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Dynamics of teacher non-verbal communication on secondary schools students' character development in the South West region of Cameroon

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Abstract

The prevalence of character crises and antisocial behaviour among secondary school students in Cameroon and the South West Region in particular, has raised significant concerns. This work explores the influence of teacher non-verbal communication as a component of hidden curriculum practices on students' character development in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. In an attempt to answer the question: "How does teacher non-verbal communication influence the character development of secondary school students in the South West Region of Cameroon?", data were collected from 400 students and 30 teachers through questionnaires and interviews respectively. A 96.25% response rate was achieved. Chi-square analysis was conducted to assess relationships between teacher non-verbal communication and character development, while qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into this relationship.Quantitative findings revealed significant relationships between teacher non-verbal communication (chi-square value = 62,104, p < 0.05) and students' character development. Qualitative data indicated that positive non-verbal behaviours from teachers, such as encouraging gestures, eye contact and body language, fostered a supportive classroom environment that enhanced student engagement and motivation, made students feel valued and respected, significantly impacting their self-esteem and willingness to participate.

Keywords:

Introduction

Indiscipline in Cameroon schools today is a problem as it affects general school performance, compromise character development and the acquisition and strengthening of virtues (qualities of being good), values (ideals and concepts), attitudes and the capacity to make wise choices for a well-rounded life and a thriving society. It is in form of violence (fighting, knifing, verbal or physical abuse), drugs (alchohol and hard substance in take, estimated at 32%), crime, cultism, sexual abuse and promiscuity and pornography and rape, cheating (general academic dishonesty such as exam fraud/malpractice, lies telling, absenteeism, bribery and corruption), insubordination, which constitute disobedience to hierarchy, stealing, collective misconduct and gangsterism, lesson boycott and late coming (UNESCO Report 2019, the UN office on drug and crime, 1996) .

The Cameroon government has implemented various strategies to inculcate and maintain character education in schools. These efforts are supported by recent circulars and memos and at school level, community engagement initiatives and extracurricular activities that promote civic responsibility, teamwork and leadership. Examples include legal instruments such as the Constitution of Cameroon which recognises the right to education which supports character education indirectly. The government has established policies that emphasise moral and civic education as integral to the curriculum.

In addition, the ratification of several international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 28 of this convention emphasises the right to education and the development of children's personalities. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which reinforces the right to education and promotes the development of children's personalities and talents. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of this declaration underline the right to education that promotes the development of the child's personality and talents; this right being for everyone. Further commitment is demonstrated by the circulars and memos issue, such as circular No. 0001/MINEDUB/SG/DAF/SE of January 2023 emphasises the integration of moral education in the school curriculum to foster civic values among students. Memo No. 0023/MINEDUB/SG/DAF/SE of March 2023, Outlines the importance of community service projects as part of the educational experience, encouraging schools to engage students in local development initiatives. Circular No. 0045/MINEDUB/SG/DAF/SE of May 2023, provides guidelines for schools to implement extracurricular activities that promote leadership and teamwork. Memo No. 0078/MINEDUB/SG/DAF/SE of July 2023, encourages schools to collaborate with local organisations to enhance character education through community engagement. Circular No. 0090/MINEDUB/SG/DAF/SE of September 2023, stresses the importance of integrating cultural education into the curriculum, promoting respect for local traditions and values.

Finally, the 1995 education forum and 1998 education law (Law N° 98/004 of April, 1998), tacitly emphasises the importance of character development, with six out of the nine educational objectives on character development. Paradoxically, character as dimension of

education is apparently the most neglected when compared to the attention given cognitive and psychomotor dimensions in the explicit curriculum. With this much done the hidden curriculum elements, one of which is teachers' non-verbal behaviour, may be a contributor to the situation at hand, given the teacher as a model. The hidden curriculum, otherwise the implicit, unwritten, invisible, unintended, latent and informal curriculum, is that aspect of the school curriculum that is ignored by the school yet it plays an important role given its strong potency, though latent, in the transmission and development of learner's character and general behaviour in school and direction of their lives (Gunio& Fajardo, 2018; Tambo, 2012).

According to Gunawan et al (2018), teachers' habits and behaviours, the school climate and students themselves are part of a hidden curriculum that can influence and shape the learner's character. This study explores the influence ofteacher non-verbal communication on character development of secondary school students in Fako division, South West region, Cameroon. It is hoped that the findings will give an insight into how teacher non-verbal communication could help improve on pro-social behaviour in schools.

Historical Background

The historical evolution of education from ancient to pre-industrial societies showcases significant developments in pedagogical approaches, moral foundations, and societal roles. Education was largely priestly, with a focus on moral and ethical foundations, particularly in Mesopotamia and China. In Mesopotamia, legal systems were advanced, while Chinese education emphasised duty and moral sensitivity, fostering harmonious societal relationships (Mukherjee, 2006).

A similar trend spans through other ancient civilisations and education focused on bringing up men of character. In the Mayan civilisation (1800 BC to 900 AD)character training was integral to their education, reinforcing self-discipline through practices like continence and abstinence (Restall and Solari, 2017). the Indian civilisation (2nd millennium BC), Higher education included teachings on Righteousness Science alongside philosophy, focusing on character outcomes, albeit through subjects like morality rather than explicit character education (Hamilton, 2007).In the Hebrew civilisation (established around 1000 BC), Character training was essential, aiming to instill high ideals of wisdom and virtue, with religious literature used toreinforce moral adherence (Zvi, (2009). In Greek civilisation (1400-1100 BC), education was designed to cultivate civic virtues, emphasising community responsibility(Wasson, 2017).

In Ancient Roman education evolved through five distinct levels, beginning with moral education from the paterfamilias, progressing through stages such as Ludus, Grammaticus, Rhetor and finally, Philosophy. Each level played a crucial role in shaping the moral and intellectual capacities of citizens.In summary, the educational frameworks of ancient civilizations were closely intertwined with their religious, moral, and societal structures. The emphasis on character development, civic responsibility, and philosophical inquiry has

profoundly influenced the evolution of education, laying foundational principles that continue to resonate in contemporary educational philosophies.

Beginning in the mid-18th century, the first industrial revolution (1760-1840) marked a shift from hand production to steam and water power, instigating significant technological, socio-economic and cultural changes. Education, work, and leisure became interrelated, fostering a work culture that valued family cohesion and self-improvement. Idleness was scorned and new policing efforts aimed to control public behaviour. Narratives emphasised the virtue of hard work, highlighting stories of individuals uplifting themselves through diligence (Brian Duignam eds Adam Augusty, 2020).

As men worked away from home for economic security, parental guidance declined, leading to societal disorder exemplified by the French Revolution (1789-1799) and strikes in Britain (1831, 1834) (White, 1918). Philosophers like Locke, Diderot, and Rousseau proposed social contracts to redefine government relationships (Tozer, 1895). This period also saw increased secularism and skepticism towards religion, influenced by earlier philosophical thought (Duingan, 2020; Dulles, 2020; Ratzinger, 2011).

The authority of hereditary power and passive acceptance of social order were increasingly questioned, with common people viewed as lazy and cowardly. By 1800, a new society emerged from coffeehouses and the print media, promoting ideas of freedom, equality, and individualism. This era saw the rise of democracy and a renewed interest in classical scholarship and exploration. The Enlightenment introduced moral philosophy, focusing on the balance between happiness and virtue (Singer, 1998; eds Augusty et al., 2020). However, the resurgence of Sophism brought relativism and skepticism, with a shift from seeking truth to winning arguments (Kerferd, 2020).

Thus, it is apparent that, though there was no formal curriculum for character education, materials like music and print media promoted virtues such as hard work while condemning idleness. Activities like reading and public lectures aimed to foster personal and family cohesion. However, economic changes eroded family ties, leading to immorality, social injustices, and the rise of agnosticism and atheism, prompting legislative reforms under the social contract (Singer, 1998; eds Augusty et al., 2020).

