflicting norms between traditional practices and current needs to communicate with family members. The “filial piety” concept comes into play. If parents or grandparents are authoritarian, then they might stick

strictly to traditions as in the above excerpt. However, elder members of the family who are more open-minded may allow different practices like talking and sharing experiences and problems to take place.

During breaks, my research participants brought up interesting quotes which their parents use such as “Your wings are stronger, so you think you can fly off now” or “Don’t try to teach your parents”. Participants tend to talk only if necessary and do most of their sharing with their peers.

In many cases, my participants gave up on negotiating because their parents were authoritarian. The cultural crisis that participants brought up was use of proverbs and phrases that they felt should not be taken for granted:

My parents always remind me that they have seen the sun first, they tasted salt first, and my grandma also always says such things. It simply means don't try telling them things because they are more experienced than us. It is true to a certain extent but we also are learning lots of things which our parents and grandparents have no knowledge about. For example, use of computer and all. My grandma is always thinking that I'm playing games but she doesn't know that I'm finding information for my school projects.

Being from an Eastern society, most of my participants are growing in and encouraged to absorb their own ethnic culture. For example, the situation above is very common when young family members try to express themselves or make suggestions. The excerpt below shows how an Indian participant is under stress because of the culture followed in Indian families:

... how the first child reacts and behaves, the other children will follow the example set by the first child. Because they are the elder child. And they set an example for the rest of the brothers and sisters. Because if they set a good example they are followed and if they set a bad example they are also followed. But I wish it was not so because the younger ones have their own brains for them to decide what is good and bad. (Orkid)

This is a further example of what my participants consider a cultural constraint. They feel each individual should have their own freedom to be what they want and not always be expected to be an example to the younger siblings. In traditional Indian homes, eldest children are always told to behave well, excel academically, and be role models. This puts stress on them and can cause conflicts in families. One unique aspect of my research is the richness of data gathered, based on culture and traditions in the Malaysian context. The in-depth analyses add the depth of the voices of the students which I will highlight all the way through.

History/Japanese occupation

This is a newly identified influence which, to my knowledge, has not been previously discussed in research involving ME. To have several of my

participants mentioning how their moral conflicts were linked to the Japanese occupation is worth discussing. Extended family members such as grandparents and older generations have been cited as using the values necessitated by the Japanese occupation to influence the morality of the present adolescents. However, the most common dialogue about this, as indicated by what I wrote in my observational journal, is that most parents who complain keep comparing their hard times during the Japanese occupation in Malaya with the good times that the children are having now:

Yes, they always bring up the sufferings during the Japanese occupation. My father always brings up those days' examples also. He'll say, "Last time we had 5 cents only; Nowadays I give you Ringgit Malaysia 3 [currency equivalent to about NZD 1.50] every day and I don't know what you are doing with the money every day". I've tried to explain that the price of things is different nowadays but he won't accept that. (Orkid)

Based on my own observations and reflections, I find the Orkid participants caught in this situation where they find parents difficult to communicate with. They seem to connect the generation gap with the way their parents were brought up in Malaya during the Japanese occupation. During the Japanese occupation, life was hard and people were living in fear all the time. Some Japanese soldiers tortured and killed innocent people, raped young girls, and created havoc which is remembered until today by those who survived the occupation.

In Kekwah too, the impact of bringing young girls up strictly during the Japanese occupation is still felt by my participants, as exemplified by the excerpt below:

Mum is so set in her ways. Because she has been brought up the strict way, no one can change her set ideas and mentality. Because mum had, a strict upbringing, she tends to pass the same way of upbringing onto her children. Unless we tell ourselves that we want to break away from such traditions and way of thinking, we might end up like them too. (Kekwah)

In traditional Malaysian families, girls have always been brought up in a closed and less free environment compared to boys. This became worse during the Japanese occupation when girls became the targets of some brutal Japanese soldiers. The girls were practically hidden in hideouts during the entire Japanese occupation. It could be due to such emotional constraints that some mothers and grandmothers continue to enforce such a strict upbringing on their daughters and granddaughters thus causing conflicts. With all the above impacts on the moral domain I now go describe the main themes that emerged from all the moral conflicts written by my participants.

Conflicting Themes

The moral conflicts presented by my study participants are mostly relational and evolve around their lives as adolescents at home, in school, and as part of a nation and a global society. The moral conflicts are either interpersonal or intrapersonal in nature. The five main themes that emerged during my research in the three different schools are: autonomy, respect, trust, freedom, tolerance. These themes in the moral conflicts in the research were double-checked by two independent raters with 95 percent agreement. The 5 percent balance was discussed and after mutual agreement was obtained each moral conflict was then themed according to the mutual agreement.

