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Exploring Pathways for Integrating Traditional Culture into Integrated Education Across Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education Institutions in Shandong Province in the Context of "Fostering Virtue and Nurturing Talent"

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Abstract

The traditional culture is an old type of culture with distinctive features of ethnicity which was created and evolved through a prolonged historical process of the Chinese nation. The splendid traditional culture of China reflects the indomitable spirit of self-improvement of the Chinese nation and the endless spiritual wealth of the Chinese people, and represents the common values of the Chinese people. This contains countless positive value concepts, philosophical feelings, modes of thinking, ritual systems, codes of conduct, and lifestyle practices, which will offer theoretical direction and spiritual guidance towards developing healthy ideological and moral character as well as instilling in the youth of the new era the core socialist values. General Secretary Xi Jinping has constantly stressed the importance of curriculum and textbooks playing their part in building a strong foundation and building up the spirit, as well as in brightening up minds and increasing wisdom; they should be the style of China and Chinese nation, and the result of the accumulation of knowledge on human cultural heritage and the outcome of innovations in this field. Hence, the incorporation of traditional culture education in primary, secondary, and higher education will greatly contribute to the successful realization of the mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent in all schools.

Keywords

fostering virtue and nurturing talent, traditional culture education, integrated education across primary, secondary, and higher education

1. The Importance of Traditional Culture in Integrated Education Across Preschools, Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education Institutions

1.1 Innovatively Inheriting Traditional Culture to Promote Cultural Transmission

As part of his address at the 39th collective reading of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, General Secretary Xi Jinping stated: "Outstanding traditional Chinese culture is the epitome of wisdom and the quintessence of Chinese civilization; it is the very source and spirit of the Chinese nation" [1]. Schools are

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the primary arena for the inheritance and propagation of traditional culture, whereas students are the main players in the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture. The process of learning about, understanding, and mastering the historical roots, cultural implications, and philosophy of traditional culture will be facilitated at different educational levels through the integration of the material, institutional, and spiritual components of China's exceptional traditional culture into education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. The application of China's outstanding traditional culture is brought about by various forms of practical activities and students are able to make use of the lessons they have learned together with the knowledge in the curriculum of each stage of their education [2]. Hence, incorporating China's outstanding traditional culture into primary, secondary, and higher education, and via a relay of nurturing through effective educational systems, people can not only revive the generation that will be tasked with transmitting traditional culture but also transform it creatively, innovatively develop it, and thus bring about the living transmission of this tradition.

1.2 Enhancing Cultural Confidence Among Youth and Contributing to Cultural Revival

General Secretary Xi Jinping said at the National Congress that culture is the soul of a nation and a people and that cultural confidence is the most essential, deep, and long-lasting power of a nation and a people. The ancient culture of China, which has been developing over more than 5,000 years of history, is ancient, extensive, and profound, with its rich intellectual wealth and strong spiritual power. Through the incorporation of China's excellent traditional culture into the primary, secondary, and tertiary education systems, and the promotion of the study of the cultural essence of the Hundred Schools of Thought, the understanding of the philosophies of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, and the principle of governing philosophy of cultivating oneself, harmonizing the family, and bringing peace to the world, people are able to help young people continue to develop their historical confidence and cultural confidence as they grow in their knowledge of the outstanding traditional culture of China and take part in the continuing evolution of the new civilization of the Chinese nation. When culture is thriving, the nation is prospering; when culture is strong, the nation is strong. Cultural confidence and self-reliance are the potent spiritual forces that fuel the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. As the new generation of youth, it is only by placing roots in the excellent traditional culture of the country and holding the cultural confidence in the solid foundation that people can drive cultural confidence and self-reliance of the Chinese nation with the youthful cultural confidence, and only then can people add an endless flow of youthful energy to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation during the exploration of the new era.