The Second Industrial Revolution, spanning from 1870 to 1914, marked a significant shift from agrarian to industrial societies, characterized by technological advancements and the establishment of technical standards (Stearns, 2013). This period also saw transformative changes in education, emphasizing a more empathetic approach to teaching. The monitorial system, developed by Joseph Lancaster, emerged, where older, more proficient students assisted younger peers, thereby fostering a collaborative learning environment (Meyer, 2009). This era was influenced by educational theorists like Rousseau and Pestalozzi, who advocated for child-centered education that prioritized the natural inclinations of children over rigid disciplinary structures. Pestalozzi proposed an "organic" model of education

integrating intellect, manual skills and character development, emphasizing activities that stimulated moral actions and practical experiences (Cubberley, 1920).

Previously, education was largely church-controlled, focusing on virtue rather than practical societal needs. However, the Second Industrial Revolution ushered in public education systems, with a marked reduction in church influence and a rise in state authority over education (Marty, 2014). National school systems began to emphasize sciences and modern languages, reflecting the demands of an industrialised society.

Despite retaining classical studies, including Latin and Greek, character education became less prominent in curricula. The defeat of Germany in the Napoleonic Wars highlighted the dangers of individualism and prompted a reevaluation of educational priorities toward fostering nationalism and collective responsibility (Lukes, 2020; Kohn, 2020). Reforms initiated in the early 19th century aimed to integrate character education into the curriculum, particularly for secondary education, although this integration remained largely implicit (Lukes, 2020). Overall, the Second Industrial Revolution significantly influenced educational practices, balancing the need for skill development with moral and character education.

The third industrial or digital revolution, marked a shift towards lateral thinking in problem solving, beginning in 1947 with the invention of the first transistor and advancing to digital technology (Vale, 2016). This transition from analogue to digital electronics transformed social relations, embedding equality in global frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Education became a focal point, spurring the creation of schools, colleges and a doubling of universities to meet the demands of a growing high-income population capable of supporting extended education for their children. Urbanisation and immigration presented challenges, including inner-city decay and disrupted families, necessitating an educational response that accommodated diverse needs (Swink et al., 2020).

In Japan, educational reforms initiated in 1947 with the Fundamental Law of Education aimed to reduce state control and promote teacher initiative. The curriculum evolved to reflect democratic values and align with economic growth, emphasising moral education and child interest over rigid discipline (1950s-60s). However, despite diverse student backgrounds, upper secondary and university curricula remained uniform, prompting calls for reform. By 1984, the advisory council advocated for greater individualisation in education, with further recommendations in 1987 emphasising the need to enhance moral education alongside other reforms.

In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, ongoing violence and social unrest may indicate that current educational curricula inadequately address values such as justice, fairness, and equity. This neglect of character education has contributed to inequality and injustice, overshadowed by a focus on functional curricula amid job scarcity. Coined by Schwab (2016), the Fourth Industrial Revolution began around 2014, marked by smart factories and new technologies that transform social behaviours, cultural symbols and economic systems (Schwab, 2018). This era merges digital, biological and physical innovations, altering how value is created,

exchanged and distributed through advancements like artificial intelligence, genome editing and robotics.

The implications for education are profound, affecting school communities, interpersonal relationships, and character development. Challenges such as anti-social behaviour, income disparity, environmental degradation and social unrest contrast sharply with ideals of equality and dignity (WEF, 2016; Marshall, 2015; International Trade Union Confederation). The World Economic Forum's collaboration (2014-2016) identified key principles that resonate across cultures: human dignity, equity, and a common good that transcends individual interests, underscoring the need for stewardship (Mergenthaler, 2016). These values are crucial as educational systems adapt to the rapid changes of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The ministries of basic, secondary, and higher education oversee the two educational systems (English and French speaking systems) in Cameroon. They jointly prescribe curricula across all educational levels. The curriculum is shaped by the 1998 education law, a product of the 1995 educational forum. Implementation often relies on a "curriculum manifest" issued by the relevant ministry; however, actual practices may differ due to teacher personal styleand the socialisation processesin classrooms. These interactions between teachers and students, contribute to undocumented aspects of learning that occur across all levels of education (Azimphor&Khalilzade, 2015; Bloom, 1981; Posner, 2004; Margolis, 2001).

The 1998 education law underscores the importance of socialisation in implementing character education, which is essential for student development. Despite a general consensus on the need for moral education, perspectives on its implementation vary widely with different views on the concepts of Curriculum and moral education among different stakeholders in Cameroon (Tambo, 2000; Tambo &Ndongko, 2000). Subjects such as citizenship education have been added but are frequently not mandatory, limiting their potential impact on all students. Hence, character education is universally integrated into the curriculum.

The conflicting views on moral education in schools, shaped by socio-political and religious factors. Proponents of religious studies argue for inclusion of religion in the curriculum, while advocates for citizenship education emphasise civic engagement. Tambo (2000) suggests an eclectic approach to moral education, integrating diverse sources to create a more effective curriculum.In conclusion, the Cameroonian educational system faces significant challenges with regrads to the implementation of character education. Thus,the interplay of formal curricula and hidden curricula such as teacher non-verbal education, along with varied approaches to character education, highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that prioritise both academic achievement and character development to prepare students for a rapidly evolving future.

Information also reveals a paradoxical situation in Cameroon as though with a highlyreligiouscomposition of its citizens, there exists a remarkable level of anti-social behaviours that contribute to a crisis of character within society.Below is the social contexts surrounding Cameroon's educational system.

Despite ongoing concerns about drug and substance abuse in Cameroon, started 30 years ago, with a UN study by Wamsi et al. (1996) revealing the following demographics for abusers: average age of drug abusers was 29, 15% under 20, 60% unmarried, male abusers 83%, 74% identified as Christians, 42% had primary education, 13% were university graduates, 22% of abusers were unaware of the health risks associated with substance use, 88% of abusers understanding the consequences, a significant number believe quitting is easy, raising questions about the effectiveness of preventive measures. The findings suggest failures in value transmission and education systems. Schools in Cameroon exist within this context.

In summary, the social contexts influencing Cameroon's educational system are characterized by high levels of religiosity and literacy, yet they are simultaneously plagued by considerable anti-social behaviours, including violence, corruption, and abuse. These challenges underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the underlying societal issues affecting both the educational environment and the broader community.

Perculiar to schools in the South West region of Cameroon the following reports, constitute anti-social behavioural concerns; risky sexual behaviours despite knowledge of sexual health and consequences (Nkuo-Akenji et al., 2020; WHO, 2021; Cameroon National AIDS Control Committee, 2021), a stigmatisation by many students towards individuals living with the HIV/AIDS virus in Fako Division in the South West Region (United Nations Children's Fund-UNICEF, 2021;Nkuo-Akenji et al., 2020), no correlation between students with higher level knowledge and safer sexual practices (Cameroon Tribune, 2022), a growing prevalence of substance abuse including alcohol and drugsamong secondary school students in the south west region of Cameroon; a correlation between substance abuse and increased incidence of violence among students in the South West Region of Cameroon (Tchuenche et al., 2022)*:*

> *bullying and violence in schools,contributing to negative learning environment, school drop-out and students mental health (Education, Cameroon, 2021;Ngwa et al., 2021; Fonkwo et al., 2022), exacerbated academic dishonesty due to high pressures for high academic performance and high grades, undermine the integrity of the academic system (Ministry of Secondary Education, Cameroon, 2021; Nkuo-Akenji et al., 2020). Such behavioural issues underscore the necessity for comprehensive interventions that address not only the educational needs of students but also their social and emotional well-being.*

Character development in the evolution of education in Cameroon

Education in Cameroon can be classified into various eras. Each of these eras, reflected distinct goals and philosophies, shaping the curriculum and character development methods employed (MacOjong, 2008). The evolution of education has had lasting implications for the values and civic responsibilities instilled in students. Formal education in Cameroon can be categorized into three periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. It was started in 18884 by Christian Missionaries. Prior to this era, existed indigenous education (Shu, 2000).

