

Storytelling and Story Reading: A Catalyst for Inculcate Moral Values and Ethics among Preschoolers

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Abstract

Value needs to be inculcate since young age to form a human personality which rooted in moral and ethics. Teachers have to deal with a variety of teaching methods and pedagogy that emphasizes the concept of 'student-edutainment' in the process of teaching and learning. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the use of storytelling and story reading to inculcate moral values and ethics among preschool children. Data collected qualitatively using focus group interviews, observations, document analysis (children's creative painting) and video recording. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis using *NVivo software version 10.0*. The result shows, storytelling and story reading methods capable of fostering moral values such as helping, loving and well behaved. In addition, aspects such as regulation of the code of ethics, social ethics, human relations, well-mannered and courteous are the practice of pre-school children. The results of this study can build a reference database for the kindergarten teachers, Development Research Centre of the National Child (CDRC), parents and the community.

Keywords: Story telling; Story Reading; Moral values; Ethics; Preschoolers

Introduction

Pre-school education is a first experience in the world of schooling to a child. Preschool meaningful learning experience will encourage and able to provide them with the skills, confidence and a positive attitude. All of these skills are important in preparing them for entering formal schooling and lifelong learning (Morni, 2002). Therefore, pre-school education is a basic education that is essential for the development of thinking, character, personality, morality and behavior of a person. According to Dewey (1915; 1947), children's learning experience must be led by the teacher by create a situation or condition that is conducive to their physical and mental development.

Early education is emphasized because, in this stage the child directly or indirectly will adapt everything that happens around them. Each input and teaching will be more easily absorbed in the early stages. According to Bandura (1977; 1986), children learn through 'imitation',

from their social environment. In fact, the process of imitation of children from parents, adults and teachers deemed to be an important source for the development of children's morality. Aspects of moral and ethical values among pre-school children is the current demands for the virtuous citizen (Rashid, 2001). Along with that, a variety of techniques, strategies and methods used by parents, guardians and teachers to assist in the development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor of preschoolers.

Therefore, it is good to fertilize values in formal education and it should implemented in preschool education. Through the National Key Result Areas (NKRA), the government has given priority to provide the best education starting from the basic level of preschool (Majzub, 2003). Therefore, pre-school education began to be used as part of the national education system in the mainstream. Then infrastructure facilities and strengthening of the teaching and learning of pre-school education become the important demands of the country (Abdullah, 2004).

Meanwhile, through the Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025) the ministry has identified eleven shifts to transform our education system. The third shift in this transformation is to produce Malaysian citizens who have moral and ethical values. Therefore, education is a major contributor to human capital, and become a vehicle for social and economic development. Then the inculcation of moral values and ethics in the minds of children, yet to start from kindergarten (Rahmat, 2006). Like the saying, "while young, the bamboo can be easily bent".

The practice of using storybooks or narrative method to inculcate moral values among children has been practiced by all the peoples of the world. Stories such as the Ramayana of Hindu culture and stories by Mulla Nasrudin from Sufi tradition of Islam has long been used to give moral lessons to children (Winston, 1988; 1999). Most kids already know the stories and the moral of the story before they go to school. These stories are told to children by adults orally. Children also hear bed time stories from their parents as entertainment for leisure (Ishak, 2005). According to Bruner (1990), the content of the stories made up by children themselves can reveal a lot about their perception of the world and attitudes towards the surrounding world.

The old Malay community have created and use stories like *Pak Pandir*, *Lebai Malang*, *Si Luncai*, *Mat Jenin*, *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah* and *Sang Kancil* (just some examples) as a means of social criticism for shaping character, behavior, norms and morality of individuals in conjunction with the public (Osman, 1991). A study by Nassbaum (1990), also shows the importance of storytelling as an effective method in developing the moral imagination. Clearly, the relationship between the story or narrative methods in applying moral lessons to children can not be out in the cold (MacIntyre, 1981). The inculcation of moral values and ethics is best done since childhood, because according to Piaget (1951; 1999), children aged 2 to 8 years old began to build the concept and identity from behavior of animated characters and metaphors of nature.

