

A Study on Effect on Character Building of Junior High Students via Reading Brief Character Reports

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ABSTRACT. *This study aims to investigate the brief of applying character education to improve junior high school students in research of productive result. This study adopts a design of quasi-experimental research, including a comparative group of students (42 students) and an experimental group of students (42 students). Both groups receive pretests, posttests and a fifteen-week long experimental teaching. Overall, there are five kinds of character teaching. The experimental group of students are applied the brief of character education, and the comparative ones aren't. In the study, the independent variables--gender, family types, educational background of the students' parents, profession, and family discipline, are explored to understand the impact on students. Before the experiment, a questionnaire of daily behavior evaluation was filled out. The data collected was analyzed by descriptive statistics and one-way ANCOVA. After the experiment, a qualitative analysis was done through interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. The results are as follows: No significant effects are found in students' independent variables. The students in the experimental group have better scores than the comparative group after character reading activities. Different groups of students show significant difference in learning effectiveness through pretest, posttest and ANCOVA on character reading activities. In the posttest, no significant effects are found in the order of the five character education. Through the brief of character education, students learn to encourage and inspire one another. Through the collected data, students really put what they have learned into practice in their daily life.*

Keywords: *Learning, Learning achievement, Learning effectiveness*

1. Introduction

Article 1 of Primary and Junior High School Act provides that, primary and junior high school education is aimed at the moral, cognitive, physical, social, and aesthetic development of the citizens; as is specified in Article 158 of Constitution of the Republic of China, education and culture shall aim at the development among the citizens of the national spirit, the spirit of self-government, national morality, good physique, scientific knowledge and ability to earn a living. In addition, Dr. Chou emphasized the establishment of safe campus and development of improved character in the 2002 to 2007 Educational Policies Report (CommonWealth Magazine, 2003). It can thus be seen that particular importance is attached to character and moral development under the domestic education. On the other hand, in 1989, it was pointed out in the seminar learning to Care: Education for the 21st Century organized by UNESCO that, morality, ethic and values are primary challenges facing human beings in the 21st century. And in 2002, President Bush of America particularly raised the budget for character education by 3 times. It is obvious that character and morality are taken increasingly seriously by the world and have become a focus of education. Character and moral education refers to that, when faced with words and deeds of themselves or others, people make self value judgment or take practical acts based on moral cognition to reveal personal moral quality and manifest social moral culture, involving conscientiousness--completion of tasks assigned by others conscientiously, respect for life, obedience to superior, gratitude and care for individuals, filial duty to elders, honesty, autonomic and self-disciplined behaviors, fairness and justice in treating others and handling affairs, kindness to and care for social members and so on. Character education originates in family and is enhanced by school; both sides shall jointly assume the responsibility of character and moral development. In short, character and moral education shall be given the highest priority. To sum up, character education is of great importance and the key to success in getting along with people and handling affairs lies in character and accomplishment of individuals. This study is going to probe into effect of character development of students based on Character Briefing education targeted at grade-9 students and central moral norms of class meetings and

campus activities organized by Dean's Office for the academic year of 2015, with such character as respect, conscientiousness, obedience, gratitude and sympathy for experimental teaching. Objectives of this study are as follows: (1) To develop a teaching mode by Character Briefing, thus to improve character of students. (2) To explore into difference in impact of the teaching mode based on Character Briefing on such character as respect, conscientiousness, obedience, gratitude and sympathy between the experimental group and the control group. (3) To probe into impact of the teaching mode based on Character Briefing on study of students under different background variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Character

Character covers cognition, goodwill and behavior (Lickona, 1991; Chen and Chen, 2003); such good virtue is a psychological characteristic affected by both internal awareness and postnatal environment (Chang, 1991; Huang, 2012), which is plastic, unique and steady (Wang, 2014). In summary, the researchers believe that character is the behavior of internal moral cognition and physical and mental accomplishment being turned into external goodness via internalized thinking, or, in other words, a spontaneous moral expression of introspection of individuals. Character is shown in various kinds of studying behaviors and activities at school, which shall be focused on core values of character to realize the effect of introspection and vigilance; where teachers make themselves an example, students would develop good characters under silent influence and a friendly campus environment is thus created.

