

Integrating Caring Education: Cross-Cultural Insights from Japan and the United States

(日本語訳) ケアリング教育の統合：日本とアメリカにおける異文化的視点

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Summary

This study examines Japanese Moral Education's cross-cultural adaptability and effectiveness and two American approaches: Differentiated Instruction by Carol Ann Tomlinson and the Responsive Classroom Approach by Rimm-Kaufman. The research aims to understand how these strategies foster caring education, which nurtures empathy in students. Employing content analysis, the study compares these approaches' pedagogical principles and practices to identify effective strategies for diverse educational settings. Results highlight that while some strategies are universally effective, others require significant modifications to address cultural nuances. The study underscores the importance of continuous teacher professional development, personalized learning, and integrating technology in education. Key findings suggest that adopting flexible and culturally sensitive teaching approaches can enhance moral education in Japan and globally, promoting academic success, emotional growth, and social responsibility among students. The research also explores future challenges in Japanese moral education, providing practical suggestions for educators. By integrating successful international practices, such as Differentiated Instruction and the Responsive Classroom Approach, the study offers actionable recommendations to bridge educational gaps and improve the efficacy of moral education. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on how caring as a core educational strategy can facilitate comprehensive student development and prepare them to meet societal challenges effectively.

Keywords : caring, moral education, empathy development, teacher professional development

1. Introduction

1.1 Caring Education

Education emphasizing caring, known as 'caring education,' has the transformative potential to foster a holistic development environment that nurtures students' emotional and social skills. The profound impact of such education on developing empathy and emotional intelligence is pivotal not just for personal well-being but also for societal harmony and progress.

This study examines Japanese Moral Education, Differentiated Instruction, and the Responsive Classroom Approach to assess their cross-cultural adaptability and effectiveness, highlighting the impact of cultural nuances on educational practices. Specifically, it seeks to understand the impact of these educational strategies within Japanese and American settings and propose adaptations for global application, including the Differentiated Instruction approach proposed by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2017) and the Responsive Classroom

Approach proposed by Rimm-Kaufman (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2014). By clarifying the distinctive features of these approaches and discussing their methodologies, we aim to provide an understanding of effective strategies that can enhance the implementation of caring education in diverse educational settings.

This research undertakes a comprehensive comparative analysis of these approaches, integrating insights from caring education theories articulated by prominent scholars like Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (2012). Their contributions are instrumental in establishing a nuanced understanding of how caring within educational frameworks contributes to nurturing empathy among students, enhancing their social competencies and emotional well-being.

John Dewey's reflections on education, particularly his emphasis on its role in knowledge dissemination and personality development, serve as a guiding principle for this study. In line with Dewey's insights, we anticipate a deeper engagement with

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caring education theory and its practical application, which will cultivate an enriched, human-centric learning environment.

Enhancing students' empathetic abilities lies at the heart of caring education. This pedagogical focus is characterized by educational strategies that promote understanding and responsiveness to the emotional states of others. Over the years, multiple specific approaches have been developed to implement the principles of caring education. Despite these efforts, the proliferation of diverse methodologies has led to a lack of clarity in defining and distinguishing these approaches. This ambiguity necessitates a thorough reevaluation to integrate and refine the methodologies better to align them with the foundational goals of caring education.

By examining these educational models, this research will provide detailed insights into the operationalization of caring education and propose ways it can be more effectively implemented to foster academic success, emotional growth, and social responsibility among students. This comprehensive exploration aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue in educational research, focusing on how caring as a core educational strategy can facilitate comprehensive student development and prepare them to meet societal challenges effectively.

1.2 Moral Education in Japan

Moral education in Japan represents a foundational approach to fostering a caring culture within the educational system. It integrates elements such as empathy, compassion, and ethical reasoning into the curriculum. This alignment with caring education is evidenced by the traditional emphasis on cultivating students' compassion and empathy.

Bamkin (2020) delineates the nuanced implementation of moral education within Japanese elementary schools, emphasizing the expansive integration of moral education beyond designated class time into a broader array of school activities that cultivate prosocial behaviors. This pedagogical alignment with Nel Noddings' care ethics theory underscores the pivotal role of empathetic and relational engagement in educational contexts. The study posits that these educational practices not only reflect but actively operationalize care ethics by fostering essential attributes such as empathy, responsibility, and a strong sense of community, which are integral to moral development.

