

Teacher As Moral Model – Are We Caring Enough?

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Abstract

Teacher modelling, a part of Ethics of Care plays a vital role in the relationship between teachers and students that shapes students' character in the classroom. This case study highlighted a limited understanding of a teacher in the classroom on what constitute care for her students. However, her display of caring was shown more through her role-modelling traits such as showing concern for students, praising students, displaying patience, empathising with students and listening to students that had positive responses from the students and this emphasizes that more positive characteristics could have emerged if the teacher understood the concept of 'care'.

Keywords: *Role-model; Caring; Empathy; Understanding; Teacher-student relationships*

1. Introduction

The main aim of Moral Education is to produce good citizens and moral persons. In schools around the world, Moral Education has been taught implicitly and explicitly to impart values effectively (Diffenbaugh, 1992). One way of teaching Moral Education implicitly is through role-modelling of teachers. In order to convey values effectively, teachers play an important role to impart those values but the choice of teachers in the education system today is very much questionable. According to Shwarz (1998), teaching should be a vocation, rather than a profession. Teachers should consider the teaching profession as a passion and where character education is concerned, ethical practices are inevitable. Teachers should model appropriate traits as they do not only have an innate duty to disperse knowledge but also to develop students into good human beings (Campbell, 2003; Schwarz, 1998). Here, it is understood that teachers need to give more attention to the human relationships that are transmitted in the classroom as Campbell (2003) puts it, 'they may take a direct form, as in the case of the teacher's admonition of students (e.g. don't hit each other; don't cheat) or an indirect form, as in the respectful way teachers speak to students or their conscious attention to fairness of discipline or evaluation' (p.27). In terms of direct form, teacher modelling is where students observe the dispositions of teachers as accomplished classroom teachers (Alleccia, 2011). Besides having a sound knowledge in theory, teachers need to practice what they have learned to develop congruent teaching in the classrooms (Swennen, Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2008). Furthermore, Kristjansson (2006) has voiced out that children need a didactic strategy or emulation of role models in order to grasp values in a straightforward manner when other approaches have failed. If this is so, then teachers are the most appropriate role models as the students have direct contact with them.

DeRoche and Williams (2001) stated that teacher modelling is perhaps the most powerful of all factors that affect Character Education. If there is a mismatch between what the teachers say and do, then students will most likely ignore over what the teachers say and that dampens the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the goals of education will not be achieved. Skoe (2010) also argued that teachers are moral models that contribute to development of care in students. Therefore, in order to accomplish this huge task, the teachers in schools need to play a very important role in developing care among students. According to Rogers & Web (1991), caring teachers emerged from good and effective teachings. An effective teacher is one who is clear about her mission and model accomplished teaching in the classrooms (Aleccia, 2011). In considering caring teachers who model caring behaviours towards students, especially in secondary schools, an area that has not been much focused (Cooper, 2004;

Gomez, Allen, & Clinton, 2004) and on related teacher characteristics elaborated (Wentzel, 1997), it is imperative to explore caring behaviour which is related to moral affective in Moral Education (Wan Hasmah, 2000). The purpose of this paper was to explore the teacher's understanding and the ways she exhibit her caring ways to her students in the moral lessons. Thus, our research questions were as follows: What is the teacher's understanding as the caring agent in the classroom? and How does she display caring to her students?

2. Role-Modelling in Teaching and Ethics of Care

According to Berkowitz (2011), adults, community members, historical figures, and character roles in literature can take the form as role-models. Role-models have character strengths that lead others to emulate them and thus form meaningful relationships with them. Role-modelling is seen as an affective means that influences students' academic and personality growth besides thriving towards career professionalism (Loh & Nalliah, 2010). An individual may not be skillful but the display of appropriate attitude could perceive the person as exemplary (Vescio, Wilde & Crosswhite, 2005). A teacher who exhibits exemplary characteristics enables students to develop their own skills and dispositions that could bring good to society in future as they will be able to think and feel for themselves or, in short, act as moral agents in society (Shwartz, 2007; Weissbourd, 2003; Wilson, 1998). In teaching moral values, conventional moral pedagogy which involves moral reasoning, highlights modeling as one of the teaching strategies where teachers believed in demonstrating good behaviour to students (Basourakos, 1999; Johansson, Brownlee, Cobb-Moore, Boulton-Lewis, Walker & Ailwood, 2011). Besides, teachers' role-modelling includes critical listening to the students as this is vital to understand the students' mindset and choices they make to lead good lives (English, 2011). This setting of good example by educators is necessary in the development of values among the learners (Arweck, Nesbitt & Jackson, 2005; Kristjánsson, 2006; Lickona, 1993; Noddings, 2002).

