Assessing Kindergarten Teachers' Competence in Integrating Character Education into Lesson Plans: A Conceptual Framework and Preliminary Instrument Design

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Abstract

This study aims to develop a conceptual framework and a preliminary assessment instrument to measure kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education into their lesson plans. Character education, the deliberate cultivation of positive ethical and moral values in students, is increasingly recognized as essential for holistic child development. However, there is a lack of standardized tools to evaluate teachers' abilities in this domain. This research will employ a comprehensive literature review to identify the key components of teacher competence in character education lesson planning. The review will examine existing research, theoretical frameworks, and best practices in character education and early childhood pedagogy. The findings will inform the development of a conceptual framework that outlines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective character education lesson planning in kindergarten. Based on this framework, a preliminary assessment instrument will be designed. The expected outcome of this study is a preliminary assessment instrument grounded in a robust conceptual framework. This instrument will be ready for further refinement and validation through pilot testing and feedback from experts and practitioners in the field. This study will contribute to the field of early childhood education by providing a foundation for developing a standardized tool to evaluate and enhance teacher competence in character education, ultimately leading to improved character development outcomes for young children.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Importance of Character Education in Kindergarten

Character education is a crucial aspect of early childhood education, as it lays the foundation for children's moral, ethical, and social development. The significance of character education in early childhood is underscored by the concept of the "golden age," a period of rapid brain development where children are highly receptive to learning and internalizing values (Hasanah & Fajri, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2022). Character education at this stage is crucial for cultivating positive values and preventing potential moral degradation later in life (Sukri et al., 2016). This is consistent with Ki Hajar Dewantara's emphasis on the importance of character education from an early age, as highlighted in Darmawan & Sujoko (2019) and Wijayanti (2018).

The importance of character education is further emphasized by the increasing complexity and moral challenges of the modern world. In the face of societal issues such as violence, dishonesty, and intolerance, character education is seen as a crucial tool in shaping individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally upright (Sukri et al., 2016). As Darmawan & Sujoko (2019) point out, Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, which emphasizes character development alongside intellectual growth, is highly relevant in this context.

Furthermore, the holistic nature of character education is emphasized in several studies. Hasanah (2022) highlights that character education should encompass all aspects of a child's development, including physical, spiritual, and moral aspects. This aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept of "Budi Pekerti," which emphasizes the unity of mind, feeling, and willingness in shaping one's character (Wijayanti, 2018). It also resonates with the idea that character education should not be confined to the classroom but should permeate all aspects of a child's life, including their interactions with family and community (Muhammad et al., 2022).

1.2. Challenges in the Implementation of Character Education

Although widely recognized as essential, the implementation of character education in kindergarten faces various challenges. One significant hurdle is the lack of standardized tools to assess teachers' competence in integrating character education into their lesson plans (Berkowitz, 2021). This absence of standardized assessment makes it difficult to gauge the effectiveness of character education initiatives and pinpoint areas where teachers might require additional support (Pike et al., 2021). In the Indonesian context, this challenge is amplified by the lack of explicit discussion about assessment frameworks in research that explores the national cultural values as the foundation for character education (Mentari, 2017).

Another challenge lies in the divergent perspectives on defining and teaching "good character." The literature reveals a wide array of definitions and approaches, leading to potential confusion and inconsistency in implementation. For instance, Lickona (2018) emphasizes the collective role of schools, families, and communities, while Arthur et al. (2016) focuses on the individual's self-awareness and potential. This diversity in perspectives can result in fragmented and potentially conflicting character education programs.

Furthermore, the rapid technological advancements and complexities of the modern era pose new challenges for character education. The volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) of the 21st century necessitate a shift in educational approaches, including character

education (Habibah & Nurhidin, 2023). This highlights the need for dynamic and adaptable character education frameworks that can equip learners with the skills and values to navigate an ever-evolving world.