1.3 Enhancing the Moral Character of Youth and Implementing the Principle of "Fostering Virtue Through Education"

China's fine traditional culture embodies the spiritual pursuits of the Chinese nation and serves as the value bedrock on which the Chinese people establish themselves and find their place in life. Education in China's fine traditional culture plays an irreplaceable role in such areas as cultivating moral character and shaping a sound personality [3]. The integration of China's excellent cultural traditions into the whole process of talent development in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and universities will lead schools to put emphasis on moral character in the development of talents, and indeed, achieve the long-sought goal of cultivating people through culture and educating people through culture to meet the arduous responsibility of educating people to the Party and nurturing talents to the nation. The superior traditional culture of China is an invaluable cultural heritage created by Chinese people over thousands of years. It contains profound philosophical thinking, a wide range of humanism, good value systems, and constructive moral principles. Schools need to direct students toward deep comprehension, collection, and research, and assimilation of China's superior traditional culture, going deep into the values behind this tradition, including such values as ceaseless self-improvement and virtue that embraces everything, the moral thought of cherishing harmony and the middle way and the highest virtue is similar to water, and traditional virtues such as benevolence, filial piety, fraternal duty, politeness, and honesty. With students being exposed to these remarkable philosophical ideals and humanistic spirit, people would be able to inspire their wisdom upon realization of the world and service to society. At the same time, people should motivate children in primary, secondary, and higher education to be more conscious about social ethics, professional ethics, and family virtues and promote patriotism and collectivism so that they could really become the enterprising youth of the new era: to cultivate great virtue, uphold public morality, and maintain strict personal integrity.

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1.4 Promoting Socialist Core Values and Firmly Advancing the Strategy of Strengthening the Nation Through Skills

On his tour of the China University of Political Science and Law, General Secretary Xi Jinping observed that: “The ideals, beliefs, mental state, and overall quality of the younger generation are a vital reflection of a nation’s developmental vitality and a key factor in its core competitiveness.” Consequently, the value orientation of the young generation will, to a greater degree, influence the societal value orientation. Nevertheless, the minds of modern youth are unable to be completely developed, and they do not have a fixed and proper worldview, outlook on life, and values. The idea of kindness or benevolence - upholding propriety, cherishing justice, and pursuing virtue and goodness, and patriotism - defending unity and being bold enough to assume responsibility, which are part of the rich and deep-rooted traditional culture, can be useful sources of inspiration to young individuals as they develop their correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, and form the basis of reinforcing their socialist ideology. Thus, implementation of the best elements of Chinese culture in educational programs at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels can make good use of the formative period of the values of the youth. People can nurture and establish their socialist core values by using the outstanding philosophical thought, humanism, and values inherent in the tradition. It will help the socialist core values to take root, grow, blossom, and yield their fruits in the hearts of the youth, and they will be able to actually become faithful followers, proactive enforcers, and exemplary followers of these values. The training of the youth into a new generation who can carry the weight of national regeneration, and the fact that they hold core socialist values firmly in their beliefs, means they will consciously incorporate their patriotic feelings, vision of a strong nation, and activities that serve the country into the concrete practice of achieving the great revival of the Chinese nation.

2. The Current Status and Challenges of Traditional Culture Education in Schools

Shandong Province has been leading since 2017 in integrating traditional culture education as a compulsory regional subject of study in the national education system. Consequently, elementary, middle, and high schools in Shandong have slowly started to use the Textbooks on China’s Outstanding Traditional Culture, and elementary and secondary schools are focusing more on the teaching of China’s excellent traditional culture. In order to obtain an overview of the situation with traditional culture education in the primary and secondary schools of Shandong, the Shandong Provincial Academy of Educational Sciences carried out a survey of the implementation of traditional culture education in all the schools of the province in 2020. The sample size included all primary and secondary schools in Shandong (13,687) with a total of 44,497 completed questionnaires. The survey showed that there were several main problems related to traditional culture education in those schools:

2.1 The Integration of Traditional Culture into Primary and Secondary School Curricula Lacks Systematic Coherence and Uniform Curriculum Standards

In accordance with national policies, primary and secondary schools have put a lot of focus on the teaching of traditional culture. Preliminary statistics by the author indicate that out of 336 texts in Chinese language textbooks for grades 1-6, 79 (23.51%) of them are connected with the traditional culture of China. It means that traditional culture has been incorporated to some extent at the elementary school stage. There are 144 passages in Chinese language textbooks of grades 7-9 with 56 of them being related to Chinese traditional culture, or 38.88 percent. This indicates that the percentage of traditional culture integration has greatly risen at the junior high school stage. Nonetheless, the methodology is still quite broken and biased in both content selection and continuity and it is not systematic [4]. A poll carried out by the Shandong Provincial Academy of Educational Sciences revealed that among numerous problems that now exist in the field of traditional culture education in schools, the absence of unified standards in curriculum on traditional culture education was reported by 40.71% of the respondents.

