Methodology for Teaching Morality in School: A Theoretical Framework

Reyaz Ahmad Wani

ABSTRACT

In the backdrop of fragmented family structure and no-time-for-kids attitude among the increasing number of working parents and indifferent socio-emotional attitude of outside society at large, what to teach and how to teach in order to develop moral character of children and adolescents is gaining more importance and urgency in school and teacher education programmes. In this context, the school education system has to play a major role in shaping the value system of students. The author, through this review article, attempts to address one very important issue in moral education which actually deals with the description and discussion of various teaching strategies employed in developing the moral character of students at school level. The discussion entails the strengths and weaknesses of each method of imparting character education to school students. Needless to say that, this piece of writing will go a long way in helping school teachers to decide which teaching plan or strategy is best suited to develop moral values and attitudes in their students.

Introduction

The selection of the system and methods of moral teaching reflects the age of children concerned and the kind of moral behaviour to be developed. Keeping this line of thinking in mind, the author elaborates on the following methods of teaching morality.

1. Modeling: Teachers as role models of morally upright behaviour

Imitation is a matter of copying behavioral patterns. Regardless of age, one

needs concrete, detailed moral action. Imitation can be used — spontaneously or selectively — with regard to moral examples, proposals, suggestions or recommendations of behavior to be followed. This combination of imitation is applied thanks to its persuasive ability and physical attraction; this combination facilitates the generalization of a special case of behavior to be followed. *Imitation supposes 'models" of behavior peculiar to various ages. For example, for the pre-school child imitation is mainly emotional and less cognitive, while for the teenager imitation is "selective" and "processed". That is why, at school, imitation is never neutral, but always supposes a duality of a reaction and an attitude expressing emotion and reason, development and integrity.*

Undoubtedly, the idea of the human "model" is not new in education and ethics; what is really new is the connection between the "model" and its "adoption". There are generally two forms of the model of man or of behavior, ideal and concrete, both of them being a source of knowledge and moral influence. At the same time, there are two problems related to the ideal: the problem of the moral model for the educator which is necessary for the imitation method, and the problem of choosing or building a behavioral model by the moral subject.

Each of these problems have various aspects from the point of view of the moral language: one related to the formulation of the model in terms of imperative moral prescriptions or in preferential and interrogative terms related to the identification of the causes and intentions of behavior, and another concerning the assimilation of the model by the moral subject (*Marin Calin).*

According to Gough (1998), the ultimate goal of character development occurs when each person reaches the point where doing "good" becomes automatic or habitual. Like thoroughly learned sports skills morally appropriate actions also become natural and habitual with practice. Students need to imitate teachers who are effortlessly honest, trusting, fair, respectful, and responsible in their actions.

According to Solomon (1997), "It is clear that recent research on character development in physical education demonstrated that the organized physical activity context is ripe for positive growth. Furthermore, evidence indicates that unless character development is directly addressed, the moral maturation process will not likely occur. Therefore, the physical educator has the responsibility and opportunity to create situations that will enhance the character development of children in their care." (p. 41)

Teachers with integrity are excellent models for their students to live a value-based life regardless of their religious, ethnic, cultural or racial backgrounds. Integrity means to follow a consistent pattern of good behaviour even when no one is looking to scrutinize ones intentions or actions. Teachers who enjoy the sense of integrity are usually the practical examples of honesty, trust,

responsibility, fairness and respect for their students. For example, a physical education teacher can demonstrate the virtues of fair play, sportsmanship, care and kindness, respect and equal opportunity to his/her students. Generally and mutually agreed upon values like honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect can be developed in students by teachers through many ways, some of which are discussed as under;

Honesty serves as a prerequisite for developing other values like trust, fairness, responsibility and respect. Honest teachers are accountable towards their work in terms of their punctuality, obligations, grading and evaluation of students, observing the rules and regulations of institution, keeping confidentiality of students' records and so on. As a role model for students, teachers consistently accept the moral obligation to be honest, regardless of the situation. Honesty also includes not lying, stealing or cheating as teachers fulfill their professional responsibilities.

Trust. An honest person can be trusted. Trust is the belief in others that develops whenever people fulfill their promises and commitments. When a teacher establishes and upholds class expectations—such as providing and following guidelines for written assignments and grading—students learn that they can trust their teacher. Trust replaces apprehension or fear with confidence and openness. When students trust their teachers, an inevitable mistake is transformed from being a fear of failure into an opportunity to learn.

Trust is most effectively taught when it is lived. When students trust their teachers, they do not worry about being embarrassed during class, since they know that a misbehavior or mistake will be addressed individually and privately.

