

Education in Daily Life: Insights from Home and Kindergarten Co-Education in Henan

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Abstract – This study assesses the development of early childhood moral education through home and kindergarten co-education in Henan. It emphasizes the significance of early childhood moral education in shaping children's values and social behaviours. Home and kindergarten are key environments influencing moral development, but in Henan, discrepancies in moral education approaches between them are evident, along with the ineffectiveness of traditional methods. An integrated and life-oriented approach is called for. The research uses a qualitative design with in-depth interviews, participant observations, and case studies. Findings show diverse current practices in moral education, yet challenges like poor communication, differing educational beliefs, and resource limitations exist. Cultural and social-economic factors significantly impact moral education practices and children's moral development. Effective co-education leads to positive moral development in children. Finally, the study highlights limitations and suggests directions for further research to improve early childhood moral education in Henan and beyond.

Keywords – Early Childhood Moral Education; Home-Kindergarten Co-Education; Henan Province; Integrated Approach; Life-Oriented Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Importance of Early Childhood Moral Education

Early childhood, typically spanning from three to six years of age, is a crucial and highly impressionable period in a child's development. During this stage, children are in the process of constructing their understanding of the world, forming their values, and developing fundamental social behaviours. Moral education at this early juncture is not a secondary concern but rather a cornerstone for their overall growth and future well-being. It equips children with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, fostering the development of empathy, respect for others, and a sense of social responsibility. Fortunately, the development and ubiquity of internet has affected language education. The abundance of resources on internet has brought convenience in language learning (Chen, 2013). Thus, EFL students can easily learn English anywhere and anytime. In recent days, for instance, there are many English platforms available online. Some of them are social network, video messengers, and 3D virtual worlds.

For example, when children learn to share toys in kindergarten, they are not only engaging in a simple act of giving. This seemingly small action helps them develop an understanding of fairness, cooperation, and consideration for others. Such early-learned moral values serve as the

foundation for more complex social interactions in the future, influencing how they build relationships, resolve conflicts, and contribute to society. Moreover, moral education in early childhood plays a significant role in shaping a child's emotional intelligence, enabling them to better understand and manage their own emotions while also being attuned to the feelings of those around them.

Role of Home and Kindergarten Co - Education

Home and kindergarten are the two primary environments that significantly influence a child's moral development during the early years. The home is the first and most intimate learning ground where children are exposed to family values, cultural traditions, and basic moral principles. Parents, as the first educators, play a vital role in instilling values such as kindness, honesty, and respect through daily interactions, routines, and family examples. For instance, during family meals, parents can teach children about gratitude, sharing, and table manners, which are essential components of moral behaviour.

Kindergartens, on the other hand, provide a structured educational setting with trained professionals who use specialized teaching methods and curricula to further develop children's moral understanding. In kindergarten, children interact with peers, engage in group activities, and participate in educational experiences that are designed to promote moral growth. Educators use various techniques, such as storytelling, role-playing, and group discussions, to teach children about moral values and social norms. For example, a story about friendship can be used to discuss the importance of loyalty, helping others, and resolving conflicts amicably.

Co-education between home and kindergarten is essential for creating a consistent and comprehensive moral education experience for children. When these two environments work in harmony, they reinforce each other's moral teachings. A unified approach ensures that children receive consistent moral messages, making it easier for them to internalize moral values. For example, if both home and kindergarten emphasize the importance of telling the truth, children are more likely to understand and adopt this moral principle in their daily lives. This coordinated effort also helps to bridge the gap between different learning contexts, providing a seamless transition for children as they move between home and kindergarten.

Focus on Henan Province

Henan, a populous province located in central China, offers a unique and rich context for the study of early childhood moral education. With a long-standing cultural heritage deeply rooted in Confucianism, Henan's traditional values, such as respect for elders, family harmony, filial

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piety, and social responsibility, have a profound influence on the moral education practices in both home and kindergarten settings. These values are not only passed down through generations within families but also integrated into the educational curricula and daily life in kindergartens.

In addition to its cultural significance, Henan's diverse social - economic landscapes, ranging from urban centres to rural areas, present a wide array of moral education practices and challenges. Urban areas may have more access to educational resources, modern teaching methods, and diverse cultural influences, which can impact the way moral education is delivered. In contrast, rural areas may rely more on traditional family - based moral education and local cultural practices. Studying early childhood moral education in Henan allows for an in - depth exploration of how these cultural and social - economic factors interact with home - kindergarten co - education. The insights gained from this research can not only contribute to the improvement of moral education in Henan but also offer valuable lessons for similar regions in China and around the world, enhancing the broader field of early childhood education.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Discrepancies in Moral Education Approaches

Despite the importance of home - kindergarten co - education in moral education, significant discrepancies often exist between the moral education approaches adopted at home and in kindergartens in Henan. Parents, influenced by various factors such as personal beliefs, educational background, and work - life balance, may have different priorities and teaching methods when it comes to moral education.