Moral education has been a crucial component of the curriculum in Japan since weekly moral education classes were introduced in elementary and middle schools in 1958. That year, the Ministry of Education formalized guidelines directing the content and methodologies of moral education. Homeroom

teachers traditionally conducted classes, and the content was largely reserved. A significant reform in 2017 led to the adoption of official textbooks and a more structured curriculum from 2018–19, mandating specific teaching methods to be employed by educators.

The curriculum guidelines for moral education are structured around objectives, content, and methods—three pillars that aim to “nurture morality as a foundation for living a better life, deepen learners' understanding of moral values, encourage self-reflection, and foster the ability to make moral judgments, cultivate feelings, and motivate moral actions” (Ministry of Education). These guidelines are divided into two parts: one for elementary schools and one for junior high schools. The elementary school curriculum guidelines are detailed for each grade from 1st to 6th, whereas the junior high curriculum guidelines consolidate content for all three years into a single section. The content for grades 1–9 is categorized into personal, interpersonal, societal, and natural or sublime interactions, with each category detailed for specific grade levels. The methodology encompasses annual curriculum design, integration with other subjects, instructional strategies, environment setting, material design, and evaluation methods. Thus, comprehensive guidelines for moral education are created for students from 1st through 9th grade, serving as a roadmap for teachers to approach moral teaching in a structured manner.

Moral education resonates with the caring philosophy through practical application in learning materials, case studies, and opportunities for self-reflection. It employs comprehensive techniques to cultivate students' moral sensibilities, such as presenting moral dilemmas, enhancing critical thinking through debate, broadening perspectives through role-playing, fostering self-awareness with diary entries, showcasing moral exemplars, and promoting civic engagement through participatory activities. These methodologies help students grasp moral principles and prepare them for proactive societal engagement.

However, challenges persist in aligning theoretical aspirations with practical execution within Japanese moral education. Critics argue that the uniformity of perspectives and instructional rigidity, the time constraints on teacher preparedness, and the slow adoption of innovative assessment techniques result in a unilateral imposition of values and reduced student engagement. Noddings (1984) argues that moral education should cultivate the ideal of caring relations rather than simply teaching moral rules or principles. This involves modeling care, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Roesgaard (2018) points out that while Japanese moral education aims to preserve values amid globalization, it lacks diversity and a tendency toward formalism. Bamkin (2018) highlights issues such as inadequate

teacher preparation and the complexities of assessing moral education. These challenges underscore a potential disconnect between theoretical ideals and educational practice, revealing an urgent need for diversified content, enhanced teacher training, innovative pedagogical approaches, and a curriculum that connects more directly with real-world applicability.

Addressing these issues is crucial for advancing a more impactful and holistic moral education in Japan that not only assimilates societal values but also equips students to apply these effectively. This research aims to explore these aspects of Japanese moral education, providing insights into its implementation and suggesting pathways for its enhancement in the context of global educational practices.

1.3 Two American Educational Approaches

This study explores educational strategies that foster a caring ethos and identifies three prominent approaches in the United States that are particularly aligned with the principles of caring education. These include Carol Ann Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction approach, which tailors teaching to diverse learning needs; the Responsive Classroom Approach, known for enhancing social and emotional learning through community-focused classroom management; and Engaged Classroom Management, which emphasizes active student participation and teacher responsiveness. Each approach offers unique strategies to develop caring and empathy among students and teachers.

Comparing these with Japan's moral education framework reveals both convergences and divergences in pedagogical techniques and educational outcomes. Such an analysis is pivotal, as it provides insights into how adaptable these Western strategies might be within a Japanese context, potentially guiding future educational reforms to enhance students' caring capacities.

One such approach is Carol Ann Tomlinson's model of Differentiated Instruction, which incorporates Nel Noddings' caring education theories. Tomlinson emphasizes the importance of adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles and individual needs influenced by brain wiring, culture, and gender. She argues that in teaching, care is fundamental and that excellent educators recognize individuals beyond the labels and categories often imposed by educational and medical systems. Tomlinson (2017) stresses that education becomes ineffective when the content or method of teaching takes precedence over understanding and addressing students' individual needs.

