

# Roles of Teacher and Challenges in Developing Students' Morality

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*Received October 27, 2019; Revised December 30, 2019; Accepted January 15, 2020*

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**Abstract** This study was aimed to examine the roles of teacher and their challenges in developing students' morality. The data was collected from online database including PubMed, Science Direct and Google. The both qualitative and quantitative studies were reviewed and synthesized in a narrative format. There were seven roles of teachers being found in this study. There are moral model, moral mentor, caregiver, moral value conveyer, facilitator, counsellor and communicator. The challenges of teachers in developing students' morality were also discussed in this study. There are method of teaching and evaluation, lack of interest, qualification of teacher, the expectation of parents and society, the distance between school values and family values and communication with parents.

**Keywords** Role of Teachers, Challenges, Morality, Students, Moral Education

## 1. Introduction

The disciplinary problem among the students is one of the big challenges for education in our country nowadays. The problem becomes serious when the students lost their moral compass to discern what is right and wrong for their actions in school or out of the school. It is undeniable that the problem is due to the low morality level among the students. Morality is principles that concern the difference between right and wrong action or good and bad behavior. Morality is important and needed to be taught in school to produce students who are balanced and harmonious in intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects based on the National Philosophy of Education.

Besides the parents who should take the responsibilities in building their children' morality, school also plays an important role as the institution which promotes moral development and transmits the moral values for the

students. Moral Education has been employed in education system since 1983 in Malaysia. In school, teachers act as 'surrogate parents' to the students who take over the responsibilities not only in teaching, but also in building the students' morality. As adult is the guide for the students, it is important for the teachers to have good knowledge of the moral subject, teaching pedagogy and they ought to be mature emotionally and able to interact with the students and communicate with the parents.

Thus, it is important for them to know more about their roles and challenges in developing students' morality. Teachers can have a better direction to play their roles and try to solve the challenges that they face in developing students' morality in the classroom.

In 2017, there were 402 Malaysia schools that were found having disciplinary and drug issues. Although moral education is implemented in every school and the teachers have been teaching and inculcating moral values to the students, the issue of school discipline still makes the headlines (Kok, 2018). When the discipline issue arises, besides the parents, the role of teachers in developing morality of students will be questioned in the society since their expectation on teachers' responsibilities is high nowadays. The responsibilities of teachers are not only teaching students, but also helping students to develop in every aspect including morality.

Nowadays, the role of teachers becomes more challenging. They are the second parents of their students who take their responsibilities in educating and taking care of the students in the school. The expectation on the teachers is getting higher especially when the students are exposed to a variety of resources, social media and gadgets in this era. According to Morgan (2016), students spend too much time online and this will affect their moral development. The aggressive content from the media social will affect students' decision making and conduct in real life situation. Teachers need to know about their responsibilities and play their role in navigating the

students to do the right thing and thus could help the students to develop their morality.

There are many challenges faced by the teachers in developing students' morality and the implementation of moral education in the school. However, when the issues arise, the society will put the responsibility on the school and teachers without understanding the real situation or challenges that they faced. Thus, it is important for the society to include the parents, to know and understand about the challenges that are faced by the school and teachers in implementing moral education and also developing students' morality. It is hoped that the society could give more cooperation and contribution to the schools to help the teachers to overcome the challenges and the most important thing is to develop the students' morality.

The objectives of this research were aimed to:

- i) Examine the roles of teachers in developing the morality of the students
- ii) Explore the challenges of teachers in developing students' morality.