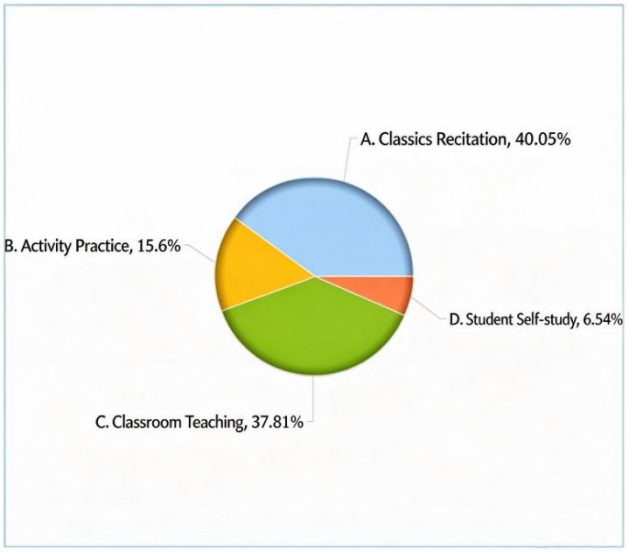
2.2 The Forms of Integrating Traditional Culture into Primary and Secondary Schools are Relatively Monotonous and Lack Appeal for Students

Based on the survey done by the Shandong Provincial Academy of Educational Sciences, the main ways of incorporating traditional culture into the curriculum include: 39.93 percent of schools have classical

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recitation, 37.73 percent have class teaching, 15.75 percent have practical exercises and 6.59 percent depend on student self-learning. It is clear that the dominant types of education of traditional culture that are now used in elementary and secondary schools are classical recitation and classroom instruction. The approaches to implement traditional culture into such schools are quite restricted and need additional enrichment and refinement. Refer to Figure 1.

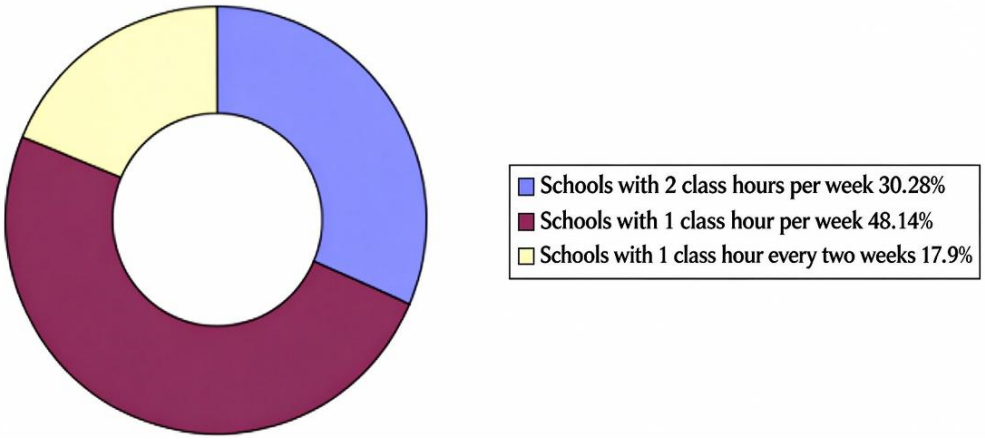
Figure 1: Primary Forms of Traditional Culture Education in Schools



2.3 The Number of CLASS Periods Dedicated to Traditional Culture in Primary and Secondary Schools Needs to be Increased, and There is a Lack of Measurement Methods

Based on the survey, in terms of the number of classes devoted to traditional culture in primary and secondary schools, it is reported that, 30.28 percent of schools will devote two classes a week, 48.14 percent will devote one class a week and 17.9 per cent will devote one class a week. According to statistics, the average number of class periods per week in primary and secondary schools is about 30. This means that fewer than a third of schools integrate 2 class periods of traditional culture education into their weekly schedule, which is 6% of the total class periods. The amount of time spent in class can also be greatly improved, and a unified educational system at all levels, including kindergarten and university, has not yet been created. (Refer to Figure 2.) At the same time, as far as the effectiveness and quality of traditional culture education are concerned, most schools have not developed a proper approach to the measurement of these aspects, which makes the improvement of them ineffective.