The Responsive Classroom approach is another key strategy that aligns with caring education theories. Developed by Rimm-Kaufman et al., this approach creates a learning environment that promotes student autonomy, emotional expression, and mutual

support, enhancing both social and emotional competencies. Research has shown that the Responsive Classroom approach correlates with improved academic performance, higher quality of instruction, and better teacher-student relationships (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). Implementing this approach involves overcoming challenges such as equipping teachers with new skills and integrating responsive practices with traditional educational methods.

Several scholars note the relationship between the Responsive Classroom approach and Nel Noddings' caring education. Noddings (2012) highlights that for a relationship of care to be effective, the caregiver must focus on the expressed needs of the cared for, a principle fundamental to responsive teaching. This approach necessitates a differential response to student needs, acknowledging both their emotional and educational requirements as part of a holistic educational strategy (Jones, 2019).

Despite the relevance of Robert Marzano's classroom management strategies to this discussion, this study will not include an analysis of his work. The decision is based on several factors: Marzano focuses more on student engagement and classroom environment than on direct references to caring or Noddings' theories, and there is a lack of explicit linkage to the caring education framework.

In conclusion, Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction and the Responsive Classroom approach represent significant American contributions to caring education. Both models emphasize education's ethical and relational dimensions, aiming to create classroom environments where caring and empathy are cultivated alongside cognitive and academic skills. This examination not only highlights the practices that facilitate caring education but also underscores the challenges inherent in adapting these approaches to diverse educational settings.

1.4 The Purpose of This Study

This study seeks to conduct a comprehensive analysis of educational approaches aimed at nurturing caring, with a particular emphasis on the role of teachers. The primary goal is to dissect the characteristics of these educational methods, especially within the context of Japanese moral education, to provide practical suggestions that could serve as a reference for educators. Additionally, this research will explore future challenges in Japanese moral education, contributing to the ongoing academic discussion.

The central challenge addressed by this study is the apparent disconnect within Japanese moral education between its aspirational goals and its practical implementation. This investigation aims to highlight and suggest improvements for

this critical issue by examining how Japanese moral education can be enhanced through insights from successful international practices such as Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction and Rimm-Kaufman's Responsive Classroom approach.

The specific objectives of this study include dissecting the distinctive features of Japanese moral education that are intended to foster a caring ethos among students. It will also explore and evaluate the methodologies of these two international teaching strategies, known for their effectiveness in fostering caring, to identify potential synergies and lessons that could benefit Japanese educational practices. Furthermore, the study will recommend pedagogical approaches and strategies that Japanese moral education might adopt to better cultivate caring and empathy among students.

In conclusion, this investigation provides actionable recommendations to bridge educational gaps in Japan and suggests further research into the adaptability of these methods globally. By integrating flexible and culturally sensitive teaching approaches, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how moral education can be effectively tailored to meet diverse student needs and enhance global educational practices. These recommendations will focus on incorporating teaching methods that foster caring more effectively, cultivating a more compassionate and engaged student body. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance the efficacy of moral education in Japan and offer valuable insights to the global educational community on fostering caring and empathy among students.

This investigation is structured to not only address the theoretical underpinnings of caring education but also to offer practical applications that can be adapted to enhance moral education frameworks within Japan. By integrating effective international pedagogical methods, this study anticipates contributing to the broader discourse on nurturing empathy and social responsibility among students, thereby fortifying the moral education framework and preparing students to impact their communities positively.

2. Methods

The methodology employed in this study encompasses a content analysis (Caulfield, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017) tailored to compare the three distinct educational approaches under scrutiny. Content analysis, particularly qualitative, is the most suitable research technique for delineating and understanding the nuanced characteristics inherent in each educational method. This analytical framework allows for an in-depth exploration of the pedagogical principles and practices of Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction, Rimm-Kaufman's Responsive

Classroom approach, and the Japanese moral education system, facilitating a comprehensive examination of their respective methodologies. Through this approach, the study aims to uncover the unique attributes and potential intersections among these educational models, providing a detailed comparative analysis that contributes to identifying effective strategies for nurturing caring in educational settings.

