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Student Teachers Character Development in Teacher Education Institutes: A Review
(Pembangunan Watak Guru Pelatih di Institut-Institut Pendidikan Guru: Satu Ulasan)

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are the role models of character education in schools and as such student teachers during their training period should be educated to possess the required characteristics of effective teachers. This article reviews the contexts of character education and teacher character development programs, focusing on the elements of good character development training, and drawing experiences from practices in several developed countries. Challenges in character education are also highlighted in the discussions. It is suggested that teacher training institutes should pay serious attention particularly in the development of effective teachers during their training period in teacher education institutes.

Keywords: Character education; teacher education; educational policy; teacher character.

ABSTRAK

Guru adalah role model dalam pendidikan watak di sekolah, oleh itu guru-guru pelatih perludididik untuk memiliki ciri-ciri guru berkesan yang diperlukan sepanjang tempoh latihan mereka. Artikel ini mengulas konteks pelaksanaan pendidikan watak dan program pembangunan watak guru, dengan member tumpuan kepada unsur-unsur latihan pembangunan watak serta menggariskan pengalaman daripada amalan di beberapa Negara maju. Cabaran bagi pendidikan watak juga ditekankan dalam perbincangan. Adalah dicadangkan agar institusi latihan guru perlu member perhatian yang serius terutamanya dalam pembangunan guru-guru yang berkesan dalam tempoh latihan mereka di guru institusi pengajian.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan watak, pendidikan guru, dasar pendidikan, watak guru.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Malaysia has also emphasizes on character development for its/the people. Initially, character development of students was stressed in the Rahman Talib Report 1961, Education Act 1961, and Cabinet Report 1979. In the 1995 Education Bill, the National Education Philosophy was introduced which give the necessary impetus on the need to develop holistic individuals through an integrated manner (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2009).

This article reviews the contexts of character education in schools and its relationship with teacher effectiveness. This article also focusing on the elements of effective character education which were drawn from experiences of practices in several developed countries. Then, several approaches to character education for student teachers are discussed which can become good alternatives for curriculum designers in designing character education in teacher education institutes. Challenges in character education implementation are also highlighted in the discussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character Education

Teachers as character educators not merely teach about good character, but also need to show their students what good character is. They are role models of good character for their students; therefore, they must show good examples by developing their own character. The key factor for the success of character education in schools or in other educational institutes is the character of its educators. Teachers must possess appropriate characters, moral standard and virtues so that their student can see them as exemplars (Osguthorpe 2008; Steward 2006; Jones 2005). As the character educators, teachers must be better or equally of virtuous character and dispositions than their students. They need to consciously, and unconsciously display good disposition and moral character. They also need to be what they are conveying and practice morally good teaching. Hence, they can provide moral instruction effectively (Osguthorpe 2008).

Understanding good character is the central concern of virtue ethics. The character education movement is directed at developing a set of "civic virtues" deemed necessary for civic life (Collins & O'Brien 2003). It affirms the belief that "ethical, social and emotional development of the young is as important as their academic achievement" (Schwartz

2008a, p. 2). Character development of a child can happen at home from the impact of family, and schools can also become the developmental force (Berkowitz & Bier 2004). Even though parents are responsible in shaping up their children characters., many of them leave it to the teachers citing reasons that they donot have the skills to develop their children characters. It has become the teachers' responsibility to develop the students' character and it iscommon to assume that teachers themselves must be of good virtue and character.

Character education movement has been encouraged in schools in the United States, Canada and Britain by developing standards and mandates that require teachers to address character education explicitly (Winton, 2010). Many professional organisations in United States have endorsed character education as important educational movement such as Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), The National School Boards Association (NSBA), The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), and the National Education Association (NEA) (Koller, 2006). The government of Canada has also mandated character education in public schools through the introduction of Character Development Initiative 2006 policy (Winton 2010).

Characteristics of Effective and Good Teacher

The responsibility of teacher education institutes is to train student teachers to become effective and good teachers. Knowledge in subject matter is essential for good teaching. However, being knowledgeable alone does not make one an effective teacher. Effective teacher must possess not only content knowledge and skilled in methods, but also virtuous in character and dispositions that would enhance their effectiveness in the classroom (Osguthorpe 2008; Talbert-Johnson 2006). Malaysian teacher education also has addresses these needs and has recently documented it as a part of Malaysian Teacher Standard (Bahagian Pendidikan Guru 2009).

