

Contrasts Between Moral and Islamic Religious Education: Dilemmas and Prospects

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Abstract

This study has compared Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and Moral Education (ME) to identify these two subjects' innate differences. This qualitative research interviewed nine schoolteachers who were selected purposefully. Eleven themes were generated from the analysis of the interviews that manifested the findings of this research. The research findings reveal that IRE and ME have differences in their core philosophical standpoints and instruction methods. Based on the research findings, we have suggested necessary modification of Lickona's Model of Teaching Moral if it is to be implemented to the curriculum of IRE. This study is significant to the curriculum developer of IRE to ensure the readiness of IRE teachers in addressing issues and concern related to moral questions and judgments. Moreover, in the Malaysian multicultural context, where IRE and ME mostly taught by Muslim instructors without actually equipping them with necessary formal teachers' training on teaching Moral Education, the research findings also recommend the development of necessary teachers' training program and inform the future training programs, developers, about the exiting differences between these two

subjects so that the instructors can be equipped with the necessary training to optimize the teaching and learning of both IRE and ME.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Moral Education, Lickona's Model of Teaching, Curriculum, Teaching improvement*

Abstrak

Studi ini membandingkan Pendidikan Agama Islam (IRE) dan Pendidikan Moral (ME), untuk mengidentifikasi perbedaan yang asli antara kedua mata pelajaran ini. Penelitian kualitatif ini mewawancarai sembilan guru sekolah yang dipilih secara sengaja. Sebelas tema dihasilkan dari analisis wawancara, yang mewujudkan temuan penelitian ini. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa IRE dan ME memiliki perbedaan dalam sudut pandang filosofis inti dan metode pengajaran. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian, kami menyarankan modifikasi yang diperlukan dari Model Pengajaran Moral Lickona jika ingin diimplementasikan ke kurikulum IRE. Studi ini penting bagi pengembang kurikulum IRE untuk memastikan kesiapan guru IRE dalam menangani masalah dan perhatian terkait pertanyaan dan penilaian moral. Selain itu, dalam konteks multikultural Malaysia, di mana IRE dan ME sebagian besar diajarkan oleh instruktur Muslim tanpa benar-benar melengkapi mereka dengan pelatihan guru formal yang diperlukan tentang pengajaran Pendidikan Moral, temuan penelitian juga merekomendasikan pengembangan program pelatihan guru yang diperlukan, dan menginformasikan pelatihan di masa depan, pengembang, program tentang perbedaan utama antara kedua mata pelajaran ini sehingga instruktur dapat dilengkapi dengan pelatihan yang diperlukan untuk mengoptimalkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran di IRE dan ME.

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pendidikan Moral, Model Pengajaran Lickona, Kurikulum, Peningkatan Pengajaran*

Introduction

This article generates from the concern that ME and IRE are both taught as compulsory subjects in the Malaysian education system for non-Muslim and Muslim students. We wondered if both shared the same universal values, techniques, and philosophy because the ME and IRE are taught to Malaysian students even though it is only for Muslim students. Furthermore, Malaysian schools emphasize and integrate its National Philosophy of Education within every subject taught at schools. Additionally, the national education curriculum policy praxis emphasized these two subjects should be the catalyst to developing a highly moral and ethical Malaysian society in the future. These constant concerns about our morality and social problems provide constant demands for improving teaching moral and Islamic religious studies at school.

IRE and ME both share universal principles of promoting good virtues despite ME classes are only for non-Muslim students. This research corresponds to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2016-2035, which aims that IRE and ME should prepare graduates with excellent dispositions in terms of knowledge, the right mindset as morally responsible local and global citizens. Concerning the Blueprint, the Malaysian National Education Philosophy is:

[an] on-going effort towards further developing individuals' potential in a holistic and integrated manner to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God.¹

The similarity between ME and IRE aims is similar because both aim to create holistic and well-balanced individuals. Secondly, the implementation of ME and IRE in Malaysian's classroom are supposedly influenced by democratization, primarily as the curriculum is characterized as constructivist. In our opinion, this is important for IRE and ME classes because democratization within the classroom and teaching allow for mutual exchanges of thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, ME and IRE have the same orientation toward developing a civil society. It is not an incompatible comparison because the focus is on the techniques and strategies employed in ME and IRE classes and comparing the substance of these two kinds of education that aim for virtues.

