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CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE WORLD AND
HOW DOES IT AFFECT AND REFORM THE TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM IN CHINA:
A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF HISTORY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY
YUTING C. SHUAI

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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BETHEL UNIVERSITY

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HOW DOES IT AFFECT AND REFORM THE TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM IN CHINA:
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YUTING C. SHUAI

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APPROVED

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Abstract

By studying a number of key factors in the promotion of character education core values at schools across Western countries, this research aimed to focus on providing an in-depth view of how Chinese character education principles been studied and modified, that have been implemented in different level of schools and discuss its future prospects. It seeks to explore why the new reformed curriculum requires the teaching materials be contemporary and back to the nature of education. In promoting character education in some specific elementary schools, this paper analyzes the challenges and difficulties faced in Chinese schools, and suggests improvement methods. The optimal goal of this study is to assure character education teaching materials should match with the teaching strategies in a variety of ways and blended with a rich mixture of real-life examples of moral education, including but not limiting to a comprehensive courses such as social, historical, and geographical knowledge on the basis of character education. In sum, the study is included as followed: development process and implement strategies for character education should be integrate with school-based curriculum, formal and extra-curriculum. The leadership of principals, teachers, and communities are the foundation of character education to support a persistent and endure the success of character moral education.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Motivation of Research

What is morality? Morality refers to the principle adopted by a person to make decisions between right and wrong (Ambrogia, 2017). All human beings have to respect and take into account this thousand-year-old tradition at all times and in all over the world, full of wisdom and moral probity (Ambrogia, 2017). A right or wrong decision refers to an individual's consistent attitude and behavior towards reality. Virtue refers to the words and deeds that generally conform to social norms (Boyd et al., 2018). At the personal level, virtue and morals are intangible assets of an individual and can determine the success or failure of one's lifelong journey. At the social level, the maintenance of social justice and social development on the goodness of a solid moral foundation of human beings (Lockwood, 1997), which fosters a more equitable and prosperous society. Moral characteristic traits can be seen as a series of indispensable necessities to an individual both at a personal level and social level.

The main goal of moral education is to establish students' precise moral concepts and ensure students establish a sense of how to practice moral behavior so that students can develop persistent behavior by following the rules of social activities, and meeting the needs of society. In a broad sense, character education embraces the cultivation of social values to promote the sustainable development of a society (Murestiyanto, 2017).

In the early of 19th century, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China decided to proceed with the reformation of its education system. As one of the fundamental education programmes in China; it is notably pivotal to improve the quality of teaching ideology in character education implementation. The main idea of this research thesis concentrates on how one should blend moral education with traditional curriculum at primary school levels in order to

consolidate character development in education at young age. There are a few guiding questions that lead toward the central theme:

1. How can moral education be integrated into the existing traditional curriculum effectively?

This question will be discussed in Chapter 3 as an in-depth review and analysis of the integration of character education with the traditional academic curriculum process in China.

2. What are the potential benefits of such a blending of moral education with current curriculum contexts in terms of academic achievement?
3. What are the challenges and barriers in implementing this blended approach to the present education system, especially under a circumstance where scores matter utmost?
4. How do we measure the effectiveness or whether implementation of character education is necessary for today's education frame?
5. What are the best practices and strategies for assessing the impact of blended education in the current educational frame?
6. What are the approaches and strategies in applying such methodology of learning and teaching in terms of blending education strategies?

It can then be classified into two ways of teaching methods: direct and embedded in the current curriculum. Both methods can be teacher-led and teachers-guided with students applying different moral principles and theories within classrooms. Regardless of which option is implemented in the education system, according to Lickona (1996), character describes an individual's core beliefs and values; it focuses on whether a person possesses virtues or "character strengths" such as "integrity and gratitude." Character education and moral education are interlinked. They are intangible tools that help and lead people to do the right thing and be

profitable to society.

Moral education teaches students the truth and belief of being righteous and enables students to apply positive values from their heart during the learning process, including knowing goodness, being positive and making right decision, and putting them into practice in life (Lickona, 1992). The purpose of the implementation of moral education in schools is to enable students master the skills in making righteous decisions, and the process of how to let students understand making the right decision is founded on “how we should think ethically” (Lickona, 1992, pp. 359). School character education therefore creates a comprehensive view of concept of moral education, which constrains students to improve their morality.

Since ancient times, the cultivation of moral character has always been one of the important contents of educational purpose. The cultivation of “scholars’ in Chinese is to cultivate gentlemen (Junzi/君子),. Junzi, refer to a human being who has lofty beliefs, and it is a moral model integrating benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith (Yang, 2018). The Greek philosopher Socrates mentioned that the “greatest happiness of mankind is to be able to talk every day about moral matters” (Brickhouse & Smith, 2019, pp.139). Morality is a set of social norms, which include different standards and interpretations of moral laws, but the real challenge with morality education is how everyone behaves when facing morality dilemmas, particularly in a society where material wealth predominated over other public affairs. Therefore, the Ministry of Education of China announced the National medium-long-term education reform and development plan, vigorously promoting moral education implementing framework (MEC, 2012). Moral education is the core competency of education, and school is one of the main places for the implementation of moral education. All members within a school, from principals, directors, program directors to teachers are all responsible for the effectiveness and success of its

implemented curriculum. They all play a very prominent role in the educational culture, teaching of curriculum, parents education, and resource usage of the school. Consequently, in the course of promoting character education throughout different levels of schools, elevating effective school authoritative influence and actively advocating for the integration of moral education into students' learning daily experiences are must.

Research Objectives

The topic of blending teaching and learning in alignment with character education and traditional curriculum addresses the importance of recognition of holistic education that goes beyond academic achievement. While traditional curriculum focuses primarily on subject knowledge and cognitive skills, incorporating character education into the educational framework can foster the development of students' moral values and ethics. This topic is particularly relevant in the present world, where there is a growing need to nurture responsible and empathetic individuals who can navigate complicated ethical dilemmas. The final destination of education is educating children to grow into leaders with the knowledge, skills and substantial ability, and strong inner moral compass, to usher purpose-driven lives and make positive changes in the world. With a desire to contribute to the revitalization of traditional Chinese education system, and inspired by the existing research evidence of moral education; therefore, this research is focused on the efforts to maintain academic learning while prioritizing character education in all aspects of the curriculum .

Generally, the Ministry of Education of China can be divided into three levels: the Ministry of Education, provinces directly under the central government, and school levels. Schools at different levels are encouraged to set up professional development teams that are responsible for educating teachers in the long run, enhancing teachers' teaching resourcefulness

in planning and organizing learning materials with moral characteristics that confederated with existing traditional academic curricula.

With that being stated, by blending character education with the traditional elementary curriculum, educators can create a learning environment that nourishes students' moral reasoning, gratitude, and empathy characteristic traits. The approach will recognize the importance of well-equipped moral values not only to shape students' behavior when tackling challenges but to ensure they contribute to our world positively. To be specific, selected references would expand the understanding of blending character education and traditional curriculum. These findings provide insights and authoritative methodologies through the process of taking character education theory into practice, which are the methods of including character education with present curriculum.

The purpose of character education curriculum in Western countries schools is to cultivate civilized citizens, and the precise destination is to cultivate completely moral human beings. In the 1970s, Kohlberg regarded moral education as the cultivation of "philosophical Kings" (Kohlberg, 1989, as cited in Snarey & Samuelson, 2008), put forward the new Socratic moral education level. The goal of character education proposed by several famous scholars, Lickona, Plato, Kohlberg, and moral education expert Rickener at different periods of time, supported that the goal of character education is to nurture the moral values of respect and responsibility. These two moral values should be covered and highlighted across schools moral characteristic education is as pivotal as other academic sections, such as reading, writing, and math.

Agbool and Tsai (2012) also outlined character education as a growing discipline with the deliberate attempt to maximize students' ethical behavior; in other words, when a student is

attributed as having a good character as it is commonly used, that student also possesses some other qualities such as honesty, enthusiasm, consistency and trustworthiness (Agbool & Tsai, 2012). Character education is not a new idea. John Wilson stated that education should be seen as a tool of various authorities like huge corporations and institutional settings (Agbool & Tsai, 2012). The character education should be integrated in the daily activities in every possible chance (Milliren & Messer, 2009).

With the support of research evidence, this thesis seeks to leverage research evidence to explore the implementation of character curriculum across countries, initially inspired by Western educational models, and its potential in redefining the holistic education. Specifically, this thesis aims to demonstrate that education should not solely revolve around the acquisition of core subject knowledge but should also emphasize the development of students' creative, critical, and communication skills (Nisa et al., 2020). The motivation behind this study lies in recognizing the significance of holistic education and the obligation to nurture students with strong character and ethical traits. More specifically, the trend of character education in China has been influenced by the United States Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Framework (CASEL) and other character curriculum from Western world as early as in last century; that is, in addition to being a place for the transfer of knowledge, schools should also pay attention to the whole-person education, development and cultivation of individual character and potential of students.

Through phenomenological research and literature reviews, this research will present how character education based on the standard academic curriculum can internalize positive moral values in students by integrating and the reformation of Chinese compulsory curricula. Instead of adopting a separate subject mode in the past, integrate character education into the

creation of school curriculum, teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, and the overall culture of the school community.

Scope of the Study

In Western countries, for example, in the North Americas, there is no national uniform syllabi or textbooks, and the curriculum content of public schools in each state is stipulated by the state constitution and the state education policy; therefore, the curriculum is flexible and changeable for all subjects including the integration of moral education. In some situations, the school itself is responsible for setting their own moral education content. That means, some states are able to have their own separate courses of moral character education, and some states could offer a comprehensive social course including civic and ethics materials. Some Western-styled educators believe social science, including religious education, is a compulsory course in life, which belongs to the scope of moral education, and often interchangeably with SEL (Social Emotional Learning).

The SEL, as outlined by the CASEL, an organization founded in the United States that emphasizes as a process through which students and adults “acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills” to the core competencies (CASEL, 2020). That means SEL is not only about social-emotional skills, but about understanding one’s own attitudes and how they contribute to behavior so that one can make righteous decisions. According to CASEL, the goals are to develop self-awareness and self-management skills for school and for life success; to use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationship, and to demonstrate decision making skills and responsible behavior in personal, school, and community settings (CASEL, 2020).

