

Exploring The Role Of Teachers And Curriculum For Moral Development Among The Students Of Primary Schools

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Abstract

This paper presents qualitative findings regarding the curriculum and teachers' influence on students' development. Using Explanatory research design 170 respondents expressed that a robust curriculum should include interactive and engaging activities. Teachers serve as role models, impacting students' personality and academic progress. Effective curriculum design should focus on intentional skill-building activities. Teachers' ability to incorporate ethics into their teaching is crucial, but it can be challenging for untrained teachers. Instilling moral values in children requires motivation, patience, beliefs, and effective teaching methods. Teacher motivation is vital as it guides their teaching behavior. Teachers play a significant role in student's education, with students showing a positive attitude when teachers exhibit inspiring and exemplary behavior.

Keywords: Curriculum, Moral and Value Development, Primary Schools, Qualitative, Sindh Province, Teachers.

1. Introduction

One may not begin to investigate what moral/ethical values are without first understanding the morality and significance of Moral Education (ME). Florence et al. (2008) endorsed that morality is a system of principles and values regarding people's behavior, which is mainly accepted by a society or by a specific group of individuals. Ukpong et al. (2015) argued that morality develops a sense of deciding right or wrong and this successfully develops a way to spice up one's morale that affects one another. In support, Ellemers et al. (2019) express that morality indicates a 'right and wrong' manner of doing some act, for example, one should be truthful and not unfair to others. Noddings (1992) acknowledges that morality plays a vital role in molding the character of a person. Solid convictions, high esteem, altruism, and pro-social conduct decide the societal position of a person. Societies promote moral values because they reflect one's personality, attitude, and behavior. Moral values can bring peace of mind, a conducive environment, better quality of life, sustainability, and harmony among children (Ellemers et al., 2019).

Moral Education (ME), plays a vital role in developing students' personalities. This is thought of as an associate advancement and breakthrough for the progress of a nation at primary school level. According to child psychologists (Offord et al., 1987; Wild et al., 1994), the personality of a child is nurtured at the age of 3-4 years. They also accept the

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fact that children come to school with well-established values and for this reason, the schools are considered as the central institutions that influence the behavior of children. Educationists consider primary education to be the fundamental element of the entire education pyramid, where children in the middle childhood stage of life (6-11 years) will be given access to quality and free primary education in Pakistan (NEP, 2017). Children's schooling system in Pakistan begins at the primary level and ends at the Intermediate level or higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) level. Farooq (2015) argued that public sector school is a formal school system, which is the largest service provider in Pakistan, spread over 12 academic years. These schools are operated by the government of Pakistan, which has Urdu medium as the mode of instruction and uses almost outdated teaching methods. Such schools cater to the needs of lower socio-economic strata, have high rate of absenteeism among students and teachers, and employ untrained teachers (Essays, 2018; Haider et al., 2020). Iqbal (2015) and many other renowned educationists convince the masses that the most primary schools are working without understanding the right spirit, which has multiplied the problems in providing quality education.

Pakistan's National Education Policy (NEP, 2009) effectively implements programs and activities for youth excellence in self-development, which is also emphasized in Pakistan's National Education Policy (NEP, 2017). Shamshiri (2017) expressed that policymakers are adopting several tools and processes to increase the level and quality of educational services provided by public schools. According to the Sector Evaluation Report on School Education (June 2019), published by the Asian Development Bank, Pakistan's education budget is only 2% of its gross national product (GNP), much lower than the rest of the world. Moral values such as justice, truthfulness, patience, kindness, respect and empathy were combed from the literature review (Iqbal, 2015; Uyanga & Nyorere; APEID, 1989, 1991).

Further, the key objective of stakeholders, according to many studies (Muth 2022; Oberli, 2019) is the incorporation of moral education in the mainstream educational system (Kharestani & Macer, 2023). However, the basic moral deterioration among students in schools throughout the world indicates that moral education and values are not diligently implemented (Waweru, 2018). This lack of moral education is a curriculum deficiency in the country's current system of education.