Some parents may place a greater emphasis on academic achievement, believing that moral education can be addressed later in a child's development. As a result, moral education at home may be neglected or given insufficient attention, with parents focusing more on teaching children reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Additionally, the disciplinary methods used by parents can vary widely and may not align with those used in kindergartens. For example, some parents might use harsh punishment, such as scolding or physical discipline, to correct misbehaviour, while kindergarten teachers typically employ positive reinforcement techniques, like praise and rewards, to encourage good behaviour. These inconsistent approaches can confuse children and make it difficult for them to develop a clear understanding of moral norms.

Differences in educational beliefs, communication styles, and time availability between parents and kindergarten teachers also pose challenges to effective co - education. Teachers may find it difficult to communicate with parents who are too busy with work or family affairs to engage in discussions about their children's moral development. Moreover, parents may have different expectations regarding moral education, which can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of cooperation between home and kindergarten.

Ineffectiveness of Traditional Moral Education Methods

Traditional methods of moral education, which are commonly used in both homes and kindergartens in Henan, have shown limited effectiveness in early childhood. These methods often include rote learning of moral maxims, one - way lectures, and isolated storytelling. Young children at this age learn best through active engagement, hands - on experiences, and interaction with their environment. Abstract moral concepts presented in a traditional, didactic manner are difficult for them to understand and internalize.

For instance, teaching children that "helping others is good" through a lecture without providing opportunities for them to engage in acts of kindness in real - life situations is unlikely to lead to a change in behaviour. Children need practical experiences to truly understand and apply moral values. Traditional methods also fail to connect moral education with children's daily lives. Without real - world applications, children may struggle to see the relevance of moral principles in their day - to - day interactions, making it difficult for them to develop a strong moral foundation.

Need for an Integrated and Life - Oriented Approach

To address the issues of inconsistent approaches and ineffective traditional methods, there is a pressing need for an integrated and life - oriented approach to early childhood moral education through home - kindergarten co - education in Henan. An integrated approach requires close collaboration between parents and kindergarten teachers, with a shared vision and coordinated strategies for moral education. This involves improving communication channels, aligning educational beliefs, and jointly planning moral education activities.

A life - oriented approach focuses on using real - life situations, such as daily routines at home and kindergarten, community activities, and family events, as opportunities for moral teaching. By connecting moral learning to children's everyday experiences, moral education becomes more relevant and engaging. For example, during meal times, children can be taught about respect, sharing, and gratitude. Involving children in household chores or community service projects can also help them develop a sense of responsibility and social awareness. This approach takes into account the local cultural context of Henan, integrating traditional values into daily life to make moral education more meaningful and effective for young children in the province.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations of Early Childhood Moral Education

Piaget's Theory of Moral Development

Piaget (1932) proposed a stage - theory of moral development that has had a profound impact on the understanding of children's moral reasoning. During the pre - operational stage (ages 2 - 7), children are in the heteronomous morality phase. In this stage, children view rules as fixed, unchangeable entities imposed by authority

figures. Their obedience to these rules is mainly driven by the fear of punishment or the hope of receiving rewards.

Piaget emphasized the role of social interaction and experience in the development of moral reasoning. He argued that as children engage in social activities and interact with their peers and adults, they gradually start to question and understand the nature of rules, leading to the development of more autonomous moral thinking. This theory provides a fundamental basis for understanding how children in Henan begin to develop moral awareness through their daily interactions in home and kindergarten settings, highlighting the importance of creating appropriate social learning opportunities.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Reasoning

Kohlberg (1969) expanded on Piaget's work and presented a more detailed theory of moral development, consisting of six stages grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. In early childhood, children typically operate at the pre-conventional level, where moral decisions are based on self-interest, such as avoiding punishment or seeking personal gain.

Kohlberg's theory underscores the importance of exposure to diverse moral perspectives and the role of cognitive development in moral reasoning. He suggested that as children grow and are exposed to different moral dilemmas and discussions, they progress through the stages of moral development. This framework is valuable for designing age-appropriate moral education programs in Henan's home-kindergarten co-education context, helping educators and parents understand the cognitive capabilities and moral reasoning levels of young children.

