

# Values in Society and School: Social Ills among Teenagers from Islamic and Western Perspectives

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## Abstract

School is a formal institution that embodies a community's values. It educates and transmits values to ensure continuity and stability from one generation to another while preparing the youth with values that make them effective and relevant in the fast changing world. Some social problems start to develop when values taught in schools and those cherished by the community are at loggerheads. This paper examines the prevalent social ill among teenagers as a barrier to the growth and development of the nation. In an attempt to underscore the need for value education, the paper explores the relationship between values and education and then between value and character development from Islamic and Western perspectives. It then identifies some theories and opinions, along with the basic concepts of values to be addressed among the youth and teenagers. Finally, the paper suggests possible solutions for tackling social ill among teenagers.

## Introduction

Numerous studies have shown that social ill and moral problems are common among youth and teenagers at school and in society. The common argument given is that modern society and schools are becoming increasingly lawless, violent and undisciplined. These trends are rampant among teenagers. Statistics have shown that vandalism, violent crime, depression, suicide drug addiction and sexual activities have increased among teenagers. It was reported that majority of the youth since 1975 were engaged in the so-called drug-culture; the vastly increased use of psychedelic and other drugs used among the youth have been provided annually in national survey of high-school seniors conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research until 1991 (Bachman, Johnston, & O'Malley, 1990). Teenage pregnancy rate also rose significantly between 1950 and 1970 but then declined through most of the 1970s and 80s. However, the decline was reversed with a particularly sharp increase in young women between the age of fifteen and seventeen (Barringer 1990).

There is a general decline in respect for authority, politeness and good manners resulting in teenagers today being rude, using more bad language and caring less about their appearance and dress than ever before. Finally, from an Islamic perspective, decreasing interest in religion and religious education in particular is often held up as a contributory factor to the alleged moral

disease. Islam provides clear answers to questions about right and wrong attitudes. Nevertheless, nowadays, the emphasis on religion in schools has diminished to the point that it is difficult in practice to detect anything one could count as 'religious' in many educational institutions. Thus, moral vacuum has been created in the classroom.

When one asks about the role of teachers, the typical answers by many will be to pass knowledge or to develop children/youth's intellectual abilities or to prepare them for future development. On the other hand, when allegations of falling educational standards arose, teachers are likely to be blamed. Thus, they are criticized for not doing their job properly. Therefore, for many people in society, falling standards brings to mind falling in standards of behaviour and conduct rather than falling in only intellectual attainment. So to judge from public opinion in given certain answers, teachers and parents are to be held responsible for this kind of decline. It is argued that institutional education sectors should teach teenagers not only to be knowledgeable but also to be "good" (the highest forms of behaviours and conducts). This could be discharged to the youth in many ways as outlined in the following sections.

### **Education and Values**

The relationship between values and education is complex and has been well examined in the literature. There has been an emphasis on the particular methods of teaching values, school syllabus and the way in which schools organize extra-curricular activities, which contribute to the values orientation within a school. It seemed that school teachers used to pay more attention to the subject they were teaching rather than values needed to be inculcated in the students. There is some agreement on distinctive general societal values, general pedagogic values and subject particular values (Clarkson, Bishop, FitzSimons, & Seah, 2000; Halstead & Taylor, 2000). The general educational values are concerned with approaches to learning. Specific values are those values and principles, which form the basis of a school subject as a basis of knowledge and a set of agreed procedures (White, 1982).

Moreover, there is a comprehensive literature on the issues investigating the role of education in values and moral development in students, the structure and sequences of the curriculum for moral development and teachers' moral reflective practices. Notwithstanding, little attention has been paid to how well curriculum incorporates moral values, how it supports values integration, or the ways in which value orientation may be integrated into classroom practices. Haydon (1997) holds the view that much of the literature on moral and values education were questionable.

Recently, there has been awareness raised by educators to turn back to a curriculum that literally focuses on moral and values education. The development of moral and character in students is described as a fundamental role of education and a means to curb the rise in moral problems and immoral behaviour that is the result of our schools and society de-moralizing (Wynne & Ryan, 1997). The advocates of integrating moral and values education recommend that if the schools collaborate with parents and other social institutions, it will enhance good standard of ethical and social values (Wynne & Ryan, 1997).