Storytelling and story book reading is widely recommended in educational setting. It is common for teachers to read stories to young preschoolers and primary school students in class. Sometimes, teachers who enjoy storytelling choose to integrate storytelling into their classroom routine, believing that their students might benefit from it. According to Sobol (1999), the ancient art of oral storytelling has experienced a resurgence in popularity among child audiences as well as adult audiences. In addition, to its entertainment value, some proponents of storytelling and story book reading believe that, storytelling and story reading may have considerable potential as an educational tool (Alna, 1999).

Meanwhile, Deniston-Trochta (2003), point out classroom storytelling and story reading has a ragtag reputation among school teachers. One reason for this reputation is because of a limited research on classroom storytelling and story reading method. Therefore, in this study, storytelling and story reading has been used as an educative tool to inculcate moral values and ethics among preschool children. Story-telling and story reading has been used in this study in three phases, involved children from a kindergarten. Phase I, is where the preschoolers listen to the story. Phase II, is reading the story and phase III, is activity conducted after the story telling session by the teacher.

Review of Literature

In this section, a number of studies related to storytelling and story reading on the effects of developing moral values and ethics are explored. The educational value of storytelling and story reading is widely accepted. Reading exiting stories to children might in turn get children excited about learning to read books for themselves. However, storytelling and story reading has been demonstrated to be beneficial to children in a variety of others ways as well (Gallets, 2005).

Several experimental studies by Morrow (1996), found that children in the treatment groups produce higher scores in the areas of vocabulary, story comprehension and decoding compare to the children in the control groups who are not involve in storytelling and story reading. According to Snow (1983), reading story books and share stories with children, is the most studied format for language learning. Reading story books, help children develop language skills, language abilities and intervention goals. In addition, to helping children learn to decode meaning and use language, storytelling and story reading is believed to have many other benefits.

Storytelling is also believed to have social benefits. According to Winston (1998), story reading encourages children to explore their thoughts and feelings. They explains that reading stories can also help children learn to respect for the idea of others and encourage the children to reflect on different points of view. Meanwhile, Goldberg (2005), found a positive correlation between storytelling, story reading and overall school achievement. Children can benefit from listening to storytelling and it provides opportunity for building a social skills. Therefore, both storytelling and story reading, increasingly recognized as having important theoretical and practical implications; and may also help children to become more understanding citizens (Gallets, 2005).

Baker and Greene (1977), have described storytelling as not the presentation of a memorized script but rather as an interaction between teller and listener. Storytelling is a best mutual creation. This description seems to be consistent with Roney (1996), who says that storytelling can be valuable in the classroom because it is co-creative and interactive. Listening to storytelling requires more imagination. According to Alna (1999), storytelling naturally promotes the engagement of the individual imagination and also the active involvement of the listeners as partners in the creation of the story.

Ellis (1997), says that "by using storytelling in the classroom teachers can fulfill many requirements at once" (p.21). He goes on to say that storytelling is useful because it can help students develop consistent expressions, facial and body expressions. This seems to make perfect sense because passing on cultural heritage and traditions has always occurred through the telling of stories. Erickson (1995), found that she could use storytelling to get students excited about art and the history of art. Hamilton and Weiss (1993), use storytelling to help

children develop confidence, poise and love of language, attitude of appreciation and respect.

Roney (1996), claim that humans need to tell their personal stories in order to make sense of their own lives. All the people do this by telling stories about their own experiences, and through that, defining their personal beliefs or group membership. Instead, shared stories also make groups coherent and help to build community in small groups (Bauman, 1986). Similarly, stories and narratives are often used to establish shared understandings to convey culturally significant messages (Nelson, 1996) and moral values (Noddings & Witherell, 1991). Other educators see storytelling as a possible strategy for meaningful learning that help students understand different perspectives and complexities involved in problem-solving and social relationship (Egan, 1986).

Narrative opportunities in art include the stories that students have about their own art and interpretations of the artwork itself (Zander, 2007). Kellman (1995), explain that, for young children "art making and its narrative description of the here and now allows children to share the day-to-day details of their lives with others" (p.19). When children draw, they are using images to tell about themselves, their interests, their perspectives on the world as well as to confront or re-interpret events which may have left them feeling out of control. The act of drawing and sharing that drawing with an adult helped him separate fantasy from reality and put him/her back in control. A teacher can underscore the power of stories inherent in works of art when they (teacher) acts as a guide and mentor to help students understand their work from a new perspective (Zander, 2007).

