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The Implementation and Development of Moral Education

Moral education becomes more and more important day by day

Cummings and scholars (2001) pointed out that in rapidly developing regions and countries such as Asia Pacific Zone, values education is getting more attention day by day. In line with the rapid changes of society, in the year 2001 our country promulgated 《An Outline on the Building and Implementation of Citizen Morals》 to enhance and improve the works of moral education in schools so as to promote the building of civilized spirit in the whole society. Likewise, the Special Administrative Region of Macao carried out a comprehensive review on moral education at the end of last century. In the year 1999, it launched the re-organised 《An Outline on Moral and Citizen Education》, expecting to provide a systematic learning progress for students and promote the development of their morality and group spirit.

Compared to Hong Kong, Macao has put more emphasis on moral education in schools. It was manifested by the fact that moral and citizen educations were included as regular subjects in the curriculum of middle and primary schools in Macao. According to the observation of writer, the success and failure of moral education were to be decided by: 1) Could direction of curriculum truly complement with the development of society? 2) Could the ways of implementation correspond with fundamental characteristic of values learning? In this article, we tried to explore the implementation and limitation of moral education from the aforesaid two directions: first identify the challenges faced by moral education and discuss what kinds of direction could complement with the development of society more effectively; then, quote an implemented example on moral education to analyze the basic design and conditions of implementation of effective moral education effectively; lastly, discuss further development of moral education in middle and primary schools in Macao according to this analysis.

The challenge that moral education was facing

Most of the scholars agreed that in the society which changed rapidly, the views on values became more diversified, numerous and confused and relative, bringing in more social conflicts and problems. To face this changing situation, different societies took different ways of responses. Totally speaking, societies in the East were concerned about the blessing of whole societies. It expected to rebuild a society with fundamental moral and common view on values through enhancement of traditional concept of value. The chief duty

of school was to cultivate citizens with moral conduct to promote harmonious development of the society. Societies in the West were concerned more about individual development and regarded diversification, clash and conflict as part of their life. Therefore, school education needed to help an individual to build up ability to make independent judgment, in order to face diversified concept of value and also be able to actively participate in and promote the changes of societies.

Carr (2004) believed that there were desirable and insufficient points in these two types of values education. The former was more able to maintain the tradition of a society. It helped to rebuild a society of mutual value; strengthen the cohesion of society and confirm the recognition of individual status. But it was more difficult to promote the development of individual ability of values judgment to overcome the challenge in a society of diversified values. Learning ways inclined to be one-way module of teaching, instructions and instillation. It was not in harmony with the increasingly open society, diversified and interactive ways of living. Thus it reduced efficiency of leaning directly. The

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latter was more advantageous for cultivation of self-examined citizen. It emphasized the rationality of instrument and was more able to promote the building of critical spirit and development of diversified viewpoints. But it overlooked traditional moral and made views on values opposite to each other and unclear and was more difficult to promote the building of a society with consensus. The learning ways of the latter used module of exploration. Through activities such as discussion, conversation and debate, students could participate aggressively, clarify their values or analyse different issues on value conflicts to make responsible decision on problems in daily life. Yet students might lack a strong value base and were difficult to deeply examine different angles of view of the issues in the course of their participation. They could only repeat the points of view of the others and sometimes dispute purposelessly and fundamentally they did not possess the thinking ability of criticism. To solve the above two problems on values education, Carr (2004) suggested strategy of values education which was compatible with these two directions. This strategy of values learning was named "Liberal Education", which advocated to provide chances for students to fully understand traditional concept of moral values on one side, while on the other side led them to explore with rational attitude on the implementation meaning of traditional values in real life.

The curriculum of moral education in Macao valued more on traditional moral and country concept to cultivate citizen with good moral conduct for building a harmonious society. But modern society was developing with more diversification, and the concept of value was more numerous and confused. Should we need to refer to the suggestions of David Carr? Could we help the students to explore the meaning and implementation of traditional moral concept through their familiar living circumstances and carried out in daily life?

Implementation and limitation of moral education

The strategy suggested by David Carr was able to aim at the core problem of value education. It provided us a workable way out. But the carrying out of moral education still needed detailed consideration on the design of teaching and whether it would complement with the characteristics and satisfy the basic conditions of value learning. In the following the writer took an example of a detailed situation of value education to analyze the main characteristics and important points of design on effective value teaching.

This was a scenario of teaching general knowledge in a primary school in Hong Kong. It was a teaching module for primary three, namely "Good habit on diet". The good habits identified in the study of this module included balanced diet, restrained intake of particular food, regular interval and quantity of food intake, etc. Teaching was basically carried out according to learning activity designs in books which included filling in working papers — to identify functions of food, to differentiate different kinds of foods, to evaluate whether one's diet was balanced based on the pyramid for healthy diet, to design healthy menu, to take three days' record on breakfast, lunch and dinner, to identify foods of excessive fat, excessive salt and excessive sugar; teacher expected to help students to know, recognize and build up an attitude and habit of balanced diet. After completion of the above class learning activities, all students gathered in school hall and participated in a lunch gathering designed by their teacher. Apparently, it was to celebrate students' completion of the learning module smoothly. Actually it was hoped that this lunch gathering provided chances for students to carry out views and attitude on values, as a means to assess whether the students were able to build up positive attitude and habit.