It is important to note that based on the MOE, ME Syllabus for Secondary Schools, except for autonomy, the other four themes of respect, trust, freedom and tolerance are all included in the revised syllabus. However, these values have been embedded within the content area which students' study as "facts". My research shows that participants reconceptualize these values within a relational frame, as will be discussed. The pedagogy of teaching and the lack of students' voices in exploring the values and conflicts thus constitute a gap as identified by which my findings.

Autonomy

The core notion in autonomy is that the autonomous individual can make free choices and act on them. Autonomy seems to be the key conflict among the participants in my PAR research (Dworkin, 1998 in Lee, 2023). They find themselves constantly battling with this moral conflict in interaction with their parents and with other members of society. An enriched understanding of autonomy must take account of "emotions, needs, attitudes, preferences, feelings and desires", as well as "community structures and social interdependence" (Kleinig, 1992 in Khader, 2020). My PAR students think that those around them do not understand their needs and this causes moral conflicts, particularly with those in authority.

Based on my research, autonomy is a new finding and is different from the values covered in the curriculum whether the current or the previous one. It is also a finding that voices the students need for something that is not taught but is important for their present development.

In Malaysia, due to the government policy of implementing the Islamic code of conduct in public places, adolescents have limited autonomy to express themselves with their partners or friends. Indecent conduct based on the Islamic code is brought to court and those found guilty are fined or punished in several ways. Members of the Muslim community are taken to the Syariah courts whereas non-Muslims are taken to the civil courts.

During one of the focus groups discussions held in Orkid, participants spoke further on the conflict in autonomy versus authority which they face in

their daily activities. In the interview excerpt below, the participants shared how they yearn for autonomy from their parents:

Like studying and always asking us to think about our future. We know what we are doing but they keep nagging us and that is very annoying sometimes. (Orkid)

In almost all moral conflicts of autonomy participants had conflicts with their parents and one with the school authority. Although desiring some autonomy to direct their own lives, participants still respected their parents and other authorities. This takes us to the next theme which is respect.

Respect

Although respect is included in the curriculum, as the following extract shows participants view this value as a two-way process:

Give a listening ear to the child, but the child too must be more patient with mum and tolerant and respect the mum's feelings. It's a two way- process and will take time for each party to respect the other. By then we will all be adults. Just hope we don't repeat the same mistake with our children... (Kekwah)

The above extract was taken from one Kekwah participant's journal. The participant talks about the two-way process of respect which seems to be in conflict here. Respect constitutes another theme in which participants identify conflict in values. They respect their parents and others for who they are, but they also feel the need to have mutual respect from those they conflict with. The conflict in respect interfered with their other activities and made them feel the need to have more respect. They also wanted their parents to understand them and accommodate their needs.

Trust

In all three schools where I conducted my research this theme kept recurring either in the focus group discussions or in students' dilemma analysis journals. In my research, participants raised the concept of self-trust - new to ME - because they are trying to find a balance between the requirements of societal norms and their own will power. Trust versus mistrust and trust versus care are seen as interpersonal or intrapersonal. In the present ME syllabus, trustworthiness is the value included in the learning area related to self-development. However, the relational concept is lacking and the conflicts identified by my participants are all relational conflicts.

Freedom

The conflicts concerning freedom as presented by my study participants are all relational in nature and involve family members except for one which has to do with academic freedom. The freedom-related conflicts are different from the autonomy-related conflicts. The autonomy-related conflicts comprise issues of personal independence, the capability to make moral decisions, and acting

within the contextual situation. Freedom-related conflicts are related to the ability to exercise free will and make moral choices independently like the right to speak or act without restriction. However, there is a thin layer of overlap between the two.

In the current ME syllabus, freedom is a sub-value under values related to democracy. The two sub-values are freedom of speech and expression and freedom of religion. Because of the learning area and the way freedom is taught, the emphasis is more on nation-building and less on students' relational day-to-day conflicts.

Adolescents are negotiating their desire and hope for greater freedom, they often experience increased conflicts with their parents (Swanson et al., 2008 in Riazi et al., 2021). Responses from Kekwah and Orkid participants concur with this; Students seem to be juggling with the need to have more freedom on one hand and the need to please their parents on the other hand. In the Malaysian scenario, adolescents are under great pressure to perform well academically, be responsible and good, and keep up the family's good name. Because of so many expectations from parents, adolescents are always monitored and pushed to the maximum. On top of that, the education system which is so exam-oriented adds to the challenges of these adolescents. Thus, they hardly have space to voice their opinion or suggest alternatives for their needs.

