

Action research: Exploring the role of curriculum in preparing students to be efficient members of society

Salma Ali
Texas A&M University

Abstract:

This study explores the role of the secondary curriculum entitled, “*Ethical Pathways to Human Development*”, in which students were engaged in this module with the issues of society by examining the impact of poverty, illness, illiteracy, homelessness and social injustice on communities across the world, and in Dubai. The study concludes that this curriculum encourages students to analyze their own contemporary situations and to reflect on the social and ethical challenges of an increasingly plural world.

Introduction to curriculum

As a teacher and educator, I observe that most students were unable to apply their classroom knowledge outside the classroom to the larger society. To me, application of knowledge is crucial to enable students to create meaningful learning environment (Holbrook & Rannikmäe, 2010), and this research study explores the role of the curriculum entitled “*Ethical Pathways to Human Development*” in creating a meaningful environment in which students learn about the societal issues. The Institute of Education (IOE), located at the heart of London is one of the world’s leading centers for education research and development. The Institute’s collaboration with the Institute of Ismaili Studies builds on more than 40 years of successful joint provision of curriculum development and teacher development programs. The Institute of Education, University of London and Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) in London developed a Secondary Curriculum “*Ethical Pathways to Human Development*” to foster

in students an understanding of problems in society by examining the impact of poverty, illness, and other issues in communities across the world. The curriculum addresses “human issues that are of critical significance to individuals, communities and societies” (*Ethical Pathways to Human Development* 2004, 8). A contextual approach is adopted to issues of development, and their impact on the quality of life of people in different regions.

The major part of the curriculum is devoted to exploring and examining major world issues and the role of NGO’s and other institutions through case studies of innovative approaches to development in selected parts of the world. The entire *Ethical Pathways* curriculum consists of six units and each unit discusses the major issues and challenges of one selected region. In addition, it evaluates the role of the institutions in that region that work on those issues. The curriculum focuses on major global issues and challenges including poverty, illness, homelessness, race and social justice, cybercrime, bullying, application of technology, and unequal distribution of world’s resources. The overall key message of this curriculum is to encourage students to take responsibility for improving the quality of their own lives, at the same time not neglecting their responsibility towards their fellow human beings.

Theoretical framework

The organization of schooling has long been associated with the idea of a curriculum. Researchers have grappled with questions like of which include: what is a curriculum? And, how might it be

conceptualized? Kelly (2009) criticizes curriculum merely as a product and states

that curriculum is to be thought in terms of activity and experiences which continue to develop and respond appropriately to the changes in society and educational processes. This notion of examining broadening of curriculum is also seen by Brookfield (1990)

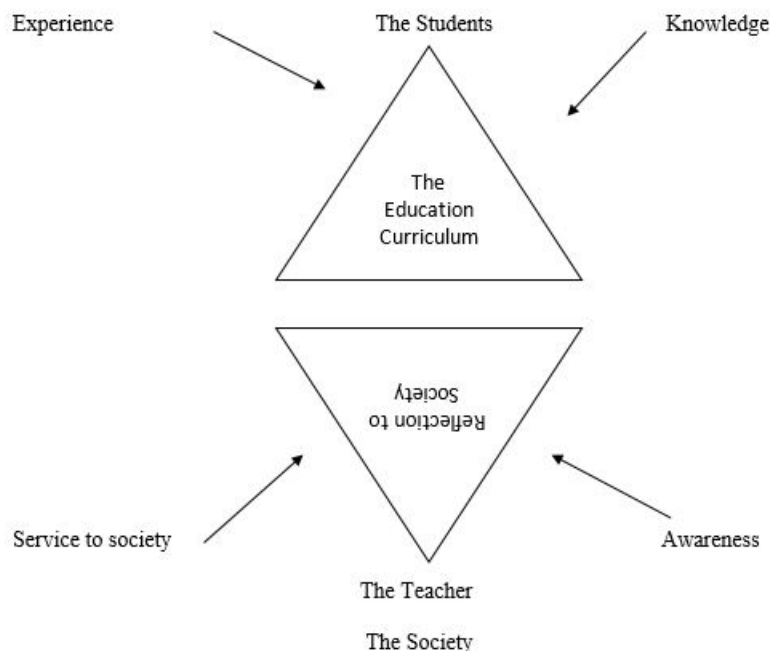
curricula is not studied in some kind of artificial isolation, but that ideas, skills, and insights learned in a classroom are experienced in real life. Essential to praxis is the opportunity to reflect on experience, so that formal study is informed by some appreciation of reality. (50)

