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# Test of Moral Values: Its Development and Try-out

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## Introduction

The need for a more vigorous and organized Moral Education programme in Singapore schools is emphatically made in the *Report on the Ministry of Education, 1979* (Goh et al., 1980). It recommended that Moral Education be formally taught as a subject in the school curriculum throughout primary and secondary schools. The concern for Moral Education manifested itself in yet another attempt by a group of parliamentarians, resulting in the publication of the *Report on Moral Education* (Ong et al., 1979). This report serves as a common frame of reference for all Moral Education programmes currently implemented in Singapore schools. The state of Moral Education in Singapore schools was systematically documented and relevant issues were objectively studied in 1981 by a committee appointed by the Ministry of Education (Eng et al., 1981). Subsequently, existing programmes were improved on and new programmes introduced. At present, there are no less than six moral education programmes, both secular and religious, in Singapore schools.

With the implementation of moral education programmes came the problem of evaluation. Any evaluator involved in such an endeavour is immediately faced with two problems, one conceptual and the other technical: Which moral values are to be evaluated? And, how to evaluate them?

## The Test

As pointed out earlier, the *Report on Moral Education* (Ong et al., 1979) provides a common

frame of reference for all moral education programmes in Singapore schools. That being the case it is most appropriate to develop a test anchored in the moral values recommended therein. This will not only result in a test based on a set of agreed-upon values which will transcend programme specificity, yet also assure curricular relevance. With reference to the moral concepts recommended by the *Ong Report*, a 24-item test was developed.

The recommended moral concepts are in measurement terms analogous to psychological constructs for which measuring devices are to be developed. A variety of tasks can be generated to gauge moral concepts and values. The better-known approaches, each with its advantages and difficulties, are discussed in Rest (1979a): (a) Abstract direct questioning, (b) Justifying solutions to moral dilemmas, (c) Comparing acts and actors in stories, (d) Use of state prototypic statements, and (e) Defining and judging the crucial issues in a moral dilemma.

Of these, the first approach is self-explanatory. The second is Kohlbergian and the third Piagetian, both extensively used by researchers of the cognitive-development persuasion. The fourth and the fifth are in a very real sense off-shoots of the Kohlbergian approach in that they use essentially Kohlberg's moral dilemmas (the Heinz story and others) and attempt at constructing moral judgment tests that can be *objectively* scored. The fourth approach is best represented by the Ethical Reasoning Inventory (Page and

Bode, 1980), whereas the fifth is represented by the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1979b).

The fourth approach of using stage prototypic statements is of special interest here. In this procedure, a typical item consists of two parts. The first (the item stem) presents a situation involving a moral concept or issue. This is followed by several options or alternatives all of which are plausible responses to the moral situation. The options or alternatives are presented as statements exemplifying the distinct reasoning of stages of moral development. Given several different modes of response the subject is asked to match one of the options to the stem as he best sees fit. The subject is then assigned a score representing his moral maturity (or stage) as exemplified by the prototypic statement (option).

This approach allows a much larger number of moral values to be gauged within a test, a gain, since wide coverage is essential in curriculum evaluation. The multiple-choice format is very familiar to the students (through achievement testing) and thus reduces test-anxiety as an interfering factor. Thirdly, ease and objectivity of scoring are important in large-scale evaluation.

Each of the 24 items of the *Test of Moral Values* is made up of two components, namely, an item stem and three options. The item below is a typical one:

When Kuo Ming has to go home late, he makes sure he tells his parents. Why?  
 a. He does not want to be scolded by them.  
 b. His friends have told him to do so.  
 c. He does not want his parents to worry about him.

As shown above, the item depicts a situation in which a moral concept (in this case, filial piety) is assumed to be involved. The three options are plausible responses to the situation and pertain to three different frames of mind, that is, *self*, *social* (peer influence), and *moral value*. Care was taken to ensure a simple language level for the items to minimize a language confounding effect. Moreover, the situations depicted in the items are within the experience of the pupils.

### The Subjects

The try-out of the test involved 324 students from two secondary schools. These were selected as a contrasting pair in that School A has been classified by a particular moral education project team as a school having 'poor' environment for moral learning. The reverse was true for School B. *Table 1* shows the distribution of students by schools, class level, and ability stream. A balance was kept between sexes.

### Analysis

Although there were three categories of responses to each item, for comparison, these were grouped into two, that is, *self plus social* versus *moral value* responses. This was necessary because the majority of responses fell into the *moral value* category. The chi-square test was run for each item. A significant chi-square ( $p < .10$ ) was taken as indicating discrimination between the two groups of students who *a priori* should respond differently.

TABLE 1: THE SAMPLE

School	Level	Stream		Both
		Normal	Express	
School A	Sec 1	42	39	81
	Sec 2	38	40	78
	Both	80	79	159
School B	Sec 1	47	39	86
	Sec 2	40	39	79
	Both	87	78	165
Total		167	157	324

