A Practical Study on Integrating Traditional Chinese Etiquette Culture into Ideological and Political Education for Vocational College Students

Li Xuanjun[1], Phananoi Rotchu[2], Sirisawas Thongkanluang [3]
1 Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction Suratthani Rajabhat University
2,3 Faculty of Education, Suratthani Rajabhat University
e-mail 67052535112@student.sru.ac.th

Abstract

The integration of traditional Chinese etiquette culture into higher vocational education has gained policy momentum under China's Moral Education Initiative, yet empirical evidence validating its instructional efficacy remains scarce. This study examines the effectiveness of a structured curriculum intervention designed to cultivate professional competence through traditional etiquette education among vocational college students. A quasi-experimental single-group pre-test-post-test design was employed with 25 students at Quanzhou Light Industry Vocational College. Participants completed an eight-session course (45 minutes per session; six instructional hours) titled "Etiquette Nurtures Craftsmanship: Integrating Traditional Etiquette with Professional Competence," with data collected via knowledge tests, satisfaction questionnaires, classroom observation, and self-report instruments. Cognitive outcomes demonstrated a substantial gain from pre-test ($M = 69.64$) to post-test ($M = 85.00$), representing a 15.36-point increase that was statistically significant, $t(24) = 29.54$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 5.91$; 95% CI [14.29, 16.43]). Emotional engagement yielded a mean satisfaction score of $M = 4.34$ ($p < .001$, $d = 0.83$); subscale analyses showed medium-to-large effects for course content ($d = 0.62$) and learning outcomes ($d = 0.81$), although teaching methods did not reach significance ($p = .075$). Classroom observation scores showed no statistically significant behavioral change ($t = 1.23$, $p = .231$, $d = 0.25$); however, 88% of students reported heightened attention to etiquette norms and 92% expressed willingness to continue practicing etiquette behaviors. The Efficiency Index was 0.506, exceeding the 0.50 threshold for high efficiency. The findings provide feasibility evidence, a replicable curriculum framework, and a cognitive-emotional-behavioral evaluation model for culturally grounded vocational moral education.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese etiquette culture; higher vocational colleges; ideological and political education; Moral Education Initiative; curriculum intervention; quasi-experimental design; teaching efficiency index

1. Problem Background and Significance

1.1 Policy Context and Strategic Requirements

Beginning in 2017, the General Offices of the Central Committee and the State Council mandated traditional culture integration across all educational stages (General Office of the Central Committee & General Office of the State Council, 2017). Subsequent policies-the National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan (State Council, 2019), the Guidelines for Integrating Ideological and Political Education (Ministry of Education, 2020), and the "Skill Development for National Strength

Through Education" initiative (Ministry of Education, 2025)-established etiquette-based curriculum as a priority, although implementation pathways remain unresolved.

1.2 Educational Value of Traditional Chinese Etiquette Culture

Traditional Chinese etiquette culture encompasses behavioral norms and values-benevolence, sincerity, respect, and courtesy (Zou, 2000; Gu, 2001; Peng, 2004)-and can yield cognitive, emotional, and behavioral benefits through embodied practice (Yu & Zhou, 2015; Cai, 2023).

1.3 Practical Challenges in Higher Vocational Institutions

Ideological education remains theoretically dominated, yielding low engagement and knowledge-behavior gaps (Qian & Yan, 2026; Yue, 2023). Etiquette education is often delivered sporadically without systematic design and remains focused on behavioral constraint rather than cultivating virtue through etiquette (Wu & Chen, 2020; Zhang, 2019).

1.4 Research Gap

The literature exhibits three deficiencies: theoretical discussion without adequate empirical validation (Zhang, 2019; Xu, 2019); macro-level principles without replicable curriculum designs (Yue, 2023; Wu & Chen, 2020); and a focus on regular universities that neglects vocational-specific students (Cheng, 2010). This study therefore evaluates a curriculum intervention integrating traditional Chinese etiquette culture into ideological and political education through a quasi-experimental design.

2. Research Objectives

This study pursued three core objectives: to design and implement an eight-module course integrating traditional Chinese culture with vocational skill development; to examine curricular effects on cognition, emotional identification, and behavior through tests, observations, and questionnaires; and to quantify teaching efficiency through attainment efficiency (E1), retention efficiency (E2), and the comprehensive Efficiency Index (E.I.) while identifying replicable design principles.

3. Research Hypotheses

Four hypotheses guided the study. H1 proposed that post-test knowledge scores would exceed pre-test scores. H2 proposed that mean satisfaction with course content and learning outcomes would exceed 4.0, while teaching-method satisfaction was not expected to reach significance. H3 proposed significant improvement in observed greetings and adherence to etiquette norms. H4 proposed that the comprehensive teaching efficiency index would reach or exceed 0.30, indicating effective instruction.