This study analyzed the perspective of nine teachers that teach IRE classes and ME to students. The researcher conveniently selected the participants. The comparisons were made with matters related to Islamic religious values and moral subjects. Secondly, from this comparison, we sought to learn if the core of IRE related to virtue is different from ME, including how it is taught and implemented. The research was guided by two following research questions-

1. How are IRE and ME different in their orientations towards their philosophy and values?
2. How do these differences affect teaching?

¹ Ministry of Education, *Education in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Educational Planning and Research Division, 1993).

In the following, Lickona's teaching morals are included because they developed Malaysia's moral curriculum. Finally, how religious education is taught in Malaysia's classrooms is detailed.²

Historical Context of IRE and ME in Malaysia Education System

The earliest IRE in Malaysian history was dated during the Malacca Sultanate long before the Independence of 1957.³ At first, the classes were informal and handled within the castle's compound. The focus was Quranic recitation skills. Later, when Malacca Sultanate became the center of knowledge, more religious classes with diversity in fields and topics in various places mushroomed, extending to the neighboring states and government. However, during colonialism, the growth of IRE was stunted and destroyed.⁴ When the Portuguese reigned Malacca, there was no improvement in Islamic education.⁵

Things started to change when the British took over Tanah Melayu (read: Malaya, before Malaysia's Independence in 1957) through the implementation of IRE classes to increase Malay Muslims' participation at school because of low attendance and Malays' fear of Christianization.⁶ To attract more Malays to the schools, the British provided job opportunities for alumni and added a simple IRE class that covered only the basics. It is important to note that the jobs provided were not substantial; the jobs were low and demeaning, not the highest hierarchy, and only for clerical consignments.⁷ To that extent, Hirschman said⁸:

It was stated that the goal of village Malay schooling was to make the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father had

² Lawrence Kohlberg and Richard H. Hersh, "Moral Development: A Review of the Theory," *Theory Into Practice* 16, no. 2 (April 1, 1977): 53–59, doi:10.1080/00405847709542675.

³ Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor and Wan Mohd Tarmizi Wan Othman, "Sejarah dan Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia" 6, no. 1 (2011): 20.

⁴ Auni Abdullah, *Tradisi Pemerintahan Islam Dan Kolonialisme Dalam Sejarah Alam Melayu*, Cet. 1. (Kuala Lumpur: Darulfikir, 2005).

⁵ Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam Dan Pengaruhnya Di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1995).

⁶ Rosnani Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia: Implications for Theory and Practice* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Charles Hirschman, "Educational Patterns in Colonial Malaya," *Comparative Education Review* 16, no. 3 (October 1, 1972): 488–89, doi:10.1086/445630.

been. The colonial education system (as with other aspects of the colonial regime) appears to have been inherently conservative. The objective was not to change the social structure for the sake of progress but rather to make the existing social structure a bit more efficient. A western social scientist looking at the situation quite recently said that the urban English-medium schools' goal during the colonial era was to provide clerks for the bureaucracy. The educational system's view that could effectively contribute to social change was only a perspective envisaged since Independence.

ME was not formally taught at school until after Malaysia's Independence from the British in 1957.⁹ However, there was value in Christian ethics education, especially in missionary schools.¹⁰ Before Malaysia's Independence, the development of formal ME and IRE were slow. However, the strong emphasis on character building can be seen from religious education taught informally at mosques, madrasah, and home. For Muslim students, the values were taught based on the Quran and Sunnah and usually implemented through informal education (home) and madrasah or formal education in Malay vernacular schools.¹¹

Later, ME became part of the school curriculum through the Cabinet Report of 1979.¹² It happened due to the decline of ME, which the government identified as a need to curb the social ills by introducing ME schools.¹³ According to Ahmad, Remot & Nordin¹⁴, ME was formally implemented in Malaysian schools as early as 1983 to cater to the non-Muslim student population's needs to develop their values. Before 1983, ME was in the process of development and was open to various changes. For example, it had not called ME but civic education and was discontinued after experiencing problems related to the implementation and content. According to Hoon¹⁵, ME in

⁹ Vishalache Balakrishnan, "The Development of Moral Education in Malaysia," *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education* 25 (2010): 13.

¹⁰ Rahimah Haji Ahmad, "Educational Development and Reformation in Malaysia: Past, Present and Future," *Journal of Educational Administration* 36, no. 5 (January 1, 1998): 462–75, doi:10.1108/09578239810238456.

