Analysis of Moral Education Textbooks in the United Arab Emirates: Implications for Positive Education Implementation

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Abstract: Societies have been concerned with developing their citizens morality, character, civic engagement, mental wellness, happiness, and fulfillment for years, with the integration of these efforts into schools becoming formalized more recently. Moral education (ME) and positive education (PE) are two approaches addressing the "whole person" in education. This study explored the potential convergence and divergence between these two approaches within the UAE education system by coding textbooks from the moral education programme (MEP) curriculum for themes related to key PE constructs of growth mindset, mindfulness, character strengths/virtues, resilience and mental toughness, self-efficacy, positive emotion, flourishing, and well-being. Our analysis found that many of these constructs are implicitly and explicitly addressed within ME textbooks across three educational cycles (grade 2, 6 and 9). They were more prevalent in the younger grades and decreased as grade level increased. Multi-faceted themes like flourishing and character strengths were more common than single themes like self-efficacy. The UAE addresses some PE constructs within its centralized MEP; however, efforts to establish ME and PE should be considered complementary and overlapping, versus distinct. By incorporating principles from PE that are most culturally relevant into the MEP, it is more likely to be adopted and sustained over time.

هناك تهمة مع المجتمعات في تطوير المواطنين الأخلاق، الشخصية، المشاركة المدنية، النضام العقلي، السعادة، والتحقيق لعدة (PE) والتربية الإيجابية (ME) سنوات، مع دمج هذه الجهود في المدارس أصبح منظماً أحدث. وتعد التربية الأخلاقية مجموعتان معالجتان للشخص الكامل في التعليم. هذه الدراسة تطرقت إلى التقارب والانحراف المحتمل بين هذه المجموعتان (MEP) في نظام التعليم في الإمارات العربية المتحدة من خلال الترميز الكتب الدراسية من منهج التربية الأخلاقية الرئيسية مثل النية النموية، والتواصل الداخلي، وقوام الشخصية/ الفضائل، والقوة PE للموضوعات المتعلقة بمحتويات العاطفية، والتعادل، والثقة الذاتية، والعاقمة الإيجابية، والتفعيل. وجدت أن العديد من هذه المحتويات يتم تلقيها تلقائياً وبوضوح في كتب التربية الأخلاقية في ثلاثة دورات تعليمية (الصف الثاني، والسادس، والتاسع). وكانت أكثر شيوعاً في الصفوف الأصغر وتقل كل

Keywords: positive education; moral education; United Arab Emirates; textbook analysis

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Education systems across the globe have recognized the need to address academic success (math, science, reading, etc.) as well as student outcomes related to well-being including character, morality, social-emotional skills, and happiness. A push for addressing "the whole person" in schools has gained momentum in recent years (e.g., Flook, 2019). There are many ways in which education systems accomplish this with different countries, regions, and specific schools and districts adopting various approaches. The most common include social-emotional learning (SEL), moral education (ME), positive education (PE), and character education. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), there have been simultaneous movements in the areas of ME and PE. The current paper discusses these efforts within the UAE education context, elucidating their similarities and differences and offering recommendations for enhancing the implementation of both in UAE schools.

Positive Education (PE)

PE is rooted in positive psychology, which is the "scientific study of what makes life most worth living" (Peterson, 2008, n.p.). The field includes an exploration of constructs related to positive experiences (e.g., joy, love), positive states and traits (e.g., gratitude, resilience), and positive institutions (i.e., applying principles in workplaces or schools for instance; Ackerman, 2018). Positive psychology emerged in response to a focus on pathology within traditional psychology. In contrast, it focuses on strengths, thriving, and what makes individuals well (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). An element of this research has been the development of a common language of strengths. The Values in Action (VIA) Character Strengths and Virtues taxonomy includes 24 strengths organized within six virtue categories considered universal (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These include wisdom (creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective), courage (bravery, honesty, perseverance, zest), humanity (kindness, social intelligence, love), justice (fairness, leadership, teamwork), temperance (forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation), and transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality). Research suggests these are related to positive outcomes including school achievement, less negative and more positive affect, and stronger classroom engagement (see Coppley & Niemiec, 2021).

In recent years, positive psychology researchers began applying principles to student learning and development, with their first whole school effort being at the Geelong Grammar School (GGS) in Australia in 2008 (Seligman et al., 2009). Such efforts focused on developing academic skills in students, as well as skills for happiness and flourishing (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). PE has gone through three iterations over time. In the first, the focus was on teacher delivery of materials, curricula, and interventions to students, with the goal of improving student happiness and engagement in learning. This included studying skill-specific interventions (e.g., gratitude lessons, mindfulness exercises) in the classroom. The second acknowledged that students could not do well

if teachers and school environments more broadly were also unwell. This wave deemphasized skills and focused on creating conducive environments that supported the wellbeing of all individuals within schools via the formal curriculum as much as what was modelled within school systems themselves (White & Kern, 2018). The third and current iteration explores the boundaries of PE across cultures, population groups, and individuals with diverse backgrounds and interests (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). How PE fits with similar but different approaches used in schools, like social emotional learning (SEL), character education, moral education, and holistic education is discussed.

Often used in the application of PE, is Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, i.e., positive emotion (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), meaning (M), and accomplishment (A). A recent version adds "H" (PERMAH) for health (Green et al., 2021). Schools incorporating PE are advised to use the PERMAH model to guide their process: a needs assessment is conducted to determine how each area is cultivated across students, staff, and the school setting. Yet, the actual application of PE is often disjointed. Schools may hold a professional development lecture or workshop to expose teachers to positive psychology and PE but do not follow-up with support for implementation into teacher practices. Some select one area of positive psychology in which to advance student skills and implement a program or lesson targeting it (e.g., growth mindset curriculum). Others adopt a SEL curriculum and reinforce its competencies but overlook PERMAH areas (Green et al., 2021). To date, there is no cohesive framework for the implementation of PE within schools.