Additionally, there many studies are not available that have examined how the effectiveness of curriculum affects students' moral development (MD) (Gang & Gang, 2023). In this study, the moral foundation theory of MD is utilized to support the idea of including moral values education into the school curriculum to stop moral deterioration in society (Ramezani et al., 2022). Usman et al. (2016) asserts that moral education is neglected in Pakistani society because most public schools are weak in the deliverance of ME due to their poor performance; however, the private education sector has prospered in Pakistan in this respect (Dar, 2012). Dar (2012) indicates that in Pakistan, the focus on ME is very limited in public sector schools because most of them are in a deplorable condition due to limited facilities Campbell et al. (1999). Unfortunately, the education system in Pakistan, focuses on teachers' knowledge through the lecture method. Teachers in public sector schools widely use this way of teaching and they deliver the contents given in textbooks (Aslam, 2019; Rehmani, 2005). This is mainly because the teachers are not professionally qualified to employ different methods to promote enjoyable learning for primary school children (NEP, 2017; Jillani et al., 2024). There has been a dilemma of supporting teachers with their role as moral mentors and it should be addressed systematically. By taking into consideration these problems, the following research objectives, research questions, and research hypothesis has been framed.

Research Questions

- Q1. How effective is the implemented curriculum in emphasizing the moral values of students in primary public sector schools in Sindh?
- Q2. How do teachers at primary public level schools in Sindh contribute to developing the moral values of students?

- Q3. How do teachers' implicit beliefs concerning their moral capabilities affect their communication and practices in the classroom?

2. Literature Review

Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) is a new psychological paradigm that promotes a pluralist perspective of morality, going beyond the commonly addressed topics of preventing individual damage and injustice (Koleva et al., 2017). The MFT is a tool for organizing, quantifying, and characterizing moral basis variations across people, communities, and cultures. Because different people rely on various foundations (concerns) to varying degrees, a way to quantify these disparities is required (Andersen et al., 2015). As a result, MFT identifies moral considerations that control how we treat people and how we act in groups. MFT's insights and principles, particularly focus on group-level moral concerns and virtues, having a wide range of business implications. These range from improved customer and employee understanding to improved corporate culture and leadership to value-based marketing (Zuber & Andersen, 2016).

Ethical and Moral Education

Ethical and moral education has the potential to significantly improve the ethical atmosphere in teaching institutions. Improving ethical and moral education starts with a comprehensive grasp of how individuals make decisions about what they think and how they act in ethical situations (Graham & Burns, 2020). As the study's main objective: To investigate the effectiveness of the implemented curriculum in emphasizing the moral values of students in primary public sector schools in Sindh is to improve the moral values in students; therefore, MFT gives insights on what could be the effective ways to improve ethics in organizations.

The under-sub sections discuss the variables that were included in this research, which were derived from MFT. According to this theory, moral growth is concerned with appearance, improvement, and interpretation of morality of a person right from infancy to maturity. This concept when confronted with moral dilemmas at various stages of physical and cognitive growth creates confusion (Narvaez, 2019).

Allama Mohammad Iqbal, a renowned philosopher and educationist of Pakistan believed that to impart morality in children, they must be allowed to learn through social life experiences (Raja, 2008). His philosophy is strongly reflected in NEP as well. According to Dar (2012), the focus in Pakistani schools on moral education is very limited due to a lack of coordination and cooperation between the stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, parents, and community. It is evident that there is a contradiction of opinion regarding the implementation of ME at the primary level (Yun & Yusoff, 2016). Marzouki (2012) argues that school ME is part of education reforms, which he describes through an affinity diagram process to explore beyond its conventional thinking and pre-determined categories. This technique accesses the excellent knowledge and understanding residing untapped in our context. Brousseau et al. (2012) describe ME as a tree with four main components: roots, stems, branches and leaves. The origin of the change comprises the philosophical basis for implementing the mainline reforms of individual education: (a) roots reflect the intellectual foundation and implementation of ME; (b) stems indicate a mandate from the government as responsible national education providers; (c) branches reflect management in the form of ME teachers and managerial competence, which must be improved; and (d) leaves refers to implementation of ME.