In Ethics of Care, modeling constitutes one of the four components. Noddings (2008) believed that modeling is demonstrating to the youngsters on what care is all about. When teachers show genuine concern to the students, trusting relationships are established between the teacher and students. Teachers listen to the problems of students and offer appropriate responses that could lead to more effective learning opportunities. These good modeling of teachers would create a moral climate in the classroom that allows for support and response to work in both ways. As Noddings (2008) puts it, the relationship between a teacher and a student is relational. It is not one sided.

In showing care, the needs of the students must be taken into account. Caring teachers are sensitive to the students' needs and interest (Rogers & Web, 1991). The concern towards the students inevitably leads to positive classroom climate in order for the learning to take place effectively. DeRoche & Williams (2001) offered one of the teaching standards for Character Education that is "teachers must help create school classroom climates that emulate respect and support tenets of a community of learners such as being caring" (p. 96). Here, it shows that caring teachers have enormous influence on students. In fact, Cloninger (2008) found that caring interactions between teachers and students create conducive learning whereby students find learning meaningful.

3. Method

3.1 Setting

This study involved a seven-month case study where observations and interviews were done on one teacher in a state in Malaysia. It also involved a month-long interview with four students from the school who were purposively selected. Visits to the schools were made earlier to seek permission from the principal to gain entry to the site as well as to inform and to get the consent from the teacher involved and parents of the students. However, before entry in the school, two approval letters had to be obtained from the Educational Planning and Research Development (EPRD) and the State Education Department for the principal's attention.

3.2 Participant

The focus was on one teacher, Bing who illustrated her ways as a moral agent to her students. We also chose to highlight four students' perceptions on Bing to demonstrate her caring ways based on the interviews conducted. A case study approach was done as it allowed us to gain authentic, holistic and meaningful understanding of the actual events in the classroom such as the teacher's behaviour and her relationship with the students (Yin, 2003).

Bing. A female, aged 43 years old, Bing has been teaching Moral Education for the past twenty years. We chose Bing because, unlike other teachers, she has shown genuine interest in the students' welfare despite not being conferred the 'Excellent Teacher' award by the Ministry of Education which would have allowed her to be promoted for better terms of service and salary. In her dealings with other teachers and students, Bing has demonstrated that

she is positive-minded, open to ideas, and believer in many approaches to teach Moral Education in an interesting way as she proclaimed that the 'worst method is the same method'. We wanted to show how her role as a moral model inspired the students.

3.3 Data Sources and Analysis

Data was gained from ten non-participant observations in the classroom, approximately with the duration of 1 hour 10 minutes per lesson within a period of seven months. The schedule of observations was given to Bing earlier and she was satisfied that her lessons would be observed fortnightly as she was busy with other meetings and activities in the school. However, the schedule was subject to changes as Bing has informed us a few times that she was not able to accommodate us because of her busy schedule. All her lessons were audiotaped but not videotaped as she did not consent to it. Seven semi-structured interviews were carried out (177 minutes) to gain insights on Bing's beliefs and feelings on the subject matter and her relationship with her students pertaining to her caring ways. Data saturated after seven semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in a quiet empty classroom or in the teachers' staffroom. Besides, Bing's personal journal was collected from time to time during the duration to gain understanding on her thoughts and feelings. We also asked Bing's permission to look into her lesson plans that we thought might shed light on her caring approach. As for the students, we conducted interviews approximately 30 minutes with each of them to have an understanding of their views towards Bing.