Indigenous education emphasized values such as hospitality, moral integrity and a deep understanding of life, with the aim of fostering harmony between individuals (Noyoo, 2007; Eyong, 2007; Mbuagbaw, 1984). This education was rooted in philosophies like communalism and communitarianism, which stressed total human development and community service (Simeon, 2018; MacOjong, 2008). Students learned the importance of empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect through communal activities such as farming and celebrations. Colonial powers viewed indigenous education as conservative, aiming to impose their own cultural values through imitation and instruction. This perspective sitd with the belief that character is learned rather than inherent, positioning teachers as critical transmitters of knowledge and values (Shu, 2000). The German colonial period emphasized vocational training and assimilation into Teutonic culture, while the British and French focused on preparing Cameroonians for self-governance, guided by policies from various international bodies (MacOjong, 2008).

Within the British context, the Phelps-Stokes Fund commissioned a feasibility study on education in West Africa, including British Cameroon which concluded that Africans were perceived as lazy and intellectually inferior, necessitating character education to empower them for problem-solving and manual labour (MacOjong, 2008; Fonkeng n.d.). In response, the British colonial office established the Advisory Committee on Native Education to adapt educational practices to the cultural context and focus on character building.The curriculum included religious instruction, vernacular language and character education, supported by a sufficient number of qualified native teachers.

The French colonial education system in Cameroon was highly centralized, designed to degrade the indigenous population and ensure acceptance of their imposed education. This structure, guided from Paris, enforced a uniform curriculum across schools, focusing heavily on the French language and vocational training (Tambo &Ndongko, 2000). The curriculum aimed to develop intelligence, morality and physical strength to foster social and economic progress. In Post-independence, Cameroon teacher training initially emphasized character, this focus diminished over time, as the rigorous standards of the English colonial period were relaxed, undermining the quality of teacher preparation and the incorporation of character education in the curriculum (Tambo, 2000).

Character education encompasses its purpose or goals, strategies, approaches, and requirements (JCCV, 2017). Educational goals, as defined by Posner (2004), describe expected learning outcomes over time and across subjects, guiding the teaching-learning process. Such goals may include, critical thinking, self-discipline and civic responsibilities. These goals stem from educational aims focused on personal growth, socialisation and economic productivity. While character outcomes relate to these schemas, they are primarily associated with socialisation. Additionally, Bloom (1956) identifies three learning domains: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective, with character outcomes most closely linked to the affective domain. The main concepts discussed in here, are teacher non-verbal communication and character, with emphasis on character as a key educational goal.

Teachers' non-verbal behaviours encompass individual differences in communication, such as body language, attire and time management (Euson, 2012; Burgoon &Bacue, 2003).

Character is framed as an outcome of teacher non-verbal communication and defined in various ways. The Center for Curriculum Redesign (2015) describes character as a set of qualities that shape an individual's engagement with the world. Anderson (2000) defines it as moral excellence and firmness, while Chowdhury (2016) identifies good character with virtues such as wisdom, honesty, kindness, and self-discipline. Research by Hamlin, Wynn, and Bloom (as cited in Hojota, 2014) suggests that a preference for prosocial behaviour is both universal and innate, manifesting even before language acquisition and higher-order reasoning develop. This aligns with the idea that certain virtues are widely valued across diverse backgrounds—religious, cultural, economic, and social—because they underpin pro-social behaviour.According to these views, virtues are interchangeable with character, collectively forming its essence and suggesting the selection of virtues that may be considered more universal. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017) categorises these qualities into four types: religious and philosophical, intellectual, civic, and performance virtues. Ultimately, teacher non-verbal development can trigger character development through the interaction between teachers and students.

Theoretical Framework

This paper was anchored on Kohlberg's theories of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 17); and Bronfenbrenner bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). These sample theories from the above-mentioned categories will be reviewed.

Lawrence Kohlberg expanded on Piaget's two-*stage model of moral development by proposing a three-level framework: preconventional, conventional, and post-conventional morality.* At the preconventional stage of moral development behaviouris focused on the individual's perspective with decisions primarily limited by the potential consequences of actions. It has two stages. At the first stage, children (ages 2-6) focus on avoiding punishment from authority figures. To them, right and wrong is defined in terms of individual needs. Obedience is to avoid disapproval, reflecting a fear of punishment rather than an understanding of morality (Niato, 2013). At the second satge, children recognise that different individuals have different viewpoints. Moral reasoning is based on self-interest and the pursuit of rewards. Decisions are made to satisfy personal needs, leading to a more reciprocal understanding of justice (Naito, 2013; Fleming, 2005).

Generally, children at this level have not yet adopted or internalised society's conventions regarding what is right or wrong, hence their focus is largely on external consequences that certain actions may bring. As such, in terms of character education, the authority figure (the teacher) and the society (classroom culture, peer reaction) here is critical in helping the learner internalise certain rules that will help him or her develop conforming behaviour or socialise properly. This entails community (class/peer) rules and their encounters or experiences with the discharge of those rules. These encounters may help the learners at this

stage, set a foundation upon which certain values are built and internalised leading to positive or negative out comes, virtuous or vicious men. The second level is the conventional level.

At the conventional level of morality, moral values are described in terms of maintenance of interpersonal relations, group, societal national consensus and expectations. This level consists of stage 3 with relationships on mutualinterpersonal expectationsand interpersonal conformity and stage 4, which is the social system and conscience. It's the early adolescence level.

In stage three, children (ages 7-12) focus on satisfying the expectations of their social groups. They seek to preserve rules that lead to predictable behaviour, emphasizing conformity and the importance of being "nice." Moral development is centered on living up to social expectations and the influence of peer opinions (Naito, 2013). Stagefour typically occurs between ages 10 and 15. Children begin to frame their moral beliefs in terms of societal norms and laws. They consider whether their actions are consistent with the laws of society, understanding that the purpose of laws is to maintain social order. A morally good action is one that is legally and socially approved, reflecting a growing awareness of the collective norms that govern behaviour (Naito, 2013).

The implication in terms of character development is that, students will draw conclusions, from the consideration of diverse reactions from many more persons, rather than just from that one person who is seen as the authority figure and whose views must be respected to avoid punishment or gain some rewards. The issue here is that crowd effect. Where the peers assume that an adult, perhaps the teacher is wrong in his or her directives, they may develop some undesirable acts such as disobedience or defiance (Niato, 2013; Fleming, 2005).The purpose for which the young seek to observe the law implies that, the young have a conception of the function of the law – to maintain order. Thus, society is considered as a whole when making judgments. A morally good action is that which is legally approved, if not, customarily approved by most people, even those people the young person doesn't know.

Cconspiracies may become the basis of operations may guide and direct young person's action when the majority determines the course of action. Students may even take decisions without full understanding of the situation. The crowd is not always right but may overwhelm the rule of law and justice, in case of mob action.The child may be caught between making a judgement on whether it is the rule against mob justice that is right or the opinion/action of the mob. This is another dilemma. Often the statement 'everyone is doing it' is the justifying or reference code for even the wrong actions taken by young persons. This statement might have led to bullying, violence in schools, robbery, rape, assault sexual and drug clubs, created in schools and the consequences are suffered by the individual not by the crowd. Wrong may become a norm in a society. This leads to the development of negative morality. There is the failure to see that truth and justice have to be neutral. On the other hand, the law-abiding person becomes an asset to his community, as resources are not spent on reparations due to disorder caused by the persons. The persons develop virtuous qualities such as respect for individuals, loyalty and service to the community, as he grows seeking to maintain the laws and carry out his responsibilities to the community.

Kohlberg's post-conventional morality (stages 5 and 6) emphasises the importance of universal principles in moral decision-making. Individuals at this level navigate ethical dilemmas by prioritising their internalised values over societal laws, showcasing a sophisticated understanding of justice and individual rights. This stage highlights the capacity of individuals to challenge societal norms for the greater good, contributing to moral progress within society. At stage 5, individuals (typically 12 years and above)recognise that laws and regulations exist for the mutual benefit of all citizens. They understand that unjust laws should be challenged and changed; start to appreciate the diversity of values, opinions and beliefs within society (Kohlberg, 1981). This means that students at this stage will not conform to any teacher non-verbal behaviour that doesn't tolerate contrary views.