According to Tappan and Brown (1989), stories as an approach to develop and form moral sensitivity among children is slowly dying in our modern education system. Bruner (1986) agrees that story-telling and use of stories is an effective way to transform moral experiences to moral knowledge. When students are actively engaged in listening the story and involved in a story telling, then a values and virtues is most likely to occur (Berkowitz & Oser, 1985). One of the contemporary approaches to moral education is the use of stories and narratives to teach values and virtues (Vitz, 1990). These story books is useful source that provides various arguments for solving moral dilemmas (Vitz, 1990). Tappan and Brown (1989), support the same view, considering that, children's storytelling creates authorship of moral choices when the story told is able to lead to a real moral experience. Stories provide powerful models for the moral formation of the young (Tappan, 1998).

Methodology

Research Design

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2012) in a form of a single case study (Yin, 2009). Data was collected from various resources such as observation, group interviews, individual interviews and document analysis for the triangulation process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). The collection of more data from various sources is better to understand a phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). Thus, researchers have used a variety of research instruments such as the protocol of observation, interviews and document protocols such as painting and a worksheet produced by children (Creswell, 2012). The research design took into consideration children psychology as all participants were below seven years of age. Each research instrument chosen was modified and simplified to suit the young respondents. The duration for data collection was also different and suited the mental capacity of each child as well as their moods and attention span.

Participants

Research participants were chosen based on purposive sampling as advocated by Richards and Morse (2007) and Creswell (2012). Participants were selected based on criteria that they have rich information (Patton, 2002). The gatekeepers of the preschool who were the principal and the teachers teaching the preschoolers had a meeting with researchers and understood why we requested for a mix group of boys and girls and of different ethnic children. Seven participants were selected between the age of five and six. Refer to Table 1. All the Study participants were involved in three phases for the purpose of collecting data, Phase I (phase hear stories), Phase II (phase read the story) and Phase III (phase covers activities such as story after story telling, drawing and acting).

Table 1:

Respondents Profile

No	Name (Pseudonym)	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
1	Afi	Boy	5 years	Malay	Lecturer	Surveyor
2	Ariz	Boy	6 years	Malay	IT Officer	Post doc student
3	Aiman	Boy	5 years	Malay	Administrator	Nurse
4	Ruby	Girl	6 years	Indian	Engineer	Radiation Therapist
5	Nancy	Girl	5 years	Indian	Engineer	Radiation Therapist
6	Man	Boy	6 years	Malay	Consultant	Lecturer
7	Zah	Boy	5 years	Arabic	Senior Lecturer	Housewife

Analysis of Data

The thematic approach, as introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used for data analysis. With the thematic approach, the coding scheme was initially guided by the research questions which provided the main themes and key coding. However, the possibilities of other emerging themes that might emerge from the data were also accepted. Data from various sources and transcription were codified into concepts, sub-themes and themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data was compiled according to the order based on the breakdown of data into simple categories. Two phases of coding (open coding and axial coding) were used in the process of identifying correlates of data into an idea, category and theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The inductive-deductive cycle of thinking constantly happened in our data analysis process in order to derive the most valid codes and concepts to answer the research questions. Findings were categorized according to several themes.

Findings and Discussion

Results show storytelling techniques can inculcate moral values and ethics among preschool children. Data from all three sources, namely, the observation, interviews and document (children's drawings) were analyzed to categorize the various sub-themes to main themes. A

total of three moral practices that are consistent with the values and norms of society were identified in this study. The three moral practices are helping each other, love and well-mannered. In addition, two themes for code of ethics was generated were social ethics and human relations and courtesy. Analysis of data to answer these themes presented in the form of descriptive analysis.