After initial round of classroom observation, we began by expanding fieldnotes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and were uploaded in NVivo software. All fieldnotes, interview transcripts and Bing's entry journals were coded initially as tree nodes. Codes such as *encourage students*, *showing concern for students*, *patience*, *motivation*, *treat students fairly and understanding students* were done as these depicted Bing's understanding on caring and how she display caring to her students. At the end of data collection, we were able to detect patterns that emerged from the various sources of data. Similar codes were merged and categories were formed to identify and describe Bing's conduct towards her students. From the categories, major themes emerged as it signified Bing's characteristics as a moral agent in the classroom.

3.4 Data Credibility

In ensuring the credibility of this qualitative research, besides consistent observations and interviews with Bing, we also triangulated the data by obtaining various sources such as Bing's journal and interviews with students in order to understand the data in the actual context such as Bing's interpretation of her caring and her demonstration of care in the classroom. Lastly, we also engaged in member checking with the teacher to obtain feedback to confirm authentic information regarding her experiences with her students in the classroom and to dispel any misinterpretation of the data.

4. Findings

4.1 Action-based Caring

From the observations and interviews conducted with Bing, it was discovered that she has limited understanding on what constitute care for the students. However, Bing responded that the consistency in showing care to the students is vital in demonstrating discipline to the students. She also believed that although the caring approach was a slow method in transforming the students' behaviour, nevertheless the students would realise the sincere deeds of the teachers if the consistency of care and love was shown to the students. She articulated:

...some people might perceive it as ... slow and it's not effective but I believe when you are consistent in loving our students, in showing care, they will realize it one day.

(A- INT7-180411-90-92)

Through love and care, they will change because physical pain will create hatred even though the pain inflicted it's just for a short while. But then when you show love and care, and you are consistent in your approach, then, they learn what discipline is all about.

(B-INT7-180411-96-99)

Besides, Bing's comprehension on caring was more on action-based. She strongly believed that care was about making time for students who needed someone to talk to about their problems and assisted them in solving problems. She stated:

To me, when I observe something amiss in class, I will solve it straightaway, rather than procrastinate and say later, maybe after school, the next time when I see the person I will ask, so it becomes not meaningful. If I observe that there is a problem, it's better for me to solve it there and then.

(B-INT4-170211-9-12)

I will go to them personally and talk to them, ah, I'll take time, it's either recess time or after school and I meet them, sometimes I call them but I won't take their class lessons.

(B-INT5-210211-3-5)

The above verbal utterances seemed to jive with the observations that were meted out. In one of the observations, Bing took time to converse with her student to find out his problems when she noticed his bandaged leg. This would be dealt more in the subsequent theme as it demonstrated her caring ways as a role-model to her students.

Bing also understood that caring means going an extra mile in helping out her students although there were risks involved in doing so. Furthermore, she opined that care is a concept that was difficult to measure or to explain; and the show of care varied from one individual to another individual. She said:

It's very difficult to measure and explain the word care because in what situation should we care and how much should we care. To certain teacher you know this is enough you don't have to go that extra mile right, so is the extra mile that we take that is caring. Some say why should you think I'm not caring enough, I mark their papers, I mark their books, and I go to the class to teach. Is that not caring? I care enough to go into the class to teach, I could have at least take a rest and stay at home. Actually, the perception of care, varies from one individual to another individual.

(B-INT3-290910-384-392)

By articulating such words above which viewed her notion of caring and how she considered others' perceptions on caring, it showed that Bing's understanding of care was rather simplistic and did not show a conceptual grasp. Nevertheless, it would be more meaningful to understand how she enacted her role as a moral model to her students.

4.2 Role-Modelling

4.2.1 Concerning for Students

As it was discussed earlier, Bing engaged a student who had encountered a troubled situation. It was observed that when the student, Vignes came into the class with a bandaged leg, Bing stopped teaching and enquired whether he has seen a doctor. The student replied that he had and Bing was seen satisfied with his answer. She smiled at him and resumed her teaching duties. Vignes was seen smiling at her and he was more of a relaxed mood compared to when he was just entering the class. When asked later on her reason for making inquiries immediately on the student, she said:

We need to show our care for our students, not only for this and then I believe people say lessons are caught, and not taught. If the teachers practice it, they will know.

(B-INT6-210311-156-158)

When we asked Vignes regarding his perception on Bing, he perceived her as someone who cared for their wellbeing. He said:

I think she cares for us all, no matter what, not many teachers are like that, you know.