To conduct content analysis, this study employs a literature review as its primary data collection method. The selection process targeted texts delineating the overarching characteristics of the three educational approaches. Specifically, for moral education, the "Course of Study" and its accompanying commentary, both issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in 2017, were chosen to provide foundational insights into the Japanese moral education framework. In exploring diverse educational methodologies that enhance caring, Japan's Course of Study contrasts significantly with the American models of differentiated and responsive classrooms. Issued in 2017, this document not only dictates the content but also the pedagogical strategies elementary school teachers must adopt, embodying a comprehensive national standard with legal authority. This detailed directive supports integrating moral values into daily teaching practices, aligning closely with the ideals of caring education. For instance, it includes specific methods for fostering empathy and ethical reasoning among students, which is crucial for nurturing a caring school environment. This structured approach, representative of Japan's holistic educational philosophy, provides a rich text for analysis, helping to identify distinctive features that could be adapted to improve caring education practices globally.

In the case of differentiated education, a textbook authored by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2017) detailing the conceptual framework of the Differentiated Classroom was selected to represent this pedagogical approach. Similarly, to examine Sara Rimm-Kaufman's Responsive Classroom methodology, three scholarly articles penned by Rimm-Kaufman (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2014; The Alleghany Foundation, 2017), offering a comprehensive overview of the Responsive Classroom's principles and practices, were selected. This curated collection of texts serves as the basis for thoroughly examining and comparing each educational strategy's core attributes, thereby enabling a nuanced understanding of their contributions to the development of caring within educational settings.

This research implements a detailed content analysis methodology to deeply understand each educational approach's nuanced aspects. We employ a mixed-methods strategy, integrating keyword analysis (Saldana, 2021) with thematic

analysis (Caulfield, 2019). Initially, we code the text using keyword analysis to identify pivotal concepts. Following this, we utilize these codes in thematic analysis to dissect and synthesize the distinctive features of the texts. This dual approach enables a thorough exploration of both the individual and collective attributes of the educational methods examined, ensuring a comprehensive understanding that supports our study's objectives. This process involves the following steps:

1. **Keyword Extraction:** Initiate by identifying 30 keywords that encapsulate the core characteristics of Japanese moral education, differentiated education, and responsive classroom approaches, respectively, culminating in a comprehensive list of 90 keywords. These keywords serve as the primary data points for further analysis.

2. **Theme Creation:** Following the extraction of keywords, the next phase involves the organization of these 90 keywords into several thematic categories. This classification is pivotal in structuring the analysis, enabling a focused examination of the data.

3. **Theme Analysis:** Upon establishing the themes, scrutinize the distribution and orientation of the keywords across these thematic categories. This analysis aims to uncover the unique attributes and shared elements among Japanese moral education, differentiated education, and responsive classroom methodologies.

4. **Content Interpretation:** In the final step, delve beyond the surface meaning of the keywords to interpret the underlying themes. This involves referencing the original textual sentences from which the keywords were derived, ensuring a rich and contextually grounded understanding of each theme.

Through these steps, the content analysis provides a nuanced exploration of the distinctive and commonalities of the three educational approaches. By systematically extracting, classifying, and analyzing keywords and their associated content, the study seeks to illuminate the pedagogical characteristics that underpin the cultivation of caring in educational settings, thereby contributing to the discourse on effective moral education practices.

3. Results

In the initial phase of our content analysis, categorizing keywords based solely on their literal meanings led to a biased

portrayal of the educational methodologies, overshadowing their unique characteristics. For instance, the themes created were overly focused on the content delivered to students, which misaligned with our research goal of analyzing educational approaches. The challenge was that the keywords interpreted too literally failed to capture the nuances of educational methods, the primary focus of this investigation. Consequently, it became essential to delve deeper into the educational intentions behind these keywords and integrate these insights into our thematic analysis. Nevertheless, incorporating these interpretations during the keyword selection phase could potentially obscure the true characteristics of the texts. Therefore, we opted to include the interpretation of educational intentions in the thematic analysis phase, ensuring a more accurate and purposeful analysis.

The revised strategy was thus employed, concentrating on the keywords' educational intentions.

3.1 Ten Themes Identified

Through refined content analysis, ten overarching themes were discerned, each defined by its educational focus and intent. The themes and associated keywords are detailed in Table 1. The identified themes serve as a framework for understanding the nuanced aspects of each educational approach under study. The themes and their definitions are as follows:

1. Personalized Learning and Engagement

This theme underscores the importance of tailoring the educational experience to accommodate each student's unique needs, learning styles, and interests. It uses adaptive curricula and differentiated instruction strategies to nurture learner autonomy, bolster student engagement, and facilitate self-directed learning pathways. The objective is to create an educational environment where students feel valued and motivated to explore their potential.

