

Research on the Relationship between Elementary School Moral and Legal Education and the Formation of Students' Behavioral Habits

Suzhen Wang*

Tsinghua University Affiliated Primary School, Beijing, 100084, China

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the practical effects of moral and legal education in elementary schools, examining its role in shaping students' behavioral habits and how optimizing educational methods and content can more effectively promote students' holistic development. The article systematically analyzes the goals, methods, and outcomes of moral and legal education, delving into the interaction mechanisms between education and behavioral habits. Additionally, it proposes further optimization strategies. This research not only deepens our understanding of the essence of moral and legal education but also provides valuable insights for policymakers, teachers, and parents. It aims to drive the reform and innovation of moral and legal education, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of students.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing society, elementary education bears the responsibility of cultivating future citizens. Among its various aspects, moral and legal education (MLE) has gained unprecedented significance. This form of education is crucial for shaping students' values, sense of norms, and social responsibility, which are fundamental to the development of good behavioral habits. However, the intrinsic connection and mechanisms between MLE and the formation of students' behavioral habits remain a topic worthy of deep exploration in the field of education. Thus, an in-depth exploration of the relationship between elementary school MLE and the cultivation of students' behavioral habits is of profound importance.

2. The Essence and Objectives of Moral and Legal Education

2.1 Conceptual Analysis of Moral and Legal Education

As a crucial component of the basic education system, moral and legal education (MLE) integrates both moral and legal instruction with the goal of cultivating students' moral qualities and legal awareness^[4]. Unlike traditional subject knowledge, MLE emphasizes interactive teaching methods, such as scenario simulations and role-playing. These methods enable students to experience and internalize values like justice, responsibility, and respect, ultimately transforming these values into personal behavioral norms.

*Corresponding Author:

Suzhen Wang,

Female, master's degree,

Research direction: Primary school moral education research,

Email: 928789837@qq.com

2.2 Educational Objectives

At the elementary school stage, MLE aims to shape students' behavioral habits and foster their comprehensive development. The specific educational objectives are as follows:

Establishing Correct Values: MLE seeks to cultivate students' understanding of social ethics, family values, and personal character. It aims to teach students to respect others, be honest and trustworthy, and work collaboratively.

Enhancing Legal Awareness: The goal is to familiarize students with basic laws and regulations, helping them understand the importance of legal rules in maintaining social order. This involves developing an awareness of the need to adhere to the law and uphold fairness and justice.

Developing Critical Thinking: MLE encourages students to think independently and analyze problems from multiple perspectives. It aims to cultivate their ability to discern right from wrong and to develop a sense of independent judgment.

Promoting Social Adaptability: Through team activities and social practices, MLE aims to enhance students' abilities to interact with others and solve problems. This objective is intended to facilitate their social integration and adaptability.

2.3 Theoretical Foundations

Albert Bandura's social learning theory underscores the role of observational learning and imitation in behavior formation. According to Bandura, individuals can learn new behaviors by observing others and their consequences, without direct personal experience^[1]. In the context of MLE, teachers often act as role models by demonstrating positive behaviors such as honesty and tolerance. This approach guides students to emulate these behaviors, fostering the development of good habits.

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development provides another important perspective, noting that children exhibit different cognitive characteristics at various developmental stages. For elementary school students, MLE should focus on activities that align with their concrete operational stage. Engaging in intuitive and participatory activities, such as role-playing and situational dramas, helps reinforce their understanding and application of moral and legal concepts, leading to their internalization and practical application.

3. The Impact of Moral and Legal Education on Student Behavioral Habits

3.1 The Formation of Moral Cognition and Behavioral Habits

Systematic moral education plays a crucial role in developing students' moral cognition, which involves

understanding and embracing core values such as good and evil, justice, and responsibility. Through interactive methods such as storytelling, role-playing, and moral discussions, students not only grasp abstract moral concepts but also translate these concepts into practical behavioral guidelines. For instance, by examining the actions of moral role models from various historical and contemporary contexts, students learn to differentiate between right and wrong and adopt behaviors such as honesty and helpfulness in their daily lives. This gradual process fosters the development of an intrinsic moral behavior pattern.

3.2 Enhancement of Legal Awareness and Rule Adherence

Legal education constitutes a vital aspect of MLE, focusing on strengthening students' legal awareness and their understanding of the importance of legal rules in maintaining social order and protecting individual rights. MLE provides students with fundamental legal knowledge, helps them comprehend the consequences of unlawful behavior, and makes them aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens^[2]. This understanding encourages students to adhere to laws and regulations, reflecting respect for legal norms and a commitment to the rule of law.

Beyond merely imparting legal knowledge, legal education emphasizes the underlying principles of fairness, justice, and order. Schools frequently organize mock trials and legal seminars, allowing students to learn basic legal concepts while experiencing the procedural rigor and fairness of the legal system. These activities not only enhance students' legal awareness but also foster respect for the law through exposure to real-life legal scenarios and the potential severe consequences of illegal actions.

3.3 Development of Social Emotions and Interpersonal Skills

MLE extends beyond individual moral and legal literacy to focus on the cultivation of social emotions and interpersonal skills. Through participation in team projects and community service activities, students acquire essential skills such as communication, sharing, collaboration, and empathy. These experiences strengthen students' sense of responsibility and belonging within their community. Consequently, students display more mature and considerate behaviors in their interactions, such as proactively assisting peers and actively participating in class activities. This reflects the positive impact of MLE on enhancing social and emotional development.

