Comparing The Effects Of The Story Telling Method And The Conventional Method On The Interest, Motivation And Achievement Of Chinese Primary School Pupils

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Abstract

This article is based on a quasi experimental research, comparing the effects of the storytelling method and the conventional method on the interest, motivation and achievement of Year Five Chinese Primary School pupils in Malaysia. The objective of the study was to investigate whether the use of the storytelling method helped to enhance the interest, motivation and achievement of pupils in Moral Education. The sample of the study consisted of 110 Year Five pupils from two schools. The sample was divided into two groups, the Experimental Group and the Control Group. The Experimental group was taught using the story telling method and the Control group was taught using the conventional method. The study was conducted over a period of eight weeks. A set of questionnaires was used to gauge the pupils’ interest and motivation before and after the experiment. The ANCOVA test was used to analyse the data obtained from the post test and the questionnaire. The findings of this research indicate that the utilization of the storytelling method significantly enhanced the interest, motivation and achievement of the pupils in the Experimental Group in Moral Education compared with the pupils in the Control Group who were taught using the conventional method.

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1. Introduction

The Malaysian Primary Schools Integrated Curriculum emphasizes ongoing individual development and balancing intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical traits. Moral Education is taught as a core subject among nonmuslim pupils in all primary schools, with national primary schools using the Malay Language as the medium of instruction, Chinese Primary schools using the Chinese language as the medium of Instruction and Tamil Primary schools using the Tamil Language as the medium of instruction. Moral Education in primary schools focuses primarily on five areas of learning, such as, self development and values related to the self and family, self and society, self and the environment and values related to the self and country. In addition, moral education in primary schools also emphasizes the spiritual and humanitarian values to be imbued in pupils.

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Various methods of teaching and learning have been recommended by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), Ministry of Education Malaysia to teachers in carrying out the Moral Education lessons in the classroom. Storytelling is one of the teaching methods that has been recommended. According to Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1969), the use of the storytelling method is suitable for teaching and learning of Moral Education, especially among children. Unfortunately most teachers prefer to utilize the conventional method to teach moral education whereby pupils are required to process and store information by reading the contents of textbooks and teachers use the ‘chalk and talk’ method to deliver the content. Such methods are more teacher centered and boring for the pupils and pupils tend to lose interest in learning Moral Education. As such, the objective to instill positive moral values in children may not be achieved easily if teachers do not employ effective teaching methods during moral lessons. Many researchers have emphasized the fact that the teaching methods used by teachers are closely related to pupils' interest in learning and their achievement in the subject (Khairuddin Saeran, 2001; Yahya Othman, 2003, Rajeshwari, 2003; Shanti, 2005 & Armum, 2007).

1.1. Statement Of Problem

Prior to the research, the researchers carried out a preliminary study in ten Chinese Primary Schools in the district of Butterworth, Penang on methods employed by the teachers to teach Moral Education. The findings indicated that 90% of the teachers utilized the conventional method during their Moral Education classes. In addition, reports by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2000, 2005), a study by Zarin (1990) and reports by state Education Departments in Malaysia further reveal that the implementation of Moral Education faces many problems in primary and secondary schools whereby teachers still employ the conventional method of teaching and the lessons are boring. Besides that, most of the teachers do not have the expertise to utilize effective teaching materials to make the Moral lessons interesting. In most schools teachers who are not trained to teach Moral Education are teaching the subject. Some teachers seem to be having attitude problems because they think that Moral Education is not an important subject, as such they are not serious about teaching the subject. A study by Chang Sharifah, Norani, Mogana, Mahzan & Abu Talib (2003), on Moral education in primary schools also supported these earlier findings.

The Penang State Education Department (2006, 2007) highlighted several problems on teaching and learning of Moral Education in primary schools. The problems point to students not being interested in the subject or showing less than the desired interest in the subject, not paying attention in class while learning, making noise in class and not practicing the values they have learned during Moral Education lessons.

According to Chang et al., Rahman (2006), Tam (2006), Subadrah & Annamal (2008) and Kaladevi (2008) the main cause contributing to the lack of interest and motivation in learning Moral Education among students is the conventional teaching methods which are less interesting and less effective. If teachers employ appropriate and interesting teaching methods and engage pupils actively in the learning process they will be motivated to learn and their interest in Moral Education will be enhanced. The Ministry of Education also has suggested various teaching methods and techniques to teachers to enhance students’ interest, motivation and achievement in Moral Education.

Piaget (1965) as the pioneer of the Moral Development Theory asserts that children learn moral values through stories and scenarios appropriate to their level of cognitive maturity. Piaget's theory is supported by the theory of Kohlberg (1969) that also explains that children learn moral values through experience and scenarios in stories.

