

Capstone Final Draft

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Background and Context

During the complexity of human development, the genetic traits and external influences are both major factors to determine the complex process of our mental development. What truly shapes and forms our moral self, our personality that will later become a part of the society of our country? Are we mainly shaped by the external environment or are we simply the products of our genetic codes, and can those be modified? These questions lead to the core of this topic which questions whether education and continuous practice can affect human nature, the development of humans which directly affects the development of our society.

"People's beliefs about their abilities have a profound effect on those abilities. Ability is not a fixed property; there is huge variability in how you perform," Albert Bandura stated. Bandura's words mark the importance of education in human development of belief, attitude and behavioral system. Education serves as a catalyst for the development of personal and societal profile, breaking the walls of genetic predispositions.

Ethics education has been an indicator of personal and professional development, implementing the understandings of different moral values. These moral values that shape our personality and character will become the foundation, guide us through life, and the process of responsible decision making. Especially today when the world is getting more and more complicated and interconnected, the importance of proper ethics education should be emphasized more than ever before. This capstone project dives into the significance of ethics education in Armenia, the possible positive effect left on the society as well as the curriculum content along with various samples.

Dr. Michael Josephson, an ethics expert, highlighted the importance of ethics education not only in the complexities of society but also for shaping each individual self. He states that the importance does not lie within the idea of memorizing the ethics codes instead, it's much more effective in instilling moral values that will determine human behavior in various stages and situations of life. Individuals that have a deeper understanding of ethics, and have undergone ethics education classes appeared to be more interactive, empathic and ethical in their decision making behavior.

According to Dr. Josephson's research stating the fascinating benefits of ethics education, it is clear that institutions that provide access to such training/education programs result in communities with lower ethical violations and higher moral standards. Additionally research conducted by Dr. Josephson states

that individuals who experience ethics education have better skills to deal with conflicts in the workplace or their environment in general resulting in positively impacting their living surrounding.

One of the goals of ethics education is to be able to use critical thinking skills to question assumptions, analyze complex situations, and make beneficial decisions based on valid judgements. This approach is given priority rather than simply covering themes on moral values based on government directions.

Moreover, the digital age has affected every single living person bringing new ethical barriers starting anywhere from data privacy, bullying or misuse of artificial intelligence. Ethics education serves as a tool to learn the skills of critical thinking not only to navigate various challenges in our everyday life but to also protect and prepare us to coexist with possible barriers of the online world. Ethics codes are not static norms, rather they are consistently developing skills that grow along with each new invention.

This capstone project seeks to explore how implementing ethics education in elementary schools will transform an individual's character positively, simultaneously affecting Armenian society. Ethics education is the catalyst to our moral self in the rapidly developing world. By fostering a strong mindset equipped with moral values, ethical and critical thinking skills, these individuals will be prone to making adequate decisions starting from simple tasks until the most important choices of their life. These actions will therefore lead to a more harmonious, ethical and just society where each citizen will have a meaningful contribution in each step of their everyday life with a firm understanding of the importance of civic engagement. As a result this capstone project will focus on the power of ethics education and its potential regards shaping a brighter future for our homeland.

Problems of incivility, after 2020 Artsakh war - before lit review in introduction

The period of the 2020 Artsakh War along with the stage of regret, acceptance and its outcomes left a deep scar on our society such as tensions, divisions, blame, aggression and egoism. This negative wave covered us all in destructive dialogues, damaged empathy and vanished the image of social unity that we were always proud of. However, among the chaos in our lives we need to acknowledge and seek objectively for a way out through ethics education – by healing and progress at least among our youngest generations that are in the stage of early development.

Giving our kids access to ethics education is a way towards success – the path of recovering our future generations from becoming the possible victims of post conflict minds. By encouraging and instilling ethics codes and morals such as empathy, respect, and open mindedness, we can get to a point where understanding and constructive cooperation is something that lies within our culture. Empathy being one of the most fundamental contents of ethics – teaches individuals to put themselves in the shoes of others, therefore eliminating narrow-mindedness and developing the acceptance of diversity. Empathy becomes the base for respectful communication as well as more optimal problem solving, eliminating possible tension, aggression and selfishness.

Besides this crucial factor, ethics education prepares individuals to deal with conflict situations resulting in successful solution finding. This is done by continuous practice of implementing active listening, critical thinking and effective communication skills. As a result individuals express themselves respectfully and become participants of meaningful dialogues.

Another major aspect that the education program will focus on is enhancing the feeling of responsibility and accountability. These crucial skills serve as a catalyst in the process of becoming law abiding and harmonious society. By instilling these values we not only shape individuals that not only adequately reflect on their personal actions and choices, but also become a part of collective responsibility that is defined by unity, trust, and honesty. These skills will serve to break the destructive behaviors such as blame, which is currently a descriptive character of our society.

Instilling the above mentioned values is crucial when trying to get out of the post-conflict stage. However the educational program must be available for every youth. In order to reach world changing results the program must be connected with the ongoing formal education system. The support from the governmental level is crucial in developing an ethics education program that will address the cavities formed as a result of post conflict society.

Ethics education program will stand as a transformative base for a post war society such as Armenia after the 2020 Artsakh war, where disrespect, blame, and aggression will no longer be descriptive of our containing ritual, by promoting empathy, respect, responsibility, and effective communication. As Nelson Mandela stated, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” where ethics education should stand for a powerful weapon for a positive change within an environment for a peaceful living.

Literature Review

The focus of the capstone project is on exploring the idea of the establishment of mandatory ethics classes in schools. The vitality of this comes from the consensus that a multitude of factors, from inherent genetic tendencies to external factors, play a role in the formation of one's personality - ethics being a cornerstone in each of these elements. In order to conduct the analysis, a variety of sources will be reviewed, supporting the inclusion of ethics instruction in the classroom. The chosen sources offer an insight into the complexity of human growth, bring up supporting case studies, examine recent studies on the influence of genetics and behavioral ethics, and much more.

The scholarly works considered provide an in-depth understanding of the complex relationship between personality development and the integration of ethics education in schools. More in depth, sources like Spaulding's research titled "*Personality and Social Development: Peer and School Influences*" and the work of Havighurst et al called "*Personality Development*" explore the role of external factors, such as the environment, age, peers and teachers in influencing a child's early development, contributing to the shaping of his/her personality in the future. Similar to Thompson's research "*Development in the First Years of Life. The Future of Children,*", these works underscore the importance of early experiences and relationships, which helps argue that ethics classes should be implemented at the early years of a child's education. In their work, Havighurst, et al shed light on the concept of "ego-personality," emphasizing self-criticism, self-discipline, self-motivation, and responsibility as essential components of personality development, which are all parts of ethical reflections. Similarly, Thompson argues that "Young children do not learn about the world by themselves. A young mind's capabilities (...) provide powerful avenues for understanding when aided by everyday experience and the behavior of other people". Hence, when made a mandatory part of curricula, ethics classes would act as a constant example, formalized framework for understanding right from wrong, encouraging positive and adequate behaviors such as respect, empathy, decision making, effective expression, and critical thinking, accountability, problem solving, active listening, community involvement, cultural awareness, and discouraging negative ones (hate, negative criticism, disrespect, unfairness, degradation, egotistical and self-centered traits).

