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Letters to the Editor

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MORAL EDUCATION SUBJECT: It is too exam-oriented

HAVE we destroyed the intrinsic value of Moral Education (ME) subject and made it so simplistic that it has become one-dimensional?

A handful of my second-year Faculty of Education students in Universiti Malaya (UM) and I find that ME is too exam-oriented.

Students are frustrated because the subject is crammed with a set of moral values, in which each of these values are defined neatly with specific keywords and terms in the syllabus.

Questions and marking schemes in ME can only test how adept the students are at memorising the subject.

As long as they can provide the answers with correct keywords in the answer scheme, they can pass, or even get an A.

Answers that deviate are not allowed and this indirectly shuts the door for students to think critically and analytically.

ME is not something structured, or something that you can just learn through memorisation. It is not an academic subject as it extends beyond skills and knowledge. My students and I believe that moral education is something caught not taught.

Learning ME can be lively when we actually learn about life, how to live and learn about yourself.

Being too bound by the textbooks makes the subject redundant. When preparing the students for exams, they are trained to do more exercises for the purpose of central assessment.

They are also trained to memorise like robots, just remember the key words to score well in the examination. But it is such a waste of effort if students only memorise moral values but do not practise them in their daily lives.

Such drudgery in memorising kills the students' interest in the subject and it eventually becomes meaningless to them.

Most parents also find ME unnecessary and should not be included in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination.

On the contrary, ME is a great subject to instill good values and helps to enhance critical thinking.

It teaches students how to cultivate the importance of reasoning with their "heads and hearts" and to make wise, rational and objective decisions when faced with real-life moral dilemmas.

If the subject is taught with greater effort, creativity and commitment, we are sure students will be happy to learn ME and appreciate life and contribute constructively to society.

ME is a complex subject, and therefore those who teach it would have to be trained. There should be no form of indoctrination. In higher learning institutions, ME is taught by certain academics who might be influenced by indoctrinated philosophies.

If such academics are not open-minded towards the epistemology and philosophy of ME, then the subject is doomed to fail.

Perhaps, instead of introducing Islamic Education and Moral Education as two separate subjects in schools, something could be done to transform the essence of the subjects, and present them in one single subject.

The subject would be able to teach students about morals, ethics, religion and philosophy that will help develop them holistically.

All students should learn ME regardless of their faith. We believe that there will be no disparity and differences as they would be able to share challenges and issues that happen around them. They can even voice out their opinions to some extent, to cultivate love and respect among themselves. ME is not an examination subject but one that imbibes principles and values for life.

There will not be any need for memorisation because such values have been inculcated from primary school and have become part of the students' character.

One needs to respect the old when they are young, help the weak when they are strong, and admit to their faults or mistakes -- after all, these are the values that should come from within.

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