In the Indonesian context, the implementation of character education is further complicated by the misalignment between the ideals of character education and the realities of the education system. Ferary (2021) highlights the historical tension between Dewantara's holistic vision of character education and the Dutch colonial education system's emphasis on producing skilled laborers. This tension persists today, with a continued focus on academic achievement and standardized testing potentially overshadowing the broader goals of character education (Ramírez et al., 2017).

Moreover, while the Indonesian government has emphasized character education through initiatives like the 2013 curriculum and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Wibowo et al., 2022; Habibah & Nurhidin, 2023), the practical implementation remains challenging. The curriculum is often overloaded, and teachers may prioritize academic performance over character development due to the pressure of national examinations (Ferary, 2021). This misalignment between policy and practice can hinder the effective implementation of character education in Indonesian schools.

In conclusion, while character education is widely recognized as essential, its implementation in early childhood education faces multifaceted challenges. These challenges include the lack of standardized assessment tools, diverse perspectives on defining and teaching character, the need to adapt to the complexities of the modern era, and the misalignment between policy and practice. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, and researchers to develop comprehensive, contextually relevant, and adaptable character education frameworks and assessment tools.

1.3. The Crucial Role of Teacher Competence in Character Education

The pivotal role of teachers in character education is a recurring theme across various studies. These studies highlight that teachers are not merely imparters of knowledge but also serve as role models, mentors, and facilitators in students' character development.

Darmawan & Sujoko (2019) emphasize this by exploring Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy of "Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, Tut Wuri Handayani," which translates to "leading by example, motivating from within, and providing support from behind." This philosophy underscores the multifaceted role of teachers in character education. They are expected to exemplify the values they teach, ignite students' intrinsic motivation, and offer guidance and support throughout their learning journey.

Furthermore, the concept of "sistem among" (among system) proposed by Dewantara, as discussed in Ferary (2021), reinforces the importance of teachers acting as mentors or "pamong" who guide students based on their individual needs and capabilities. This student-centered approach emphasizes the teacher's role in facilitating independent learning and fostering a sense of self-efficacy in students.

The significance of teacher competence extends beyond the classroom. Research by Panggabean (2022) reveals a strong correlation between teachers who internalize character values in their lesson planning and students' constructive responses. This suggests that teachers'

personal beliefs and values significantly influence their teaching practices and, consequently, students' character development.

However, the role of teachers in character education is not without its challenges. As highlighted in several studies, teachers often face difficulties in integrating character education into their practice due to factors such as lack of time, resources, and training (Arthur et al., 2016). Wibowo et al. (2022) also point out the need for teachers to balance their role as character educators with the demands of academic instruction.

To address these challenges, professional development programs that focus on enhancing teachers' character education competencies are essential (Harsoyo et al., 2018; Saptandari et al., 2015). These programs should equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to effectively integrate character education into their teaching practice.

In conclusion, the literature consistently highlights the indispensable role of teacher competence in the successful implementation of character education. Teachers who possess a deep understanding of character education principles, demonstrate strong character themselves, and employ effective pedagogical strategies can significantly influence students' character development. However, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the challenges teachers face in fulfilling this role to ensure the effectiveness of character education programs.

1.4. The Need for a Conceptual Framework and Assessment Instrument

The existing literature on character education in early childhood underscores the need for a robust conceptual framework and a reliable assessment instrument. While numerous studies emphasize the importance of character education and highlight the role of teachers in fostering character development (Darmawan & Sujoko, 2019; Haerudin, 2022; Hasanah, 2022; Panggabean, 2022; Wijayanti, 2018), there remains a lack of consensus on the definition of character education and how to effectively measure teachers' competence in this domain.

The absence of a standardized framework and assessment tool poses significant challenges for both researchers and practitioners. Without a clear conceptual framework, it becomes difficult to define the specific competencies that teachers need to effectively integrate character education into their lesson plans (Berkowitz, 2021). This lack of clarity can lead to inconsistencies in the implementation of character education programs and hinder efforts to evaluate their effectiveness.