## Values Education and Character Development: Western Conception

The concept of value and character education has become a common theme of Education in many Western countries. The Citizenship, Civic and Moral Education curricula in different countries have developed over the past years to address various moral, social and political matters. A definition of Value education is a starting point to the understanding of the Western conception. Halstead & Taylor (2000) defines value as the doctrine and fundamental belief which act as overall guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good or desirable. While value education, according to Powney, Cullen, Schlapp, Glissov, Johnstone, and Munn (1995), is the process by which people transmit values to others. Robb (1998) gives a comprehensive definition of value education as follows:

Value education is an activity which can take place in any organisation during which people are assisted by others, who may be older, in authority or more experienced, to make explicit those values underlying their own behaviour, to assess the effectiveness of these values and associated behaviour for their own and others' long term well-being and to reflect on and acquire other values and behaviour which they themselves realise are more effective for long term well-being of self and others (p, 4).

Based on this definition, "values education" is thus the education of children about the values which are the basic principles for living an ideal life. In general, Values education is the processes that drive individual value of what is suitable for life.

While character education on the other hand as described by the United States Army JROTC Overview (2012, p. 1) is a national movement to create schools that foster ethical, responsible and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character. Berkowitz (1998) described character education as "the intentional intervention to promote the formation of any or all aspects of moral functioning of individuals" (p, 3). Character education is also described as "an attempt to prepare individuals to make ethical judgments and to act on them, that is, to do what one thinks ought to be done" (Howard, Berkowitz, & Schaeffer, 2004, p. 198).

Accordingly, Lickona (1997) defines character education as "the intentional, proactive effort to develop good character" (p. 46). He explains further that the virtues that make up a good character are good for the individual and the community. Character education is, therefore, the process of teaching children virtues and moral habits that will help them develop the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of incontrovertible value to their society. Consequently, character education is to provide students with shared values such as respect, honesty, fairness, compassion, responsibility, civility, courage and kindness. Character education also attempts to model and teach students positive character and help students grow socially, morally and academically by imbuing character development into every aspect of education and the school curriculum.

Additionally, values education has been, in some form, a general goal of public schooling in every society. Education is a moral enterprise. Character building of students is the pivotal goal of education all over the world. There is a general agreement that the development of good

values, character building and learning of ethical and moral values are the overarching goal of education (Huitt, 2000; Power, 1997). The values, such as respect, integrity and justice, honesty and trustworthiness, tolerance, fairness, responsibility, hard work, civil rights, truthfulness, and a responsible use of resources are extremely important in shaping the personality features of an individual and for the development of the nation.

Consequently, the task of facilitating students' value and character education has been so important that teachers, schools and communities have been specifically assigned that duty. Tyler (1949) categorised some topics that can be addressed in values education as: Moral and Character development, Spiritual development, Religious education, Citizenship education, personal development, social development and cultural development. These values are believed to be essential factors in human relationship in the society. According to Krause, Bochner, and Duchesne (2003) both individuals and communities share value of respect for self and others, concern for the common good, honesty, fairness and an appreciation of the company of others.

Hence, value cannot be learned in seclusion, it is a goal believed impossible to achieve without the help of others (Narvaez, 2006). Therefore, a lot of what the students learn needs to be taught to them by adults. For that reason, children need to be taught and learn how to live harmoniously in the society from their parents, school, teacher and community. As long as what they are being taught is correct and proper and applied it to their daily life, they will provide a better future for their families and countries. In short, education has the power to improve their lives and help them contribute to the development of their society and make the world a better place to live.

### **Moral and Character Development: Islamic Perspective**

Islamic culture covers all aspects of life and deals with all thoughts and concepts. Social relation is one of these concepts which Islam focuses on as a means of development for individuals as well as for the *Ummah*. The Glorious Qur'ān contains numerous instructions on ethical character and social behaviour for the well-being of humanity. An evidence of this in the Glorious Qur'ān is found in where Allah (SWT) says:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things) (49:13).

This Qur'ānic verse highlights that Allah (SWT) lays excellent traditions for the equitable and considerate manners and encourages people to uphold dignity and kindness. In effect, if the teaching of this Qur'ānic verse is observed it will build a society in which there would be no room for oppression and injustice. Also, Islamic principles are based on belief and righteousness. Allah (SWT) in this respect says in the Glorious Qur'ān which says: Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend (Q. 4:125).

According to this Qur'ān injunction, man has double responsibility to discharge. The first is his duty to his Creator, and the second is his responsibility towards fellow human beings which can be regarded as social responsibility. Hence, belief is the bedrock of religion and practice is the result of belief. This is the Islamic etiquette. Allah taught these manners to His believing servants and commanded them to preserve and abide by it.