(V-270611-70-71)

Bing also believed that teachers should model their concern towards the students so that the students were aware that the teachers cared for them. In her class, there was a male student, Bisma who was very disruptive and sometimes interrupted Bing's lessons as he was not focused. We observed that Bing showed her consistent concern towards him. Often Bing would speak to him personally and tried to reason with him. In subsequent observations, we noticed that Bisma was better behaved. Bing affirmed that one needed to execute positive feelings so that students emulate that positive model. She uttered:

...if they have the feeling, it could be positive or negative. If it is negative feeling, they learn not to do that, if it is a positive feeling then they will be encouraged to model that action.

(B-INF-INT1-280411-24-26)

She also maintained her belief that if teachers showed genuine care to the students, they would eventually change

their devilish ways and become more subtle. She voiced out:

Well, if you are really showing genuine care and concern, I believe you win them over.

(B-INT3-290910-166-167)

When you are doing something for the student, you show that you care for the person and not pick on the person

(B-INT3-290910-169-170)

It was also observed that Bisma executed his soft approach towards Bing but not to other teachers. Notoriety was his trademark and the school authorities believed him so as there were records of disciplinary problems on him. However, Bing considered him behaving reasonably well and more attentive in her class. In fact, Bisma smiled at us when he spotted us in the classroom. One day, she found him walking along the corridor with a female classmate, displaying respectful mannerism to her. She halted him and asked about his well-being, at the same time enquired his changed behaviour towards her. He replied it was her caring approach. This has made Bing's day and she penned her happiness in her journal.

He is more approachable. I commented to him, "You have changed to a better person. You are more attentive and less playful. What made you change?"

His response was my caring approach.

(B-J-300810)

She was happy to note that Bisma amended ways was because of her concern ways towards him. We wanted to interview Bisma to acquire his perception on Bing but we were shocked to find out that he was expelled from school after his involvement in a gang-fight and other subsequent disciplinary reports on him. Enquiries were done and we discovered that Bing's voice, apparently had no effect on the school's decision.

4.2.2 Praising Students

In most of the lessons, it was noted that Bing praised her students when they gave proper answers, showed good behaviour and gave support to their groups. In one of the lessons regarding family values, Bing discussed with the students on how parents and children should treat each other. She first asked Jason of how his approach towards his children if he had done mistakes to them.

Jason: I prefer to die than to disturb my children.

Bing: You prefer to die that to disturb your children. Is that how you want your children to learn from you? Are you trying to say that your father should die rather than disturbing you.

Jason looked at her blankly and Bing proceeded to ask Darren to share his opinion.

Bing: You have done a mistake now, you regret, so what would you do?

Darren: I will tell my children I have done a mistake and don't take action like me.

Bing: Ok, good Darren. He was brave to admit that he was wrong in front of his children and he said it was his mistake, okay, very good. A good answer compared to Jason.

(B-OB6-280411)

Bing praised Darren that indicated a proper action from his part. Jason smiled upon listening to Bing's comment and he nodded his head. She asked him whether he understood their discussion.

Bing: Now Jason, do you understand why Darren's answer was more appropriate?

Jason: (nodded his head). Yes, teacher.

Bing: Do you still want to die rather than admitting your mistakes?

Jason: I think I will learn to admit my mistakes.

Bing: That's good!

(B-OB6-280411)

Bing's probing has made Jason aware that his approach to the situation mentioned above may not be appropriate,

thus making him pondered and altered his approach and response accordingly. Unlike other teachers, we noticed that Bing hardly attempted to utter negative remarks to her students such as 'no' or 'wrong answer'. She believed her guidance should assist students and praises need to be voiced to encourage them. Her praises to the students displayed her encouragement to the students so that they would do better in their lives, work or studies. Jason admitted that he could depend on her if he has issues in his studies. He told us:

Jason: Because she really cares for me, if I really don't understand, she will explain it to me.

(J-270611-55-56)

In addition, Bing also realised that many students were shy and did not possess self confidence in themselves. Therefore her reason for praising them was to motivate them to gain self-confidence. She said:

Because I want to encourage them, because I noticed these few students are shy and they are inward looking, introvert, so I want to bring them out, I want to help them to be more confident. I noticed they don't have that confidence in themselves, the self-confidence, many of our students lack of that.