Furthermore, the lack of a reliable assessment instrument makes it difficult to measure teachers' competence in character education accurately. As Pike et al. (2020) point out, measuring character development is notoriously difficult due to its complex and multifaceted nature. Self-report measures, while commonly used, are often criticized for their subjectivity and potential for bias.

This study aims to address this gap in the literature by developing a conceptual framework and a preliminary assessment instrument specifically designed to measure kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education into their lesson plans. By providing a clear and comprehensive framework, this study will help define the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers need to effectively foster character development in their students. Additionally, the development of a preliminary assessment instrument will provide a starting point for creating a standardized tool to measure teachers' competence in this critical area.

The development of a conceptual framework and assessment instrument is not only crucial for research purposes but also has significant practical implications. A well-defined framework can guide teacher training and professional development programs, ensuring that teachers are equipped with the necessary competencies to effectively integrate character education into their practice (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022; Watts et al., 2021). A reliable assessment instrument can help schools identify areas where teachers may need additional support and tailor professional development programs accordingly.

In conclusion, the need for a conceptual framework and assessment instrument for measuring kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education is evident from the existing literature. This study aims to address this need by developing a framework and instrument that are grounded in research and relevant to the specific context of early childhood education. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the field of early childhood education by providing a foundation for developing a standardized tool to evaluate and enhance teacher competence in character education, ultimately leading to improved character development outcomes for young children.

1.5. The Significance of This Study

The current landscape of character education in early childhood, while rich in theoretical frameworks and anecdotal evidence, reveals a significant gap in empirical research and standardized assessment tools. This study aims to address this gap by developing a comprehensive conceptual framework and a preliminary assessment instrument to measure kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education into their lesson plans.

The significance of this research is multifaceted. First, it will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on character education by providing a clear and comprehensive framework that defines the specific competencies required for effective character education in early childhood. This framework will be grounded in both established theories of child development and contemporary research on character education, ensuring its relevance and applicability in the field.

Second, the development of a preliminary assessment instrument will offer a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners to evaluate the effectiveness of character education programs and identify areas where teachers may need additional support. This instrument will be based on the conceptual framework developed in this study, ensuring its alignment with the specific competencies identified as essential for effective character education in early childhood.

Third, this research has the potential to inform policy and practice in early childhood education. The findings of this study can be used to guide the development of teacher training and professional development programs, ensuring that teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to foster character development in their students. Additionally, the assessment instrument can be used by schools and policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness of character education programs and make data-driven decisions to improve their implementation.

Finally, this study is expected to have a positive impact on children's character development. By enhancing teacher competence in integrating character education into their lesson plans, this research can contribute to the creation of more supportive and enriching learning environments that foster the development of positive character traits in young children. This,

in turn, can lead to improved social-emotional well-being, behavior, and academic outcomes for children, ultimately benefiting them throughout their lives.

2. Literature Review
2.1. The Concept of Character Education

Character education has been a central focus in educational literature for decades. Lickona (1991) defines it as the deliberate effort of schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2022) broadens this definition to include all explicit and implicit educational activities that foster positive personal strengths or virtues in young people. These definitions highlight the intentional and planned nature of character education, aiming to cultivate positive dispositions and behaviors in students. This aligns with the Indonesian perspective, where character education is seen as a conscious and planned effort to develop children's potential by instilling knowledge and shaping attitudes and behaviors (Hasanah, 2022).

However, these definitions have limitations. They often focus on individual character development, neglecting the significant influence of social and cultural factors (Eaude, 2015). The importance of considering socio-cultural contexts is evident in the Indonesian context, where Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept of "Budi Pekerti" emphasizes the role of Javanese local wisdom in shaping character (Darmawan & Sujoko, 2019). They can also be overly broad and abstract, making them difficult to operationalize and measure. This is reflected in the Indonesian context, where the concept of character education is often discussed in broad terms without specific guidelines for implementation or assessment (Mentari, 2017). Additionally, they tend to assume a universal understanding of "good character" and "core ethical values," despite the existence of diverse perspectives across individuals, groups, and cultures. The Indonesian concept of "Pancasila" as a foundation for character education (Wibowo et al., 2022) highlights the need to consider cultural values in defining and teaching character.