4. Research Scope

4.1 Conceptual Framework and Variables

The independent variable was an eight-session, six-instructional-hour curriculum delivered for 45 minutes per session. The dependent variable was effectiveness across cognition, emotional attitude, and observed behavior. The proposed relationship progressed from cognitive understanding to emotional identification and behavioral manifestation and was informed by experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

4.2 Population, Sample, Site, and Time

A natural class from the 2024 cohort at Quanzhou Light Industry Vocational College in Quanzhou, China, was selected through cluster sampling. The sample comprised 25 Internet of Things Application Technology students. Data collection covered an 18-week implementation period.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Value
Program	Internet of Things Application Technology
Sample size	N = 25 (16 male, 9 female)
Age range	18–20 years

4.3 Course Content

Eight modules based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle covered origin; campus and workplace applications; family etiquette; intangible cultural heritage; project-based learning; and presentation and reflection. Instruction combined simulation, role-playing, heritage experience, and projects.

5. Research Methods

5.1 Research Design

The study used a single-group pre-test-post-test quasi-experimental design (O1 ⟶ X ⟶ O2), where O1 was the pre-test, X was the eight-session intervention, and O2 comprised the post-test and satisfaction questionnaire. Mixed methods combined quantitative test and Likert-scale data with qualitative observation notes and reflective writing. Each participant served as their own control.

5.2 Theoretical Foundation

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory guided concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Jackson's (1968) hidden curriculum theory informed situational simulation, while Piaget's (1932) constructivist account supported role-playing, peer evaluation, and collaborative projects.

6. Research Instruments

Three purpose-built instruments collected cognitive, emotional, and behavioral data.

6.1 Etiquette Culture Course Content Test

The researcher-developed 100-point test contained multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, situational application, and reflection tasks. Its distribution followed Bloom's taxonomy: memorization (40%), comprehension (30%), application (20%), and reflection (10%). Pre- and post-tests each required 40 minutes.

Table 2. Test Structure

Section	Items	Points	Cognitive Level
Multiple-choice	10	20	Memorization
True/false	10	10	Memorization
Short-answer	2	20	Comprehension
Situational application	1	20	Application
Reflection	1	10	Reflection
Total	24	100	—

6.2 Course Satisfaction Questionnaire

Fifteen closed-ended items and one open-ended item measured course content (Q1–5), teaching methods (Q6–10), and learning outcomes (Q11–15) on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's α was 0.87 for the full scale and 0.81–0.89 for the three dimensions.

6.3 Classroom Observation Record Form

The form documented attendance, engagement in questioning, discussion and role-playing, and etiquette behaviors such as greetings, norm adherence, and polite communication. Structured forms were completed after each session, and video recordings supported post-class coding.

6.4 Development, Pilot Testing, and Revision

The instruments were aligned with the cognitive-emotional-behavioral framework and pilot-tested during preparation. Wording, instructions, and observation descriptors were refined before formal administration; internal consistency informed retention of the questionnaire dimensions.

7. Data Collection

7.1 Procedure and Timeline

Data collection proceeded in three phases. Phase 1 (Weeks 1–4) covered preparation, pilot testing, a 40-minute pre-test, and a 20-minute initial questionnaire. Phase 2 (Weeks 5–14) delivered eight 45-minute sessions and completed observation forms after each session. Phase 3 (Weeks 15–18) included the 40-minute post-test, 20-minute satisfaction questionnaire, and compilation of observation records.

7.2 Data Quality Control

Quantitative data were double-entered in Excel for verification. Observation records and reflection texts were retained for thematic coding, while video recordings supported review of classroom observations.

8. Data Analysis

SPSS 26.0 was used for quantitative analyses. Descriptive statistics included the mean, standard deviation, range, and satisfaction rate; Shapiro-Wilk tests assessed normality. Paired-samples t-tests evaluated cognitive gains (H1) and behavioral change (H3), while one-sample t-tests against 4.0 assessed emotional responses (H2). Cohen's d and 95% confidence intervals quantified effect sizes. Teaching

efficiency was calculated as E.I. = (Mpost − Mpre) / (100 − Mpre), with E.I. ≥ 0.30 classified as effective and E.I. ≥ 0.50 as highly efficient. Qualitative material was analyzed through inductive thematic content analysis.

9. Research Summary

Results correspond directly to the four evaluative objectives.

9.1 Cognitive Dimension (H1)

The pre-test mean of 69.64 (SD = 3.95, range = 62–76) increased to 85.00 (SD = 3.48, range = 78–90), a gain of 15.36 points or 22.1%. Every participant improved by 9–18 points. The paired-samples result was $t(24) = 29.54$, $p < .001$, $d = 5.91$, 95% CI [14.29, 16.43]; therefore, H1 was supported.