(B-INT7-180411-60-63)

Besides praising them for their good work, Bing was also seen praising students for their good behaviour especially for their effort in making time to attend Saturday class. She said 'good' to students who came on Saturday whether they studied in school or went to a college or made other visitation on that day. She also praised students for giving support to their own group. She said, 'kudos to our friends, although they were shy at the beginning, you have also succeeded to act out and give your co-operation to your group' (B-OB1-230810). Her praises also acted as a form of reminder to the students to give support to one another. She uttered:

I don't believe in forcing them because as a moral teacher I have to give them freedom and yet they have to discover themselves. They need to change because I believe in external motivation, positive motivation. Negative enforcement will not be helpful so that's why I try to give a lot of advice, reminders in class.

(B-INT3-290910-32-36)

Bing regarded her praises as an external motivation for the students to rediscover themselves so that they would be able to move forward in their lives.

4.2.3 Displaying Patience

Bing's patience was demonstrated in most of her lessons. From the observations, it was noted that she frequently assigned students to be in groups to complete tasks after giving instructions. In this situation, she gave them freedom to be in their groups as long as the work was done. Students were seen talking and laughing but she did not seem to mind. In fact, Bisma went to her table and enlarged the font in her laptop so that he could see the words clearly on the LCD. She did not show any anger. She just looked at him and continued assisting students in their groups. However, she kept reminding them about their work. When probed further she said:

every week I will be reminding them you know, then one fine day they will be ready to be responsible... we have to give people time to mature and grow because we cannot expect them to change overnight, we have to give them time and opportunity to grow... because last year I have this girl, she was in Form Four, when I did a group activity, she was just on her own, she just didn't bother, she wouldn't do anything even if you scold her... but this year I could see the change in her, she has started asking questions, you know ... you give time for the person to change..

(B-INT2-60910-124-130)

Her patience seemed to be apparent especially when she allowed the boys in her class to engage in small talks with each other when she tried so hard to explain by giving information related to academic content knowledge to her students. We were irritated by the situation but Bing did not show any anger towards the students, she reminded them to pay attention to her only after observing their actions for some time (B-OB3-200910). When asked further, she said:

Sometimes you need to be patient, sometime you lose patience, then it's not that when we discipline them we are not caring. I remember people say you have to be cruel in order to be kind to that person, so there were times that I told them off, there were times I found they were doing my work right. If they were not doing my work, I would have told them to stop doing that if not I would take their work away from them, or at times if they are making a lot of noise I told them that they have a choice to stay in the class or go out

there or they could go to the discipline room. I told them it's their choice, then they quiet down, just for a short while.

(B-INT3-290910-55-62)

Her words showed that Bing cared for the students very much for she believed in students changing their ways in time to come. She felt that as an adult, she has to allow them to grow up and realise their mistakes. Furthermore, Jason valued his relationship with Bing and found her patience to be of great assistance to him. He expressed:

If I do not understand any questions, she will make time to explain it to me until I understood. She gives me a lot of exercises but I'll just do a little. She gets angry though but I always feel relaxed with her. She advises a lot. I don't think she's mad at me.

(J-270611-65-67)

However, Bing did share her frustration that she could not possibly pay attention to every child because of the number of students in the class that could prevent her from doing so especially with the time constraint. She said:

Hmm, this class is too big, it a bit difficult for me to care for everybody but when I observe something which is not right, I usually go to them and talk to them, you know individually,... Sometimes it's too much that I had to reprimand them in front of the whole class.

(B-INT3-290910-64-67)

Her utterances demonstrated that although not uncaring, she recognized pragmatically the constraints of teaching large classes in secondary schools. This limits the teacher's capacity and competence in sustaining caring relationships with students.

4.2.4 Empathising Student

In her lessons, Bing showed her ability to understand students' feelings. In one of the lessons, she showed a profile picture of a role-model student and asked Jason how he felt when putting himself in that role-model's shoes. He replied that he was sad. She understood his feelings by immediately saying:

"Do you think your performance is as great as the student? Ah, he felt sad because if he compared himself to the student, his achievement was not as good as hers. He may not get the Achiever Award. Is that how you felt?"