However, this aspiration is not effectively turn into practice, and there are a few teacher education programs intentionally and deliberately preparing pre-service teachers to be character educators (Narvaez & Lapsley 2008; Revell & Arthur 2007; Milson & Mehlig 2002). One of the reasons is that there are little room for additional training courses due to heavy teacher education curriculum (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Producing effective and quality teachers is one of the main goals in teacher education. What are the characteristics of effective and good teachers? Different organisation or nation has different values. Therefore, no common list of good character can be found in literatures. However, effective and good teachers come with many characteristics. Malaysian Teacher Standard 1 (Bahagian Pendidikan Guru, 2009) listed 26 constructs as their professional values and practice. Walker (2008) concluded that effective teachers share at least 12 characters. Koutsoulis (2003) identified six characteristics of effective teachers. Lund, Wayda, Woodard & Buck (2007) had identified 25 dispositions that appear to be essential for effective and good teachers. Those characters are listed in Table 1.

Effective Character Education

Many schools have implemented character education and many of them were successful in developing their students' character (Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, & Walberg, 2002). Literatures suggest seven important characteristics of effective character education. The first characteristic is, leaders who are fully understand about character education and are committed to realise the vision of character education support the character education (Schwartz 2008a; Berkowitz & Bier 2004).

TABLE 1. Lists of effective and good teacher characteristics

Effective Teacher (Walker, 2008)	Effective Teacher (Koutsoulis, 2003)	Teacher Disposition (Lund et al., 2007)	Malaysian Teacher Standard 1 (Bahagian Pendidikan Guru, 2009)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitude about teaching and student • High expectations for all students • Personal and approachable touch • Cultivate sense of belonging • Dealt student's problem compassionately • Sense of humor • Respect student, don't deliberately embarrass them • Forgiving, not hold grudges • Admit mistake • Show creativity • Treated and grade student fairly • Prepared to class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show understanding • Friendliness • Knowledgeable • Effective communication • Effective classroom management • Interesting and motivating lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitivity to other differences • Enthusiasm • Dedication • Flexibility • Respect group rules and values • Trustworthiness • Dependability • Communication • Prepared to class • Regular attendance at class or meeting • Meet deadlines • Role model • Follow instructions/ direction • Active participation • Ability to cooperate • Professional activities participation • Seek solution to problems • Control emotion • Pride in one's job • Taking initiative • Respectful of authority • Work under pressure • Ability to leave personal problem home • Work independently • Good grooming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in God • Trustworthiness • Sincerity • Knowledgeable • Caring • Patience • Good manners • Fairness • Considerateness • Endurance, competitive, durable • Energetic, active, healthy • Interpersonal & intrapersonal skill • Voluntary • Efficient • Passion for profession • Dexterous • Integrity • Role model • Team work • Proactive • Creative and innovative • Harmony • Social skills • Sociability • Patriotism • Nature lover

The leaders give their long-ranged support to character education and are willing to acquire necessary skills to act out character education. Like any other programs or initiatives, supports from the leaders would boost the program success.

Another important characteristic of effective character education is the involvement of committed and skilled staff that shares the same responsibility to implement the character education (Schwartz 2008a; Berkowitz & Bier 2004). Staff involvement and commitment is a critical factor for the success of character education. The staff should be equipped with essential skills where staff development program is important.

Gates (2008) found that teachers who received training in character education are more likely to implement character education in their school.

Effective character education also promotes specific themes, character elements and values (CASEL 2010; Elias 2009). Schools should have explicit instructions in character education that promote core ethical values and supportive values. They should define 'character' comprehensively including cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. Everybody should know what kind of character are being emphasised by their school, therefore everybody has a common goal to achieve for example instructions that enhance coping skills, social support for transitions, crises, and resolving conflicts

Effective character education also uses comprehensive approaches to character education that are intentional, proactive and effective. This would include academic curriculum, extra-curriculum and hidden curriculum (Schwartz, 2008a; Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). A comprehensive approach would involve several parties, programs and initiatives such as classroom management, parent involvement, curricular activities, social-emotional skill training, and school reform elements (Berkowitz & Bier 2004).