Positive Education in the UAE

PE was introduced in the UAE in 2009 by the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KDHA), a Ministry of Education (MOE) affiliated regulatory agency. The aim was to introduce happiness and wellbeing classes into school curricula to create happier schools and educational communities. The KDHA began to assess student happiness in 2017 where, in partnership with the Government of South Australia, it undertook its first 'Dubai Student Wellbeing Census' (DSWC) for students in Grades 6 to 9. In 2018, the census was extended to students in Grades 10, 11, and 12, and by 2021, the fifth iteration had occurred. The 2020 survey discovered that of 102,854 students from 162 nationalities at 189 schools in Dubai, 70 percent of students in Grades 6 to 9 and 65 percent in Grades 10 to 12 had high emotional engagement with their teachers. Respondents also reported feeling pleased with their lives (87 percent for Grade 6 to 9 boys, 80 percent for Grade 6 to 9 girls, 80.7 percent for Grade 10 to 12 boys, and 73.8 percent for Grade 10 to 12 girls) and had improved their relationships with friends during the pandemic. Overall, results from 2018 to 2020 showed high levels of student happiness and positive school climates.

In 2016, happiness and well-being became a central tenet of education in the UAE when Her Excellency Ohood bint Khalfan Al Roumi was appointed as the Minister of State for Happiness. This appointment was one of the focus areas (the others being innovation, tolerance and co-existence, youth, climate change, and future skills for youth) for achieving the *Vision 2021 National Agenda,* linked to the educational Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. The ministerial post came with an official office, but by 2020, a cabinet restructuring moved it to an office within the Ministry of Community Development, retitled as the "Quality of Life and Happiness" portfolio. Under the original description, the office was intended to make government policies, programs, and services that promoted a positive lifestyle and develop a happiness index to measure people's satisfaction.

In 2018, the UAE launched the *National Program for Happiness and Well-being*. A positive schools network was launched in 10 schools across the country when the experimental program showed good outcomes in higher academic attainment, better health, and lower absenteeism. It aimed to add "well-being to education to help students build personal and positive skills in parallel with their academic and futuristic skills; the network features a flexible mechanism that helps the participating schools implement positive education and well-being concepts" (UAE, MOE, 2018, para 2). While promising, little has been published about its accomplishments or implementation.

Cultural Distinctions in Well-Being

PE is largely Western in nature, first gaining traction in schools in the United Kingdom and Australia. Conceptualizations of key constructs within PE, particularly the notion of "well-being", tends to be biased towards Western views. Joshanloo et al. (2021) summarized the conceptualization of well-being in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, showing in which dimensions these often differed: (1) hedonic versus eudemonic experiences, (2) self-enhancement versus modesty, (3) autonomy versus harmony, and (4) individual versus contextual views. There is evidence that striving towards well-being is done in culture-specific ways and how one defines well-being and good functioning is partially dependent on the alignment between individuals and the values and practices of their culture. Joshanloo et al. (2021) caution that "...without an adequate appreciation of cultural differences, individualistic measurement tools and wellbeing enhancement strategies are more likely to be imposed on collectivistic cultures" (p. 693), which could be ineffective or harmful. In understanding the implementation and integration of PE in the UAE, it is vital to consider its cultural appropriateness. Exploration of how PE concepts and goals may already be addressed within the centrally developed moral education program (MEP) in the UAE may inform which of the PE constructs are most culturally relevant.

Moral Education (ME)

ME is another overlapping but distinct construct in education, which has its foundations in the work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg and focuses on the development of children's moral reasoning and cognitive development (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Examples include supporting students in developmentally appropriate ways to think about moral dilemmas and use decision-making processes that include justice reasoning and relational morality (Althof & Berkowtiz, 2006). A related construct is character education, which was developed in the United States and traditionally focused on the development of "desirable habits," such as honesty, courage, and respect (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Recently, character education evolved to encompass the development of both approaches, with Berkowtiz (2012) adding that the lines between moral and character education are ill defined and other constructs including social-emotional learning, democratic education, civic education, civic engagement, social justice education, and positive education overlap in many ways. What approach is adopted and implemented varies as a function of region, politics, values, etc.

Moral Education (ME) in the UAE

All UAE public and private schools are required to implement the Moral Education Program (MEP; www.moraleducation.ae). Its curriculum was initially developed in 2016 and piloted for

grades one to nine in 2017 and grades 10 to 12 in 2018. It was designed by the federal government and provides a set of values and civic duty to a diverse student body, most of which are expatriate in nature. Four goals were outlined for citizens and residents; in sum, that they be, "equipped to make morally based choices in different situations; feel part of a common culture, encompassing a national identity; are well integrated and active in their society; yet are effective and comfortable in a global environment" (Pring, 2019, pg. 299). Thus, the MEP covers four pillars of teaching and learning, namely: character and morality; the individual and community; civic studies; and cultural studies.

The program blends academic content with an exploration of character and ethics. It was designed as a progressive series of units to be taught over 12 years (from grade 1 to 12). One 40-to-60-minute class each week is dedicated to the ME content every year. Content builds on previous years and expands from a personal or familiar understanding of the topics (e.g., equality, fairness) to a wider global understanding (e.g., peace and conflict studies), requiring more sophisticated thinking (Pring, 2019). There are efforts to integrate the lessons into the broader school culture and climate through schoolwide activities and teacher/staff modeling. Thus, what is called ME in the UAE is a convergence of ME, character education, civic education and engagement, and social/cultural studies. Still, it is unclear in what ways constructs essential to PE are integrated into the curriculum as they are not explicitly named within the textbooks or related materials about the program.