2. Ethical, Moral, and Social Values in Education

Central to this theme is developing students' ethical judgment, moral sensitivity, and social responsibility. By integrating community service projects, fostering an appreciation for diversity, and underscoring the importance of family values, the educational approach aims to instill in students a deep sense of fairness, integrity, and respect for the environment. This theme is dedicated to preparing students for their roles as conscientious citizens in a diverse and interconnected world.

3. Social and Collaborative Learning Enhancement

This theme focuses on augmenting social skills and collaborative capabilities among students, leveraging

Table 1 Results of Content Analysis: Comparison of Three Educational Approaches

	Japanese moral education	Differentiated Instruction	Responsive Classroom
1. Personalized Learning and Engagement		Adaptive Curriculum Differentiated Content Differentiated Process Differentiated Products Individualized Learning Learner Autonomy Learning Styles Student Engagement Student Interests Student-Centered Approach Varied Teaching Methods	Reflective Teaching Student Engagement Student Voice Amplification Student-Centered Learning
2. Ethical, Moral, and Social Values in Education	Community Service Projects Diversity Appreciation Environmental Stewardship Ethical Judgment Formation Fairness Principles Family Values Emphasis Integrity Reinforcement Moral Sensitivity Cultivation Respect Cultivation Values Clarification Exercises		Positive Relationships
3. Social and Collaborative Learning Enhancement	Classroom Dialogue Group Collaboration Teamwork Skills	Collaborative Learning Flexible Grouping Peer Learning	Community Activities Cooperative Learning Group Dynamics Peer Collaboration
4. Educational Environment and Daily Life	Experiential Learning Opportunities Teacher Leadership	Educational Equity	Classroom Organization Classroom Unity Holistic Development Learning Environment Enhancement Positive Discipline Routine Structure
5. Inclusivity, Diversity, and Cultural Education	Civic Engagement Activities Civic Responsibility Encouragement Cultural Heritage Appreciation Global Citizenship Awareness	Culturally Responsive Teaching Diverse Learners Inclusive Education	Cultural Inclusivity Cultural Sensitivity
6. Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking Promotion	Case Study Analysis Critical Thinking Enhancement Storytelling Integration	Academic Readiness Critical Thinking Reflective Practice Scaffolding Skill Mastery	Critical Thinking Problem-Solving Techniques
7. Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness	Emotional Intelligence Development Empathy Expansion Self-Discipline Focus Self-Reflection Techniques		Emotional Intelligence Empathy Cultivation Mindfulness Practices Social-Emotional Development
8. Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skills	Conflict Resolution Strategies Friendship Building Perseverance Promotion Role-Playing Scenarios		Active Listening Conflict Mediation Respectful Communication
9. Growth through Assessment and Feedback		Continuous Assessment Formative and Summative Assessment Tailored Feedback	Feedback Reflection Growth Perspective Interactive Modeling
10. Educational Technology and Innovation		Creativity in Teaching Instructional Strategies Professional Development for Educators Technology Integration	Empowerment Strategies

interactive learning experiences. It emphasizes the significance of classroom dialogues, peer interactions, and teamwork in cultivating robust communication skills, improving group dynamics, and nurturing a community spirit and mutual support within learning environments. The goal is to empower students to work effectively with others and to appreciate the value of collective effort and shared knowledge.

4. Educational Environment and Daily Life

This theme is committed to establishing a nurturing and comprehensive educational setting that bolsters students' academic and personal growth. Emphasizing positive classroom management, the creation of consistent daily routines, and the promotion of holistic development, the goal is to cultivate a learning atmosphere that is both supportive and enriching. The focus is on creating environments where students feel safe, valued, and equipped to explore their full potential, enhancing their well-being and readiness to learn.

5. Inclusivity, Diversity, and Cultural Education

This theme champions an inclusive educational approach that celebrates cultural heritage and raises awareness of global citizenship. It is focused on encouraging civic participation and enhancing cultural sensitivity among students to equip them to succeed in a multicultural and interconnected global community. By embracing the richness of diverse perspectives, this approach aims to prepare students to appreciate various cultures and viewpoints and actively contribute to a more inclusive and understanding world.

6. Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking Promotion

This theme is dedicated to advancing students' intellectual capacities, specifically by enriching their analytical skills, problem-solving abilities, and capacity for critical thinking. It underscores the significance of reflective practices, structured learning experiences, and the examination of case studies as methods to deepen students' comprehension and application of knowledge. This approach aims to cultivate knowledgeable learners capable of independent thought and innovative problem-solving by encouraging an environment where questioning, analysis, and exploration are valued.

7. Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness

This theme focuses on developing students' emotional intelligence and self-awareness, employing practices designed to enhance empathy, foster mindfulness, and promote self-discipline. It is devoted to assisting students in understanding and managing their emotions effectively, which is anticipated

to lead to better interpersonal relationships and overall social-emotional well-being. By prioritizing emotional learning, this approach aims to equip students with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of their inner lives and external interactions, contributing to a more empathetic and emotionally resilient generation.

8. Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skills

This theme emphasizes the importance of imparting students effective conflict resolution strategies and interpersonal skills, enabling them to navigate and constructively resolve disputes. Through the cultivation of active listening skills, the practice of respectful communication, and the fostering of empathy, this approach seeks to strengthen interpersonal relationships, build durable friendships, and encourage perseverance in the face of challenges. The goal is to prepare students to deal with conflicts positively and effectively, enhance their ability to work collaboratively and maintain healthy social interactions in various aspects of their lives.

9. Growth through Assessment and Feedback

This theme underscores the critical role of ongoing, formative, and summative assessments in supporting student development and learning. It advocates for providing personalized feedback and reflective consideration of learning progress to foster a growth mindset among students. The objective is to motivate students to pursue academic excellence and to view challenges as opportunities for learning and improvement. By emphasizing the value of constructive feedback and self-reflection, this approach aims to cultivate an educational environment where students are continually engaged in self-improvement and are inspired to reach their full potential.

10. Educational Technology and Innovation

This theme focuses on adopting technology and implementing innovative teaching methods to enrich the educational experience. It champions creativity in pedagogical approaches, ongoing professional development for educators, and the seamless integration of technology into the curriculum. The aim is to update and revitalize instructional techniques, cultivating an engaging and dynamic learning atmosphere. This approach prepares students for the future by embracing educational technology and innovation, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate and contribute to a rapidly changing world.

3.2 Common Points & Features of Caring Education

Our findings show that aligning educational strategies with Japanese cultural expectations, such as emphasizing collective activities, is crucial for successfully adapting Western educational models like Differentiated Instruction and the Responsive Classroom Approach. The results suggest that while some educational strategies are universally effective, others require significant modification to address cultural nuances in learning and student interaction within different educational systems. These common points highlight essential aspects of fostering a nurturing and responsive educational environment.

The first and foremost feature is the commitment to diverse learning methods, acknowledging the unique learning processes of each student. Caring education requires teachers to continuously adapt their pedagogical strategies to meet varying student needs and preferences. This commitment necessitates that educators remain in constant professional development, keeping up with the latest pedagogical innovations and technological advancements to improve their teaching effectiveness. Additionally, it involves the continuous observation and analysis of student learning activities to ensure that educational methods are appropriately aligned with individual student requirements. This feature significantly intersects with the themes of 1. Personalized Learning and Engagement, 2. Ethical, Moral, and Social Values in Education, 5. Inclusivity, Diversity, and Cultural Education, 9. Growth through Assessment and Feedback, and 10. Educational Technology and Innovation. Considering the keywords within these themes, the specific roles of teachers can be described, emphasizing their critical responsibility in fostering an adaptive and inclusive educational environment.

In the context of caring education, the role of teachers is pivotal in designing and implementing educational strategies that cater to the diverse needs of students. Teachers are tasked with creating a variety of curricula that respect and respond to different learning styles, actively involving students in their learning processes through choices and decision-making opportunities. This approach respects students' autonomy and fosters a sense of responsibility and engagement. Continuous monitoring and adaptive support ensure that educational objectives are met effectively. Moreover, the commitment to innovation and the adoption of new teaching tools exemplify the dynamic nature of caring education, which is crucial for preparing students to thrive in a diverse and ever-evolving societal landscape. Such practices are integral to the development of moral education in Japan and responsive classrooms in the U.S., as they underline the importance of flexibility, empathy, and inclusiveness in achieving educational

success.