Figure 2: Class Periods Allocated to Traditional Culture Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

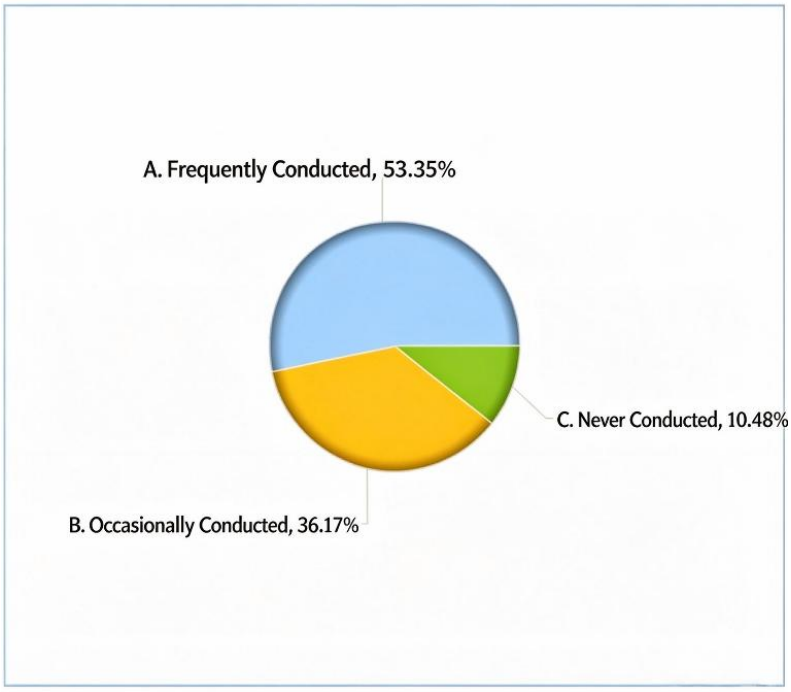


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2.4 Schools Conduct Few Activities Related to Traditional Culture Education, and the Practical Application of Traditional Culture is Weak

Based on the results of a survey conducted by the Shandong Provincial Academy of Educational Sciences entitled "On Schools' Implementation of Traditional Culture Education Activities", 53.27 percent of the schools often engage in such activities, whereas 36.11 percent do occasionally, and 10.62 percent never. Refer to Figure 3. The presence of activities promoting traditional culture is scant in primary and secondary schools. Meanwhile, it is common to find that universities normally provide compulsory and optional classes related to traditional culture, and there are no opportunities to apply them in practice. Universities act as a very important link between student life and entering society, and they are also very important learning stages where university students can apply traditional culture to society and unlock its commercial value anew. Considering modern universities, most of the facilities provide respective required and elective courses on traditional culture, with electives taking up the majority. These courses will fail to be offered if either no student enrolls or the number of students who enroll is inadequate. Simultaneously, contemporary college students have no high level of consciousness regarding the significance of inheritance and development of traditional culture; there are not many instances of application of good traditional culture to everyday life and society; the application of traditional culture in practice is poor; the incentive to transform it in practice is lacking.