The Present Study

The current study explored the constructs of ME and PE within the UAE educational context. Specifically, we sought to understand the following:

1. Do ME texts developed by the UAE federal government implicitly or explicitly discuss key PE constructs?
2. If so, what concepts are the most and least discussed?
3. How does PE content in the ME texts differ across grade level?
4. How are ME and PE overlapping and divergent approaches within the UAE?
5. What implications do these findings have for a successful implementation of PE in the UAE?

Method

Official textbooks and other curricular materials that focused on the topics of ME and PE were collected from participating schools. UAE Moral, Social, and Cultural Studies textbooks in grades 2 through 9 were obtained and scanned into digital formats for coding. Textbooks were 2021 editions of the Moral Studies and Moral Education curriculum certified by the UAE Ministry of Education. One textbook from each education cycle (cycle 1 is grades 1-4, cycle 2 is grades 5-8, cycle 3 is grades 9-12) was selected to sample the curriculum across the developmental spectrum. We sampled texts from grades 2, 6, and 9.

Textbook Analysis Procedures

We were interested in determining how often and to what extent key PE constructs were discussed within ME textbooks, as this serves as an indicator of the overlap and integration of PE into ME studies. To do so, eight PE constructs were identified from the literature, including, (1)

growth mindset, (2) mindfulness, (3) character strengths/virtues, (4) resilience and mental toughness, (5) self-efficacy, (6) positive emotion, (7) flourishing, and (8) well-being (see Table 1).

One researcher served as the primary coder. They were provided with the eight constructs and definitions. Then, they examined each textbook's contents and subject index to determine the context and learning outcomes of, and within each unit (see Table 2). Throughout, units consisted of lessons that were each framed in a sequence of a) storytelling, b) recalling lessons learned from the story, and c) activities to practice their application and ensure comprehension. The lessons were designed so that overall objectives were not explicitly mentioned but represented.

Once the primary coder understood the content of the texts and eight constructs, they chronologically progressed through each of the textbook's lessons. They coded any content that represented one or more of the eight PE constructs by reading through the lessons and recording all codes that were relevant based on the definitions provided. This continued through each lesson of each book until all three textbooks in the sample had been coded. The primary coder also recorded quotes and described activities from the text that highlighted the relevance of the codes. They selected vocabulary words and objectives from the text provided in the textbook as part of the curriculum that had relevance to PE and the eight PE constructs of focus.

Next, a secondary coder reviewed the eight codes and their definitions with the primary researcher and primary coder to ensure clear understanding and agreement about the definitions and their meanings. After familiarizing themselves with the textbooks and their content, they independently coded 25% of the lessons in each textbook. The primary and secondary coder then met to review their codes and identify discrepancies. Analysis of discrepancies indicated complete agreement on nine out of 11 double coded lessons and discrepancies on the codes for two lessons. Discrepancies were discussed until they reached consensus on the correct code. As the level of agreement between the two coders was above the 80% acceptability threshold (81.8%), it was determined there was sufficient interrater reliability and further consensus coding was not required. Once each textbook was examined and coded, the data were analyzed.

Table 1

Key Positive Education Constructs and Definitions Used for Textbook Coding

PE Construct	Definition	Example Quote or Activity from Text
Growth Mindset	"The belief that human capacities are not fixed but can be developed over time" (Dweck & Yeager, 2019)	"Read the information about different types of exercises and the benefits associated with them" (Unit 2, Lesson 2, Grade 6)
Mindfulness	"a process of openly attending, with awareness, to one's present moment experience" (Creswell, 2017)	"Put yourself in your partner's shoes. Do you understand what your partner is feeling? How can you help them?" (Unit 1, Lesson 4, Grade 2)
Character Strengths and Virtues	"morally valued trait-like personality characteristics which contribute to fulfillments that comprise the good life, for oneself and for others" (Ruch et al., 2021) and include the 24 VIA strengths of wisdom (creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective), courage (bravery, honesty, perseverance, zest), humanity (kindness, love, social intelligence), justice (fairness, leadership, teamwork), temperance (forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation), and transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality (VIAcharacter.org)	"You have individual values and motivations, and it is your personal responsibilities to live by these. However, we must think beyond our individual selves. As an individual you should always keep the welfare of society at the back of your mind" (Unit 2, Lesson 3, Grade 9)
Resilience and Mental Toughness	"positive adaptation in the face of adversity"; "a 'can-do' attitude as well as having the skills to be able to navigate change as it occurs" (Green et al., 2021)	"For every problem there's a solution, and a simple act can go a long way" (Unit 1, Lesson 4, Grade 2)
Self-Efficacy	"individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to plan and take the actions required to achieve a particular outcome" (Bandura, 1986)	"In this lesson, I will learn how I can help others feel good" (Unit 1, Lesson 4, Grade 2)

Positive Emotion	"markers of flourishing, or optimal well-being... moments in people's lives characterized by experiences of positive emotions—such as joy, interest, contentment, love, and the like" (Fredrickson, 2001)	"It's so nice when we're all living together so peacefully and happily" (Unit 1, Lesson 3, Grade 2)
Flourishing	"feeling satisfied with life and having the ability to live to the fullest" (Chaves, 2021).	"Morals are fundamental to society because laws and rules are based on them. This is the main element in creating upstanding citizens, wholesome families, sophisticated societies, and developed countries" (Unit 1, Lesson 1, Grade 9)
Well-Being	"feeling good and functioning well; the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment as well as the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive relationships" (Ruggeri et al., 2020)	"The approach of tolerance, peacefulness, civil coexistence, and respect of beliefs adopted by the UAE stems from the legacy of its people... They serve the good of the nations and stability across the region and the world" (Unit 1, Lesson 1, Grade 9)