At this stage 6, individuals internalise universal ethical principles to such an extent that they become inherent guides for their behaviour. This stage is marked by a strong commitment to justice, which may lead individuals to violate laws or take significant risks to uphold their moral beliefs (Kohlberg, 1981).There is the willingness to prioritise ethical beliefs over societal norms, demonstrating the complexity of moral reasoning at the post-conventional level. At this level, a student may disagree with the teacher non-verbal instructions such as an appeal to hug or look straight into the teacher's eye, if he or she thinks it doesn't meet ethical standards. A morally good action at this stage could be a belief in democraticprinciple and values of capitalism, seasoned by the belief in the sacredness of humanlife and concern for the environment. Thus, the person's belief at this stage is not only guided by customary practices but also by universal principles. These universalprinciples may cause the person to occasionally disagree with customary practices.

Somewhat later in his career, Kohlberg described stage 7, the "**mystic stage",** which he regarded as meta-ethical: in this stage, individuals become capable of problematising any action or intention by asking themselves why it might be moral. This implies that, the can analyse and interpret teacher non-verbal and its hidden intention.The National Scientific Council on Developing Child, Harvard University (2009) notes that young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development – intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioural and moral. Hence the development of the character aspects of the child such as attitude, are based on a dynamic interaction between the child's physical and cognitive structures and the nature of his environments. This justifies the choice of Bronfenbrenner Bioecological systems theory. Besides, the bioecological theory is an important model to explain humandevelopment and the subjective understanding of the bioecological model could be very beneficial to educational stakeholders (teachers, leaders, policymakers and students) in creating better learning environments (Mulisa, 2019). Also, the theory suggests the impact of the interrelationship between teacher non-verbal behaviour on human development. Hence, these variables may not only discretely or unilaterally affect the child's human development.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested that the environment of the child is a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next. These structures are organised in order of how much of an impact they have on a child. According to Mutiara (2020); Velez-Agosto et al (2017); and Johnson (2008) these structures consist of five layers; the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. Because the five systems are interrelated, the influence of one system on a child's development depends on its relationship with the others.

The microsystem is the foundational layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, encompassing elements that directly interact with the child in their immediate environment. Mutiara et al. (2020) emphasize that the microsystem includes everyday environments such as home, school, and neighborhoods, characterized by two-way relationships between key components such as parents, friends, classmates, and teachers with pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships experienced by a developing individual within specific settings, shaped by the distinct characteristics of those involved (Panopoulos and Drossinou-Korea, 2020; Johnson, 2008)

According to this theory, a child's engagement with these elements fosters learning and various aspects of human development, including moral development. These interactions can be viewed as socialization, during which learners acquire knowledge, skills, and character traits essential for effective participation in society. Thus, this layer supports the classroom-related aspects of the hidden curriculum such as teacher non-verbal communication that either promote or hinder character development.

Eamon (2001) notes that children from low-income backgrounds often face peer rejection and conflict, leading to stigmatisation and isolation; implying that where a child who sees teacher non-verbal behaviour as stigmatising, children may recline to isolation. Additionally, Eamon (2001) highlights that physical attributes, health issues, and malnutrition can further restrict participation in peer activities, negatively impacting a child's socioemotional development and leading to relationships that encourage undesirable behaviours. This implies that teachers need to be sensitive to their non-verbal communication.

The mesosystem is the second layer of Bronfenbrenner's model, emphasising the relationships and interactions among two or more microsystems. According to Eamon (2001) the mesosystem encompasses the relationships among various settings of the microsystems, such as the child's school and family, or peers and siblings. A critical aspect of the mesosystem is reciprocity, which refers to the mutual influence between the child and their environment. A child who finds a teacher's non-verbal behaviour supportive, may increased participation in activities that involve that teacher. This may influence his or her character development.

The quality of these interrelationships between the settings in the microsystem significantly impacts a child's development. Positive interactions, such as supportive relationships between parents and teachers, can enhance a child's character development and attitudes (Tudge et al., 2009). Conversely, negative interactions, such as conflict between parents and teachers, may

hinder development. Panopoulos and Drossinou-Korea (2020) highlight the importance of these interconnections, noting that they can influence student learning paths.

The exosystem is another layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, comprising the broader social structures that indirectly influence a child's development. The exosystem consists of settings that influence the child, even if the child does not participate in them directly. For instance, changes in the teachers' home such as matrimonial problems can have significant emotional and developmental impacts on the child. The exosystem encompasses events and decisions over which the child has no control but that nonetheless affect their development (Mutiara et al., 2020; Panopoulos&Drossinou-Korea, 2020; Johnson, 2008), hence the student may have no control over a teacher's non-verbal behaviour yet is controlled by it.

In the context of education, the exosystem includes external factors such as state regulations, economic conditions, and community values that shape the school environment. These factors can influencestudent indirectly by influencing teachers, affecting the overall school culture and the experiences of learners.The macrosystem represents the largest and most distant layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. It encompasses cultural patterns, values, ideologies, overarching beliefs, political systems, economic structures, and educational policies that can significantly influence a child's development.

For instance, laws regarding educational access for marginalised groups, such as students with disabilities or young mothers, are part of the macrosystem. Such policies and perspectives or reactions of teachers in its implementation can indirectly affect a child's educational experience and social interactions and consequently character. Mutiara et al. (2020) emphasise that the macrosystem influences development across all other systems, acting as a filter through which individuals interpret their experiences.

The chronosystem is the fifth layer which focuses on the dimension of time and how it relates to changes in a child's environment (Tudge et al. ,2009). In a school context, the chronosystem includes variations in curriculum, changes in teaching staff, and shifts in student demographics over the years. For example, a newly established school may face different challenges and opportunities compared to a long-established institution. Johnson (2008) points out that the developmental changes occurring in the school community can significantly impact the learning experiences of students.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory emphasises that all these layers operate simultaneously, influencing one another and shaping the child's development. The interaction between systems is crucial for understanding the complexities of human growth. For instance, a child's experiences in the microsystem are affected by the relationships within the mesosystem, which are, in turn, influenced by broader factors in the exosystem and macrosystem.The theory illustrates that a child's development is not solely determined by their immediate environment but is a product of the intricate web of relationships and influences that encompass their life. The chronosystem adds a temporal dimension, showing

how these influences evolve over time and contribute to the individual's development.This understanding of the interactions between the systems underscores the importance of fostering positive relationships and supportive environments that promote healthy development across all layers of influence.

Non-verbal communication and character development

Related studies on non-verbal communication and character development include the work of Guesnon (1993). Guesnon (1993) conducted a study titled "The Impact of Non-Verbal Communication on Students in Multicultural Environments," focusing on how non-verbal cues influence student interactions and learning. The aim of the research was to explore the role of these cues in facilitating or hindering engagement among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Utilising a qualitative research design, Guesnon observed and interviewed approximately 100 secondary school students representing various cultures. Data collection involved observational checklists and semi-structured interviews, providing insights into the dynamics of non-verbal communication in the classroom.The findings revealed that non-verbal communication significantly affects student interactions, with cultural differences often leading to misunderstandings. Positive non-verbal cues, such as gestures and facial expressions, were found to enhance student engagement, while negative cues created barriers to effective communication. The study concluded that educators need to be aware of these dynamics in multicultural settings and recommended incorporating multicultural training into teacher professional development to improve classroom interactions and facilitate better understanding among students.

In contrast, the study on the hidden curriculum and its implications for character development among secondary school students in the South West Region of Cameroon emphasises implicit social norms and values rather than communication styles. While Guesnon's work highlights the importance of non-verbal communication in fostering engagement, the hidden curriculum study investigates role of unspoken rules and expectations in shaping ethical behaviour and character development within a specific cultural context.

