

Effective Moral Ethics Education at the Undergraduate Level in Pakistan: The Role of Curriculum

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Abstract

Ethical Education is an optional subject in lieu of Islamic Studies for non-Muslim students in Pakistan from primary to undergraduate level. The main aim of this study is to discuss factors which can help to design a Moral Ethic curriculum which would assist the teachers to educate an individual with his/her own identity, to assimilated by ethical values with developed moral judgment and behavior established by an individual's beliefs. Students can show a positive attitude towards themselves and others and be able to work together and support others. In this perspective, we also illustrated that moral education helped those people who respect social norms and behave sensibly in any situation belonged to present or future. Therefore, the main objective of this research paper is to establish the necessary elements that should be the part of an effective Moral Ethics curriculum in order to create a democratic and educational environment where everyone can respect for others' beliefs and stop violating others' feelings on the basis of freedom of speech. In this study, our targeted readers were included teachers of Moral Ethics, policy makers at different levels, and curriculum developers.

Keywords—Ethical education, Curriculum, Morality, Teleological Approach, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

The question is how the curriculum influences the process of learning, it would be pertinent to know what is curriculum and learning, and how do they interact to each other. The term *curriculum* means “runs a (race) course” and it indicates to a series of “steps or stages” in “teaching and learning” a precise text or concept.¹ As it is difficult to control the experiences of learners so, it is better to provide them with

“opportunities” to learn certain knowledge. Thus, “a curriculum is a sequence of learning opportunities provided to students in their study of specific content.”

As the curriculum is an abstract concept, the learning process is the only way to observe it during this process indirectly. One can observe textbook or classroom activities meant to serve during the learning process. However, artifacts and effects of the curriculum can be experienced directly, but not the curriculum itself. As a learning process, curriculum works diversely. It provides aims and objectives that a teacher wishes from students to learn parallel to classroom activities that are planned to execute those objectives and obtain the preferred outcomes.

In the present scenario, a general decline in moral values has fueled the intolerant, aggressive and violent behaviour in students like the other members of the society as well. On the other hand, the availability of social media has provided every single person with a forum to disseminate his/her thoughts and beliefs freely in the name of the right of free speech. This attitude has seriously divided the Pakistani nation at the social and religious level. Besides the family upbringing and social control, educational training can help to save children’s minds at an early age from conflicting issues. Knowledge and education is thought to be the major contributors to reduce poverty, provide steady advancement and economic progress.² In this context curriculum is an approach that is increasingly seen as a basic tool for educational development to achieve proposed educational results. The curriculum presents knowledge, skills and values in a systematic and organized way: a choice that changes the way in which teaching, learning and evaluation procedures are arranged to address issues such as “what, why, when, and how” students should learn.

In general, the curriculum is a “political and social” document that provides the shared vision of society while concentrating on domestic, national and international requirements and vision. In other words, the curriculum reflects the educational goals and objectives of the community. Now a day, the process of “curriculum reform” is increasingly dependent on community debates and exchange of opinions with relevant

stakeholders. Therefore, curriculum design has become the subject of significant discussion - often with conflicting views - involving “policymakers”, scholars, stakeholders and community at large. Policy makers and program designers are facing the complexities of curriculum design and questions which are related to the goals of learning and evaluation process. The procedure of curriculum designing is affected by local needs and global patterns; there is a need to understand and deal with domestic problems and cultural issues rising globally in the context of national objects.³

However, the fundamental issue which all nations have been facing is how to introduce new changes into the era of fast, global and social change. Never in written history, humans have experienced such a rapid change and have faced practical and ethical risks because of these changes. This situation is completely new and unpredictable for the young generation and adults. It would be pertinent to briefly discuss the concept of morality and the nature of moral education at this stage.

THE IDEA OF MORALITY

The philosophers and ethicists explain the idea of Morality in different ways, but in general, it means community or culture provides the standards of good and evil. This idea is dependent on rules, concepts and criteria used to differentiate within right and wrong. Although the concepts of “good and happiness” have a specific “cultural” connotation, morality in general implies to behaviour and susceptibility that promote “respect, responsibility, integrity and honesty”. According to Lickona (1996), “respect and responsibility” are the two fundamental elements of ethics on which other principles are based.⁴

The word respect, in the context of moral philosophy, consists of dual meaning: self-respect and respect for others’ beliefs, views and traditions. Subsequently, the term liability or duty requires an individual to make use of his “life, actions and commitment” for the well-being of the community in general by actively participating in the “social, economic, political and cultural activities” of society. Ethics is the "rule system that governs social interactions and social relations of individuals within

societies and is based on the concepts of well-being (harm), trust and justice (comparative treatment and distribution) and rights". This is the criterion that people define their activities depended on their mental skills to understand the social conditions. A moral process includes "problem-solving skills, self-control, critical thinking and adaptation".