The questions of this research were:

- i) What are the roles of teachers in developing morality of the students?
- ii) What are the challenges being faced by teachers in developing students' morality?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Search Strategy

Databases selected included those representing psychological, sociological and educational fields. The search was inclusive of unpublished dissertations and book chapters. The published and unpublished studies were searched through the following online database over period 2009-2018. The database includes PubMed, Science Direct and Google. The keywords used to search for the studies in the database include roles of teachers, moral educators, challenges of moral teachers, morality of students and moral education. 'Roles of teachers' was selected as the primary search term as it is the most representative of the concept. Other terms that represent teachers' roles in developing students' morality are moral agent, moral modelling, moral educator, and challenges of teachers were selected to be inclusive of potentially relevant research. The screening process was scanning the titles and abstracts of the journal articles for relevance according to inclusion criteria. After scanning the titles and abstracts, the contents of journal article were scanned and to be made sure the data was relevant and could be used to answer the research questions. At last, there were nineteen most related journal articles or studies being selected from the

search result. PRISMA flow diagram was used in selecting the studies.

**Figure 1.** PRISMA Flow Diagram.

### 2.2 Inclusion Criteria

There is no language restriction in the studies found. The studies might be using English or other languages as long as they are related to the roles of teachers in developing morality of students. There is no country restriction in the studies. The studies from other nations could be reviewed. The age range of the students in the studies is less than 24 years old. The roles and challenges of teachers were not restricted for moral teachers only, but also for all the subject teachers in developing the morality of their students.

### 3. Data Analysis

The data was analysed systematically and chronologically from 2009 to 2018. The contents of the studies which were related to the roles of teachers in developing morality of students and their challenges were reviewed and analysed critically. The differences of design, population and focus of each journal article were stated and compared according to the published years. The data of all the articles were reported narratively. The findings in the research were used to answer the research questions as mentioned previously which were roles of teachers and challenges of teachers in developing students' morality. The results of included studies were summarized in a qualitative manner.

### 4. Findings

There was research conducted to examine the responsibilities of parents, teachers and religious institutions in moral education of the child (Oladipo, 2009). The research was carried out based on Kohlberg, Piaget and Gilligan's moral development theory. The research stated that except the parents, moral teachers or school teachers are influential adults in the life of the children beginning from the pre-school years. The teachers teach students the moral values and behaviors, and act as a role model for showing students the desirable characters and traits in the school and also the society. They also teach students to respect the rights of other persons and teach them about the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.

Another study from KENPRO (2010) discussed about the role of teachers as a moral educator. The researcher believed that morality is fostered by good example. Therefore, the first role of teacher that the researcher discussed was teacher as a role model who sets a good example for the students and they are also as a counsellor who can provide advice to students to avoid learning immoral acts. The second role of the teachers is that they should create a caring environment which is important for moral development of the students. The third role is that the teacher should teach students about the importance of ethical behavior through direct instruction and indirect instruction. The last one is that teachers should help the students to foster their self-regulation and self-efficacy. They should provide opportunities for students to monitor their own study progress and self-development.

In the study of Klaassen (2012), he stated that teachers should always show their best side in order to provide a good example and inspire students to imitate the behavior. Teachers should have moral courage to be moral example to the students. They should be courageous to stand up for their own principles, cultivate the moral values and condemn the immoral behavior in others like students, parents, colleagues and school leaders. From the findings,

Klaassen concluded that teachers should always be an example and they can alter the attitude of students. They are as role model who can help students to develop in attitudinal forming and vocational training areas. The teachers, who have certain characteristics are observed, learnt and assimilated by the students. The students will learn the moral virtues from teachers. The moral socialization of students can take place effectively and efficiently by setting a good example for them.

In the study of Pantić and Wubbels (2012), they explored about whether teachers' beliefs on moral values are reflected in their relationship with students and how it is reflected. The teachers who participated in the study agreed that they are moral models to students in the classroom. Unlike other professions which may have social distance, teachers should be able to get close to their students and to help them to learn and develop especially in morality. Teachers should have a supportive relationship with their students. They should care for students in order to make their learning effective. The teachers also should articulate their own values and understand their influences on students.