Methodologically, Guesnon employed qualitative methods, whereas the hidden curriculum study uses both a quantitative and qualitative approaches, surveying 400 students through questionnaires and interviewing 30 teachers. This difference in population and sample highlights the distinct focuses of the studies, with Guesnon concentrating on non-verbal cues in multicultural classrooms and the hidden curriculum research examining broader social influences on character development.

Instrumentation in Guesnon's study included observational checklists and interviews to assess non-verbal communication dynamics, while the hidden curriculum study likely utilizes different tools to explore implicit educational norms. In terms of findings, Guesnon identified

significant influences of non-verbal communication on student engagement, whereas the hidden curriculum study probably uncovers how implicit norms shape character traits.

Ultimately, Guesnon concluded that effective non-verbal communication is essential for enhancing learning and recommended training for teachers to recognise and utilise these cues. In contrast, the hidden curriculum study emphasises understanding implicit educational practices to foster character development. Thus, while both studies address communication within educational contexts, they focus on different dimensions: engagement through non-verbal cues versus character formation through implicit norms.

In a study titled "The impact on Nonverbal Communication on Students' Educational achievements", Khan (2017) examined the impact of nonverbal communication on students' educational achievements, with emphasis on the role nonverbal cues in conveying thoughts, behaviours, emotions, ideas, and skills essential to the teaching-learning process. The study was aimed at determining how these cues affect student engagement and learning outcomes. In this descriptive observational study, Khan (2017), utilised a random sampling method to select 108 teachers from a total of 364 in public schools. Key indicators of nonverbal communication included gestures, postures, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, vocal intonation and aspects of the physical environment such as personal space and physical attractiveness.

Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Z-tests, analysis of variance, and correlation coefficients. The findings revealed that teachers' nonverbal behaviours were largely consistent with their verbal communication, reflecting a unified messaging approach. Additionally, no significant statistical variation was found in nonverbal communication based on gender or among teachers from different institutions. Importantly, the study established a strong relationship between teachers' nonverbal behaviours and students' educational accomplishments, highlighting the critical role these cues play in enhancing learning outcomes. Khan (2017) concluded that effective nonverbal communication is essential for improving student engagement and recommended developing targeted training programmes for teachers to enhance their nonverbal communication skills.

In contrast, the study on the hidden curriculum and its implications for character development among secondary school students in the South West Region of Cameroon focuses on implicit social practices that shape student character and ethical behaviour. The title reflects this emphasis, distinguishing it from Khan's (2017) work. The objectives of the hidden curriculum study include investigating how unspoken rules and expectations influence students' moral, intellectual, performance, and civic virtues, which are integral to overall educational achievement.

In terms of population and sample, the hidden curriculum study targets secondary school students in a specific cultural context, involving 400 students who completed questionnaires and 30 teachers who participated in interviews. This contrasts with Khan's (2017) focus on a sample of 108 teachers from public schools, reflecting a different approach to understanding educational dynamics.

Instrumentation also differs between the two studies. Khan (2017) utilised structured questionnaires and observational methods to assess nonverbal communication dynamics, while the hidden curriculum study likely employs various tools to evaluate implicit educational practices and their effects on character development.The findings of the hidden curriculum study will reveal how implicit norms shape character traits and ethical behavior, in contrast to Khan's (2017) results, which identified a strong correlation between effective nonverbal communication and academic success. While Khan (2017), underscored the importance of nonverbal cues in enhancing learning outcomes, the hidden curriculum study focuses on the broader impact of social norms on student character.

Ultimately, Khan (2017) concluded that effective nonverbal communication is crucial for improving student engagement and recommended targeted teacher training. In contrast, the hidden curriculum study is likely to emphasise the need for educators to recognise and address implicit norms that affect character development, suggesting that schools should incorporate character education programme to foster moral and ethical growth. Thus, while both studies highlight important aspects of education, they differ significantly in focus: Khan's (2017) work concentrates on nonverbal communication and its direct impact on academic performance, whereas the hidden curriculum study explores the influence of implicit norms on character formation.

In the study titled "Nonverbal Behaviour as an Educational Symbolic Mediator in Class," Li and Jiang (2022) explored the role of nonverbal behaviour as an educational symbolic mediator in classroom settings. The research aimed to investigate how nonverbal cues influence communication and learning, specifically addressing questions about the effectiveness of these behaviours in facilitating student engagement and understanding.The study employed a qualitative research design, utilising observations and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 120 students from various educational backgrounds. Data collection involved detailed observations of classroom interactions and interviews to gather insights into students' perceptions of nonverbal behaviors.

The findings indicated that nonverbal behaviors, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language, significantly enhanced communication and learning processes. These cues acted as symbolic mediators, helping to convey meaning and foster a supportive learning environment. The study concluded that educators should be mindful of their nonverbal communication and its impact on student engagement. Recommendations included training for teachers to develop effective nonverbal communication strategies to improve classroom dynamics.

This study differs from the research on the hidden curriculum and its implications for character development among secondary school students in the South West Region of Cameroon in several key aspects. The title of Li and Jiang's (2022) work emphasises nonverbal behavior in educational contexts, while the hidden curriculum study focuses on implicit social norms and their influence on character development.

The objectives of Li and Jiang's (2022) study, center on understanding the immediate effects of nonverbal behavior on communication and learning, whereas the hidden curriculum study aims to explore how unspoken rules and values shape students' moral, intellectual, and civic virtues. This difference in focus reflects distinct research questions, with Li and Jiang (2022), investigating how nonverbal cues facilitate engagement and understanding, while the hidden curriculum study examines the broader implications of social norms on character formation.In terms of population and sample, Li and Jiang's (2022) study involved 120 students from diverse educational backgrounds, providing insights into various classroom interactions. In contrast, the hidden curriculum study targeted 400 secondary school students who completed questionnaires and 30 teachers who participated in interviews, emphasising a larger and more varied population in a specific cultural context.

Instrumentation also varies between the two studies. Li and Jiang (2022), utilised qualitative methods, including observations and semi-structured interviews, to assess the impact of nonverbal communication. The hidden curriculum study likely employed different tools, such as structured questionnaires and interviews, to evaluate implicit educational norms and their effects on character development.The findings of Li and Jiang's (2022) study revealed that nonverbal behaviors significantly enhance communication and learning, acting as mediators in the educational process. Conversely, the hidden curriculum study likely uncovers how implicit norms influence character traits and ethical behavior, emphasising the importance of recognising these social influences in education.

In conclusion, Li and Jiang (2022), advocated for training educators to develop effective nonverbal communication strategies, highlighting the importance of these cues in fostering supportive learning environments. In contrast, the hidden curriculum study emphasises the need for educators to recognise and address implicit norms that affect character development, suggesting the incorporation of character education programs. Thus, while both studies highlight critical aspects of education, they differ significantly in focus. Li and Jiang's (2022), work centers on the impact of nonverbal communication on academic engagement, while the hidden curriculum study explores the role of implicit norms in shaping student character development.

Manninen and Thurlin (2002), conducted a study titled "Teachers' Nonverbal Communication: The Impact on Student Engagement," which aimed to explore the role of teachers' nonverbal communication in facilitating student engagement in the classroom. The research sought to answer questions about which nonverbal behaviors are most effective in promoting active participation and how these behaviors influence students' perceptions of the learning environment.

The study utilised a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative observations. The population consisted of secondary school teachers and students, with a sample of 150 students and 30 teachers drawn from various educational institutions. Data collection involved structured questionnaires completed by students to assess their

perceptions of teachers' nonverbal communication and classroom engagement, alongside observational methods to record teachers' nonverbal behaviors during lessons.

The findings indicated that specific nonverbal behaviours, such as eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions, significantly enhanced student engagement and contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere. The study concluded that effective nonverbal communication is essential for fostering student participation and recommended that teacher training programs include components focused on developing nonverbal communication skills to maximie student engagement.This study differs from the research on the hidden curriculum and its implications for character development among secondary school students in the Southwest Region of Cameroon in several key aspects. The title of Manninen and Thurlin's work emphasizes nonverbal communication in relation to student engagement, while the hidden curriculum study centers on implicit social norms and values that shape character development.