THE IDEA OF MORAL EDUCATION

Moral education has always been a constant goal of a civilized society. Through Moral Education, students are educated mentally and physically to react in matters of good and evil.⁵ It is quite an obvious fact that school curriculum function is not only to educate the young pupils but also to transform them into a good citizen. The restoration of moral education goes back to the fact that modern societies are often confronted with problematic facts in educational institutes and communities as a whole. The word "moral value" is vague and required some explanation. It indicates means that specific values that are usually specific in certain communities are varied according to different cultures. For example, there is a great difference in Eastern and Western social cultures; as one common social norm in the West is seen an offensive act in Eastern society and vice versa.

Often some individuals and ethnic groups confront each other on common ethical values, although most cultures deal with values that we define "patriotism" as an ethical value and see "betrayal" with empty words. In short, generally "ethical values" are the basic human beliefs that help to form social relations among human beings in different societies. These moral traits, as in the Ten Commandments, often contain religious orders. Whether religious, secular or traditional, it must be generally accepted in most conditions. Consequently, morality is explained as a just behaviour, not only in our direct social relationships but also in our relationships with our social fellows and in the eyes of the entire human race. As the determination of our behaviour depends on the possession of moral concepts regarding the right and wrong ideas, our culture, religion and society have set for us.⁶ In other words, every society

knows about the concept of right or wrong. Therefore, morality is characterized as a just behaviour, guided through or determined by the concerned communities.

Literature Review

All the sources which were examined in the context of the importance of Moral Ethics curriculum at the tertiary level agreed that Moral ethics must be taught in educational institutes. The basic questions are: should Moral Ethics be taught? How should Moral Ethics be taught? And will its teaching be effective? This section will analyze contradictory arguments in the literature about the role of curriculum in moral education in schools and colleges. According to Frankena (1973), “moral values can be divided into five categories: deontic, teleological, intrinsic and extrinsic. The Deontic values of faith are related to moral rights - issues of justice, equity, rights and responsibilities. Most educational institutions have existing structures that explicitly address issues involving moral rights, at least with regard to the obligations and rights of students, faculty and staff.”⁷

The “Teleological values” are related to “issues of moral good” or concerned with the well-being of others. These are often not identified in American schools, although services such as school meal programs, student outreach campaigns, and vaccination campaigns are an expression of moral good. Moral values include provisions on the moral value of individuals and institutions. They include motives and attributes of personality such as “generosity”, “empathy”, “loyalty” which are often described as motives for moral action. Historically, teachers have weighted the evolution of moral personality. The core values are these valuable endings of their inherent numerical validity. They include qualities such as “autonomy”, awareness, “intelligence” and “knowledge”. Their progress is seen as offering people. Finally, external values are the means through which good deeds can be produced, such as wealth, arts, knowledge and journey, even though they do not reflect any intrinsic value.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1975) built his own theory on Piaget's earlier work on the construction of children's morality.⁸ Using a technique identical to the stages of

Piaget's development of the child, Kohlberg proposed the theory of moral thinking focusing on “three levels and six stages”, where children advance according to “the preconvention (based on personal needs and others’ rules), conventional (based on others’ approval, expectations or values), and post-conventional moral reasoning (based on social contracts and individual principles)”. Kohlberg's work served as the basis for several moral education programs. His theory arising in the wake of “the Social, Justice Movement has led to moral development” becoming a prominent theme in psychology books and fix its place in the school education in many ways, such as the values. Similar to Piaget’s ideas, Kohlberg also emphasized the teaching of Moral ethics education in schools.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD MORAL ETHICS CURRICULUM:

INCLUSIVE APPROACH

A good curriculum must be comprehensive to help students, despite their ability, race, “cultural background”, “gender”, socioeconomic status or “geographical location”, to cultivate their personal learning skills as a learner and develop their full potential. Children are often excluded because of their socio-economic status, ethnic background, cultural background, gender, geographical location or age. A curriculum is a primary document of compensation, integration and compensation by which the community can recognize its obligation to integration.

In addition, each student is different than others. Not everyone is good at learning knowledge. Some will perform better in some areas than the other, but all students can be helped and encouraged to produce their best performance. A well-organized curriculum recognizes the personal, social and cognitive abilities of each learner and it considers differences in the way that student opt learning. The curriculum encourages teachers to help and support each student to realize his/her potential interest and skills.

LEARNING DIFFERENTIATION

A good quality curriculum allows enough room for policy makers to adapt the curriculum according to students' needs and abilities. It does not require that each student learn the same text in the same way and in the same number of hours. It provides teachers with an opportunity to make sure that their content is tailored to the needs and abilities of their students.