(B-OB6-240411)

Jason agreed with Bing. When probed later, she said:

Because somebody is successful, I wish I am in that position but I cannot achieve it so I feel sad but at the same time I know I am not doing enough to achieve that position. In fact that student may feel that, I should be the one going up, not somebody else.

(B-INT4-170211-89-91)

Her understanding of Jason's feelings displayed that Bing has enacted care in this situation. She managed to make a link between Jason's response and the situation that she put forth. This ability to make a link could assist students in learning classroom materials and in engaging with their teacher in a meaningful way.

In all her lessons, Bing did not push the students very hard to do their presentations in front of the class. She understood their background and their personality very well as she has spoken to them individually. She commented:

Because of inferiority complex, some did share with me that when they were young they were being laughed at so they couldn't bring themselves to talk in front of a lot of people.

(B-INT4-170211-209-211)

In fact, she understood the feelings of a large female student in the class and never forced her to participate in the class discussions. The student would always have to be encouraged to get into a group and would not participate in any presentations. When asked later, she said:

I believe that when you are very big, you are very self conscious. So when you come up here, people will be looking at you and not the other two girls, so you won't be feeling comfortable to act, so I have to understand that. And the boys will be intimidating her, that will make her feel more shy and she will be withdrawing to her own corner, so I don't want that to happen to her.

(B-INT4-170211-307-312)

Her feelings for the students were later enhanced in her thoughts as she penned in her journal. Her empathy with the student is clearly seen in her entry journal, she wrote:

I did not want to force because one of the girls is rather big sized and I did not want to embarrass her. I would want to encourage her to overcome her low self-image of being laughed at.

(B-J-240111)

Moreover, Charan, one of the girls that we interviewed felt that Bing was one of the teachers who could really empathise with the students if they could not complete their homework on time. She explained:

She really empathises with us because when we don't finish our homework, she gives us some time like 'okay, submit tomorrow' or something like that. You know some teachers, if I tell them that I haven't finish my homework, they will write in their record book and make it look like a disciplinary case because they didn't hear our reasons. And I have so many things to do as a prefect. So Mrs. B just says, okay submit tomorrow or even now she allows us to submit online, so it's kind of easier.

(C-270611-63-67)

4.2.5 Treating Students Fairly

All through observations, Bing did not discriminate any particular student in the classroom. She treated the students in the same manner whether they were Chinese or Indians. Although she has the desire to talk to students individually, time did not permit her to do. Furthermore, as stated earlier, she felt the enrolment in the class was too large that it prevented her from talking to students individually. There were occasions where Bing wanted to talk to a certain student in class to know his problem but she was afraid that this would take too much time and other students would perceive her as being unfair. We could see that she was trying to be fair to all students. She uttered:

students perceive teachers as not fair, why teacher showed so much attention to that person and not me, you know. If the teacher is prejudice, the students will know, teacher like certain people or teacher don't like certain people, so I try not to do that usually, you know in class, using students' class time.

(B-INT3-290910-73-76)

Therefore, Bing would meet up any students who needed her help after school hours as she did not want to take up the limited classroom time as the focus should be on their studies.

...our core business in the class is to present the subject matter based on the objectives of the lessons but if you want to care during the group work, you may do so at a different time on an individual student. I find that I need to complete the subject matter on that particular day for certain, ahm What I mean is I cannot just abandon 34 students and just concentrate on one student, what about the time for the other 34 students, it's not fair... you have to take care of the 35 students and not just one. If you want to take care of one of them, then you have to call him or her out and talk to him or her. You see you have to make an appointment and not using the class time, so it's not fair for the rest of them because the rest of them need to learn.

(B-INT3-290910-80-88)

By refusing to concentrate on just a student as she considered it denying the rights of other students who need equal amount of time spent on every individual, portrayed that Bing wanted to be fair to all students.

Likewise, Kavi, one of the prefects in the classroom that we engaged with, confided in us that Bing was an industrious teacher who worked diligently at conquering their hearts. He said:

I feel she's a hardworking woman. She works so hard to win our hearts and she's fair to all of us. She'll go to anyone who doesn't understand her lesson.

