

# SEE Learning and Teaching Reform of College Morality and Rule of Law Course

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**Abstract:** This paper studies how to realise the creative integration of global holistic education philosophy in college ideological and political education under the background of the current restructuring of Chinese higher education. Morality and the Rule of Law is one of the first required courses for college students, so it is hoped that students will acquire a sense of morality and respect for the law through study. In order to deepen the teaching effect of the curriculum and foster students' all-around moral and legal literacy, this paper takes the structured pattern of Social, Emotional and Ethical learning (SEE Learning) as its foundation and applies a unified Head-Heart-Hand instructional rationale to promote the harmonious development of logical thinking, emotional sensitivity and moral behaviour. Based on the evaluation of the internal alignment between SEE Learning and the educational goals of the curriculum, this paper puts forward practical classroom pedagogical transformation strategies, including the improvement of pedagogical logic, the stimulation of learners' intrinsic value identification, the integration of in-class micro-practice, and the advancement of holistic development assessment. This paper aims to provide some new theoretical ideas and practical references for the high-quality and creative development of moral and rule-of-law education in Chinese universities.

**Keywords:** SEE Learning; Morality and Rule of Law Course; ideological and political education; teaching reform; whole-person education; Head-Heart-Hand

## 0. Introduction

Recently, with the progress of ideological and political education reform in China, more and more higher education institutions have begun to use scenario-based, problem-driven and other ways to make their courses more appealing and effective. However, many pedagogical applications and empirical studies have found that the results of the transformation are still limited; many lecture halls have been in a state of "superficial modernisation and ritualistic implementation". The underlying reason is that most of the innovations are only technical improvements to teaching methods or activity plans and do not change the traditional linear structure of "scenario presentation – conceptual clarification – post-class exercises". This sequence of steps divides the entire educational process into relatively independent stages of cognition, emotion and behaviour, and lacks coordination among academic learning, emotional involvement and behaviour in actual classroom situations.

From one side, students are often exposed to moral education and law through passive learning in class; they lack deep emotional engagement and the sense of value awareness. On the other hand, most extracurricular activities are somewhat disjointed and more ritualistic, do not connect with their school studies well, and cannot turn values into daily behaviour. A long-standing problem has appeared in recent years that is likely to reduce the effectiveness of moral education and legal education in our country. In light of the above problem, many modern educators have attempted to integrate the cultivation of children's socio-emotional abilities with moral and ethical education in comprehensive ways, rather than separating them as distinct categories within the school's curriculum<sup>[1] [2]</sup>.

In the background of educational reform around the world, Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning) has begun to attract more attention as an important direction for all-round schooling and values education (MGIEP, 2020). SEE Learning was started by Emory University

in the United States and has since been officially endorsed and spread by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP); it is a newer system compared to the traditional Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) model that includes a distinct moral dimension and a combined teaching concept. Different from the scattered and skill-oriented structure of traditional SEL, SEE Learning is based on the “head–heart–hand” unified instructional logic; that is to say, students need to cultivate logical thinking, emotional understanding and moral conduct simultaneously during the process of learning, not in a fixed order<sup>[3]</sup>.

Based on foreign research, SEE Learning can motivate students to think independently and develop their sensitivity to others and sense of responsibility; at the same time, it will facilitate the integration of knowledge, emotion and behaviour<sup>[4][5]</sup>. Currently, SEE Learning is widely used in primary and secondary school education, college entrance examination preparation, etc., in many countries around the world, and has achieved good results in value instruction, ethical reasoning, moral decision-making, etc<sup>[6]</sup>. Although some Chinese scholars have begun to explore the integration of foreign holistic instructional ideas with ideological and political education, related research has not been widespread; especially, organised studies and empirical investigations on how to implement SEE learning in the Morality and Rule of Law curriculum are still in their infancy.