Robinson et al. (2009) confirm that young children's minds are like seedlings that can thrive in fertile soil. As a result, children should receive good instruction in their early years of studies; therefore, the role and responsibilities of stakeholders are very crucial at this age. Principals/head teachers must focus on how at times, they are hindered by the processes and practices outside their control or by the decisions they make that could be unpopular with workers, but which they thought were right (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Kutsyuruba et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

Primary Education

Primary education is a necessary and common component of all comprehensive systems, and their implementation necessitates inter-departmental coordination, standard policy, and joint action plans (Lashari et al., 2023). Therefore, the principal /school head comes at the top position because he/she performs a variety of leadership tasks to improve school performance (Akram et al., 2020). Ahmed and Braithwaite (2007) point out a grave issue regarding the moral obligations of the teachers and elaborate that even though they are considered as the role models, they are unable to address healthy classroom matters like: behavior problems and learners emotionally fall prey to ethical, psychological as well as developmental well-being issues (Aulia & Siregar, 2022; Lashari & Umrani, 2023). National Educational policies are being developed to encourage the academic and practical qualities of the learners (Tibo & Tobing, 2022).

3. Methodology

The researcher used a qualitative method in which she used thematic analysis to encode qualitative details. Initially, the coding method was used in compliance with Saldana (2013) recommendations, which define coding as a mechanism in which the researcher uses explicit codes that may be a word or phrase assigned to raw data's main features. Saldana (2013) further focuses on the principles to capture the main elements clustered together according to correspondence and continuity in the data to form patterns, which then create different categories for analysis. In addition to this, Boyatzis (1998) argues that the researcher uses explicit codes and sets categories to study the data themes. The thematic analysis allows academics or analysts to systematically use a wide range of knowledge to define a specific phenomenon's patterns.

Out of twenty-nine (29) districts of Sindh province, five districts were randomly selected for the study: Khairpur, Sukkur, Nousharo Feroz, Jamshoro and Karachi south and four public primary schools from each of the districts mentioned above. The study population included male and female students, teachers and principals of primary public sector schools, from rural and urban areas. The researcher examined life experiences through semi-structured interviews with principals from selected schools in the public sector. Twelve semi-structured interviews of 12 primary school principals from 12 schools of selected districts were conducted through a self-developed protocol (see Appendix A). Phenomenological researchers hope to gain insight into the essential truth, that is, the essence of the lived experiences, which include efforts to understand and give meaning through this method. This is typically achieved by gathering and analyzing narrative materials systematically using relevant methods to ensure that the data and the findings are reliable (Byrne, 2001).

For the qualitative part of the analysis, face-to-face interviews are the primary source of research-related information. The selected interview strategy can provide insider perspectives on the educational background in public sector schools in selected districts of Sindh. Therefore, this research was carried out through approximately a 45-to-60 minute semi-structured interview with principals of each school chosen from Sindh. The use of semi-structured research interviews has inherent strengths and limitations. Fox (2009) points out that semi-structured interviews are characterized by open-ended questions and allow the interviewers to explore the research topic in-depth. It helps the interviewers to motivate the interviewees if they have trouble answering the questions or giving short responses by using cues, prompts or probes. The interviewers can also question the interviewees to clarify the initial answers better or pursue the areas of questioning proposed by the respondents. Semi-structured interviews often allow interviewees to express personal thoughts and feelings otherwise held to themselves (Jackson, 2010).