Phonexayphova (2013) in his study explored the literature about whether teachers should have a professional responsibility to be moral agents in and out of the classroom. He discussed about teachers who play their role as moral exemplar not only for the students but also for other teachers. The students will be more likely to value the ethic topic and moral instruction if they are taught by an exemplar. The teachers not only teach the facts and rules of moral but also help the students to be accountable and practise the facts and rules of moral wisely in their life. The teachers also should understand their role as moral agents. They should respect and realize the values of society so that they could contribute in shaping morality of their students. Teo (2013) in her paper also mentioned that teachers of ethics should educate themselves about the values of ethic. They could not teach the students and act as role model to the students if they are not well-grounded in ethics.

Another study from Velea and Farca (2013) investigated the role of teachers for moral and affective education of secondary education students. They discussed about the challenges of teachers and how teachers understand their role in moral and affective education of children. The researchers suggested that all the teachers must participate in the moral and emotional education of their students no matter what subject they teach. They should respect the students' rights. They should create a fixed and secure socio-emotional environment to their students based on trust, balance and respect. The teachers should communicate with their students through direct collaboration to give them some advice for them in every situation. The participated teachers stated that responsibility is the main value they aim to develop with their students. They also noted the need of understanding

children's psychology as a part of core curriculum in early teacher training program so that they could understand deeply about the children's attitudes and behaviors. Besides, teachers should be prepared to communicate with the parents about the students' moral development.

Kotaiah (2014) in his research stated that home is the first place while schools and teachers are the second place to influence the morality of the children. He stated that teachers play a vital role in fostering the moral qualities of the students regardless what subjects they teach. The teacher's own conduct is helpful in shaping students' moral behavior. Therefore, teachers should set a standard of moral behavior before the students. Teachers can foster various moral qualities to the students through both curricular and co-curricular activities. He also suggested a list of activities for moral development of children in his paper which could give more ideas for the teachers. The activities include class discussion, group projects, role play, celebration of festival, camp, etc.

There was another study from Okeke and Drake (2014) stating that the responsibility of teacher is to tell the truth and to behave well at all times. Teachers have to be equipped with some elements to help them to live in the way that society expects them to behave. Teachers should be able to engage students in moral reasoning process which will help them to make morally-principled decision about their own lives. They also stated that teachers nowadays are expected from parents and society to take the responsibilities as mentors, therapists, parent-substitute, counsellors and so on. Teachers have to be a good character as they are expected as educators who can teach the students moral virtues and can mould young people into contributing members in the society. This means that teachers always have to be a good role model for the students in fostering morality of the students.

There are some studies about roles of teachers in developing morality of students found in 2015. One of the studies is from Narinasamy and Logeswaran (2015). They discussed about teacher role-modelling and the ethics of care. The findings showed that teachers play important role in building relationships with their students in the classroom. They should be patient listeners to their students and this could change the students' behaviors. Other than that, teachers who show empathetic behavior will be able to foster their relationship with the students. The students will be convinced to imitate the empathetic feature of their teachers if the teachers portray their concern to them. Teachers are also the good observant of students' behavior and actions. They should praise the students to affirm their appropriate conduct and this will motivate the students to strive in their work. Teachers should be a caring person towards their students. This may strengthen their role as a model to the students especially in moral education. In short, teachers should have both empathy and caring characteristic in order to develop students' morality.

Another study of Sachar (2015) investigated about how teachers play their role in building good character of the students by acting as a role model to them. He explained that people who have good character will act morally in all situation of life. He stated the roles of teachers as role model who can set good example for their students. The moral character of teachers themselves could help to transmit the moral virtues to their students. Besides, as the studies discussed before, Sachar stated that teachers should build a caring environment for their students. Students who are always being cared will most likely care for others and as a moral citizen in the community. Teacher should also develop social and emotional skills in their students. The students who are able to control their emotion in good way will be able to form good character. In the study of Аллабердиева (2015), she also stated the important role of teachers as role model by making professional judgements and decisions based on the societal and moral virtues. Teachers should teach about respect and responsibility. They should respect the students regardless of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status or abilities and demonstrate their accountability for their actions and also fulfilling their duties. Another role of teachers is assisting their students to learn and apply moral reasoning process.