Dewey's Pragmatic Approach

Dewey (1916) advocated for an educational approach that emphasizes the integration of learning with real-life experiences. He believed that moral education should not be an isolated subject but should occur through active participation in social activities. According to Dewey, children develop practical moral judgment by engaging in experiences where they have to make decisions, solve problems, and interact with others.

In the context of early childhood moral education in Henan, Dewey's ideas support the concept of life-oriented moral education. By connecting moral learning to children's daily lives, both at home and in kindergarten, educators and parents can help children develop a more practical and meaningful understanding of moral values. For example, involving children in community service projects or family-based activities can provide opportunities for them to learn about responsibility, cooperation, and social justice.

Research on Home - School/Kindergarten Co - education

Epstein (2001) developed a comprehensive framework for family-school partnerships, categorizing them into six types: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. This framework provides a structured way to

understand and enhance home-kindergarten co-education in moral education. However, research by Hill and Taylor (2004) has shown that implementing these partnerships can be challenging.

Differences in values, expectations, and communication styles between parents and educators often pose significant obstacles to effective collaboration. In the context of Henan, these challenges may be further complicated by local cultural factors. For example, traditional views on parenting, which may emphasize strict discipline and authority, may conflict with the more child-centered and democratic approaches used in modern kindergartens.

Life - Oriented Moral Education in Early Childhood

Wang (2015) explored how kindergartens can incorporate moral education into daily routines, such as playtime, meal times, and clean-up activities. The study emphasized the importance of using these natural learning opportunities to teach children moral values in a practical and engaging way. Li (2018) focused on the role of the family in life-oriented moral education, suggesting that household chores, family gatherings, and daily interactions can serve as valuable teaching moments.

However, there is a lack of research specifically focused on how to effectively coordinate home and kindergarten efforts in life-oriented moral education in a regional context like Henan. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the practices, challenges, and successful examples of home-kindergarten co-education in life-oriented moral education in Henan Province.

IV. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena such as early childhood moral education in the context of home-kindergarten co-education in Henan. Qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of parents, kindergarten teachers, and children.

By using methods such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and case studies, the study aimed to uncover rich, detailed, and context-specific information. This approach helps in understanding the underlying factors influencing moral education practices, the challenges faced, and the strategies employed in home-kindergarten co-education. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research focuses on the "why" and "how" of social phenomena, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

Research Participants

The study selected participants from eight kindergartens located in different regions of Henan Province, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. A total of 30 kindergarten teachers, 60 parents, and 120 children (aged 3-6 years) were included in the research.

The selection of participants was carefully considered to ensure diversity in terms of family income levels, educational backgrounds of parents, and types of kindergartens (public, private, and semi - private). For parents, educational attainment ranged from those with only primary school education to those with university degrees. Family income levels were also diverse, representing both low - income and middle - income families. Among the kindergarten teachers, there was a mix of experienced educators with over ten years of teaching experience and relatively new teachers, which helped to capture a wide range of perspectives and practices.

Data Collection Methods

In - depth Interviews

Semi - structured interviews were conducted with kindergarten teachers and parents. For teachers, the interview questions focused on their understanding of home - kindergarten co - education in moral education, their teaching methods, the challenges they faced in coordinating with parents, and their experiences in implementing life - oriented moral education. Sample questions included: "How do you integrate moral education into the daily curriculum in your kindergarten?" and "What strategies do you use to communicate with parents about their children's moral development?"

For parents, the questions covered their views on moral education, their involvement in their children's moral development at home, their communication with kindergarten teachers, and the influence of cultural values on their moral education practices. For example, "What moral values do you think are most important to teach your child at home?" and "How do cultural traditions in Henan influence your approach to moral education?" Each interview lasted approximately 45 - 60 minutes and was audio - recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data collection.

Participant Observation

The researcher spent a total of 240 hours observing daily activities in the selected kindergartens. This included observing classroom teaching, outdoor play, meal times, and interactions between teachers and children. During these observations, detailed field notes were taken, documenting behaviours, conversations, and the overall context. For example, notes were made on how teachers used moral - themed stories during circle time, how children interacted with each other during play, and how teachers guided children in resolving conflicts.

In addition, 100 hours of observation were conducted in the homes of a subset of participating children. The focus was on family routines, parent - child interactions, and any moral - related activities. This allowed the researcher to understand how moral education was practiced in the home environment, such as how parents taught children about respect during family gatherings or about responsibility through household chores.