For this research study, the participants were told about the study's purpose and scope and were asked to fill in the consent form. Voluntary informed permission was taken at the start of the study from public sector schools' heads and teachers. Thus, the researcher used mindful ways in which structural inequalities, such as race/gender and socioeconomic

status-co, do not affect the participants (BERA, 2018). To summarize, the researcher considered data fairness, reliability, validity, trustworthiness, credibility, partiality, and impartiality throughout the study.

4. Results

The current section will cover the findings from 12 interviews conducted with the principals of selected public sector schools (four from Karachi south district, two from Khairpur, two from Sukkur, two from Nousharo Feroz, and two from Jamshoro district). Pseudonyms will be used throughout the chapter to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Data findings have been culled from the variables of the study set out initially from all identified schools for this research. The responses will be divided into five, comprising the themes during interviews with the principals of public sector schools of selected districts of Sindh, Pakistan. The variables of study are explained below:

1. Effectiveness of curriculum
2. Role of teachers
3. Role of principals
4. Teachers' implicit belief
5. Socio-economic support

Qualitative data analysis covered all the interviews with the participants of the study, keeping in mind the weak language proficiency of the respondents. All interviews were conducted in Urdu or Sindhi language. The responses were translated manually. In order to establish the validity of the answers, back-to-back translation was also done which was initially from Sindhi to Urdu and then translated back into English. Back-to-back translation was also done to ensure that the exact meaning emerges. Data taken through interviews was stated to be integrated at the stage of tenth interview at point of saturation from respondents.

4.1. Effectiveness of curriculum

Rathore et al. (2018) claim that curriculum is the essence of education, which includes the transfer of knowledge, attitudes, and skills from one generation to the next generation. It is therefore appropriate to incorporate teaching values into the curriculum for the integration of ME.

According to the respondents of this study, the curriculum is planned in such a manner that it incorporates all interactive, interesting, and worthwhile activities for the curriculum to be robust. Therefore, the curriculum must place a strong emphasis on developing a cordial and receptive pupil-teacher connection, as indicated by Unar and Hussain (2021). It is evident from the study that education plays a significant influence in determining one's talents and thus, having a good curriculum is crucial. Along with the capacity to think about technical advancement, people also need to be able to think more compassionately and creatively. Liu and Pan (2022) study indicated that by modifying the contents of the curriculum, students will alter their thinking pattern from an early age. Exceptional performance demands deep knowledge, which calls for theoretical curriculum embedding in addition to excellent teaching techniques (Zhang, 2023). The improvement of each person's potential is based on the curriculum being implemented effectively. Before moving on to the next level of the curriculum, students must demonstrate learning goals, criteria, and essential abilities (Qie et al., 2021).

4.2. Role of Teachers

Jadhav (2015) justifies that teachers are a link between the children and the textbooks. They understand the different needs of children, academic institutions, communities, and parents. Teachers model positive behaviors in the classroom and society helps students to develop moral attitudes and mindsets. Teachers also educate pupils to accept responsibility for their

actions (Fayaz et al., 2023) and to respect the interests of others; therefore, the teachers serve as moral mentors within the context of intellectual development (Azimovna, 2020). The qualitative analysis of the interviews with the teachers demonstrated that the students' personality development and academic progress are both influenced by the teachers' abilities and capabilities. This finding is also validated by (Ghosh, 2019) that teachers' way of teaching is crucial to motivate students, who are their role models. Moreover, teachers must understand how to include fundamental ethical principles in their teaching. Thakur and Dhatt, (2019) also agree that teachers' professionalism and their ability to influence students' conduct have always been crucial components. The teachers make an effort to keep the classroom calm, comfortable, and stress-free. (Sudarsana et al., 2020) also witnessed in their study that teachers are capable of creating a well-organized and disciplined comfortable classroom environment.