Gleeson and O'Flahertyb (2016) in their study explored the role of the teacher in moral education in Catholic schools in Australia and Ireland. They had outlined the moral role of the teachers in these two countries. Generally, the respondents in both countries agreed on the roles of the teacher as moral educator, role model and holistic educator. Australian teachers emphasize relationships between teachers and students while Irish teachers more emphasize on students' respect to teachers. It was due to the influence of their stronger association with the historical values of school charism. Another study of Vaishnavi, Subikshalakshmi and Goswami (2016) examined the role of teachers in instilling moral education. As school is a small community, teachers have to train their students to effectively deal with the actual society. As teachers are role model for the students, the students are most likely to follow the moral acts of their teachers. Therefore, teachers should portray moral behavior and take responsibilities for all the actions to their students.

Yashoda and Kumar (2017) investigated about the role of teacher in inculcating moral values among the high school pupils. They stated that teachers are role model of students. They should teach students the moral values in order to build up desirable character of the students. Yashoda and Kumar also emphasized the importance of reward and punishment to adjust the moral development of the students. Teachers should give students more rewards than punishments in order to foster the desirable character. Teachers should set moral rules in the classroom. They should also promote moral values through various activities and mass media.

In the study of Rissanen, Kuusisto, Hanhimaki and Tirri

(2018), they examined the impact of implicit theories of Finnish teachers' teaching morally and teaching morality practices. They also agreed that students have been benefitted in social and academic when they are supported in a caring classroom environment. They explained the difference of teaching morally and teaching morality in early part of their paper. Teaching morally refers to morality of the teachers' conduct while teaching morality refers to efforts to provide students with the methods for developing their morality. The findings showed that the Finnish teachers believed that they should take responsibility on students' moral development, meeting students' individual needs and respecting students' rights. The teachers stated their view that punishment and striving for justice are not the only parts of job as moral educators. They need to change their students' behavior by communicating with them. They need to learn to trust the students and do not label the students based on their previous actions. They should help the students to find out explanation for their ethical failures.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Roles of Teachers in Developing Morality of Students

#### 5.1.1. Moral Model or Exemplar

This is the most general finding found from the studies. Teachers play important role as moral model or exemplar to the students (McMurchy, 2014). As the studies stated before, teachers are the second important person in the children's life after their parents as they spend more time with their teachers in school comparing with their working parents. The children are most likely idolising their teachers who have some attractive characteristics like caring, optimistic, passionate and so on. The children would imitate the behaviors and actions of their teachers. Therefore, teachers should first have moral personality and make the moral values into practice in his or her life so that they can act as moral exemplar to their students. They should also demonstrate their moral virtues such as respect and responsibility both in and out of the school so that the students would learn from them in their daily life too. They should show their respect to the students' rights regardless of their background and model responsibility by fulfilling their duties as a teacher.

#### 5.1.2. Moral Mentor

Some of the studies discussed about how teachers play their role as mentors who not only convey subject matter knowledge like language, mathematics and science, but also concern on moral development of their students. Students may seek for their advice in moral reasoning process and decision making process. The moral teachers should acquire content knowledge about moral just as other

subject matter teachers so that they can serve as moral mentor by providing moral instruction and guidance to their students. Some researchers also noted the importance of the content knowledge of teachers as they had suggested that moral development and children psychology courses should be included in teacher training curriculum. The trainee teachers need to know about the psychology and moral development of children before they are posted in the school (Teo, 2013). This helps the trainee teachers to identify the cause of students' behavior and use suitable teaching strategies to assist them in shaping moral character.