Studies by Pellowski (1977), Macdonald (1982), Vitz (1990), Hui (2005) and Kilpatrick (1992) also support the belief that the storytelling method can assist in infusing moral values in children. Consequently, in this research, the researcher utilized the storytelling method to examine whether this method was able to improve Year Five students’ interest, motivation and achievement in Moral Education.
1.2. Objective Of The Research
The research employed a quasi experimental design. The first objective of the research was to compare the effects of the story telling method and the conventional method on students’ interest and motivation towards Moral Education. The second objective was to compare students’ achievement in Moral Education after being taught using the storytelling method and the conventional method.

1.3. Research Hypotheses
Following are the three null hypotheses tested in this research.

Ho1 There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the mean scores of students in the area of interest in Moral Education

Ho2 There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the mean scores of students’ in the area of motivation

Ho3 There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their achievement in Moral Education

2. Review Of Literature
This section discusses the theories of the storytelling method and studies related to motivation, interest and achievement of students in a particular subject.

2.1. Theories related to the storytelling method
The storytelling method is closely related to the cognitive and moral development of children. Children have a natural interest to listen, read and understand stories. Hence, this method can stimulate and motivate students in the learning process (Special Handbook of Moral Education, Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1983). Next the pioneers of the theory of moral development and children’s moral education also support the use of the storytelling method to convey knowledge of moral values to children (Piaget, 1965; Kohlberg, 1969).

A number of studies support the views by Piaget and Kohlberg that interaction with peers can influence children's moral maturity (Damon, 1988; Killen & Nucci, 1995; Maqsid, 1977). Popular children often engage in social activities and become peer leaders and they are more prone to high moral judgement.

The implications of Piaget's Theory of Moral Development (1965) and Kohlberg (1969) is that teachers can help children learn moral values through stories and scenarios. After the teacher tells a story the pupils should be given the opportunity to create discussions and interactions between peers so that children can learn what is "wrong" or "right" through problem solving and conflict in the individual consciousness and make collective decisions. Moral education learned in this manner is much more meaningful to students and increases their interest and motivation to learn Moral Education.

2.2. Studies Related to Motivation
Motivation is a process to raise, maintain and control the interest of students in teaching and learning. Hence, the interest and motivation are to determine the direction and objectives of teaching and learning of certain subjects (Schunk, 1995).

Motivation is an important research area among educators, scientists and philosophers as motivation explains why someone is doing something (Toh, 1998). In the scenario of primary education in Malaysia, most of the focus is on the question of 'how' to teach and 'how' students learn. Thus, many theories about teaching and learning have been developed and endorsed by educational researchers. On the other hand, research on the question of 'why' students failed to maintain interest in learning (motivation) are of less concern among researchers. (Keller, 1987; Abdul Rahim, 1996).
Keller and Kopp (1987) developed a learning model based on the theory of value raising expectations, which explained that students will be motivated to learn if they feel that they can be successful in their studies and there is value in learning. Subsequently, Keller (1987) expanded this model into four components namely, 'Attention', 'Relevance', 'Confidence' and 'Satisfaction' by the acronym ARCS. The ARCS model of motivational design is aimed at helping teachers to plan teaching and learning activities to enhance students’ motivation and learning outcomes.

2.3. Studies on Interest
According to Schraw & Lehman (2001), interest is the attitude that makes a person more active in certain areas and a positive attitude about selected aspects of the environment. The interest of an individual towards a certain subject will stimulate his desire to continue his studies (Dewey, 1913).

Hazri Jamil (1998) in his study on learning poetry utilized the critical thinking approach. This approach involved incorporating critical thinking skills with the content of the lesson to be taught to students. His findings show that the interest score of the experimental group improved significantly compared with the control group after they were taught using the critical thinking approach. The findings were in line with the findings by Kairuddin Saeran (2001), Yahya Othman (2003), Sathiapathi (2004), Santhi (2004) and Subadrah and Rajeshwari (2006) which indicated that students’ interest in learning increased when they were engaged in student-centred activities.

3. Methodology
This study employed a quasi-experimental design, and was carried out for 8 weeks. During the first week, students from both groups were given a set of questionnaires on interest and motivation. Then they were also given a pretest. From the second week to the seventh week, the experimental group was taught using the storytelling method and the control group was taught using the conventional method. In the eighth week, students from both groups were given a questionnaire on interest and a questionnaire on motivation and a posttest.

3.1. Sample
The researchers used the intact group as the sample of this study. The sample consisted of 110 students from Year Five students from two National Type Chinese Schools in an urban area (Butterworth, North Wellesley, Penang, Malaysia). Both the schools were grade A schools with more than 1,000 students, and the distance between the two schools was less than 5 kilometers. The experimental group consisted of 58 students (school A) and the control group consisted of 52 students (School B). Both groups of students had average academic results, ranging from 40% to 59% in the schools’ end-of-year examinations. In terms of race, all the students were Chinese and in terms of gender there were boys and girls in both groups.