Conversely, the importance of character education had been challenged in China because

schools and families only wish to emphasize the academic coursework, and character education is categorized as an extracurricular activity. However, this extensive use of academic coursework overlook a thorough exploration of the nature learning, the value of education, and the prerequisite considerations of discerning the worth and necessity of students. In the matter of urgency in cultivating a noble citizen, from the practical perspective, the Chinese government started to examine and improve the character education model, cultivate a moral initiative, and promote the transformation of students' moral knowledge and practice. Therefore, the application and practical evidence will be presented in the following sections, which collectively interpret how other countries have been promoting the formation of students' excellent character as pioneers, and then examine how the Ministry of Education of China implements and reform its latest education curriculum with moral character education.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview and Meaning of Character Education

Positive character traits benefit people for a lifetime. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education” (King, 1947). Over 2000 years ago Aristotle noted, “All adults involved with children either help or thwart children’s growth and development, whether we like it, intend it or not” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p.6). That being said, moral education nurtures children’s principles of human behavior and enables them to learn from their hearts. The American scholar Lickona (1992) considered character as a virtue, or a group of people, and consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. Character is the sum of the different good traits of an individual; meanwhile, virtue is defined as a behavior that is in accordance with ethical and moral norms. According to Karimova (2018), character means an individual’s personality shaped by habits and the unique behavior of an individual. The Character of an individual is shaped by his or her habits and the unique personality of an individual. It means that the behavior that a person exhibits marks the individual, group, or culture, and that type of behavior becomes a clear indicator for others to recognize who we are in the world.

Lickerman (2011) pointed out that character education is not only a discussion of right or wrong values, nor does it refer to a single philosophical approach to teaching programs. Character education is a collective term that includes traits that reveal themselves only in specific traits such as honesty, virtue, and kindness (Karimova, 2018). The term character consists of character and virtue which not only retain the connotation of personality but also have strong external as well as stable internal psychological characteristics, and the external temperament and behavior that conform to the moral norms of an individual’s conduct (Berkowitz, 2005, 2011,

2014, 2017).

In the midst of the learning process, students learn the value of good virtues, and recognize and accept these good traits; the study of Berkowitz (2011) highlighted that education generally has three main ultimate goals: academic achievement, character development, and civil citizen. The basic principles of character education teach children how to behave, Lickona (1992), a well-known American character education scholar, argued that character should consist of three levels to help students' behavior change cognitively (Lickona, 1992). In recognition and corresponding to the official policy terminology of the Ministry of Education in China, this study is in line with the reformation of the educational framework, which promotes education for optimal positive student development, including character development and behavioral performance (Lickona, 1996). In accordance with the argument stated by Lew (2006), in terms of the "cognitive" aspect of character education, the learning process should take into the account developmental state of children and age-appropriate curriculum contents. Corresponding to this study, social-emotional competence, and civil knowledge, skills, and character models are collectively referred to as a set of character education (Davidson et al., 2008, January).

Traditionally, moral education theories have been divided between those assigned to the notion of what is right and those that seems not right as the most important factor (Boyd & Thorsen, 2018). In fact, long before the director of the Harvard Center for Moral Education, Lawrence Kohlberg theorized that individuals acquire and refine their moral judgment through a series of universal, invariant stages (as cited in Doris, 1978, October), where Kohlberg classified the development of moral judgment into six stages: pre-conventional moral reasoning, conventional level, and post-conventional moral development (as cited in Doris, 1978, October, p. 35). In view of Kohlberg's stages of moral development, one must answer to the question of

what the character or moral education is. More specifically, these stages lead to a path that includes a discussion of moral conflict situations, knowledge of development matches, encouragement of role-taking, and a focus on rational thinking. In terms of the practice aspect of character education, schools should emphasize the development of character through experimental learning and guidance. In other words, as Johnson and Hanson (2015) agreed in their research, character education is a way of doing everything in the school that influences the kind of human beings that students become one day; it involves recognizing the core common values and socializing of students to develop them through role models, legends, and heroes, stories, and narrative. Through education and activities, the school helps students understand the meaning of character education and internalize their “character traits”.

Principle and Pedagogy of the Character Education Implementation Globally

In the 1970s, Doris (1978) re-emphasized Lawrence Kohlberg’s perspective that human beings must learn by focusing on cooperation rather than competition, which especially is essential for progressing through stages in the development of a global moral perspective. Doris (1978) reviewed the stages of moral development as a basis for education based on several practical studies of Lawrence Kohlberg’s approach and concluded that the aim of moral education, or a definition of moral education, is to motivate the student’s moral reasoning from one stage of development to the next (Doris, 1978). All societies should expect citizens to cooperate with others to achieve social progress and to be willing to understand and manage their possible agitations in order to have an understanding of others, and then be motivated and be able to be empowered to follow the guidelines of character definitions.

Studied by Doris (1978) and a thematic analysis of elementary contexts by Pattaro (2016 February), character education programs that were associated with school, student, child,

education, approach and model, which highlighted more and more literature research towards context, subjects and definition of character education. To be specific, the association between character education and academics shows clearly how the literature carefully looks at the relationship between character educational approach and academic achievement (Pattaro, 2016, p. 10). In other words, the interest in Pattaro's research of character education refers to a specific attention to the school curriculum, to the associations with curriculum and program. Based on Pattaro, when examined elementary school environments, character education typically consists of a collection of methods for implementation. It is evident that these strategies have a substantial impact on enhancing social and emotional awareness, encouraging positive social behavior, shaping affirmative attitudes, fostering problem-solving abilities, and mitigating risky behaviors (Pattaro, 2016, p. 19).

Collectively, it is reasonable to conclude that character education has been widely impacted in the last decade throughout several countries, including China. The Chinese government's underlying philosophy of educational perspectives, curriculum, and even family and social contexts, reveal a gradual change in the national value system, which underpins how character educational perspectives and curricular instruction have changed significantly over this period (Minister of Education The People's Republic of China [MEC], 2021).

By integrating moral education into the ongoing conventional curriculum, schools can provide a comprehensive educational experience that addresses intellectual growth and character education development. On account of this, the success of education is very determined by where education is able to change students (Nisa et al., 2013), and in a sense, these changes can help students grow their potential and students are able to get the benefits directly from the development of their personality. In other words, they explained that the implementation of

character education is intended to nurture students in developing good character and sound knowledge to care about global issues and to prepare for the demands of an ever-changing world. The U.S. Department of Education (2005) also clearly defined character education as an explicit learning process whereby students in the school community understand, embrace, and practice ethical values such as respect for others, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for themselves and others (2005, May 31).

Relevant research evidence stated in the review of Bring character education into the classroom by Agboola (2012), the significance of character education must be integrated into the present curriculum framework to highlight the importance of blending character education development into everyday classroom activities. By blending moral education with the curriculum, educators have an obligation to create a learning environment that bolsters students' moral reasoning, empathy, gratitude, and social responsibility. This approach recognizes that education should not only aim to impact knowledge but shape young learners who are well-equipped to navigate ethical challenges and contribute positively to society (Tsai, 2012).

With the support of research evidence, the term character education will be used in this study for two main reasons: firstly, it is in line with the official policy terminology of the Ministry of Education of China; secondly, character education covers both 'character' personality traits and 'moral' social norms. That being the case, this paper will focus on applying a national curriculum that was originally from a Western country, and envisioned a new type of international education. This education model should not solely revolve around building knowledge within the core curriculum, but it should also be designed to cultivate students' creative, critical, and communicative attributes (Nisa et al., 2013). Education must help students understand what good moral character is, and once students grasp the sense of it, they can do

good deeds through school education and activities. Students, therefore, are helped to understand the contents of character education and internalized it into the school's curriculum. On top of that, the integration of character education within the curriculum can support students to develop essential characteristics such as integrity, respect, and compassion.

Virtue ethics is concerned with what kind of person the student should be rather than what they should do. Therefore, students with virtuous behavior can naturally make correct moral judgments; social learning theory believes that seeing the wise and learning from good is a way to learn moral behavior through observation and imitation. In this way, teachers and schools pay attention to the creation of a classroom environment and to the development of a relationship with the students to improve the effectiveness of character education implementation. Meanwhile, the classroom social system interacts with peers so that students not only learn through direct experiences but also through observation of their own behavior. The practice of character education in schools across countries should be on the ethics of caring. The caring relationship between teachers and students can promote children's self-identification and help students develop the ability to care to manifest the power of human feelings as suggested by Doris (1978, Oct.).

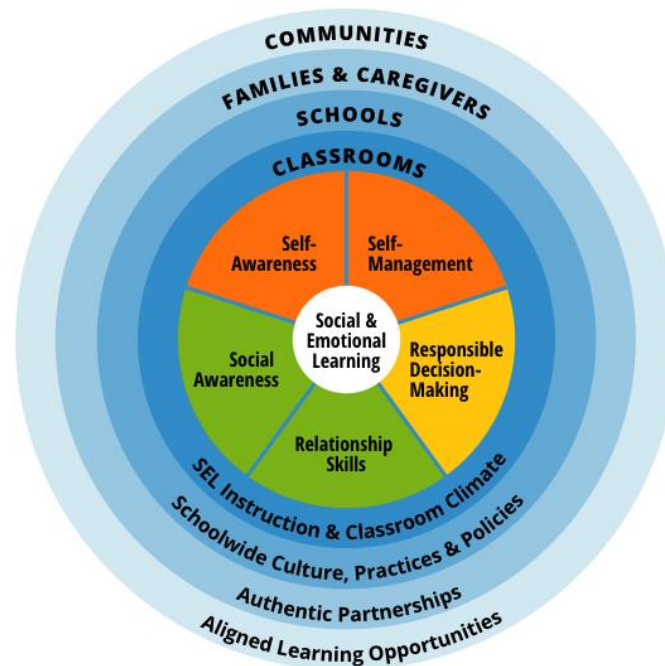
Character Education in the United States

The CASEL organization, founded in the United States, supports schools and families in nurturing younger generations and promotes the development of positive mental, social, and emotional behaviors (CASEL, 2023). CASEL suggests that social and emotional competency can be implemented through the five dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making. The first two are interventions from an individual perspective, while the last three are interventions from a social and

interpersonal perspective.

By the definition of CASEL, an American SEL Education Research Institute, the term CASEL refers to Collaborative, Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. This means, social and emotional education and character education is an interchangeable concept, and a dispensable process in the education industry and children development. The SEL process, as highlighted by CASEL, it helps children to acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand their emotions, and establish positive relationships, and therefore make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2023). After years of practice, the CASEL organization in the United States has proposed that effective social and emotional learning programs are characterized by four aspects, Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit, which are summed up in one sentence: the principles of CASEL are serialized, and should be proactive.

Figure 1: The CASEL Wheel



Note. To recognize and understand the nature of SEL and integrate it into the character learning and teaching, CASEL proposed the above “CASEL Wheel” framework that better explain the five major

areas of students' abilities.