Furthermore, for Muslims, faith is an attribute of the heart that cannot be observed outwardly, it needs to be actualized in one's actions. One of the signs to show that one has strong belief and submit himself to the disposition of Allah (SWT) is that he willingly submits himself to all religious duties. The faithful ones learn the details of the kind of life that will be pleasing to Allah (SWT) as contained in the Glorious Qur'ān. Thus, they determine the kind of moral values that would guide them to attain Allah's pleasure. They know what is lawful and what is unlawful. In Sūrat al-Ra'd 13: 29, Allah (SWT) says, "For those who believe and work righteousness is (every) blessedness, and a beautiful place of (final) return".

It is obvious that Allah (SWT) sent the Glorious Qur'ān for the purpose of establishing a satisfactory social order on earth. As a result, the Muslim community is then formulated by this ideology, Islam, whose aim is to command good and forbid evils. In this respect the Qur'ān says, "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity", (Q. 3: 104).

In this same trend other verses says: The Believers, men and women, are protectors of one another: they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise, (Q. 9:71). In this connection, Mawdudi (1948) stated,

Only those societies have been considered worthy of honour, which have possessed the virtues of organisation, discipline, mutual affection and compassion and which have established a social order based on justice, freedom and equality. Disorganisation, indiscipline, anarchy, disunity, injustice and social privilege have always been considered manifestations of decay and disintegration in a society. Robbery, murder, larceny, adultery and corruption have always been condemned. Slander and blackmail have never been considered healthy social activities (p. 12).

Moreover, Allah (SWT) sent the final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), to teach the Qur'ān to mankind and to serve as a model teacher for all to learn from until the last day. The Qur'ān says:

Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious (Q. 4:36).

For Muslims the relationship between values and practice lies at the very heart of their way of life. In this respect, Tauhidi (2001) aptly explains that being a pious Muslim requires that one's faith be reflected in one's daily practice and moral conduct with other people. In this regard,

Allah (SWT) in the Glorious Qur'ān provides man with light and vision to human consciousness, ethical and moral code for living a righteous and purposeful life. At several places in the Glorious Qur'ān Allah (SWT) lay down the rule for an integrated and holistic approach to life. It is then obvious that Islam offers a complete coordination of the spiritual and practical aspects of life, and lays down a simple and efficient code and demands righteousness well within the realm of practicability.

### **Why Do We Need Moral and Character Education?**

Value and character education have become one of the major focuses of both Western and Islamic education. Presently, every society is living in an increasingly globalizing environment. Although the new era has turned the world into a single global village, it has its own threat. As a result of globalization, many societies are facing untold problems of value disorientation, political unrest, economic imbalance, and cultural and environmental disorder. There is presently a renewed concern about introducing some form of moral and value education at all levels of education. So, to meet the challenges in the new era, there is a definite need for the education imparted to children at all levels of education to focus on molding the character of the students and prepare them to face social challenges in this globalized world.

Islam lays emphasis on manners and on the proper way to deal with others. Individual manner and behaviour are central to Islamic teachings. While faith is the most important aspect of human life as a whole in Islam, manner and behaviour are the authentication of a sound faith. The Prophet is reported to have said, "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself" (al-Bukhārī, 2:12). That means that faith without manner is wanting. The Qur'ān says: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)" (9:119). In this Qur'ānic verse, Allah commands the believers to do righteousness, speak truthfulness and forbid all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion. It is evident that Allah used these words to show the believer the importance of good manners and decency in carrying out their religious duty.

The Prophet (SAW) said: "Modesty is part of Faith" (Muslim, 1:61)". He (saw) in another tradition says: "Indeed, modesty and Iman are companions. When one of them is lifted, the other leaves as well," (al-Bayhaqī, 2003, *ḥadīth* 7330). The Prophet (SAW) also says: "Every deen has an innate character. The character of Islam is modesty" (Al-Muwatta', 47:9). In essence, faith without ethical values is considered as imperfect, the belief must manifest in the deeds. The prophet (SAW) says: "Verily, the believers with the most complete faith are those with the most excellent character and who are most kind to their family." (Tirmidhī, 40:7). Therefore, the believers should always be in the best manner and good ethical values. Islam forbids any action that harm oneself or others or deprived others of their right. In this connection, the Qur'ān says, "You are the best of people, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah..." (3: 110).

Furthermore, the way we behave is the major factor in how people perceived and accept our teaching. Muslims must act in accordance with the principles and teachings of the Islamic faith; this is because any deed or action of a Muslim that is not based on Islam gives a wrong image of

Islam. Also, the Qur'ān provides a great insight into human nature and the type of behavior that Allah expects of believers as His representatives on earth.