¹¹ Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia*.

¹² Balakrishnan, "The Development of Moral Education in Malaysia."

¹³ Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia*.

¹⁴ Asmah bt Mohd Taib et al., "Moral Education in Malaysia," *Evaluation in Education* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 1982): 109–36, doi:10.1016/0191-765X(82)90008-8.

¹⁵ Chang Lee Hoon, "Revisiting the Values in Moral Education for Malaysian Schools," *Journal of Research, Policy & Practice of Teachers and Teacher Education* 3, no. 2 (2013): 49–59.

Malaysia is modeled after Lickona's model¹⁶ of character education because it emphasizes developing a good personality and citizenship based on sound moral reasoning, moral feeling, and lastly, moral acting.

Lickona's Model of Character Education

Lickona¹⁷ provided fundamental methods and models for teaching character in schools. To that extent, he identified 11 crucial principles that should be a standard to build and strengthen character education in any educational institution. Character education aims for positive outcomes that highlight prevention rather than a cure for any social impairments. It is similar to ME because ME's purpose is to train for good values and virtues to develop good character traits. It is in conjunction with Sharp¹⁸, who believed that the aim of ME seems to be restricted to the formation of habits in the average family. In this way, it is sought to develop not merely the virtues of punctuality, order, obedience, and industry, but also veracity, honesty, and self-control.

Though character education has a different name than ME, they are fundamentally similar from Sharp's perspective.¹⁹ However, Althof & Berkowitz²⁰ believed that ME and character education are different based on many dimensions, and one of them is their focus. The latter focuses on the foundational characteristics that support morals, while ME's focus is on developing moral reasoning structures due to the cognitive-structural model of moral reasoning stages. Due to this characteristic, ME has a narrow range of pedagogical strategies.

Moral knowing is knowing and understanding the good.²¹ Good ethics must be based on having good knowledge of what is right. Students are exposed

¹⁶ Thomas Lickona, "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education," *Journal of Moral Education* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 1996): 93-100, doi:10.1080/0305724960250110.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Stella Emily Sharp, "Individual Psychology: A Study in Psychological Method," *The American Journal of Psychology* 10, no. 3 (1899): 124, doi:10.2307/1412140.

¹⁹ Sharp, "Individual Psychology."

²⁰ Wolfgang Althof and Marvin W. Berkowitz*, "Moral Education and Character Education: Their Relationship and Roles in Citizenship Education," *Journal of Moral Education* 35, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 495-518, doi:10.1080/03057240601012204.

²¹ Cassie B. Barlow, Mark Jordan, and William H. Hendrix, "Character Assessment: An Examination of Leadership Levels," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 17, no. 4 (June 1, 2003): 563-84, doi:10.1023/A:1023408403204.

to moral values and are aware of the values all the time; the values are engaged within their cognitive structure. Their cognition will develop their reasoning to be selective when making decisions about any values. Moral knowing is about having the ability to evaluate any situation.²² The situation should be evaluated so that the moral action taken is compatible with the situation itself. It is an assessment within the individual with their moral knowing. Also, the individual should have the ability to be empathetic to other people's situations. S/he should be aware of what others are thinking or their potential reactions. Moral knowing is also about understanding the necessity to be a moral person, and at the same time, to evaluate oneself.²³

The moral feeling is about how people anticipate and love the good. It consists of six dimensions. Firstly, the individual should have a conscience—his/her cognitive structure should distinguish between good and evil and work towards completing the good. His/her self-esteem should be entrenched in his/her mind so that s/he understands his/her self-better. S/he needs to love the good, be empathetic, and have good self-control that can prevent him/her from doing wrong to others or him/herself. Being humble is one way to help the individual evaluate and correct him/herself whenever necessary.²⁴

Moral action is a combination of moral knowing and moral feeling. It consists of three aspects: (1) the competence—where the individual can change from moral knowing and moral feeling to moral action, (2) the will—where the individual will give priority to implement the moral action before him/herself, and (3) manage to handle pressure and sinful inclinations, the habit—where the moral action becomes a routine.²⁵

Method of Teaching IRE

According to Tamuri & Ajuhary²⁶, Islamic education teaching and strategies stress Islamic religious teachers to be good role models. To achieve

²² Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Barlow, Jordan, and Hendrix, "Character Assessment."