Tolerance

Tolerance is not a new value in the Malaysian scenario where people from different ethnic groups have lived together; Respecting and tolerating each other's needs and lives for generations. However, in recent times, tolerance has faced its challenges in the Malaysian context where certain groups who believe they have been tolerant appear to indicate that they feel let down by other dominant groups. This scenario is reflected by my study participants. My participants indicated a preference for the idea of mutual tolerance; This has not been widely discussed in the ME scenario in schools.

The value of tolerance is spelt out in the syllabus under values related to self-development. However, since it is categorized under the intrapersonal section, my participants' responses indicate they did not see the relevance of the value to interpersonal matters. This is one serious observation that I made throughout my research. Though the current ME syllabus spells out many values to be taught, the way the values are taught does not seem to make them meaningful to my participants who respond to them more as facts to be learnt for examination rather than values for life. Values like tolerance stay as values in the syllabus and students' textbooks but are not seen as something relevant to be assimilated and applied in their daily moral conflicts.

In a conflict of tolerance versus care, this participant is trying to manage her relationship with a friend for whom she cares but whose gossiping habits she cannot accept:

My friend likes to gossip. She was in my class but now we are in different classes. Beginning of this year, we were okay and as usual during recess, we will talk until the bell rings. As time passed, I realised that every time she came to me, she started with "Do you know this girl/guy?" I used to tolerate her habit earlier but I just don't like the way she keeps on gossiping about someone else. In my opinion, we don't need to care about others - like what they wear and what they do. I try to avoid her nowadays even though I still want to be her friend. I still meet her every time I go for tuition and this conflict is really bugging me. (Kekwah)

The conflict above, as shared by my participant, is because she wants to be someone's friend but does not like her gossiping attitude. The conflict is between tolerating the friend's behaviour and caring for the friendship that they have established so far. She is in a dilemma because she is wondering if she should tolerate the actions of her friend which she considers not respectful.

In the Malaysian tradition, elders whether in family, school, or society are more influential than younger members. In the dilemma below, this participant is experiencing a moral dilemma related to this and feels the need for mutual tolerance:

My brother and I have never tolerated each other even though our mother used to advise us both. Because of our misunderstandings, my brother and I have not spoken to each other for some time even though we live under the same roof. The misunderstanding was about the television channels that each of us wanted to watch. Though it was a small issue, we did not tolerate each other and it has become real serious. I always have to give in and I feel it's time that he has some tolerance for me too. (Seri Pagi)

Here is the clash between a brother and sister over the seemingly minor issue of watching television programmes. But further analysis will show that it is more than that; the younger sibling is actually fighting against the normal cultural practice and traditions.

The research findings indicate that young people in Malaysia face complex moral conflicts in decision-making. These conflicts are influenced by various factors such as government intervention in curriculum implementation, cultural shifts, ethnic and religious differences, and historical influences, notably the period of Japanese Occupation.

Within these moral conflicts, the study highlights five main themes: autonomy, respect, trust, freedom, and tolerance. However, the existing curriculum does not entirely meet students' needs in resolving moral conflicts, as values are taught as "facts" rather than as values applied in everyday life. This indicates a gap between the curriculum and the actual needs of students in resolving their moral conflicts.

This research contributes significantly to uncovering the complexity of moral conflicts faced by students in Malaysia and the factors that shape these

issues. In this context, this research is an important foundation to broaden the understanding of the richness of moral issues faced by students in the context of Malaysian education. A major contribution of the study was the disclosure of an urgent need to include students' perspectives more substantially in the development of educational curricula. The emphasis on values that are not only taught as theoretical concepts, but applied in students' daily lives, became the important essence found from this study.

CONCLUSION

My research was focused on the engaging of secondary school students to resolve their real-life moral dilemmas and how open discussion with their peer group influenced the process. To listen to their voices from such pedagogy allows the space for those at the "grass roots" level to be heard. It should be stated that it is clear that my PAR participants related most of their real-life moral dilemmas to relational conflicts. They discussed conflicts within themes of autonomy, respect, trust, freedom and tolerance.

I also argue for the inclusion in ME of new values that were identified by my participants during the research, and which are unique to the Malaysian multicultural society, the classroom, and the curriculum. Based on my research, I proceed to suggest a process of using Re- LiMDD based on Vygotsky's ZPD - which I extended into ZCD - and consider how this could function in local and global contexts. I end this paper with a discussion of the nature and limitations of Re-LiMDD based on my research, and consider the prospect of moral journeys ahead.

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