Furthermore, a variety of works will be used with a specific focus on the extent to which education plays a key role in shaping one's personality in the longer-run. Spaulding's research titled "*Personality and Social Development: Peer and School Influences*" explores how peers and teachers influence personality and social behaviors in a school environment, while Soder, in his work "*The Good Citizen and the Common School*" focuses on the vitality of having well-trained professionals as teachers, because their everyday interactions with children directly contribute to the shaping of the young minds and behavior. Similarly,

Kohlberg's piece, called "*Moral reasoning. Educating the democratic mind*" explores the idea of education developing independent thinking skills, ethical considerations, and moral reasoning in the young minds. A comparative analysis of these sources, explains that by spending a significant portion of their formative years in educational institutions, young minds are shaped by the interactions and experiences encountered within these settings. As exemplified in Spaulding's work, the teacher's approach, both in terms of behavior and teaching methods, is a crucial factor influencing the cognitive and social development of students.

Moreover, the dynamics among peers within the school environment contribute significantly to the overall social behavior and personality traits that individuals exhibit. These findings, perfectly align with the arguments from behavioral ethics and teaching ethical decision making by Drumwright et al work "*Behavioral ethics and teaching ethical decision making*", where the authors delve into behavioral ethics principles and their application in teaching ethical decision-making, while arguing for purposeful integration into educational practices to enhance students' ability to make morally right decisions. Hence, the insights gathered from these sources emphasize the impact that incorporation of dedicated classes focusing on ethical considerations would have in the development of students. In a nutshell, the early years of education, as highlighted by Havighurst and Thompson, are particularly crucial in laying the foundation for these essential components of personality development, and the school environment, as explored by Spaulding and Soder, becomes not only a space for academic learning but a dynamic arena where social behaviors, interpersonal skills, and ethical considerations are concurrently nurtured, this way making it an important place in life of students where they spend a significant amount of time during which the environment can be modified to a place where students will learn positive customs. Thus, well-structured ethics classes would complement and enhance the positive influence that educational institutions naturally have on shaping the character of young individuals.

On the other hand, the contradicting viewpoints to the discussed hypothesis should not be neglected. Bouchard's work titled "*Genes, Environment, and Personality*" focuses on the genetic aspects of personality development, as opposed to external factors. As a result of a variety of twin studies, the author estimates genetic influences on personality traits of around 40-50%. Thus, this viewpoint prompts a nuanced consideration of the interplay between nature and nurture in personality development. While external factors mentioned previously such as education, environment, and interpersonal relationships are undoubtedly influential, Bouchard's research underscores the significance of an individual's genetic makeup in shaping personality traits in the child. So, this source will be used to represent the debate around the chosen topic, in order for the work not to be subjective. It is crucial to acknowledge that, despite the

influential role of genetics in shaping personality traits, there exists a shared understanding that genetic factors do not constitute the entirety of the equation. As highlighted in the source, the effect of genetics is estimated to contribute to approximately half of the shaping of personality traits, so there remains a significant portion of one's personality that is open to external influence and environmental molding. In essence, the acknowledgment of genetic predispositions does not limit the potential impact of ethical education. Rather, it underscores the need to address the other half of the equation – aspects of personality that can be shaped through external measures. In this light, the establishment of mandatory ethics classes in schools is positioned not as an attempt to alter inherent traits determined by genetics but as a strategic and necessary attempt to influence the part of personality development that is bendable by external interventions. It is an assurance that all available mechanisms, both genetic and environmental, are harnessed to their fullest extent.

While the aforementioned scholarly works build a strong foundation for discussing whether or not mandatory ethics classes in schools improve the holistic development of individuals and their personalities, there are still gaps that the capstone project will aim to fulfill. First, the capstone project will delve into various ethical theories, exploring the dichotomy between ethics as a universal concept versus a subjective, personal one. For instance, by examining ethical realism, the project will explore the argument against the existence of universal moral standards. This will help understand whether or not the ethics classes should be mandatory everywhere, and whether or not the content taught should vary. Within the same scope, the project will navigate the interplay between culture and personality development. It will explore how cultural norms contribute to the ethical fabric of individuals and analyze the proposition that ethical standards may vary significantly from one nation to another. A case study of Armenia will be presented, shedding light on the cultural dynamics influencing ethical norms within a specific context and comparisons will be drawn from examples of other nations, such as the United States. Following this, the project will explore strategies and frameworks for integrating diverse cultural perspectives into ethics curricula. This is vital in ensuring that ethics classes are not only tailored to universal principles but also sensitive to the cultural nuances that shape individual ethical frameworks. An example of an International Baccalaureate course called “Theory of Knowledge” will be brought up, which uses a variety of materials to discuss different human conducts through the ethics lens. Additionally, analysis from Drumwright et al work “Behavioral ethics and teaching ethical decision making” will also be implemented, specifically the area of research rejecting merely adding liberal learning to the curriculum and arguing for purposeful integration, use of collective resources like Ethics Unwrapped and GVV educational platforms. Lastly, the work will address the complexity of selecting teachers for such classes and try to identify the criteria to be employed in choosing educators who can effectively impart ethical education with the help of analysis conducted in Mathur's and Corey's work

“Bringing Ethics into the Classroom: Making a Case for Frameworks, Multiple Perspectives and Narrative Sharing..”

What do we mean by ethics education

The educational program that will be proposed during this project is not simply a summary of curriculum content and learning outcomes, it is rather a course filled with different activities and interactive methods open for developing the individual learning possibilities of students. In the following sections there will be a detailed proposed curriculum, with characteristics of each covered theme and anticipated learning and performance goals. Performance of each student will not be graded by exams as it would be traditionally done with other courses, instead there will be cognitive assessments to determine students' performance level. The curriculum content as well as the assessment methods can be further specified and developed by teachers and professionals. In the sample curriculum there are emphasized the key elements of the proposed program that should be covered throughout the years of attending elementary school. The form of the course is such that teachers will not be limited to modify the learning methods to their creativity level, however the changes must be made within the content of the educational program.

The program of ethics education has its specific areas that will be mostly focused on, one of them being - development of communication and social skills. This broad topic will be addressed in many different ways and perspectives, where memorizing, monotonous teaching, and passive lectures will not be a choice. The classes will be oriented towards different life situations embracing social skills and prosocial behavior. In order to achieve the stage where children will have the required foundation of knowledge to behave as such, they need to be exposed to a continuous practice of critical thinking, discussion and evaluative attitudes. In the ethics education program these skills become means from which the desired behavior is gained.