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ab. Halim Tamuri and Mohamad Khairul Azman Ajuhary, "Amalan Pengajaran Guru Pendidikan Islam Berkesan Berteraskan Konsep Mu'allim," *JIAE: Journal of Islamic and Arabic Education* 2, no. 1 (2010): 43–56.

that, Islamic religious teachers must integrate action and theory synergistically in their teaching practice and the theories that he/she teaches. Both must go hand in hand. Secondly, Islamic religious teachers must understand the final objectives of his/her teaching, which is always to uphold the Truth illuminated from the Quran and Sunnah. Thirdly, Islamic religious teachers need to know and understand their students' capabilities so that he/she can always improvise and use appropriate teaching strategies. According to Tamuri et al.²⁷, most religious education teachers prefer to teach using the same lecture-teacher-centered method despite the strategies aligned here.

In teaching virtue at school, teachers use many strategies and techniques to deliver the students' curriculum.²⁸ Despite the strategy, the internalization of good virtue is still moderate among the students, to the extent that the differences of the internalization of good virtue are varied across gender and location.²⁹ The low internalization of virtue aligns with the teachers' low integration of good moral values within the classroom.³⁰ Without successful integration, the value is only an idea for students without fully grasping its conception. It is difficult for students to practice because the conception is not fully understood.

When teaching IRE in Malaysian schools, there are two important matters that we need to examine closely. Firstly, the element of Islamization emphasizes the integration of worldly matters tied to the hereafter since the conception of hereafter plays a significant role in IRE rather than only to excel for the exam. Education in the IRE curriculum is not only for material purposes but also on an Islamic basis. Education is tied to the religious basis because every good and honest intention and act that can be directed/intended/aimed

²⁷ Ab Halim Tamuri et al., "Religious Education and Ethical Attitude of Muslim Adolescents in Malaysia," *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal* 7, no. 4 (November 11, 2013): 257–74, doi:10.1108/METJ-03-2013-0008.

²⁸ Ab Halim Tamuri, "Islamic Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Teaching of Akhlāq in Malaysian Secondary Schools," *Journal of Moral Education* 36, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 371–86, doi:10.1080/03057240701553347.

²⁹ Khadijah Abdul Razak and Habsah Ismail, "The Internalization of Akhlaq among Selangor Secondary School Students," *Asian Social Science* 9, no. 16 (November 28, 2013): p133, doi:10.5539/ass.v9n16p133.

³⁰ Wan Zah Wan Ali et al., "Teachers' Belief Towards the Principles Underlying the National Philosophy of Education in Malaysia," *The International Journal of Learning: Annual Review* 12, no. 9 (2007): 91–104, doi:10.18848/1447-9494/CGP/v13i09/45058.

for Allah can be considered an act of worship/good purposes. The Islamic basis aims to achieve not just material gains but also for the hereafter. That is the main reason why there is always a need to integrate the elements of spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual in every layer of the curriculum, from development, teaching, and integration. It goes beyond accumulating learning experiences and meaningful interaction because it intends to produce a God-conscious individual who submits only to Allah. That is the ideal of Islamic Education in Malaysia. Al Attas, Baqir & Rahmat's conception of education aligns with high moral ethics because education is the act that can lead to a pure and sincere life.³¹

Current Practices

There are four kinds of Islamic education in Malaysia: the national schools, the religious, national high schools, the famous religious schools, and state religious schools. As the Malaysian federation system allows the states to support and establish their curriculum, many variations lie within the Islamic religious curriculum. The construction of a uniform Islamic religious curriculum is highly demanded.³² Balakrishnan has mentioned that currently, there is a lack of proper teachers' training program for ME.³³ She mentioned that most of the teachers are devoid of any proper training to teach ME. All 27 teachers' training colleges do not offer any significant courses to provide ME training.³⁴ She also mentioned that most of the ME teachers come from Islamic religious backgrounds. Therefore, there is a strong need to equip the instructors with proper training. Before developing any training program either for IRE or ME, it is necessary to compare the two subjects to include the necessary content for affecting the instructors' training. Halstead has mentioned that moral education is part of the Muslims' belief system, and little attempt has been made to distinguish between moral duty and religious duty.³⁵

³¹ Syed Muhammad al-Naquib Attas, Haidar Bagir, and Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Konsep Pendidikan Dalam Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Mizan, 1984).