When developing differentiation approaches, a dynamic curriculum would take into account this fact that students have different level of learning and understanding a same content. Some, for example, are efficient and qualified auditors; others need visual aids; some learn things better by practical simulations.⁹ A well-designed curriculum will support teachers to be more familiar with learners and ensure that teaching methods and strategies focus on obtaining the best result from their student.¹⁰

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

A high-quality Moral ethics curriculum defines and reinforces the teacher's new roles. The teacher's approach of "I'm here to teach" goes to "I'm here to lead and enable effective learning." Through this approach, new relationships are created between teacher and student - from teacher-controlled courses in the role of exclusive authority to classes in which the teacher recognizes evaluates, and teaches students. Moreover, with the help of the curriculum, a teacher promotes effective learning for each individual and encourages debate, inquiry and curiosity among his students.

Personal learning is mainly education that focuses on the learner-centered approach: teaching, learning and evaluation that gives great importance on the background, knowledge, past needs, the current stage of development and the potential of each learner. Teachers must, therefore, know what each student thinks, so that they can provide each student with specific comments. Good Moral ethics curriculum should assist to develop the ability to intellectually-meditate thinking in students learning and to express their current level of understanding. Learning through a curriculum that focuses on the learner requires teachers to play a particularly active role in the classroom. Learners are also required to play an active role in supporting students'

learning, their participation in teamwork, their contribution to teamwork, experiential and project-based learning, and the preparation of learning portfolios and other presentations for their understanding.

The curriculum must also be challenging, while one of the main objectives of Moral ethics curriculum are to enable each student to realize his or her potential. It is important that the Moral Ethics curriculum expands children's capabilities and critical thinking which stimulate the development of curiosity analytical questioning and imagination. The content of the curriculum must be sequential and progressive.¹¹ It should be included curricula or subject-wise data appropriate to different age level and must take into account the stages of child development, with special attention to “cognitive and emotional” development. It must be flexible enough to allow individual learning (for capable learners).

A well-designed Moral Ethics curriculum must also be sensible and equalized. This means that it should focus on:

- Different moral theories- relativism, naturalism, hedonism, utilitarianism, divine command theory, etc. - so that students are exposed to the historical account, strength and weakness of these theories,
- each area or area of learning (in terms of time and case allocation);
- the development of personal, social, emotional, aesthetic, physical/kinetic and cognitive knowledge of students;
- each element of Moral Ethics syllabus, content - knowledge, skills and values to develop the required skills in students.

Integrated learning is also an essential part of a well-adapted curriculum also promotes. As mentioned earlier, the Moral Ethics curriculum is organized according to the subject or field of learning, which has evolved over a period. In many cases, the content of a curriculum also reflects somewhat the structure of university courses. However, the way we use or apply knowledge or skill in our lives, is rarely based on separate disciplines. In most cases, we use the knowledge gained in different areas to

respond to a social or professional situation or to solve a problem. In fact, we use all the means available to us (knowledge, skills, multidisciplinary expertise) to find the best way to deal with new conditions by creating links between current knowledge and old information, and searching for meaning and relevance. Learners benefit from opportunities provided by Moral Ethics curriculum to apply their potential skills in new contexts, establish linkages, and enhance and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Moreover, a curriculum prepared with comprehensive order and purpose conveys consistent messages about teaching, learning and student evaluation process. It must be easy to use and accessible to education practitioners and stakeholders, providing objectives, practical and strategic guidance.

A good curriculum is organized into a number of distinct but interconnected components. These components are usually expressed in documents that are developed and written specifically for the purposes of the curriculum and not merely modifications to other documents (such as educational policies or textbooks).¹²

A high degree of compatibility between the various components of the curriculum is essential. Ideally, this consensus must be clear on every level, from consistency in philosophy and basic assumptions about how children learn to construct, coordinate and present different curriculum materials. This alignment provides the curriculum as a whole, integrated and consistent, not as a set of disparate and even contradictory parts.

CONCLUSION

The present results can be summed up as follows: Teaching ethics is one of the branches of professional ethics and its theme is the theoretical reflection of ethical and moral issues in the teaching profession (a comprehensive formulation of ethical values). Principles and standards of the code of ethics for teachers; his part also seeks answers or solutions to the practical ethical problems of contemporary issues related

to real life situations. The foundation of ethics education is a multidisciplinary approach based on the interaction of philosophy, ethics, education and psychology.

For this reason, teaching moral ethics should be integrated into future educational curriculums as well as supplementary training programs for the students; the role of ethics should be to solve and assess current problems in particular that arise in schools and out-of-school environments.

On this basis of our results, it would be pertinent to develop methodological materials and effective pedagogical strategies as a guide to solving students' moral and ethical problems - in cooperation with similar disciplines like psychology, etc. We assume that this contribution can inspire future researchers to discuss moral and ethical problems of both teachers and students of Moral ethics discipline to contribute to the development of ethics in teaching as a moral branch of ethics, especially, in Pakistan because of our professionals (philosophers, educators and other specialists) have left the contemporary trends developed by specialists around the world.

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