



# An Exploration of the Paths to Integrating Wu Opera into Moral Education in Primary School within the Framework of Ideological and Political Education Integration

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## Abstract

In response to the current problems in moral education in primary schools, the study proposes a three-dimensional implementation framework: integrating curriculum content, coordinating experiential teaching activities, and developing shared resource platforms. Specifically, it creates school-based teaching materials, organizes rich experiential activities, integrates internal and external school and community resources, and cultivates integrations of drama, morality, knowledge, and action. Meanwhile, a multi-dimensional support system based on funding guarantees, curriculum integration, teacher capacity-building, and the construction of an evaluation framework is established, providing a feasible exploration pathway for them to be introduced to moral education in elementary schools.

## Subject Areas

Pedagogy

## Keywords

Integrated Ideological and Political Education, Wu Opera, Elementary School Moral Education

## 1. Introduction

In promoting integrated development in ideological and political education at all stages in China, this work must be implemented in accordance with students' cognitive and developmental stages. In particular, the characteristics of moral educa-

tion content at each educational stage must be carefully aligned to ensure coherence and a spiral of growth. Simultaneously, as the most crucial period for shaping students' moral sentiment and good behavioral habits, primary school moral education courses must adopt an activity-oriented, experiential, and interactive approach. Meanwhile, traditional primary school moral education courses tend to over-emphasize explanation methods, and many moral education concepts are overly abstract, dry, and distant from students' lives, severely damaging teaching effectiveness. China's excellent traditional culture is the spiritual lifeline of our nation and provides rich nourishment for ideological and political education. Wu Opera, commonly known as "Jinhua Opera", has a vast repertoire, resonant melodies, masterful techniques, and distinctive facial makeup artistry, and is often called one of the "ancestors of Peking Opera". This kind of opera art serves dual functions: as stage art and as a local moral textbook. It carries the powerful characteristics of China's outstanding traditional culture. It embodies values such as loyalty, filial piety, integrity, national harmony, benevolence, and trustworthiness, all of which accord with the socialist core values. Therefore, on the platform of integrating ideological and political education, making full use of such a living fossil of local culture in moral education classrooms in elementary schools provides a feasible exploration pathway to address the shortcomings of moral education in schools. This meets the goal of cultivating virtues while preserving culture.

## **2. Significance of Integrating Wu Opera into Primary School Moral Education**

### **2.1. Wu Opera Repertoire Embodies Outstanding Traditional Culture**

In traditional Wu Opera plays, the main themes are blessing, virtue, and harmony, extolling loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness. These plays often have dramatic highs and lows and end happily. The contents are rich in filial piety, charity, and integrity. Therefore, protecting and developing local opera has great practical significance in promoting core socialist values and in passing down China's outstanding traditional culture [1].

### **2.2. Wu Opera Conforms to the Teaching Philosophy of the New Curriculum Standards**

Wu opera aligns with the philosophy of "contextualized, experiential learning" outlined in the new standards. Primary students develop mainly through concrete image thinking. Wu's comprehensive performance in singing, recitation, acting, and martial arts, combined with flashy face paintings, costumes, and plots, creates an environment in which students "watch with interest, want to discuss, and enjoy learning". Second, it matches the concept of "interdisciplinary learning". Wu encompasses literature (script), music (melody), art (face painting), and physical education (movement and martial arts), meeting the new standards' call to "break down school boundaries and tear down subject barriers".

Wu opera can be incorporated into classrooms as a teaching case synthesizing the knowledge points across disciplines. Through this integrated teaching process, it activates multiple educational functions: moral, aesthetic, and intellectual development. For example, in language arts classes, students can clarify the moral messages conveyed through script recitation. In contrast, in art classes, they can explore Wu Opera through various painting techniques to better understand the nuances of good and evil. This is truly putting into practice the saying of teaching students and bringing them up. Third, it matches the emphasis on “cultivating cultural confidence” in the new curriculum standards. The new curriculum standards identified “cultural confidence” as the core component of students’ “four major subject-specific competencies”. Traditional culture, as represented by Wu opera, is an effective vehicle for educating students about China’s rich cultural heritage. It seamlessly integrates “moral education” with “cultural education”, meeting the uniform educational requirements of ideological and political theory courses.