Figure 3: Frequency of Traditional Culture Education Activities Conducted by Schools



3. Pathways for Integrating Traditional Culture Education Across Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education

The Ministry of Education notes in the "Guidelines for Improving Education on China's Outstanding Traditional Culture" that enhancing the education of China on its outstanding tradition is an important avenue in developing a mechanism of inheritance of the tradition as well as promoting both cultural heritage and cultural creativity; it is also an important avenue of nurturing and living core socialist values and achieving the fundamental goal of moral instruction by means of education. Educational reforms that involve incorporating traditional culture into schools of all levels would thus become especially essential. In order to tackle the current problems the following areas need to be addressed:

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3.1 Establish Curriculum Standards Tailored to Each Educational Stage Based on Their Characteristics, Ensuring a Gradual Progression in Traditional Culture Education

The integration of outstanding traditional culture into primary, secondary and higher education needs to be grounded on the particular characteristics of each stage since the students have different characteristics and learning capabilities depending on their grade levels and the instructional arrangements may vary throughout the educational stages. Standards of curriculum need to be created per stage, and clear goals of the instruction of traditional culture need to be set. It makes sure that the education of traditional culture and its objectives are very close and move in a stepwise fashion through various stages of education, thus ensuring preciseness and effectiveness in the process of teaching the excellent traditional culture at every level.

Depending on the requirements of every educational level as stated in the "Guidelines on Incorporation of China s Excellence in Traditional Culture in Primary and Secondary School Curricula and Textbooks", the nature of students at various stages and the material of traditional culture, the proposed approach is as follows.

Table 1: Curriculum Standards and Traditional Culture Education Objectives Across Educational Stages

Educational Stage	Requirements	Traditional Culture Education Content	Knowledge Objectives	Quality Objectives
Primary School	Starting with enlightenment education, focusing on cultivating students' affinity for and sensibility to fine traditional Chinese culture.	Historical figures of the Chinese nation, traditional festivals, solar terms and customs, inventions and discoveries, distinctive crafts, stories of traditional virtues, etc.	Enlightenment education, cultivating interest.	Nurturing traditional culture.
Middle School	Focusing on enhancing students' understanding of fine traditional Chinese culture, guiding students to further recognize the breadth and depth, long history of fine traditional Chinese culture and its significance to the world.	The history of splendid culture created by people of all ethnic groups in China, great achievements, calligraphy of famous masters, traditional arts, traditional classic literature, traditional etiquette, and traditional customs of various ethnic groups, etc.	Deepening understanding, enhancing identification.	Practicing traditional virtues.
High School	Focusing on enhancing students' rational understanding and practical ability in fine traditional Chinese culture.	The historical origins of the pluralistic integration of the Chinese nation, and important academic and artistic schools, etc.	Rational cognition, strengthening practice.	Firming up cultural confidence.
University		Historical origins of fine traditional culture, Chinese humanistic spirit, philosophical thoughts of traditional culture, General Secretary Xi Jinping's important discourses on China's outstanding traditional culture, relevant policies on the "Two Creations" (creative transformation and innovative development) of fine traditional culture, etc.	Learning for application, innovative inheritance.	Cultivating moral character, establishing aspirations, and strengthening the nation.

At any level of primary, secondary, or tertiary education, there should be specific knowledge and competency goals related to traditional culture education. Simultaneously, with the inclusion of traditional culture in the Chinese language, history, ethics, and the rule of law, and others, each of these subjects is required to formulate its own specific curriculum standards which should explicitly specify the requirements of curriculum objectives, content, class hours allocation, teaching methodology, and assessment. It is guaranteed that various subjects and grade levels can supplement each other and act in harmony, whereas the

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various educational stages are smoothly connected and advanced in a step-by-step fashion so that the continuity, coherence, and progressive nature of traditional culture education through all the educational stages are ensured.

3.2 Diversifying Integration Methods, Stimulating Student Interest, and Enhancing the Effectiveness of Traditional Culture Education