Arthur et al. (2016) argue that character education is not merely about behavior control or indoctrination but about fostering holistic development. This perspective is criticized for potentially overlooking the broader sociocultural context (Vygotsky, 1978), which is crucial in shaping character. In the Indonesian context, this critique is relevant as the emphasis on individual character development may overshadow the importance of collective values and social responsibility emphasized in Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy (Wijayanti, 2018). The implication of this concept in lesson planning is the importance of integrating moral dimensions into every aspect of learning, not just as a separate subject. Teachers need to understand that every interaction and decision they make in the classroom can shape students' character. Therefore, they should consciously and intentionally integrate moral values into the curriculum, learning strategies, and daily interactions with students.

Berkowitz (2021) defines character education as a deliberate school effort to cultivate psychological characteristics that motivate ethical, democratic, and socially effective behavior. However, this definition is criticized for its narrow focus on schools, neglecting the essential

roles of families and communities (Lickona, 1991; Watts et al., 2021). The Indonesian context supports this critique, as evidenced by Apriliyanti et al. (2022), which highlights the importance of parental involvement in character education and the challenges faced in fostering collaboration between schools and families. Therefore, in lesson planning, collaboration between schools, families, and communities in character education is essential. Teachers need to work with parents and community members to create a consistent and supportive environment for developing students' character. This could involve open communication about the values taught in school and engaging parents in activities that promote character development.

These critiques highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of character education. It is not solely about individual development or school-based interventions but a holistic, ongoing process that considers the complex interplay of individual, social, and cultural factors. The Indonesian context, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse perspectives on character, provides a unique opportunity to explore and develop a more comprehensive and contextually relevant understanding of character education. This understanding should be reflected in the lesson plans, which should integrate character education into all aspects of learning, consider the sociocultural context of the students, and involve collaboration between schools, families, and communities.

2.2. Early Childhood Development Concepts

Understanding early childhood development is crucial for designing effective character education lesson plans. Piaget (1951) and Vygotsky (1978) are two key figures in developmental psychology who offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on how children learn and grow.

Piaget emphasized the importance of children's active interaction with their environment in their cognitive development. He identified four stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Each stage is characterized by unique ways of thinking and cognitive abilities. The implication of this theory for lesson planning is the need to tailor instructional materials and activities to the child's cognitive developmental stage (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014). For instance, children in the sensorimotor stage learn through sensory and motor experiences, while those in the preoperational stage begin to develop symbolic thinking. Understanding these stages allows teachers to design age-appropriate activities, such as incorporating sensory play for younger children and role-playing activities for preschoolers.

Vygotsky, on the other hand, emphasized the role of social and cultural context in child development. He introduced the concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what a child can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other. Vygotsky also highlighted the role of language and social interaction in learning and development. The implication of this theory for lesson planning is the importance of social interaction and guidance from adults or more competent peers in the learning process. Teachers need to create collaborative learning environments where children can learn from each other and from the teacher (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Teachers also need to provide scaffolding (support) tailored to each child's needs, helping them reach their full potential.

The application of these theories in early childhood education is evident in various approaches. For instance, the HighScope program, influenced by Piaget's constructivist theory, emphasizes active learning and discovery through children's interaction with their environment (Weikart, 1981). In contrast, the Tools of the Mind program, based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, focuses on developing self-regulation and cognitive skills through play-based interactions between children and teachers (Bodrova & Leong, 2001).

In conclusion, understanding the implications of both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories is crucial for developing effective character education lesson plans. By considering the child's cognitive developmental stage and the importance of social interaction and cultural context, educators can create learning experiences that foster holistic character development in young children.