In respect to classification of characters by scholars at home and abroad, as is shown in Table 1, characters mostly include sympathy, conscientiousness and respect. For the purpose of this study, the researchers hereby focus experimental teaching hereunder on such characters as respect, conscientiousness, obedience, gratitude and sympathy that are necessary to grade-9 students, based on years of experience in class organization and administrative tutorship.

2.2. Character Education

Scholars differed on explanation of character education. Some believed that character education was an internalized behavior and teachers could teach students goodness and instruct them to be good and show kind behaviors, i.e. specific practical good behaviors turned from cognition (Yang, 2004). On the other hand, most scholars argued that character education was a course of doing and learning, the mutual effect of which equipped individuals with ethical values and thus realized association or inter-personal relationship based on caring, honesty, responsibility and respect (Li and Tsai, 2004; Wang, 2014). According to Vessels and Boyd (1996), character education concerned individuals with good characters and moral values fulfilling responsibilities to the society. Moreover, Otten (2000) gave diversified meanings to character education, including moral cognition development, social and emotional learning, moral education, life skills education, health education and resolution of conflicts, and defined character education as a course of individuals changing their personality and attitude via education and learning. In summary, character education is a diversified course of education concerning cognition and instruction, where students are taught goodness and instructed to manifest kind behaviors based on internalization, and thus promotes good characters and behaviors among people around.

Studies on character education conducted by domestic scholars were mostly focused on elementary school education (Lin, 2015), where character education is carried out by virtue of character education textbooks compiled by Prudential Cultural and Education Foundation, animated movies, introduction to picture books, fairy tales, or group discussion, all exerting fair effect. On the other hand, overseas studies on character education were mostly focused on school, teachers and family (Murat, 2010; Cheung, 2010; James, 2011; Blagica, 2012; Kim, 2013; Rokhman, 2014); teaching was accomplished via records of observation (Ryan, 1996), encouragement (Bohmann, 2003), or multi-media devices and videos (Reategui, 2008; Deokman, 2015) to improve character and moral development of students. In summary, character education must involve sincere conversations with children and punishment shall be substituted

with positive encouragement; teachers should appreciate merits of students and teach them to be good and behave good and thus to give back. Hence, this study is to integrate brief reports on the above-mentioned characters into teaching and reading, thus to discuss on learning effect of grade-9 students.

2.3. Reading

According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reading literacy is defined as learning, using and reflecting literal contents to achieve personal goals develop personal knowledge and potential and participate in social activities. Hung (2004) believed that reading was a course of actively absorbing information and improving excitation of brain cells. Zimmerman (1989) pointed out that reading could help accumulate knowledge, master orientation of learning, develop and explain different abilities, excite the brain and broaden horizon. In summary, by reading, we can learn new knowledge, broaden the horizon, turn knowledge and experience of others' into ours, and excite the brain to become smarter and wiser.

Studies on reading were mostly focused on attitude, ability and effect of reading (Yang, 2012; Simone, 2014) and sometimes focused on character education (Hung, 2004) or presented in the form of drama (Hung, 2004). In summary, reading is an effective teaching mode. Reading instruction in teaching scenes can improve students' motive in, behaviors of an interest in reading and improve their ability in comprehension and cognition. Hence, this study is to apply fun textbooks to Character Briefing thus to discuss on the impact of reading ability on character.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Structure

This study aims to explore into the impact of applying character briefing to teaching and reading on character learning of junior high students, with such structure as is shown in Figure 1.

- (1) Independent variables: Gender, educational background of parents, occupation of parents, family pattern, parenting style.
- (2) Dependent variables: Scores in behavior scale, covering respect, conscientiousness, obedience, gratitude and sympathy; higher score indicates better effect of learning.

3.2. Research Design

For the purpose of this study, quasi-experimental design is adopted, with teaching environment being independent variable, experimental disposal concerning Character Briefing teaching, and effect of learning being dependent variable. Behavior scale test was conducted among both the experimental group and the control group before and after the experiment. For the purpose of the experimental group, briefing of one character was completed in 3 weeks (30 minutes a day divided to self-study in the morning and in the evening and noon, 5 days a week), and the whole course was completed in 15 weeks. Teaching mode thereof is shown in Figure 2.

3.3. Research Subjects

Test subjects were selected for grade-9 students of academic year 104 from a junior high school in Pingtung County, including 42 students (21 boys and 21 girls) in the experimental group and 42 students (21 boys and 21 girls) in the control group.