As an important skill in social life, SEL learning can help students establish a positive attitude, learn to regulate their emotions, and enhance resistance. It is particularly aligned with the concept of character education that aims to cultivate students' future all-round development to cope with the pressure and challenges of study in their life.

Drawing on the Social and Emotional Competence Model of the CASEL, several cities across China began exploring and developing the regional curriculum from kindergarten to high school in 2009 (MEC, 2018). Meanwhile, Guangdong Middle schools also drew on the theories of CASEL to explore localized curricula, and developed a series of three social and emotional learning programs that focus on the relationship between individuals and others. These practical explorations and local experiences have laid the foundation for the reformation and deepening of quality education in China. The importance of understanding emotions, and mastering social interaction skills appears more important and should integrate the SEL learning into the K-12 education as early as possible.

Character Education in the UK

According to the Jubilee Center for Character & Virtues applications across schools in the UK, schools are encouraged to work with the governments and non-profit organizations with the aim of developing character education programs as a means to ensure students establish character traits, and with the assistant of positive behaviors to nourish students to move forward to a life with strong self-confident and self-assured attitudes. One example takes place at the University of Birmingham, which has a robust, rigorous research center. Their evidence-based research offers research on the importance of the development of good character and virtues and the benefits they bring to individuals and society (Jubilee Center Framework for Character Education in Schools [JCFCE], 2013, 2017, 2022). The Jubilee Center for Character & Virtues

categorizes character into the four categories as shown in the table below:

Figure 2: The Building Block of Character

Intellectual Virtues	Moral Virtues	Civic Virtues	Performance Virtues
Character traits necessary for discernment, right action and the pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding.	Character traits that enable one to act well in situations that require an ethical response.	Character traits that are necessary for engaged responsible citizenship, contributing to the common good.	Character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the intellectual, moral and civic virtues.
<u>Examples:</u> <i>Autonomy,</i> <i>Critical thinking,</i> <i>Curiosity,</i> <i>Judgment,</i> <i>Reasoning,</i> <i>Reflecting,</i> <i>resourcefulness.</i>	<u>Examples:</u> <i>Compassion,</i> <i>Courage,</i> <i>Gratitude,</i> <i>Honesty,</i> <i>Humility,</i> <i>Integrity,</i> <i>justice, respect.</i>	<u>Examples:</u> <i>Citizenship,</i> <i>Civility,</i> <i>Community,</i> <i>Awareness,</i> <i>Neighborliness,</i> <i>Service,</i> <i>Volunteering.</i>	<u>Examples:</u> <i>Confidence,</i> <i>Determination,</i> <i>Motivation,</i> <i>Perseverance,</i> <i>Resilience,</i> <i>Leadership,</i> <i>teamwork.</i>



Practical Wisdom (phronesis:from Ancient Greek) is the integrative virtue, developed through experience and critical reflection, which enable us to perceive, know, desire and act with good sense. This includes discerning, deliberative action in situations where virtues collide.



Flourishing Individuals and Society

Another example of a project funded by the Jubilee Center for Character & Virtues is the Knightly Virtues Programme, which focuses on character education curriculum learning in elementary schools, providing teachers at the primary level with information on where they can potentially integrate the framework into their daily educational agenda, practices, and routine (JCFCE, 2014). This Knightly Virtues Program was developed and piloted the character education program is clear to schoolteachers and the teaching of subject knowledge through the successful framework guidelines. By successfully developing and piloting teaching character through literacy material, teachers will be able to understand that character education and academic knowledge are inseparable and discrete. This particular curriculum and materials development remind schools that students' learning experiences of conscious literacy materials and structured reflections create entitled strong foundations of understanding of character and virtue.

Character Education in Indonesia

Schaps, et al. (1996) indicated that students' sense of the school as a caring community is a mediating variable in a diverse range of important school outcomes, including reading comprehension and other academic indicators (as cited in Davidson et al., 2008). Other than the recapitulation of the importance of character education in North America, character virtues are

also reinforced in Europe and in Asia. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia [MECI] made a breakthrough by implementing the 2013 curriculum, which is based on character and moral education competence. The curriculum involves four elements: graduates competency standards, content standards, standard process, and standard of assessment (Nisa et al., 2020), and was intended to produce students who are competitive, innovative, creative, collaborative, and character to live as individuals who are faithful, productive, and able to contribute to the community and the world. Seeing this phenomenon, in Murestiyanto's study (2017), the character education values are well emphasized, and analysis of such importance in shaping attitudes and social behavior requires effort for students to have the knowledge and display perspectives that aligned with positive attitudes and affirmative social behavior. Through a case study that takes place from Murestiyanto's research in an Indonesian school, character education was expected to form as a complex of integration that cultivates a student as an individual in accordance with what is desired, and acts in accordance with the positive values and norms in society.

Murestiyano collected data from interviews and observations and concluded that the implementation of learning is not just an activity, but a "project" that requires interaction and communication between teachers and students to allocate all available learning resources to allow the actor of student learning (Murestiyanto, 2017).

Nowadays, character education is supposed to balance good social behavior with academic achievement; learning in schools should not only focus on students' academic abilities but also pay attention to their affective aspects (Murestiyanto, 2017). The ultimate goal of schools in Indonesia is to help students grow and develop their character traits according to their potential, provide a basic education with a curriculum that does not burden children, but

facilitates an infrastructure that makes children enjoy school and engage there with a happy heart (Murestiyanto, 2017). Moreover, schools develop their own systematic framework by implementing a unique learning model for students, which ensures students are more comfortable and able to develop themselves. To respond to the above phenomenon, Indonesia undertook the education reformation with the values of creating a curriculum embedded in cultural values and national character.

Character Education in Korea

Korea enacted the Character Education Promotion Act in July 2015. The first article of the Act states that “education is the benefit of mankind” (Character Education Promotion Act, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). The purpose of this act is to contribute to the development of our society by educating citizens of sound and upright character and to ensure our children live independently while qualified for citizenship to contribute to the development of a democratic nation and the commonwealth of mankind (Character Education Promotion Act, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). In 2015, the Korean government introduced the Promotion of Character Education Act, Lee (2013) highlighted the importance of the Character Education Promotion Act, as it was a required curriculum in character education. The goals of character education development in Korea are divided into four stages: early childhood program (kindergarten), elementary school, middle school, and high school. The goal particularly for the elementary level is centered on theoretical knowledge and is conducted mainly through the nationally developed educational curriculum (Lee, 2022).

As clarified by the Ministry of Education of Korea and conducted by researcher Yang in “A study on the development of character education through subject education”, incorporating character education into the subject curriculum requires its integration at every stage of

curriculum revision. Following this approach, revisions to the subject curriculum will be made and communicated, and ensuring a systematic and ongoing implementation of character-focused education (Yang et al., 2013). All levels of government and all 12,000 elementary and middle schools in Korea are required to develop character education programs, and teachers are required to attend character education training. All teachers are also required to attend character education training. All teacher training colleges and universities are required to make character education a compulsory subject (Lee, 2013).

The Ministry of Education of Korea (MOEK) has revised to a great degree on the education process to describes the concept of character education in the Character Education Promotion Act, and redefines character education as the careful cultivation of a decent and healthy inner self and the cultivation of good human qualities necessary for communicating with others. To be specific, MEST (2009), the national preschool curriculum, namely the “Nuri Curriculum”, was implemented in 2012 for five years old and extended to include 3- and 4-year-olds in 2013. The curriculum emphasizes character education and promotes continuity between early childhood education and primary schooling (as cited in Lee, 2013). MEST (2012) identified six major character traits emphasized in early childhood programs, as follows: care, respect, cooperation, sharing, order, and Filial Piety (MEST 2012, as cited in Lee, 2013). Filial Piety is an important virtue in Korean culture, where children are taught to respect their parents, grandparents, and elders.

Character Education in Singapore

In 2021, the Ministry of Education, Singapore (MOES) updated the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum, the CCE curriculum framework draws on the new framework of the existing version of 21st Century Student Core Literacies [SCL], which

enhances the relationship between core values and social-emotional competencies. The new framework of core literacy for 21st-century students in Singapore is shown below in figure 3:

Figure 3: Framework of Core Literacy



Note. The above figure emphasizes the interconnectedness of the core values, social and emotional competencies and civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills that are crucial in students.

Core Value, is the foundation of character, is the principal guideline for all human behavior. Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-curricular Skills, which is guideline for managing self in how to deal with others efficiently and responsibly. Being a responsible citizen to own society and country. Students will learn values through these three overarching ideas, and character curriculum is delivered through approaches such as the story-telling or skills practices, role modeling by teachers and peers.

The core value of reformed including respect, responsibility, perseverance, integrity, caring, and harmony align with social and emotional management skills, which encompass self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and making

responsible decision (MOES, 2022). The entire Singapore character and civic education curriculum is structured into four components: character and civic education classes, teacher-led classes, a school-based character, and civic education curriculum, and a module on character and civic education instruction (MOES, 2022). Singapore's character education curriculum focuses on developing students' self-awareness and their social and emotional management skills to achieve personal health and balance. In order to develop an honest and kind personality, and make moral and ethical decisions, students in Singapore are encouraged to focus on interpersonal communication skills. In addition, students are encouraged to cooperate with others, maintain respectful relationships, and demonstrate perseverance in the face of adversity. Singapore's character education highlights a sense of belonging to the country and pride in being a Singaporean; and cherishes Singapore's diverse and cohesive social culture in the meantime (MOES, 2022). Translating these values into the curriculum, students should then be morally educated towards being able to appreciate Singapore's desired moral values, and community would be more appraisal of moral teaching policies.

Theoretical Studies of the Reformation of Character Education in China

Berkowitz and Bier (2005) provided with a strong perspective that curriculum-based character education initiated positive changes in students. They reported that the internalization of moral character through the development of habits and the support of an administration that provides good moral leadership support and school-based social and learning programs are all critical components of character education. These findings support that character education is a way of cultivating and learning that leads to the strengthening and development of mental and behavioral learners.

In 2002, the Ministry of Education of China (MEC) officially launched the new

curriculum reform guidelines with the original “Ideology and Morality” framework for the elementary school stage (Grades 1-6) (Tang & Wang, 2021, p. 3). Tang and Wang stated in their report, that the MEC content emphasized modern values and that greater attention has been given to the traditional Chinese cultures and virtues (Tang & Wang, 2021). The success of education is determined by the ability of education to change students through the community and other related institutions. As such, the goal of Western cultures and Eastern curriculum reformation, as emphasized according to MEC (2021) proposal, is to nurture cooperative and responsive citizens and raise young learners’ individual morality and the basic principles of common sense, skills, and attitudes that incorporate these characteristics traits to their academic education.