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It was out of expectation that teachers discovered that chicken wings were the most favorite food. Several dishes of chicken wings were consumed within ten more minutes, with big dishes of vegetable left behind. It reflected that the students were unable to build up the concept and habit of balanced diet and restrained intake of particular food. In a discussion for follow up, the teachers were quite disappointed, pointing out that most of the students were able to mention advantages of the above diet habits to health. The design of menu was in line with requests for balanced diet. They did not understand why the performances of students were entirely opposite in implementation. After further discussion, teachers deduced that students might have forgotten or could not fully understand the importance of balanced diet and restrained intake of particular food to health. Therefore they were unable to carry out their concepts in practical circumstances. Some of the teachers blamed the inconsistency of values judgment from families to society which counterbalanced the efficiency of teachings in class. As for how to improve the problems of implementation of students, teachers suggested different ways. These ways included to remind related concepts to students on site; to demonstrate by teachers how to choose foods; to enhance the trainings in class etc. According to their explanation, these ways could help the students to remember well the correct values judgment; to become their habits gradually and exhibit in their daily life.

Would the teacher expectation become true? To promote effective value teaching, we must have clear knowledge on the characteristics of value learning and basic conditions for facilitating value learning. Mentioned quite simply, the building of values judgment involved three main compiled parts: knowledge, sentiment and conduct (Gagne, 1985). Take an example of the above teaching circumstances, students did not know well in detail the meaning of balanced diet and restrained intake of particular food. Furthermore, they could not understand the relationship between these two principles and health, and lacking solid basic knowledge. They had difficulty in making rational judgment in the process of choosing food. In a follow-up discussion, teachers confirmed that the aim of this learning module was to introduce the correct habit of diet, not to learn related concept and students were only requested to differentiate many kinds of food in different tiers of the health diet pyramid. So in this module, the value learning of students was fundamentally built on superficial knowledge, lacking

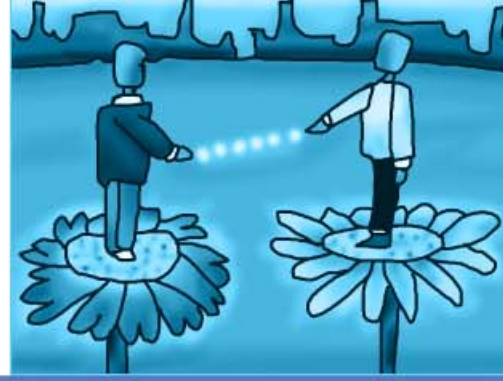
The building of values was also influenced by sentiment. The performances of students in lunch gathering reflected clearly how their judgment and conduct were interfered by sentiments. When they were facing delicious food, most of them chose desired good food and threw away the good diet habit which they just learnt. But if in the process, the teacher could initiate the yearn for health and exemplify pains brought by illness, students would have more experiences, higher sense, fruitful imagination and more diversified sentimental reactions to consider more alternatives.

Actions were more important for the establishment of values. Actions provided chances of implementation and contributed to strengthening the building of values judgment which changed into one's habit internally. Action learning not only provided the chances of implementation, it also needed the active participation of students. Through continual self-examination of one's conduct, inspection on different experiences brought by actions, conclusion on the meaning of actions could be made. The above examples on value learning could not promote self-examination to students during process of action. Therefore it was helpless for the building of related values and attitude.

It was illustrated clearly in the above example that slogan and advertisements were not enough for effective value learning. It must aim at the characteristics of values and attitude. Learning design needed to complement with basic conditions of related value learning. Did our design on moral education need to consider the characteristics of design and satisfy these conditions? Had the teacher sufficient knowledge and design ability to promote activities for effective value learning?

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The progressive development of moral education

The rapidly changing society brought great challenge to moral education. We must self-examine continually in order to face challenge and promote progressive development for moral education. According to the analysis of above article, we could think about the progressive development of moral education in two directions: on one side, besides to cultivate continually the concepts of traditional moral and learning for students, we should in the meantime consider in the course design the development of ability to make independent judgment by students, to reduce using one-way teachings, to increase explorative design on learning, to use specific events to single out the concept of values, in the meantime to lead students to use rational attitude to explore the development background and directions of events by exploring from different angles and the possible ways for arrangement to self-examine the concept of value and attitude on individuals in this event and lastly make

rational choice carefully. On the other side, we needed to consider prudently on detailed design and ways of promotion on value teaching to aim at characteristics of value concepts and attitude to provide students with related learning knowledge, sentiments and implementation changes on conduct development; besides we needed to plan more in detail on different promotion process for learning activities to satisfy the basic characteristics for value learning.

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