**Multicultural character education: A philosophical analysis of the need for multicultural perspective in neo-Aristotelian character education**

This paper argues the need and a possible way of involving a multicultural perspective in neo-Aristotelian character education. There are three main sections in this paper. In the beginning, well-being and education will be explored. Different approaches of well-being theories will be examined and I point out that within these well-being theories, Aristotle’s eudaimonia theory has the most potential for offering a concrete way of cultivating virtue to flourish. Next, I will discuss the need for including a multicultural perspective within neo-Aristotelian character education. In addition to illustrating the characteristics and contents of neo-Aristotelian character education, I argue that there is very little discussion about multicultural elements in current neo-Aristotelian character education. With a multicultural perspective, neo-Aristotelian character education can be more influential and more diverse groups of students can find their own way to flourish.

1. **Well-being and education**
2. **Well-being as the aim of education**

In the field of education, well-being is increasingly becoming a dominant issue (White, 2011; de Ruyter, 2014; Kristjánsson, 2020). This is apparent in far-reaching international research, as well as within individual countries. One significant international example is PISA. Since 2015, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) incorporated a new tool to evaluate the socio-emotional variables related to the well-being of students (Govorova, Benítez & Muñiz, 2020, p. 431). Five dimensions of students’ well-being have been evaluated: psychological, social, physical, material, and cognitive. In PISA’s report, students’ well-being is a dynamic state and it can be measured through subjective and objective indicators of competencies, perceptions, expectations and life conditions (Govorova, Benítez & Muñiz, 2020, p. 431). In addition to this global research, individual countries and governments are also taking a keen interesting in wellbeing in education. One such example is Australia. The ‘Australian Student Wellbeing Framework’ was launched in October 2018 to promote students’ well-being, safety and positive relationships, helping students reach their full potential (Student Wellbeing Hub). It can clearly be seen that even well-being has been emphasized in education sector worldwide but the understandings and definitions of well-being are variant. PISA’s report shows that students’ well-being is a dynamic state while the Australian government focuses on building a comfortable community which involves schools and parents for students to learn and grow.

Apart from PISA and the Australian government, the UK also plays an important role in promoting well-being in education. According to White (2011), the emergence of well-being education in the UK can be traced back to *Every Child Matters* agenda in 2003. The most well-known lessons and programmes focusing on well-being are offered by Wellington College (White, 2011, p. 11), the first school starting teaching happiness and well-being in the UK since 2006. The curriculum includes six elements: physical health, positive relationships, perspective (developing a psychological immune system), engagement, the world (living sustainably), meaning and purpose (Wellington College). Therefore, well-being is one of the popular and crucial educational issues and it is emphasised by global governments. However, there are too many practices or policies claim to promote students, but it lacks clear theory basis. In the next section, main theories of well-being and education will be explored to offer a robust theoretical basis for well-being and education.

**b. Well-being theories: philosophical and psychological approaches and the role of neo-Aristotelian character education**

Philosophy and psychology are two main fields which have studied the conception of happiness, as pointed out in the *Oxford Handbook of Happiness* (David et al., 2013, XV-XVII). Feldman claims that psychologists devote themselves to finding out the causes of happiness, while philosophers focus on exploring what happiness is (Feldman, 2012, pp. 7-8). This viewpoint shows that the definitions and understandings of happiness within psychology and philosophy are different. However, if we do not know what happiness is, how can we realize what leads to it? Therefore, this paper will explore both the philosophical and psychological approaches to clarify their advantages and drawbacks.

Theorists have used different terms to refer to a good life. Badhwar mentions the different translations of happiness by philosophers, ranging from ‘happiness’, ‘well-being’ to ‘flourishing’ (Badhwar, 2014, p. 5). Happiness is easily considered to be a positive feeling in most psychological approaches (such as Richard Layard’s usage in *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*). Well-being, on the other hand, is a term referring to a broader aspect of human flourishing (such as John White’s discussion of well-being in *Exploring Well-being in Schools*). Theories about ‘happiness’, ‘well-being’ and ‘flourishing’ will be included in this paper to prevent neglecting important related viewpoints. However, I prefer to use the term ‘well-being’ rather than ‘happiness’ to refer to a good life. It is the common term used in the field of education. Five different theoretical approaches of well-being will be briefly illustrated: hedonism, eudaimonism, positive psychology, SDT theory and liberal theories. ‘Eudaimonism’ and ‘Hedonism’ are two main streams of discussions related to well-being in philosophy (Huppert & Linley, 2011, p. 2; Rijavec, 2015, pp. 229-230). They have long history of discussing the notion of well-being. Positive Psychology and SDT theories are both psychological approaches. Liberal theory foundation based on educationalists who support for well-being and education.