Help each other

Observational data indicate, during phase III (activity after the story), children love to help friends to give suggestions about colors they should be chosen for coloring the characters of the story. They are even, lend their color pencils to friends who do not have color pencils to draw. Children as well, helping others to find a good story books. The practice of mutual assistance is also evident in the phase I (listening to the story), when they helped a friend who did not know how to answer teacher questions about the characters in the story. Children also, clearly provide aid to friends regardless of gender, skin color and race. The practice of mutual assistance between them is also evident, when they help their friends read the words that are not understood by their friends while reading a story in phase II. [PTS / Vis / 03.3.16] & [RV4 / 3.3.16]

In the meantime, the interview data also show the practice of helping their fellow friends. Children said that they need to help friends because it is good practice set out by teachers through their stories heard. Co-operation and helping one another is very clear among participants. They are very helpful to their group members. Here, is an interviews conducted by the researchers to children who complete re-enact the story of Princess Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in phase III (activity after the storytelling).

Researcher: What character do you hold in the cast?

Participant 3: Third Dwarves .

Researcher: Why do you help princess Snow White?

Participant 3: Princess Snow hungry ... I ask grandma gave apple.

Researcher: Why do you think we should help people?

Participant 3: Yes ... we have to help people because the teacher said it is good things to do.

Researcher: I see you helped to put the face mask (mask), for your friend. Why you help him?

Participant 4: Because he is my friend ... I help him to put his mask. He do not know how to put.

Researcher: In the cast I notice that you hold your grandmother's hand to cross over the street. Why you do that?

Participant 5: I help grandma ... because she is old ...I have to hold her hand..

Researcher: Do you think, helping people is a good attitude?

Participant 5: Yesgood ... good attitude.

[TBKF / Fai / 10.03.16]

Love

Analysis of the three sources of data (observations, interviews and document analysis) show that children also cared for and love each others. Observation in in phase II (story reading session), also show girls like to read a story book that emphasizes the love of family and the love of parents. Stories like *Malin Kundang*, *Si Tanggang*, *My Sister* and *Mrs. Rabbit Sick* (few examples), is still popular among children. Besides that, they also like to read stories which shows love for animals such as butterflies (*Pretty Butterfly*), mermaids (*Little Mermaid*) and

clown fish (*Niki's Mother*). Stories of the beautiful princess such as *Thumbelina*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*, also attract the preschoolers. In the drama session (activity after the storytelling), all the children act out and show the values of the love to human and animals. For example, the girl who plays the daughter character of the mother rabbit (in the casting of Mrs. Rabbit Sick), clearly showing affection to her mother by giving medicine, putting on socks to her mother, put powder and pleased her mother with polite words like 'I love you mom', and so on.

[PTS / Lina / 24.02.16] & [RV2 / 02.24.16]

In addition, an interviewed data also showed that, children not only love human beings but they also felt pity for animals. According to the participants, they like to read certain books, especially about caring and love to strengthen the affection between them and their parents. Here is an excerpt of the interview:

Researcher: In the last casting I saw you help your moms who are sick. Why do you help her?

Participant 4: The reason is I love my mom...I help her because she is sick.

Researcher: Why do you like to read this book?

Participant 5: This book is about butterfly. I love ... I love butterfly... butterfly.

Researcher: What book is this? Let me see. Oh,..fish! Are you like this story?

Participant 5: Yes ... I love fish stories ... I love Niki ..Niki the clown fish ... Niki find mom..

Researcher: Do you like fish and butterflies ?

Participant 5: Yes I love animals...

Researcher : Can we kill them?

Participant 4: No ... not good ... we must love them ... love them

Participant 5: I love my parents...I love my pet cat in my house.

Participant 5: I love my mom and my dad ... my friends ...

[BKF / Nad / 08.3.16] & [RV2 / 08.03.16]

In the meantime, data analysis of children's creative painting (document analysis) also showed that participants has deep affection to their parents and fellowmen. Each painting produced by them as an activity after the storytelling phase. Overall, children like to paint the character of mother and child holding hands, and a happy-smiling human face. This clearly shows that, kids love the caring attitude is what make them love to their parents and siblings. In addition, they also often drawing emblem heart (love), in all the drawings as a background to show that they need their parents attention or love. It shows that every child needs affection.

