

## **STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE INCULCATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF VALUES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM<sup>#</sup>**

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*The study was conducted to examine the extent to which the inculcation of 16 values has been successful and how far the students have understood the values. The respondents of the study comprised 1039 secondary school students from two states in Malaysia. The questionnaire administered was the Inventory on Noble Values which was developed by the researchers. Results revealed that students perceived their teachers as successfully inculcating all the 16 values in their lessons and they had understood those values too. However, the question still remains as to whether these students had internalized those values. This question is pertinent in the face of the current adolescent social problems.*

In Malaysia, any educational program is incomplete without adding the element of values. A comprehensive values program would enable children and young adults to explore and develop universal values such as honesty, respect, peace, love, and tolerance. The values that we impart to our children today either consciously or unconsciously, will have a major impact on our society in future. The inculcation of values can not be left to chance as we may lose an integral piece of our culture.

Values are principles or qualities that a person perceives as having intrinsic worth. Every individual has a personal hierarchy of values that may include success, wealth, love, achievement, and survival. When people possess what they value, they are contented. If they are deprived of what they value, they feel frustration or dissatisfaction (Yero, 2001). Humans unconsciously behave in ways that move them towards what they value or away from anything counter to that value. Values are virtues, ideals, and qualities on which actions and beliefs are based. Values are guiding principles that shape our outlook, attitudes, and conduct (Yero, 2001).

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The inculcation of values to school children is aimed at providing the guiding principles, and tools for the development of the whole person. In order to achieve this goal, it is vital that attention be given to the different dimensions of the individual namely, the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. The secondary education in Malaysia, aims to further develop the potentials of the individual in a holistic, balanced, and integrated manner encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects in order to create balanced and harmonious human beings with high moral standards. It is strongly believed that good education of high quality would produce resilient and respected individuals and society.

The above goals have been planned by the educational system and incorporated in the Malaysian Educational Philosophy which aims to produce knowledgeable, competent, virtuous, and responsible Malaysian citizens who are able to contribute towards the individual well being and a harmonious society. The emphasis in the educational philosophy is on the development of virtuous individuals (Ministry of Education, 1998). With the revision of the National Education Curriculum in 1998, the emphasis on values was given priority when 16 values were incorporated in all subjects through the concept of values across the curriculum. In the integrated secondary school curriculum, inculcating values across the curriculum mean that values are indirectly instilled in different subject areas where lessons are planned to include them or through extra curricular activities where they develop the values.

A number of studies were conducted on the implementation of values across the curriculum in Malaysian secondary schools. In a study by Hasni (1990), it was found that in the teaching and learning of science, the insertion of values happened at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the lessons. Ting (1997) found that a number of values such as love for the school and friends, cooperation, and interaction between different ethnic groups were instilled by using the cooperative learning method. In a study by Rahman et al (1996) found that the most frequent values inculcated were diligence, cooperation, honesty, and love. On the other hand, among the least instilled values were kindness, integrity, and rationality. These values have been inherited from the past generations to the younger ones as a way of life or the culture of the various races in Malaysia. Children are taught to observe and practice good values by their parents and elders. Most of these values are relevant to education and are further strengthened in schools. In Malaysia, values are instilled from pre school years informally. They are further infused in the subject areas

in a more formal manner in the secondary school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1998).

According to the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), humans have evolved an advanced capacity for observational learning that enables them to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and values through the rich fund of information conveyed by actual or symbolic modeling. By proper modeling, noble values can be instilled in children either at home or in the school.

The objective of the present study was to examine how far teachers trained by the faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia had inculcated the 16 values across the curriculum as perceived by their students.

This paper will present findings based on the following research questions:

- How do the students perceive the inculcation of values in the teaching and learning process?
- What is the level of students' understanding of the 16 values?
- To what extent teachers inculcate values in the teaching and learning process?

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

The respondents of the study comprised 1039 secondary schools students who were randomly selected from two states in Malaysia namely, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. The two states were randomly sampled from four states. This study was based on the students' perception of 29 teachers who were teaching English as a Second Language, Physical Education, Principles of Accounts, Commerce, and Economics. These teachers were graduates from the Faculty of Educational Studies, and had been teaching in schools for at least three years. Students age range was between 15 to 16 years.