1. **Hedonism**

Hedonism is mainly about maximizing pleasures. In the ancient tradition, Hedonism was articulated by Aristuppus (435-366 BCE) and further elaborated by Epicurus (342–270 BCE). Hedonism is generally considered to be concerned with seeking maximum pleasure. This is illustrated both in the Jeremy Bentham’s *happiness equation* and John Stuart Mill’s *Greatest Happiness Principle*. Jeremy Bentham’s primary concern is that by maximizing our utility (or pleasure) we can increase our happiness. Bentham believes that we can attain happiness through choosing pleasures rationally. He proposes the ‘happiness equation’ to answer how happiness can be measured (Huppert & Linley, 2011, pp. 15-16). In Bentham’s hedonic theory, there is only quantitative (more or less) distinctions between pleasures and no qualitative distinctions (better or worse).

There is an amendment of Hedonism by John Stuart Mill. Adopting the same basic utilitarian position as Bentham, Mill also takes happiness as pleasure. In describing the ‘Greatest Happiness Principle’, Mill wrote: ‘By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain’ (Noddings, 2003, p. 18). Mill believes that to become a better person is the ultimate goal of life (Huppert & Linley, 2011, p. 26). Broadening the idea of happiness from only seeking pleasures to the realization of various human ends, Mill also suggests that mental pleasures and aesthetic activities have higher value than physical pleasures (White, 2011, p. 90). White persuasively argues that Mill’s viewpoint regarding the ranking of pleasure is unconvincing because it both lacks empirical evidence and it does not lead to a conclusion that a life with mental pleasures would definitely acquire more well-being than a life lacking mental pleasures (White, 2011, p. 90). Regarding the Greatest Happiness Principle and happiness equation, hedonism is generally considered to be seeking of maximum pleasures.

Hedonism has received a great deal of criticism, such as the fact that it encourages over-consumption, self-indulgence and undermining morals etc. It has been claimed that hedonism may reduce happiness because pleasure may fade with time. Therefore, pleasure seekers will not be satisfied and will seek a stronger stimulus (Veenhoven, 2003, p. 438). Hedonism do not offer a complete answer about why and how people achieve well-being in a meaningful way either, so it contributes little in well-being and education.

1. **Eudaimonism**

It is obvious that eudaimonism targets offering a way of achieving well-being. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* focuses on his idea of eudaimonia and the method of leading a happy life. McGill V. J. argues that Aristotle’s theory is the most complete and influential one in happiness theories (McGill, 1967, p. 4). The eudaimonists support that well-being is ‘an activity that develops and expresses one’s most reflectively valued and well integrated human potentialities,’ rather than having good feelings. For Aristotle, eudaimonia is itself an end. The pursuit of eudaimonia is on account of happiness itself rather than something else ([1097b 1-5] Aristotle, 2019, p. 8). That is, people do not pursue well-being for wealth, health or anything else, but pursue well-being itself.

Taking well-being as the final end, Aristotle argues that well-being is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue ([1098a 15-20] Aristotle, 2019, p. 10). Well-being is not a resting state but a dynamic process in which people are practicing virtues. Moreover, some virtues should be conducted among the interaction with other people. Kristjánsson (2020) suggests that for Aristotle, many of flourishing constitutive virtues involves others, such as compassion (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 9). That is, to practice those virtues, people have to engage in activities involving other human beings. For instance, you need someone to show your compassion to.