Besides, the return of moral and character education to the forefront is what it takes to deal with modern day alarming trends in every society. As observed by Koh (2012), major global problems such as the case of terrorism and the consequences of the economic imbalance have raised interest in the development of morality and the promotion of general values. The resurgence of interest in moral education has also motivated politicians and educators who support the view that the principal obligation of public schooling is moral development (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Hence, societies also develop and sustain relationships by development of moral values. In order to live happily and harmoniously in a society, every individual in the society should consider the right and dignity of others. For instance, the founders of the American democracy claim that moral education is essential for the growth and development of a democratic nation because the people must possess the appropriate character to build a free, just and egalitarian society.

Without values and moral education, individual in society may face serious problems particularly in the social aspect of life and perhaps, lead an unhealthy life. Kohlberg (2005) believes that a morally developed individual may be expected to act in accordance with moral principles. This is based on the notion that one's moral judgment would determine his or her moral action (Bay & Greenberg, 2001; Blasi, 1980).

In a nutshell, it is the time to embed moral values and ethics in the education system to combat moral dilemmas among youth and teenagers. Both Western and Islamic philosophy have a moral ethos embodied in rules, traditional and religious values and sub-values to described the meaning of the main values and the best approach to inculcate those values in the students. The purpose of every education was to train good and virtuous citizens (Skinner, 2004). Therefore, the focus of educators in both conventional and religious education should be on moral and character development. However, presently, educators have shifted away from a moral focus in education to an academic focus. Thus, educators prioritize academic above moral teaching (Million, 2012).

Hence, moral and values education is more than mere reading and writing. It covers several activities, ranging from training in environmental and physical health, personal hygiene, manners, proper social conduct, civic rights and duties to aesthetic and also religious training (Seetharam, 2004). Therefore, the school, teachers, educators, and other various stakeholders are expected to pay more attention to procuring knowledge, attitude and skills related to recognition of cultural values, dignity of individuals, social harmony, peace, compassion and humility, appreciation of the world's cultural heritage, respect for and sharing of common resources, compassion, trust, courage, acceptance and other values that will prepare them to lead a full life. Consequently, the task for the scholars and educators now is to find a way to bring back values and character education to the forefront.

### **Main Approaches to Moral Education**

Moral development is a topic of concern in the field of education and psychology. According to Santrock (2008, p. 279) "Moral development is the development that involves thoughts, feelings,

and actions regarding the rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people.” The theory was developed based on the fundamental belief in the equality of men, sense of communicating, freedom, sharing things with others, and real love. Education is believed to contain an essential moral component, and some approaches have emerged in the literature. These include value transmission, value clarification development of moral reasoning and value across the curriculum, personal and social education.

#### **(a) Value Transmission**

It covers the everyday procedures that educators adopt to influence teenagers and children’s beliefs and behaviour. The value transmission here can be reflected in the teacher’s supports of certain values by their encouragement and discouragement of certain forms of conduct. What teachers or parents smile indicates the importance he/she places upon the values embedded in particular behaviour. According to Musgrave (1978), “the everyday incidents of school life will enable the teacher to impress upon the importance of punctuality, of good manners and language, of cleanliness and neatness, of cheerful obedience to duty and respect for others” (pp.7-8).

#### **(b) Value Clarification**

This approach has made a considerable impact in America and Canada in recent years. The aim is to allow individual pupil to get in touch with his values, to bring them to the surface and to reflect upon them (Purpel & Ryan, 1976).

#### **(c) Development of Moral Reasoning**

According to Kohlberg (1984), our reasoning about moral situation gradually becomes more complex and sophisticated as one moves from Pre-conventional level (where teenagers might judge the rightness or wrongness of an action in terms of reward or punishment it attracts) to the Conventional level (where the demands of rules and authority become the overriding moral criterion). In this approach, what determines the level of moral development a teenager is at is not the particular action he judges to be appropriate or inappropriate, but his reasons for so deciding (Kohlberg, 1984). However, in his latest work, Kohlberg changed his mind about the implication of his theory for moral education. He contends that moral education should deal with concrete morality in a school world.

#### **(d) Values across the Curriculum**

This approach emphasizes that moral education can be seen in some respect as distinct, and are to be undertaken in addition to institution curricular concerns. Hence, the teaching of all subject areas should include moral education. It argues that school subjects should possess a moral dimension of some kind and that thorough the subjects, teaching will accordingly offer a more natural and appropriate medium for moral education.