### **Instrument**

The questionnaire administered was the Inventory on Noble Values developed by the researchers. There were 32 items in the inventory, 16 measuring on the perception of students on the

inculcation of values in teaching and other 16 items were on students' perception in their understanding of the values inculcated in teaching. It was a likert 5 point rating scale, ranging from 1(never) to 5(very frequent). The instrument was based on the noble values in the school curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education. The noble values which cut across all subjects in the curriculum were based on universal values and also relevant to the three main ethnic groups in the country. The instrument was satisfactory in terms of its reliability with an alpha coefficient of .73. Sample items of the instrument are as follows: The following are the noble values in teaching and learning. Please indicate to what extent the following values are instilled in the teaching conducted by your teacher, by circling a number given below:

Respect: never      1   2   3   4   5      very often;

The following are the noble values in teaching and learning. Please indicate to what extent do you understand the values using the following scale:

Honesty: Do not understand      1   2   3   4   5      understand well.

## **Procedure**

The questionnaires were administered by student-teachers who were the enumerators for the study. Before the questionnaires were administered, the enumerators were trained by the researchers in order for them to explain to the respondents regarding the instructions to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered in class. Respondents were asked to rate honestly and they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

## **RESULTS**

### **Perception of Students on the inculcation of values across subjects**

Results indicate a positive picture on inculcation of values across subject areas. The 16 values instilled during the lessons were perceived by the students as being frequently implemented in the teaching and learning process. The perception of 16 values being inculcated is reported in the Table 1.

Table 1

*Perception of students on the inculcation of values across subjects (N = 1039)*

Values	Mean	SD
Kindness	4.17	1.73
Self-reliance	3.79	0.93
Integrity	3.88	0.95
Respect	4.24	0.79
Love	4.01	0.96
Equity	3.91	0.96
Independence	3.59	1.04
Bravery	3.80	0.99
Cleanliness	4.23	0.88
Honesty	4.2	0.83
Diligence	4.32	0.78
Cooperation	4.28	0.78
Moderation	3.87	1.8
Gratefulness	3.83	0.96
Rationality	3.97	0.93
Community spirit	4.11	0.93

The most frequently inculcated values as perceived by the students are diligence ( $M = 4.32$ ), cooperation ( $M = 4.28$ ), respect ( $M = 4.24$ ), and cleanliness ( $M = 4.23$ ). On the other hand, the values which were less frequently inculcated by the teachers as perceived by the students are independence ( $M = 3.59$ ) and self-reliance ( $M = 3.79$ ). These findings indicate that teachers have done their duty as far as the inculcation of the sixteen values are concerned. Students are aware that the values are incorporated in their school subjects, and they did not have any difficulty in identifying those values. It may be inferred here that students have the knowledge on the values that they are supposed to inculcate in schools.

Table 2 shows the perception of students on their understanding of the 16 values inculcated across the different subject areas.

Table 2

*Perception of students on their understanding of values across subjects (N = 1039)*

Values	Mean	SD
Kindness	4.28	1.77
Self-reliance	4.15	1.78
Integrity	4.04	2.54
Respect	4.33	0.77
Love	4.21	1.51
Equity	4.02	0.9
Independence	3.89	0.95
Bravery	3.99	0.94
Cleanliness	4.18	0.89
Honesty	4.34	2.45
Diligence	4.26	0.79
Cooperation	4.30	1.46
Moderation	3.85	0.92
Gratefulness	3.90	1.58
Rationality	3.85	1.02
Social spirit	4.09	0.96

The values that they understood well were honesty ( $M = 4.34$ ), respect ( $M = 4.33$ ), cooperation ( $M = 4.30$ ), kindness ( $M = 4.28$ ), and diligence ( $M = 4.26$ ). On the other hand the values which were least understood by the respondents were moderation ( $M = 3.85$ ), rationality ( $M = 3.85$ ), and independence ( $M = 3.89$ ).

The findings in Table 2 indicate that students perceived that they had understood the values inculcated by the teachers in the various school subjects. The questionnaire given to respondents measured their perception on the understanding of the values in the teaching and learning process.

The findings indicate that majority of respondents had understood the values even though they were not rated highly. Generally, teachers had imparted the sixteen values to students through the different subject areas and students claimed that they had understood the values rather well.