Furthermore, the idea of ‘self-flourishing’ cannot be isolated from ‘universal well-being’ in Aristotle’s theory (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 27). Eudaimonists argue that self-realization with the common good, which is a moral norm, is the core of a good life (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 59). Kristjánsson suggests that it is inevitable to affect other positively when people exercise some virtues (especially the moral and civic virtues) (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 27). Which means that in Aristotle’s theory, self-wellbeing inevitably casts influence on other people. When a person is practicing some virtues, it is beneficial for both himself and other people.

Therefore, Aristotle’s theory of eudaimonia and his methods to cultivate virtues to achieve eudaimonia is complete and it is also beneficial for publics rather than an agent him/herself. I will delve into it in further detail here and leave it to the next section to talk about the needs for waving multicultural perspectives in neo-Aristotelian character education.

1. **Positive psychology**

Positive psychologists like Martin E. P. Seligman proposes well-being theory and the model to teach students about ‘happiness’ at school, which serves as the basis for the positive education. Seligman tries to create well-being theory to clarify that well-being is a construct idea which includes five parallel elements: positive emotion, engagement, (positive) relationships, meaning and achievement, also called PERMA (Seligman, 2011, pp. 13-24). I will not explore further details about Seligman’s well-being theory and its practice of teaching at school in this section, but focus on the idea of well-being in his theory.

Seligman includes some philosophical ideas in his theory but fails to transform them in a logical way into his psychological theory. Besides, involving some ideas about well-being from religion or philosophy to create a so-called new theory cannot solve the problem of monism which he proposed to argue the flaw in philosophy. It only creates another monism and without logical discourse. Take six virtues and twenty four character strengths from Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) viewpoint for example, we can see the fractures of those virtues and character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp. 28-30). Peterson and Seligman do not offer discourse about the reason for selecting these virtues and character strengths, and they believe it’s more important to focus on the practical part, which is the methods to evaluate and promote character strengths (Lu, 2019a, p. 31). Nevertheless, those character strengths lack explanation of why they lead to well-being and their illogical retrieval of philosophical and religious ideas leads to a misconception of well-being. Moreover, the psychological approach taking ‘virtue’ as ‘traits’ is also a misconception of virtue. For Aristotle, virtues are acquired through upbringing (by habituation and role modeling) and then through people’s repeated choices (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 15). It’s not a state or a trait.

Consequently, positive psychologists offer their point of view of well-being by using empirical studies to examine and promote character strengths and aspire to increase people’s well-being. However, they couldn’t diminish the importance of the philosophical approach of studying well-being since they lack complete discourse of why and how to cultivate virtues in education.

**(d) Self-determination theory (SDT)**

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory within the psychological approach which includes the perspective of eudaimonism. Unlike Seligman’s well-being theory, Deci and Ryan proposed SDT and they later worked with philosopher Curren to incorporate the characteristics of eudaimonism into SDT. Ryan et al. (2013) argue that there are objective elements in living well in Eudaimonist thinking and they believe some of the elements can be identified by empirical study (Ryan et al., 2013, pp. 57-58). Comparing to positive psychology, the assumptions of well-being in SDT are closer to eudaimonism. Ryan et al. refuted Kashdan, Biswas-Diener & Kings’ stand. Kashdan et al. argue that the philosophical perspective of well-being creates confusion since people can evaluate their own levels of happiness subjectively. They attack the philosophical perspective of well-being which imposes improper value judgment on people (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 58). Ryan et al. state that pleasure is in company of activities which fulfil human beings, but not the end of human existence. Moreover, SDT welcomes the idea of acting for others’ good (Ryan et al., 2013, pp. 58-59). So far, it seems that SDT is quite in accordance with eudaimonism, but the theory makes the same mistakes which lead to the fracture of eudaimonism just like positive psychology.