3.4 Cultivation of Self-Discipline and Self-Motivation

MLE also aims to foster students' self-discipline and

self-motivation. By establishing moral and legal standards, MLE encourages students to engage in self-reflection, recognize discrepancies between their behavior and societal expectations, and implement corrective measures. This process of self-regulation and continuous improvement helps students make ethical choices when facing temptations and challenges, demonstrating significant self-discipline. Positive reinforcement mechanisms, such as awards for “Virtue Star” and “Progress Prize,” are essential. These rewards provide recognition and encouragement, further enhancing students’ self-motivation. Such positive feedback not only consolidates their behavioral habits but also promotes perseverance and a pursuit of excellence, highlighting the critical role of MLE in supporting self-improvement.

4. The Reciprocal Impact of Student Behavioral Habits on Moral and Legal Education

4.1 The Feedback Mechanism of Behavioral Habits

Student behavioral habits are not only shaped by moral and legal education (MLE) but also exert a reciprocal influence on the educational process itself. Positive behavioral habits, such as attentive listening and active participation, contribute to a well-ordered classroom environment, enhance learning efficiency, and foster a more conducive setting for MLE. For example, when students consistently engage in active listening and contribute meaningfully to discussions, educators can more effectively impart MLE content and have better opportunities to gauge students’ comprehension and adjust instructional strategies. This reciprocal influence extends beyond the maintenance of classroom order; it also affects educators’ evaluations and modifications of their teaching approaches. When students demonstrate positive behaviors, such as respecting others’ speaking turns and providing constructive feedback, educators receive immediate insights into students’ understanding and engagement with MLE content. This feedback allows educators to fine-tune their teaching methods, ensuring that educational content is more closely aligned with students’ needs.

4.2 The Mutual Reinforcement Between Behavioral Habits and Educational Outcomes

Behavioral habits displayed by students, such as respect for others, adherence to rules, and honesty, effectively serve as indicators of the success of MLE. When students apply the moral and legal principles they have learned and exhibit positive behavior patterns, it reflects the effectiveness of the education provided and offers educators valuable positive reinforcement. This, in turn, encourages con-

tinued enhancement of educational content and methods. Moreover, students’ exemplary behaviors can generate a model effect both within the school and in the broader community, influencing their peers and creating a virtuous cycle. This positive reinforcement further enriches the educational environment, making MLE more engaging and effective, and contributing to an overall improvement in educational outcomes. The observed behaviors of students also provide practical case studies for educators, enriching the application of MLE in practice. Teachers can use these positive behaviors as illustrative examples to facilitate discussion and reflection among other students.

4.3 The Interactive Influence of Family and Social Environment

Students’ behavioral habits are influenced by their family and social environment, which subsequently impacts the effectiveness of MLE. A family environment characterized by respect, fairness, and responsibility can enhance the impact of school-based education. Conversely, negative social conditions may undermine the effectiveness of MLE. Therefore, the success of moral and legal education requires the collaborative support and coordination of families and the wider social context, creating a unified educational effort that promotes the development of positive behavioral habits in students.

5. Optimization Strategies and Recommendations

5.1 Challenges Faced by Moral and Legal Education

Although moral and legal education (MLE) plays a crucial role in shaping student behavioral habits, several pressing issues remain in its implementation. For instance, the curriculum sometimes leans towards theoretical content that lacks practical relevance to students’ everyday lives, making it difficult for students to translate knowledge into action. Additionally, there is a shortage of adequate professional training for educators, particularly in the realm of legal education, often due to insufficient resources and guidance, which impacts the quality of education^[3]. Another significant challenge is the lack of effective collaboration between home and school, resulting in a disconnection between family education and school-based instruction.

5.2 Strategies for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Moral and Legal Education

To address these challenges, schools need to implement targeted improvement measures. Curriculum design

should be more closely aligned with students' life experiences, incorporating interactive teaching methods such as case studies and role-playing to facilitate learning and application of MLE concepts in real-life contexts. Furthermore, there should be an emphasis on enhancing teacher professional development through regular training programs, particularly focused on legal education, to improve educators' instructional skills and expertise. Additionally, establishing a triadic educational network involving home, school, and community is essential. This can be achieved through regular parent meetings, home visits, and online platforms to strengthen communication between families and schools, creating a supportive environment for the development of students' behavioral habits.

5.3 Future Outlook

Looking ahead, the advancement of MLE requires not only continuous innovation in content and methods but also a focus on building an educational ecosystem. It is important to promote societal recognition of the value of children's moral and legal education through government policy support, active involvement of social organizations, and positive media coverage. Moreover, leveraging modern information technologies, such as online education platforms and virtual reality, can expand the spatial and temporal boundaries of MLE, offering students a diverse range of learning resources and practical experiences.

6. Conclusion

This research reveals that systematic and sustained moral and legal education (MLE) can significantly promote the development of positive behavioral habits in students, thereby providing a robust foundation for their

comprehensive growth. At the same time, students' behavioral habits reciprocally influence the effectiveness of MLE, creating a dynamic interplay that fosters mutual enhancement. In light of the profound impact of MLE on shaping student behavior, this research advocates for the active involvement of educators, parents, and the broader community in elementary moral and legal education. By establishing a cohesive educational framework that integrates home, school, and community efforts, we can cultivate an environment that supports students' healthy development. Such collaborative engagement is essential for nurturing a new generation of citizens who possess both exemplary moral character and a strong sense of legal consciousness, thereby contributing to the establishment of a harmonious society.

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