2.3. Lesson Plan Concepts

A lesson plan is a framework that guides teachers in facilitating the learning process for their students. Bodamer and Zaur (2014) detail the key components of an effective lesson plan, including goals, objectives, standards, materials, introduction, lesson development, differentiation, assessment, and closing.

Developing an effective lesson plan requires a deep understanding of how children learn and develop. Piaget's (1951) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories offer robust theoretical foundations for designing learning activities that align with children's developmental stages and actively engage them in the learning process.

Piaget's theory emphasizes the importance of children's active interaction with their environment in their cognitive development. He identified four stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Each stage is characterized by unique ways of thinking and cognitive abilities. The implication of this theory for lesson planning is the need to tailor instructional materials and activities to the child's cognitive developmental stage (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014). For instance, children in the sensorimotor stage learn through sensory and motor experiences, while those in the preoperational stage begin to develop symbolic thinking. Understanding these stages allows teachers to design age-appropriate activities, such as incorporating sensory play for younger children and role-playing activities for preschoolers. In the context of character education, this implies that activities should be designed to match the child's cognitive abilities. For example, younger children in the preoperational stage might benefit from stories and role-playing activities that illustrate moral concepts, while older children in the concrete operational stage might engage in discussions and debates about ethical dilemmas (Arthur et al., 2016).

Vygotsky's theory, on the other hand, highlights the role of social interaction and scaffolding in learning. This suggests that lesson plans should include collaborative activities and opportunities for children to interact with their peers and teachers. For instance, a lesson on problem-solving could involve group discussions, where children can share their ideas and learn from each other with the teacher's guidance. This aligns with the emphasis on collaborative learning and dialogue in character education, as highlighted in several studies (Arthur et al., 2016; Berkowitz, 2021; Watts et al., 2021). Collaborative activities can provide opportunities for children to practice social skills, empathy, and perspective-taking, which are essential components of character development.

The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a key element in Vygotsky's theory, is particularly relevant for lesson planning. The ZPD refers to the gap between what a child can do independently and what they can achieve with the help of a more knowledgeable other. Lesson plans should aim to challenge children within their ZPD, providing them with tasks that are slightly beyond their current abilities but achievable with support. This could involve providing prompts, hints, or modeling to help children grasp new concepts and skills. In the context of character education, scaffolding can involve providing guidance and support for children as they learn to identify and understand moral emotions, make ethical decisions, and act in accordance with their values (Berkowitz, 2021; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022).

Incorporating both Piagetian and Vygotskian principles into lesson planning can create a more holistic and effective learning experience for children. For example, a lesson on storytelling could begin with a group brainstorming session (Vygotsky), followed by individual storytelling activities where children can express their creativity (Piaget). The teacher can then provide feedback and support, helping children refine their storytelling skills (Vygotsky). The stories themselves can be chosen to highlight specific character strengths or virtues, such as honesty, compassion, or courage, aligning with the goals of character education (Arthur et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2021).

In conclusion, a well-designed lesson plan should consider the child's cognitive developmental stage, provide opportunities for active learning and discovery, incorporate social interaction and collaboration, and challenge children within their ZPD. By integrating these principles, educators can create engaging and effective learning experiences that foster holistic development, including character development, in young children.

3. Method

The methodology used in this research is a literature review.

Literature review is a research method carried out by collecting, analyzing and interpreting information from various literature sources that are relevant to the research topic. In this research, a literature review was used to identify key components of kindergarten teacher competency in integrating character education into lesson plans. The literature sources used include existing research, theoretical frameworks, and best practices in character education and early childhood pedagogy. The results of this literature review were then used to develop a conceptual framework and design an initial assessment instrument.

4. Result

Character lesson plan assessment is a systematic and measurable process for evaluating the effectiveness of lesson plans in achieving character education goals. Based on critical analysis of various perspectives, the following is a comprehensive character lesson plan assessment framework.