SDT embraces some elements within the eudaimonic approach and uses empirical methods to testify them. However, SDT’s understanding of well-being is much narrower than the one in eudaimonism. Kristjánsson suggests that SDT understands well-being as need satisfaction rather than an exercise of practical reason (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 29). SDT wants to refine eudaimonists’ hypotheses and make the theory more practical at schools, but compared to Aristotelian’s thoughts, SDT’s understanding of well-being is much narrow and they ignore some fundamental components in the eudaimonic approach. From Aristotle’s point of view, possessing a good character is necessary for flourishing (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 19). SDT focuses on ‘motivation’ rather than character, and lacks complete discourses about the definition of well-being and the reason why we should cultivate virtues. If a man finds killing people is worthwhile and he is full of motivation in doing so, is the man living a life of well-being from SDT’s perspective? So, without

**(e) Liberal theories**

Arthur (2020) suggests that liberalism which emerged in the Enlightenment has been deeply immersed in the ideas of education and schooling in western countries. Liberal virtues help to cultivate self-governing citizens and strengthen the western democracy (Arthur, 2020, p. 22). Some scholars show clues of welcoming liberalism within their viewpoints of well-being and education. White argues that education should equip students with the ability to live a life of ‘autonomous, whole-hearted and successful engagement in worthwhile activities and relationships (White, 2011, p. 129).’ A citizen is expected to join in the decisions about the future of a political community, and these decisions should be based on better lives of people and their flourishing (White, 2011, p. 93). de Ruyter (2004) holds a viewpoint more of individuals as she presents an example of a flourishing mother who supports racist activities to explain that even though she does nothing illegal, we should convince her of the belief that all people are born equal. This is because a tolerant society is more prosperous and thriving. Discourses in liberal theories put emphasis on cultivating citizens with civic virtues and building an open-minded and tolerant civil society (de Ruyter, 2004, pp. 386-387).

There is a characteristic within the discourse of liberal theories as they all urge that schools and teachers should play an active role to help students to acquire the ability to flourish. White claims that education should both mapping out the possibility of living flourishing and inducting students to live flourishingly (White, 2011, p.55). de Ruyter (2007) proposes it is the state’s responsibility to make sure students receive proper education and lead them to a flourishing life (de Ruyter, 2007, pp.34-35). Brighouse (2008) also brings about his idea of changing the formal curriculum, the informal curriculum and hidden curriculum to prepare students to lead a flourishing life (Brighouse, 2008, pp.64-70). de Ruyter suggests that teachers should offer instructions to students to help them to lead a good life even if students have different definition of a good life from teachers (de Ruyter, 2007, pp.34-35). The discourse of liberal theories thus pave ways for the multiculturally sensitive theoretical model in this paper because the democratic environment helps different cultural groups to flourish equally in society. Besides, liberal theories have the same goal of citizenship with multicultural education, which is to cultivate citizen’s civic virtues for the democratic society.

Liberal theories lack consensus of what is ‘flourishing life for students to achieve. Although liberal theories offer many ideal aims and possible ways to urge well-being and education, they seem to be separated from each other and it shows the weakness of the connection between philosophical discourse and educational practices in liberal theories. Kristjánsson examines flourishing theorists’ perspectives of education and finds some consensus within them, for instance, fulfilling students’ potential for competence, being fun and stimulating flow and wonder, aiming at essential goods of truth etc. However, he points out that these elements are closer to liberal education rather than promoting well-being in Aristotle’s theory (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 30). The gap between theory and practice is inevitable, but ideally the scholars should grasp the essence of theory and then make it practical. It is promising that many important aspects are mentioned by liberal theories, such as civic education and those necessary environments for multicultural groups. However, from my point of view, they are too broad, vague and fragmental.

To sum up, there are two essential aspects when we discuss well-being and education: one is the understanding of well-being within a particular theoretical context; the other one is to make sure that the practice of well-being in education is suitable nowadays and does not shift away from the spirit of theory. After exploring five approaches of well-being theories, it is clear that eudaimonism as a theory of exploring well-being, offers a philosophical and practical possibility to realising well-being and education. Moreover, there is a surprisingly common consensus on urging for cultivating virtues in Eudaimonism, positive psychology and SDT theory. Kristjánsson holds that character education should be necessary if people recognise that create good character is fundamental to human flourishing (Kristjánsson, 2015, p. 20). Therefore, I will argue that neo-Aristotelian character education plays an important role not only in a clear and robust theoretical framework. However, the multicultural perspective is under-considered in neo-Aristotelian currently and I will explain this viewpoint in the next section.