Given the current situation and intrinsic problems in the teaching of Moral and Rule of Law at Chinese higher education institutions, this paper develops a non-linear teaching model that combines cognition, emotion and practice based on the fundamental ideas and operating logic of SEE Learning. Building on the clarification of the essence and characteristics of SEE Learning, this paper will explore the systemic tensions and operational bottlenecks of current curriculum instruction in depth and also investigate the specific implementation methods and tactics of SEE Learning in the classroom. The aim of this paper is to address the shortcomings of traditional linear education, cultivate a moral orientation in learners that is no longer purely based on external compliance but rather internal will, and offer theoretical basis and practical data for the deep modernisation and excellence enhancement of university ideological and political courses.

## 1. Core Connotation and Unique Attributes of SEE Learning.

Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning) is a general teaching system that has accumulated a large number of theoretical works, which seeks to solve the basic structural problems of traditional cognition-oriented education (Emory University, 2019). Based on the traditional system of social and emotional learning, SEE Learning has added systematic moral education and reflective thinking; therefore, it is now a more comprehensive model of humanistic education that is suitable for value-driven curriculum teaching<sup>[7]</sup>. In short, this architecture is based on the synergistic Head–Heart–Hand instructional model; that is to say, logical intellectual evaluation, internal affective awareness and pragmatic action involvement are three separate but connected and mutually supportive levels of education. Moving away from the traditional teaching mode that emphasizes knowledge acquisition and skills training, SEE Learning believes that genuine learning in school should be all-round, addressing different levels of education, and cultivate the whole child by integrating thinking, emotion, and behaviour; thus, education should be conducted at all stages, not just at one time<sup>[11]</sup>.

The conceptual idea of SEE Learning is to shift the origin of learning from external motivation to internal motivation; it is consistent with the educational aim of higher education ideological and political education. The traditional school often has students passively accept prescriptive knowledge by listening to teachers explain or giving examples. Now, in this system, context has become one of the topics of study that is close to life and can help us live more meaningfully by guiding us in ethical decision-making and inspiring others. The learner-centred teaching mode will not be disturbed by the temporary emotional fluctuations caused by the external case, and thus, morality can be formed gradually through self-reflection and acceptance<sup>[21]</sup>.

For the characteristics of education, SEE Learning is non-linear and comprehensive, and it differs from traditional teaching models. The usual form of the classroom is still in a linear structure, with the three steps of presenting a situation, explaining the ideas behind it, debating, and applying in class are rigidly separated; thus, it is difficult to cultivate students' all-round development. At the same time, SEE Learning fosters a non-linear cooperative learning environment to integrate and enhance logical assessment, emotional reflection, practical strategy formulation, etc., at all stages of instruction. The united system of values will enable students to not only know the rules and morality but also to feel a willingness to practice good behaviour voluntarily in daily life and study<sup>[8]</sup>. SEE Learning also believes that the extent and duration of ethical education need to be extended; therefore, genuine moral character cannot be formed through brief emotional changes or the memorisation of facts but must be built by prolonged self-reflection and participation in real-life ethical problems<sup>[4]</sup>.

## 2. Structural Dilemmas in Current College Morality and Rule of Law Course Teaching

Although many years have passed since the educational reform and teaching innovation of college Morality and Rule of Law courses, the pragmatic pedagogy still has serious structural problems due to linear teaching reasoning that reduce the depth and effect of value internalization. First of all, the traditional scattered-linear teaching method makes students feel detached from their studies and thus do not learn effectively in class. Most of the current innovations in scenario-based teaching are still based on a simple procedure: present the situation first, then elaborate on the concepts second, and add post-lesson exercises. Although many teachers employ all sorts of methods to enrich the classroom and inspire students to learn with enthusiasm, these methods have not altered the primary roles of all the links in education. Scenario engagement is restricted to the introduction to spark students' interest, conceptual instruction takes up most of the time in class, and applied assignments are mainly given after school; as a result, students' emotional experiences cannot feed back into conceptual learning and behaviour.