Indeed, the integration course is not limited to a combination of contents on morality and society, but in a broader that encompasses various aspects of students’ social experiences, interpersonal communications, ethical principles, cultural influences, surroundings, and societal structures, all in a comprehensive manner (Tang & Wang, 2021). Regardless of curriculum reformation in Singapore, Korea, Indonesia, the UK, or China, the perpetual purpose of such remodeling is prompted to embed meaningful and planned approaches to fostering character development in the formal program, and then provide a new direction for the advancement of character education.

As representatives of Asian multi-ethnic countries, China and Singapore both attach great importance to national identity education. National identity plays a pivotal role in China’s character and citizens' education and is a sense of belonging to the county’s political system, history culture, and spiritual traditions. As it has been claimed as what if we take a look closely at the content of the policy and plan of curriculum innovation of China, in order to thoroughly implement the quality of character (PinGe 品格) education on the rooted for the mental health of

millions of students (Tang & Wang, 2021). Meanwhile, in June 2001, the Ministry of Education of China (MEC) officially launched the new curriculum guidelines for elementary and middle schools. As reviewed by MEC (2019), there are opinions put forward on consolidating the reformation of educational teaching and comprehensively enhancing the quality of compulsory education, summarized as follow:

1. Endorse virtue and cultivate young citizens and strive to train new personnel to take on the great duties of national rejuvenation: establish a scientific perspective on the quality of education, deepening reformation, and build an education framework that systematically cultivates morality, intelligence, and social and physical development. Improve the implementation mechanism of moral education, and focus on strengthening ideals and beliefs, cultivating the spirit of resilience, and enhancing overall personal characteristic traits.
2. Endorse moral education as a priority, educate and guide students to love their country, love the people, and love their socialism; vindicate the importance of knowledge and practice, and establish the foundation for the lifelong learning and the developmental journey of each student.
3. Establish a quality evaluation and monitoring system in accordance with the development of quality education. Encourage schools from the elementary level to incorporate the core of ethical practice and citizenship in all areas and subjects.
4. The evaluation of school education quality highlights the goals of comprehensive learning and improvement of students' overall quality, including but not limited to school behavior, team building, academic performance, and social satisfaction. The important connotation of literacy, such as the core values of morality in the new curriculum of

moral education is planning and should practice with academic courses and revising accordingly.

In the eyes of practical points of the new curriculum, MEC (2014) guidelines pointed out that curriculum design should approximately integrate family education, health career planning, reading literacy, physical education, and other subject topics when necessary. This updated curriculum reform focused on the status and role of moral education, promoted and cultivate ethical criteria, and understood the importance of individual behavior on social community impacts. The primary goals and fundamental task of character education that have been elevated to the core values of a newer version of Ministry of Education (Tang & Yang, 2021). In other words, this is the notion given and highlighted by the government of China that each individual student can develop themselves by understanding and embodying virtuous qualities as a means of self-improvement, subsequently inspiring positive change in others, and governing a place with compassion and moral uprightness (Lee, 2022).

Research on Core Values to Implement Character Education in China

Since 1993, Character.org has partnered and collaborated with various schools, different levels of organization and workplaces, community, and families with diverse cultural backgrounds all over the world (Character.org, n.d.), to ensure that the *Eleven principles of effective character education* as a guiding framework for schools to develop a culture of character since 1999. These principles focused on multifaceted entities of school achievements, including social-emotional learning (SEL by CASEL Framework), student participation, academic performance, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and the development of a culture of character in schools. Character.org believes that the principles of effective character education are broad, and the eleven specific principles together are used to maximize character

education outcomes as follows:

1. Core values are specified, practiced, and entrenched in the school culture.
2. School itself defines character education holistically, including students' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
3. School uses a holistic, conscious, and proactive approach to character development.
4. School has created a caring community for all students.
5. School provides opportunities for students to act ethically.
6. School provides meaningful learning programs that respect students and help them to succeed.
7. School cultivates self-motivation.
8. All staff members are responsible for developing, practicing, and modeling ethical character.
9. School examines the application of character education, the value of its culture, and how the climate of character growth nourishes students on a regular basis.

In addition to Character.org, the Jubilee Center for Character and Virtue in the UK, which presented the latest version of Framework for Character Education in Schools (JCFCE, 2017a). It (JCFCE) classified virtues into four “types”: moral virtues, intellectual virtues, expressive virtues, and civic virtues. This framework coupled with the “Neo-Aristotelian” Model of moral development depicts through the lens of Aristotelian habit and summarizes the main points of the Framework for Character Education in UK schools (Department for Education, 2019) as follows:

1. Character is fundamental: it is the basis for human and social flourishing.
2. Character is captured to a great extent through characterization and emotional

compassion; therefore, school culture and its spirit are central.

3. Character is teachable.
4. Character is not fixed, and virtues can be cultivated.
5. Good character is the principle for higher achievement, better behavior, and increased potential employability.
6. Character should be developed in close cooperation with parents, employers, and other organizations within community.
7. The development of character empowers and is free for students.
8. The importance of early “family upbringing” is highlighted.

Character.org has proposed Six Pillars of Character Traits: trust, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and civic responsibility. Responsibility, fairness, caring, and civic responsibility are core values that are considered to contribute to a positive school climate as well as an inclusive culture that prepares schools’ safer learning environments. As the Ministry of Education in China (MEC) underlined the goal of the whole country’s education is to cultivate children into civic-minded humans through the clarification of the core values of character. The MEC revised the version of the current curriculum program and made a point that all cities and schools encourage to set character goals, core values, and specific codes of conduct for character education.

Several times of educational reformations took place in the past 20 years in China. The Ministry of Education in China includes the Twelve-Years national curriculum with embedded character education and moral practices (MEC, 2002b). The Twelve-Years curriculum place more focus on the core qualities of character education. It can be said that the innovation of the current Twelve-Years academic curriculum undertakes a comprehensive status of moral

education in Chinese elementary and middle schools, in which the new integration curriculum syllables take core literacy as the main tool of character development.

The core literacy content of character and moral education can be transferred into the core literacy content of each subject domain at each stage of education level, such as the Language Arts program in elementary school, and the Language Arts and Social Science education in secondary school. In terms of the core literacy content of the learning, it is focused more clearly integrated with students' life situations and practiced in their lives. The fundamental idea of the new character education curriculum is that moral and virtue education should be lifelong (Gao, 2002; Lu & Wang, 2000, as cited in Lu & Gao, 2007, January). However, in general, the study by Lu and Gao on character education proved that moral education in China was still undertaken in the very traditional way (Lu & Gao, 2007). While only lectured through one-way instructions and students learning in a monotonous repetitive method to memorize the content of the textbooks, moral education was taught simplistically and in a rudimentary way.

In specific, most Chinese primary schools have launched ideological and moral courses, in addition to imparting certain moral and social knowledge, a certain amount of content explanations such as history, natural sociology, and human geography are also carried out. However, due to the cognitive deviation of ideological and moral courses, some schools still have barriers such as not paying attention to the curriculum, unreasonable curriculum arrangement, and insufficient investment in ideological and moral curriculum resources (National University Ideological & Political Work Net [NUIPWN], 2021). In the meantime, some schools have certain formalism and are only taught according to the syllabus and textbooks. Firstly, some primary schools still use ideological and moral educational courses as self-study packages but without in-depth guidance and behavior guidelines provided. Secondly, there is a

lack of connection between classroom teaching and real-life experiences. When given lectures, many teachers always read the content of the textbook to the students bit by bit according to the order of the texts shown in the book. Therefore, the knowledge learned by the students only stays in the textbook, and classroom teaching and learning are similar to read-along learning method, as the students following straight but without digging deeper, which will limit the students' vision to a certain level of content.

Again, the teaching mode plays an important role as the theoretical knowledge on the subject cannot be connected with the reality of life; if it is detached from real life, it cannot cultivate a good ideology and students will not be able to understand the meaning and value of moral literacy. According to the current teaching situation in China, teachers' lack of character education teaching experience has a great negative impact on the character development of students. At present, under the development of new curriculum reform and quality education, the content of "knowing oneself" (MEC, 2021) has been added to the Curriculum Standards for Ethics and the Rule of Law in Compulsory Education in China. The purpose of adding character contents is to let students know themselves and then know others better. On the grounds of this, elementary school moral education teachers should guide students to understand the relevant content and establish a sense of responsibility in the process of self-awareness, improving their character and practical skills. Students will establish the sense that they should be responsible for themselves, for others, for families, and for the society, so that they can develop a strong sense of responsible interpersonal interaction skills.

As educators learned from many biographies about Albert Einstein, that character is the fact that linked Einstein's attitude and success. Most people think it is intelligence that makes a scientist, but what really makes a scientist is character. In 1997, the American scholar Lockwood

defined character education as activities promoted by schools and designed to cooperate with other social institutions that directly and systematically shape the behavior of adolescents by visibly influencing and espousing non-relativistic values that can produce positive behavior (Lockwood, 1997). Character education can be seen as education that Freud studied, it consciously influencing the development of an individual's mental qualities or character traits. Although scholars from different countries do not have exactly the same understanding of character education, the commonality is to cultivate students' appreciation of life and cooperation, which leads to the formation of such characteristics as identification with belonging, willingness to communicate, respect for diversity, respect to others, and active participation of empathy.

All scholars from different countries do not have exactly the same understanding of character education, but they have underlined the great importance of character education to their students. For example, the United States is synonymous with "moral education", which integrates moral cognition, moral emotion, and moral behavior, and takes the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, self-discipline, and respect as content (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; Metcalfe. et al., 2023). The UK focuses on developing students' resilience, self-confidence and encourages students to develop their skills in "sport, creativity, performance, and work ethic (JCFCE, 2013, 2017, 2022). In Korea, character education is influenced by history and culture as well as religious education, which not only nurtures young people's religious beliefs, but also focuses on more cultivation of human dignity, self-restraint, a sense of responsibility, and the spirit of helping others (Lee, 2000, 2022, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021).

In China, the entire country has proposed the concept of the "Chinese national community", emphasizing the importance of multi-ethnicity of moral unification. In terms of

moral unification, the Ministry of Education of China introduces character education textbooks across schools in provinces, with the core values and concerns of study always centered on the content of characteristics education (MEC, 2021, 2022). The future development of character education should not only be based on the country's political position but also based on the nation's perspectives of character education core concerns. In this sense, the core of moral education in China can be understood as social studies curriculum provided in Western countries, including historical, geographical, political, economic, cultural, and psychological content.