³² N. Karimizadeha and M. Abolghasemib, "The Islamic and Religious Education in Malaysian Schools: From Past Up to Now," *International Academic Journal of Innovative Research* 3, no. 4 (2016): 19–29.

³³ Balakrishnan, "The Development of Moral Education in Malaysia."

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ J. Mark Halstead, "Islamic Values: A Distinctive Framework for Moral Education?," *Journal of Moral Education* 36, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 283–96, doi:10.1080/03057240701643056.

Research Method

This study's research design involved the nine selected teachers that teach religious education values and morals at public schools. They were selected based on my relationship with them as their instructor for Methodology of Teaching ME. They are selected purposely because the six religious teachers have experience teaching IRE classes to the students. Another three of them teach ME at schools. This study is qualitative, and selected teachers were chosen to illustrate the in-depth, dynamic, and complex teaching ME and IRE, so the case study was used.³⁶ Six of the teachers that teach ME at school were named Moral Teacher A, B, C, D, E, and F. The three IRE teachers were named Religious Teacher 1, Religious Teacher 2, and Religious Teacher 3.

There were eight open-ended interview questions about the methods of teaching religious studies and morals. The interviewees were interviewed two times each, with each interview lasting 45 minutes for each session. The interview data were analyzed by identifying emerging themes³⁷ reflected from our literature review representing teaching moral³⁸ and Islamic education.³⁹ The questions were designed to reveal any new methods or strategies that would enrich moral teaching and Islamic education. Quotations from the interviewees support the themes.

Based on the interviews, the findings are divided into two parts. Part A (theme A to G) conveys dominant teaching elements shared by ME and IRE. Parts B conveys elements that are not shared with ME and IRE. Part C conveys concerns coming from IRE teachers.

³⁶ Robert K. Yin., *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage publications, 2008).

³⁷ Glenn A. Bowen, "Naturalistic Inquiry and the Saturation Concept: A Research Note," *Qualitative Research* 8, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 137–52, doi:10.1177/1468794107085301.

³⁸ Barlow, Jordan, and Hendrix, "Character Assessment."

³⁹ Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia*; Ab. Halim Tamuri and Mohamad Khairul Azman Ajuhary, "Amalan Pengajaran Guru Pendidikan Islam Berkesan Berteraskan Konsep Mu'allim."

Part A: Shared Teaching Elements between ME and IRE

1. Theme A: Integration of Good Values

Fair values have to be integrated into teaching and learning, though it sounds complicated. Among the obvious obstacle is the segregation between moral classes for the non-Muslim and religious classes for Muslim students, where many good values within the moral and religious classes can be good universal values. Integration of good values needs teaching and learning to be connected to students' lives. (Moral Teacher A)

Integration of values must be supported with in-depth discussion for students in the classroom. The discussion among the students will help them to differentiate between good vs. bad. (Moral Teacher B)

Moral arguments in the classroom need to be associated with religious elements because Islam is not a dogma religion. It is an integration of morals and religion since Islam does not separate faith and reason. (Religious Teacher 3)

2. Theme B: Dynamic Assessments

Students cannot do well on the exam because the assessment is more on testing the memorization of facts and thinking to discern the wrong answers from the excellent answer. I wish we could do more on moral, practical, or tasks that involve living out the proper habits and practice to the community. (Moral Teacher A)

Parents must be involved in assessment/ students' homework because parents can see how well their kids practice what they learned inside the classes. At home, parents can monitor if the students practice and doing Islamic rituals (Religious Teacher 1)

Assessment must be direct yet combine elements from understanding what is ethical and not; the students' problems must be hands-on. It means the nature of learning is not teacher-centered, where teachers tell the students what they should do. (Moral Teacher E)

Exam-orientated testing for moral and religious education destroys the students' core values. They could not internalize the content they learn

into their core values and implement them daily because studying for what is tested is superficial from what they learned. (Religious Teacher 2)

3. Theme C: Open pedagogy

Moral and religious education do not need specific techniques for teaching. Having a good role model is essential. Moral and religious education are not ritualistic but rather how we adequately live our lives. (Religious Teacher 1)

Specific teaching techniques or strategies? What matters most is your classroom management skills. Furthermore, religion and morals are ingrained in our daily life. Anything could be a valuable teaching lesson. (Moral Teacher A)