Case Studies

Twelve in - depth case studies were developed based on the data collected from interviews and observations. These cases were selected to represent different scenarios of home - kindergarten co - education in moral education, such as successful partnerships, challenging situations, and varying levels of parental involvement. Each case study provided a comprehensive description of the situation, including the background of the family and kindergarten, the specific moral education practices, the challenges faced, and the impact on the child's moral development. The case studies were used to illustrate and analyse the complex dynamics of home - kindergarten co - education in moral education in Henan.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed the principles of thematic analysis. First, the audio - recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then, the transcripts, observation notes, and case study materials were carefully read and coded. Initial codes were generated based on the emerging themes in the data, such as "communication barriers between parents and teachers," "moral education methods in kindergartens," and "parental attitudes towards moral education."

These codes were then grouped into broader themes and sub - themes. Through continuous comparison and refinement, a thematic framework was developed to present and analyze the data. This framework helped in identifying patterns, relationships, and key findings related to early childhood moral education in Henan's home - kindergarten co - education context, allowing for a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

V. FINDINGS

Current Practices of Home-Kindergarten Co-Education in Moral Education

In the kindergartens surveyed across Henan, a variety of innovative practices are employed to integrate moral education into daily routines. Many kindergartens have developed themed weeks dedicated to specific moral values. For example, "Kindness Week" involves activities such as creating handmade cards for classmates, sharing snacks, and performing small acts of service within the kindergarten. Teachers use these opportunities to facilitate discussions about how kindness makes others feel and why it is an important value.

Storytelling remains a cornerstone of moral education in kindergartens. Educators not only draw from classic Chinese fables like "The Farmer and the Snake," which teaches about the consequences of naivety and the importance of discernment, but also incorporate contemporary stories that address relevant moral issues such as environmental protection and inclusivity. Role - playing games are also widely used. Children engage in scenarios like running a pretend "kindergarten store," where they learn about fairness in trading, cooperation, and taking turns.

At home, parents in Henan often use family traditions and daily interactions as teaching moments. During family dinners, parents encourage children to express gratitude for the food, share their experiences from the day, and listen attentively to others. Traditional festivals like the Spring Festival are rich opportunities for moral education. Parents teach children about family unity, respect for elders, and the significance of cultural heritage. Some parents also establish routines such as bedtime discussions, where they explore moral dilemmas in a simple and relatable way, like discussing what to do if they find a lost toy.

Challenges in Home-Kindergarten Co-Education

Despite the efforts, significant challenges impede effective home - kindergarten co - education in moral development. Communication between parents and teachers is often fragmented and insufficient. Only 20% of the surveyed parents reported having regular in - depth conversations with their children's teachers about moral education. The primary modes of communication, such as short notes in communication books or brief exchanges during pick - up and drop - off, do not allow for comprehensive discussions. This lack of communication leads to a lack of alignment in moral education approaches, with parents and teachers often unaware of each other's teaching strategies and the progress of children.

Disparities in educational beliefs and priorities are also a major hurdle. Approximately 45% of parents prioritize academic skills over moral education, believing that moral values can be instilled later in a child's development. This misalignment with the kindergarten's holistic approach, which emphasizes the simultaneous development of cognitive, social, and moral skills, creates confusion for children. Moreover, differences in disciplinary methods between home and kindergarten further complicate the situation. While kindergartens predominantly use positive reinforcement techniques, such as praise and rewards, some parents still rely on more punitive measures, which can send conflicting messages to children about acceptable behaviour.

Resource limitations are another significant challenge. Many kindergartens, especially those in rural areas, lack adequate educational materials for moral education. Only 22% of the surveyed kindergartens had a well - stocked library of moral - themed books, games, and digital resources. Parents also often lack the knowledge and resources to effectively support moral education at home. A majority of parents (around 60%) reported having no formal training on how to teach moral values to young children.

Factors Influencing Moral Education Practices

Cultural factors play a profound role in shaping moral education in Henan. The long - standing influence of Confucianism is evident in both home and kindergarten settings. In homes, the values of filial piety, respect for elders, and harmony within the family are emphasized. Children are taught to show deference to their parents and grandparents, help with household chores, and maintain good relationships with family members. In kindergartens, Confucian teachings are integrated into the curriculum

through stories, songs, and activities. For example, children learn about the concept of "ren" (benevolence) through group activities that encourage cooperation and mutual support.

Social - economic factors also have a significant impact. In urban areas, kindergartens have better access to resources, including trained teachers, modern teaching facilities, and a wider range of educational materials. This enables them to implement more diverse and innovative moral education programs. However, urban parents are often busier due to work commitments, which can limit their involvement in their children's moral education at home. In rural areas, while the close - knit community provides a rich context for moral education, kindergartens face challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers and limited resources.