Our task will be to support the personal and social development of students with a note of their own character, identity, values and goals. When fulfilling this aim the learning methods used will only be interactive, cognitive, and experiential which in addition to the given materials and the information will effectively be absorbed and grasped by children. The acquisition of behavior and installments of moral standards will be therefore consistent with them.

The emphasis will be put on the enhancement of moral reasoning, working on interpersonal relationships within the family, that later extend to the class and school environment, up until the city, the region and the country they live in. Harmonious and stable relationships will be achieved by practicing and instilling social skills such as - open communication, empathy, assertiveness, positive acceptance of others, ... The problem will not only enhance and develop social skills but will also prevent behavioral and learning disorders.

To round up students will throughout the completion of the program acquire behavioral traits to have healthy interpersonal relationships. Students will learn to understand and respect the highest value, which is human life and everything that leads to its development. Children will be encouraged to strengthen their self-esteem as well as not only value themselves but other people. Proper expression of feelings and respect of the emotions of others will also be taught. Another concept that we will put emphasis on will be understanding the value of friendship and family. Last but not least, children will learn to actively participate in the society (class, school, city/country), as well as develop their positive and supportive attitude towards disabled, sick and old people.

The class will not be a regular civics class as it is mostly known. It will include the practice of civic participation, rather just having a philosophical look. The class will be led in the form of experiential learning and active participation rather than a form of discussions of theories, concepts, and historical events. Students this way will have the opportunity to not only receive information but also apply it through various activities and projects. This way the sense of civic responsibility, and not only, will be grasped more effectively, encouraging them in the future to become more active and engaged members of their community. By including interactive methods we will create a tunnel that will connect theory and practice, which will serve as a preparation stage to help students face challenges of real life and benefit the society as a citizen.

The significance of why ethics should become a mandatory part of the curriculum in Armenian elementary schools can not be overstated. Being exposed to ethics education children will have to nurture the skills of responsible citizenship, moral values upon which they will make decisions, as well as being emotionally and physically educated. By creating a standard to be later implemented in the education system we can raise the quality of education received and the outcomes in terms of mature students that graduate with a set of crucial skills and knowledge to manage their lives and maintain a harmonious society.

In order to achieve success in transforming our future generation into a better one we need to focus on a wide audience at the same time, making this program available to every single school of Armenia, to every single student that is enrolled in mandatory Armenian education. We also need to make sure that mandatory ethics classes should be integrated starting from the first grade. The exposure from such a young age will ensure the most effective absorption of ethics elements. As the students grow up, along with their age the topics and teaching methodology also shifts accordingly.

This practice has been implemented in many countries which can be examined as success stories on the way of implementing such programs in Armenia. Slovakia for example being one of the countries that implemented mandatory ethics classes in their schools, can be compared to receive inspiration from. Students practice ethical thinking, responsible decision making, social and civic responsibility, sustainability, and many more. Such mandatory programs are also implemented in other European countries such as Finland and Norway. As a result citizens of these countries have high moral values, are emotionally more stable, and are socially responsible.

Similarly Japan has an mandatory moral education program, known as “do toku” which is considered as one of the most important elements of not only the educational program but also culture. The program plays an important role in the development of the child's character and future citizen’s behavior. However the program is rather focused on teaching normative social values and behavioral traits to align with societal needs, than critical thinking, emotional intelligence and skills to independently but ethically behave. The Japanese instruction consists of elements such as order, cooperation, manners, respect for public property, endurance, hard work, freedom, justice, and harmony with nature (Hill, 1996). Despite the slight difference in focus and goal of the programs, the decision to implement such a course into the mandatory educational program can become evidence that such an approach is effective enough to change the development of future generations.

By studying the models of countries like Slovakia, Finland, Norway or Japan we can create a successful model for ethics education classes. These countries also serve as proof of how such methods can improve the quality of life and contribute to the formation of a successful generation to power Armenia. Ethics education should therefore not be an option so each individual is exposed to a set of morals in order to make adequate decisions.

Purpose of the Study

In the context of Armenia being globally recognized and effectively represented, ethics education plays a determining role when it comes to nourishing a society with critical thinking, objective reasoning, ethical problem solving and strategic planning skills. The purpose of this capstone project is to explore how a mandatory ethics education program can build a strong country where individuals not only acknowledge the power of their homeland but also effectively represent its interests past its borders.

Armenia's journey towards a successful and powerful future, just like each country's, lies within an educated citizen with a mindset equipped by critical thinking and proper analysis skills. This relates to any situation in life whether it's the simplest task of choosing between two products during grocery shopping or a critical decision making process regarding business or political matters. We need to nurture citizens with the ability to make decisions where our choices are not made out of the blue without a single thought about the consequences.

The cultivation of a children's behavioral and social character has always been the task of parents. Despite the fact that it is each parent's right to choose which values to nurture into the child's psychology, this stage might in some families be accomplished partially whereas in others can be totally missed. Due to that there have been many suggestions to move the stage of character development into the area of mandatory school programs. Each individual is developing in the result of interactions among its environment. However despite this fact each of us always aspires to become an individual that has his own unique mindset, set of values and goal. Each interaction during this stage of development will eventually lead to a situation where an individual makes decisions for himself, taking full responsibility for his actions. If we want to have a society where citizens make wise decisions and actions, we need to interact accordingly during the developmental stage of children in the name of mandatory ethics classes program.

Furthermore, the positive interaction in terms of putting children on to the right track will result in the formation of citizens equipped with all necessary skills, mindset and intelligence needed to represent Armenia globally, along with strengthening its influence and protecting its interest in the international sense.

The purpose of this study was to identify effective methods, and recommendations on implementation of ethics classes into the mandatory Armenian education program. The focus is put on the importance and effects of this program, various themes that should be implemented into this program along with explanations of their meanings, and why they are important in the specific age. To sum up, the purpose of

the study focuses on one of the methods to empower citizens to become citizens with high moral values and other skills that will positively affect their actions to keep up in a rapidly changing world\

Statement of central research question

Research question

Why should we implement a mandatory ethics class in elementary schools of Armenia and how it will help develop values and mindset for a better society in future?

Claim

Implementing a law, about mandatory ethics classes in elementary schools in Armenia, is crucial to develop a strong base with certain values and a dedicated mindset from a very early age when kids start learning at schools. By encouraging the development of responsible and emotionally stable and healthy citizens, we will contribute to changing our society into a better place for living, working, studying and developing our country in the future.

Implementing such a routine in elementary schools has an enormous potential in strengthening our society. When teaching children morals and values, and building a strong foundation based on principles such as honesty and respect, we will form the children's personality and character by creating an individual who is emotionally stable, and has high conflict resolution skills. After learning about certain values or more specific situations in life and exploring the right choice of reaction, students will develop the skill to make responsible decisions, contributing to society and our homeland.