1. **Neo-Aristotelian character education**
2. **A brief history of character education in the UK and the USA**

To understand the development of character education, prior to the development of discrete disciplinary approaches, it is best to start with a brief history. While character education was ubiquitous in ancient and medieval educational approaches, it suffered something of a setback with the Enlightenment’s (Humean) scepticism towards the objective unification of facts and values and the very idea of an underlying human self that could possess something called ‘character’. Nevertheless, character education continued to be promoted by many thinkers in eighteenth century, such as James Barclay, David Fordyce and John Locke in the UK. They believed that teaching character is more important than teaching intellectual subjects (Arthur, 2002, p. 10). In the nineteenth century, character became increasingly seen as a ‘class-based concept’. Parents in the middle-classes sent their children to private schools to cultivate their characters, trying to consolidate or even elevate further their social status (Arthur, 2002, p. 14). In the Victorian era, character education was highly emphasised, children should learn obedience and fulfil their duties to occupy a predetermined social role (Arthur, 2002, pp. 12-13). In 1905, the British government released the Introduction to Education Code. In this document, the British government emphasises ‘the purpose of public elementary schools is to form and strengthen the character and to develop intelligence.’ This description shows a significant progress towards the secularisation of character because it is closer to ancient Greek than Christian traditions (Arthur, 2014, p. 48). In the early twentieth century, character education grasped the British government’s attention, before WWII eroded some of the optimism about positive human character development (Walker, Roberts & Kristjánsson, 2015, p. 83). In 1997, the White Paper, Excellence in Schools, explicit promulgated that pupils ‘need to develop the strength of character and attitudes to life and work, such as responsibility, determination, care and generosity, which will enable them to become citizens of a successful democratic society’ (DfEE, 1997, p. 10; cf. Kisby, 2017, p. 13). While this British history is potted, as this is not an historical thesis, it shows that character revived in educational discourse at regular intervals for various reasons.

In the USA, nearly every public school had lessons to teach character in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Character education was mostly based on theology there until late nineteenth century (Arthur, 2014, p. 48). By the 1950s, cognitive psychology became more influential. In the 1970s, values clarification and Kohlberg’s moral dilemma method prevailed in the USA, but none of those post-war movements foregrounded character, which was seen as too elusive for scientific study (Lickona, 1993, p. 6). In the 1990s, some scholars called for the retrieval of character education due to prevailing social and educational problems in the USA. Thomas Lickona (1991, p. 5) proposed, for example, that schools should play an important role in fixing the moral problems of the nation. He identified ‘personalism’ (a kind of narcissistic subjectivism) in 1960s and 1970s as one of the reasons for the decline of morality. ‘People take any kind of constraint on their personal freedom as an intolerable restriction of their individuality (Lickona, 1991, p. 9)’. Similar to Lickona’s support for teaching character, Anderson claimed that only a traditional characterological morality could solve the problems which result from progressivism. The success of economy does not lead to harmony in society; only characterological coherence does (Anderson, 1992, p. XXV). Lickona and Anderson’s analyses of social problem in the USA in 1990s may have been insightful at the time, but this way of promoting character education led to the criticism of it being nostalgic and conservative (Walker, Roberts & Kristjánsson, 2015, p. 81).

1. **What is neo-Aristotelian character education?**

Neo-Aristotelian character education intends to modify and expand the original framework of Aristotelian character education. For example, Watts, Fullard and Peterson draw important ideas from Aristotle and try to update Aristotle’s thoughts for modern society (Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021, p. 8). It is also clear that neo-Aristotelian character education is more open to connect with relevant studies from other fields about cultivating virtues, such as positive education or social and emotional learning (Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021, p. 14). Moreover, neo-Aristotelian approach pays attention to different practices of character education, such as Berkowitz, Bier & McCauley’s PRIMED model or McGrath’s prototype of character education (Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021, p. 19). That said, the theoretical basis of neo-Aristotelian character education does not seem to be not as clear as an orthodox historical Aristotelian approach; indeed, researchers such as Watts, Fullard and Peterson (2021) or Sanderse (2012) put more emphasis on current practices of neo-Aristotelian character education and what can be learned from them rather than its theory basis.