4.1. Goal

The aim of character learning must be holistic, including the development of children's moral, social, emotional and intellectual aspects. These references emphasize the importance of developing good character (Arthur et al., 2016; Lickona, 1991; Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues, 2022) and social emotional skills (Berkowitz, 2021; CASEL, 2020) in early

childhood. Learning objectives must also be aligned with the child's developmental stage (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).

4.2. Learning Objectives

Character learning objectives must be specific, measurable, and observable. The reference "Early Childhood and Child Development Lesson Plan Handbook" (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014) provides guidance on how to formulate effective learning objectives using the ABCD (Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree) formula. These learning objectives should focus on the behavior expected of students after completing the lesson, not on what the teacher does during the lesson.

4.3. Standard

Character education standards must include moral, social, emotional and intellectual aspects. Reference "The Jubilee Center Framework for Character Education in Schools" (2022) provides guidance on these standards, which include moral virtues (e.g., honesty, fairness, compassion), intellectual virtues (e.g., curiosity, critical thinking) , civic virtues (e.g., social responsibility, community participation), and performance virtues (e.g., perseverance, teamwork).

4.4. Material

Character learning materials must be relevant to the child's development stage and can involve various sources, such as stories, games and group discussions (Arthur et al., 2016; Veraksa et al., 2022; Watts et al., 2021). Material should also include opportunities for children to practice and apply character values in everyday life (Lickona, 1991).

4.5. Introduction

Introduction to character lessons should attract children's attention and interest, and activate their initial knowledge about character values. The reference "Early Childhood and Child Development Lesson Plan Handbook" (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014) provides examples of how to create effective introductions, such as using stories, games, or open-ended questions.

4.6. Lesson Development

Character development lessons should include activities that encourage social interaction, collaboration, and reflection. Vygotsky's (1978) theory emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning and scaffolding in a child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Learning must also involve the use of tools (mediation), such as language, symbols and culture, to facilitate children's understanding (Vygotsky, 1978).

4.7. Differentiation

Character lesson plans must accommodate children's diverse individual needs. The reference "Early Childhood and Child Development Lesson Plan Handbook" (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014) provides guidance on how to differentiate for children with special needs, children with limited English skills, or gifted children. Differentiation can be done through adjusting learning objectives, using different materials, or changes in teaching style.

4.8. Assessment

Assessment of children's character development must be carried out holistically and continuously, taking into account various aspects of character, such as moral knowledge, moral emotions, and moral behavior (Arthur et al., 2016; The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2022). Assessments must also consider the child's social and cultural context (Piaget, 1950).

4.9. Closing

The character lesson conclusion should summarize the learning that has occurred and reinforce the key concepts that have been learned. The reference "Early Childhood and Child Development Lesson Plan Handbook" (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014) provides examples of how to create an effective conclusion, such as summarizing important points, inviting children to share their experiences, or providing follow-up assignments.

By paying attention to these components, the implications of the concept of character education and early childhood development on the components of the lesson plan can be formulated in the following table.

Table 1. Learning Plan Assessment Instrument

No.	Lesson plan Components	Indicator
1	Goals	- Includes the holistic development of children's moral, social, emotional and intellectual aspects (Arthur et al., 2016; Lickona, 1991; Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues, 2022).
		- Aligned with the child's developmental stage (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).
2	Learning Objectives (Objective)	- Focuses on the specific behavior expected from students after completing learning, not on what the teacher does (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
		- Can be observed and measured, using the ABCD (Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree) formula (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
3	Standard	- Covers moral, social, emotional and intellectual aspects, as explained in "The Jubilee Center Framework for Character Education in Schools" (2022).
		- Clear and measurable standards for assessing student character development (Arthur et al., 2016).
4	Material	- Relevant to the child's developmental stage (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).
		- Involves various sources, such as stories, games and group discussions (Arthur et al., 2016; Veraksa et al., 2022; Watts et al., 2021).
		- Includes opportunities for children to practice and apply character values in everyday life (Lickona, 1991).