The objectives of Manninen and Thurlin's (2002), study focus on identifying effective nonverbal behaviors that enhance student participation, whereas the hidden curriculum study aims to investigate how unspoken rules and values influence students' moral, intellectual, and civic virtues. This difference in focus reflects distinct research questions, with Manninen and Thurlin examining the role of nonverbal cues in engagement, while the hidden curriculum study delves into the broader implications of social norms on character formation.

In terms of population and sample, Manninen and Thurlin's study involved 150 students and 30 teachers from various educational contexts, providing insights into the dynamics of nonverbal communication in the classroom. In contrast, the hidden curriculum study targeted a larger sample of 400 secondary school students and 30 teachers, emphasising a broader population within a specific cultural context.Instrumentation also varies between the two studies. Manninen and Thurlin utilised structured questionnaires and observational methods to assess nonverbal communication dynamics, while the hidden curriculum study likely employed different tools, such as surveys and interviews, to evaluate implicit educational norms and their effects on character development.

This study differs from the research on the hidden curriculum and its implications for character development among secondary school students in the South West Region of Cameroon in several key aspects. The title of Manninen and Thurlin's work emphasizes nonverbal communication in relation to student engagement, while the hidden curriculum study centers on implicit social norms and values that shape character development.The objectives of Manninen and Thurlin's (2002), study focus on identifying effective nonverbal behaviors that enhance student participation, whereas the hidden curriculum study aims to investigate how unspoken rules and values influence students' moral, intellectual, and civic virtues. This difference in focus reflects distinct research questions, with Manninen and Thurlin examining the role of nonverbal cues in engagement, while the hidden curriculum study delves into the broader implications of social norms on character formation.

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Summarily, there are seven major categories of non-verbal communication. The following table will summarise them.

Table 1: Categories of non-verbal communication from empirical reviews

Category	Description	Elements
Facial expressions	Used of head	Nodding or rotations of the face, wry, winks, etc,
Oculesics or eye contact	Expression in terms of eye behavior	winking, staring, gazing, widening eyes, narrowing eyes, direct eye contact, personal gazes, flashbulb eye, blinking etc
Vocalization	vocal intonation.	tone, pitch, volume, rate or tempo, room acoustics
Kinesics	Use of body mass	Body movements, gestures (use of limbs), postures
Haptics & Proxemics (territoriality)	Use of space or physical environment.	Proximity, touch, orientation (bodily alignment to each other)
Olfactics, costume & set (environment)	outfit worn to create the appearance characteristic to a particular period, person, place, or thing.	Dressing, grooming or physical attractiveness, individual artifacts like jewelry, portraits, colours, scents and smells
Chronemics	Use of time	late coming or punctuality, right action or right purposeful use of time, efficient use of time, willingness to wait, talk/silence time, wait time, work time etc

Designed by researcher, 2024

Statement of the problem

Under the 1998 law on education, character development (therein referred to as moral development), is one of the general purposes of education. In section 5 of this document 6 out of 9 objectives, are character related. The expectation here is that, character development will guarantee pro-social behaviour and personal achievements. In practice, schools have adopted amongst others, emblems/symbols, mottos, visions and regulations that suggest their interest on some of these reasons underlined by this topology of character development.

At a more personal level, character development help learners understand, care about and consistently practice character strengths and core values that will help them flourish in school and beyond. Summarily, character development enables learners become virtuous (ability to check potentially destructive human tendencies) (EWA, 2021; JCCV, 2017; CCR, 2015), thus fulfilling the aim of Education, which according to Aristotle, "is to become good". Despite the acknowledged importance and potential benefits of character development, reports show that the level of character crisis or antisocial behaviour in Cameroonian schools, has reached a level of public concern. 21% of school-age youth have experienced self-directed violence (which includes drug and substance abuse (Cameroon Human Rights Commission - CHRC, 2022), increasing rates of youth violence, dishonesty (lying, cheating, stealing), insubordination, bigotry, declining work ethic, sexual indecency, selfishness and substance abuse (Ministry of Secondary Education-MINESEC, September 2022).

Generally, these forms of violence constitute a character crisis, have compromised students' education, health, well-being and the possibility of flourishing beyond schools, impacted negatively on affected the quality of teaching and learning, resulting in uncovered/unfinished school curriculum, poor results, dropouts and wastage of resources invested by educational stakeholder; led to unsuspected and shocking tragedies such as the death of the victim (MINESEC, 2022). It is thus, possible that implicit curriculum elements such as teacher non-verbal behaviour may be responsible for these unexpected outcomes. The study therefore seeks to explore the influence of the teacher non-verbal practices on character development of learners in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Methodology

Research Design:

A convergent parallel design was used in this study to simultaneously collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The reason being that, the data collected was to be analysed separately and the results compared and integrated to deepen the understanding of the research question. Besides, this design was to enhance the credibility of the conclusions drawn on the study (Whitenton, 2021).The combination of different research methods will take into account the strength of each method to mitigate the weaknesses of the other method. Both methods (qualitative and quantitative) to an extent, deal with the questions of what and why. Hence, they are not independent of the other. Rather they are mutually supportive with each being part of a continuum.

Data was obtained through interviews and questionnaires from two groups of respondents. Qualitative data was obtained from teachers because they are more able to describe the phenomena of interest in question in the field while quantitative data was obtained from the students. Students may not be able to extensively describe the phenomena under study in ample depth. The questionnaire had two parts, preceded by that which solicited some demographic information about the respondent. There were seven of these sub variables from which indicators were designed for data collection: use of head, oculesics or eye contact, vocalisation, Kinesics, haptics and proxemics or territoriality, olfactics, costume and set and

chronemics The dependent variable had four sections. Primarily, the first was the philosophical and religious (moral virtues – virtues that help learners relate with one another). Nine of these virtues (courage, just or fairness, honesty, compassion, gratitude, humility, integrity and respect) constituted indicators that guided the design of questionnaire in this section.

The second section here was the on civic virtues (virtues that help students understand their duties, responsibilities and relationship with community). Four of these virtues (being civil or respectful, service, selflessness and kindness) constituted the indicators that guided the design of questionnaire. The third section here was the on intellectual virtues (virtues that help one make informed choices when confronted with conflicting demand). Seven of these virtues (curiosity, critical thinking, thoughtfulness or reflection, discernment, seeking and pursuing the truth, tolerance/open mindedness and decisiveness) were considered for the indicators that guided the design of questionnaire Finally, the fourth section here was the on performance or enabling virtues (virtues that help students manage their lives effectively). Five of these virtues (resilience, determination, confidence, focus, collaboration) were considered for the indicators that guided the design of questionnaire. This data was collected November 2023 to May, 2024.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique used was selected on the basis of avoiding implicit (conscious or unconscious) bias, guaranteeing representativeness, offering each sample element a fair chance of being selected, and as such justifying generalisation of results on the population.
The multi-stage sampling technique was used to obtain the sample elements under study, given that the population and hence the sample is in clusters and stages. The clusters and stages for the population under study are administrative (Divisions), kind of secondary schools (General, technical/industrial), type of private (denominational and lay private: day and boarding).

At the first stage the divisions from which schools will be selected were obtained through a purposive sampling method. The basis for selecting these divisions was that schools in these areas have been relatively regular since the anglophone crisis in 2016. Hence the tendency will be to get a more relative school attendees over time. Consequently, and more importantly, these divisions had the highest number of student enrollment within the area of study and are thus, more representative of the population under study. In the second stage, groups from which data was to be obtained for the study were identified and selected. These were Administrators, teaching staff and students. For administrators, the discipline office was to represent the administrative staff because it deals directly with student school life and conduct.

Teachers were selected from some departments. Department were selected on purposive basis. These were departments that were likely to have the higher and more diverse number of students and subjects that appeared more frequently on the time table. Following this

criterion, HODs of core science teachers, core arts teachers, core technical subjects and teachers of compulsory subjects (English, Mathematics and French) were selected to form the sample of the study. These departments have a population sample more representative of the student population. In addition, HODs are likely to be more experienced in teaching and also play administrative roles over management of teaching and learning and of their various subjects, besides presiding over departmental meetings. Hence, their experience and position give them possession of more sufficient knowledge of students' behaviour.

