

Transformation in Moral Education



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RECENTLY, there was a suggestion that a Values and Personality Development Initiative programme be introduced to students next year.

I look forward to such a programme, which will focus not only on the grading component of Moral Education and Islamic Studies, but also what is characterised by students who study both the subjects.

Moral Education started as a core subject in the education system in the early 1980s. After three decades, there has been a tremendous transformation in Moral Education, not only in Malaysia but also many parts of the globe. A subject that used to focus on the moral cognition, especially stages of moral development, has ventured more into holistic moral development, which includes moral thinking, moral emotions, moral actions, moral sensitivity and moral motivation.

In the 1960s, when Moral Education was gaining popularity worldwide, the principle behind moral philosophy was that one who thought morally would behave morally. But, as research intensified, it was realised that individuals who talked so much about morality and how one should behave, sometimes were not moralised themselves.

Then, came the era of character education in the 1970s. Authorities argue that to be moralised, one needs to have the head (moral thinking), the heart (moral emotions) and the behaviour (moral action).

Since Moral Education started in Malaysia in the 1980s, we have been following the character education model, focusing on the moral thinking, moral emotions and moral action components.

However, the assessment at the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level until early 2000 focused on Moral Studies, which entailed the 16 main values and 64 sub-values in the syllabus.

It was a teething era for Moral Education and we have come a long way from focusing on values and value clarifications based on situations provided in the examination.

Now, the pedagogies and assessments for Moral Education are based on the three components as mentioned.

In 2002, Paper Two for Moral Education was introduced in SPM. Students were required to conduct moral projects. Moral Education teachers were required to assess students based on the projects and reports submitted by their students.

The evaluation was on the process and the product. But, in reality, the focus of the Moral Education assessors is on the folio, which is the final product submitted by the students.

To say that Moral Education only focused on grades is not right as the example above clearly shows how Moral Education has transformed from a grade-based subject focusing on how much students can remember in the written examination to one that focuses on values learnt at home and school, and in society, and how they apply the values in their daily lives.

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