Dewey (1937) explains that curriculum serves a broader social purpose, which helps pupils become more effective members of society. It does not simply instruct young people about what is true or false, but curriculum enables the learner to inquire how is this experience related to other things they know? How can this learning be utilized in a new setting? and how will the knowledge affect other people? What clearly emerges from the discourse above is the notion that curriculum is not just simply the material that the teachers and students use in the classroom, rather it also involves the processes where the experience of the learner and the teacher through dialogue and pedagogies recognizes the relevance of the subject matter that is to be taught and learned in an educational and real world setting.

Harrison, Blakemore, and Buck (2001) stated that the curriculum should reflect the society and should discuss the surroundings where we live. I agree with

Harrison, Blakemore, and Buck (2002) that curriculum should contain features of producing awareness in students about the main issues of the society and of their role to fight with these issues. In order to explain the relationship of curriculum with students and society, Harrison, Blakemore, and Buck (2001) introduced a model, diagram of which is given below, about curriculum development stages. This model tells about the goals of educational curriculum, which includes producing interest in students to serve their society well. However, this depends also on schools and teachers to implement the curriculum in the educational institutes. After studying *Ethical Pathways* curriculum, and comparing the goals of the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum to the details of Harrison's model, *Ethical Pathways* seems follows the Harrison's (2001) model in which students learn about the societal issues, and develop a sense of responsibility. Therefore, this study explores whether or not (a) this curriculum engaged students in dialogues, collaborative inquiry, and continuous reflection on worldwide issues that helped students develop a sense of responsibility. Whether or not (b), after gaining knowledge and understanding of major global issues, *Ethical Pathways* curriculum inspires human empathy and sympathy in students for motivating them to play their role to minimize those issues.

The diagram of a model is given below shows the relationship between curriculum and society. It gives a link where students use their school-based knowledge outside the classroom.



(Harrison, Blakemore, and Buck 2001, 109)

Method and Methodology

Qualitative Research

In order to understand the situation in its natural setting, I chose the qualitative research method, Rossman and Rallis (1998, 39) state, “Qualitative research is done in the natural setting and the researcher’s purpose is to learn about some aspects of the social world and to generate new understanding”. In the research, all activities, observations and interviews were conducted in a real classroom setting and focus was on the process of students’ learning. Therefore, primarily concerned of this qualitative research was to focus on the process rather than outcomes (Creswell 1994).

Action Research

The nature of the research calls for an action based approach due to its main focus on developing theoretical understanding, and develop a sense of responsibility (Denscombe 1998). Carr and Kemmis (1986) define action research as “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken

by participant in social situation, in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social and educational practices” (162).

Accordingly, during the research, students were given the opportunity to improve their understanding of world major issues by thinking rationally and engaging in reflective dialogue and collaborative inquiry. In this process, I was confronted with new issues, challenges and opportunities to explore the curriculum. Action research allowed me to engage in an ongoing cycle of systematic planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Denscombe (2002) explains that use of findings and an assessment of the impact on teaching and learning must be a part of cycle of study in the action research process. I found action research gives the findings which generate some possibilities for change and then practitioner can apply and evaluate them for further inquiries or investigations (Denscombe 2002, 58) to enhance students learning.

For this study, I taught 2 classes a week for 8 weeks: each class lasted for one hour. So I taught sixteen classes (16 hours of instruction) in total. During this study, I taught three units of *Ethical Pathways* curriculum. In the first unit “*Our world our challenges*” contains pictures with descriptions, and video links that helped the students to explore some of the major issues that are facing the majority of people in the world such as gender equality, poverty, war and conflicts, security issues, climate changes and global warming issues. Then I taught Unit 2 “understanding the issues”, in which students read some case studies that focus on the root causes of these issues, and then students discuss some possible solutions of them. Finally, in Unit 3 “Our surroundings”, students explore some of the local major issues that our country or communities are facing. students reflect on their own role in causing those issues, and what can we do to minimize these issues. Overall, students spent eight classes on exploring Unit 1 & 2 in total to have an understanding of world major issues, and another six weeks to explore Unit 3 to have an understanding of the local issues.