Another characteristic of effective character education is the promotion for school caring community that will enhance students bonding to school (Schwartz, 2008a; Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). The development of caring community is an integrated effort to create positive bond with the school that involve teachers, students, school staffs families and community members. It is the whole school character development and not just focusing on students' character development. Caring community not only provide a conducive environment for students' learning, but also conducive for an effective school management. Parent involvement with the school activities and management has also become a crucial factor in effective character education.

Effective character education also provides students with opportunities for moral action, moral reflection and moral reasoning (Schwartz, 2008a; Berkowitz & Bier 2004). Students are constructive learners who learn more by doing. Students will foster their self-motivation when they are given more exposure to character education and more meaningful opportunities for reflection, problem solving and restoration from their mistake (Schwartz 2008a).

Another important characteristic of effective character education is the evaluation of their character education. The school need to evaluate the character of the school, the staff functioning as character educators, and outcomes and impacts on students (Schwartz, 2008a). The evaluation finding will provide information on the program conceptualization, program planning, program implementation, and program effectiveness. With the right information obtained from the program evaluation, character education can be improved systematically to achieve its intended goals.

Approaches to Character Education in Teacher Education Institutes

Narvaez & Lapsley (2008) suggest two alternative approaches for character education in teacher training. The first approach is reflected through best practice instruction. Therefore, there is little need to have a specialized instruction on character. Character development is viewed as an outcome of effective teaching. Teacher educator need to ensure that student teachers are prepared to be an effective and outstanding teachers. Narvaez & Lapsley (2008) suggested that the teacher education curriculum should provide content knowledge about the links among caring classrooms, achievement, and prosocial character. Teachers should also be trained with the pedagogical skills to foster a caring classroom and disposition to be committed in practicing caring climates in their teaching. Reflective practice can make the implication of moral character education become apparent with student academic achievement.

The second approach is more intentional and deliberate in teaching character development. This approach views that best practice teaching is important but not enough for effective moral formation of students, especially in poor neighbourhoods (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). In this approach, character education can be implemented either through 'smorgasbord approach' (Elkind & Sweet, 2004) or 'holistic approach' (Elkind & Sweet, 2004; Schwartz, 2008a; Berkowitz & Bier 2004; Lickona 1998).

Implementation of character education through smorgasbord approach is based on particular needs and it can be chosen from an arrays of character education programs. Among the programs are : building a caring community; teaching values through the curriculum; class discussions; service learning; and explicit instruction in characters and values (Elkind & Sweet 2004). Even though literatures not suggesting this is an effective approach, but it can be an alternative if an institute unable to utilize the holistic approach.

In holistic approach, the character education is integrated in every aspect of teacher's life at the training institutes. This approach is also known as institute reform and it is very comprehensive. Distinguishing features of this approach are: (1) It is a multifaceted approach in which everything is organised around the character development of students, staffs and the community; It involves all stakeholders including parents and the community, and incorporates ongoing professional development; (2) The institute establishes a caring community culture with values become parts of everyday lessons inside or outside the classroom. Adults including teachers and staffs, and peers are promoted as role models of good character; (3) The institute uses an explicit agenda for character development. The character development is emphasised as much as academic learning by integrating it into the curriculum; (4) Teachers use multiple strategies approach and appropriate pedagogy to enhance character development such as fostering a democratic classroom rather than a teacher-centred classroom, classroom management concentrated on problem solving rather than rewards and punishment, and incorporating strategies for fostering peer interaction; and (5) The institute encourage students in practicing moral reasoning by giving ample opportunities to practice moral behavior, moral reflection and moral feeling (Elkind & Sweet 2004; Lickona 1998).

Narvaez & Lapsley (2008) suggested an integrative model for cultivating moral character called the Integrative Ethical Education (IEE). This model is a holistic, deliberate and more intentional approach in teaching character development. The IEE combines several key findings from empirical research to provide a step-by-step framework. The first step is to 'Foster a supportive climate for moral behaviour and high achievement' which is the formation of caring school community. The second step is to 'Cultivate ethical skills' which includes ethical sensitivity, ethical judgement, ethical focus, and ethical action.