In addition, the current teaching in class is too much about external emotional motivation, so the moral education of college students is shallow and inconsistent. In the previous era of moral education, teachers often present typical good or bad stories to stir up students' emotions and encourage them to follow the rules of conduct set by society<sup>[9]</sup>. However, this expression of emotion is prompted by outside stories and does not stem from students' own thoughts. When they leave the school environment, the temporary emotional excitement will dissipate quickly, and many students are unable to carry forward the sense of empathy and understanding in that moment into their daily lives. Many students can precisely grasp the text and conduct conventional ethical judgments in their studies, but continue to make vague choices about values and exhibit inconsistent behaviour in daily life; thus, they have fallen into the common state of "knowing but not doing".

Moreover, the institutionalisation of applied instruction has widened the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the subject. Traditional laboratory experiments are generally held after the lectures and are removed from the surrounding circumstances and immediate reasoning in class. The standardised and uniform practical assignments are out of step with the cognitive environment of the classroom and are thus often only meant to fulfill procedural requirements rather than be driven by the desire for self-improvement of individuals. Formalised exercises cannot assess the genuine morality and legal consciousness of students, nor can they help students correct their misconceptions and behaviour by means of situational reflection. In fact, many long-standing problems in modern Morality and Rule of Law education are not due to old ways of teaching; rather, they are the structural flaws caused by a single-track teaching system and disconnected goals for education. Therefore, only by reconstructing the unified nonlinear instructional architecture proposed by SEE Learning can we solve the long-standing problems in the teaching of this subject area.

### 3. Practical Reform Paths for the Integration of SEE Learning in Morality and Rule of Law Teaching.

Structural defects and inherent contradictions in current university Morality and Rule of Law education cannot be resolved by simply changing teaching tools or adding more exercises in class. In accordance with the concept of all-round education and the non-linear pedagogical reasoning of SEE Learning, pedagogical innovation in the classroom should start by reorganising the basic instructional logic, internalisation process and practical training framework to achieve a comprehensive change from fragmented linear teaching to integrated non-linear pedagogy<sup>[5]</sup>.

The first basic direction of reform is to build a synchronous teaching system based on the idea of cognitive discovery, emotional introspection and on-site conductive planning, and thus deviate from the old linear classroom. In the traditional pedagogical design, scenario construction is merely an introductory step that is completed at the beginning of the stage for clarifying ideas; thus, there is a split between context awareness and learning. Predicament scenarios and daily life are incorporated into all sections of the teaching under the SEE Learning paradigm to prompt students to think independently and talk to themselves during class. At the start of each teaching unit, the presentation of concepts will no longer be isolated information but will be combined with students' problems in daily life and moral choices. At the same time as organising ethical rules and laws, learners also think about their own behaviour differences and value conflicts in typical daily life; thus, logical awareness, internal feelings and practical purposes can be generated, cultivated and strengthened concurrently in the same educational environment. Non-linear synchronous development is not fragmented by segmented teaching, and thus it is possible to integrate cognition, affect and action in reality properly.

Based on the reconstructed structure logic, the educational instruction should move the process of value internalisation from passive empathetic response in the outside world to endogenous active self-reflection. The traditional way of moral education mainly employs exemplary cases and emotional stories to arouse students' emotions, so the values they learn tend to be driven by these external factors rather than through independent thinking. SEE Learning believes that, to be effective, values education should start from the daily life experience and ideological problems of students, motivate them to achieve self-awareness through continuous self-exploration and contrastive situations<sup>[3]</sup>. In the classroom, teachers should reduce formal value sermons and uniform judgment criteria reasonably and create a transparent and open environment for students to speak freely. By having pupils organise their inner ambivalence, affective inclination and conduct pattern in the face of moral predicaments, teachers help learners independently understand the reason and need for observing ethics and laws. The first kind of recognition is based on one's own experiences and self-reflections; thus, it tends to be stable for a long time and is not easily eroded by the absence of external stimulus, thus addressing the problem of superficial emotional arousal in the classroom and the subsequent decline of values after class.