Research context and participants

In Dubai, the majority of the schools follow the reception learning model. In reception learning students are dependent on a teacher for their learning. Teachers control the classroom and students are trained to acquire knowledge rather than to think and build knowledge from their own or through peers’ experience. A similar reception learning model is in practice at the Dubai Latifa High school in which this study was conducted. The teaching methods in this high school is predominantly lecture-based in which much of the knowledge dissemination is done by teachers. Dubai Latifa High school’s grand campus, in the Grecian architectural design, is located on the perimeter of one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Dubai. The racial, and cultural mix of youth attend this high school

including citizens, immigrants, and the residents of Dubai. Dubai is the place where just 20% of the residents are citizens and 80% of the population consists of foreigners. Out of those 80%, more than 50% are from South Asian countries as a worker or immigrants, and they always struggle to maintain their visas.

Within this context, I pursued this research study to deepen my understanding about the role of the issue-based *Ethical Pathways* curriculum. For this study, the local and immigrant students between 15 to 16 years from Grades 9 or 10 enrolled as participants, who had been living in Dubai for at least one year, without any other prior requirement. Among those participants, there were eight girls and seven boys in the Grade 9 while six girls and seven boys were in Grade 10. These students attended classes for 8 weeks (2 days a week); each day I taught a one hour lesson and in this way students received 16 hours of instruction (16 classes) in total. In addition, three girls, and three boys mix-cultural local or immigrant students were recruited for the focus group, without any other prior requirement. I made sure that all of the participants had been living in Dubai at least for one year, in order to know their understanding about the local issues.

Data collection Methods

A variety of information was collected through these methods below thereby highlighting different perspectives.

- Questionnaire (Pre & Post)
- Focus group interviews
- Teacher’s reflective journals

Questionnaires

The Questionnaire method is easier to arrange and organize the data as compared to other forms of collecting data (Derry 1990). Therefore, I used one as a key method for data collection. The questionnaire, a 4 items open response form (See Appendix A), was devised and

administered to students prior to the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum teaching. I conducted two questionnaires, in the beginning as pre-questionnaire, and end of this study as post-questionnaire. All student participants completed the two questionnaires. I spent the first class session (one hour) collecting students' prior knowledge about world major issues, then I spent the next seven classes teaching the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum. Then, I spent another seven classes to explore local (Dubai) issues, and finally the last class was used to get post questionnaires, and post focused groups interviews.

Pre-Questionnaire: The pre-course questionnaire of four questions, was used in the first class to create a baseline of students' perception towards their understanding about the global issues of the society in which they live, and to know the sense of responsibility they feel.

Post – Questionnaires: In the last class session, I administered a post-test questionnaire to the students consisting of the same questions that students answered on the pre- course questionnaire. By doing this, I was able to gain insight into the effect of the intervention on students' learning.

Focus group interview

According to Cohen, Manion, Morrison, and Morrison, (2007) a focus-group is designed where the topic of discussion focuses on issues of relevance that are to be evaluated. The focus group interview was conducted with students where open ended questions were asked about a specific topic (Robson 2011). Eight student participants, 4 students from 9th and 4 students from 10th grades were selected for the focus group. A purpose of the focus groups to have detailed responses about their understanding of world global issues. (Denscombe 2002). Each focus group lasted an hour, during which students responded to my open ended questions and had conversations with each other. I audio recorded their responses, conversations and later transcribed them.

The discussion was specifically undertaken in a conducive environment in which students were asked to freely share their thoughts and opinions (Hopkins 2008). This focus-group discussion allowed me to see how change in pedagogy influenced the learning outcomes for the students. As I mentioned that the focus-group discussion was held two times during the research with the same students. The data from the first focus-group discussion informed my further practices. I observed how they know about societal issues and how they were feeling about societal issues. The post focus groups interviewed from the same students showed me how the students shifted in their learning of the core themes of the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum during this study. Also, their conversation with each other helped me to understand their willingness to play their roles in minimizing the global issues after studying the EDM curriculum (Laws, Harper, Jones, & Marcus, 2013).

Teachers' Reflective Journal

As Brockbank and McGill (2007) suggest, to facilitate students learning, teachers must themselves engage as reflective practitioners, the journal helped me critically examine how the learning environment and strategies motivate students to actively engage in the learning process. This journal helped me reflect on classroom teaching and allowed me to revisit the lesson and teaching strategies according to students' understanding and reflection. Throughout the research, I used a four column reflective journal, suggested by Moore (2006), and wrote my reflections after every class.