4.3. Role of Principals

The school principal performs a variety of leadership positions to improve school performance (Goraya, 2020). The principal is at the top level of hierarchy in schools and they are in charge of putting rules and policies into effect. Principals' actions improve students' moral character by teaching them significant inherent values and setting up extracurricular activities. The literature proposes that school principals function as an agent in creating an ethical and moral climate in the classroom (Effendi & Sahertian, 2022). The results of the qualitative analysis conducted with principals show that they are responsible for establishing positive school culture. Suntani et al. (2021) also stress that principals' vision should be centered on continuously raising the standard of operations in the schools since they are likely to have a significant impact. Therefore, principals need to concentrate on internal efficiency development and teacher empowerment. The principals have to pay attention to a number of other things, like skills development and knowledge (Iryani et al., 2023). As a result, the principals foster a sense of emotional camaraderie within a setting where fundamental moral principles are taught. The involvement of principals in fostering an inclusive school climate helps students to set a moral environment (Iryani et al., 2023; Suntani et al., 2021; Turnadi et al., 2021). In addition, the study indicated that the principal's role was crucial for empowering students because they came from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. This is endorsed by Das & Behera, (2020). The findings of the study by Fajri & Dafit, (2022) suggested that teachers and school administrators must possess a thorough understanding of curriculum, instruction, and student accomplishment.

4.4. Teachers' Implicit Beliefs

Teaching is considered as a morally upright occupation, as a result, it is intended to foster the complete development of individuals instead of the cognitive domain. Teachers' implicit belief plays an essential role in nurturing students in classrooms and school settings.

As per the findings of the qualitative analysis of the study, teachers serve as role model for students in the classroom to teach moral values. Tadege et al., (2022) acknowledge that moral values are to be introduced to students since they have an impact on their development and behavior. Additionally, teachers reported in the present study that by learning moral values, students may grasp what they desire, distinguish right from wrong, and resolve problems in their lives as also suggested by Ru'iyah, (2019). Since teaching is seen as a morally upright profession, its goal is to promote the full development of people rather than just their cognitive abilities. Teachers' implicit confidence that pupils may flourish socially and intellectually in the classroom and at school is crucial. The analysis presented in this study leads to the conclusion that implicit beliefs are related to the views people have about fundamental human characteristics. The implicit assumptions of the students also have a significant influence on their motivation and learning. Implicit beliefs are interconnected with a network of other specific views. As a result, teachers comprehend

both themselves and their pupils as well as provide meaning to their social experiences (Mavis Sevim, 2021).

4.5. Socio-economic Support

According to the moral domain theory, differences in socioeconomic conditions and cultural context might influence how individuals react and this mechanism is associated with emotions and perceptions that can be affected by socio-economic factors in terms of activities and possible growth (Caravita et al., 2012).

Qualitative analysis has shown that variations in socioeconomic circumstances and cultural environment may have an impact on how people behave and that this process is linked to emotions and perceptions, which may be impacted by the socioeconomic variables in terms of activities and potential development. The aforementioned findings confirm that while the government and teachers can offer economic support in the form of financial assistance, which may include free textbooks, free uniforms, and free education at this stage of students' lives, mental development to lessen inequality in lives or to produce better citizens must be provided by parents and teachers. Therefore, this implies that decreased educational chances for those with less education lead to increased mental health vulnerabilities. The study respondents stated that it is crucial to pay attention to students who are struggling to finish their educational track to address educational inequities. Furthermore, the interviewees suggested that students from low socioeconomic level households are also at a disadvantage in school since their homes lack an established academic environment that students' economic condition has an impact on their academic performance as well (Walia, 2022). The amount of student self-efficacy, pleasure, and other non-cognitive outcomes for individual learning are decreased by lower levels of physical and educational resources (Ono & Oluwemimo, 2021).