The more detailed theoretical basis of neo-Aristotelian character education lies in virtue ethics (as retrieved by Anscombe, 1958, and her successors). I will not delve in more detail into virtue ethics here. Instead, the most complete framework of neo-Aristotelian character education, that from the Jubilee Centre (2017), will be mentioned and some of the differences between Aristotelian character education and neo-Aristotelian character education will be illustrated below.

The Jubilee Centre’s framework for character education draws a clear picture of the way to promote flourishing individuals and society. There are four ‘building blocks’ of character in the Jubilee Centre’s framework: intellectual virtues, moral virtues, civic virtues and performance virtues. With these four blocks of virtues and the meta-virtue of practical wisdom, in place, people can stand a better chance of leading a flourishing life. Their neo-Aristotelian model of moral development illustrates different stages of cultivating character clearly. In the beginning, there are two possible groups of children, the ones with early-childhood habituated positive moral traits and ones with less positive traits. It is easier for the first group of children to develop their virtues. Through further moral habituation and the of teaching of virtue knowledge and understanding, this can help internalise children’s virtuous habits. The next step is to cultivate autonomous virtue through critical reflection and autonomous virtue reasoning. Having built the ideal intrinsic motivation, people can demonstrate virtuous actions and practices regularly. The other group of children have not been as fortunate in receiving the proper early education of moral traits, so they lack self-regulation. Fortunately, with the help of practical habituation, self-regulation can be formed. Then, subsequently, with critical reflection, they can ideally move up to the stage of full autonomous virtue There is a last stage called ‘heroic virtue’, it involves supererogatory acts of extraordinary altruism (Jubilee Centre, 2017, pp. 2-7). However, requiring considerable mental and financial resources, this last stage of heroic virtue is rarely seen among the public.

Turning now to the theoretical basis of neo-Aristotelian character education, there no unanimous theory of neo-Aristotelian character education at work in the field of philosophy of education. To better understand the characteristics of neo-Aristotelian character education, it is perhaps most instructive to explore some apparent differences between neo-Aristotelian and Aristotelian character education. First of all, Watts, Fullard and Peterson believe that apart from the small range of character traits mentioned by Aristotle, there are many more virtues that can help people understand what it means to be good and to live a good life in modern society (Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021, p. 9, 17). For example, creativity can help students create new ideas or items. Creativity is a kind of intellectual virtues (in the neo-Aristotelian’s framework), although not explicitly invoked by Aristotle himself. Besides, community awareness and service are taken to be civic virtues. These two kinds of virtues could be helpful for equipping students with the ability to function well in the modern, democratic societies, although again they go beyond the historical Aristotelian framework. From this expansion of understanding of the types and tokens of virtues, it is obvious that in addition to the moral virtues from Aristotle’s own theory and some of his intellectual virtues, some new more liberal elements have been added. Even the intellectual virtues in neo-Aristotelian character education are slightly different from the historical Aristotelian approaches. For instance, creativity, open-mindedness and intellectual awe are seen as intellectual virtues in neo-Aristotelian character education. By contrast, for Aristotle, the intellectual virtues are scientific knowledge, technical knowledge, intuitive reason, practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom. It is thus obvious that some of the types of virtues in neo-Aristotelian character education are different from Aristotle’s original thought, although additions to the system are often left unjustified. It is understandable that some elements of virtues should be transformed to suit modern society, but there is no clear standard of what counts as ‘virtue’ in neo-Aristotelian character education and whether ‘new virtues’ need to be theoretically justified or only empirically grounded (in what most people nowadays would count as virtues). Indeed, there seems to be no limit to the potential proliferation of virtues, as long as it can be argued that they can help students to live flourishing lives, such as by cultivating the virtue of environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, neo-Aristotelian character education understands virtues as being comprised of relevant components that are more specific than in Aristotle’s own analysis: virtue perception, virtue knowledge and understanding, virtue emotion, virtue identity, virtue motivation, virtue reasoning and virtue action and practice (Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021, pp. 9-10). Motivating this classification is the conviction that each component can be taught in different ways. In the favour of neo-Aristotelian character, it must be said that it offers more concrete steps of teaching virtue than Aristotle provided. As Curren (2010, p. 553) points out, the neo-Aristotelian approach to character education supports the interrelationship between habituation, perception, emotion and judgement. These components are taken to be developmentally interrelated.