Methodology

To start working and bringing my project to life, I will need to undertake an extensive research proving the positive impact of ethical education in elementary schools of Armenia, will bring to our society whether in present time or in future. The research will both include quantitative and qualitative methods.

The first phase of my research is the literature review which will help me to create a solid base in terms of academic findings, and theories. The review contains studies on how learning ethics changes an individual, development of an individual's personality, how environment changes our perceptions and what we need to become responsible citizens. These academic articles will provide reliable information and statements that will build up upon my argument.

A sample curriculum along with lesson plans will be designed in order to fully communicate the methods of teaching and learning environment key points, such as focusing on engagement, interactivity, and creating a stress-free atmosphere. When designing the curriculum themes such as fairness, kindness, rules, respect, responsibility, building peaceful relationships, self-control, understanding differences, and fostering a sense of community and safety were considered for first graders. For second grade students, themes change according to their age and we can introduce them to topics such as emphasizing uniqueness, kindness, gratitude, cooperation, helping peers, understanding respect, and handling aggression positively. As students step into the third grade they are introduced to concepts such as apologies, determining mistakes, building trust, understanding self-worth, and developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills in school and community settings. Fourth graders get to experience more complex concepts such as media influence, gender stereotypes, human rights, environmental conservation, and ethical behavior, fostering critical thinking, empathy, responsible media consumption, and ethical decision-making. Because this research focused on the first five grades, the last grade, fifth grade, included themes like conflict resolution, emotional expression, self-awareness, self-belief, effective communication, the first encounter of the concept of human rights, and environmental responsibility. Throughout the grades the concepts can repeat however the idea is to throughout the years of the mandatory program, constantly introduce the same topic to students, age appropriately as well as to foster skills and values more effectively.

Accordingly assessment methods will be designed to effectively analyze the understanding of students grasped from classes. Methods include storytelling sessions followed by drawing or a short writing assignment, role plays, group works, interactive activities, debates, and interactive quizzes in forms of Kahoots. All these methods are chosen to be appealing to children according to their age and eliminate the possibility to view this class as a boring, demanding or challenging course for children. At the same time

the effectiveness of the assessment methods must be declined, to make tracking of students progress possible for instructors.

Next type of research I will conduct will be quantitative data analysis in the form of survey and interview outcomes that will be put in statistical measures. During the surveys, where my target group will be teachers, students of elementary schools, and their parents. I will conduct multiple surveys with the target groups, the first survey will be about the society we currently live in and its flaws. Are people satisfied by their everyday interactions with people or are there major problems they face frequently and would like to change. The responses will be analyzed and evaluated to find the problematic areas that people would like to eliminate from our society and analyze their causes as well as ways we could minimize those. The outcome of the survey must determine the needs our society currently has, regarding ethical and moral behavior among children and adults.

For the second phase of surveys the target groups will be asked whether they are satisfied with the outcomes of the school teachings, the environment where kids learn , whether they notice any negative traits that upset them and affect other children, whether they are familiar with the way individuals communicate in that environment and their level of satisfaction . Most importantly the survey will include questions whether or not they are familiar with the concept of having ethical education in school, whether they would be for or against the idea, what is their opinion, how would the course benefit the children or otherwise would it be useless.

The other type of research that will be implemented are interviews. Interviews will be conducted with teachers, students, parents, and psychologists, where the aim will be to analyze their views on the potential outcomes that the project can bring. Whether they believe that having mandatory ethics classes will benefit the children or on the other hand will not have any significant change. The surveys and interviews will be finished with a focus group discussion where selected teachers, parents, and students (all groups separately) will be invited to discuss and evaluate the significance of ethics education, again highlighting the gaps of our society, and solve each gap within the frames of the proposed course curriculum. At the same time, qualitative data analysis will be implemented in the form of overviewing and including notes, and suggestions gained from the interviews and discussions.

Qualitative research methods will be also used in the form of an analysis that will be conducted of a country that has a mandatory ethics education implemented in their school system. During this phase specific school books that are used for these classes will be analyzed, the ways teachers lead such classes, and the

differences of the two societies will be discussed. The goal will be to find the solutions to the previously mentioned gaps in the Armenian education system and society, as well as implement customs that helped the foreign country in its well being, modify those to the Armenian understanding and implement those. This qualitative method will pick the best policies and customs used within the course and applied in Armenia in a modified version.

Another type of research will consist of conducting a pilot testing during which we will choose two classes in an elementary school of the same age group and run a few trial classes of ethics. After that we will compare the changes in students' ethical realization, behavior, and whether they implemented the methods and class discussions throughout the day when in school. This way, qualitative data will be analyzed and provide us with a stronger understanding of the impact of the course on children.

Lastly the research will also consist of a cost benefit analysis where the costs of bringing such a project to life will be evaluated. The analysis will give us an approximate understanding of the practicality of implementing a mandatory ethics class. This part will include the approximate data on materials and supplies, and printing costs for books that will need to be exclusively made for the course. After the data is collected we will start planning resource allocation and if possible implement sustainable means for creating the materials.

Problem Statement Analysis:

Despite the high potential that students have in Armenian elementary schools, the education system struggles with different issues that serve as a barrier in the development of ethical and responsible citizens. One of them being the issue of students not perceiving classes with their full seriousness leading to many absences and a relaxed approach towards completing various assignments, as most of the times there will be a way, such as parental influence to change teacher's decision, to get away with the inaccurate behavior.

Another problem that the system is facing is the little dedication and interest from teachers to track the effectiveness and success of their students. This brings us to the ineffectiveness of the system, where the majority of teaching methods lies within theoretical instruction instead of practical and engaging learning. This way of learning that is currently being practiced the most is creating a gap between the content taught and real life application of the knowledge received in the classroom. Not only does this way of learning become less effective, it also does not provide the necessary critical thinking and decision making skills necessary to succeed in the future.

A survey was conducted for the purpose of this research, where one of the aspects was to identify the societal issues that citizens of Armenia have experienced. Where the vast majority indicated in their responses that they have experienced unethical behavior seen in different segments of society. More specific examples included disrespect towards teachers, elderly citizens, women, and bullying children from lower class or people with disabilities. Other common responses included verbal unethical behavior such as speaking loudly, cursing or using aggressive tone in public spaces.

Another response that repeated throughout the survey results was the dishonesty and unethical behavior in everyday interactions such as queue jumping, inappropriate public transport usage, or baseless criticism. These examples affected the surveyor's quality of life on an everyday basis. Individuals privacy related issues also appeared to be in the response such as, not respecting other's privacy and invading their personal territory or some more serious concerns such as taking intimate pictures of others without their consent, in a public setting. Other issues that concerned responders were related to not being able to keep a clean environment, littering.