3.4. Research Tools

- (1) General personal information list: To be completed by the experimental group before the experiment, including Gender, educational background of parents, occupation of parents, family pattern, parenting style.
- (2) Behavior scale: Self-made questionnaire. When the draft was finished, the researchers have discussed with the advising professor on effect of contents therein and the advising professor has recommended 6 experts and scholars for providing opinions for correction after calling them for consent. The scale was thus of expert validity, covering such 5 aspect as respect, conscientiousness, obedience, gratitude and sympathy based on Likert Scale, including 30 questions.
- (3) Teaching plan and learning list: To be used coordinately. Learning list was completed after teaching of one character; the class was divided into 7 groups and each group shall discuss before expressing opinions in the class.
- (4) Interview records and observation records: A semi-structural questionnaire was completed

by students after activities and the researchers has recorded details of interviews for organization and analysis. Learning status of students was observed and behaviors thereof were recorded in the course experimental teaching.

3.5. Data Processing

This study includes both quantitative and qualitative data processing. The former involved descriptive statistics and one-factor covariable analysis and the latter covered semi-structural questionnaire, interview, observation, learning list and introspection. Mutual verification between quantitative data and qualitative data helped explore into the impact of Character Briefing in teaching on character development of junior high students.

4. Research Results and Analysis

4.1. Analysis of variables of background of students

(1) Gender: Boys and girls accounted for respectively a half of the experiment group and the control group, i.e. 50% respectively

(2) Educational background of parents

For the purpose of the experiment group, 50.0% of fathers were vocational college or secondary vocational school graduate, 28.6% junior college graduate, 14.3% junior high graduate and 7.1% postgraduate and 0% of elementary school graduate. As for the control group, 66.7% of fathers were vocational college or secondary vocational school graduate, 19.0% junior college graduate, 9.5% junior high graduate and 2.4% postgraduate and elementary school graduate.

For the purpose of the experiment group, 57.1% of mothers were vocational college or secondary vocational school graduate, 33.3% junior college graduate, 4.8% junior high graduate and 0% postgraduate. As for the control group, 66.7% of mothers were vocational college or secondary vocational school graduate, 26.2% junior college graduate, 4.8% junior high graduate, 2.4% elementary school graduate and 0% postgraduate.

(3) Occupation of parents

For the purpose of the experiment group, 50.0% of fathers were industrial workers, 31.0%

civil worker (military, civil servant, and teacher), 7.1% farmer and worker of other industries, and 4.8% commercial employees. As for the control group, 31.0% of fathers were farmer, 28.6% worker, 19% civil worker (military, civil servant, and teacher), 19% commercial employee and 2.4% worker of other industries.

For the purpose of the experiment group, 35.7% of mothers were commercial employees, 31.0% worker of other industries, 16.7% civil worker (military, civil servant, and teacher), 11.9% worker and 4.8% farmer. As for the control group, 42.9% of mothers were commercial employees, 23.8% worker of other industries, 21.4% worker, 7.1% farmer and 4.8% civil worker (military, civil servant, and teacher).

(4) Family pattern

For the purpose of the experiment group, 50.0% of students were from a two-parent family, 21.4% from a single-parent family, 21.4% from a family of parents and grandparents, 4.8% raised by grandparents, and 2.4% under foster care. As for the control group, 52.4% of students were from a two-parent family, 26.2% from a single-parent family, and 21.4% from a family of parents.

(5) Parenting style of parents

For the purpose of the experiment group, 69.0% of students were under democratic parenting, 14.3% authorized parenting, 7.1% non-interference parenting, 4.8% other parenting style and 4.8% indifference. As for the control group, 85.7% of students were under democratic parenting, 9.5% authorized parenting, 2.4% non-interference parenting, and 2.4% indifference.

4.2. Analysis of behaviors of both groups

4.2.1. Comparison of post-experiment assessment of both groups at different levels

Results of descriptive analysis of both groups in different characters after implementation of Character Briefing are shown in Table 2. For the purpose of the experiment group, priority of characters was respect, gratitude, sympathy, obedience and conscientiousness, with the greatest effect on respect and little effect on conscientiousness. As for the control group, where Character Briefing was not conducted, the priority was respect, gratitude, obedience, sympathy

and conscientiousness. Average scores in all aspects of the control group were higher than that of the control group in after-experiment assessment, with a rather big difference in sympathy and conscientiousness. It can thus be seen that Character Briefing does help develop characters.