Table 2

Summary of Textbooks Analyzed: Units, Lessons, Topics, Relevant Vocabulary Terms, Outcomes, and Page Counts

Textbook	Moral, Social, & Cultural Studies: Grade 2 (Term 1)	Moral, Social, & Cultural Studies: Grade 6 (Term 1)	Moral, Social, & Cultural Studies: Grade 9 (Term 1)
Content	3 Units/18 Lessons, 160 Total Pages	3 units/15 lessons, 149 Total Pages	3 units/15 lessons, 156 Total Pages

Topic, Relevant Vocabulary Terms, and Lesson Outcomes

Unit 1 Lesson 1	Differences and Uniqueness (6 Pgs.) *Unique, Similar, Different* We should accept each other regardless of our differences and similarities.	Aspects of Equality Among People (10 Pgs.) *Equality, Fairness, Justice* There are difficulties that come up when studying equality, there is a difference and often, a discrepancy between equal opportunities and equal outcomes.	Global Ethics in the Context of Global Issues (6 Pgs.) *Moral Imperative* Ethics and ethical enquiry are relevant in the context of international relations.
Unit 1 Lesson 2	Respect is a Duty (6 Pgs.) *Respect, Duty, Care, Tolerance, Accepting Other Points of View, I Respect the Law, Other People's Needs* We need to show respect to everyone and respect the rules/laws.	How Is Fair Distribution Accomplished? (10 Pgs.) *Fairness, Justice, Distributive Justice* Distributive justice is about scarce resources being allocated fairly.	International Relations of the UAE (6 Pgs.) *Moral Rules* The UAE has a significant role in foreign relations and in various international organizations and forums.
Unit 1 Lesson 3	How Would You Like to be Treated? (6 Pgs.) *Cooperative, Treating Others as They Treat Us, Friendly, Good Listener, Bad Treatment, Good Treatment, Decent Behavior*	Distributive Justice (10 Pgs.) *Equality, Fairness, Justice, Distributive Justice* There is an uncertainty in determining what is fair, so it is important that we make a	Global Ethical Challenges (6 Pgs.) *No relevant vocabulary words* There are numerous key ethical challenges that humanity faces, and we need to master the

	Column A	Column B	Column C
	Understanding other people's feelings is important and we should be treating everyone as we want to be treated.	personal commitment to fostering just or fair distribution of scarce resources.	methods of searching for advanced information.
Unit 1 Lesson 4	Helping Others Feel Good (6 Pgs.) *Angry, Scared, Excited, Shy, Sad, Bored, Happy, Compassionate, Helpful* We need to have compassion and learn how to make others feel good.	Standards of Distributive Justice (8 Pgs.) *Eligibility, Equality, Authority, Need* Distributive justice is about the distribution of scarce resources fairly within a group.	World Moral Challenges (6 Pgs.) *Treaty, Controversial, Propaganda* There are various moral challenges to humanity.
Unit 1 Lesson 5	Put Yourself in My Shoes (6 Pgs.) *Understanding, Compassionate, Appreciative, Loving, Caring* We need to be understanding and show compassion to others.	How is Fair Distribution Accomplished? (8 Pgs.) *Benefits* When distributing resources, it is important to be aware of what everyone needs to ensure a fair distribution.	Dealing with Global Ethical Challenges (6 Pgs.) *Mother Language, Disability, People of Determination* People and other parties can find a solution to specific global ethical challenges.
Unit 2 Lesson 1	Good Morning School! (6 Pgs.) *System, Respect, Pride, Appreciation* School is a special space and we need to respect the rules of and the staff at our schools.	How Healthy Is Your Lifestyle? (6 Pgs.) *Nutrition, Diet, Carbohydrate* We have a responsibility to care for ourselves. This includes healthy eating, sufficient sleep, and regular exercise.	Realizing the Value of Money (6 Pgs.) *Barter, Inflation* The less fortunate can be financially supported through financial management and philanthropy.
Unit 2 Lesson 2	At My School with My Friends (6 Pgs.) *Behavior, Personal Freedom, Readiness, Ignorance* We must respect the rules and rights of others, even if we have our own personal freedom.	Exercise and Healthy Habits (6 Pgs.) *Aerobic, Flexibility, Movement* Diseases can be spread in different ways, which is why sanitation and clean water are important.	The Dangers of Wealth and Greed (6 Pgs.) *Crisis, Inequality* We need to learn how to avoid financial complications.

Unit 2 Lesson 3	How Can We Work Together? (6 Pgs.) *Commitment, Responsibility, Team, Cooperation, Tasks, Productivity* Being able to work in a team is important because teamwork achieves goals and saves time.	Obstacles to Health and Getting Help (6 Pgs.) *Challenge, Consequence, Disease* There is an individual and collective responsibility in relation to health.	How Wealth Can Be a Force for Good (6 Pgs.) *Philanthropy, Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility* The less fortunate can be financially supported through financial management and philanthropy.
Unit 2 Lesson 4	Our New Team (6 Pgs.) *Blending In, Commitment, Skills, Leadership* Unity is a strength in a team.	Types of Diseases (8 Pgs.) *Global Health, Malnutrition, Malaria* Malaria and malnutrition are two global health concerns that are being addressed by professionals.	The Development of Entrepreneurship Skills (6 Pgs.) *Start-up, Entrepreneur* We need to be making informed decisions about budgeting, investing, saving, and borrowing.
Unit 2 Lesson 5	How Can I Help? (8 Pgs.) *Support, Tasks* "One hand can't clap" and sometimes we need help from another to complete a task.	Disease Prevention (6 Pgs.) *Sustainable Development Goals, Campaign, Prevention* To ensure that the world is a better place, we need to tackle issues such as malaria and malnutrition.	Becoming an Entrepreneur (6 Pgs.) *Emerging, Scalability* We need to be making informed decisions about budgeting, investing, saving, and borrowing.
Unit 3 Lesson 1	The UAE During the Last Century (12 Pgs.) *Century, Decade, Exported, Pearls* A century is 100 years long, and the UAE has changed a lot within the last century.	After the Fall of the Roman Empire (14 Pgs.) *Common Era (CE), To Benefit, To Conquer, destruction, fierce* The fall of the Roman Empire was an important historical event that taught important lessons on the distribution of resources.	The UAE Landscape and Jebel Faya (26 Pgs.) *Climate* There is a lot to learn from the Neolithic Age, such as the people, trade, the climate, and their culture.