Findings and Analysis

Findings are based on my analysis of the data obtained via questionnaire, focus group interview, teacher's reflective diary, and observations. After my analysis of the responses, the findings were clustered into these three areas of reporting.

- Students' prior knowledge about the major global issues
- Students' understanding of global issues through *Ethical Pathways Curriculum*
- Students' understanding of some of the local (Dubai) issues through *Ethical Pathways Curriculum*

The first part analyses students' initial perception about the global issues and the second and third parts discuss the students' understanding of the global issues through the *Ethical pathways* curriculum.

Students' prior knowledge about the major global issues

In the first class, I collected data with a pre-research questionnaire. In relation to this theme, two questions were asked about the global issues, *1) what are the major challenges of the world? And what is the number –one global challenge in today's time?* This question provided me with an understanding of their vision of global issues.

In analyzing the data, I discovered that the students seemed to emphasize quite specific things with regard to the number-one challenge of the world such as visa issues, handicapped access, and how to save money. Below is the figure 1 that represents students' responses on global issues from the questionnaire.

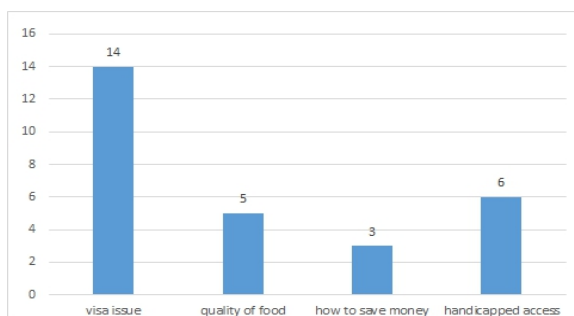


Figure 1: Pre-lesson questionnaire responses on what is the number-one global challenge in today's time?

As the data reveals that 14 of 28 students wrote that visa issues is a major global issue,

5 students mentioned food quality, 3 students thought how to save money can be a world' biggest challenge, and 6 students thought that world needs handicapped access everywhere and this is the kind of issue that needs to be addressed immediately.

After the students completed the questionnaire, I conducted a focus group to get the details about the issues that they mentioned in the questionnaire. In the focus-group interview, further probing also resulted in similar concerns being expressed by the students about the global issues. Some of the responses are listed here.

I am not sure but I saw many handicapped access that means physical disabilities are the major challenges of the world. Also, we need more handicapped access for disabled people and I think this is the biggest issue that all the world is facing. (Sam)

The global issues are not necessarily the way you are facing. It could be the challenges that come to you if you are struggling with your living like in a village and crops not growing properly that could be one of the global issues. Because it is affecting the quality of food. (Ali)

I think it includes many things such as visa issues. When people travel to other country they need a visa to enter in this country, and there is no global visas. Even to come to Dubai we need a visa that expires soon. I think people need a global visa so they can travel anywhere in the world, and I think this is the biggest global issue. (Jose)

Oh yes, residence and work visa should not expire, I think all around the world people are worrying about it. (Zack)

No, I think it can be related to income, means about you earned the money you spend and the money you save. (Sarah)

I think children playing Fort Night (game) is biggest issue in the world. (Zack)

This initial data, from the questionnaire, and the focus group conversation revealed that students identified some of the issues but they don't seem the actual current or major issues that the majority of the world is facing now as per the current *Ethical Pathways* module. *Ethical Pathways* Module follows the list of global challenges and issues of the United Nations. However; it seems that what the students see or hear around them are considered as genuine global issues by them.

Ethical Pathways lessons provide a venue for discussing major issues such as climate change, gender equality, equal opportunities of education, poverty and illiteracy in major continents in the world, peace and security, population, health related issues, and migrations.

Students' understanding of global issues through *Ethical Pathways* curriculum

My aim was to facilitate students' awareness of world issues, and some of the major local issues. To achieve this, I taught sixteen classes (16 hours) in total, where I used content from the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum and designed activities for students to explore global issues such as social, economic, and justice issues. I designed those activities based on the student's prior knowledge about global issues.