In the process of integrating traditional culture into primary, secondary, and higher education, there are several approaches to integration that may be applied depending on the nature of students at various educational stages and the particular curriculum content. Firstly, revolutionize the manner in which traditional culture is incorporated into the curriculum: 1. Incorporate education on traditional culture in pre-class introductions, in-class instruction, and post-class assignments, but focus on the whole process of integration; 2. In-person classroom instruction should be prioritized, while taking advantage of new media tools and online resources to enable students to learn how to use new media technology to explore and go deeper into outstanding traditional culture and thus achieve a blended learning style of traditional culture education, comprising both online and offline segments; 3. Develop immersive scenarios with technologies like artificial intelligence based on traditional cultural content to conduct thematic instructions. Thematic-based teaching enables students to have more rich visual, auditory, tactile and sensory experiences and also immerse themselves in traditional culture and receive its cultural influence in an immersive setting. Secondly, broaden the ways in which school students can experience outstanding traditional culture. For example, take students on regular field trips that concern traditional culture and invite traditional culture artisans to schools to lecture, demonstrate crafts, and offer hands-on opportunities to students; and enhance the firsthand experience of outstanding traditional culture of students in a variety of forms of practical activities. It increases the depth of students understanding and awareness of traditional culture in various planes. Thirdly, apply traditional cultural festivals and rituals to create an atmosphere supportive of traditional cultural education. There are many traditional festivals in China; Some of the festivals can be used to engage students in themed activities. With this, students gain knowledge of the historical background and contemporary importance of traditional Chinese festivals by maintaining their high quality and encouraging their innovative development. Such as the commemoration of the patriotic poet Qu Yuan with the guidance of students to the Dragon Boat Festival, enhancing their sense of patriotism; or the commemoration of the ancestors and martyrs with the guidance of students to the Qingming Festival, and so on. When traditional culture is integrated into primary, secondary, and higher education, various forms of integration and teaching techniques may be chosen depending on the characteristics of students at all education levels and the specifics of curriculum content.

3.3 Improving the Assessment Mechanism to Motivate Students and Ensure the Effectiveness of Traditional Culture Education

The evaluation of student learning achievements is also an essential tool used to assess the learning results of students and acts as one of the critical drivers used to encourage students to enhance their work and work toward excellence. Hence, due to the inclusion of Chinese traditional culture into primary, secondary, and higher education, specific assessment plans need to be developed depending on the nature of various educational stages and subjects. It not only tests the level of knowledge of traditional culture that students have but also encourages them to learn and gain insight into it more actively [5]. In terms of assessment forms of traditional culture education, they can be designed both theoretically and practically. Theoretical assessment means assessing the result of students' learning using exams and tests mostly, motivating students to acquire theoretical knowledge of traditional culture, including traditional culture taught in the curriculum, additional knowledge studied outside the class, and different types of traditional culture knowledge competitions held by classes or schools. As examples, schools can be inspired by programmes such as the China Poetry Competition, or the Poetry and the Far Horizon: The Best Youth Poetry Competition in China hosted by Qingdao University of Science and Technology in 2024, which gathered an enthusiastic response from over 50 elementary schools and 80,000 students. Using the format of these traditional culture competitions as inspiration, schools will not only be able to evaluate the mastery of traditional cultural knowledge of students but also encourage them to engage in active learning of traditional culture when they are free. Practical assessments consist of engaging students in traditional craft-making activities, traditional culture creation competitions (i.e.,, cultural and creative design or so-called Guochao design), and other practical activities associated with traditional culture, i.e., applying traditional virtues to practice. As an example, the Cultural Heritage Strengthens the Nation - I

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Contribute Youth Calligraphy and Painting Training Conference organized by the Sichuan Provincial Department of Education focuses mainly on elementary and secondary schools. The conference features calligraphy and painting competitions and assessment of case studies in teaching creating a framework of inheritance, dissemination and practice. Those students who meet the goals may receive appropriate certificates of traditional culture. No matter how traditional culture education is conducted, whether it involves theoretical assessments or practical certificates, students have the option of filing an application with their schools to access innovation credits. With proper assessment techniques, people can not only enhance the familiarity and enthusiasm of young students towards traditional culture as they take part in practical activities, but also make sure that there is improved conservation and innovative development of the traditional culture. Moreover, this procedure assists young individuals in boosting their cultural confidence and enhancing their devotion to the nation by employing their abilities.

Concerning the assessment aspects of traditional culture education, the criteria may be defined in the context of the teacher evaluation, school evaluation, family evaluation, and social evaluation, which would lead to diversity and pluralism in traditional culture education and create a multidimensional evaluation system. With the process of perfecting the evaluation processes of each level of education and maintaining the coherence and succession of the evaluation schemes used at various levels, it is possible to establish a uniform evaluation system of traditional culture education. With sensible and efficient evaluation systems, students are motivated to take an initiative in learning traditional cultures and the practical efficacy of traditional culture education is also guaranteed.