### **2.3. Wu Opera Contributes to Students’ Ideological and Political Education**

Taking Wu Opera as a means, it uses traditional and red-themed plays as its dual carriers to materialize patriotic education by cultivating national sentiment. Through the stirring vocals and vigorous postures of traditional plays, such as “The Legend of Yue Fei” and “Mulan”, the plays demonstrate the spirit of loyalty, dedication, and responsibility, as in Yue Fei’s resistance against the Jin Dynasty and Mulan’s enlistment in the army. In the classroom, the teacher analyzes the classic plots and organizes singing excerpts to let students understand that patriotism is not only a heroic feat but also the responsibility of ordinary people. Red-themed Wu Opera lays particular emphasis on the revolutionary process and reform practices, advocating ideals, beliefs, and the spirit of struggle. Through role-playing, students experience the dedication and entrepreneurial perseverance of their predecessors, thereby transforming their emotional resonance into patriotic action. The local characteristics of Zhejiang help link plays to historical figures from the hometown, fostering the rise of national identity from the starting point of “loving one’s hometown”. Wu Opera upholds core values through a connection to traditional morality, such as “filial piety, fraternity, loyalty, integrity, propriety, righteousness and shame”, and aligns with the requirements of school education, such as “integrity, friendliness and dedication”. The distinct contrast between good and evil, as well as the portrayal of character traits in the play, provides vivid material for value education. The plot interpretation leads the students to clarify the moral principles. In addition, immersive experience deepens practice: through emphasizing team cooperation and responsibility during rehearsals, analyzing moral standards of judgment in face-painting, and combining story-sharing sessions with the practical application of virtues in life. This model of “unity of knowledge and action” promotes students’ internalization of the value concept into moral character and

its externalization into behavior, thereby achieving the goal of moral shaping in ideological and political education.

### **3. Theoretical Basis for Integrating Wu Opera into Primary School Moral Education Classrooms**

#### **3.1. Experiential Learning Theory**

The method of instructing Wu Opera follows Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Moral learning is essentially an experiential process that requires a collaborative approach between teachers and students in the construction of moral contexts, the living of ethical life, and the development of an integrated moral framework [2]. Students first acquire sensory experiences through observing Wu Opera performances, followed by guided moral reflections led by teachers, the extraction of underlying ethical values through analysis, and then solidification through active practices such as role-playing. This holistic, participatory model proves more effective than traditional didactic approaches in fostering lasting moral development.

#### **3.2. Situational Cognitive Theory**

This theory maintains that knowledge should be situated within authentic activities and social contexts. By embedding abstract moral principles into vivid, culturally situated narratives, Wu Opera presents students with real moral scenarios to which they must apply contextualized reasoning rather than merely memorize the rules to make the appropriate moral judgment. For instance, the dilemmatic conflict between legal justice and human compassion in "Yuanmen Zhanzi" situates students in an authentic moral dilemma, requiring them to apply contextualized reasoning rather than simply memorize the rules for making appropriate moral judgments. Such a conflict is settled through practical problem-solving, and the students internalize moral behavior. Dramatic conflict in educational settings promotes understanding of character, which can trigger empathy and perspective-taking [3].

#### **3.3. Dramaturgical Theory**

Following Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory, social interactions can be conceptualized as performative behaviors in which persons play roles and manage impressions within situational social scenes [4]. In educational drama, students act out character roles in set contexts through imagination, observation, or personal experience. Through language, body movements, and properties, they reveal a character's personality, emotions, thoughts, and life experiences, thereby entering the character's social and moral world [5]. This intensive role engagement not only fosters self-awareness and social identity development but also heightens students' moral reasoning and judgment. As participatory pedagogy has demonstrated, role-based learning yields deeper cognitive and affective engagement.

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## **4. Challenges in Integrating Wu Opera into Primary School Moral Education Classrooms**

### **4.1. Inadequate Funding Support**

The biggest problem is a lack of sufficient financial input. Wu Opera is a comprehensive stage art form that requires specialized materials for costumes, props, and musical instruments, all of which are expensive to purchase. The expenses of hiring professional Wu Opera performers for sustained school-based teaching and organizing students to attend live performances are also high. For most schools facing tight budget constraints, it is hard to afford these extra expenses. Therefore, Wu Opera-related activities often remain isolated, one-off experiences, and cannot develop into systematic, sustained educational practices.

### **4.2. Challenges with Teacher Capacity Building**

The second challenge concerns the development of a qualified teaching force. On the one hand, since there is only a small pool of professionals specializing in Wu Opera who are already very busy touring and preserving cultural heritage, it is difficult to secure regular school involvement. Even when collaborations can be established, such artists often lack pedagogical training and face significant challenges in reconceptualizing their specialist skills into age and curriculum-appropriate content for young learners. On the other hand, teachers responsible for moral education through drama often lack foundational knowledge of Wu Opera, including its historical context, performance conventions, and vocal techniques [6]. This makes it difficult for them to identify and interpret the embedded moral values in operatic narratives, and instruction consequently cannot progress beyond superficial appreciation to deeper moral cultivation.