Regarding caring, the vigilant and adaptive approach to teaching is essential for realizing the principle of 'complete acceptance,' which is fundamental to caring within educational settings. By creating learning environments that respect and support the diverse experiences of learners, educators establish a foundation for a more inclusive and empathetic school culture. Additionally, this commitment to ensuring diverse ways of learning resonates with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims, underscoring the global relevance of such educational strategies.

The second key feature stresses the critical role of adopting learning methodologies that build relationships and enhance effective communication. The essential prerequisite for these methodologies is creating an environment that fosters nurturing relationships. Within the framework of caring education, cultivating relationships is not only a foundational requirement but also a central element of care and empathy. This aspect significantly intersects with the themes of 3. Social and Collaborative Learning Enhancement, 4. Educational Environment and Daily Life, and 7. Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness. From the content encapsulated by the keywords in these themes, we can delineate the specific roles of teachers, which revolve around fostering an interactive, supportive, and empathetic educational setting.

The objective is to create a learning environment where caring relationships can thrive, making developing such relationships a central focus of caring education. This involves facilitating collaborative learning and group communication, managing emotions and social interactions, and setting up group formations and rules that support these activities-crafting the soft infrastructure necessary to foster social competencies.

About caring, this strategy emphasizes that meaningful educational experiences derive from robust, supportive relationships among educators and students, enhancing a communal educational journey marked by empathy, understanding, and mutual respect.

The third key attribute recognizes the development of critical thinking as a crucial result of building relationships and effective communication. This perspective highlights that critical thinking transcends individual efforts, emerging instead from collaborative interactions and nurturing caring relationships. This attribute closely aligns with the themes of 6. Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking Promotion, and 8. Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skills. Based on the keywords associated with these themes, we can define the specific roles of teachers, emphasizing their responsibility to foster an environment where critical thinking and interpersonal skills are

developed through cooperative and caring interactions.

In addressing the pivotal role of teachers within caring educational frameworks, the study identifies critical thinking and conflict resolution as essential skills that educators must facilitate. This involves structuring curricula that challenge students and equip them with the tools to effectively engage in complex problem-solving and mediate conflicts. These responsibilities are integral to the themes of 'Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking Promotion' and 'Conflict Resolution and Interpersonal Skills,' highlighting a direct application of Nel Noddings' care ethics in practical teaching scenarios. By fostering such environments, teachers play a crucial role in not just academic instruction but in nurturing a culture of empathy and mutual understanding among students, aligning closely with the broader goals of moral education in Japan and comparable international practices.

Within the framework of caring education, critical thinking is intertwined with the concept of "responsiveness," a core element of caring. Individuals are encouraged to offer thoughtful considerations and insights by engaging in responsive interactions, fostering mutual growth. This perspective posits that critical thinking emerges as a collective achievement, enhanced by the dynamics of caring relationships where individuals are attuned to and reflective of the thoughts and needs of others. Thus, critical thinking is seen as both a goal and a result of caring education, emphasizing the importance of nurturing an educational environment that values deep, reflective thought as part of a shared intellectual and emotional development journey.

3.3 Shortcomings of Moral Education in Japan

This section focuses on the discrepancies among the three educational approaches highlighted by our thematic analysis. Specifically, we scrutinize those themes that do not contain keywords specific to Japan's moral education, aiming to identify the essential elements required for advancing an education focused on caring. Additionally, we will investigate concrete measures needed for Japan's moral education by consulting the keyword meanings from two American educational approaches. The thematic analysis revealed that the themes lacking keywords related to Japan's moral education are: 1. Personalized Learning and Engagement, 9. Growth through Assessment and Feedback, and 10. Educational Technology and Innovation. We will examine these areas by referencing the keywords from the Differentiated Instruction and Responsive Classroom approaches to address the challenges faced by Japan's moral education.

Relating to Personalized Learning and Engagement, implementing adaptive educational strategies and tailored

content is crucial to meeting students' varied learning styles and interests. Promoting learner autonomy through individualized learning enhances student engagement and makes moral education more relevant. Additionally, employing various teaching methods and reflective practices helps forge a deeper connection between students and the material, leading to a more meaningful learning experience. By amplifying student voices and ensuring that the education process caters to individual needs, Japan's moral education can become more effective and impactful, truly preparing students for societal roles.