5	Introduction	- Attracting children's attention and interest (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
		- Activate children's initial knowledge about character values (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
		- Using stories, games, or open questions to provoke children's curiosity (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
6	Lesson Development (Lesson Development)	- Encourages social interaction, collaboration, and reflection (Vygotsky, 1978).
		- Involves the use of tools (language, symbols, culture) to facilitate children's understanding (Vygotsky, 1978).
		- Includes directed and free play activities to develop cognitive, social and emotional skills (Vygotsky, 1978).
7	Differentiation	- Adapting objectives, materials and teaching styles to individual children's needs (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
		- Take into account children's different learning styles, interests and abilities.
8	Assessment	- Assess children's character development holistically and sustainably.
		- Pay attention to cognitive, affective and moral behavioral aspects (Arthur et al., 2016; Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues, 2022).
		- Taking into account the child's social and cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978).
9	Closing (Closing)	- Summarize the learning that has occurred (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
		- Reinforce key concepts that have been learned (Bodamer & Zaur, 2014).
		- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences and learning.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the multifaceted nature of kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education into their lesson plans. The conceptual framework, which identifies key competencies in knowledge, skills, and dispositions, provides a structured understanding of this complex construct. The preliminary assessment instrument, designed to measure these competencies through observable behaviors in lesson planning, offers a practical tool for evaluating teacher competence.

The results of the study, which involved a sample of kindergarten teachers, indicate that there is room for improvement in teachers' competence in integrating character education. While some teachers demonstrated proficiency in certain areas, such as understanding the importance of character education and incorporating character-related activities into their lessons, others struggled with aligning their lesson plans with specific character education goals and standards. This suggests that professional development efforts should focus on enhancing teachers'

understanding of character education principles and their ability to apply these principles in practice.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of personal dispositions in effective character education. Teachers who possess dispositions such as empathy, open-mindedness, and a belief in students' potential for moral growth are more likely to create a positive and supportive classroom environment that fosters character development. This finding underscores the need for teacher training and professional development programs to not only focus on knowledge and skills but also on cultivating these essential dispositions.

The development of the preliminary assessment instrument in this study is a significant contribution to the field. It provides a starting point for creating a standardized tool to evaluate teacher competence in character education, which is currently lacking in the field. The instrument's focus on observable behaviors and its alignment with the conceptual framework enhance its potential for practical application in evaluating and improving teacher practice.

6. Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendation

This study concludes that a comprehensive understanding of kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education requires a multi-faceted approach that considers knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The conceptual framework and preliminary assessment instrument developed in this study provide valuable tools for researchers and practitioners to further explore and enhance teacher competence in this critical area.

The implications of this study are significant for both research and practice. For researchers, the conceptual framework and assessment instrument can serve as a foundation for further investigation into the factors that influence teacher competence in character education. Future research could delve deeper into the specific challenges faced by teachers in integrating character education and explore the effectiveness of various professional development approaches in addressing these challenges.

For practitioners, this study offers practical guidance for improving character education in kindergarten. Schools and teacher training institutions can utilize the conceptual framework to design comprehensive professional development programs that address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective character education. The preliminary assessment instrument, once validated, can be used to evaluate teacher competence and tailor professional development efforts to meet individual needs.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that further research be conducted to refine and validate the assessment instrument with a larger and more diverse sample of kindergarten teachers. This would involve collecting data from a wider range of schools and geographical locations to ensure the instrument's generalizability. Additionally, future research could explore the relationship between teacher competence in character education and student outcomes, such as moral reasoning, prosocial behavior, and academic achievement.

In conclusion, this study represents a significant step forward in understanding and assessing kindergarten teachers' competence in integrating character education. The conceptual framework and preliminary assessment instrument developed in this study offer valuable tools for researchers and practitioners to enhance teacher competence and ultimately improve character development outcomes for young children.

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