Fairness. Fairness is closely linked with trust as students quickly learn whether or not teachers discriminate against them or treat them fairly. Fairness requires that all students have the same opportunity to meet the standards on a written or skill test and receive an appropriate grade. Teachers who are fair believe in each student's ability to learn, and they encourage each person to achieve at the highest possible level. Teachers are fair when they give the highest and lowest achieving students the same punishment for violating a classroom policy.

Respect. This process begins with teachers demonstrating respect for students, regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status or individual characteristics or abilities. Teachers must be unbiased in how they respond to the various levels of skill and ability displayed by their students. Noddings (1992) advocated that moral education is based on teachers showing students that they care for them as unique individuals. Teacher who cares and shows respect for their students by being sensitive to and they considerate of their feelings. Teachers who model respect will always appreciate each individual

student, even when the behaviours of some may be less than worthy of this respect.

Responsibility. Teachers demonstrate responsibility by being morally accountable for their actions and fulfilling their duties. When teachers create and sustain a positive learning environment and focus on providing educational services to students and society, they are acting responsibly. Teachers act responsibly by helping to optimally develop the psychomotor, cognitive and affective abilities of their students.

Table 1: Factors Affecting Learning Based on Modeling

Developmental Status	Improvements with development include longer attention and increased capacity to process information, use strategies, compare performances with memorial representations and adopt intrinsic motivators.
Model Prestige and Competence	Observers pay greater attention to competent, high-status models. Consequences of modeled behaviours convey information about functional value. Observers attempt to learn actions they believe they will need to perform.
Vicarious Consequences	Consequences to models convey information about behavioural appropriateness and likely outcomes of actions. Valued consequences motivate observers. Similarity in attributes or competence signals appropriateness and heightens motivations.
Outcome Expectations	Observers are more likely to perform modeled actions they believe are appropriate and will result in rewarding outcomes.
Goal Setting	Observers are more likely to attend to models who demonstrate behaviours that help observers attain goals.
Self-efficacy	Observers attend to models when they believe they are capable of learning or performing of modeled behaviour. Observation of similar models affects self-efficacy ("If they can do it, I can too").

2: Values Clarification Model: The values clarification model was propounded by Louis E. Raths (2005). The decision-making model developed along two different lines. One approach, called "Values Clarification," emphasized feelings, personal growth, and a totally nonjudgmental attitude; the other, known as the "moral reasoning" approach, emphasized a "critical thinking" or cognitive approach to decision making. Although both shared many assumptions and methods, it is important to understand the differences. Values Clarification got its start in 1966 with the publication of *Values and Teaching* by Louis Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon — all professors of education. What the authors offered was not a way to teach values but a way for students to

"clarify" their own values. The authors took pains to distance themselves from character education and traditional methods of teaching values. In fact, Simon once expressed a wish that parents would stop "fostering the immorality of morality." It was Simon, also, who took the lead in popularizing the new method. His *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* was published in 1972, and quickly became a best-seller among teachers. According to the promotional blurb on the book's back cover, Values Clarification makes students "aware of *their own* feelings, *their own* ideas, *their own* beliefs ... *their own* value systems."

But Values Clarification was not exactly a new idea. In reality, it was an outgrowth of human potential psychology. The developers of Values Clarification had simply taken Carl Rogers's nondirective, nonjudgmental therapy technique and applied it to moral education. Indeed, the authors of *Values and Teaching* were so committed to therapeutic nonjudgmental that they felt obliged to note that "it is entirely possible that children will choose not to develop values. It is the teacher's responsibility to support this choice also."

True to its origins in the human potential movement, Values Clarification also puts a heavy emphasis on feelings- so much so that it virtually equates values with feelings. That this is the case is indicated in the very first strategy in the *Values Clarification* handbook. It is titled "Twenty Things You Love to Do." This exercise is not a prelude to deeper thought ahead. Rather, it sets the tone for the whole book. A value is essentially what you like or love to do. It is not what you ought-to but a want-to. In his book *Educating for Character*, Professor Thomas Lickona relates the story of an eighth-grade teacher who used this strategy with a low-achieving class only to find that the four most popular activities were "sex, drugs, drinking, and skipping school." The teacher was hamstrung. The Values Clarification framework gave her no way of persuading them otherwise. Her students had clarified their values, and they were able to justify their choices with answers they found satisfactory ("Everyone drinks and smokes dope"; "Sex is the best part of life").