#### 5.1.3. Creator of Caring Environment

Some researchers had mentioned about teachers who should build positive relationship with the students. The quality of teacher-student relationship can influence students' academic and social outcomes. The teachers should get closer to and understand their students deeply so that they will be able to help them to learn and develop their morality. It is important for teachers to create a caring environment in the classroom or school. Caring for students affects their learning. Teachers who care for their students are always sensitive and considerate of their feeling. Thus, they have to be a good observant in the classroom. They should always observe students' behavior and affirm their conduct by giving praises. The praises act as motivation and encouragement for students to maintain their moral behavior. Students who are being cared from teachers will learn to care others in their lives. Therefore, a caring environment in school can encourage social and emotional bonding of students which are essential for formation of students' moral character.

#### 5.1.4. Inculcating Moral Value

Moral value is the basis of what people believe about themselves and others. Moral values are universal values accepted and associated with the moral values practiced in a society, nation and globe. Teacher is the important person to inculcate those moral values to students in the school (Yashoda & Kumar, 2017). As students spend a large amount of time in school, it is important for teachers to internalize moral values that the students will be able to apply inside and outside of the classroom (Taher, 2015). Teacher can emphasize moral values such as love, self-control, trust, respect, responsibility and so on through their teaching subjects and during the co-curricular activities. Teachers should inculcate the moral values either overtly or covertly to students using various types of instructional materials and activities in the classroom. For instance, teachers can inculcate moral values by telling a moral story to their students in language class. They ask questions about the characteristics of the characters to help students to practice their moral reasoning skills. Besides, they can ask students to think about the lesson learnt from the story and teach them to learn the positive attitude of the

character in the story.

#### 5.1.5. Facilitator of Students' Moral Development

Teachers are as facilitator in developing students' morality. They should provide opportunities to students to use moral reasoning skills independently. Students should have self-regulation so that they could monitor their own behavior and actions. They should be given chance to train to resolve the moral dilemmas with skills that they learned. This can help them to be more capable to apply the skills in real life situation and choose the appropriate behavior. Besides, students should be given roles that require moral responsibility. Teachers can assign post to the students and provide them with practice opportunity to build a sense of themselves as moral human beings.

#### 5.1.6. Counsellor

Teachers act as counsellor who can listen to students' problem and offer advice in their moral reasoning process. Teachers have to be a good listener by displaying their patience in handling students' problem. They should understand students' mindsets and feelings. They need to be empathetic to their students. They can give suggestions or recommendation for students to live their life based on moral virtues. They also can give warnings to students to prevent them from learning immoral acts from media sources. They should give advice to students about what they should or should not do in any situation of their lives. They should raise the awareness of the students about the immoral behavior on social networks since the students in this generation are exposed to social network and gadget nowadays (Turan & İşçitürk, 2017).

#### 5.1.7. Moral Communicator

Teachers also act as a communication bridge between students and their parents. The social pattern of the students is mostly being observed in the school as school is a small community. Teachers are more understanding students' behavior and attitudes that they display in schools. Teachers should talk or communicate with the parents when they find that the students are not behaving well or when some conflicts occurred so that their parents can know about their children's behaviors in the school. They discuss the problems and find out the solutions with both students and parents.

## 5.2. Challenges of Teachers in Developing Students' Morality

### 5.2.1 Method of Teaching and Evaluation

Teaching morality and moralising the students are two different things. That the teachers who can teach moral concepts and theories well does not mean that they could develop their students' morality well. This is same with the students who get higher marks or scores in moral education

but are not necessarily having high morality in their lives. They may write the most points and discuss the points in organized manner in the assessment which can lead them to get the higher marks as other subjects (Ogama & Alaiyemola, 2015). In Malaysia, most of the schools are evaluating the students in their moral knowledge by using assessment but less focus on observation of students' moral behavior.