One thing we can observe here is the similar pattern between these problematic situations, that people have mentioned, many of them stem from lack of ethics and can be perceived as unethical behavior.

Therefore these results can stand as evidence and a warning that an action must be taken in terms of integrating ethics education as a mandatory component of the educational system of Armenia.

Schools serve as student's second homes, especially from first to ninth grades, when students spend 6-8 hours a day, which takes up an adequate portion of the day. Therefore we need to make sure that the content of the schools curriculum must be equipped with necessary lessons that equip our future generations with necessary skills fostering ethical character. Ethics education, as some might think, is not simply moral instruction, it includes the cultivation of civic duty and responsibility for all aspects of life.

By designing a mandatory class along with its cognitive learning methods that cover topics such as moral values, empathy, respect, responsibility, self-control, and conflict resolution. It also dives into the topics such as social issues, media literacy, environmental preservation, and the skills necessary to maintain positive relationships and community engagement. By exposing students to discussions and activities of these themes we will be able to shape a character full of high moral values and other skills to become an even more developed generation than currently.

The need for an enhanced education system is critical, and measures must be taken not to let a nation, more specifically future generations, degrade intellectually. One of the suggestions and gaps in the society is the prevalent unethical behavior and lack of emotional intelligence. Luckily these can be significantly decreased by targeting the majority of current and future students that will be educated in the Armenian schools. The strategy will lie within implementation of mandatory ethics classes available to students starting from first to ninth grades.

Current Ethics Education Offerings in Armenia

After interviews conducted with teachers of Armenian elementary schools, it was clear that there is no mandatory program to cover ethics education in schools. The ethics education offerings are extremely limited in terms that they are implemented in the so-called “hidden curriculum.” In the name of “the hidden curriculum” students are being presented with a “storytelling” method of learning. Stories include characters such as dogs, cats, lions and various animals, this is specific for elementary grades. The stories are followed by discussions about the characters, in this case animals’, behavior. Unfortunately the approach undertaken here is extremely limited in terms of primitive themes on ethical behaviors. The ineffectiveness lies within the fact that there is no engaging technique, especially for a first grader a simple discussion can be extremely boring. Through a story and a discussion a six year old will grasp on the topic much harder than compared to an interactively led class full of beneficial activities and games.

Some schools on the other hand do offer a more thorough class focused on civic responsibility, typically focused on life lessons, introduced in the fifth grade. However the problems that occur with this program are as follows - the class is not a mandatory program, some schools can choose to implement it in their curriculum some don't. The class is only offered in the fifth grade, this way limiting the amount of topics introduced and effectiveness to work with a child for the duration of years (1-9). This class could create a part of a mandatory ethics education but with such limited characteristics it can definitely not be a solely introduced class and leave positive changes on future generations.

As stated in *Genes, Environment, and Personality* (Bouchard, 1994) when a personality is being shaped approximately half of the determining factors are genetics, however we are left with a big space of influence that can affect our personality formation. This space can be fulfilled by many different factors from our environment where in student’s cases one of those are schools and the information they are taught at such institutions. This makes designing an educational program for children a much more responsible act which affects their character. If we think strategically in the name of a more powerful and developed nation with equivalent citizens, we can use this information to modify the program in a way that will nurture our future citizens, today’s children, with all necessary skills and values that are implemented in our proposed project.

Policy Implications for Ethics Education

When implementing ethics classes into the mandatory curriculum of the Armenian education system, proper means should be taken in order for this class to be taken seriously and legitimately just like a math class or an English class. The necessary considerations include policies that will serve as a catalyst in making the integration and acceptance of such a program.

First and one of the most important policies is the mandatory attendance of the class. This is a huge problem within Armenian schools, students often miss classes without legitimate reasons. Especially for such a class, it could be perceived as a class that could be skipped or not taken seriously. By making attendance compulsory and affectionate towards the final grade students will show responsibility towards the ethics classes just like mathematics, English, Armenian or biology. If the student fails to meet attendance requirements along with showing bad performance throughout the academic year will not be able to pass to the next grade.

Another policy proposal is to make ethics classes a mandatory requirement for being able to graduate from 9th grade. Students must obtain nine final passing grades in order to graduate from high school. Failure to do so will result in additional examination and/or assessment by the end of each academic year to receive a passing grade. This way the policies ensure that ethics education will be considered as one of the leading important classes where students should come concentrated and prepared to demonstrate activity.

Policies should not only affect students but the teachers as well. Another policy should be concerning the preparation, readiness and training of the instructors. This is a very sensitive point which must be carefully processed because as Soder highlights in "The Good Citizen and the Common School", the role of a well-trained teacher is determined in shaping children and their behaviors. And as this is an instructor-led class, they must have necessary qualification and understanding of ethics education but more importantly the significance and nuances of interactive learning. The pressure during these classes must be taken to the minimal level. This way we will ensure the students positive understanding and approach towards ethics classes, creating a pleasant atmosphere which will automatically attract children and make their learning experience fun and beneficial. Children will grasp information more effectively in a pressure free environment and a relaxed mind. In order to achieve this, especially taking into consideration the prevailing teaching methods left from the Soviet times, where students experience fear of their teachers, the pedagogs must undergo a special training in order to master cognitive methodology and the maintenance of a harmonious environment.

As partially mentioned, the learning environment must become one where children will not be shy to open up or simply answer a question. The atmosphere should be supportive and conducive where there are no strict right or wrongs, instead there are discussions in a form of open dialogues, games and activities to embed certain skills. They should never experience fear from the instructors, they should instead know and understand that the instructor is always open and willing to help with any question.

To sum up, the main guidelines should include mandatory attendance, becoming one of the graduation requirements, instructors training and competency measurements, and maintaining an effective and supportive learning environment. Of course further clarifications and modifications must be made and the policies should be much diverse as there are a lot of other aspect that need to be considered such as curriculum content and so on, however these are the main and most important policies that should be considered in order to achieve effectiveness and the goal that the program carries.

Potential Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Implementing ethics education in elementary schools of Armenia can arouse various challenges such as resistance from parents and cultural norms. In this section the possible challenges will be addressed along with their proposed solutions.

One of the main concerns about the program will be introduced by the parents of children. These concerns will be mainly expressed regarding the content of the curriculum. Some parents might also be skeptical whether this class is needed at all. Questioning the need of this class arouses from the idea that it is a widely spread belief that children should be taught morals and belief at home.

According to the survey conducted for the purpose of this research, 33.1% of respondents indicated that they expect resistance from parents regarding the curriculum content. However, to the question whether the process of ethics education should be a parents or school's responsibility a vast majority (92.5%) votes for a collaborative approach of both parties, stating that it should be a responsibility of both. This is a very strong indicator explaining the importance and role our education system and the school plays during a child's development.