Well-Mannered

Observation in phase I (listening to the story), show the children practice the noble virtuous such as good deed, kindness and generosity. Overall they are well-mannered. They do not make noise while the teacher read the story and apologized to the teacher who reprimanded them. Children also like to thank the teachers and friends who help them find their favorite story book. When the teacher asked the children to carry out casting (phase III, activity after the story), children continue to move to dramatize the story with excitement. They did not object to the teacher's instructions. The girl who plays *Princess Snow White*, for example, can show a kind gesture and good manners to thank the people who helped her (a dwarf) as a

way to be grateful to them. Meanwhile, the child who plays *Sleeping Beauty*, also very kind and grateful to the prince.

[BKF / Vis / 03.3.16] & [RV4 / 3.3.16]

A noble and well-mannered virtuous can also be obtain in an interview after phase III (activity after the storytelling) in this study. Children said they should be virtuous, kind gesture and generous to all people who helped them. Here is a record of the interview:

Researcher: Why you succumbed to the prince in the play?

Participant 6: I respect ... because he's a prince.

Researcher: You also thanked all the dwarves in the cast. Why you do that?

Participant7: Teacher told us to wish "thank you"... because...because it is good practice.

Participant 6: Because..they help us...we remember kind people.

Researcher: How do you show the respect to your parents, teachers and friends?

Participant 6: I will bow while walking in front of my parents.

Participant 7: During the meal, I do not ... make noise .. While eating the meal cannot talk ... not good.

Researcher: How you talk to the teachers?

Participant 6: I'll speak slowly ... must tell "excuse me' teacher ...

Researcher: Why do you say "excuse me" in acting with Thumberlina?

Participants 6: Because ... Thumberlina was talking to butterfly. I must tell "excuse me".. is good practice.

[BKF / Nad / 08.3.16]

Moreover, in discussing the ethics conduct and practice by children, two themes have been generated from the data source. These themes are social ethics and human relations and courtesy. The following is a discussion peel both these themes:

Social ethics and human relations

Interview data for storytelling technique results also showed that children understand how to be ethically associate with others in the society. They know how to mingle ethically to the people around them. These relationships include the relationship of children with their parents, the relationship between partners and relationships with teachers and with their relatives. For example, they refused to fight each other, because they felt that is not ethical. Here is an interview suction researchers with study participants.

Researcher: What is the moral of the story?

Participant 2: I know .. (Ariz show of hands)

Researcher. What is it Ariz.?

Participant 2: I cannot scream when answering questions.

Researcher. Good Ariz ... any more answer?

Participant 2: Yes ... slow down your voice when talk to the teacher. Then teacher like us.

Researcher: Yes, Ariz. We need to lower our voice when talking with a mother, father and teacher.

Researcher: What you learn from this story?

Participant 3: Cannot disturb your friend ... cannot fight ...

Researcher: Why cannot stir, disturb and fight with your friends?

Participant 2: They are our friends..we cannot fight ..

Researcher: Very Good ...

[BKT / Nad / 08.3.16] & [RV2 / 08.3.16]

In addition, data from observations showed that, children are also concerned with human relations. Children use a low tone of voice when communicating with teachers and friends. They seem to keep a good teacher-students relationship. They want to have a close relationship to everyone. In the storytelling session, this child noticed teachers intonation and they also imitate the same way when they reading and telling the story to the teachers and friends. Observational data also show that children can adapt and relate to others. They also love to share books among friends, and helping in reading a story book and explain the attitude of a character in the story they read. In phase I, II and III, the children show good interaction between themselves and fellow teachers. They like to ask questions to the teachers about stories they read and listen to. Interaction between teachers and children as well as to their peers is in the pleasing consistency.

[PTS / Lina / 24.02.16] & [RV2 / 02.24.16]

Data from the creative drawing (children's document) also show that they understand the importance of ethics and social relationships among humans. After phase III (activity after the storytelling), the children were asked to draw the aspects that are understood by them through the story. Children love to paint their home as a place to live, and their mother, father and other family members as people who have a significant relationship with them. Children love to draw parents and family members who are in the house closed house. This clearly shows the close relationship between the child and other family members on the basis of love. For example, a painting showing the closeness of parents of study participants who took the participants to the movies together participants sister.