### **4.3. Issues with the Development of Curriculum**

Besides, there are still many problems related to curriculum design and instructional implementation. The effective integration of Wu Opera, a traditional art form, in modern moral education calls for serious academic and practical research. Currently, standardized teaching materials and curricular models are lacking, and teachers must prepare integration strategies on their own, which increases their workload and reduces consistency and quality in instruction. Furthermore, considering the cognitive and developmental features of primary school students, teaching content should be carefully adapted to their comprehension level while maintaining the authenticity of the artistic work. This calls for collaborative efforts by education experts and performing artists.

### **4.4. Lack of an Evaluation Mechanism**

Finally, the absence of an effective evaluation system presents a crucial obstacle. Current assessments of moral education tend to focus more on observed behavioral outcomes, with few attempts to understand students' internal development in moral reasoning and emotion [7]. No evaluation standard has yet been devel-

oped for the effectiveness of integrating Wu Opera into moral education, which should take into account both students' artistic understanding and their development in moral cognition and behavior. Without adequate assessment instruments and methods, the educational effect cannot be quantified, and teaching practices cannot be iteratively improved; all these factors, unfortunately, impede the long-term sustainability and refinement of such initiatives.

## **5. Practical Pathways for Integrating Wu Opera into Elementary School Moral Education Classes under the Framework of Unified Ideological and Political Education**

### **5.1. The Pathway of Integrated Curriculum Content: How to Achieve the Organic Combination of "Drama" and "Moral"**

The moral education ethical structure needs to change alongside modern society and meet the evolving needs of modern students. It has to be conceptualized and executed in ways that echo the students' lives, growth, and current-era goals. That requires the embodiment of education on China's rich traditional culture, cross-cultural communication, cybersecurity awareness, ecological civilization principles, artificial intelligence ethics, media literacy skills, dual-track vocational training, and the incorporation of physical education [8]. In addition, drama-based moral education activities should be organized in various ways across these content areas, such as situational, ideological, and political instruction; dramas derived from moral education-themed textbooks; emotional narratives; drama-infused class meetings; and immersive, interactive theater experiences.

Organize local cultural experts, moral education teachers, and Wu Opera performers to develop school-based teaching materials such as Moral Education Stories. Retell classic plays in a child-friendly storytelling format with a "Moral Education Insights" section explaining how they relate to the Code of Conduct for Primary and Secondary School Students and moral education curriculum objectives, allowing Wu Opera to become easy to understand and reflective moral education material.

Wu Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command" tells the story of the elderly Mu Guiying, who resolutely dons her armor once more in response to a national crisis. In primary school moral and legal education classes, this opera can serve as a vivid representation of the core value of patriotism. By examining Mu Guiying's transition from retirement to military leadership, students can understand that patriotism is not an abstract slogan but a concrete action that arises when the nation is in need. It would be worthwhile for teachers to use the heroic sentiment of "If I do not take command, who will?" to stimulate students' reflection on how patriotism manifests in contemporary times through diligent study, active participation in collective life, and a commitment to community well-being. In this way, the heroic legacy of historical figures can be reinterpreted as present-day responsibilities, allowing students to internalize patriotic values and realize their place within the modern transmission of national spirit.

## 5.2. Integrated Teaching Experience Pathway: Connecting Knowledge and Action

Take students to view professional troupes of Wu Opera or school clubs on a regular basis, or play excellent videos of Wu Opera through multimedia. Give guidance before watching and organize discussions after watching to help them shift their attention from the spectacle to something more profound. Emphasize character development and moral reasoning, specifically, the ethical judgment seen through the virtues and plot conflict in the characters.

Set up a Wu Opera interest club and organize it with the help of intangible cultural heritage inheritors; first, establish a foundation through physical training such as stage movement and hand gestures, replicating facial makeup. Move from simple actions to rehearsing short snippets. In immersive “heroic performances”, students learn character as moral cognition is internalized, and emotional identification becomes a behavior pattern.

Encourage students to create artistic expressions out of everyday observations. For example, new lyrics about campus etiquette are set to the traditional Wu Opera melody, or short Wu Opera sketches are composed based on moral tales. This method unifies artistic creation, moral self-education, and expressive communication.

## 5.3. Integrated Resource Platform Co-Construction Pathway: Realizing School-Community Synergy

Establish “Wu Opera Culture Corners” on campus, each an independently set-up area displaying costumes and props, facial mask models, and related literature to create an immersive atmosphere of traditional culture. These can serve as informal settings for moral education during student breaks.