About the environment/ethos required to conduct character education, Sanderse (2019, p. 411) argues that neo-Aristotelians suggest schools to be the ideal place for students to cultivate virtues. Although Aristotle does not explicitly explain this in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, there are more clues in Book VIII in his *Politics*. Curren suggests that for Aristotle, ‘education is a prerequisite for the practice of virtue, and is thus a matter of public concern’ (Curren, 2010, p. 551). Public schools, as the extension of government’s ways of cultivating ideal citizens, should be the ideal way of teaching virtues. Curren also mentions that in Aristotle’s *Politics*, a person should be virtuous to help achieve the goal of all citizen living the best kind of life in a uniformly organised state. Therefore, while it seems that both Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian character education do view schools as a place to conduct character education, the more communitarian instincts of the neo-Aristotelians open up the possibility of character education becoming one of government’s means to extend its power of controlling citizens. From my point of view, however, it can be seen that Aristotle’s works give space for concern for being either to individuality-focused (based on the *Nicomachean Ethics*) or too collectivist (based on the *Politics*). It shows that both Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian character education may face the same challenge of having to solve the tension between governmental authority and individual autonomy.

For now, the basic framework of neo-Aristotelian has been addressed, however, there is no consideration of multi-culture in those discussion. Those who urges for neo-Aristotelian focus on exploring the types of virtues and the destruction of virtues into segment ideas.

1. **The need for a multicultural perspective in well-being and education: what is missing in neo-Aristotelian character education?**

As I have mentioned from the previous section, neo-Aristotelian character education tries to update Aristotle’s theories. However, those discussion focuses on educational practices and the expansion of the types of virtues. These discussions are practical for schools, but still, the multicultural perspective is missing. Students are from different cultural backgrounds, it is impossible for them to understand virtues in the same ways.

Although there is nearly no multicultural perspective discussion in character education. Educational scholars, for example, John White involves the idea of culture when he talks about students’ well-being. White discusses the roots of the conception of well-being in the UK and explores some crucial aspects which he believes to be highly related to well-being and education. He suggests that the notion of ‘well-being’ in the UK is highly related to Christian tradition. Following God’s will and embracing morality are deeply rooted in the British’s mindset, and they become the essential element of human flourishing in the UK (White, 2011, p. 17). This view shows that people’s conception of well-being is deeply intertwined with tradition. But tradition, like culture, are changing through times. White holds a pessimistic attitude toward culture.

Cultures may generate worthwhile activities. But they also spawn activities with little value, like playing the lottery, as well as activities with significant disvalue - slavery, children working down mines, pushing drugs (White, 2011, p. 89).

Here, White shows his concern about the uncertainty of culture. Sometimes culture may offer worthwhile activities but sometimes it may not. White does not define ‘culture’ in this argument. I believe ‘culture’ which White means is closer to popular culture. People would seek trendy activities without thinking carefully about activities’ values. Those activities mostly help people to release their stress. In addition, White specified the misconception of well-being from cultures.

Cultures also land us with misleading conceptions of well-being - the hedonist and desire-satisfaction theories already discussed. It is because of culture that so many of us are confused about the good life (White, 2011, p.89).

Indeed, cultures are changing and there is no standard or guidance for this change. But it is the flexibility of culture that constitutes the characteristics of human society and cultures which present the way people live and think. Multiculturalism and interculturalism embraced cultural differences and have their ideal picture of human society. The origin of multiculturalism or interculturalism is to break down the barrier between dominant culture and minority culture. But more importantly, multiculturalism and interculturalism try to build a tolerant civil society. From the perspective of interculturalism, through integration, a common culture could be built (Lu, 2019b, p. 9; Bouchard, 2011, pp. 460-461).