3.2. Research Instruments
The instruments used in this research were a questionnaire on interest (20 items), a questionnaire on motivation (20 items), a pretest and a posttest. The questionnaire on interest was adapted from Hazri Jamil (1988), Shanty (2004) and Armum (2007). The questionnaire on motivation was adapted from Keller (1989) and Toh (1998). In Toh’s study (1988) the internal validity of the questionnaire was 0.81. The motivation questionnaire consisted of 20 items (the sub constructs of motivation were attention, confidence, relationship and satisfaction). The contents of the pretest and the posttest were the same and consisted of 3 parts; Part A required students to give ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers (15 items), Part B consisted of multiple choice questions (10 items) and Part C contained questions which required students to match answers with the statements (10 items).

3.3. Pilot test
Before the actual study, a pilot study was conducted among Primary Five students in a Chinese Primary School, in Butterworth, Penang and the characteristics of the school and the students were similar to the sample and the school involved in the experiment. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the reliability of the instruments. The Cronbach Alpha value for the items on interest was 0.90 and the value for the items on motivation was 0.91.
3.4. Data Analysis
Data were analyzed using SPSS Windows version 11.5. The Independent samples t-test and One-way ANCOVA analysis were used to answer the research hypotheses.

4. Findings
The findings of the independent sample t-test on the score on pre-interest, and the pretest indicated that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. For the pre-interest \( t = -0.15, df = 108, p = 0.8 \), for the pretest \( t = 1.14, df = 108, p = 0.26 \). On the other hand there was no significant difference for pre-motivation, \( t = 3.91, df = 108, p = 0.00 \). As such, the researchers used the one way ANCOVA test on the post-interest, post-motivation and the posttest using the scores of the pre-interest, pre-motivation and the pretest as the covariate in order to eliminate the differences between the two groups before intervention.

**Ho1** There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group.

- in the mean scores of students in the area of interest in Moral Education
- The post-interest mean scores of students' in the experimental group increased significantly \( (\text{Mean} = 6.29) \) compared with the control group \( (\text{Mean} = 57.61) \). The one way ANCOVA test results showed that The experimental group performed significantly better than the control group \( (\text{as shown in their scores in interest}) \) after being taught using the storytelling method \( (F = 14.27, df = 1, p = 0.00) \). These findings failed to accept Ho1.

**Ho2** There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group.

- in the mean scores of students’ in the area of motivation
- The findings showed that the mean score for post–motivation of the experimental group \( (\text{Mean}=58) \) was higher than the control group \( (\text{Mean} = 52) \). The ANCOVA test results revealed a significant difference between the motivation of the experimental group compared with the control group \( (F = 53.73; df = 1; p = 0.00) \). The findings therefore failed to accept Ho2.

**Ho3** There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group.

- in their achievement in Moral Education
- The findings showed the mean for achievement in Moral Education for the experimental group \( (\text{Mean} = 79.22) \) was significantly higher than the control group \( (\text{Mean} = 70.52) \). The results of the ANCOVA test indicated a significant difference between the achievements of the experimental group and the control group \( (F = 18.64; df = 1; p = 0.00) \). These findings failed to accept Ho3.

5. Discussion
The findings of this study indicate that the experimental group was more interested in learning Moral Education through the storytelling method compared with the control group. These findings support the theory of Piaget (1965), Kohlberg (1969) and the findings of Hui (2005) who explained that the storytelling method is able to attract children to learn moral values. The use of storytelling is interesting and stimulating as such the experimental group was more interested in learning Moral Education compared to their counterparts in the control group.

The results also indicate that the use of the storytelling method helped to increase the motivation of the experimental group significantly compared with the control group. This finding supports the view of Schunk (1995) who stressed that motivation is a process that enhances, maintains and controls students' interest in the process of learning. This finding also supports the view of Bandura (1969), that the learning motivation includes external and internal forces. External motivation includes incentives or rewards given to students such as praise and recognition by teachers. Intrinsic motivation exists when students have a desire to learn for self satisfaction itself. Intrinsic motivation enhances students’ learning process and their learning outcomes (Keller and Thomas 1987).

This study also shows that the storytelling method helps to enhance students’ achievement in Moral Education in primary school. The findings from this study support the findings of Piaget (1965), Kohlberg (1969), Damon (1988),
Killen (1995) and Maqsud (1977) that the interaction among peers plays an important role in developing sophisticated moral thinking skills. If children are allowed to experience various conflicts when interacting with friends, eventually they will be adept at facing dilemmas. In this study, students are exposed to various conflicts during group discussion sessions. Prolonged interaction with peers helps students with their moral judgements and reasoning. In addition, it also helps them to develop moral maturity.

6. Conclusion
In conclusion the findings of this research reveal that the storytelling method is more effective than the conventional method in the teaching of Moral Education among Year Five students in Chinese Primary schools. The story telling method helps to enhance students’ interest, motivation and achievement in Moral Education. This method also increases students’ understanding of moral values because they are engaged actively in peer discussion. The storytelling method is more student centred and creates a more conducive and fun learning environment.

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