On the other hand only a small percentage (1.9%) thinks that it should be the school's responsibility only. However, after a given situation where the family fails to keep up with the responsibility of introducing ethics education to their child, and despite the potential resistance that could arouse from parents, a significant majority (85.5%) shared the same belief that the school should take over and become the consistent source of ethics education.

This way there will be equality in the established moral values system among children and will therefore not vary depending on the individual's social class which includes factors such as, financial status, education, or occupation. This was validated by research supported by an extensive survey and analysis of Dutch population, stating "... classes differ in (a) their moral values and understandings of what is correct/ethical, (b) their patterns of social interaction, and in (c) the costs and benefits of taking various actions," (Trautmann, van de Kuilen, & Zeckhauser, 2013). In such a situation, a mandatory ethics education program will be viewed as a leveler among children to create a harmonious environment with equal opportunities for all.

In order to overcome the possible negative approach from parents, mitigation strategies should be considered. One of the strategies would be the active engagement of parents regarding the content of the

curriculum. Alongside the content parents will be informed on the assessment methods and most importantly the benefits of the classes. Parents could also be involved in the curriculum development and have their opinions expressed which can be analyzed by specialists and in case of approval, implemented.

Another consideration will be expected from the cultural perspective. Due to the fact that Armenian culture is quite conservative mindset, this can cause challenges while discussing sensitive topics such as sexuality even if it is done in the context of ethics education. In order to overcome or eliminate these perceptions the most effective way will be to be extremely careful when designing content that includes sexual topics. One of the steps can be to include special training for instructors to equip them with necessary approach and vocabulary to address such sensitive topics. Another step could be to customize the curriculum which would be more appropriate to Armenian cultural considerations, without eliminating the theme and making sure to cover and achieve the learning outcomes for these classes.

Ethics education by each grade and age group

1st grade - age 6/7

- Introduce children to the concept of ethics
 - Explain what the term means in a simple language that would be understandable to this specific age group (example: being fair, kind, determine whether a behavior is right or wrong)
 - Introduce the idea of rules, and responsibilities (actions that help us live in peace and happiness)
 - i. Discuss the idea of peace and happiness - expression among children, discover their depiction of peace and happiness
- Family and Community Rules
 - Discussion among children where each share their rules at home and express their importance in their opinion (examples: respecting parents, siblings, doing chores, washing hands before touching food)
 - Discussion on community rules, what behavior do we consider appropriate and inappropriate outside of our house (example: being polite and greeting the neighbors, offering help to the elderly or disabled people, not littering)
- Respect and relationship
 - Explain what respect is in simple terms and examples such as listening to others when they speak, helping the ones in need, caring for your loved ones, using words such as “please, sorry and thank you.”
 - i. Through role plays discuss and reflect on the importance of these expressions and how they can change a certain situation positively
 - Discuss different situations where relationships are build on respect and opposingly where respect is missing (example: family, friends or teachers and students building relationship)
 - i. Discuss the differences in both situations, how do both members of situation feel
- Self control and responsibility
 - Teach about self-control (example: waiting for your turn, controlling emotions)
 - Discuss responsibility in school and family (example: taking care of your belongings, completing homework, doing chores)

- Understanding and respecting differences
 - Explain the concept of different personalities, nationalities, backgrounds and raising awareness on diversity among students
 - Discuss why should we accept and respect each other's differences
 - Each kid will have to determine their personality traits
- Introducing yourself
 - Create a pleasant and stress-free environment where kids will have to introduce themselves and assign a personality trait that describes them
 - The classroom becomes a safer and friendlier place for children to experience pleasure whilst learning
 - Discuss each others differences, at the same time emphasize and encourage respectful behavior during this process

2nd grade - age 7/8

1. Embracing uniqueness
 - a. Children will be encouraged to present something unique about themselves
 - b. Each characteristics will be discussed among children and celebrated
2. Kindness and Gratitude
 - a. Each child will have to mention something they are thankful for - this will be practiced frequently throughout the year to create a sense of appreciation towards the smallest things in life
 - b. Discussion will be held to share an act of kindness each students has done
 - i. Talk about the impact it left on your environment
3. Helping your peers
 - a. Why is it important to help your friends
 - b. Discuss the feeling after you offered and helped someone - feeling of accomplishment, fulfillment, being needed
 - c. Practice simple tasks by helping each other, working in pairs
 - d. How to ask for help?
4. Empathy and compassion
 - a. What do we need when we are feeling sad - what would comfort us
 - b. Role plays to help foster compassionate behavior among children

- c. Practice empathy by discussion and reflections of different situations and personal stories
5. Respect
 - a. What respect means for each student
 - b. How can we show respect by simple actions such as listening to each other without interrupting, understanding that each of us have different opinions, using kind words, not laughing at each other, ...
 6. Why are some kids laughing at others?
 - a. Understanding why some kids laugh at other - see what children think, their perspective
 - b. Explain what a person feels when trying to laugh at someone else - they see their flaws and want to hide them by putting someone else on the spot
 - i. Change perception of kids with such behavior from bad kids to kids that need our help and support
 - ii. Understand that there is nothing to be ashamed of and the importance of sharing your experience with someone reliable
 7. Importance of friendship and cooperation
 - a. By the use of illustration where different kids are cooperating, lead discussion where each kid will interpret the picture - how are the kids different from each other, what makes them unique, what do they have all in common - after this practice lead discussion about the actual classroom following the same principle
 8. How to control aggression - storytime
 - a. By storytelling explain how aggression affect the aggressor
 - b. Discuss how children perceive aggression, what comes to their mind when they hear the word aggression
 - c. Discuss and share stories on whether the kids have encountered or experienced any aggressive behavior
 - i. How did they feel?
 - ii. How did they resolve the issue? / How would they want to resolve the issue?