4.2.2. Comparison of questions in post-experiment assessment of both groups

Sympathy

Results of descriptive analysis of both groups in sympathy after implementation of Character Briefing are shown in Table 3. For the purpose of the experiment group, the average score of "I listen to others" was the highest (4.62) while that of "I stop and persuade people who make fun of others" was not satisfactory (4.02). It could be seen from average scores that, after Character Briefing, students learned to listen to opinions and emotions, with the best effect in "I listen to others" and unsatisfactory effect in "I stop and persuade people who make fun of others". As for the control group, the average score of "I listen to others" was the highest (3.98) while that of "I do not make fun of or squeeze others out" was not satisfactory (3.12). It could be seen from average scores that, students were willing to listen to others and share emotions of others, while required improvement in "not make fun of or squeeze others out".

Conscientiousness

Results of descriptive analysis of both groups in conscientiousness after implementation of Character Briefing are shown in Table 4. For the purpose of the experiment group, the average score of "I seriously finish tasks decided by all" was the highest (4.40) while that of "I lead people in doing things" and "I finish my homework timely everyday" was not satisfactory (4.00). It could be seen from average scores that, after Character Briefing, students paid increasing attention to class issues and were developing a centripetal force, with the best effect in "I listen to others" and unsatisfactory effect in "I lead people in doing things" and "I finish my homework timely everyday".

As for the control group, the average score of "I finish tasks assigned by family members" was the highest (3.86) while that of "I finish my homework timely everyday" was the lowest

(2.98). It could be seen from average scores that, students attached importance to tasks assigned by family members yet needed to improve in homework.

Respect

Comparison of respect between both groups after implementation of Character Briefing is shown in Table 5. For the purpose of the experiment group, the average score of "I do not touch or take other people's belongings without permission" was the highest (4.57) while that of "I greet others initially" was not satisfactory (4.36). It could be seen from average scores that, students behaved the best in respecting stuff and rights and interests of others, while should do better in greeting people initially, probably because they were not sufficiently confident and felt embarrassed to initially greet people. As for the control group, the average score of "when voting, I am subordinate to the majority when I am among the minority and respect the minority when I am among the majority" was the highest (4.14) while that of "I greet others initially" was not satisfactory (3.74). It could be seen from average scores that, students were able to be subordinate to the majority and respect others as well as rights and interests thereof; they shared the case with the experiment group in greeting people.

Obedience

Comparison of obedience between both groups after implementation of Character Briefing is shown in Table 6. For the purpose of the experiment group, the average score of "I comply with traffic rules" was the highest (4.43) while that of "I am obedient to my parents and elders, and do not bicker with them" was not satisfactory (4.12). It could be seen from average scores that, students behaved the best in complying with traffic rules, class regulations and school regulations; such regulations were formulated by all, and punishment would be exerted to whoever violated, so students were able to comply. "I am obedient to my parents and elders, and do not bicker with them" was not satisfactory, as grade-9 students were in the rebellious stage and sometimes bickered with their parents or elders. As for the control group, the average score of "I comply with traffic rules" was the highest (3.88) while that of "I am obedient to my parents

and elders, and do not bicker with them" was not satisfactory (3.38). It could be seen from average scores that, students were able to comply with traffic rules or class regulations formulated by the mass yet needed to do better in obeying parents and elders.

Gratitude

Comparison of gratitude between both groups after implementation of Character Briefing is shown in Table 7. For the purpose of the experiment group, the average score of "I thank parents for care for me in basic necessities of life" was the highest (4.60) while that of "I thank people who offer advice when I make mistakes" was not satisfactory (4.17). It could be seen from average scores that, students after the activities, students became more grateful to parents and showed gratitude towards life.

As for the control group, the average score of "I say thank you to people who help me" was the highest (4.36) while that of "I thank teachers for instruction in study and school life" was not satisfactory (3.62). It could be seen from average scores that, students were able to practically express their gratitude for assistance from their classmates, yet should do better in thanking their teachers.