The third step is to 'Use an apprenticeship approach to instruction (novice-to-expert guided practice)'. According to this novice-to-expert paradigm,

individuals increase their expertise over time during the course of experiences in particular knowledge domains. Expertise development involve direct instructions such as role modelling, thinking aloud and demonstration; and indirect instruction such as immersion in environments where skills and knowledge can be practiced intensively. The fourth step is to 'Nurture self-regulation skills' in which students learn to use their skills independently with the assistance from their teacher who take the role as the coach and facilitator. The final step is to 'build support structures with the community' in which the connections among home, school, and community is strengthened.

Challenges in Character Education

Character education implementation is not a smooth sailing journey. Educational institutions encounter at least three challenges in their effort to implement value-based teaching effort in order to ensure the success of character education (Tomaselli & Golden 1996). The first challenge is to determine which/what moral values should be taught to student teachers. Researches and practices in character education have suggested six human values (caring, civic justice, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness) with many ways to define them. To resolve this dilemma, educators can develop a list of agreed-upon values which they can define based on the diversity of cultures and lifestyles in their society.

The second challenges lies in educators own belief and values. Many have not fully developed and explore their own belief and values. We should not expect teacher educators to teach what they themselves never studied and possess because student teachers can easily identify words that does not match action particularly when involving belief and values. Even though we want teacher educators to be good exemplars, but we cannot expect them to be a perfect role model.

The third challenge is to instil values and character development into both curriculum and co-curriculum activities. It is difficult to make it more than just a one-off program. Adding new subject would add more burdens on the already overloaded curriculum to teacher educators and student teachers. Inculcating value as a part of the curriculum sounds good but often neglected by teacher educators in their learning activities. Furthermore, a study by Schwartz (2008b) found that efforts to include moral and character education into the coursework were hindered by the already crowded curriculum. These challenges are more of the administrators and educators part who are responsible to implement character education.

To resolve these challenges, teachers' character development should be a part of their training during pre-service teacher education.

DISCUSSION

It is essential to produce teachers of good virtues and characters because they will be the role model and the character educators in schools. Effective character education at teacher education institutes or training centres can produce many effective teachers who can successfully develop the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual domains of students. Policy makers in teacher education can learn from effective character education in schools as a guideline to evaluate the implementation of character education in teacher education institutes.

Literatures illustrate that most schools that effectively implement character education utilised a comprehensive or holistic approach. In this approach, every aspect in an educational institute was involved in the efforts to develop student teachers' character. It involves the role of institutional management and policy makers to revise and integrate character education in their teacher education curriculum. The development of institutional culture such as a caring community, culture for character development, and involvement of local community also become part of the holistic approach. Teachers should be able to integrate character education in their teaching and learning activities, and in their classroom management. Therefore, staff professional development has also become an important aspect to ensure that the character education achieve its desired outcomes.

Policy makers need to give adequate attention to the challenges in implementing character education. The first and the third challenges can be resolved through negotiation among stakeholders but the second challenge is a true challenge. To change an adult's values and belief to become a good role model is not an easy task. Teacher educators need to be skilful and creative in promoting good virtues, values and belief among student teachers, and helping them to internalise those values as parts of their character. Findings from social science researches about such as Bandura's Social Learning Theory or any other theory can be very helpful in developing effective program for character education.

CONCLUSION

Everybody in teacher education has his/her own roles to ensure the success of the endeavour to produce teachers with good characters. Policy makers of teacher education need to evaluate the teacher education program to make the character education for teachers become more prominent. In the new challenging era for younger generation, we are looking for teachers who are competent in character education, and they themselves are people of good characters.

We need to be sure that character education for teachers is not left out in their training curriculum. The focus on character development for teachers should receive better or at least of equal treatment to their cognitive development process. Even though their training consist of many activities related to character education, it is not clear whether the efforts are synchronized through, a well-planned program or they are conducted in pieces of unorganized manner.

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