(KV-270611-59-61)

4.2.6 Listening to Students

As discussed earlier, Bing would like to talk to the students but time and class-size constraints did not permit her to do so. In all her lessons, Bing talked to her students first before she started her lesson as was her custom. Her purpose of doing so was to create a conducive learning where the students would feel comfortable with her. Once students confided in her, she would be able to take appropriate action after listening to them. In fact, Karen respected Bing for her ability to consider her students as her friends whom they could look up to. She clarified that Bing would make time to listen to her problems and counseled her accordingly. Bing showed reciprocity and would assure her that assistance would be rendered, making Karen felt comforted and appreciated. She asserted:

She will counsel us if we have problems. She'll listen to our problems and she'll try to help us in whatever way she can. At that time, she's not only a teacher but also a friend to us, to me.

(KT-270611-49-51)

It was also written in Bing's journal that she would like them to talk about their problems. Here, it evidenced that Bing has a desire to be a good listener.

I should let them talk about their problems and let them discover their own problems. Let them realise their mistakes.

(B-J-180411)

I try to create a friendly environment in class. Mistakes are allowed but need to be corrected.

(B-J-280411)

Accepting students' answer was also one way of Bing listening to the students. In one of the moral lessons, Bing asked a student's opinion, the reason he would not allow his child to take up singing as a profession. She accepted his answer and another student gave his opinion why parents should allow a child to take up a singing profession.

Bing: Why, Naren?

Naren: Parents have brought up and sacrificed a lot for the child. Therefore, the child should at least sacrifice just one for the parents. The child should listen to the parents.

Bing: Okay, thank you, Naren.

Bing repeated what Naren said to the class and asked him whether she was right in interpreting his answer.

Naren: No teacher, the child can sing but only part time. Should study hard and sing leisurely. No need to be like Siti Nurhaliza (professional singer).

Bing: Don't be a singer...indulge singing as a hobby and if one has the time. Okay, good, a thought which is matured. Kavindran did not agree. Okay, give me your opinion.

Kavi: But teacher, if the child has talent, the parents must follow the child's talent.

Bing: Yes, I also agree, we have to see the child's talent. If the child becomes an engineer but does not know his/her job, then we have to see the talent.

(B-OB6-280411)

The discussion that took place showed that Bing listened to her students' opinions and she did not dismiss their answers. In fact, listening and talking to students is one of her ways of showing care to the students. She said:

.....you take extra time to find out and to know students' problem... and not just knowing, after finding out something you will take action.

(B-INT4-170211-4-6)

Here, it is demonstrated that Bing would find time to talk to her students, listen to them and then later take appropriate action to help those students.

5. Discussion and Implications for Teacher Education

The findings from this case study showed that Bing's articulation on her understanding on care towards her students was limited although she was more comfortable in exhibiting her caring ways to her students. The lack of conceptual grasp suggests the need of appropriate coaching of educators which embodies the true nature of teaching and learning in Moral Education.

Another pointer in the findings displayed the importance of time factor in the development of caring relationships between the teacher and her students. Bing has expressed the need to spend more time with her students as the class enrollment was too large for her to handle as she could not concentrate on every one of them. We acknowledged that Bing was not alone in wrestling with this dilemma. Educators find it challenging to maintain good rapport with students in large enrollment as if care was not the primary concern (Gomez et al., 2004). In addition, Blatchford, Basset and Brown's (2011) empirical study has shown that teacher-student relationship was affected in large classes especially for weaker students in secondary schools.

The findings also showed that teacher's characteristics were important in establishing good relationships between teacher and students in the classrooms. In this study, it was evidenced that Bing's patience and listening to her students worked well with the students as it had changed Bisma's behaviour. Caldwell and Sholtis (2008) affirmed that caring teachers 'listens, accepts, and uses their feedback constructively' (p.86) and demonstrated patience by allowing students time to give their own answers. A study done by Kim and Schallert (2011) showed that patience was an important trait that it built trust between the teacher and student so that the student would be able to develop her skills to her full potential as how Bing developed the trust in Bisma. Unfortunately, we were unable to witness Bisma's potential. The decision made by the school authorities can be questionable as our study highlighted Bing's ability in transforming Bisma in a gradual way. The school may be deemed as 'uncaring' institution as it did not reflect its responsibility in 'educating' Bisma.