Unit 3 Lesson 2	Natural Resources in the UAE (10 Pgs.) *Natural Resources, Natural Features, Make a Living* There are many natural resources in the UAE that shape the way people have lived in the past and present.	The High Middle Ages of Europe (14 Pgs.) *Overnight, Province, Center of Power, Prominent, Invader, Stability* The Byzantine Empire represents the importance of preserving cultural heritage and growing strong.	The Bronze Age and Umm an-Nar (16 Pgs.) *Domesticate* The Umm an-Nar culture was unique in how they treated people and its economic development. Equality should be improved between people.
Unit 3 Lesson 3	Life by the Sea (12 Pgs.) *Trap, Fisherman, Bait* The sea is a very important resource in the UAE.	The Republic of Venice (14 Pgs.) *Influential, Maritime, Fleet, Navy, Armed, Exclusive, Medieval, Armed* The Republic of Venice tells a tale of the importance of keeping promises.	The Impact of the Falaj during the Iron Age (16 Pgs.) *Iron Age, Oasis, Mudbrick* Falaj (underground water channels) is important to a community. We need to recognize and preserve world heritage sites.
Unit 3 Lesson 4	Life in Coastal Cities (12 Pgs.) *Trade, Merchants, Products* There is a lot of trading of products in the UAE, and different forms of transportation were used to transport the products.	The Late Middle Ages-The First Hundred Years' War (14 Pgs.) *Particularly, Reputation, Account, Victorious, Treaty, Kingdom* Keeping and preserving documents is important so that we can learn from the mistakes of those in the past.	Domestication of Camels and Muweilah (24 Pgs.) *Artefact, Symbolism, Currency* There are many ways we can settle disagreements. We should also strive to help those less financially fortunate. The camel was very useful to society back then.
Unit 3 Lesson 5	Life in the Desert (12 Pgs.) *Hospitality, Traditions, Culture* The people of the Arabian Desert value their traditions and culture. Hospitality is a big part of Emirati culture.	Crises of the Late Middle Ages (11 Pgs.) *Crisis, Consequence, Famine, Climate, To Starve, To Appreciate, Hygiene.* Many natural disasters and diseases occurred during the late Middle Ages in Europe. Sanitation and clean water are a crucial part of preventing disease.	Shipbuilding and Trade: Ed-Dur and the Arabian Gulf (10 Pgs.) *Settlement, Harbour, Tuberculosis* There are many effects of travel, such as the spread of diseases. These cities were the center of the UAE during their prime.

Unit 3 Lesson 6	Life in the Desert Oasis (12 Pgs.)	n/a	n/a

Transport, source, oasis
The oasis is very important to people living in the desert.

Unit 3 Lesson 7	Modern-Day UAE (11 Pgs.)	n/a	n/a

Tolerance, Charity, Generosity, Institutions, Man-Made Features, Natural Feature
Present day UAE has many man-made and natural features. Tolerance, generosity, and charity are very important in the community.

Unit 3 Lesson 8	UAE Heritage Project (11 Pgs.)	n/a	n/a

Heritage, Traditional, Endurance
The UAE has a history of traditional sports and games that have been played in the past and the present. These sports require endurance and are a part of UAE heritage.

Results and Discussion

Table 3 shows the frequency of each PE construct found across the ME textbooks, and the percentage of lessons within each textbook that received each code. Results pertinent to each research question are shared.

Question 1: *Do ME texts developed by the UAE federal government implicitly or explicitly discuss key PE constructs*? Our analysis revealed that many PE concepts are embedded in the ME curriculum. In the textbooks from grades 2 and 6, all 8 PE constructs were identified in at least one lesson within each textbook. This was not true for the grade 9 textbook, in which only four of the eight constructs were identified at least once. Half of the PE constructs, i.e., flourishing, well-being, character strengths/virtues, and mindfulness were identified at least once in all three textbooks. Thus, MEP textbooks address some PE concepts, although it is not an explicit program goal, with students in the earlier grades (cycles 1 and 2) being exposed to many PE concepts. While PE was not a stated component of the MEP curriculum, there appears to be overlap between the two approaches.

Question 2: *If so, what concepts are most and least discussed?* The most frequently and consistently identified construct was flourishing, with its content identified in 89% to 73% of the lessons, indicating high frequency in each textbook. Wellbeing was also commonly identified, with 60-67% of lessons in the grade 6 and 9 textbooks discussing related concepts; yet it was less common in the grade 2 text (22%). In contrast, character strengths/virtues were commonly coded with the highest frequency in the grade 2 text (67%) and lower rates in grade 6 (40%) and 9 (20%). The least frequently identified code across all grades was self-efficacy, only identified in one lesson in the grade 2 (6%) and grade 6 (7%) textbook and no lessons in grade 9. Positive emotion and growth mindset were also limited; they were most common in the grade 2 curriculum (39%, 7 lessons for both codes) but rarely discussed in grade 6 (7%, 1 lesson for both codes) and not discussed in grade 9.