Based on guidelines and principles promoted by the Ministry of Education of China, and research analysis reported by Li (2011, 2012), Lu (2003), Wang and Zheng (2012), and Zhang (2012), Zhang, (2016), they all highlighted the philosophy of integrating character education into the primary level of national basic education curriculum. In addition to their research reports, the National Education report also contains specific contexts on the integration of character education into various areas and subjects. It has been more than 20 years since the first version of the introduction of moral education in China, and the promotion of character education has shifted to a permanent and tenacious approach. The reformation of the 12-year curriculum has explicitly listed character education as one of the important national issues (MOE, 2021), encouraging schools to explore, analyze, and consider character education core values from different subjects. This reformation covered the entire K-12 curriculum, with the original Ideology and Morality at the different school levels. As to integrate character education across fields, the National Education Bureau promotes its guidelines to suggest schools include curriculum, teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, and school cultures.

In the absence of formal character education subjects across curriculum, this research pondered how the current character education in China could be developed. How do teachers

integrate the various learning subjects and areas into the implementation of moral education?

How can schools combine the core curriculum with the morale courses to effectively promote character education? This study focuses on identifying the optimal practice strategies for promoting character education at the primary school level and clearly depicts the pathways that would motivate educators and students in response to increasing self-awareness toward moral education.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPLICATION

Introduction of Current Character Education Project in China

Generally, Grade 1 and Grade 2 play important foundations as young children begin to develop a sense of self-awareness, a sense of family responsibility, and cognitive knowledge of their own growth. The curriculum of Character Education with National Curriculum (MOE) should be based on children's cognitive development level through multifaceted and real-life experience development of practical abilities and skills. The principles of the compulsory national curriculum of China are summarized as shown in the table below:

Table 1

Character and Life

Main Theme	Contents of Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-Development ● Collective Friendship ● Love Family ● Social Morals ● Love Hometown ● Love Country ● Protect Earth ● Passion for Science ● Passion for peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-Management and growth; ● Adapt to the school environment, have a pleasant relationship with teachers and classmates; ● Respect parents and be willing to undertake housework; ● Observe social morality and social order; ● Have a deep understanding of hometown; ● Respect and understand the history of

	<p>heroes and be patriotic;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Actively practice environmental protection; ● Love to explore and discover unknown things; ● Understand the customs of different countries, and respect diverse cultures
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Note. The principles of the compulsory national curriculum of China were made by Xinhua (2019, July). China issues new guidelines to improve compulsory education.

“Character and Society” is a comprehensive humanities subject offered from Grade 1 to Grade 6 that integrates social, economic, historical, and geographical knowledge with character education values to promote the formation and development of good moral values, and social life skills. After summarizing the curriculum objectives and content of the “Character and Society” course contents, this paper compiled eleven topics covered in the “Character and Society” course, which are listed in Table 2:

Table 2

Character and Society

Main Theme	Contents of Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-development ● Group fraternity ● Love families ● Social virtue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-management and growth development; ● Showing compassion for the group, get along with classmates;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Love hometown ● Love country ● Love earth ● Respect science ● Love peace ● Democracy and the Rule of Laws ● General knowledge of social science and economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showing gratitude for parents, positive communication skills; ● Activate participation in community activities; ● Grateful for all kinds of occupations and workers of society; ● General knowledge of history and culture of the motherland; ● Participate in environmental activities, enhance environmental awareness; ● Oppose superstition and consider the pros and cons of scientific development; ● Understand the world situation and cherish peace; ● In the knowledge of applying law and regulations to protect oneself; ● Implement knowledge of economy, and science in life.
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Note. The principles of the compulsory national curriculum of China were made by Xinhua (2019, July).

China issues new guidelines to improve compulsory education. Ministry of Education, The People's Republic of China.

Based on MEC's guidelines of the national curriculum and compared to the old 12-year compulsory curriculum content, the updated 12-year curriculum includes "moral practice" and "moral real-life education" in the core theme qualities. It can be explained that the recent 12-year national education curriculum places more attention on "core literacy" and "issue integration" in guided character education. Core literacy refers to an individual's knowledge, abilities, and attitudes and emphasizes integrating learning and real-life experiences. With the introduction of a reformation 12-year National curriculum, teachers and schools are encouraged to guide children in solving problems in their life situations during the learning process and to keep pace with the guidelines of character theme to become lifelong learners (Lu, 2003).

According to MEC guidelines and emphasized by Chinese scholars Lu (2003) and Li and Ji (2011) in their studies of the research, the role of character education and moral education policy should be vastly introduced and implemented in primary and secondary schools. As discussed by MEC and analyzed by scholars, the national curriculum standards are the basis for teaching materials, teaching strategies, assessments, and leveled examinations. In other words, the development of teaching contexts must be aligned with the curriculum standards, as curriculum standards not only define the nature and basic concept of learning but cover the contents of the "Character and Life" course details. The Content of Character and Life is listed in detail that covers 11 categories within four criteria that correspond to the concept of curriculum design. The number of content items under each theme reflects the weight of the content covered in that particular theme. In the following studies, 43 theme items were grouped into nine subject categories under "Character and Life." To probe into how well three sets of textbooks and lesson plans adapted to the theme guidelines, this section classifies these 43 contents and the ratio between the number of articles under each topic, as well as the proportion of the total number

under each article. The same procedure will be followed for “Character and Society,” as the statistical results are shown in Table 3:

Table 3

“Character and Life” and “Character and Society” Standard Topic with Content Distribution

Statistics

Curriculum Theme	Character & Life Content Percentage	Character & Society Content Percentage
● Self-development	● 17 article (40%)	● 8 article (15%)
● Collective Fraternity	● 4 article (9%)	● 6 article (12%)
● Love Family	● 4 article (9%)	● 4 article (8%)
● Social Morality	● 4 article (9%)	● 7 article (13%)
● Love Hometown	● 1 article (2%)	● 3 article (6%)
● Love County	● 1 article (2%)	● 10 article (19%)
● Love Earth	● 2 article (5%)	● 1 article (2%)
● Love Peace	● 10 article (23%)	● 1 article (2%)
● Democracy and The Rule of Law	● 0 article (0%)	● 8 article (15%)
● General Knowledge of Social Sciences	● 0 article (0%)	● 1 article (2%)
	● 0 article (0%)	● 3 article (6%)
	Total: 43 articles (100%)	Total: 52 articles (100%)

Note. The distribution statistics were presented by 1994-2019 China Academic Journal.

Unquestionably, the “Character and Life” and “Character and Society” are courses not exclusive to a combination of contents on morality and society or community life, but

comprehensive guidelines comprising multifaceted factors, such as society life, geography, history, ethics, law, and politics. Economy, culture, and environment, as well as the various knowledge and skills necessary for the cultivation of civic mindedness, are also noted and underlined by Tang and Wang (2021). In this regard, curriculum content is more comprehensive, and the course implementation focus is on the practical application of lessons.

Application Background and Role

With the rapid development of the social economy in China, the quality of life of all citizens has gradually improved, and the level of education has also improved. In recent years, China has vigorously advocated educational reformation, and the government is committed to promoting the cultivation of students' ability to establish self-development and social awareness. Unfortunately, more emphasis is placed on the "score-prioritize" ability, while ignoring the cultivation of students' affection and character. Due to the emphasis on students' academic work and the integration of character education into comprehensive activities, character education is obviously neglected; however, after 10 years of consistent curriculum reform (MEC, 2012), the importance of moral education is gradually recognized.

Due to the change in family structures, the increasing numbers of single-parent families, social class pattern changes, and the fact of school leadership conflicts, the government realized the only method to improve the above issues is to recognize the importance of character education.

With the increasing recognition of moral education embedded with Chinese cultural spirits, China is experiencing high support for promoting and implementing character education at all levels. This support aligned with the vision of President Xi Jinping, who emphasized the importance of strengthening China's cultural and "soft power" and disseminating the values of

modern China. President Xi highlighted the need to promote Chinese culture, both domestically and internationally, by combining the excellent traditions of Chinese culture with contemporary moral values, as he noted on December 31, 2013:

The strengthening of our cultural soft power is decisive for China to reach the Two Centenary Goals and realize the Chinese dream of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. [...] To strengthen our cultural soft power, we should disseminate the values of modern China. During its 5,000-year history, the Chinese nation has created a brilliant and profound culture. We should disseminate the most fundamental Chinese culture in a popular way to attract more people to participate in it, matching modern culture and society. We should popularize our cultural spirit across countries as well as across time and space, with contemporary values and the eternal charm of Chinese culture, which feature both excellent tradition and modern spirit, both nationally and internationally. (Xi 2013b, as cited in Ambrogio, 2017, p. 117)

This message clearly clarifies that the “Chinese dream” needs the whole society and human power to look forward and take significant steps in approaching morality values. Through the discussion of the implementation of the “Eleven Principles” of moral education (Lickona et al., 1996), the Ministry of Education of China highlighted the importance of “the School Character Education Framework” (MEC, 2021, 2022), which is referred to in the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education in the United States, in addition to the principles stated by Berkowitz (2005, 2011), and “The Framework for Character Education in Schools” by the Jubilee Center for Character and Virtue (2022).

The current Chinese reform and implementation strategy of character education is combined with diverse research results and findings. All related experts agreed that now is the

time to have school leaders and educators ponder how to construct the current school-based curriculum of moral education, how to guide educators to develop their education teaching/learning strategies, and how to transform character education ideologies into actual moral education teaching action.

Based on Berkowitz's (2011) principles and empirical evidence generated by schools across the country, the Ministry of Education of China was able to reevaluate the current situation in promoting moral education at the school level. In particular, the role of character education and moral education policies in public schools is as follows.

First, to better promote traditional virtues, China is a country with a long history of cultural heritage. Moral education embodies the spirit and temperament of the Chinese nation, and conducting character education both in elementary and secondary schools would strengthen students' understanding of Chinese virtues.

Secondly, character education in elementary and secondary schools can achieve better prospective results more effectively while students are at the stage of ignorance of ideology in human life. The earlier the initiation of character education, will make it easier for students to establish righteous moral concepts from earlier in life.

Thirdly, to promote the development of the home country, elementary and secondary school students are the two main majorities in helping construct and bring a devotion to home country. The reformation of curriculum is the optimal version of "upgrading of educational goals" in China, which refers to the cultivation of righteous moral qualities, and foster students into world citizens with the spirit of innovation, rationality, democracy, and independence.

Character education is not about asking students to memorize certain materials, but most importantly, is about developing students' "real habits" in character. The current reform and

implementation strategy of character education in China is based on diverse research results and findings. But the common principle is to guide school leaders and educators in constructing a school-based, real-life based curriculum of character education, which strengthens effective teaching and learning strategies, as well as translating character education ideologies into more practical teaching actions. Currently, Chinese students memorize knowledge and learn skills from textbooks, but they are not able to present proper moral behaviors in real-life situations. Therefore, the most important aspect of moral education is that students should be able to assess moral values intuitively so that they can practice moral behavior through self-regulation and judgment.