SEE Learning can be used to construct a complete micro-practice system in class and solve the problem of formality in instructional exercises. Traditional experiential education is usually organised as extracurricular activities and social inquiry projects; it does not take place in class or during a specific moment of cognition, and thus there is a disconnect between theoretical study and practice. On the other hand, the practice portion of SEE Learning is not long-term off-campus work but rather in-situ behavioural construction and immediate behavioural correction in the lecture hall. Through dilemma exploration and self-reflection, learners can voluntarily develop their own behaviour improvement plans and daily regulation rules that are in line with their own cognitive development; thus, they have made the abstract ethical and legal doctrines of minor behaviour into actionable goals for daily study and life<sup>[4]</sup>. Micro-practice based on the classroom is closely linked to the real development needs of students; it has high relevance and executability, and thus can avoid the shallowness and tool-orientation of traditional practical assignments. It may be that the close-loop teaching effect of simultaneous development of cognition, self-reflection and behaviour can be achieved in a single classroom to reduce the knowledge-action

gap of traditional teaching <sup>[8]</sup>.

Therefore, at the same time, the structure of instructional assessment should also be reformed to build a comprehensive development and supervision system for nonlinear education. Traditional assessment places too much emphasis on the memorization of conceptual knowledge and the final results of written examinations, ignoring the improvement of students' internal literacy and behavioural consciousness; thus, it fails to fully demonstrate the integrative pedagogical effect of ethical and legal education. In the SEE Learning instructional model, appraisal indicators have been extended from the mastery of individual subjects to the three-dimensional development results of the students' logical thinking depth, sincerity in self-reflection and application of determination. The below table shows the differences between the two:

Evaluation Dimension	Traditional Linear Model	SEE Learning Integrated Model
Cognitive Domain	Rote memorization of moral rules & legal articles; end-of-term exams.	Depth of rational thinking; structural understanding of ethical dilemmas.
Emotional Domain	Superficial empathy induced by positive/negative instructional cases.	Authenticity of continuous self-reflection and emotional self-regulation.
Practical Domain	Formalized post-class reports and disconnected social investigations.	Immediate in-situ behavioral planning and long-term habits constraint.

#### 4. Conclusion

Educational innovations in the university-level Moral and Rule of Law curriculum have constantly tried to solve problems such as monotonous teaching methods, decreased students' interest in class, and poor teaching results; however, many previous efforts have only been at the level of procedural optimisation and experience innovation and have failed to escape the limitations of traditional linear instruction. The reasons for the shallow integration of values and the continuous cognitive-behavioural gap are that intellectual learning, emotional engagement and practical application are all limited to the form of a lecture. SEE Learning is an established holistic pedagogical model around the world, and at its core, it promotes the simultaneous development of students' heads, hearts and hands; thus, a new theoretical system and operating plan for a deep structural change in college Moral and Rule of Law education have been proposed <sup>[10]</sup>. By reforming the non-linear integrated classroom, bringing external emotional resonance inside for self-reflection, organising embedded in-class micro-practices, strengthening holistic developmental assessment, this innovation has solved the problem of segmentation and isolation in traditional teaching, promoted the integrated synthesis of students' logical comprehension, sense of identity and behaviour, etc., and significantly increased the authenticity and stability of ethical and legal character education <sup>[7]</sup>.

Based on this study, it has been confirmed that SEE Learning is in line with the concept and practical application of morality and rule-of-law education, providing a new idea for the regional adaptation of global holistic pedagogical frameworks and the ideological and political curriculum reform in China <sup>[11]</sup>. This paper has the following deficiencies. The main content of this paper is the construction of concepts and teaching blueprints; there are no long-term observations or numerical empirical analyses of teaching effects. In the future, more studies can be carried out with regulated classroom experiments and long-term follow-up to refine the execution details of the SEE Learning non-linear instructional approach in college ideological and political courses and thus better achieve the main goal of moral education through higher education curriculum reform.

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