The higher prevalence of flourishing, well-being and character strengths/virtues may reflect the broad scope of these constructs. Flourishing and well-being speak to the idea of being fulfilled, happy, mentally well, pleased with one's life, and living with meaning and purpose, the intended outcomes of PE. Accordingly, it is likely that lessons and activities touched on these multi-faceted constructs more frequently than specific constructs such as growth mindset or self-efficacy. Character strengths/virtues are the personal traits or attributes that societies view as moral, virtuous, or ideal. The 24 strengths are diverse and range from honesty and justice to humor and bravery, and likely more easily captured because of their broad definition. The least identified constructs (self-efficacy, growth mindset, positive emotion) are more precise and less likely to be identified.

It is possible that the most frequently identified PE constructs were more closely aligned with the goals of the MEP, which strives to unite young people in the UAE, regardless of nationality and age, to share common values. Of the four pillars, the character and morality as well as individual and community pillars are most closely aligned with PE. The character and morality component is described as "developing each student as honest, tolerant, resilient and persevering" (Moral Education, 2017, Character and Morality Section) and the individual and community pillar focuses on developing citizens that "take[s] care of themselves in addition to caring about the good of society". Character strengths/virtues aligns with the stated goals of both and is likely more prevalent for that reason. Well-being and flourishing speak to the ideas of taking care of oneself and finding meaning and purpose, which also fits with the pillars. In contrast, the lower frequency of constructs

like self-efficacy and positive emotion may be less aligned with the MEP's goals. These constructs are more focused on individual pleasure and sense of efficacy or esteem, whereas the MEP curriculum is more focused on individual growth in areas that affect others (tolerance) and show perseverance (resilience) with less emphasis on personal pleasure or accomplishment.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Lessons Containing Each Positive Education Key Construct (Code)

Code/ Moral, Social, & Cultural Studies	Growth mindset	Mindfulness	Character Strengths/ Virtues	Resilience and Mental Toughness	Self-efficacy	Positive Emotion	Flourishing	Well-being
	# of lessons with code/total lessons (% of lessons with code)							
Grade 2	7/18	16/18	12/18	6/18	1/18	7/18	16/18	4/18
	38.9%	88.9%	66.7%	33.3%	5.6%	38.9%	88.9%	22.2%
Grade 6 (Term 1)	1/15	5/15	6/15	2/15	1/15	1/15	13/15	10/15
	6.7%	33.3%	40.0%	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%	86.7%	66.7%
Grade 9 (Term 1)	0/15	1/15	3/15	0/15	0/15	0/15	11/15	9/15
	0.0%	6.7%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	73.3%	60.0%

Note. Cell shading is used to demonstrate frequency categories of none (0%), and low (<20%), moderate (20-50%), and high (>50%) frequency.

Relatedly, the stated goals of the MEP are grounded in the culture and values of the central government and nation. Thus, differences in the prevalence of PE constructs may reflect differences in cultural relevance. Perhaps self-efficacy, growth mindset and positive emotion are not central to the government's goals regarding the development of the whole person. As stated, conceptualizations of key constructs within PE are biased towards Western perspectives. Joshanloo et al. (2021) identifies four cultural distinctions between individualistic and collectivistic cultures that may impact notions of well-being, namely: (1) hedonic versus eudemonic experiences, (2) self-enhancement

versus modesty, (3) autonomy versus harmony, and (4) individual versus contextual views. Based on the information presented, the content appeared to emphasize and favor eudaimonic or meaningful living (over hedonic, pleasurable living), modesty over self-enhancements, harmony over autonomy, and focused on contextual factors more than individual. The concept of self-efficacy and growth mindset are individually rather than collectively focused and strengthen autonomy and self-enhancement. Similarly, positive emotions focus on the hedonic or pleasurable aspects of life. It is possible that these aspects of PE from a Western perspective do not have as much importance in the more collectivistic culture of the UAE and thus were less frequently noted.

Research Question 3: *How does PE content in ME texts differ across grade levels?* To understand how the prevalence of codes changed across the curriculum from grades 2 to 9, we explored grade-specific differences (see Figure 1) and found a range of features. Growth mindset was much more common in the 2nd grade text (39% of lessons) than the 6th (7%) or 9th (0%) grade texts, with its prevalence decreasing as student age increased. It was rarely incorporated into the MEP textbooks (range from moderate to no frequency). Mindfulness was prevalent in the grade 2 curriculum (89%) but decreased in frequency as the grade levels increased. In grade 6, it was in 33% of the lessons and by grade 9 it was only in one lesson (7%). Character strengths/virtues were incorporated into textbooks across all three grade levels. It varied from a high frequency code (67%) in grade 2 to a moderate frequency code in grades 6 (40%) and 9 (20%), showing a steady decrease in prevalence over time.