3rd grade - age 8/9

1. The importance of saying sorry
 - a. Discuss that each of us has the right to make a mistake, however it should be followed by a reflection and an effort to learn from it, and take responsibility for the caused inconvenience if necessary

- b. Discuss why is it important to acknowledge and say sorry for your mistakes
 - c. Teach students how to sincerely apologize via role plays to visualize how saying sorry helps maintain a relationship, resolves a conflict and builds trust
 - d. Why are some kids ashamed to say sorry and how is it wrong
2. Determining real mistakes
 - a. Discuss the difference between accidents, and intentional mistakes
 - b. Discuss how to determine types of mistakes and how to handle situation accordingly via role plays and discussions
3. Trust but check
 - a. Ask children who do they trust? Should we trust everyone around us?
 - b. Discuss the importance of thinking twice and verifying before believing or sharing an information
 - c. Lead games and activities that foster critical thinking
4. Self worth and self respect
 - a. Accepting yourself the way you are
 - i. Children will be encouraged to determine their strongest and weakest sides, accept those, and build their character upon the stronger side, eliminating the possible character loss in the future
 - b. Lead games and confidence building activities
5. Assessing problems that can happen in school
 - a. Role play some common problems such as bullying, sharing conflicts, disrespectful behavior, skipping classes, inappropriate language, peer pressure and more
 - i. Discuss how certain situations can be handled respectfully and assertively
 - ii. Praising respectful behavior and discourage bad behavior
6. Risk situations
 - a. Identify possible risky situations at school or in the community
 - i. Discuss smart choices for each situation
 - ii. Why and how to stay safe?
 - iii. Practice decision making via role plays
7. Behavior towards others
8. The importance and meaning of school

4th grade - age 9/10

- How does the TV and other media affect me
 - Discuss the influence of TV shows, movies, and social media on children's behavior, thoughts, and emotions.
 - Explore topics such as advertising, stereotypes, and the importance of critical thinking when consuming media.
- How do boys and girls differ
 - Foster discussions about gender stereotypes and societal expectations.
 - Encourage understanding and respect for differences while emphasizing equality and opportunities for all.
- The value of a book
 - Highlight the benefits of reading, such as expanding vocabulary, improving comprehension, and fostering imagination.
 - Encourage students to share their favorite books and discuss how reading enhances their lives.
- Human rights
 - Introduce the concept of human rights and emphasize that every child has rights that should be protected.
 - Discuss examples of children's rights, such as the right to education, healthcare, and a safe environment.
- I have human rights and can use them
 - Name some rights kids have or should have
 - Empower students to recognize their rights and understand how to advocate for themselves and others.
 - Role-play scenarios where students assert their rights in a respectful manner.
- Protecting the animals and our environment
 - Teach the importance of environmental conservation and responsible stewardship of natural resources.
 - Discuss ways students can contribute to protecting animals and the environment in their daily lives.
 - Explore the concepts of ethics and morality, distinguishing between positive and negative behaviors.
 - Encourage empathy and understanding of the impact of actions on others.

- Good and bad behavior
 - Bring examples of people you know
 - Have students share stories of individuals they admire for their positive qualities or actions.
 - Discuss the characteristics that make these people role models.
- I can listen to others
 - Emphasize the importance of active listening and respecting others' viewpoints.
 - Teach communication skills such as paraphrasing and asking clarifying questions.
- Mutual benefit
 - Explore the idea of cooperation and mutual benefit in relationships and communities.
 - Discuss examples of collaboration and teamwork leading to positive outcomes for all involved.
- Name how is the region you live in different, its historical features with a brief introduction
 - Encourage students to research and share information about the historical significance of their region.
 - Discuss how the region's history has shaped its culture, traditions, and identity.

5th grade - age 10/11

- How to avoid conflicts
 - Respecting others
 - Expressing your emotions
- How to know yourself
 - Believing in yourself
 - Shaping myself
 - Self esteem and self control
 - Self worth
- The meaning of a person with a big heart
- How to handle stressful situations
 - What to do when feeling sad
- Learning to pack for traveling
- Together - helping each other
- The importance of apology and thankfulness
- I can greet and communicate
- Water
 - How to use water thoughtfully

- Clean planet
- Basics of effective communication
 - Active listening
 - Non verbal communication
 - How to choose the right vocabulary
 - How to enhance communication
 - Means of communication

Due to the fact that starting from the first grade for the children it will be the very first encounter of such a class, the teaching methods will have to be shaped and created to be as attractive and pleasant as possible. We should shift from the traditional teaching style as this class should be everything but memorizing and getting credits by simply attending and listening to the teacher. The ethics education class should be all about active participation along with learning. Instead of reading, writing or memorizing the emphasis will be put on more collaborative and interactive teaching methods such as, storytelling, role-playing, teacher led games and activities, discussions followed by reflections on real life situations. All these methods will help children implement ethical concepts with ease and fun, the activities will also promote teamwork which will lead to a sense of stronger community and safer environment.

Teachers will also have to undergo special training to be aware of the new teaching methods and the right way to implement those in a classroom. The training will also include discussion on the shift of the teaching methods and the environment we aspire to create. The teacher will serve as a role model to the students which emphasizes the importance of teacher training as these people will be the direct channels to transfer the information and codes we want to implement in our students. The teachers will be open to different resources such as lesson plans and schedules, books and videos to support the teaching process, guidance on how to lead games and activities. Move to the end or the beginning

The knowledge and behavioral patterns of students will also have to be evaluated. Due to this there must be interactive, age appropriate but at the same time effective assessment methods. Some methods will include storytelling sessions especially for younger grades such as first to third grades. The aim of the storytelling session will be for the student to recreate or retell the story via a drawing, or write down their individual choice or action that they would include in the story, in order to see what the student took from the class, and whether they understood the concepts right. Drawings can play a crucial role when we want to understand a child's inner thoughts and feelings. Role plays, group works, interactive activities and

debates can also serve as assessment methods during which the teacher will observe students' understanding based on their reasonings and choices. For themes that will be quiz appropriate, attractive quizzes such as kahoots can be conducted where children will have to choose the most ethical answers to given scenarios. Another assessment method can be keeping a white board with photos of classmates, where children will have to write down an ethical choice they made throughout the week. The board will be analyzed and each student will have a brief say about their act of kindness, during each last ethics class of the week. Children will be encouraged to behave ethically and benefit their environment, therefore fostering ethical decision making and active participation.

To eliminate the chance of resistance from parents which can most likely occur from the idea of not being informed or aware of what their children are learning at school, the upcoming curriculum will be presented to the parents at the beginning of the school year, along with the class objectives and students learning outcomes, teaching methods and content. The parents will also be encouraged to hold discussions similar to the ones held during ethics classes, at home. Parents will also be encouraged to raise awareness of the ethical behavior of their children, and track their behavior to notice and solve any challenges in case they occur.

Sample classes

Theme - Kindness, Fairness and Respect (focus group: 1st graders)

Materials needed - playing cards with different scenarios; boards and paper figures for collage.

Introduction (5 minutes) - talk about what being kind means; it is about being nice to yourself and other and willing to help; discuss what is fairness and responsibility; the importance of treating everyone equally and making sure that each of us complete their tasks.

Background preparation (5 minutes) - put chairs in a circle; imagine we are in a magic land where everyone is kind, fair, and responsible;

Roleplay (15 minutes) - split into groups of 4-5; make each member of the group randomly choose a scenario that your group will act out; the scenarios will include situations like helping a friend in need - referring to kindness, sharing toys fairly - referring to fairness, cleaning up your house - referring to responsibility.

Discussion (10 minutes) - each group should share their thoughts and feelings on what they experienced when for example helping someone, sharing a toy with someone, or cleaning up. Discuss why these actions are important and what impact they leave on our environment.