Additional information were collected through the supervision of 36 student teachers in the schools under the present study. The student teachers were from a different sample and population. This was done because there was a difficulty to observe the lessons conducted by

trained teachers in secondary schools. An examination of their lesson preparation showed that the student teachers had included in their lesson plans, the relevant noble values to be assimilated in their lessons. However, the majority of student teachers were concentrating more on their subject content, and the values in their lesson plans were given very little attention or conveniently dismissed. Past studies had shown that, in order to be effective, values have to be instilled using specific methods for instance cooperative learning (Ting, 1997) or personal models (Leming, 1996), songs, drama, stories, and films (Jokhoo, 1998). The time allocated for the inculcation of values in the different subject areas was not specified, thus it may not be given as high a priority as the subject content.

## **DISCUSSION**

The inclusion of 16 noble values in the school curriculum is in line with the Malaysian Philosophy of Education which aims to develop virtuous individuals. The findings of the present study indicate that the teachers had incorporated in their lessons the sixteen values as required. The students as the receivers of knowledge on values perceived that they had understood what their teachers have instilled in them. The observation on the teaching of teacher trainees have strengthened the fact that teachers included the content on values in their lesson plans. This is important because teachers are aware that they have to inculcate the noble values in their lessons and their training have included the element of values.

On the whole, the inculcation of values in the selected secondary schools, seem to be in the right direction. However, as values are related to character education, a further observation on the character of students need to be scrutinized. How far students internalized the values that they have learnt, can be observed from the way they behave, and how well they emulate the good role models in our society. Statistics have shown that a considerable number of our secondary school students are involved in various kinds of anti-social behaviour such as drug addiction, vandalism, smoking, truancy, and indiscipline. This is something which contradicts the noble values which the education system is trying to inculcate in our young generation. Even though the educational system has its programme on values education, its effectiveness depends on other variables in the society which sometimes are beyond the control of the educational system.

Perhaps a second look at the inculcation of values in the different subject areas is urgently needed so that it will have a positive impact on character education. Past studies have shown that through proper methods such as cooperative learning and personal models, values were instilled effectively (see, for example, Leming, 1996; Ting, 1997).

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents claimed that they had understood honesty, respect, cooperation, kindness, and diligence rather well. However, the present study did not control for subjectivity and inaccuracy in self evaluation. The data collected from the respondents were taken as accurate and there was no further investigation as to the accuracy of respondents self evaluation.

### **Suggestions**

The positive findings in the study, that is, students perceived well on values taught by the teachers, does not necessarily mean that the students have internalized what had been inculcated. A further analysis is needed to explain on the occurrence of anti-social behavior among youths and school children. Such behaviour could have been observed through models that they have come across in their daily lives. Perhaps knowing and understanding of values may not be sufficient in the current situation. Internalizing of values through proper methods of teaching need to be seriously considered. Among the classroom strategies that teachers can adopt are as follows:

1. They can serve as effective caregivers by loving and respecting their students, helping them succeed in school tasks, and building their self-esteem by treating each student as having worth and dignity. This can be one of the many ways that teachers can show their students how to practice some of the good values. If they can respond in the same way as the teachers do, the values inculcated will be more meaningful.
2. They can serve as moral models by demonstrating a high level of respect and responsibility both within and outside the classroom. Teachers can also model moral concern and moral reasoning by taking time to discuss morally significant events in the school and the wider world.
3. They can serve as ethical mentors that is providing direct moral instructions and guidance through explanation, story telling, classroom discussion, encouragement of positive behavior, and corrective behavior feedback when students engaged in behavior which is unaccepted by others.



4. A necessary prerequisite in inculcation of values in education is that teachers have to practice what they teach. Teachers and educators must be the 'samples' if they are to produce many 'examples'. It would require a total effort not only from teachers but also from parents, students, media, and the school management.

## CONCLUSION

The Malaysian educational system emphasizes the inculcation of values across the secondary school curriculum through the teaching and learning process. In Universiti Putra Malaysia, teacher preparation programme at the Faculty of Educational Studies had attempted to prepare the teacher trainees with the sixteen values, and ensure that their teaching will also concentrate on the infusion of values.

Present study indicated that secondary school students understood the sixteen values, and perceived that the teachers had successfully inculcated the values in their daily lessons. However, through the examination of the student teachers' lesson preparation, it was found that they failed to impart the sixteen values successfully because they focused more on the content of their subjects rather than the values.

The teacher education programme at university level need to review the effectiveness of the inculcation of values across subjects. The student teachers need guidance not only in teaching the subject matter of their specialized areas, but also the approaches in the inculcation of values in their subject areas. The pedagogical content knowledge should give more emphasis on the inculcation of values in our effort to develop knowledgeable, competent and virtuous citizens.

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