Students responses on the first class (from the questionnaire and focused group interview) led me to take a closer look at the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum to explore the ways to make the students aware about their role as a global citizen. I picked the case studies from the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum that illustrated some of the major issues that the world is facing now. Hence, I planned the lesson in a way that it enhanced and developed students' knowledge about some of the major issues such as economic,

environmental and communal issues facing the world today.

In the second, and third classes, before using the case studies, I picked some pictures from Unit 1 "*Our world our challenges,*" of the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum that show poverty, illiteracy, global warming and health issues in the major countries in world countries, and presented them on the slides. To further enhance students' awareness about the major issues of the world I played a short clip "our world our challenges". This video explores a lot of issues the world is facing today; students watched episodes on poverty, illiteracy and global warming. To explore the issues in detail I asked:

- What global issues or conflict did you see here?
- Who are held responsible for these events or issues?

Students thought individually first and then discussed the facts about the video in groups and replied to me as well as exchanged ideas between themselves. Shown here is one student conversation:

Oh my God, we have lots of problems that we did not know. (Sam)

For me, unemployment and poverty are the main issues from the clip and we all are responsible for them. (Jose)

Do you mean we can reduce those issues by ourselves? (Zack)

Of course, if we minimize our greediness then everybody will get food and jobs. In this way poverty can be reduced. (Sam)

This discussion demonstrated that students were becoming aware of some of the issues that faced not just them, but the major population in the world. This conversation and dialogue between the students acknowledge that they even

considered themselves (human beings) responsible for those issues. Sam's and Zack's comments show that students themselves realize the issues and gradually start to discuss the causes and the possible solutions of these issues.

Then in the 4th and 5th classes, students read the case studies from the different parts of the world that exhibit major issues they are facing. Those case studies are taken from the Unit 2 “*Understanding the issues*” in the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum. My purpose to use those case studies was that students just are not aware of those issues, but understand the causes of the

issues. Therefore, for understanding the issues in depth students encountered three major categories of issues; economic issues, social issues and environmental issues of the world. Students divided into 3 groups (mix group of 9th & 10th grades) and each group was assigned a category, i.e. Social, Economic or Environmental, where they had to choose one issue under the assigned category. In the group, students read the assigned case studies, then identified the issue or challenge in this story, and then discussed the root causes and possible solutions about that issue. The students' responses are captured in figure 2 below:

Groups	Major issues	Causes	Possible Solutions
1	(Economic related): Poverty	Lack of education, over-population, diseases and limited employment opportunities	individuals and institutions should provide support to increase awareness about savings, quality education, facilities to get skills
2	(Environmental related issue): Global warming	high use of fossil fuel and electricity	do not waste electricity, change cars to natural gas, conserve water
3	(Social issue): Conflicts and wars	misunderstandings, no dialogues, different religious aspects	UNO should play it's role to minimize the conflict, individuals should respect human rights, respect to pluralism

Figure 2: Categorization of some of the World major issues

During this entire activity, I observed that students deeply engaged in the discussion to identify the issues, and possible causes of the issues. In addition, I noticed that their understanding of the issues are not just roaming around them, but they are aware of the issues that people of the world are facing. While analyzing data, clearly, I could see a shift in the students' understanding of some of the major issues that the majority is facing such as poverty, global warming and conflicts.

In the next class, after completing the above chart, students presented their case study, identified issues, and causes and

possible solutions to the entire class. After the presentation, during the whole class conversation, Ali who identified that improper growth of the crops was the main global issue, in the initial class, asked; “What is our responsibility because there are many people in our country who are also facing such problems?” I took this opportunity and assigned students to write what they can do for the development of the society in which they live in.

Here are two of the suggestions that the students came up with;

We agree that quality education and training facilities for people to get skills could help the people of Congo to fight against poverty. (Jose)

However, we need an efficient leadership who eliminates corruption in the country and will utilize resources responsibly. (Sam)

During all the activities students demonstrated great interest to work in their groups which created a good level of motivation in students and evoked in them a sense of responsibility. This group activity pushed them a little to think about their own context in which they live in and we have regional issues, too.