4. Theme D: Cognitive engagement

Rational and cognitive engagement is essential because it is the basis for the child's self-esteem. It is imperative to develop self-esteem to easily integrate critical thinking in denying or rejecting friends' bad influence. Critical thinking itself is not enough to reject bad influences because peer pressure is extreme and powerful. However, self-esteem can. Self-esteem will strengthen core values. (Moral Teacher D)

There is a limit when it comes to the use of rational in the religious decision. Usually, we follow what has been decided by Quran and Sunnah [prophetic tradition] if the matter is related to faith. Jurisprudence can be varied since the field is vast and diverse. It is open to the *ijtihad* (read: independent reasoning) and interpretation. (Religious Teacher 3)

5. Theme E: Using Narratives from Folklore

I used different stories for different age levels. For kids, I used old folk stories or narratives from animals' stories. I emphasized the excellent qualities of the character inside the folk stories. Stories do amazing things in transferring good values. (Moral Teacher D)

6. Theme F: Values conceptualization

It takes a longer time to discuss values because everybody has different values. Values from one family to another family are different

because our students' families have different backgrounds and upbringings. However, it is not difficult to teach values, to explain to the students that they exist. However, for them to conceptualize it requires me to show short videos or children's stories because values are depicted in them. Students perceive the lesson as not complicated. (Moral Teacher E)

Teaching values are embedded in teaching perspectives. It is crucial for the students to feel safe in my classroom before sharing their opinions or being taught about an issue. There are times when the issue we discussed in the classroom; things got heated. I need to calm down the students and resolve the disagreement by becoming the arbitrator. The next time before any discussion, I set up a rule that the discussion is a dialogue, not a debate. (Moral Teacher B)

I clarify values by playing the devil's advocate. It opens a new perspective. The discussion will not heat because my students know that they are talking to me, understand that they are clarifying and discussing their perspectives, and the extent to which they are justifying and persuading me to voice their opinions. (Moral Teacher A)

7. Theme G: Scenarios, case study, and drama are purposeful and useful

I taught them through/by giving them scenarios. From the scenarios, I can question their choices of answers and interpret the scenarios from their perspectives. If I think their answers lack empathy or are demeaning, this is the time when I can help them to build their critical thinking so that they can make a better decision. (Moral Teacher D)

It is crucial to make sure the students understand the basic concept of these developmental stages. To that extent, I will provide a sample of the case study for every stage, and from there, they will turn the case study into drama. It takes two weeks. I can explain and examples for each stage, but I do not think they can easily understand the stages. During the preparation of a straightforward drama, I went from one group to another to communicate and see if they can understand the scenarios and what is beyond the scenarios. (Moral Teacher F)

Part B: Perspectives from IRE Teachers

1. Theme H: IRE classes do not discuss Moral Theory.

We do not have the exact Trait Theory. However, we have the classification of good and bad manners derived and analyzed from the Quran and Sunnah. The classification is done based on references from the books written by scholars of Islam. After that, there will be some lectures explaining manners. Discussion and questions and answer session comes later. (Religious Teacher 1)

2. The theme I: Non-existence of moral theories in IRE

The good qualities derived from the Prophet's stories in the Quran and Prophetic Narrations are discussed in a religious classroom. Usually, it is done by asking the students about the qualities. Usually, it is general unless I asked them specific questions. One time, I gave various stories related to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and I told them that I need a specific trait related to good leadership. The students could do that, but they needed longer time and groups. Grouping them is crucial because they can divide the work before putting them back together to get a general idea. The main thing is to be specific about whatever I need. (Religious Teacher 2)

3. Theme J: Values only can be accepted if it is according to Quran and Sunnah

Our values are clarified accordingly based on the Quran and Sunnah. When it comes to values that do not understand the Quran and Sunnah, we will discuss them first. If through discussion, we cannot reach an agreement, we will have the debate. If it is rejected because the values are not aligned with Quran and Sunnah, we will try to understand the reason and rationalize why the values are not aligned. (Religious Teacher 3)

If the values contradict, it is essential to rationalize that Islam is a wholly unique system. Within the unique system, the acceptance of the values must begin with understanding the issue. The issue is discussed by looking at the arguments. Either the arguments are a foundation/principle, for which there is no grey area or branches. For

example, the notion of homosexuality is not accepted in Islam, but it is impermissible to kill a person because of homosexuality just because this is against the principle of Islam. Comparing the two ways of life is an important exercise to show the uniqueness of religious education in Islam compared to Western morals and ethics. (Religious Teacher 2)

