

Original Paper

Using Evaluation to Boost the Moral Development of Junior High School Students: Exploration of the Moral Evaluation Mechanism Based on the English Subject

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Abstract

Due to the transitional, closed, social, and turbulent characteristics of their psychological development, the evaluation of the moral development of junior high school students should focus on the dynamic evaluation of their daily performance and growth. This exploration of the moral evaluation mechanism for junior high school students precisely starts from this criterion, based on the characteristics of the English subject, takes “all-round education” as the cornerstone of the evaluation, uses the three dimensions of core competencies as the basis for evaluation, and adopts multiple evaluation and progressive implementation methods as the guide to conduct a diverse and objective assessment of the morality of junior high school students. With the expectation of achieving the ultimate goal of developing students’ individual specialties and promoting the comprehensive development.

Keywords

Moral Development of Middle School Students, Core Competencies, Moral Education Evaluation, All-round Education

1. Introduction

Educational evaluation has an underestimated influence on the development of teaching. Moral education evaluation, as an important part of the evaluation of the quality of school education, is an important measure to ensure the realization of the goal of moral education in schools. In the new era, in order to thoroughly implement the fundamental task of “cultivating people with morality”, it is necessary to give full play to the guiding, motivating, and managing functions of moral education evaluation. However, there are currently some problems in the field of moral education evaluation, such as the lack of research on basic evaluation theories, the deviation of evaluation content, the simplification of evaluation methods,

the single evaluation subject, and the lack of integrated research on evaluation. Moreover, due to the rich connotations and different characteristics of various disciplines, how to integrate moral education into specific disciplines and achieve the fundamental goal of “cultivating people with morality”, weaken the narrow and utilitarian evaluation in the past, make the evaluation return to the essence of moral education, and truly exert the educational function of evaluation has become a “test” for every educator. Based on the practical thinking about moral education and evaluation, this paper integrates the disciplinary characteristics of the English subject and the specific contextual themes of units in junior and senior high schools, in order to propose a moral education evaluation mechanism based on the English discipline.

2. Key Points and Subjects of Evaluation for the Moral Development of Middle School Students

The three fundamental questions in education are “What kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them,” and the practical exploration in New China has been continuously deepening around these three questions. Regarding “What kind of people to cultivate,” it has always emphasized the fundamental task of “cultivating people with morality,” constructing “an education system that comprehensively cultivates students in morality, intelligence, physical education, art, and labor,” adhering to “the combination of education with productive labor and social practice,” and cultivating socialist builders and successors who are well-rounded in their development. Therefore, based on this consensus and historical foundation, the Ministry of Education’s “Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening Curriculum Reform and Implementing the Fundamental Task of Cultivating people with morality” in 2014 proposed to cultivate “well-rounded individuals.” It includes three dimensions of cultural foundation, self-development, and social participation, as well as the six core qualities subdivided under them: humanistic foundation, scientific spirit, learning to learn, healthy living, responsibility, and practical innovation. This indicates that the evaluation of the moral development of junior high school students must be carried out around these three dimensions and six core qualities.

But how to specifically carry it out? Some scholars view moral education evaluation from a historical perspective and divide it into three types: empirical, scientific, and humanistic paradigms. For a long time, the moral education evaluation in China has been deeply immersed in empirical evaluation, where teachers make evaluations of students’ moral development based on their own subjective will. Since entering the era of modern educational evaluation in the 1930s, educational measurement and evaluation have been flourishing. It pursues the quantification and precision of performance through measurement and has achieved good results for a time due to its scientific and objective nature, but it has gradually fallen into the strange circle of utilitarianism. Therefore, the call for an evaluation method that is free from utilitarianism and the excessive pursuit of the “theory of usefulness” has been growing stronger, which requires the participation of multiple and multidimensional evaluation subjects and the joint creation of such a benign evaluation atmosphere. Moreover, the six core qualities with multiplicity also requires educators to break away from the limitations of a single subject in evaluating students’ moral development. This multiplicity is reflected in aspects such as profound “humanities contents”, “scientific