Students' understanding of major local (Dubai) issues through *Ethical Pathways* curriculum

Therefore, after spending eight classes to explore, and understand the world major issues through *Ethical Pathways* curriculum, I spent another eight classes on understanding local issues (Dubai's issue)

After discussing global issues, I started a lesson entitled "Let us develop an understanding of local (our surrounding) issues" which is based on Unit 3 "*Our surroundings*" for exploring local issues to facilitate students' awareness towards understanding the issues. To achieve this, I used different strategies to understand students' learning and their perceptions throughout this period.

In relation to this theme, in the 9th class I started off by asking a question from students in pre-questionnaire and focus group interviews;

Q: What are some of the major challenges in Dubai? How aware are we aware Dubai's major issues or challenges?

Students' responses informed me that as there is no substantial coverage of media (TV and newspaper) due to contextual sensitivity it is hard to be aware

of the current issues of UAE. A few students reported in the general discussion in the classroom that there were no major problems in Dubai. Some students pointed to minor issues that they and their family face such as finding parking for the cars. Overall, students' responses don't reflect some of the major Dubai's issues in Dubai such as running out of fresh water and labor issues. Therefore, some students pointed out minor issues which were frustrating for them and their families like finding a car parking spot or getting tickets. For example, Haya said in the focus group interview;

"I think only getting fines and tickets is the main issue of UAE."

Zack agreed and responded to Haya;

"For me, finding a parking for a vehicle is also an issue in UAE"

Interestingly students describe the issues which are disturbing them personally, although the issue of traffic jams leads to the awareness about other important issues like energy wastage and global warming. However, they did not think about the lack of fresh water or energy wasting in UAE but they pointed to the traffic jam and issues of car parking.

Such responses made me a little bit worried, which was evident from my reflection that day;

How can I start to guide them about the major local issues which could be understood by students and their parents due to the conservative society of UAE? How can I prepare them to get ready to accept their role as an active citizen of the country? (Teacher's Reflection- 1st Feb 2017)

These views from students led me to think about teaching strategies which I could apply to facilitate students' awareness about social service through exploring local issues. For that I again explored the *Ethical*

Pathways curriculum, and created an activity about teaching the current local issues to students so that they can be encouraged to serve the society.

For exploring current local issues, I provided some basic information about current Dubai issues through newspaper clippings. The clippings describe most urgent issues of Dubai such as shortage of fresh water, wastage of energy, non-existing recycling, labor issues. Then I divided students into groups and allowed them to discuss the issues presented in the articles. Students' discussion showed that before reading these clips from newspapers, they were not aware of local issues such as running out of fresh water and energy usage. Findings suggest that this basic information played a vital role in students' understanding about urgent issues facing Dubai. While analyzing data, I found that students learned some of the facts and figures written on the charts and graphs about the local issues in the articles. One of my students Haya said;

"In Dubai water is becoming more valued than oil. It will disappear and run out in our lives because 70% of fresh water is being used in homes and 30% in businesses."

Similarly, Ali expressed her views in her feedback diary on energy issue;

"Dubai needs to put more efforts towards important issues of the energy sector, like generating power and desalination of water. I believe, there is no future of Dubai without sustainable energy in order to keep continuing their developments."

Findings indicated that now students at least knew some urgent issues of Dubai through articles and group discussion. I prepared a role play activity for inspiring the students with human empathy and sympathy so they could get involved in social services practically.

Role play activity was designed about the changes that have taken place in the modern life of Dubai. Students discussion revealed how some of these changes have improved their lives however; others have created new problems and challenges in Dubai as well. While analyzing the data, this activity made the students understand how they manage the changes so that it improves our quality of life instead of becoming a problem. Findings also tell that a role play activity helped the students to know the causes of the current issues in UAE which led them to bring some possible solutions.

Haya, acting as a person who wasted a lot of energy, says,

"Oh my God, I wasted so much natural resources which I cannot re-produce."

One of the students Ali came up with the idea after playing a role of thirsty man, *"Please Save water, save life and save Dubai."*

One of the students from the same group quoted,

"Each and every drop of fresh water counts."

Later on, for getting deep understanding of how to address these local issues, I invited a guest speaker from NGO(ABC). ABC is a recycling company that provides recycle bins on demands. schools, and industries, and even residents can ask the companies to provide the recycle bins on a weekly basis. However, the important thing is to educate ourselves, and others to use those bins. Students inspired through the work that ABC company is doing to save Dubai, and wrote a letter to the principal to have a recycle bin from ABC company on daily basis. Then students-participants asked the principal to go in different classes in the school and provide the information about the recycling and how to use those bins.