3.4 Expand Practical Activities, Apply Knowledge in Practice, and Promote the Innovative Transformation of Traditional Culture

Traditional culture education may be practically carried out in both in-class and out-of-class forms. Besides typical in-class activities like recitation of classical texts and copying calligraphy by famous artists, in-class activities might also be in the form of skits based on themes related to traditional culture, choral recitations, storytelling, and writing essays. These are activities that lead students to actively gather, comprehend, acquire, and explain the best traditional culture and thus increase the efficacy of traditional culture education. As an instance of this, an essay task on the subject of ancient celebrities, learning and sharing the historical background of traditional cultural artifacts, commenting on them, or cooking a traditional dish could be used to help students get more knowledge about traditional culture through post-class practical tasks. Out-of-class extracurricular activities can involve bringing students to listen to lectures on traditional culture, attending traditional culture exhibitions, researching traditional culture, experiencing traditional crafts, making works inspired by traditional culture, and even practical activities like productive work, volunteer work, and social welfare programs based on traditional culture. Encourage students to leave the classroom, interact with the world, and experience a real traditional cultural environment so that they can feel the historical importance of traditional culture, admire its high-minded values, and continue its spirit.

The two other methods that could be considered when it comes to college students are: First, enhance traditional culture club activities so as to create a learning environment of traditional culture. Create traditional culture-related clubs, including a Famous Figures of Traditional Culture club, which mainly spreads the stories and ideas of famous people in history to inspire college students in the course of their everyday life and education, and a Traditional Crafts club, which helps students to feel and learn traditional crafts and develop a sense of achievement during exhibitions, charity sales, and online check-ins. Also, students have an opportunity to acquire different types of innovation credits depending on their performance in these clubs. Second, people need to introduce “ideological and political education through the curriculum” using integration of traditional culture and major-specific subjects as well as integration of traditional culture and innovation and entrepreneurship education. It allows students to utilize their specialized knowledge combined with traditional culture to participate in innovation and entrepreneurship. People need to create an effective training facility for college student innovation and entrepreneurship projects at the institutional, provincial, and national levels that will help students to engage in hands-on practice to benefit from the new educational and business value of traditional culture. Through the use of students professional strengths, people can naturally incorporate traditional culture into modern economic development and cultural growth, as well as societal advancement, thus making the contribution to the great rejuvenation of China.

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Through the broadening of the practical activities in the traditional culture education, pupils at various grade levels can use their knowledge in practice to boost creative transformation and innovation of the splendid traditional culture of China.

4. Conclusion

To be precise, passing down traditional culture between students has similar features to nurturing a young sapling. Elementary school education provides the conditions under which the transmission of traditional culture may become deeply rooted and shoot up; middle school education creates the branches and trunks of this transmission; and university education permits the transmission of traditional culture to flourish and produce its fruits. The education of China's remarkable traditional culture at all levels of education can certainly make sure that traditional culture becomes rooted and sprouted and thrives among students. With these steps, traditional culture is going to fill the minds and bodies of each student of any age-children, youth, adults-both internally and externally, so that it will be transmitted without breakage to the next generation and the role of outstanding traditional culture in the new era will be achieved.

The excellent traditional culture of China is developed and acted upon - not just studied and written about. When the concept of culture does not fulfill the role of transformation, it cannot be considered culture but mere words on paper. Then, in the process of traditional culture preservation, in addition to comprehension and literacy, people need to change society by taking actual steps. The students act as the enormous medium of the novel transfer of China's excellent traditional culture. It is expected that with the educational reform of traditional culture in schools with tight collaboration at all levels of education, gradual implementation and spiral development, people will be able to successfully execute the task of fostering virtue and nurturing talent. Finally, this will bring about the ultimate objective of creatively changing and innovatively evolving China's excellent traditional culture, which will restore its vibrancy in the new era. Moreover, with the help of the best educational principles of the traditional culture, people may gently and slowly shape and promote the essence of socialist values throughout lives, starting with childhood, improve cultural pride, consolidate national identity, and enrich the patriotism.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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