spirit” and “responsibility”. “Humanities contents” not only requires schools to create high-quality courses rich in the spirit of humanism but also relies more on the community and society to create a better humanistic environment. The “scientific spirit” not only exists in classroom knowledge teaching and independent thinking but also in the brainstorming of group cooperative inquiry. And for the “responsibility”, it is not only cultivated through the guidance of teachers in schools but also relies more on the construction of a good family tradition and the exemplary power of parents at home. All these indicate that from students’ self-evaluation to peer evaluation, and then to teachers, parents, and society, all can serve as subjects to conduct multiple and multidimensional evaluations of students.

3. Design of Moral Education Evaluation for the English Subject of Middle School Students

Having just transitioned from the age of 6 to 12, which is characterized by low stability and a relatively low level of will development, the psychological development of junior high school students is transitional. That is, their psychology is in a semi-immature and semi-mature state and is not highly stable. Therefore, in the long cycle required for the formation of the six core qualities, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of the psychological development of middle school students. By designing interesting evaluation systems to attract students to voluntarily and consciously participate in each evaluation activity, it becomes crucial to encourage them to actively participate in the task of moral evaluation. During the educational internship, the author observed that even students at the junior high school age still have the small habit of collecting cards. Can utilize this to enable junior high school students to achieve the goals of the six core qualities while collecting cards during the process of learning English based on the characteristics of English tasks? Based on this thinking, the author believes that the design of the moral evaluation cards should consider the following principles.

First, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of the English subject as a language. Formally, English is a language, but it is an important tool for China to understand foreign countries. Compared to the moral education infiltration in the Chinese subject, which is to stimulate and cultivate students’ love for the language and characters of their motherland and guide students to develop a sense of identity with the excellent culture of the Chinese nation, one important task of moral education infiltration in the English is different—to cultivate students’ cross-cultural awareness and communication skills. In the process of teaching the language, English teachers should enable students to have national pride while learning to accept and respect foreign cultures, and become “linguistically competent, culturally aware, and communicatively skilled” global citizens in the era of economic globalization. When designing the cards, it is preferable to write all the text on the cards in English, and present the core word meanings represented by each card, the word combinations and sentences, in English, accompanied by corresponding pictures. At the same time, tips on the language and culture of English-speaking countries can also be infiltrated. This makes the moral evaluation cards permeated with knowledge of the English subject. This design references the presentation form of the card-based vocabulary teaching method, using a multi-modal presentation form to immerse students in the target language environment as much

as possible with the portable card materials. However, the moral evaluation cards do not allow students to learn English in scattered and isolated contexts. On the contrary, due to the authenticity of the usage scenarios, students can “learn by doing,” which meets the communicative requirements of task-based teaching and is therefore implementable.

Second, the “all-round education” needs to be implemented. “The all-round education” was proposed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in the “Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era” after “cultivating people with morality” was determined as the fundamental task of education. It emphasizes that the direction of student evaluation should be towards the all-round education. Based on this, the design of the cards should include the five aspects of morality, intelligence, physical education, art, and labor, truly realizing the practical value of comprehensive education.

Furthermore, the progressive nature of the evaluation needs to be reflected. One of the reasons why online games are deeply loved is the progressive nature of the level settings, and the continuity makes players want to continuously play. Therefore, when designing the cards, the author also references the characteristics of game settings and selects a progressive level-based format to enable students to continuously enjoy the joy of successful challenges, stimulate students to participate in the full evaluation, maintain their enthusiasm for participation, and turn the entire moral development evaluation into a process that integrates multiple evaluation methods such as value-added evaluation, process evaluation, and multi-evaluation.