Art time (10 minutes) - each student will create a collage of what their scene depicted with its title.

Closing (5 minutes) - each student get to pin their collage to a board dedicated to the classroom's artwork (this board will be frequently updated and new artwork will be pinned, after storing the old ones); finalize the class with a brief speech that being fair, kind and responsible makes us happy and our environment peaceful.

Theme - Embracing uniqueness (focus group: 2nd graders)

Materials needed - paper and colored pencils

Introduction (5 minutes) - explain that all of us are different; people can have different personalities - being quiet, shy, or outgoing; people can have different nationalities or backgrounds. Discuss why it is important to embrace differences and how we can benefit from diversity.

Background preparation (5 minutes) - put chairs in a circle prepare for a engaging and stress free discussion ;

Discussion (15 minutes) - talk about why it is important to accept and respect other people's differences; how diversity makes us learn new things as well as add colors to our environment. Talk about different ways how we can show respect to people different from us.

Determining personalities (10 minutes) - give students some free time to think about their personality traits(shy/outgoing) and their interests (quiet activities or active lifestyle)

Group talk (10 minutes) - discuss why it's important for the given differences to be respected and accepted.

Closing (5 minutes) - sum up the key points, put emphasis on positive understanding of differences.

Theme - Saying sorry (focus group: 3rd graders)

Materials needed - playing cards with different scenarios.

Introduction (5 minutes) - introduce students to the topic of why it is important to say sorry when you feel like you have made a mistake; explain that saying sorry has to be a sincerely made act.

Background preparation (5 minutes) - put chairs in a circle to prepare for an interactive role play activity.

Roleplay (15 minutes) - students will be divided into pairs; they will randomly choose a playing where they will have a certain scenario such as accidentally taking someone belonging, saying something unkind to a classmate, forgetting to do a group project and letting mates down. In each scenario one of the sides will have to apologize.

Discussion (10 minutes) - have a discussion about each situation where each group will present their sides and present the rights and wrongs of the situation.

Reflection time (10 minutes) - gather all students together and discuss how it felt apologizing; have the other side also reflect on how it felt to receive an apology. Discuss the reasons why some might feel ashamed to say sorry and why they should not feel that way (it is okay to apologize).

Closing (5 minutes) - sum up findings and key points based on discussions, highlight the importance of sincerely saying sorry as a step towards taking responsibility for your actions.

Theme - Protecting the animals and our environment (focus group: 4th graders)

Materials needed - paper and pencils for posters

Introduction (5 minutes) - Introduce the topic of protecting animals and our environment discussing how ethics, morality and empathy impact our actions related to our environment and nature. Start by discussing risks our nature is currently facing such as deforestation, global warming or endangered species.

Background preparation (5 minutes) - paper and pencils for posters

Brainstorming (15 minutes) - have students brainstorm about actions that can make a positive impact on our environment, these actions should include our daily activities such as reducing waste, using water responsibly, recycling, planting trees, and avoiding usage of plastics and so on.

Preparation time (10 minutes) - give students time to prepare a poster where each student will design their proposed plan to protect the environment.

Presenting posters and plans (10 minutes) - students will present their posters and give a brief description, after that the poster will be pinned to the board along with all posters.

Closing (5 minutes) - summarize key points mentioning the dangers we are facing, the action we can take to overcome these challenges by referring toward an ethical behavior when interacting with the environment.

Theme - Practicing self-awareness and self-belief (focus group: 5th graders)

Materials needed - a brainstorming format class

Introduction (5 minutes) - the class will cover the importance and different techniques on how to have confidence in ourselves; make students think about their interests, strengths and areas for growth.

Background preparation (5 minutes) - put chairs in a circle prepare for a engaging and stress free discussion;

Presenting success stories (5 minutes) - present a success story how a positive mindset affect a certain situation, explain what makes us love a certain activity and what on the other hand makes us think that a certain activity is challenging.

Brainstorming (10 minutes) - give students time to think about activities they love doing; encourage them to come up with one thing they like about themselves and at least one interest that defines them; ask the question “What am I good at?” and “What do I find challenging?”

Practicing self belief and self awareness (15 minutes) - according to students' observations , have students create affirmations such as “I am capable of doing...” or “I am unique because ...” Optionally student can create a poster with such affirmation and a symbolic visual to represent their strengths and goals

Closing (5 minutes) - wrap up the class by highlighting the importance of self belief in order to succeed in life; reflect on students' new observations regarding their talents and strengths; encourage students to be confident in themselves and their actions.

Conclusion

Implementation of mandatory ethics education in elementary schools of Armenia has personally always been believed to be life changing in the development of Armenian society. The journey of this research has been a diverse journey including clarification of theoretical structure, a sample curriculum along with its sample classes designed, methodology clarifications, potential benefits and challenges.

One of the supporting points highlighting the importance of mandatory ethics education are the academic pieces by Spaulding and Kohlberg exploring school influence and moral reasoning bring us to a result where a combination of both findings create an effective formula for nurturing the students with ethical, critical, and responsible decision making and thinking skills. After implementation of both findings a curriculum was designed to provide children with age appropriate information of ethical behavior. For this research purposes the sample curriculum was designed for first five grades of the elementary school, however the proposal is advocating for the implementation of the ethics classes starting from first to ninth grade. For the curriculum and sample classes along with assessment methods for higher grades, further research needs to be done. By integrating such mandatory classes we will have the opportunity to shape a society that is known for its high moral values and ethical consciousness.

The curriculum and proposed assessment methods were designed while considering the age and abilities of students from different grades. These such as kindness, fairness, respect, embracing uniqueness, saying sorry, protecting the environment, and practicing self-awareness form the basis of ethical character, accompanied and presented by engaging activities starting from role plays and group discussions to reflective art projects. This engaging cognitive approach not only practices the cognitive skills that are thoughts such as critical thinking and problem-solving but also instills values such as empathy, self-awareness, and cooperation.

The benefits of this project are numerous and impactful, however we also encountered potential challenges that the process of implementation can face. Due to the exclusively cognitive approach and an unusual content to the Armenian culture, there is a need for instructor training. Moreover the unusual content will not only affect the teachers but will also arouse resistance from parents regarding cultural sensitivity and just overall contextuality of the program.

From the methodology perspective a research was undertaken in forms of literature reviews, where an analysis of academic sources was done based on which the majority of claims were made. Another method of data gathering was conducting surveys and interviews to evaluate the current and future

programs. Sample curriculum and cognition teaching methods were designed by the analysis of already existing programs and scholarly sources on the different teaching approaches.

To conclude, the aim of this project is not only to enrich the Armenian educational system where only academic achievements are emphasized but one where holistic education is the formula. A system where all necessary skills and mindset is cultivated for progressive and responsible citizenship. Positively contribute to our collective well-being, making Armenia a better place to live for its citizens and visitors.

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