In addition, the painting depicts a teacher who always smiles to participants during storytelling. Things that described in the story, such as a garden of flowers, butterflies and sunflowers are also draw by the participant. It also shows the interaction with the teacher, and participants. Analysis of the data from this study also showed that children love to interact and socialize with family members and teachers who are the people closest to them. Their paintings also confirm that, kids loves the communication and interaction among people. They want to have a good rapport to their parents and teachers.

Courtesy

Observation data after phase I (listening to story) and phase II (reading story books), show children like a story that in read and heard over and over again. In addition, children also like to read books which they like much with a loud voice. While reading the children love to repeat a word. Apparently, their early language and overall development associated with their early, treatments and events experienced by them. After hearing the story, they make comments like "good boy", "nice girl", "wise deer" and many other polite language. Upon hearing the story, they also use a good language like, "excuse me", "pardon me", "please let me see", "please allow me to see it", and so on. They showed a great courtesy.

[PTS / Nad / 02.29.16] & [RV2 / 02.29.16]

Interviews among study participants also showed that children use polite language to researchers during the discussion. They also confirm that, they are interested in a character, that show a good manners and proficient. During storytelling (in phase III), children also

verbally give their views on the language of the characters involved in a story. Here is a record of the interview:

Researcher: Why do you like Stomper?

Participants 6: Stomper good.

Researcher: Why you said so?

Participants 6: Stomper didn't get angry with Nippy.

Researcher: How Stomper talk to Nippy?

Participants 6: ... Um ... "sorry" ... When Nippy ask.. Stomper said "no mention" ..

Researcher: When you did wrong, what will you say to teacher?

Participant 6: I will tell "sorry" to teacher.

Researcher: How you wish your teacher?

Participant 7: I will tell "good morning" to teacher ...

Researcher: How you show respect to your teacher?

Participant 7: ... "Thank you" teacher ... and then ... "please" help me teacher ...

[BKF / Lina / 3.9.16] and [RV3 / 09.03.16]

Analysis of the data (children's creative drawing) also show kids love interacting with others using the good and polite language. However, they also use words that are not polite to express their angry reaction. For example, one participant draws a character using the words 'evil', to show he did not like people who like to bother him. Similarly another participant to write words like 'love' to show his love teachers who become storytellers. Similarly, another participant using the word 'Hello', to show he likes to mingle with others. The language used by study participants in each painting, clearly indicating their thinking and understanding in relation to others. They can make social adjustments that are appropriate to their environment. They can identify and distinguish between the good and bad things. This is evident in the use of language as a communication tool, and the characters portrayed by children.

The development of ethics among children, especially in terms of language can be observed during interviews and through observation when they give an opinion on what they think about the story. This happens when children are given the opportunity to talk about the story after the teacher to do so. The development of vocabulary is also clear when children use new vocabulary such as 'brave', 'strong', 'smart', 'intelligent' 'safe' and 'peace', while telling stories and talking with other partners. Children's drawings also prove that they were courteous towards teachers, parents and to their friends. Social interaction with teachers and peers in storytelling methods can develop children's language skills.

Conclusion

In general, the results of this study seem to mesh with the findings of researchers such as Egan (1986), Gallets (2005), Kellman (1995), Tappan (1989), Tappan and Brown (1989), Zander (2007) and Vitz (1990), whoes found that storytelling and story reading offer certain educational benefits to young children. Thus, the method of storytelling can be a teaching pedagogy to develop values and codes of ethics of preschool children. This finding also consistent with studies done by Majid, Abdullah and Zakhi (2012). In fact storytelling and story reading able to form morals and values of children (Yaacob & Rahim, 2014). Activities such as art making (painting), is also able to develop personality and creativity of children (Tappan, 1989). Through storytelling, children begin to think of the good and bad things, develop emotional and rectify their behavior (Arba'ie, Affandi & Rafidah (2011). A wave of

transformation demands teacher education and educational institutions to produce individuals who can think and have a moral emotion as both of these aspects influence the behavior of children in facing the challenges of globalization.

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