### 5.2.2. Lack of Interest

The other challenge of the teachers is about the interest of students in moral education. First, students cannot see the relevance of this subject in their lives (Oladipo, 2009). They are taught these moral values in school but they do not know how to apply in their lives. Second, teachers always use the same strategies in teaching the moral concepts. The students feel bored with the subject by just listening to the explanation of the moral concepts. The old style of teaching method is not so advanced in boosting students' interest in learning. Third, lack of adequate instructional materials is another reason (Okeke & Okoye, 2016). Students nowadays are exposed to gadgets in their lives. They can focus and learn well if those devices are provided. However, not every school provides the facilities or devices to them.

### 5.2.3. Qualification of Teacher

Some teachers who have no qualification in teaching moral education are teaching this subject due to shortage of qualified teachers in this subject (Okeke & Okoye, 2016). Although all teachers, no matter moral teachers or other subject teachers, can act as moral educator, they need to acquire content knowledge about moral concepts and theories in order to teach the students effectively. Some teachers are never being trained in the pedagogy of this subject but they are being assigned to teach by the school leaders. The school leaders expect every teacher to teach this subject as it is an easy subject for them. However, the teachers face many difficulties in explaining the moral concepts and carrying out the moral activities in the class and this could be the big challenges in developing their students' morality.

### 5.2.4. The Expectation of Parents and Society

The teachers face the challenge in the expectation of parents and society. They expect teachers to be a role model and mentor to students. Thus, they believed that teachers should have high morality and always behaving well in the school and in their lives. The high expectation makes the teachers especially the teachers of moral instruction feel stressed as they know that they are being watched by others. Besides, students will question when the teachers themselves do not practice what they teach. For instance, teachers expect the desirable behavior from the students but they do not practice the behavior themselves (Velea & Farca, 2013).

### 5.2.5. The Distance between School values and Family Values

Teachers face challenges when the school value and family value are far different from each other. Students often find what is considered as 'good' by the school is seen as 'wrong' and 'impractical' in their family (Velea & Farca, 2013). For example, teachers teach students to be helpful to everyone regardless of their background while the parents ask them not to help the strangers as they may be possible to harm them. Besides, parents who show the negative example also will be contrasted with the values that are taught by the teachers. Students feel confused when the values of teachers and parents are contrasted.

### 5.2.6. Communication with Parents

The teachers learn about how to communicate with children and young people when they are trained in the college. They do not learn how to communicate with the parents. In Velea and Farce (2013) study, they found some teachers revealed that they often ignore the importance of communication with the parents for moral education of the children. Therefore, when the values held by teachers and parents are far different, the teachers feel difficult and escape themselves from communicating with the parents when the conflicts occurred. Parents and teachers stand strong on their own perspective when dealing with the problems of students due to their different values with each other.

## 6. Conclusions

Teaching profession is a sacred profession. The teachers have responsibilities and should play important roles in developing students' morality. They serve as moral model, moral mentor, inculcating moral values, creator of caring environment, facilitator, counsellor and communicator between the students and their parents in the school besides teaching the subject knowledge. The teachers who are not teaching moral education need to inculcate moral value in their teaching content both overtly and covertly.

Since teachers have to play their different roles in developing the morality of students, they face many challenges in moral education. This paper had explored the challenges of teachers in developing the morality on their students. First, teachers face challenges in the mode of teaching strategies and the assessment. Second, teachers face difficulties in lack of facilities and instructional materials in teaching this subject. Third, it is about the high expectations of the parents and society to teachers.

The moral development of students is under the responsibility of schools, teachers, parents and society. Every party should cooperate in developing students' morality no matter at home, in school or in the community. Through this study, it is hoped that the people who concern on this issue including teachers know and understand more

about their roles and challenges in enhancing the students' morality.

School education is a value education that emphasizes moral formation in terms of holistic aspects of moral reasoning, moral emotion and moral behavior. Education is the process of humankind towards the well-being of ourselves, society, nation and the world. The teaching profession is a professional career given on the basis of moral responsibility.

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