Form long-term alliances with local troupes of Wu Opera and centers for the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Invite artists regularly to give campus lectures and workshops in order to bring the “living” tradition into the classroom. It aims at enhancing the professionalism and authority of moral education activities.

Integrate online museums and digital Wu Opera resource libraries to develop micro-courses and VR experiential lessons. Such development would overcome the limitations of time and space, enabling learners, at any time and from anywhere, to access high-quality resources for Wu-based moral education.

## 6. Safeguard Mechanisms

### 6.1. Funding Guarantee

To address the funding challenges encountered during the integration of Wu Opera into primary school moral education classrooms, a comprehensive model must be developed that integrates diversified fundraising strategies with effective cost control. On the one hand, financial support can be broadened through applications for government special grants, the introduction of social sponsors, and

collaborative programs with school-based student organizations. On the other hand, a hierarchical approach should be adopted to implement an initial low-cost appreciation-based course. This should be followed by the establishment of regional resource-sharing centers to reuse costumes and props and to use simplified teaching aids in place of professional equipment. Additionally, digital technology can be employed to create an online repository of open-access educational resources. Furthermore, schools should be encouraged to organize campus cultural and creative activities, public welfare exhibitions, and similar initiatives that generate income. All these efforts contribute to enhancing resource allocation efficiency, maximizing utilization rates, and promoting sustainable development under a tight budget.

## 6.2. Curriculum Integration System

It is of great importance to integrate drama education elements into subject teaching and other educational activities purposefully, so that drama can fully play its role in moral education. The implementation of a set of moral education programs based on drama art should be carried out in forms that are popular and convenient for students [9]. In Chinese language courses, students can be asked to write scripts on moral dilemmas; in moral education courses, it can be dramatized to enhance understanding; and in arts courses, auxiliary skills such as stage design and costume coordination can be included to complement the main learning areas.

It is also worth suggesting that schools actively establish Wu Opera clubs within their campuses to engage students interested in this particular art form. Organizing an annual Wu Opera Cultural Festival would provide a perfect opportunity for the students and the wider school community to learn about the intricacies of Wu Opera. The visits by students to local Wu Opera troupes, theaters, and cultural venues to observe rehearsals and performances would let them feel the onstage and offstage aspects of this traditional performing art.

## 6.3. Teacher Development

Drama education in K-12 schools must be based on the fundamental principles of dramatic art. The highly qualified, specialized drama educator is the most important resource for effectively implementing such programs. Promoting professional capabilities to improve the capacity of the drama education faculty in K-12 settings and establishing a network of demonstration bases for exemplary drama education, demonstrating its value and modeling effects, significantly improves the standardization and quality of drama education within schools [10].

In addition, regularly organizing Wu Opera knowledge and skills in school workshops should be carried out to enhance in-service training for existing teachers. In this way, it can nurture a team of “dual-qualified” teachers who are qualified to teach both morality and Wu Opera. Meanwhile, it is necessary to institute a flexible artist-in-residence mechanism: hiring actors from Wu Opera troupes

and experienced artists as part-time instructors will offer students firsthand experience with professional performance techniques.

Moreover, it is about forging long-term ties with renowned local Wu Opera troupes to invite their best performers to the school for regular teaching. Such collaborations will enrich students' education and further enhance their appreciation of this traditional art.

#### 6.4. Evaluation System Development

An integrated assessment system that incorporates both formative and summative assessments, moving away from the single-exam assessment model, is crucial. "Moral education growth portfolios" will be implemented to record student performance across multiple dimensions, including viewing, discussion, performance, and creation.

Scenario-based assessment, behavioral observation, and peer and self-assessment should serve as the basis for a comprehensive evaluation of moral cognition development, emotional cultivation, and behavioral improvement. This approach underlines growth-oriented changes in the students' learning journeys.

### 7. Conclusion and Outlook

Guided by integrated ideological and political education, elementary school moral education classrooms should be more down-to-earth in their expression. As an artistic treasure rooted in central Zhejiang, Wu opera is a rich cultural resource and an attractive medium for primary school moral education, with its distinctive ethical appeal and aesthetic charm. In line with this, we can systematically design a pathway to bring Wu opera into primary school moral education classrooms in an organic way, making moral instruction more attractive and practical. We enable the seeds of core values to take root and flourish in children's hearts, adding modern-day substance to this intangible cultural heritage. Such practice can achieve a synergistic effect: "cultivating individuals through culture, educating through beauty, and nurturing through virtue", laying a solid moral foundation for a new generation that shoulders the weighty responsibility of national rejuvenation.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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