Besides, teacher modeling, which included moral leadership, contributed significantly in the character development of the students (Weissbourd, 2003). One of the attributes of teacher modeling was the moral concern and care for others in the classroom as this fostered manners in the students as well as gave attention to the needs of the students (Schwartz, 2007; Wentzel, 1997). In this research, Bing has portrayed her concern towards her students by making time to enquire about their welfare, especially Vignes and Bisma. Her empathizing with students pointed out her understanding nature towards them which inevitably convinced them to emulate this feature of hers. Vogt (2002) affirmed that teachers who showed emphathetic behaviour have an edge compared to those who showed none, as they were able to foster better relationships with their students. The study done by Arweck et al. (2005) on values education programmes, carried out by two schools in UK, emphasised the need for teachers to be moral models to educate students on interpersonal skills where empathy as an affective part in Moral Education plays a significant role in developing children holistically.

Good teachers were always observant of students' behaviour and affirmed their actions (Noddings, 2010). Bing's praises towards Darren and Jason proved to be her affirmation towards their conduct, be it in their work or behaviour. Those praises would carry enough weight as students at this impressionable age will always consciously or unconsciously impersonate teachers' behaviour in schools. Praises act as a form of motivation, indirectly it compelled students to strive in their work. Hayes et al. (1994) acknowledged that teacher's praises is not just a form of encouragement but also one of the traits of a caring teacher.

In relation to teacher education, our findings suggest that displaying caring should not be the ultimate behaviour of educators but comprehending on what is care should be a basic trait in every teacher. We see the challenge faced by Bing as a role-model in enacting care to her students can be addressed and taken up at teacher education institutions. These institutions should explicitly uncover what care means and how care can be enacted in large groups of students. If a teacher understood what entails caring towards students, it definitely brings the best out in her especially in showcasing her care towards the students and probably more positive characteristics may emerge from her relationship with them. It may strengthen her role as a moral model to her students especially in Moral Education.

It also boils down to what entails teachers as exemplary in teacher education especially in the Moral Education fraternity. Care and empathy are basic elements of teachers' professional morality (Cooper, 2010; Tirri & Husu, 2002). We suggest that care and empathy should be an important topic and discussion in teacher education. Ideals of care should be discussed among teacher trainees and this could be brought further by examining how care can be developed from their perspectives to classroom situation which is related to race, cultural, ability, and language background (Gomez et al., 2004). This would help teachers, be it in-service teachers or teacher trainees to conscientiously reflect on their practices of care in their teachings, no matter how complex it is. In relation to empathy, Cooper (2010) asserted that 'profound empathy' emerged from close relationships between teachers and students where teachers demonstrate personal understanding towards the welfare of the students, thus making moral modelling an unavoidable linkage to teachers' professional morality. Therefore, it is necessary in teacher education programmes to emphasize Care Ethics and empathy in the training of future educators who would ultimately emerge as impeccable moral educators.

This outcome of study adds to the current body of literature on the virtuous disposition of the teacher and the moral development of students. Many studies have acknowledged the connectivity between teachers' moral characteristics and values development in students (Campbell, 2003; Fenstermacher, 2001; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Osguthorpe, 2008). Osguthorpe (2008) pointed out that the society needs teachers who are able to educate students from the bottom of their hearts as it portrayed their good dispositions and moral character. Teachers who lack strength and character cannot be good role-models to students, what more to the community and society (Campbell, 2004; Willemse, Lunenburg & Korthagen, 2005).

These modelling traits of a caring teacher are imperative in Moral Education in Malaysia although the caring dimension is relatively new in Moral Education as a whole. Moral educators may find demonstrating care to students as challenging as time and support from administrators, colleagues and community are needed in order for them to execute care. It should be taken into account that teacher role-modelling, as part of Ethics of Care served as a fundamental role in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Aleccia (2011) has noted that modeling is still an essential component of good teaching, besides knowing intimately about academic content knowledge of a subject. This study suggests that the teaching and learning process will be enriched and complemented by the comprehension and execution of care by teacher modelers in the classrooms.

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