4.2.3. Analysis on difference in both groups in before-experiment assessment and post-experiment assessment

We first conducted regression coefficient homogeneous examination on difference between experiment group and control group in behavior scale assessment. p value of before-experiment assessment was .89, outside the significant level of .05, available for covariable analysis. One-factor covariable analysis was conducted, with before-experiment scores in the behavior scale being covariables, post-experiment scores therein being depending variables and group being independent variables. According to results thereof, p value was $.00 < .05$, reaching the significant level, indicating significant difference between groups under no impact of before-experiment assessment. Results of the experiment group ($M=152.02$) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($M=132.98$), demonstrating that Character Briefing helps improving characters and is of good effects.

4.3. Analysis of different background variables on learning effect

(1) Gender

One-factor covariable analysis was conducted to probe into the effect of gender on Character Briefing learning among the experiment group. p value of regression coefficient of the group was .74, outside the significant level of .05, available for covariable analysis. And results of covariable analysis were outside the significant level, which indicated that post-experiment assessment after Character Briefing reading was not affected by gender, i.e. there was no significant correlation between learning effecting in post-experiment assessment and gender.

(2) Educational background of parents

One-factor covariable analysis was conducted to probe into the effect of educational background of parents on Character Briefing learning among the experiment group. p value of regression coefficients of educational background of father and mother were respectively .79 and .94, outside the significant level, available for covariable analysis. And results of covariable analysis showed no significant correlation with educational background of parents--junior high, vocational college, secondary vocational school, junior college or postgraduate, which indicated that post-experiment assessment after Character Briefing reading was not affected by educational background of parents, i.e. there was no significant correlation between learning effecting in post-experiment assessment and educational background of parents.

(3) Occupation of parents

One-factor covariable analysis was conducted to probe into the effect of occupation of parents on Character Briefing learning among the experiment group. p value of regression coefficients of educational background of father and mother were respectively .42 and .09, outside the significant level, available for covariable analysis. According to results of covariable analysis showed no significant correlation with occupation of father--civil worker (military, civil servant, and teacher), farmer, worker and commercial employee, which indicated that post-experiment assessment after Character Briefing reading was not affected by occupation of father, i.e. there was no significant correlation between learning effecting in post-experiment assessment and

occupation of father. On the other hand, the average number of cases of mother being civil worker (military, civil servant, and teacher) was larger than that of cases of mother being commercial employee, $p=.02$, indicating that mothers being civil worker had a higher influence on effect of character learning than mothers being commercial employee; the average number of cases of mother of other occupation (housewife) was larger than that of cases of mother being commercial employee, $p=.02$, indicating that mothers of other occupation (housewife) had a higher influence on effect of character learning than mothers being commercial employee. It could be seen that post-experiment results of cases of mother being civil worker or of other occupation (housewife) were better than that of cases of mother being commercial employee, i.e. there was no significant correlation between post-experiment learning effecting and occupation of mother.

(4) Family pattern

One-factor covariable analysis was conducted to probe into the effect of family pattern on Character Briefing learning among the experiment group. p value of regression coefficient of the group was .62, outside the significant level, available for covariable analysis. And results of covariable analysis were outside the significant level, which indicated that post-experiment assessment after Character Briefing reading was not affected by family pattern, i.e. there was no significant correlation between learning effecting in post-experiment assessment and family pattern.

(5) Parenting style

One-factor covariable analysis was conducted to probe into the effect of parenting style on Character Briefing learning among the experiment group. p value of regression coefficient of the group was .92, outside the significant level, available for covariable analysis. There was no significant correlation with parenting styles, which indicated that post-experiment assessment after Character Briefing reading was not affected by parenting style, i.e. there was no significant correlation between learning effecting in post-experiment assessment and parenting style.

4.4. Questionnaire analysis after Character Briefing

After Character Briefing, students in the experiment group have completed a semi-structural questionnaire, result of which showed that students considered written descriptions easy and not difficult to comprehend, with 19.05% of students considered that easy, 80.95% modest, and 0% difficult. 9.52% considered questions related to life improvement helpful, 71.43% considered that of some effect in self-reminding and 19.05% considered otherwise. 70% of students considered Character Briefing helpful to problem solving, improvement of judgment and acquiring of knowledge. In terms of effect to taught matters to the class, 11.90% considered them very helpful, 78.57% slightly helpful and 9.52% not helpful at all. Over 70% of students thought Character Briefing was very helpful to characters of class members and class order; people reminded each other and divided tasks accordingly. In terms of favorite unit, 21.33% liked stories of American historical figures most, 13.11% stories about animals in nature and 11.37% teaching based on physical objects and practical cases. The unit of supplementary materials about character leaders was the least popular unit. Students preferred units of practical cases and images, probably because they were realistic and closer to daily life.