Figure 1

Prevalence of PE Themes in Moral Education Textbook Lessons (Grades 2, 6, and 9)
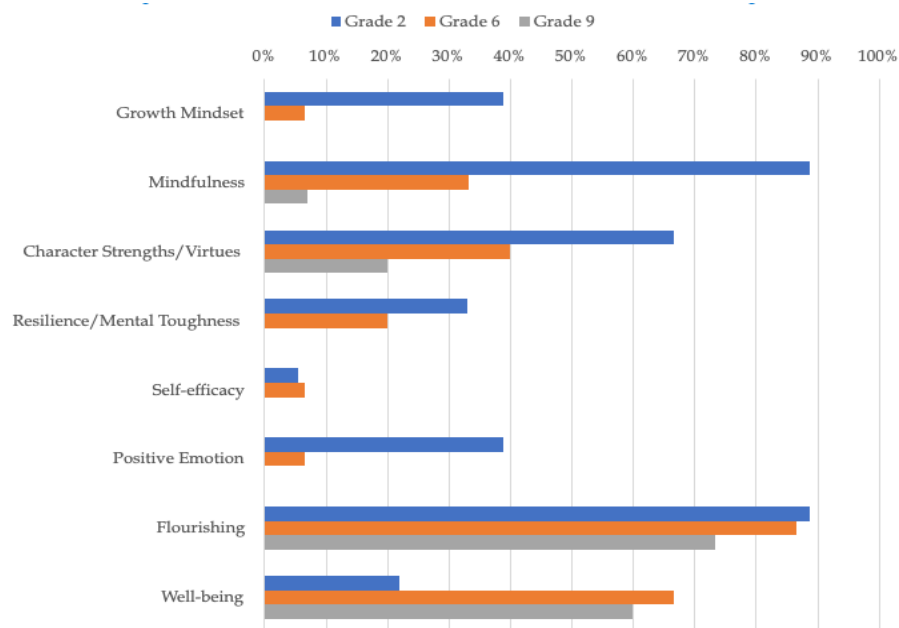
Resilience/mental toughness was one of the lower frequency codes across grade levels. It ranged from moderate frequency in grade 2 (33%) and 6 (20%) to being absent (0%) in grade 9. Self-

efficacy was the lowest frequency code overall. It was identified once in grade 2 and 6, with no identifications in grade 9. Positive emotion was a moderate to low frequency code, ranging from 39% in grade 2, 7% in grade 6, and not at all identified in grade 9 (0%). Flourishing was the most prevalent and consistent code. It was the highest frequency code for all three textbooks, showing a slight decrease over time. In grade 2 it had a prevalence of 89%, which reduced to 87% and 73% in grades 6 and 9 respectively. Well-being was the second most prevalent code. In grade 2 it was a moderate frequency code (22%), which then increased to 67% in grade 6 and fell to 60% in grade 9.

Half of the codes were not identified in any grade 9 lessons. The curriculum for this year emphasized cultural and civic studies, including historical events, government, and global awareness. Throughout texts, the MEP curriculum moved from a narrow lens for the younger grades to a broader lens for the older grades. For example, the grade 2 curriculum often uses the classroom or simple interpersonal hypothetical examples when explaining topics, whereas the grade 6 and 9 textbooks reference the community and world in their examples, confirming the MEP's intended transition from individual-level morality and character (e.g., being trustworthy) to community-oriented and global concepts (e.g., peace and conflict studies). Thus, our analysis observed that individually focused PE concepts like growth mindset, positive emotion, and character strengths/ virtues were more prevalent in the texts for younger students, focusing on behaviors, emotions, and states of individuals striving towards personal well-being.

The differences in PE content across grade levels may also reflect differences in moral reasoning. Kohlberg (1958) described moral development as a series of stages through which individuals progress. The preconventional stage typically lasts through the age of 9 years; here, children base moral decisions on the sense of right and wrong established by adults and/or authority figures (i.e., obedience and punishment orientation), which later progresses to an understanding that individuals differ in their views (individualism and exchange). Grade 2 students are likely in either of the preconventional moral reasoning substages and account for why the focus of moral studies would cater to helping students explore right and wrong, understand how others may think and feel, and more individually focused discussions of emotion and well-being. Students in grades 6 and 9 are likely in the conventional or postconventional stages. There, the emphasis expands beyond the individual to an understanding of social order and the rules of society (conventional). As students move to the postconventional stage, they reason at a more complex level and consider the social contract, individual rights, and universal principles. Thus, a shift from specific, individual PE concepts like growth mindset to broader concepts like well-being may reflect a developmental progression from concepts that can be cognitively and morally engaged with in the elementary years (e.g., how to be kind to others) to those that require advanced cognitive and social emotional skills in the secondary years (e.g., what is a meaningful life).

Still, PE theory and research would suggest that components of positive psychology are applicable across all ages and ideas like growth mindset, mindfulness, and positive emotion are relevant for everyone. As adolescence is marked by decreases in life satisfaction and increases in mental health difficulties including depression, it is an important period in which to address such topics and support youth in developing skills and strategies for their improvement. Thus, it is not that PE constructs are irrelevant for older children but may not be as prevalent as the MEP goals were to move from interpersonal skills and individual thinking to global concepts.

Research Question 4: *How are ME and PE overlapping and divergent approaches within the UAE?* Both globally and within the UAE context, ME and PE concepts are not entirely distinct and have areas of overlap. In our analysis, we found convergence around constructs that emphasize character strengths and virtues. For example, the character strengths/virtues PE construct was prominent within the MEP texts, particularly in the earlier grades. Resilience and mental toughness also fall within the character studies MEP pillar and was common in the texts for younger grades (1/3 of lessons in grade 2, 1/5 lessons in grade 6). PE constructs including life satisfaction, purpose and meaning, and specifically flourishing and well-being were also commonly identified. The MEP program pillar of "individual and community" references the importance of taking care of oneself and the community, which shows strong alignment with the concepts of flourishing and well-being.

Yet, our analysis also identified areas of discrepancy. One distinction is that the MEP was developed by the UAE government for the purposes of advancing the values and goals of the nation for its diverse student population. Its aim is to help students unite around common values, morals, civic duties, and responsibilities. Thus, it is culturally driven and informed. In contrast, PE is a Western concept that has been transferred to other environments with varying degrees of adaptation and modification for cultural variables. As the notion of well-being is often culturally informed, the adoption of this approach without attention to cultural relevance can lead to a mismatch. A prevalent feature of this curriculum is its collectivist perspective. The ME curriculum focuses on teaching students a range of concepts to benefit one another and the community. This is evidenced through the vocabulary terms listed at the start of each session, i.e., respect, duty, care, tolerance, accepting other points of view, respecting the law, cooperation, good listener, decent behavior, appreciation, etc. The collectivist perspective becomes even more evident when applied to a broader global perspective. Our analysis suggests the MEP curriculum is more focused on collectivistic values and goals than individualistic ones, which traditionally informs the PE approach.