In addition, they would have had an overall view of the impressions of departmental colleagues on students' behaviour. Finally, teachers selected for interviews came from the following subject areas: English Language, French Language, Mathematics, chemistry, history/citizenship, technical(engineering)drawing/applied mechanics engineering science teachers. The second group were students. Though students were randomly selected from across the classes, focus was dominantly on the intermediate forms (three and four) because they have been in secondary schools long enough to have had their character under development process. They still had more time to likely spend in the school; at least two years, than those in the higher classes. Besides, they are more likely to read and understand the questionnaire within the context of school life.

They can interpret hidden messages in different student and teacher behaviours, have a more sufficient understanding of underwritten rules and are more sufficiently adapted to the instructional environment as a whole, than those in junior classes. A smaller proportion of students were selected from the higher classes – forms five to Upper Sixth. Though smaller in number, they can represent their thoughts and those of their classmates or peers. The selection process also considered the student sex ratio for different schools to form the sample size.

The outcome of this selection was that all types of institutions ended up represented in the sample: public, denominational and lay private as well as technical and general educational institutions.

Presentation of Findings

Data was analysed using the SPSS Version 20. The data was obtained from two groups of research participants. The first group consists of respondents of the questionnaire who were students. The second group consists of interviewees who are teachers. Following these criteria, 66 teachers from across the eight departments, were found eligible for interviews. All were approached for interviews but at the end, only 30 finally got interviewed. Those interviewed had the following profile:

Grade/qualification: 20 teachers with Bachelor degree, 2 with higher degree, 4 with PLET and 4 with PLEG. For positions held, 8 were heads of departments (HODs), 6 were discipline masters and 24 were classroom teachers with no administrative positions. Of the 30 teachers, there 17 males and 13 females with an age range between 27 and 55; 4 to 20 years of teaching experience. For different subject areas, 5 of the teachers interviewed were English

Language teachers, 4 French Language teachers, 5 Mathematics teachers, 4chemistry teachers, 6 history/citizenship teachers, 4technical(engineering)drawing/applied mechanics teachers and 2 engineeringscience teachers.
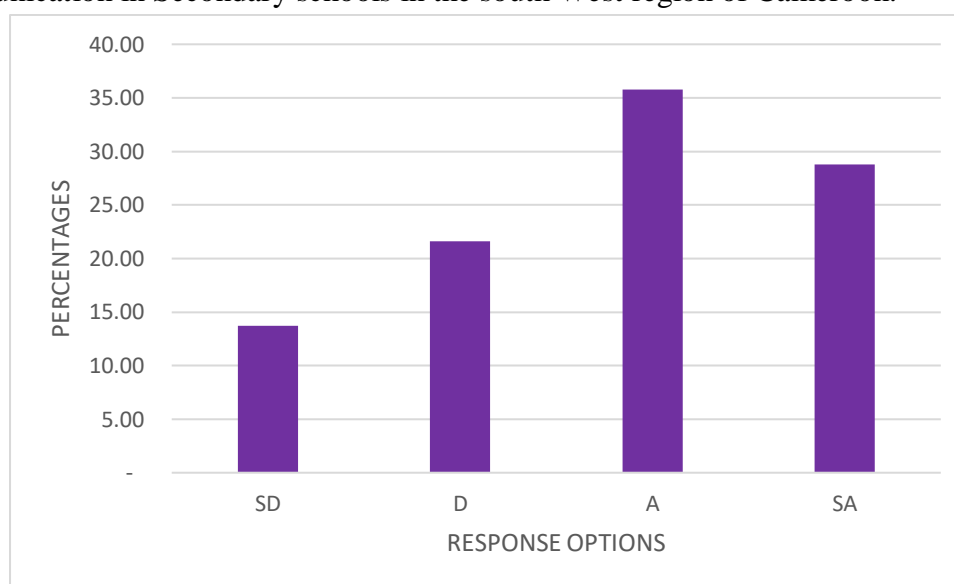
Research Question:

What are teachers' non-verbal practices in the South West Region of Cameroon?

How do teachers' non-verbal behaviours influence students' character development in secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon?

Table 2: Overall Frequencies and percentages of Responses on Non-Verbal Communication

SD		D		A		SA		TOTAL	
Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1596	13.7%	2507	21.6%	4162	35.8%	3350	28.8%	11615	100.0%

Table 2 below shows summary responses to teacher the frequency of teachers' non-verbal communication in Secondary schools in the south West region of Cameroon.

Of the 31 research questionnaire items were administered to 400 students with 389 of them were responded to, representing a participation and return rate of 97.25% , The response rate ranged between 364 (91%) and 383 (95.75%) for the different items.

According to the chart above, out of 11,615 responses, 13.7% (1,596 responses) strongly disagreed to the existence of teacher non-verbal communication in the classroom. 21.6% (2,507 responses) disagreed; 35.8% (4,162responses) agreed, while 28.8% (3,350 respondents) strongly agreed to the existence of teacher non-verbal communication in classrooms. With respect to teachers' non-verbal communication practices in the South West Region of Cameroon, these results, give a very strong affirmation to the existence of facial expressions, oculesics or eye contact, vocalisation, kinesics, proxemics or territoriality,

olfactics, costume and set and chronemics, as types of teacher non-verbal communication practicesin the classrooms in the South West region.

In hypothesis testing, the chi-square test of independence was used to determine the relationship between teacher non-verbal communication and character development. The following hypotheses were tested.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' non-verbal communication and students' character development

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between teachers' non-verbal communication and students' character development

The results were obtained as follows:

Ha 1:

Table 3 : Non-Verbal Communication CharacterDevelopmentCrosstabulation

Non-VerbalCommunication[a]	character development[a]				Total
	SD	D	A	SA	
SD	5595	9417	21559	23384	59955
D	6395	16113	39279	32722	94509
A	10638	24127	67770	56012	158547
SA	10260	18357	45192	53667	127476
Total	32888	68014	173800	165785	440487

Table 4: Chi-square Calculation table for hypothesis one

O1	E1	O-E	(O-e)2	(O-E)2/E
5595	447.5	5147	26496426.53	59205.65
6395	7056	-661.3	437328.421	61.98
10638	11838	-1200	1438957.506	121.56
10260	9518	742.3	550983.7831	57.89
9417	9257	159.6	25461.27964	2.75
16113	14593	1520	2311032.665	158.37
24127	24481	-353.7	125080.4965	5.11
18357	19683	-1326	1758559.239	89.34
21559	23656	-2097	4397585.412	185.90
39279	37290	1989	3956988.286	106.11
67770	62557	5213	27177183.49	434.44
45192	50297	-5105	26064598.4	518.21
23384	22565	818.9	670573.1489	29.72

32722	35570	-2848	8111776.11	228.05
56012	59672	-3660	13395170.11	224.48
53667	47978	5689	32366700.32	674.62
				62104.18

Chi-square - $\sum(O-E)2/E$ =62,104.18

df =9, α = 0.05, Table value = 3.325 at 95% confidence level, calculated chi-square value **is** 62,104.

Interpretation: The calculated chi-square value (62,104), is greater than critical or table value (3.325), so we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between these teachers' non-verbal communication and students' character development.

Interview results: Information obtained through interviews conducted with teachers across the eight departments noted above was follows:

On the gestures that teachers made while teaching, the most prevalent ones were head nodding, eye contact, facial expressions, movement of limbs, especially arms, stares, voice tone, blackboard illustrations, sign language, claps, and keeping to time.

In case of proxemics and territoriality, movement in class is determined by student's response to questions, disruptive behaviour, distracted student(s), student in need of personal attention, class density, type of lesson evaluation process, controlling students' activities like checking their engagement through observation of tasks they are carrying out, forestall disruptive behaviour, ages of students, concepts to be explained.