There are two main objections to this approach: (a) there is no guarantee that all teachers in schools will pay sufficient attention to the moral dimension of the subject they are teaching and



(b) it is arguable that moral education requires as much specialist knowledge and methodological expertise as any other subject (Roger, 1988).

### **(e) Moral across Personal and Social Education**

'Personal' and 'social' seem to be more acceptable adjectives than moral at present time. The approach implies that schools/institutions should design courses which contribute to personal and social development. The aim is that the curriculum should speak of personal and social disciplines in a broader sense. Assessment of performance should be set up to monitor the children's personal and social controls.

### **Basic Concepts of Values to be addressed among Teenagers**

#### ***Goodness and Morality:***

Moral goodness is the type of goodness that is to be pinned down in teenagers, which involves certain level of standards. The goodness here is different from somebody being good at doing something. The kind of moral values that should be embedded in children or teenagers invites no further explanation. For example, if one says that Muhammad is a good boy, it means that he possesses moral goodness relating to the best characters and behaviour rather than good at doing something or bad in others.

#### **i. Forms of Morality and Moral Education.**

These refer to the different ways in which moral goodness is being spelled out. Some have concentrated upon types languages in which moral statements are made. Accordingly, there is a need to work out the rules and structure of the moral language to be inculcated into the mind of teenagers. Moral language must be tightly bound up with people's actions. Others have to do with moral choice and reasoning by which teenagers may arrive at moral conclusion over certain acts and behaviours. From this point, forms of morality may reflect prescriptivism or motivism in nature.

#### **ii. The Content of Morality and Moral Education**

These have to do with rules and regulation that is guiding behaviour and action undertaken by individual teenagers in both school and society. The question of content in morality is best described by focusing upon the subject of moral rules and principles. For instance, one may argue that morality is mainly concerned with justice, charity, chastity, honesty, or truthfulness, in each case one is referring to a rule or principle whose function is to guide conduct and to help resolve problems about what ought to be done by teenagers. In other words, any content-based approach to moral education will aim at teaching a particular set of rules and principles to children and teenagers. Finally, the set of norms and principles should be followed by justification upon which they are derived. The contents should, therefore, cover value derived from authority, nature, human welfare and reason.

## **Tackling Social Ills among Teenager**

Muslims' Iman as a whole have been affected by the process of modernization and globalization. Muslim teenagers' Iman have become weak and thus opened the floor for the satanic agency to manipulate their mind. This became possible as a result of the negligence attitude towards the teaching of Islam. Another factor that paves the way for their evil in their minds is the lack of clear knowledge about Islam. This does not imply that they are not knowledgeable, but they need to explore the teaching of Islam more thoroughly and holistically and then put the outcome knowledge into practice in their daily activities. By doing this, evils will have no space in the society. Muslims of today are lagging behind in research to add to what has been laid down in the early work of Islamic scholars or think of new development in the Islamic law that will be appropriate and applicable in our contemporary context of pluralism.

Another factor that gives way to the evil agent in teenagers is the lack of propagation of Islamic teaching. The scholars and leaders of Islam fail to disseminate the message of the teaching of Islam to the new generations of Muslim. As a result, Satan took advantage to manipulate the Muslim young ones.

In lieu of the above mentioned issues, it is the duty of both individuals and the society, especially the parents, teachers, and the leaders of the society, to always remind and advise youth that they must protect and preserve their own Islamic value of moral conducts. They should motivate the youth to pursue the sublime virtue of honesty, decency, truthfulness, justice, sacrifice, respect each other, accountability and responsibility in the process of acquiring western education.

## **Conclusion**

Education should not be reduced to the memorization of abstract concepts and formulas. Character education to inculcate moral values is equally important. It is primarily meant to shape human characters for better citizenry. Character education will help to address social maladies faced by the teenagers. This study has addressed the duty of schools and society towards moral and character education.

Since society is a stable union of two or more people for a common goal, people are not just rational animals but also social beings interacting on certain set of actions and behaviors. These distinctions are derived from the natural law. Adults, teenagers, and even children have natural desire and need for one another. These can be realized through proper behaviour and dealing with each other based on common values. The channels through which moral characters could be communicated to and impacted upon children and teenagers are schools and society. That will let children and teenagers realize from the very beginning the importance of moral education and its relevance to their overall performance in school and society. It, therefore, becomes imperative to re-examine the moral education being imparted to teenagers be it from Western or Islamic perspective. More importantly, the curriculum of education should be re-designed to embrace moral dimension in every subject.

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