To illustrate, Huo et al. (2022) examined policy documents guiding ME in China to understand if the VIA character strengths were implicitly incorporated. They found a great deal of overlap, despite the Chinese perception that positive education is "psycho-personal rather than socio-moral" (p. 480). The distinction between the personal and moral is distinct from Western conceptions of PE which bridge the gap between moral and psychological development (Seligman et al., 2009). That is, many Westerners view PE as a promising educational approach for addressing both psychological and moral development, but in cultures where social interdependence is more strongly valued, these concepts may be distinct even if they show implicit overlap (Huo et al., 2022).

Research Question 5: *What implications might these findings have for successful implementation of PE in the UAE?* The UAE has undertaken efforts to integrate both ME and PE into their education system. The ME initiative has been more structured, resulting in a curriculum developed by the government that is implemented in every grade level and progresses in a sequential way. Efforts have been top-down and structured resulting in a comprehensive implementation across schools in the country. In contrast, efforts related to PE have been less unified. PE has not been operationalized through a formal national curriculum; instead, different emirates and schools have integrated aspects of PE in more individualized and context-specific ways. Schools in Dubai and private schools for example, have seen a fuller incorporation of PE than those in other areas or public schools (jules et al., in press).

One implication of this study is that PE implementation might be better implemented if it were viewed as a supplement to the MEP rather than a separate initiative. Program coherence in implementing any change is critical in school settings (Newmann et al., 2001). Schools are often victims of multiple and sometimes contradicting initiatives that leaders are not always adept at making sense of for teachers and staff. This leads to change fatigue and low engagement from teachers and staff due to the frequency of new or changing initiatives (Bernerth et al., 2011). School leaders drive program coherence by ensuring initiatives fit and support school missions. Thus, to implement ME and PE simultaneously, it is incumbent upon school leaders in the UAE to understand how these are mutually beneficial and develop a plan to bring program coherence. Leveraging current practices, such as the established ME curriculum, as the backbone for implementation moving forward, is recommended. Research suggests this integration may already be occurring. Pring (2019) studied the development of ME in the UAE and found that at least one school had required all staff to participate in a three-day training on PE with a focus on integrating efforts towards well-being, social-emotional intelligence, and positive relations with others. Schools are already identifying the overlap between the two initiatives and trying to develop strategies for integrating and expanding them.

A more structured approach may better support schools. A curriculum review process of the MEP texts and other curricular materials can be conducted to determine areas of convergence and gaps in PE content, with supplemental materials, as well as additional lessons, activities, and potential programs being developed to bolster PE topics of importance to MEP stakeholders. This can streamline the two approaches into one and reduce unnecessary efforts and redundancies and ensure a more appropriate cultural fit.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to the current study. First, this project only examined one MEP textbook from each education cycle (grades 2, 6, and 9). This was done to make the analysis more manageable, but also means that every textbook across all grades was not examined. We may have missed important PE content that was covered in different years, particularly as the curriculum was designed to be followed chronologically and build upon previously learned principles and concepts. Second, we selected PE constructs for coding based on those commonly discussed in the literature; however, this is a non-exhaustive list and other constructs, particularly within the UAE, may have been missed. We acknowledge that our analytical method was deductive and guided by pre-established codes/themes, which means that other themes may have been overlooked. Third, any analysis of curriculum conducted via the sole examination of textbooks is likely to miss pedagogical techniques and ongoing schoolwide initiatives to support it; thus, there may be other ways in which the MEP addresses and teaches PE that were missed. Finally, we did not evaluate curriculum implementation (e.g., pedagogy, student engagement). In the future, a multi-modal method including classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers would be valuable.

Conclusion

The current study sheds light on the distinct yet overlapping concepts and goals of moral and positive education within the UAE education system. The UAE educational leadership have been simultaneously developing and implementing initiatives to address the whole child from the

perspective of ME (character and morality, individual and community development, citizenship, and cultural studies) and PE (supporting student, staff, and whole school well-being). However, as a report on well-being policies and practices in Dubai's private school sector elucidates (OECD, 2021), despite successes, barriers to the successful implementation of PE remain. Some of these include a lack of a "unifying vision...for well-being," the need for stronger incentives and accountability structures for implementation, and greater support for schools to "design and implement effective well-being policies" (Executive Summary). In particular, the report notes that less resourced private schools face difficulty with PE implementation; it is likely that less resourced public schools face additional obstacles. Our analysis suggests that efforts to enhance implementation of PE in an equitable way across all students in the UAE may benefit from thinking about synergies and commonalities across the two initiatives, as the current ME curriculum addresses many PE concepts.

Globally, advocates for educational practices that emphasize the whole child (e.g., SEL, PE, ME, character education, trauma-sensitive schools) grapple with their identity, including how to demarcate and differentiate themselves across similar initiatives. Schools can feel overwhelmed by which program/curriculum, theoretical approach, or initiative to adopt, and struggle with how to sustain efforts over time, particularly given "initiative fatigue" which paradoxically drives burnout, stress and anxiety in teachers and staff. In short, for both ME and PE to fulfill the aims of the whole child, educational leaders must work together across curricula to reduce redundancies, streamline efforts, and place teacher, staff, student and parent goals and views at the heart of program implementation efforts.

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