With respect to costume and set or dressing to school, teachers' dressed such as not to distract students, by putting on a reasonably loose dress, to portray modesty, exhibit their culture to students and communicate to them what responsible dressing is, remind students of their (teachers) status, align with teacher professional ethics, the nature and depth of interactivity required for the day or lesson, to avoid possible embarrassment from any student, class gender, to dilute attention on the address rather than the substance that is being taught.

Gestures engaged in when teaching, are determined by students' responses to questions, students' comments, special observation, class population density, what the teacher intends to express, illustrate and emphasise. With respect to how teachers' non-verbal communication influences students' character development in the South West Region of Cameroon, the following results were obtained.

On how these gestures, dressing and movement in class influence students' character development, teachers identified only the positive influence on the learners' character development. Specifically, in terms of interpersonal relationship, when students find a mentor in the person of the teacher, they copy from the teacher as they find in the teacher, a model,

collaborative (pairs or group) work in different tasks, moderation of voice tone to transmit kindness and a feeling of appreciation of the student's state, appeal to their love of the subjects, hence the virtues of empathy love and kindness are passed on.

With regards to understanding how dressing, gestures and movement in class influence students' understanding of their duties and responsibilities towards community, include peer support when they work with one another in groups. The way teachers dress, addresses the responsibility learners have towards society. The dress to show students an example of such behaviour (dressing) that will command respect from society. This is an action that portray inclusive values, in the case of dressing, hence the virtue of tolerance. Through collaborative work, they take responsibility for each other's performance, develop peer support, and consequently the virtue of care and patriotism. Teacher's approval gestures, dressing and movement in class influence students' help develop in students, the awareness that community is ready to reward success. As a response, they strive to meet the demands of the community so as to earn such favours (scholarships and other awards from the community) in return. In an attempt to seek or work for these awards or simply meet up with community demands, students develop the virtues of hard work, meritocracy, honesty and live up to standards set by society. The effort to meet up with community demands the learn to aprreciate and develop their duties and responsibilities towards community.

In terms of their abilities to make good choices when confronted with conflicting demands, gestures, dressing and movement in class help students to be thoughtful, reflective and develop logical thinking (in the case of mathematics). Teacher's voice tone, presence and output in arts inspires students and increases thoughtfulness. They also help students to be self-constructive and develop a spirit hard work. The dressings, gestures and movements of teachers also give students something to talk about with their peers, even out of the classroom; and if they draw positive conclusions about these, they are likely to be influenced by these conclusions to make better choices when confronted by conflicting demands. Hence the virtues of thoughtfulness, hard work and discretion as opposed to instinct. These influences them to make good choices in case they are confronted with conflicting demands.

And in terms of their management of personal affairs, these gestures, movements and dressings of teachers they develop time consciousness, class attendance as opposed to lateness and absenteeism, attentiveness in class, focus, rational decision making and logical thinking, hence the virtues of punctuality, duty consciousness.

Discussions and Conclusions

The prevalence of teacher non-verbal communication in the form facial expressions, oculesics or eye contact, vocalisation, kinesics, proxemics or territoriality, olfactics, costume and set and chronemics; and the calculated Chi-square of 62,104 compared to the table value is 3,325 at 95% confidence level with a 9 degree of freedom has two implications:Firstly, that there is a strong, statistically significant relationship between the variables being tested; in

this case, non-verbal communication and students' character development in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Secondly, the large chi-square value suggests that the observed frequencies in the data deviate considerably from the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis of independence. This implies that the variables are not independent and there is a substantial association between them.

However, there are some limitations and related implications. First of all, the chi-square test only indicates the presence and strength of a relationship, but does not provide information about the direction or nature of the relationship. This implies that, additional analysis would be needed to determine whether the relationship is positive or negative. In addition, the chi-square test does not explain the underlying mechanisms or causal relationships between the variables. More theoretical and empirical research would be required to understand the reasons for the observed association.

In relation to the theories reviewed, the first is Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. According to Kohlberg (1981), this theory holds that, moral development occurs in a series of universal, invariant stages, that progress from a focus on a concrete, self-interested considerations to an abstract, principled moral reasoning. Individuals move through these hierarchical stages, as they become better able to coordinate different moral perspectives and apply universal principles.

The findings do not directly support or contradict this theory, as it focuses on the cognitive and moral reasoning processes underlying moral development, rather than non-verbal communication which is more behavioural. It could only be deduced that, some of these behaviours may tacitly control the child through conditioning, especially with the teacher repeating non-verbal elements under study here, that may involve the cognitive aspect in the interpretation of the action by learners as approving or disapproving of certain behaviours. This interpretation may be justified by rewards or punishments. In this case, learners operate at the pre-conventional where the aim at avoiding punishment and gaining favours.

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the Bioecological Theory of Human Development holds that, human development is shaped by the complex, dynamic interactions between the individual and the multiple, nested environmental systems (micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems) in which they are embedded. These proximal processes, over time, influences the individual's growth and adaptation.

The findings could be relevant to this theory, as non-verbal communication has an important aspect of the proximal processes and interactions within an individual's ecological systems. However, more specific research would be needed to establish the connections.With respect to Implicit Theories, Sedikides (2019), holds that individuals hold implicit beliefs of theories about nature and moral character, specifically whether it is fixed and unchangeable (entity theory), or malleable and can be developed (incremental theory). These implicit beliefs shape how individuals perceive, evaluate and respond to moral information and situations.

The findings do not provide direct evidence for or against this theory, as it concerns individuals' beliefs about the malleability of moral character, rather than non-verbal communication. However, deductively, if individuals have a malleable mindset, they may perceive, evaluate and react positively to certain non-verbal cues. Whether, they are affirmative and open, these cues can have them influence the growth of their religious and philosophical, civic and intellectual virtues.

Implicit Theory of Learning: According to Dweck (2006), individuals hold implicit behaviours or theories about the nature of intelligence and learning abilities, specifically whether they are fixed or unchangeable (entity theory) or malleable and can be developed through practice and effort (incremental theory). These implicit behaviour influences individuals' motivation, effort and approach to learning. The findings are not directly relevant to this theory, which focuses on beliefs about the nature of intelligence and learning abilities.

On Implicit Theory of Intelligence, Dweck (1999), holds that individuals hold implicit beliefs or "theories" about the nature of intelligence, specifically whether it is fixed, unitary trait (entity theory) or malleable, multifaceted capacity that can be developed (incremental theory). These implicit beliefs shape how individuals interpret and response to intellectual challenges and the feedback. Similar to the implicit theory of learning, the findings do not have a clear connection to this theory, which deals with beliefs about the fixed or malleable nature of intelligence. However, indirectly, theory in line with the findings is connected. The mind set of individuals may enable learners interpret teachers' non-verbal behaviours positively or negatively, leading to development of positive or negative character traits. If learners interpret teachers' non-verbal behvaiour positively, it may help in the incremental development of virtuous character traits.

In summary, the large and statistically significant chi-square value indicates a strong relationship between the variables related to non-verbal communication, but the specific implications and connections to developmental theories require further investigation and analysis. Following the results of the chi-square test, all prevailing gestures, proxemics, costume and setting, found in the field have an influence on character development. Observations from teachers through interviews, uphold the statistical findings.

According to the interview results obtained from teachers, and presented in above, these indicators of non-verbal communication (gestures, proxemics, costume and setting etc), influence the development of religious and philosophical virtues such as kindness, care, compassion and honesty; civic virtues such as patriotism and tolerance; intellectual virtues such as thoughtfulness, discretion and tolerance; and performance of enabling virtues such as resilience, forbearance and hard work. This position is supported by empirical evidence.

Li & Jiang (2022), found that teacher non-verbal communication have an impact on student-teacher affective communication. Khan (2017), found a strong relationship between teacher non-verbal communication and student educational accomplishment. Character development are educational accomplishments too. Guesnon (1993), found that non-verbal communication

plays an important role in the effective teaching of students and can have a detrimental effect on them.

In conclusion, the statistical test, shows a significant relationship between teachers' non-verbal communication on character development and the interview results give further insights to the findings. This tests and interview results have empirical backing.

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