Relating to Growth through Assessment and Feedback, emphasizing continuous assessment through both formative and summative methods can provide ongoing insights into student progress and areas needing improvement. This approach should be coupled with tailored feedback specifically designed to meet each student's unique needs and promote a growth perspective. Feedback should be informative and encourage students to reflect on their learning and behaviors. Additionally, employing interactive modeling as a teaching strategy can help students better understand and internalize ethical behaviors and moral reasoning. Together, these elements create a dynamic learning environment that supports continuous improvement and a deeper understanding of moral concepts.

Relating to Educational Technology and Innovation, incorporating creativity in teaching and diversifying instructional strategies can greatly enrich the learning experience, making it more engaging and effective. Additionally, ongoing professional development for educators is critical to equip them with modern pedagogical skills and to stay abreast of educational trends and technologies. Integrating technology in the classroom is another vital component, as it can provide innovative ways to deliver moral education content and engage students interactively. Finally, empowerment strategies should be implemented to foster an environment where students feel motivated and equipped to apply their moral knowledge and skills both in and outside of the classroom. These combined efforts can significantly improve the effectiveness of moral education in Japan, making it more dynamic and relevant to today's students.

In conclusion, the development of moral education in Japan hinges on embracing many adaptive educational approaches that cater to the needs of modern students. This analysis highlights the importance of student-centered pedagogies, ongoing assessments, and the incorporation of technological advancements in classrooms. There is also a critical need for continuous professional development for educators to ensure they are equipped to apply these innovative strategies effectively. By focusing on these aspects, Japan's moral education can be transformed into a dynamic system that not only meets

comprehensive educational standards but also prepares students to be ethically aware and responsive citizens. These findings suggest a pathway not only for Japan but potentially for other nations striving to integrate moral education effectively into their curriculums.

4. Discussion

This study underscores the need to consider cultural contexts in educational reforms, as evidenced by the differences between Japanese moral education and the American Responsive Classroom approach. For instance, while the American approach focuses on enhancing individual emotional and social skills, Japanese education prioritizes collective harmony and societal contributions. These differences demonstrate how educational programs can impact student development and emphasize the need to develop education programs adaptable across different cultural settings.

Understanding these cultural divergences is crucial in designing effective and culturally adaptive educational programs. Future educational reforms must develop strategies that not only accommodate but leverage the unique cultural backgrounds of students, ensuring that these educational approaches are not merely transplanted but thoughtfully integrated into the local educational landscape, enhancing their relevance and impact and fostering a more inclusive and effective educational environment. For example, American educational approaches such as the Responsive Classroom could be adapted to include more collective community activities that align with Japanese values of societal harmony, thus providing a balanced approach that respects individual and collective needs (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2014).

Furthermore, the application of care ethics in education, as emphasized by Nel Noddings, suggests that effective educational relationships arise from educators' sensitivity to students' individual needs and personalities. True educational efficacy can be achieved when educators engage sincerely with each student, making it essential for teachers to develop the capacity to relate personally and empathetically with their students. Implementing these theories into practice involves creating classroom environments that prioritize dialogue and allow students the freedom to express their emotions and opinions. This enhances students' social and emotional skills and fosters a sense of agency and engagement in their learning process (Noddings, 1984; 2012).

This study illuminates the intricate dynamics of moral education across diverse cultural contexts and highlights critical gaps in the practical application of these educational

frameworks. Previous research, notably by Bamkin (2020), has explored the theoretical foundations of moral education, yet it often overlooks how these theories translate into actual student behavior. Future research should, therefore, employ quantitative methods to assess the impact of moral education on student behavior and incorporate initiatives for teacher training and curriculum improvements to enhance educational outcomes.

The findings from this study underscore the urgent need to develop specific methodologies in 'caring education.' This involves designing pedagogical approaches emphasizing emotional intelligence, empathy, and ethical reasoning. Additionally, it is crucial to develop classroom environments that support nurturing relationships, encourage open communication, and promote inclusivity. Furthermore, establishing ongoing professional development programs is essential to equip educators to create a caring and inclusive classroom atmosphere, adapt to diverse student needs, and effectively manage the complexities of moral education.

By focusing on these key areas, this discussion not only integrates the findings of this study but also outlines a clear pathway for future research and practical applications in education. This approach highlights the importance of adapting educational practices to meet the diverse needs of students globally, ensuring that education systems remain responsive and relevant in a rapidly changing world.

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