Finally, the design needs to consider the characteristics of the students’ learning situation, including their geographical distribution, family background, means of transportation to and from school, and so on. For example, if the majority of students in the school are boarders, then it is possible to set up cards for good habits of daily routine to help students further develop good habits of going to bed early, getting up early, and exercising on time. However, if the majority of students in the school are day students, then cards for self-care and safe transportation to and from school can be considered. Such situations should be adjusted and the cards set accordingly.

Therefore, based on the above design principles, I have initially drafted the moral development evaluation cards that implement the “all-round education” and cover the six core qualities. They are Helpful (Virtue Card), Learning (Study Card), Working (Labor Card), Artful (Art Card), Fitness (Physical Fitness Card), and Exploring (Exploration Card). Each card only has English, along with definitions, example sentences, synonyms, corresponding behavioral pictures, and extended knowledge of the language and culture of English-speaking countries. The six core qualities are reflected in: Learning (Study Card) and Fitness (Physical Fitness Card) correspond to the dimension of “self-development”, Exploring (Exploration Card) and Helpful (Virtue Card) correspond to the dimension of “cultural foundation”, and Artful (Art Card) corresponds to the dimension of “social participation”. On the basis of respecting the individual characteristics of students, it leads students to continuously challenge themselves and highlights the comprehensiveness of the moral development evaluation. Moreover, based on the characteristics of the

English subject, each card will also include the corresponding behavioral requirements. For example, the initial behavioral setting for the Helpful (Virtue Card) is to help classmates answer questions in English, help classmates recognize or dictate English words, etc.; Learning (Study Card) includes submitting English homework on time and answering questions correctly in the English class, etc.; Working (Labor Card) includes taking turns as the leader of the group or the representative of the English class, etc.; Artful (Art Card) includes creatively designing open homework completion forms when completing assignments in the four dimensions of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, etc.; Exploring (Exploration Card) includes independently acquiring new words, expressing new English expressions, and actively exploring the communication etiquette of other countries, etc. To reflect the diversification and variety of evaluation subjects, the required behaviors corresponding to the cards are not fixed. During the implementation process, based on the actual class situation and referring to the students' will, continuously add the descriptions of good moral behaviors recognized by the whole class to the behavioral requirements, so that the entire class can continuously improve their behaviors in the form of cards and develop their excellent moral qualities. Opinions from other subject teachers and parents can also be incorporated to truly achieve home-school cooperation and home-school co-education, leading the school to an effective transformation from "focusing on scores" to "focusing on educating people".

4. Implementation Methods and Steps of Moral Education Evaluation for the English Subject

To reflect the progressive nature of the evaluation, the five types of moral education evaluation cards are first set with corresponding secondary basic stars (Learning Star, Fitness Star, Exploring Star, Helpful Star, Working Star, Artful Star). After collecting 5 stars of the same type, they can be exchanged for the corresponding card. After collecting 6 cards, they can be exchanged for the opportunity to be listed on the class honor list, and the more times a student is listed, the more likely they are to be recommended to participate in the selection of honors such as "Merit Students" and "Excellent Student Cadres".

In addition, to ensure the smooth development of this moral evaluation activity, the following auxiliary activities will be set up: First, a "Star·Card Exchange Day" will be held during the weekly unit summary, and students can exchange for cards after collecting five stars of the corresponding category. Second, during the "Star·Card Exchange Day," the selection and ranking of the honor list stars will also be conducted. According to the number of cards, their photos and rankings will be published on the class honor list in order, and awards will be given to the top five students. Third, a "Card·Gift Exchange" market will be held at the beginning of each month to exchange cards for gifts. The points corresponding to each card can be exchanged for different prizes, and the students will be motivated to continue their efforts through the incentive of prizes and gifts. Fourth, at the middle and end of the semester, the selection of honors such as "Merit Students," "Excellent Student Cadres," and "Moral Education Model" at the class, school, and city levels will be carried out. According to the total score of the moral evaluation cards and the list of the honor list, five students will be recommended to participate in the selection of the above honors.