4. Theme K: Cognitive developmental stages no exist in IRE

We do not have cognitive developmental stages. There is no discussion on this topic specifically, however in religious education, we discuss good and lousy virtue, where it comes from, and how to develop and maintain the excellent virtue. We supply our students with many stories and case studies to give them the perspective that we want. (Religious Teacher 1)

Differences between IRE and ME

Curriculum-based on IRE is a manifestation of the philosophy of Islamization. The same cannot be said for ME, which is more generalist and more focused on values and ethics. Lacking the connection with Theistic elements makes ME secular. Muslims only conceptualize moral education as part of their religious belief. Islamic religious education does not acknowledge dualism; rather, knowledge related to worldly and religious affairs is inextricably intertwined in a practicing Muslim's education. For Muslims, moral education and religion are like two sides of the same coin. Moral behavior necessitates belief, and belief only gets sincere when it resulted in moral conduct.⁴⁰ Secondly, IRE is divided into three parts: teaching and learning of belief, religious rites, and rituals (Obligations, duties, and responsibilities prescribed in *shari'ah*) and virtues (*adab and akhlāq*) that Muslims are expected to practice in everyday life. On the other hand, ME is more focused on morality and virtue and heavily laden with applying rational choices.

Moreover, the way decision-making is prescribed and taught differs in IRE and ME. ME teaches several moral theories like Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory- a theory developed based on cognitive development that

⁴⁰ Halstead, "Islamic Values."

originated from Jean Piaget's observation on human socialization.⁴¹ Instead of discussing moral theories, IRE encourages the student to consult recommendations from *Qur'an* and *hadith* beforehand to make any decision. Research finding suggests that moral theories derived from *Qur'an* and *hadith* are non-existent in IRE instruction in Malaysia (theme H&I). From the research findings, we suggest that IRE could consider benefitting from some of the existing theories like Al Ghazali's Developmental Stages.

Among many IRE focuses, one focuses on developing the students' morals and values, where ME stands in the common ground with IRE. Lickona⁴² suggested "moral knowing"-understanding and knowing the good values- to be the first developmental step of ME. In IRE, moral knowledge is emphasized by purifying intention and knowing the action before taking any action. IRE is inclusive of teaching generating awareness of good values as awareness of good values helps distinguish between desired human behavior and animalistic instinct. Unlike many other creatures, the human can reflect on their action, can distinguish between right and wrong and this ability is defined as moral reasoning. IRE consents with moral feelings, which that emphasized the sincerity of doing good. Moral action is compatible with IRE because the ideal focus of IRE is to integrate information and theory into actions.

The argument that ME is not compatible with religious education is valid only if it is dogmatic. It happens because ME uses philosophical arguments to inculcate good values in the students. Thus, that makes ME null of the supernatural element in its core. It happens because it is a secular humanism approach that believes man (human) is independent of this universal without any existential elements (God), though the fact that the earliest development of ME came from biblical teachings.⁴³ However, the main issue here is not related to a metaphysical discussion about whether IRE allows philosophical arguments or rational interaction to reach agreement or consensus. Islamic

⁴¹ Mohammad Anwar Moheghi, Mohammad Ghorbanzadeh, and Jalil Abedi, "The Investigation and Criticism Moral Development Ideas of Kohlberg, Piaget and Gilligan," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 7, no. 2 (March 24, 2020): 362-74, doi:10.18415/ijmmu.v7i2.1516.

⁴² Lickona, "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education."

⁴³ Ali Syariati, *Humanisme Antara Islam Dan Mazhab Barat*, trans. Muhammad Afif (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1992).

education's openness can be seen mostly in jurisprudence matters or how the rulings are derived based on logic, only after an exhaustive search of the *Quran* and *hadith* verses.

Effect of The Difference of IRE and ME on Teaching and Learning

Based on the findings, we suggest that both IRE and ME could extensively teach moral reasoning. Yusoff and Hamzah have emphasized the importance of teaching moral reasoning in the context of a multi-racial, multicultural country.⁴⁴ For ME, moral reasoning can be taught through real-life case studies, and for IRE, the content in 'muamalat' (the broader elements besides rituals and faith in the Islamic religion, inclusive of civil acts and business transactions) that could help teachers and students to practice the elements of moral knowing and moral reasoning. For IRE, moral knowledge can also be taught by portraying Prophet Mohamad's (PBUH) character's multidimensionality. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is often represented in Islam as a holistic human being who was a prophet and a political leader, a ruler, and an intelligent human being. This teaching approach is congruent with Brady's method⁴⁵, where teachers teach predetermined qualities or traits of selected human personalities.