**TABLE 2: COMPARISONS BETWEEN NORMAL AND EXPRESS STUDENTS  
(SCHOOLS AND LEVELS COMBINED)**

	Normal N = 167 %	Express N = 157 %	Chi-Square
1 Filial piety	91.6	98.7	8.713*
2 Spirit of inquiry	89.2	96.2	5.710*
3 Self-discipline	84.4	82.8	.157
4 Humility	97.6	98.1	.090
5 Perseverance	93.4	94.9	.326
6 Trust	93.4	94.9	.326
7 Loyalty (to School)	86.2	90.4	1.391
8 Forgivingness	94.0	94.9	.123
9 Social Work	93.4	98.1	4.280*
10 Caring for aged	95.8	98.1	1.407
11 Courtesy	94.6	96.8	.951
12 Respect for law	86.9	94.3	5.179*
13 Neighbourliness	89.2	91.1	.315
14 Respect for religion	59.9	68.8	2.795*
15 Respect for cultures	92.8	97.5	3.708*
16 Generosity	87.4	98.7	15.671*
17 Pride in country	83.8	92.4	5.554*
18 Loyalty (to Nation)	94.0	96.2	.809
19 Commitment	75.4	87.3	7.388*
20 National defence	91.6	95.5	2.056
21 Justice	56.3	70.7	7.234*
22 Equality	95.2	98.7	3.346*
23 National survival	94.6	98.7	4.179*
24 National prosperity	95.2	97.5	1.141

\*  $p < .10$

## Results

As shown in *Tables 2 to 4*, a large proportion of students chose the *moral value* option, leaving a much smaller proportion choosing the *self* and the *social* options. *Table 2* also shows that, when schools and levels were combined, the academically less able Normal students had *lower* percentages choosing the *moral value* option than the Express students. The differences between Normal and Express students are statistically significant for twelve items.

The data were analysed in another manner, this time, *within school* between Normal and Express students, with levels combined. *Table 3* shows for School A (the 'poor' school) obvious differences between the two types of students with Normal students having *lower* percentages of *moral value* option. There are seventeen significant differences between Normal and Express students.

A similar comparison was made for School B (the 'good' school). The results in *Table 4*

show a similar tendency of normal students having *lower* percentages of *moral value* option. There are, however, only five significant differences between the two types of students in this school.

## Conclusion

The preponderance of *moral value* options returned by the sample as a whole is gratifying. Although the element of acquiescence (Rest, 1979a) which is probable in a test of this nature cannot be entirely ruled out, this preponderance may also be interpreted as an indication of the students having been sufficiently socialized by the society represented by parents and teachers. In fact, Page and Bode (1980) found their *objective* moral judgment test more stable than other formats, including the original Kohlberg test.

To what extent such a tendency will predict the students' behaviour when they find themselves in those situations depicted by the

**TABLE 3: COMPARISONS BETWEEN NORMAL AND EXPRESS STUDENTS  
IN SCHOOL A (LEVELS COMBINED)**

	Normal N = 80 %	Express N = 79 %	Chi-Square
1 Filial piety	88.8	98.7	6.723*
2 Spirit of inquiry	85.0	96.2	5.838*
3 Self-discipline	82.5	75.9	1.037
4 Humility	100.0	100.0	.000
5 Perseverance	92.5	94.9	.400
6 Trust	88.8	94.9	2.026
7 Loyalty (to School)	76.3	93.7	9.413*
8 Forgivingness	92.5	94.9	.400
9 Social Work	90.0	98.7	5.678*
10 Caring for aged	92.5	100.0	6.157*
11 Courtesy	90.0	97.5	3.762*
12 Respect for law	83.8	96.2	6.810*
13 Neighbourliness	87.5	88.6	.046
14 Respect for religion	58.8	65.8	.846
15 Respect for cultures	87.5	97.5	5.661*
16 Generosity	86.3	98.7	8.878*
17 Pride in country	80.0	92.4	5.131*
18 Loyalty (to Nation)	88.8	97.5	4.692*
19 Commitment	68.8	88.6	9.323*
20 National defence	88.8	96.2	3.164*
21 Justice	53.8	73.4	6.635*
22 Equality	93.8	100.0	5.098*
23 National survival	91.3	100.0	7.231*
24 National prosperity	92.5	100.0	6.157*

**TABLE 4: COMPARISONS BETWEEN NORMAL AND EXPRESS STUDENTS  
IN SCHOOL B (LEVELS COMBINED)**

	Normal N = 87 %	Express N = 78 %	Chi-Square
1 Filial piety	94.3	98.7	2.340*
2 Spirit of inquiry	93.1	96.2	.742
3 Self-discipline	86.2	89.7	.483
4 Humility	95.4	96.2	.057
5 Perseverance	94.3	94.9	.031
6 Trust	97.7	94.9	.940
7 Loyalty (to School)	95.4	87.2	3.581*
8 Forgivingness	95.4	94.9	.025
9 Social Work	96.6	97.4	.109
10 Caring for aged	98.9	96.2	1.264
11 Courtesy	98.9	96.2	1.264
12 Respect for law	89.7	92.3	.350
13 Neighbourliness	90.8	93.6	.440
14 Respect for religion	60.9	71.8	2.170*
15 Respect for cultures	97.7	97.4	.012
16 Generosity	88.5	98.7	6.893*
17 Pride in country	87.4	92.3	1.091
18 Loyalty (to Nation)	98.9	94.9	2.216*
19 Commitment	81.6	85.9	.553
20 National defence	94.3	94.9	.031
21 Justice	58.6	67.9	1.536
22 Equality	96.6	97.4	.109
23 National survival	97.7	97.4	.012
24 National prosperity	97.7	94.9	.940

'stories' cannot be ascertained here. Understandably, the prediction of overt moral actions from verbal response to a test of moral values will be influenced by other personal and situational factors. Nevertheless, the findings here show that the students are very much aware of the kind of moral values they are expected to hold and uphold.

As for the efficiency of the *Test of Moral Values* in discriminating between students who

are expected to respond differently, the findings suggest that the test as a whole should be able to differentiate between students of different moral values. It is also worthy of note that the differentiation is greater within one school than in the other; this suggests the importance of the school ethos where student moral values are concerned.

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