From 2015 to 2017, the Basic Education Quality Monitoring Center of the Ministry of Education of China (MEC) organized and implemented the first cycle of national compulsory education quality monitoring, targeting students in grades four and eight, and carrying out annual monitoring work in six disciplines: moral education, Chinese, mathematics, science, physical education and health, and art. The relevant factors such as course preparations, conditional circumstances, teaching staff, subject teaching, and school management of each subject are investigated and assessed. In 2017, 572,314 students from 31 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the supervision of the Central Government), and 973 counties (cities and districts) of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps were selected to participate in the monitoring process. This monitoring also surveyed 19,346 primary and secondary school principals, 147,610 subject-specialty teachers, and homeroom teachers. Based on the monitoring data from MEC, it clearly can be seen that the majority of students exhibited a favorable outlook on life values and promote positive behavioral standards. Over 90% of students take pride in their Chinese identity, with 96.2% of fourth graders and 97.9% of eighth

graders expressing confidence in the country's future. When asked about the most critical factors contributing to success, personal effort emerged as the top choice among students, with 47.9% of fourth graders and 62.7% of eighth graders selecting it, while the selection of family background, external assistance, opportunities, or chances ranged from 0.6% to 8.5%. (MEC, 2018)

Specifically, the positive behavioral norms of students present in various aspects of their daily lives. For instance, regarding diligence and frugality, 87.5% of grade four students and 95% of grade eight students exhibit outstanding behavior. Second of all, when it comes to honesty and trustworthiness, 89.2% of fourth-grade students and 95.3% of eighth-grade students consistently display these positive traits. In addition to the character of public morals, grade four students and grade eight students uphold these standards at 93.6% and 97.3%, respectively in their daily lives. Despite the generally positive behavior displayed by these students, there are still areas that require improvement. For example, fewer graders and eighth graders contribute to household chores and even lower rates of actively engage in school and activities (MEC, 2018).

Although the overall performance of students in the code of conduct was better, there were still shortcomings. For example, only 68.4% of fourth graders and 68.6% of eighth graders did housework, and only 53.1% of fourth graders and 38.2% of eighth graders actively participated in school and class work. (MEC, 2018)

Potential Challenges and Solutions

To effectively implement character education in elementary schools, it is essential to provide comprehensive support and resources for teachers. This includes offering professional development programs that focus on character education pedagogy and providing curriculum guidelines and materials aligned with the Ministry of Education's framework. China's current application of character education in elementary schools is driven by the recognition of the

cultural significance of moral education and its role in shaping students' character and values by promoting traditional virtues, fostering character development at an early stage, and encouraging students' contribution to the entire national development.

Despite these implementation ideologies, barriers, and challenges cannot be neglected due to the specialty of certain political circumstances in China as follows:

1. Many schools fail to conduct character education and moral education policies in elementary schools according to their own actual situations and teachers always insist on teaching with the old version of the context of moral education, which is very conservative and crippled. By saying that, what students had learned resulted in the entire education procedure becoming very mechanical, which directs to a certain extent hinders the development of character education.
2. A very large scale of schools does not pay full attention to the importance of character education and moral education policy. This well-explained reason why few schools have enthusiasm for the implementation of character education and do not fully understand the significance and connotation of moral education. Therefore, in the implementation process of moral education policy, schools have insufficient control and a lack of action motivation and initiative. In the meantime, due to shortages of professional training across schools, teachers lack of fundamental understanding of character education, and some teachers therefore lack motivation of processing character education in accordance.

Through this research, there are issues and priorities that seek to clarify the Ministry of Education of China's development of a character education promotion program. On the basis of key principles for character education by the Jubilee Center Framework of Character Education in School (JCFCE, 2013, 2017, 2022), school policymakers and educators can promote moral

education in “spotlight” schools in China in order to fully grasp the ideologies of implementing character education. Questions that should be asked are: how should ethics be taught in class? How should character be cultivated? Regardless of how different opinions and theories are, all scholars and experts agreed upon one basic principle: educators should lead the path. Moral behavior is reflected in the way children are treated at home and at school as stated by Coles, author of *The Moral Intelligence of Children* (Coles, 1998). Our children and students slowly accumulate their learning given by teachers. This teaching pathway contains six Es by Kevin Ryan (Ryan 1999 as cited in Singh, 2019) created for character education:

- Example: The teacher should become a role model, and introduce character examples from history, literature, or the real world in the classroom.
- Explanation: Teachers should not rely on indoctrination, but be required to have a sincere dialogue with students to relieve their doubts and inspire their moral cognition thinking.
- Exhortation: Emotionally motivate students to be self-motivated and stimulate their own willingness to derive moral encouragement.
- Environment: Schools and teachers need to create a learning environment where students feel respectful and cooperative.
- Experience: Teachers should work with students closely in assisting them to develop effective helping skills, and arrange activities within or outside of school; in addition, teachers and schools need to work as a team to encourage students actively participate in community and society so that they will gain more opportunities to experience their generous contribution to others personally.
- Expectation of excellence: expect and encourage the best out of students in every aspect of their life.

Application Steps and Process

Lickona (1992) suggested a number of ways to shape an ethical culture on campus, including a clear school vision, implementation of school systems, establishing a sense of community on campus, and fostering civic responsibility among students. The researchers' experience in conducting several interviews with the anonymous schools proved that regardless of the location of schools, or size of the school and as long as the leadership and teachers shared a common trait of the concept of value for children it would be strengthened to the overall quality of character education. As a result, the problems of moral education in China are mainly about a decreased motivation of individual interest, lack of professional training in character education, and a disconnect between students' needs and the contents of moral education.

Therefore, in this research, the ideal theme is to analyze existed school examples and align with the theory that outlined by Berkowitz, in exploring what key factors are hidden in the successful implementation of character education across schools, and then unlock the ignored core notions. In order to achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education in China has reaffirmed the importance of how teaching materials should use a variety of ways of constructing materials, selecting colorful examples of character education, attached the contents to the real life experiences. In line with the national curriculum reform and development guidelines, elementary schools in Jiangsu province, located in eastern China, has sought the expertise of scholars to revise and enhance the "Compulsory Education Ethics and Rule of Law Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" to further clarify the contents of what characters to cultivate in students. The following presents a concise overview of three school case curricula, outlining their objectives, content, and implementation.

School Case 1: The theme of “Cute Animals” in a local Chinese elementary school in Guangzhou City:

“Cute Animals” is the third theme in the “Ethics and Rule of Law”, and “Me and the Nature” of elementary school, which focuses on guiding students to grasp the idea of how to get along with animals around us and live in a harmonious atmosphere.

The teacher conducted a questionnaire survey on the students in front of the class, which provided rich materials for the course design. At the beginning of the class, the teachers introduced “We are in Nature” through the projector, introduced new learning subjects, and activated students’ interest. Then, through the presentation of “Animals I Like”, students are encouraged to discuss and talk about their favorite animals and pets. They have to have a preliminary understanding of the diversity of animals, which is awakening their profound love for living creatures, and embracing the beauty of harmonious coexistence between humans and animals. Next, through the game “Animal Adventure,” students can further develop their understanding of animals having different aspects of characteristics, appearance, sound, preferences, and living habits. By actively engaging in such activities, students will gain opportunities to explore nature and understand the living creatures around them and then enhance their sensitivity to protect animals. Finally, through reading the book “Our Animal Teacher” and group discussions, students are guided further in having a connection with the beauty of living creatures that exist in this world.

School Case 2: A rural middle school moral education teachers introduce social resources to carry out character education activities:

When the ideology of moral education was first introduced in a rural middle school, the teacher explained the “Great Change in China”, the teacher combined the concept with

comprehensive practical activities, and then took students into the local town center to see and compare changes that happened over several years; from local shops to the appearance of the school, so that students could truly feel the changes of the country.

School Case 3: HangZhou City Junior high school character education promotes “Family Love” through the book “I can read you”.

Based on the teacher’s understanding of the students and the previous survey conducted with the students and their parents, it was found that the first-year students lacked a perception of parental love and lacked the ability to reciprocate the love. Given the analysis of the research, the teacher then designed the curriculum to guide students in experiencing, understanding, and cherishing the love of their parents; moreover, to teach students the concept of “gratitude” and how to give it back:

1) The teacher introduced the topic using the book “Little Fang’s Family,” story to conclude the following self-assessment question: “What happened to us” to help students recognize the reasons for the communication barriers between generations?

2) Still based on the book “Little Fang’s Family”, ask questions such as “Where did the communication problem come from? For example, the teacher will guide students to discuss and investigate how skills, methods, or strategies should be applied for smoother communication between parents and students in order to solve conflicts. In the final emotional sublimation stage, the teacher led the students to understand their parents’ love through guided reading of the book “Little Fang’s Family.”

3) Play the video “Understanding You” that was filmed by volunteering families, listen to parents’ inner thoughts, and discuss the topic of “What we can do for our parents.”

These are case examples generated from China's compulsory education quality monitoring report (2018). Based on the given cases and through an extensive review of them, the main objective of implementing moral education is to provide students with systematic ideological and moral education, fostering the development of good moral character and behavioral habits. It aims to facilitate the harmonious development of various moral aspects in students, including knowledge, emotions, intentions, and actions. Therefore, while implementing the character education curriculum, teachers should not only focus on enhancing students' moral awareness but also emphasize the importance of enabling students to have positive moral attitudes and opportunities for moral practice.

Assessment Rubric

The “Several opinions of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on further strengthening and improving the ideological and moral construction of minors” issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China ((2004, No.8, as cited in MEC, 2018) highlighted the principle of integrating knowledge and action. Furthermore, it also emphasized the significance of classroom education as well as practical education, experiential education, and formative education. Besides, the document underscored the importance of students' voluntary participation and conscious adherence to ethical norms while learning moral knowledge. Based on the specialty of the Chinese curriculum and the differentiation of students' learning backgrounds, there are some prerequisites guidelines that need be implemented at school levels:

- A) Schools should strengthen the study of the rules and laws of moral education, and the design of moral education courses should be based on the reality of students' lives. This means that teachers need to understand the characteristics and rules of students' physical

and mental development at different levels. On the other hand, teachers need to seize the difference in students' preferences, interests, and needs in alignment with design differentiate learning contents and teaching methods. For example, elementary school teachers can get to know more about students by having sincere conversations with them and setting up a "suggestion mailbox" to gather opinions and advice from each student within the class.