Findings from Theme A to G in Part suggest that both IRE and ME need to introduce elevated interaction and prolonged philosophical discourse among teachers and students to improve students' ability to distinguish right and wrong through critical thinking and reflective practices. From the philosophical discussion, teachers should cultivate rational thinking and intrinsic motivation for the deliberate practice of good morals and virtues. What is more, IRE highlights that students are imitative, and teachers have an essential role as a role model for the students? Mansor⁴⁶ has emphasized that teachers stand at the same level as parents in influencing students. Tamury cautioned about teachers who do not reflect a good role model while projecting

⁴⁴ Mohd Zailani Mohd Yusoff and Aswati Hamzah, "Direction of Moral Education Teacher to Enrich Character Education," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 3, no. 1 (January 28, 2015): 119–32, doi:10.26811/peuradeun.v3i1.58.

⁴⁵ Laurie Brady, "Strategies in Values Education: Horse or Cart?," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 33, no. 5 (October 1, 2008), doi:10.14221/ajte.2008v33n5.6.

⁴⁶ Asnuurien Najma Ahmad and Azlin Nurhaini Mansor, "Pengaruh Personaliti Guru Pendidikan Islam terhadap Pembentukan Peribadi Murid," 2013, 8.

bad attitudes in front of the students.⁴⁷ Suhid has noted that teachers have an essential role in influencing students.⁴⁸ He highlighted that excellent morals and teaching are inextricably linked together as teachers are always perceived to have good morals.

Conclusion

This research's primary objectives were to identify the differences between IRE and ME and determine how these differences affect IRE and ME teaching. The researchers have incorporated a qualitative research method to investigate the research problem. The research findings ingrained disparities inherent in these two subjects do the integration quite onerous and implausible job. Despite having similar aims of improving students' morals and values (which are complementary and universal), IRE and ME's differences make their integration complex and contentious.

The findings have implications for developing teachers' training programs for providing IRE teachers with the knowledge and understanding of human decision-making from moral, educational perspectives. Findings from Theme H- Theme K also imply that IRE curriculum content should equip the concept that every decision-making, mostly the matter of religion, should be guided by good critical thinking.

Balakrishnan has mentioned that collaboration between Muslims and non-Muslims through IRE and ME would bridge the two subjects, constructing a multicultural nation's dynamic.⁴⁹ She further recommended that IRE and ME's existing issues be brought to light to foster unity and good relations. This research's importance is that through comparison, this research has highlighted the disparities and similarities ingrained within the two subjects as an attempt to bridge the gap that exists between the two subjects, and therefore, it is one step towards the desired unity, harmony, and good relation.⁵⁰ Moreover, the research findings also inform future training program

⁴⁷ Tamuri, "Islamic Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Teaching of Akhlāq in Malaysian Secondary Schools."

⁴⁸ Mohamad Khairi Othman and Asmawati Suhid, "Peranan Sekolah dan Guru dalam Pembangunan Nilai Pelajar Menerusi Penerapan Nilai Murni: Satu Sorotan," *MALIM-SEA Journal of General Studies* 11 (2010): 14.

⁴⁹ Balakrishnan, "The Development of Moral Education in Malaysia."

⁵⁰ Ministry of Education, *Education in Malaysia*.

designers of the existing disparities between the two subjects, developing a comprehensive training program to provide proper training to IRE and ME instructors to optimize teaching and learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers can develop a comprehensive framework integrating similar aims and objectives of IRE and ME, eliminating possible contrasts to optimize learning and teaching of these two subjects. Secondly, future researchers can investigate curriculum oversaturation of the subjects focusing on teaching and learning of IRE and ME. Thirdly, teaching IRE and ME focusing on the effect of rational interaction and philosophical arguments on the cultivation of good moral values can be of interest to future researchers.

Limitation of Research

This research has a limitation in terms of sample size and time constrain. We have interviewed nine participants. The future researcher can include a broader sample size to conduct the research.

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