From my point of view, the theory of multiculturalism and interculturalism in sociology may be useful resource in character education. I believe we should take cultural discussion into consideration when we discuss character and virtues theoretically and practically, in order to make the philosophical discourse more fitted in the current circumstance in the education field. Cultural theories have their strength in observing the interactions between different groups among the society. Although multicultural education currently does not pay attention to character education either. The connection between multicultural education and civic education (or citizenship education) is more common, for example, professor James A. Banks’ (2020) book *Diversity, Transformative Knowledge, and Civic Education: Selected Essays*. Also, diversity has been involved in civic education’s theories as well (as we can see in Andrew Peterson’s (2011) *Civic republicanism and civic education: The education of citizens*). Compared to multicultural education and civic education, character education mostly focuses on cultivating an individual’s virtues. To complicate matters, however, there has been a long-standing dispute about the relationship between character education and citizenship education. Some scholars, such as Suissa (2015) and Boyd (2011), hold pessimistic viewpoints towards character education as being corrosive of the ideals of citizenship. They believe that character education is individualistic and socially reactionary and that it potentially damages the progress and conduct of citizenship education. This essay is not about the dispute between character education and citizenship education, I will not delve into this discussion more. However, from the observation of the development of neo-Aristotelian character education and the relation between civic education and multicultural education, it is obvious that there is not enough multicultural consideration in character education. Sussia and Boyd’s viewpoints of character education also bring about the concern of character education that character education is depart from the society and community.

**D. Back to Aristotle: Is Aristotle multicultural?**

To involve multicultural perspective within neo-Aristotelian character education, it may be an interesting way to talk about whether Aristotle has multicultural perspective in his virtue theory. Generally, Aristotle does not hold multicultural perspective because he has no sense of multicultural in his time. His idea of eudaimonia even excludes some group of people, such as women and slaves. However, from Aristotle’s thought of civic virtue, it offers the possibilities of diversity. Justice as an example, is different for a ruler and for a subject. Aristotle also writes that ‘there cannot be a single excellence common to all the citizens’ ([1276b 34] Aristotle, 1995, p. 91). Civic virtue varies from person to person due to the agent’s role. Although, Aristotle considers these to be connected to the role of the individual (e.g. student, mother, teacher) rather than an individual’s ethnicity or cultural background, it can be seen as a space for weaving multicultural considerations into character education. Furthermore, regarding the variation from place to place, Aristotle points out that political constitutions are various, so good citizens must be of various kinds as well ([1278a13] Aristotle, 1995, pp. 95-96). It is the form of political constitution which decides the kind of good citizen. There are many more similar viewpoints from Aristotle, it seems to be possible for the consideration of multicultural perspective in Aristotle’s theory.

Moreover, I support that Aristotle’s idea of ‘golden mean’ and ‘*phronesis’* offers the way of the need for adding a multicultural perspective in character education. First of all, if virtue’s standard is different from person to person, it is necessary for multicultural consideration in deciding the best from of virtue for every student. Secondly, *phronesis* (practical wisdom) involves high level reflective thinking. The learning and expressing style of students should be considered in it as well. There are some studies from psychology have paid attention to individual differences (for example, Fowers et al. 2021), they built the model of STRIVE-4 which based on Aristotle’s theory to testify the validity of Aristotle’s theory. The psychological point of view shows the greater attention of neo-Aristotelian character education. However, a cultural perspective is still needed.

1. **Conclusion**

This paper introduces the fundamental theories of well-being and argues that neo-Aristotelian character education is one of the most concrete and essential way to cultivate students’ virtues and help them to achieve their flourishing lives. However, compared to multicultural education and civic education, the consideration of multicultural perspective currently lacks in neo-Aristotelian character education. A multicultural perspective is essentially important because we are now living in a multicultural, global society. Different culture groups of students are at school and their styles of performing character should be noticed. As well-being education has considered multi-culture is one of the crucial parts in pursuing a flourishing life, neo-Aristotelian character education should weave more multicultural consideration as well. If it is possible to involve multicultural perspective within Aristotle’s own thoughts, it may offer more possibilities for neo-Aristotelian character to be more multicultural and applicable in modern society. This paper offers a start point of supporting the need for multicultural perspective in neo-Aristotelian character education. Further discussion about including a more specific multicultural perspective, such as the theory of multiculturalism and interculturalism in sociology or social psychology into neo-Aristotelian character education should be studied in the future.

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