4.5. Qualitative analysis

The researchers hereby present opinions on Character Briefing reading and feelings given by interviewed students as follows:

(1) Contents of Character Briefing were easy and helped students gain new knowledge. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S15: "Written descriptions are plain and cases are closed related to daily life; descriptions of figures are explicit and understandable."

S06: "Many historical figures and animals in nature described have good characters."

(2) Readers became aware of weakness of human beings in the wide world and of the needs for improving behaviors: Students had a broader horizon and improved their behaviors. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S27: "I understand that the world is immeasurable, with a lot of things for us to explore. By reading Character Briefing, I have learned how to improve myself and make achievements."

S06: "When reading Character Briefing, I am able to remind myself and have my characters improved. When reading character development and instruction on growing, if I read what I am short of, I consider improving, and if I read something I am capable of, I remind myself to maintain."

(3) Students could learn about successful people and well-known dicta and spirit of giants: Such dicta were of great influence on students, instructing them when they were frustrated, and improving their writing ability in writing class. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S33: "I discovered that behind many successful people was just a normal background. They made such achievements and realized their dreams simply by postnatal efforts. Giants' world is usually full of tough training and great challenges."

S22: "Dicta help improve out writing ability. We not only learn them, but get to understand the spirit hidden therein."

(4) Students became more united and closer to each other: Students tended to consider things from different angles of view; they became more mature and the class became more closely united. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S12: "It's rich in content, and helpful to development of characters and growth guidance."

S37: "Centripetal force of the class became stronger. Students were able to compete for the class during contests."

(5) The whole course was relaxing, stress-free and interesting: Reading is a fun thing, full of happiness. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S02: "Stories of great people are very interesting, and stirs a lot of meaningful afterthoughts."

S04: "Reading everyday helps me learn a lot of knowledge and a lot of things worth learning. I really enjoy reading."

(6) Students became grateful and learned to repay their parents and the society: They believed gratitude is a fundamental merit. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S07: "Andrew Carnegie, the king of steel in the U.S., was grateful and donated his heritage to improve the society; he established public libraries all over the U.S. when he became successful."

S26: "To our teachers: Thank them for instruction. To family: Thank them for their constant support during my growth."

(7) In respect to conscientiousness, students came to learn the significance of sense of responsibility: They became aware of conscientiousness in completing different tasks and developed good habits, being able to handle things with prudence. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S18: "Condor parents fulfill their responsibilities by taking turns to incubate, hunt, feed and protect baby condors."

S19: "It's my duty to show respect to teachers and elders, study hard, develop good characters, take correct attitude and protect reputation of the school. I should study hard to prepare myself for future tasks."

(8) In respect to respect, students came to learn the significance of respect: One respects himself by respecting others. Sincere mutual respect would create better atmosphere in a team. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S20: "When General Greene was appointed Quartermaster General, he willingly and seriously handled significant issues and thus contributed to victory of the U.S."

S22: "During discussions on family issues, one should respect both speakers and opinions of family members. One shouldn't interrupt speeches of elders and should look the speaker in the eye."

(9) In respect to obedience, students understood that obedience brought about success: They understood that the true obedience involved integration of knowledge and practice. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S11: "Compared to seeming obedience, psychological obedience is more important. One must take a correct attitude."

S28: "I should be obedient to my parents and modestly listen to instruction from elders. I should wholeheartedly complete tasks assigned by teachers or elders."

(10) In respect to sympathy, students understood true meaning of sympathy: They believed that true sympathy involved helping others sincerely, instead of pity. It was about upholding justice and helping others wholeheartedly. Excerpts of feedback from students are as follows:

S05: "Bao Yunsheng won sympathy from his master by virtue of loyalty and helped more people gain freedom when he became free. It's great of him to sacrifice himself to help others."

S04: "Sympathy is about upholding justice, helping other wholeheartedly and caring the disadvantaged groups."