At this stage, students had enough information about the main issues of Dubai which our local people are also facing. Therefore, they feel little responsibility to make others aware about those issues, and how we can play a vital role in minimizing them.

In the last class (sixteenth class), I conducted a post-questionnaire, in which I did see a clear shift in students' understanding of global, and local issues. In the focus groups interview, students discussed not just the issues that the majority of the world is facing but discuss the causes, and the possible solution of them. In the focus groups interview, students were so excited about using the recycle bins for recycling of some of the resources and seemed motivated to educate others about it.

Discussion

Learning is defined as a change in skills, knowledge and attitude of the learners; both the definitions of learning and teaching show their interdependence on each other (McKinney, 2004). In light of the above, the findings of this research suggest that during the exploration of global and local issues, students critically engaged in the process of learning, which gradually helped them to find the relevance of the text to their societies.

While knowing about issues, students felt that applying the knowledge to the “real world” situations motivated them to become involved in finding a solution to some of the poverty problems people encountered (Butin, 2003). The findings indicate that approaches to explore issues for enhancing social services in students took the learners beyond the text and got them involved in the practical application where they learnt a sense of civic responsibility (Dewey, 1937). This shows in several statements made by the students (see 11) as well as from data which was gathered and analyzed during research.

The findings of the study showed that exploring issues with students

strengthened the suggested pedagogical approach of the curriculum where students’ learning lead them through a guided inquiry, reflective articulation and creative expression of their thoughts” (Teachers guide, 2011, 49). I used different strategies to explore the issue for producing awareness in students about social services for example using video clips, where content of clips brings perspective of the outside world into the classroom which gives real life experiences to students (Oddone, 2011). Video clips help to make the curriculum even more relevant to students’ lives (Brennan, & Resnick, 2012).

As a teacher, I learned that exploring global and local issues contributes in promoting a sense of social responsibility in students where they look at their active role in the society and community (Rodrigo-González & Caballer-Tarazona, 2015) as it is also shown in Sam and Zack quotes (see 16). However, social and community-services activities are not a huge part of schools’ regular practices in Dubai context. That is why I found through this research that students were not much aware of the local or Dubai’s issues. The reason could be a print and digital media in Dubai which is not so strong to explore the issues facing Dubai’s residents (Senteni, & Tamim, 2011).

In addition, the findings about exploring local issues led me to think that the majority of students belong to the well settled family in Dubai. Therefore, interestingly, students pointed out the issues about parking the cars in rush hours and traffic jam rather than thinking about global warming and energy issues in Dubai. In that case, *Ethical Pathways* curriculum helped them explore the major issues of Dubai which came out in student’s post questionnaire and focus group interviews.

Conclusion

Literature reviews report that students can play an active role in the process of learning if they are emotionally

involved in the learning process (Dewey, 1937; Vygotsky, 1978). Dewey (1937) argued that learners need to be empathizing for creative learning towards problem solving and utilizing hands-on experiences. Interestingly, the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum offers the approaches and teaching methods that help students gain empathy and sympathy to understand others' pain.

In conclusion, the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum provides an additional means to reaching the educational aims and objectives of this curriculum. However, there is need to use different approaches in teaching classes for producing awareness of issues and challenges locally and globally (Clarke, & Drudy, 2006). The reason is that classes in the *Ethical Pathways* schools are based on text centered-learning where students get fact based Islamic educations and they do not engage in the process of critical thinking. In contrast, I took an approach where students focus on real life issues and challenges, which engages them in critical thinking through a variety of teaching techniques. In this way, the *Ethical Pathways* curriculum helps students to bring and use their faith-based learning outside the classroom where others can benefit from their services. I also developed my learning that external sources like video clips help the students to inspire with human empathy and sympathy which enhance their motivation to play their active role to society for minimizing the issues. All over, the strategies for making students understand about local and worldwide issues which enhance their responsiveness, bring new life in the classroom. In addition, students enhanced problem solving skills and made a process of learning and teaching more enjoyable.

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Pre & Post-Course Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

- 1 What are the major challenges or issues of the world? And what is the number – one global challenge in today’s time?

- 2 Who do you think is the responsible for these issues?

- 3 What are the major challenges or issues of Dubai?

- 4 How would you contribute to minimize any of the local issues?