- B) Educators and teachers should keep up-to-date conferences with updating relevant curriculum standards, in parallel with provisions of the character curriculum standards as teachers may combine the teaching subject with character core concepts to create activities, class projects, and group discussions in order to carry out a variety of learning activities.
- C) As claimed by the common core teaching materials, teachers should pay attention to the development of various moral education resources available to share. These materials include but are not limited to environmental and social resources, such as plants and animals, mountains and rivers in nature, historical and contemporary buildings in towns and villages, community services, resources in modern technology. Teachers should adopt these resources to serve moral education works and have students apply learned knowledge and skills to their daily lives.
- D) The application of character education courses should focus on practicality and students' willingness to participate. Teaching methods should be flexible according to the physical and mental characteristics of students at different academic levels. At the elementary level, character teaching materials can be combined with scenarios; role plays with interactive discussions and self-investigations.

On account of the analysis of school examples and listed application instructions, in conjunction with principles of effective character education by Berkowitz and Kevin Ryan's 6Es, studies show that character education can be implemented in many different and lively ways and integrated with life. These findings not only provide valuable information on the practical aspect of character education, but also help researchers to understand the current character education practices. Based on these principles, school leaders should be questioning the efficiency of the implementation of character education in schools. How can leadership guide teachers to develop their educational profession? How can teachers respond to the changes in the integration of character education into the curriculum? How does teaching planning translate character education instructions into actual learning practices? What are the issues that exemplary benchmark schools face in transforming their curricula? How can the reformation processes be addressed and resolved?

To put it concisely, scholars' reflection on moral education is a discussion on how teachers and school leaders cooperate and in what manner. Based on empirical principles proposed by Berkowitz (2005, 2011), there are several aspects of moral education promotion steps in schools that should be considered in China:

- *Prioritization*: One can examine whether schools prioritize character education. How are resources should be allocated? What is the prevailing atmosphere in schools and classrooms? What are the contents and implications of school rules and guidelines? Additionally, how do school principals lead character education initiatives?
- *Relationship*: We can assess the interactions between teachers, teachers and students, and the relationship between the school, parents, and the community.

- *Intrinsic Motivation*: We can examine how schools foster students' motivation to learn and promote their self-awareness and self-development.
- *Modeling*: This helps schools and teachers to understand how to assist with establishing role models and inspire students to learn.
- *Empowerment*: Such principle focuses on the overall culture of the school, whether the school promotes shared leadership, empowers students, implements democratic mechanisms, and fosters a culture of cooperation.
- *Development Pedagogy*: It allows educators to evaluate and assess whether schools taking character education as a long-term learning goal and do them adopt a sustainable approach to teaching.

To address the key questions and issues proposed at the beginning of this research, schools in China can rely on the Ministry of Education of China's guidelines as a basis for conducting interviews and surveys at different schools. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of schools' strategies and practical policies in implementing character education. Through deeper exploration and examination of seeking "highlights" and prevailing key factors to the outstanding performance of some exemplary elementary schools; it will serve as a valuable reference for promoting and sustaining character education in other schools in the future.

Curriculum Design Portfolio

Based on the Jubilee Center Framework for Character Education in School (2013, 2017, 2022) and the specialty of Chinese school's curriculum framework guidelines (MEC), this research incorporates the core values of character education that are predominantly applied in Western cultures school and blended with traditional academic curricula weighted at Chinese

schools; these core elements blend together aim to help students and teachers in working together to shape characters and identities through the school life. These multifaceted programs include the Chinese moral education program, along with a core component of the character education value originally from Western culture to ensure students embody its core values and own characteristics.

So, how do teachers teach character education in the curriculum? According to the *Syllabus of Character and Life Curriculum Standards of the Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China* (MOE, 2011), character and life education should guide students to learn to love and respect life in the process of experiencing their own lives and participating in the community; it needs to guide children to care for other human beings in serving themselves, others, and extend to the rest of world. The key guiding principles should not be expelled when designing the curriculum, and the design should enact within the Character and Life Curriculum Frame:

1. Character and life education enable students to explore actively in their intrinsic interactions with nature and the environment, developing a sense of creativity and the ability to put thoughts into practice.
2. Valuing the merit of childhood and respecting the stage of children's rights of childhood is a stage of life with great potential for cognitive development. Childhood life has needs and characteristics different from those of adulthood, and is rich in developmental connotations and values.
3. Morality presents in every aspect of children's lives. The formation of children's moral stems based from their experience, knowledge, understandings, and behaviors in their own

life. Educational activities originate from children's daily lives and trigger children's inner moral feelings, rather than superficial moral knowledge and behavior.

4. The cultivation of good character must take place in children's lives; teaching and learning need rooted and gradually constructed through their direct experience, reflected and accumulated in daily activities.

The main ideology of character curriculum must be connected to students' world of life to promote their growth in a comprehensive view. It is designed to enable students to cherish and be thankful from an early stage of life, and to gain a preliminary understanding of the relationship between the world and human beings. Through multiple researches done by different schools, despite the locations and varying school sizes, all schools in China have shifted their focus to a practical character education curriculum - a genuine children-centered common trait. Three character education lesson plans generated among elementary schools (see Appendices) underscored the schools' commitment to the mission of character education: "Good Leadership and Virtuous Education", "Good Reading School-Based Curriculum", and "Learning for Good Character - Compassion for others".

These successful school teaching plans (Appendices C, D, E) lying in the cultivation of teacher-student-parents relationships, involve a comprehensive approach encompassing teaching virtues through words, actions, and the surrounding environment. The new curriculum reform require that the teaching materials should be contemporary and return to the nature of education, which means the materials should be written in a variety of ways and with rich life-based examples of character education. That means the students will guided and encouraged to participate and starts from the actual situation of their life. The focus of character education

aims to entitle students the understanding of harmonious life, to develop a sense of empathy personality, and to lay a solid foundation for the formation of optimistic attitudes towards life.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

In order to understand the reformations of character education in China, a series of collaborative research and studies on character education development should be conducted involving the integration of curriculum and review of the existing moral and character education. This research paper attempts to analyze the related policies in China and strategies in different countries and provide some practical suggestions for the future development of moral and character education in China.

Theoretically speaking, this paper examines the study of character education is strongly linked to students' academic performance as well as their contribution to the society and community surrounding them, and it serves as the foundation for shaping positive generations of the new century. Character education development process and its implementation strategies in Chinese primary schools rely on the following grounds:

- A. The revision and reformation of characteristic courses can help schools and teachers deepen the evolution of moral education, from the process and practices of promoting moral education in example schools, then gradually scattered selective moral curriculum or diversified unstructured curricula into systematic immersion character education courses affiliate with traditional academic curriculum. The reformed and updated character education development allows teachers to pay attention to every student and also promotes the deepening of school morality education.
- B. For a long time, the application of character and moral education has been carried out in an independent teaching mode, including exclusive course materials and fixed class schedules. Moreover, under the overall school schedule structure, there were also

morning routines for moral guidance. However, because of the pressure from families and school leadership, academic performance is superior to everything, and the subject of moral education was abolished and integrated into various subject areas. There are no structured subjects, no fixed routines, and no aspiring teaching material for teachers to follow. With the reformation strategies, proper teacher professional training and a learning community can serve as a reference for the growth of teachers. Communications, corporations, sharing class management experiences, and ongoing teaching training conferences working together not only promote teachers' enhancement but are also used as a substantial professional growth model.

- C. It is noted that the current implementation strategy of school administration should focus on curriculum revision, and how character education program should integrate with formal curriculum, informal curriculum, and potential curriculum. Through the promotion needs of reformation of the curriculum, different levels of schools will have a new direction to change the teaching beliefs through the innovation of curriculum and teaching philosophy by adapting diverse student activities. That is to say, the reformation of character education has made the teaching meaningful and valuable, making the character curriculum an active learning process.

Limitations and Recommendations of the Research

Since teachers have different points of perspective on the integration of moral teaching, character education should be planned more systematically and integrated into various subjects, rather than leaving teachers to deal with it on their own based on big frame guidelines. As Tang and Wang (2021) suggested in their research, morality contents and relevant contexts should be systematize according to students' ever-growing life domains, for example their families, school

community, or societal communities, and the world. It is very important to note the limitations as the reformation and application of character education may vary depending on the region, policies, and local implementation strategies:

Lack of education concept: Schools fail to pay attention to ideological and character education fundamentally, and the main position of students' learning is neglected. Undoubtedly, the reformation of character education integrated with curriculum has dramatically accelerated the demise of the traditional teaching and learning method which typically filling in the classroom, but there are still many teachers who use the conventional method as usual.

Students' internalization of character and moral education is neglected. In the process of moral education in elementary schools, many schools adopt a somewhat coercive approach; although the teaching results have increased, students' understanding and application of moral codes mostly remain superficial. Many students show inconsistent performance at school and at home. Effective character education requires well-trained and equipped teachers who can effectively communicate and model positive values and behaviors. However, there are few detailed adequate contents training and support to teachers in this regard. Teachers may not possess the necessary skills or knowledge to effectively implement character education.

Unclear educational goals: Although the pace of educational reform has been improving and renovated, the influence of traditional educational concepts on teachers has not been dispersed. Nevertheless, this new teaching model is relatively lacking in experience, which makes the teaching goal of ideological and moral education in many areas unclear or even deviated, which has a serious impact on the efficiency of ideological and character courses teaching in elementary schools. In the past, teachers were usually the main guide to carry out knowledge transmission, and students were enforced to learn, which caused a negative impact on students'

motivation and critical thinking skills along their learning journey. Furthermore, based on mentioned evidence and research above, moral character education is no longer treated as a subject since the Ministry of Education of China initiated the reformation of compulsory curriculum in 2001 (Zhang, 2010). The curriculum reform of the Twelve-Years Education system has emphasized the importance of character education as one of the important educational issues; but character education involves imparting values, ethics, and morals; which means, defining and agreeing upon specific values can be challenging, as different individuals and groups may have diverse interpretations and cultural perspectives.

Few experiences with assessment and evaluation: To understand whether character education is effectively implemented, systematic supervision and evaluation are necessary and must be appropriate. Generally speaking, systematic curriculum effectiveness assessments can be divided into two main components: summative and formative in order to examine whether the teaching and learning process is systematic and efficient. However, as character education is a school curriculum-based program, the monitoring and evaluation are conducted through the mechanism of school self-assessment and term, which mainly referred to the academic criteria review by the schools. This self-assessment system is no different from the assessment of the general school curriculum; that is, the assessment of character education program effectiveness is not required and is not mandatory.