4.6. Reflection on teaching

(1) Before experimental teaching: Master course of learning

Having decided on the subject, the researchers have been collecting data and selecting the first Character Briefing report developed by Prudential Cultural and Education Foundation as textbooks suitable for students. The researchers have independently designed teaching plans and learning list and, based on timetable of the school and central moral standards determined by Dean's Office, discussed with full-time tutoring teachers on teaching plan, learning list and capability indicators. In the course of the experiment, in addition to time controlling and coordination with school activities, attention was also paid to students' application of learned characters to daily life.

(2) During experimental teaching: Show spirit of cooperation

In the course of experimental teaching, students read character reports together, studied and discussed in groups and participated actively. They were full of energy when reading Character Briefing, expressed their opinions during group discussion, and, in the part of teamwork in completing learning list, put heads together to discuss, fill in learning list and express opinions on the platform. Students giving good performance would be presented with a praise card, 10 cards for one character merit ticket and 10 tickets for rewards. Although there were students of relatively poor performance, those of better ability would lead the group in completing tasks assigned. Only a small part of students were not serious, and the researchers would intervene timely to learn about actual situation and make necessary reminder. Publishing finished learning lists was the most exciting event, as everyone wanted to listen to details published by other groups. Opinions and understandings of each group were the results of effort and time input thereby. Therefore, students receiving praise cards were particularly happy. The researchers must pay attention to order and time control in the course of publication by the groups, thus to ensure successful completion of each step.

(3) After experimental teaching: Integrate knowledge with practice

Despite of reading character reports among grade-7 and grade-8 students, teaching plan or learning list was not employed; on the other hand, Character Briefing reading was an innovative experiment to grade-9 students, easily stirring up motive interest thereof in learning. After the 15-week course, students were able to apply knowledge to practice, reveal characters learned in daily life, demonstrating good effect in characters and class unity.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

4.1. Conclusion

(1) There was no significant difference in behavioral and learning effects in daily life among students of different background variables: Effect of character learning of students is not affected by gender, educational background and occupation of parents, parenting mode and

family pattern; students improve their characters by via reading, education and learning.

- (2) After the activity of Character Briefing reading, average scores of learning effect of the experiment group were higher than that of the control group: The experiment group showed higher average scores in learning effect of respect, conscientiousness, obedience, gratitude and sympathy than the control group, indicating that Character Briefing reading does help improve students' characters.
- (3) There was significant difference in covariable analysis in before-experiment and post-experiment assessment between different groups: Average scores of the experiment group were significantly higher than that of the control group, indicating that the experiment group showed better learning effect after Character Briefing reading than the control group, which demonstrated the improvement of learning effect and behavioral performance of students via reading and teaching.
- (4) There was no significant difference in priority of 5 characters between different groups in the post-experiment: There was no significant difference in priority of respect, gratitude and conscientiousness, with minor difference in that of obedience and sympathy.
- (5) Students became able to encourage and remind each other after Character Briefing reading: The experiment group has gone through courses of Character Briefing, teaching, completing learning list, discussion, publication and semi-structural questionnaires, which showed that, students became able to encourage and remind each other via Character Briefing reading, and apply learned characters to daily life, enhancing interaction with classmates, improving friendship and centripetal force of the class and developing good personal characters.

4.2. Suggestions

- (1) Suggestions on character education: Teaching methods should be changed or added to improve effect on students. Character Briefing should be further subscribed for continuous reading by grade-9 students. Teachers shall study teaching plans and learning lists in groups, which would not only release the burden of design, but stir up more methods. Group

discussion and feedback should be organized to learn about more relevant studies on characters in addition to improving interaction and friendship. Relevant projects and details related to characters can be planned at the beginning of a semester to better improve characters of students.

- (2) Suggestions on following studies: Following studies may be focused on subjects selected from more classes to study difference between difference subjects. Other variables may be added, such as age of parents, number of siblings, family atmosphere, academic achievement, etc. to acquire more improved results. In terms of research methods, more methods should be adopted for assessment, thus to attach more research meaning to results. Duration of research could be prolonged and, in terms of qualitative analysis on students, diversified interviews and assessments should be added, such as assessment of teachers, observation or mutual assessment among students, thus to deeply probe into impact thereof on character.

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