5. Conclusion

This paper has achieved its objectives through qualitative analysis in which the respondents expressed that, the curriculum is planned in such a manner, that it incorporates all interactive, interesting, and worthwhile activities for the curriculum to be robust. Moreover, students' personality development and academic progress are both influenced by the teachers' abilities and capabilities because teachers serve as role models for the students. The qualitative findings of the study also revealed that curriculum, in order to be effective, requires intentional skill-building activities; therefore, it should be designed in a way that includes all interactive, engaging and meaningful activities. The findings suggested that teachers are a source of inspiration for students as they set up rejuvenating examples for young people. Teachers must know how to incorporate basic ethics in teaching in their lessons; however, this is time-consuming and, at times difficult for untrained teachers.

Moral values need to be embedded in children from an early age and it requires a wholesome of motivation, patience, beliefs, and teaching tactics. Therefore, teacher motivation is essential as it is an internal state which activates and guides the teaching behavior. In educating children, a vital role is played by the teachers because students show positive attitude towards their teachers when they observe inspiring and exemplary behavior by them. The above explanation concludes that the beliefs individuals hold about essential human qualities are concerned with implicit assumption. On the learning and motivation of students, implicit opinions have a powerful impact. A network of other specifiable beliefs is connected with implicit beliefs. Therefore, due to these beliefs, teachers understand themselves and the students and give meaning to their social experiences. The development of students does not revolve around their knowledge development, but also depends on their skills and abilities development. Therefore, the role of the principal is to create an emotionally supportive community within a school where basic ethics are taught. For creating an inclusive school environment that supports students, the role of the principal is imperative as per the findings of this research.

5.1. Recommendations

School Management: Practical recommendations for school management encompass several key areas. Firstly, schools should focus on empowering students by helping them discover their passions and encouraging active participation. Teachers should foster resilience, empathy, and leadership skills. In curriculum development, schools must consider skill development and emerging job trends. Integrating practical subjects and technology education is essential. Values should be integrated into subject-specific contexts, promoting critical thinking and moral development. Character education, emphasizing virtues like wisdom and kindness, should be a priority. School management should introduce strategies for character development and ethical education. Finally, curricular standards should emphasize technical knowledge and adaptable skills to prepare students for the modern job market.

Teachers: Teachers play a crucial role in fostering moral development in students. They should receive training on handling moral, values, and ethical issues, addressing conflicts between students' beliefs, and bridging gaps when controversial topics arise. Teachers can use case methods to enhance their moral vocabulary and critical thinking. Their beliefs influence teaching behaviors, curriculum decisions, and classroom atmosphere. Active learning and professional development shape these beliefs. Teachers should adopt a moral attitude that emphasizes responsibility, individual needs, and student rights. Implicit beliefs are conveyed through reactions to ethical failures, influencing students' motivation for moral growth. Socio-economic factors also impact students' moral development, highlighting the importance of cognitive training programs for disadvantaged students.

Policy Makers: Government and policymakers can enhance education by promoting constructivist teaching approaches and providing systematic knowledge about teaching. They should prioritize teacher training and principal involvement in moral development. Implementing ethics curriculum and encouraging discussions on moral topics in classrooms can improve moral thinking. Policies for recruiting, training, and retaining expert teachers are vital. Incentives like mentorship programs and compensation for achievement can attract and retain skilled educators. A nationally available teacher performance evaluation should measure teaching skills. To meet global challenges, education should focus on knowledge and skills. Policymakers should involve teachers and schools in curriculum design and professional development, fostering a bottom-up approach to education reform.

Parents: Parents play a vital role in their children's moral development. They can foster moral thinking by offering age-appropriate explanations of social interactions and encouraging empathy and responsibility. Providing opportunities for children to engage in activities like caring for the elderly or helping others reinforces moral values. Parents should prioritize warmth and support in their relationships, using effective interactions and clear rules to guide moral reasoning. Selective peer choices and awareness of children's social experiences are important. The government should ensure access to education, and parental involvement in education should be strengthened. Collaboration between schools and parents is crucial for effective curriculum implementation, requiring seminars and meetings to promote engagement.

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