Values Clarification has suffered some setbacks in the last decade. The anti-intellectual bias is hard to ignore; so is the research, which shows Values Clarification to be ineffectual at best and potentially harmful. Moreover, Values Clarification has come under attack from parents' groups in dozens of states.

3. Moral Reasoning

The moral reasoning approach was proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg through his stage theory of Moral Reasoning (1960s) - the other strand within the decision-making model — seemed to offer a good alternative to Values Clarification. It was the brainchild of Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, a man who

was, in many ways, the opposite of Sidney Simon. Whereas Simon was a laid-back populariser with a mind singularly tuned to the changing moods of the sixties, Kohlberg was a serious scholar whose ideas were buttressed by philosophical arguments, and whose research was highly regarded. Although Kohlberg, like Simon, rejected character education (he called it the "bag of virtues" approach), he had something other than feelings to offer in its place. Kohlberg wanted to turn children into moral thinkers, to teach them a valid process of moral reasoning. Children would still make their own decisions, but their decisions would be based on reason.

How could students be brought to higher levels of moral reasoning? Kohlberg felt that the Socratic dialogue- the method used by Socrates and Plato- was ideal. The Socratic dialogue provided a way of drawing out ideas without imposing values or moralizing. Moreover, the dialogue seemed to create an atmosphere of equality between student and teacher-a goal that at the time seemed highly desirable.

4. Four Component Model

ETHICAL SENSITIVITY	ETHICAL JUDGMENT
- Understand Emotional Expression - Take the Perspectives of Others - Connecting to Others - Responding to Diversity - Controlling Social Bias - Interpreting Situations - Communicating Effectively	- Understanding Ethical Problems - Using Codes and Identifying Judgment Criteria - Reasoning Critically - Reasoning Ethically - Understand Consequences - Reflect on the Process and Outcome of Decisions - Coping and Resiliency
ETHICAL FOCUS (MOTIVATION)	ETHICAL ACTION
- Respecting Others - Develop Conscience - Act Reasonably - Be Community Member - Finding Life Purpose - Valuing Traditions and Institutions - Developing Ethical Identity and Integrity	- Resolving Conflicts and Problems - Assert Respectfully - Taking Initiative as a Leader - Implementing Decisions - Cultivate Courage for Social Justice - Persevering for Others - Work Hard for Moral Ends

The Four Component Model propounded by Narvaez (2006) describes the psychological skills or processes that a person uses in order to complete a moral

behavior: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical focus, and ethical action. Ethical sensitivity refers to perceiving the moral issue cognitively and emotionally, identifying courses of action, affected parties and reactions. Ethical judgment entails applying a code of ethics to make a decision about the most moral choice. Ethical focus involves prioritizing the moral choice, and ethical action is the ability and strength to carry through on the ethical choice. The sub-components of *Four Component Model* are tabulated as under;

Conclusion

Increasing moral degradation of the society at large is putting great onus on the schools in particular to take charge of the development of moral character of students very seriously. The million dollar question in this context is "how to teach moral values to school students who belong to various age groups, interests and socio-economic backgrounds. Various approaches and teaching strategies have been discussed above in terms of their merits and demerits in the light of how effective each method is in achieving the goal of moral development of school students.

References

1. Anderson, C. et al. (2004). *Minnesota Community Voices and Character Education: Final Report and Evaluation*. Roseville, MN: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.

2. Battistich, V. et al. (1991). The Child Development Project: A comprehensive program for the development of pro-social character. In J. L. Gewirtz & W. M. Kurtines (Eds.), *Handbook of Moral Behaviour and Development* (Vol. 3). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

3. Bennett, W. (2000). What really ails America? In G. Muller (Ed.), *The McGraw-Hill Reader* (7th ed., pp. 342–346). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

4. Gilligan, J. (1996). *Violence: Our deadly epidemic and its causes*. New York: Putnam.

5. Kilpatrick, William. "How Not to Teach Morality." Chapter 4 in *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong and What We Can Do About It*. edited by J.H. Clarke, (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1992): 78-95.

6. Narvaez, D. (2006). Integrative Ethical Education. In M. Killen & J. Smetana (Eds.), *Handbook of Moral Development* (pp. 703-733). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

7. Schaps, E., Schaeffer, E., & McDonnell, S. (2001, September 12). What's right and wrong in character education today? *Education Week*, pp. 40–41.

8. Warren Little, J. (1998). *California's School Restructuring Demonstration Program: Lessons about comprehensive school reform and its effects on students, educators, and schools*. Excerpt of paper presented at University of California, Berkeley.