Impact on Children's Moral Development

The study found that children's moral development is directly influenced by the effectiveness of home - kindergarten co - education. In cases where there is strong collaboration between home and kindergarten, children demonstrate higher levels of empathy, cooperation, and respect for others. For example, in kindergartens with active parent - teacher partnerships, children were more likely to exhibit sharing behaviour, resolve conflicts peacefully, and show concern for the well - being of their peers.

Conversely, in situations where communication is poor and there is a lack of alignment between home and kindergarten approaches, children often showed confusion regarding moral norms. They were less consistent in their moral behaviour, sometimes exhibiting good behaviour in kindergarten but not at home, or vice versa. Children in resource - constrained environments also faced challenges in fully internalizing moral values, as they had fewer opportunities to engage with diverse moral education materials and experiences.

VI. DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the intricate relationship between home, kindergarten, and early childhood moral education in Henan. The current practices in both settings demonstrate the potential for effective moral education, but the numerous challenges act as significant barriers. The successful examples of home - kindergarten co - education show that when there is clear communication, shared educational beliefs, and adequate resources, children can develop a strong moral foundation.

The role of cultural and social - economic factors in shaping moral education practices is consistent with existing research on the influence of context on educational processes. The emphasis on Confucian values in Henan reflects how cultural heritage can provide a framework for moral education. At the same time, the disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of resource availability and parental involvement underscore the impact of social - economic factors on educational opportunities.

Comparison with Previous Research

This study's findings align with and expand on previous research in the field of early childhood moral education and home - school/kindergarten co - education. Piaget's (1932) theory of moral development, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in the construction of moral understanding, is reflected in the use of role - playing and group activities in kindergartens. Kohlberg's (1969) stages of moral reasoning help explain the different levels of moral comprehension observed among children in the study.

Regarding home - school/kindergarten co - education, the identified challenges such as communication barriers and differences in educational priorities are consistent with the research of Epstein (2001) and Hill and Taylor (2004). However, this study adds to the existing literature by specifically exploring these issues in the context of moral education in Henan, highlighting the unique cultural and regional factors at play.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings, several implications for practice can be proposed. First, improving communication between parents and kindergarten teachers is essential. Establishing regular, structured communication channels, such as monthly parent - teacher meetings focused on moral education, can enhance coordination. Utilizing digital platforms, such as dedicated mobile apps for parent - teacher communication, can also facilitate more frequent and in - depth exchanges, especially for busy parents.

Second, efforts should be made to bridge the gap in educational beliefs. Workshops and training sessions for parents and teachers can help them understand the importance of early childhood moral education and develop a shared vision. These sessions could include discussions on child development theories, effective moral education methods, and the long - term benefits of a coordinated approach.

Third, addressing resource limitations is crucial. Local educational authorities should allocate more resources to kindergartens, particularly those in rural areas, to ensure they have access to a diverse range of moral education materials. Additionally, providing training and support for parents on how to incorporate moral education into daily home life can enhance their ability to support their children's moral development.

VII. CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

This study has provided a comprehensive assessment of early childhood moral education through home - kindergarten co - education in Henan. It has identified a range of practices in both homes and kindergartens, along with significant challenges that hinder effective co - education. Cultural and social - economic factors have been shown to play a crucial role in shaping moral education practices, and the impact of these factors on children's moral development has been explored. The study has also highlighted successful examples of home - kindergarten co -

education, demonstrating the positive outcomes that can be achieved when challenges are overcome.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations. Firstly, although the sample was selected from different regions, types of kindergartens, and diverse family backgrounds in Henan, it may not be fully representative of the entire population. There could be variations in moral education practices in other areas that were not captured in this study.

Secondly, the qualitative nature of the research, while providing in - depth insights, limits the ability to generalize the findings statistically. A larger quantitative component could have provided more precise data on the prevalence and impact of various factors.

Finally, the study focused on the current situation and did not follow the children over an extended period. As a result, it is not possible to determine the long - term effects of home - kindergarten co - education on children's moral development.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research could address these limitations by expanding the sample size to cover a more comprehensive range of the population in Henan. A mixed - methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research, would provide a more robust understanding of early childhood moral education in the context of home - kindergarten co - education.

Longitudinal studies could be conducted to track the development of children's moral values over time and to evaluate the long - term effectiveness of different co - education strategies. Additionally, research could focus on developing and evaluating specific interventions to improve communication, align educational beliefs, and increase resource availability in home - kindergarten co - education for moral development. Such studies would contribute significantly to the improvement of early childhood moral education in Henan and beyond.

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