Therefore, measuring the effectiveness and impact of character education can be challenging as teachers need appropriate evaluation system methods to gauge the success of character education amongst students. Primary research on character education predominately focusing on imply strategies to develop certain characteristics for students, and the support of assessment and review of how efficiency and effectiveness of the character education

implementation in the curriculum are neglected. Teachers only coped with assessment rubrics provided in the curriculum guidebook without investigating the actual performance or level of improvement on the morality scale of students. That is to say, teachers lack appropriate assessment tools in the form of observation process.

Short or absence of parents' participation: As mentioned earlier in this research, “Character and Life”, and “Character and Society” embody the main principle and characteristics of the new curriculum reformation in China. With its unique curriculum design and concept, moral character education should ground basics-students' daily life. Morality exists in students' whole lives, wherever there is human activity, there is morality. The purpose of reformation of character curriculum focuses on students to strive for all kinds of natural, social, and cultural differences that they may encounter in their lives. Therefore, paying attention to students' real life, and how their connection with families is one of the crucial factors that help them to develop their own news and characteristics that differ from those of adults. Because of the multifarious educational experiences, the diversity in social and economic stages would have disparate impact or support on students' performances, academically or social behaviorally. In Chinese society, parents are prioritizing children's academic performance over other aspects; strictly speaking, “Parental participation includes educational belief, academic expectation and implementing ways to support students' education” (Toren, 2013); which a greater of those segments are missing in Chinese parenting values. Under the large populations in China, there are few solutions and connections established between schools and families, and the pattern of character education in the family is still unwrought.

Conclusion

The contemporary educational perspective embraces diversity, deconstruction, decentralization, and emphasizes interpersonal relationships and environmental issues. The roles of families, educators, school leaders, and students have also undergone significant changes. Schools and teachers are no longer authoritative figures who simply transmit knowledge but instead assist students in integrating and constructing their own knowledge. In particular, character education occurs through the interactive process in our daily lives, between teachers and students, between students and families, where teachers guide students to accumulate characteristic traits and skills from their experiences and cultivate their life wisdom. Therefore, when promoting moral education, teachers need to demonstrate a keen awareness of their connections with students, recognizing their own position of power and dominance. The key to fostering moral development lies in the attitude of equality and mutual respect.

The purpose of developing moral education in schools is to enable students to learn how to perceive themselves and to translate the character language into their own with a broad perspective, deepening their understanding of what it truly means of being a human being. How to cultivate students' moral judgment is a crucial issue. In the process of education, it is important to take successful examples and expertise from other countries list in case schools that aim to develop character traits through tailoring educational approaches to address different areas of improvement of students. The various strategies and curricula from different schools rather cultivate in students a rich emotional life, and a willingness to present gratitude, improve attitudes from various perspectives, and nurture students' virtuous character and noble morality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Table 1: School-based Outcomes in Promoting Character Education

	School-Based Outcomes						
	School Behavior	Attachment to School	Attitudes toward Schools	Attitudes Toward Teachers	Academic Goals, Expectations & Motives	Academic Achievement	Academic Skills
Program Names							
1. Across Ages (middle school)	●						
2. All Stars (middle school)			◐				
3. Building Decision Skills with Community Service (middle school)			◐				
4. Child Development Project (elementary)	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐
5. Facing History & Ourselves (middle)							
6. Great Body Shop (elementary)							
7. I Can Problem Solve (elementary)							
8. Just Communities (high school)		●					
9. Learning for Life (elementary)	●						
10. Life Skills Training (middle)							
11. LIFT (Linking the Interests of Families & Teachers) (elementary)							
12. Lions-Quest (Skills for Adolescents)	●					◐	
13. Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education (middle)							
14. Moral Dilemma Discussion (middle)							
15. Open Circle Program (Reach Out to Schools)(elementary)	●					◐	
16. PeaceBuilders (elementary)							
17. Peaceful Schools Project (elementary)	●	◐	◐			●	
18. Peacemakers (elementary, middle)							
19. PATHE (middle, high)	◐		◐		◐	◐	
20. Positive Action (elementary)	●					●	
21. Positive Youth Development (middle)							
22. Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) (elementary)	◐	●	◐		●		◐
23. Raising Healthy Children (elementary)						●	
24. Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)(elementary)	◐						
25. Responding in Peaceful & Positive Ways (RIPP)(middle)	◐						
26. Roots of Empathy (elementary, middle)							
27. Seattle Social Development Project (elementary)	◐	●	●			◐	◐
28. Second Step (elementary, middle)	◐						
29. Social Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescence (middle)	◐				●		●
30. Social Decision Making/Problem Solving(SDM/PS)(elementary, middle)	◐					◐	
31. Teaching Students to be Peacemakers (elementary, middle, high)						●	
32. Teen Outreach (middle, high)	●					●	
33. The ESSENTIAL Curriculum (Project ESSENTIAL) (elementary)	●					●	
	Strong evidence of support = ● Moderate support = ◐ Not supported = ○						

Note. The statistical framework of School-based Outcomes in Promoting Character Education by Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2005, February). *What works in character education*. A research-driven guide for educators. Character Education Partnership.

Appendix B

Table 2: Themes and Main Contents of “Morality and Life”

Main Theme	Contents of Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-Development - Collective Friendship - Love Family - Social Morals - Love Hometown - Love Country - Protect Earth - Passion for Science - Passion for peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-Management and growth; - Adapt to the school environment, have a pleasant relationship with teachers and classmates; - Respect parents and be willing to undertake housework; - Observe social morality and social order; - Have a deep understanding of hometown; - Respect and understand the history of heroes and be patriotic; - Actively practice environmental protection; - Love to explore and discover unknown things; - Understand the customs of different countries, and respect diverse cultures

Note. China issues new guidelines to improve compulsory education.

Appendix C

Lesson Plan Example A:

Develop positive character traits through reading

Grade Level: Elementary (Grade 1-3)

Subject: Chinese/English (Bilingual) Language and Literature

Learning objects:

To develop students' understanding and appreciation of brave and confidence as positive character traits.

To enhance students' language skills through storytelling and discussions

Teaching Materials:

Storybook: Princess Truly in I Am Truly

Character trait cards: Strong, brave, confident, bright

Procedures:

Introduction: Start with read-aloud Kelly Greenawalt's *Princess Truly in I Am Truly* is a great book for teaching primary character traits because the main character spends a lot of the book describing herself, how brave she is, and all the things she can do, from dancing on the moon to taming wild lions.

1. Display the character traits cards on the board and ask students to define and engage students in a discussion of examples of each trait.

2. Explain that day's lesson will focus on such character traits, which is an essential character traits involving being honest and having strong moral principles.

Reflection and Discussions:

- Ask students to think about a time when they faced a situation that required strong and brave, and share their experiences with a partner.
- Invite a few students to share their stories with the class, emphasizing the importance of making brave and being confident to stand up for what is right.
- Lead the whole class in discussion to reinforce the significance of brave and confidence in various aspects of life, such as challenging situations, friendships, and family.

Application Activity:

- Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a scenario involving an ethical dilemma.
- In each group, students will discuss the scenario, identify brave-related issues, and brainstorm possible solutions.
- Each group will present their scenario and proposed solution to the class, encouraging further discussions and reflection.

Conclusion and Reflection:

- Summarize the main points discussed throughout the lesson, emphasizing the importance of being brave and confident in personal and social contexts.
- Have students individually reflect on the lesson by writing a short paragraph about how they can apply the concept of confidence and brave in their daily lives.
- Encourage students to share their reflections voluntarily, fostering a sense of accountability and personal growth.

Extension Activities:

- Invite a guest speaker, such as a local community role model to share personal stories that highlight the importance of such characteristics.

- Incorporate language (English and Chinese) activities by asking students to write a short story or write poem that showcases the theme of these traits.

Appendix D

Lesson Plan Example B:

Daily morning meeting to create supportive and inclusive classroom community

Grade Level: Elementary (Grade 1-5)

Subject: Chinese/English (Bilingual) Language and Social Emotional Learning

Learning objects:

- Creates inclusive community
- Fosters individual feelings of significance and belonging
- Sets the tone for a respectful class culture
- Supports social and emotional learning
- Increase academic achievement

Teaching materials:

- Morning designated space
- Morning meeting agenda or visual aids

Procedures:

1. Classic responsive classroom meeting start with a greetings, and have students share something that happens in their lives. This is not a mandatory sharing part, the teacher can call 3-4 students randomly, or anyone raises a hand if wants to share.
2. Remind students to listen actively and respond with respect and kindness, and encourage them to ask questions to show interest and understanding.
3. Share a daily morning message with the class, highlighting important information or keywords of the day. This can be any celebrating achievement or announcement.

4. Have students choose activities that represent the keywords of the day. This part encourages students collaborative, communication, and problem-solving skills. For example, a cooperative game, a team-building challenge, or a discussion on a specific related topic.

5. Ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate and contribute to the activity.

Reflections and Conclusions:

1. Conclude the morning meeting with a brief reflection or closing activity that reinforces the learning goals.

2. Ask students to share one thing that they appreciated or learned during the morning meeting.

3. Emphasize the importance of respect, inclusive, and a sense of belonging.

Extension Activities:

1. Integrate subject content into the morning meeting, such as literacy concepts through brief interactive discussions.

2. Assign rotating roles to students, such as a morning meeting leader to promote responsibility.

Appendix E

Lesson Plan Example C:

Exploring Gratitude and Thankfulness through the book *All the World* by Liz Garton

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Subject: Chinese/English (Bilingual) Social science and Mathematics

Learning objects:

- Understand the concepts of gratitude and thankfulness.
- Identify and appreciate things and people they feel thankful for in their lives.
- Integrate gratitude into social science and math activities.

Teaching Materials:

Storybook: All the World by Liz Garton

Math manipulative (such as counting bars, number blocks)

Character trait cards: Gratitude, thankful, appreciation

Procedures:

Begin by asking students what they think it means to be thankful or grateful. Encourage a brief class discussion to activate their prior knowledge or experiences.

1. Read *All the World* to students, emphasizing the themes of gratitude and thankfulness.
2. Engage students in a discussion about the book, and encourage them to ask questions like: How does the story tell about the beauty and the world around us? Can you think of things you are grateful for yesterday?
3. Ask students to count their manipulative and share the number with the class, expressing gratitude for the many things in their lives.
4. Encourage students to share their numbers and reasons for gratitude with their peers.

5. Have students to create a gratitude collage by writing words and sentences and drawing things they are grateful for.

Reflection and Discussions:

1. Encourage students to express gratitude to their classmates.
2. Explore different aspects of the world, such as nature and different cultures, and discuss how they inspire gratitude and thankfulness in social science lessons.