At the same time, to ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the evaluation and make this moral evaluation activity widely promoted and accepted, this evaluation system adheres to the principles of comprehensiveness, process, development, and interest, implements the traditional verbal praise in practice, and sets up multi-dimensional evaluation subjects to make the evaluation of students' moral development more scientific. The multi-dimensional evaluation subjects are reflected in the following: First, in addition to the English teacher, any teacher can define the reward behaviors corresponding to the moral evaluation cards based on the characteristics of their own subject, expanding the application scope of the card system and forming a good atmosphere of moral construction in the class. For example, the gym teacher can define the Fitness Card in multiple dimensions, the political teacher can define the Helpful Virtue Card in multiple directions based on the characteristics of the ideological and moral education class, and the head teacher can define the Working Labor Card according to the characteristics of class activities, and so on. Second, the combination of students' self-evaluation and peer evaluation. Students can also recommend themselves to the teacher for star recognition if they have done good deeds and developed good habits, such as sorting garbage on the way home from school. However, since junior high school students have just grown out of the unstable stage of primary school, there may inevitably be students who use lies to achieve their goals due to their eagerness to obtain honors. Therefore, peer evaluation is needed for observation and supervision. If any outstanding deeds or inappropriate behaviors are found, they can be reported to the teacher, who can organize students to discuss the specific situation. This makes every student both a participant and a judge in the evaluation, and this discussion itself is also a re-shaping of students' moral character. Third, give full play to the role of parents to form home-school co-education. Home-school cooperation and co-education is conducive to the enhancement of the function of family education, the establishment of a modern school system, the common growth of teachers, students, parents, and related participants, and the harmony, stability, and happiness of society. Therefore, teachers can involve parents in the process of students' moral development by regularly making and distributing parent evaluation contact sheets to help students achieve healthy and comprehensive physical and mental development.

5. Expected Effects of the Moral Education Evaluation Cards for the English Subject of Middle School Students

At the beginning of the implementation of the moral evaluation cards, students' enthusiasm and participation should reach a good level, because this system is similar to the games students usually play, and the step-by-step activities set during the implementation make it practical, generating great interest and a comprehensive sense of participation among students. Moreover, this system can effectively avoid the traditional, single, and highly subjective moral evaluation model in the past, allowing students to recognize themselves from multiple perspectives, cultivate their self-confidence, and combat the prevailing "only focusing on scores" mentality, while paying attention to their comprehensive development. Not only that, through long-term implementation, a benign competition can be formed

among students, and they will pay attention to their moral words and deeds in all aspects of their study and life, ultimately achieving the result of consciously regulating their personal behavior, developing their individual specialties and personalities, and comprehensively improving their own qualities.

However, at the same time, the implementation of this system initially relies on the teacher having strong prestige in the class, which may not be highly practical and easy to implement for novice teachers. Additionally, since this system sets up multiple evaluation subjects, the teacher will encounter various unforeseen real situations during the implementation and needs to discuss them with the class. The pressure on the implementing teacher will be relatively high. Therefore, the suggestion for the teacher is to set up a rotating Moral Supervision Committee in the class, which rotates every two weeks. When encountering moral behaviors that are not defined in the initial rules in reality, the committee will first discuss it, and then organize a class vote. If the number of votes is large or there is a significant controversy, the teacher will be consulted. This can greatly reduce the burden on the teacher.

6. Discussion

Although this moral evaluation system is based on the characteristics of the English subject, it does not focus on English classroom. The five types of moral evaluation cards are based on the “all-round education” and cover the six core qualities, truly implementing the fundamental requirement of “cultivating people with morality”. During the implementation of this evaluation system, it can not only effectively avoid the deviations in integrity ethics and fairness ethics caused by the traditional evaluation model but also help students consciously regulate their moral words and deeds and fully develop their individual specialties and achieve comprehensive development through their active participation in the whole process. Therefore, the conception of this evaluation system makes the author deeply feel the profound connotation of the statement: Education needs to choose appropriate evaluation, and growth is the natural face of appropriate evaluation.

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