Table 3. Cognitive Pre-test and Post-test Results

Measure	Result	Inferential Summary
Pre-test	M = 69.64; SD = 3.95	
Post-test	M = 85.00; SD = 3.48	
Paired difference	15.36 points	$t(24) = 29.54$; $p < .001$; $d = 5.91$; 95% CI [14.29, 16.43]

9.2 Emotional-Attitude Dimension (H2)

Overall satisfaction (M = 4.34, SD = 0.41) exceeded 4.0, $t(24) = 4.15$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.83$. Course content and learning outcomes were significant, whereas teaching methods were not significant at $\alpha = .05$. The highest ratings concerned family etiquette and filial piety (M = 4.44), cultural confidence (M = 4.40), and willingness to practice (M = 4.40). The lowest ratings concerned intangible cultural heritage experience and interaction feedback (M = 4.12; 24% "average"). H2 was partially supported.

Table 4. One-Sample t-Tests for Satisfaction Subscales

Subscale	M (SD)	Test Against 4.0
Course content	4.28 (0.45)	$t(24) = 3.11$; $p = .005$; $d = 0.62$
Teaching methods	4.19 (0.51)	$t(24) = 1.86$; $p = .075$; $d = 0.37$
Learning outcomes	4.38 (0.47)	$t(24) = 4.04$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.81$
Total	4.34 (0.41)	$t(24) = 4.15$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.83$

9.3 Behavioral Dimension (H3)

Class Performance 1 (M = 38.32, SD = 3.87) and Class Performance 2 (M = 39.44, SD = 3.85) differed by 1.12 points. The difference was not significant, $t(24) = 1.23$, $p = .231$, $d = 0.25$; 48% improved, 32% declined, and 20% were unchanged. Self-reports nevertheless indicated that 88% paid greater attention to norms and 92% intended to practice etiquette. H3 was therefore only partially supported.

9.4 Teaching Efficiency Index (H4)

E1 = 85.60 and E2 = 85.00 were both classified as excellent. The composite E.I. = 0.506 exceeded the high-efficiency threshold of 0.50; therefore, H4 was supported.

Table 5. Hypothesis Verification Summary

Hypothesis	Dimension	Key Statistic	Decision
H1	Cognitive	$t(24) = 29.54$; $p < .001$; $d = 5.91$	Supported
H2	Emotional-attitudinal	Content and outcomes significant; methods $p = .075$	Partially supported
H3	Behavioral	$t(24) = 1.23$; $p = .231$; self-report 88–92%	Partially supported
H4	Efficiency	E.I. = 0.506	Supported

10. Discussion

10.1 Cognitive Findings

The post-test increase and reduced dispersion indicate substantial knowledge growth. The result is consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential cycle and vocational students' preference for practical learning (Cheng, 2010; Gong, 2019). The very large effect should nevertheless be interpreted in light of the single-group design and possible testing and maturation effects.

10.2 Emotional Findings

Overall satisfaction demonstrated strong student recognition, and learning outcomes produced the largest subscale effect. This supports a pathway from cognitive understanding to emotional identification (Yu & Zhou, 2015). The nonsignificant teaching-method result and the lowest-rated intangible cultural heritage item indicate that the 45-minute experience allowed insufficient time for interaction and practice.

10.3 Behavioral Findings

The nonsignificant observation result contrasted with positive self-reports. Students perceived behavioral change, but objective observation did not detect a reliable improvement within the limited timeframe. This pattern is compatible with Kohlberg's (1981) account of moral development, in which stable behavioral change follows a slower trajectory, and it also signals a need for more sensitive and repeated measures.

10.4 Comparison with Prior Research

The findings corroborate Yin's (2024) action research and support Wu and Chen's (2020) framework linking etiquette culture with vocational ideological and political education. They also align with constructivist accounts of moral development (Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1981). The present study extends prior conceptual work (Zhang, 2019; Xu, 2019; Yue, 2023) by providing a replicable curriculum and quantified cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and efficiency outcomes, while its lack of a control group limits causal inference.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Practical Applications

Because 48% requested more practical scenarios, each micro-lecture should limit theory to 15 minutes and reserve at least 20 minutes for simulation or role-play. The intangible cultural heritage experience should become a two-hour hands-on program. Evaluation should combine classroom performance (30%), project design (30%), reflective reports (20%), and knowledge tests (20%). A digital social etiquette module covering email, videoconference, and social-media norms should also be added.

11.2 Future Research

Future research should use a larger sample and comparison group to strengthen internal validity; employ standardized behavioral scales, multiple assessors, and repeated measurement occasions; and conduct three- and six-month follow-up assessments of durability. A digital social etiquette micro-course and its measurement instruments should also be designed and evaluated in response to documented student demand.

12. References

Cai, K. (2023). Methods and approaches for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into ideological and political education in higher education. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, (12), 131–136.

Cheng, D. (2010). Research on the specificities and countermeasures of ideological and political education for students in higher vocational colleges in the new era [Master's thesis, Soochow University]. CNKI.

General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, & General Office of the State Council. (2017, January 25). Opinions on implementing the project for inheriting and developing excellent traditional Chinese culture. Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China.http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2017-01-25/content_5163472.htm

Gong, T. (2019). A glimpse into the influence of major contemporary social trends on vocational college students. *Education Modernization*, 6(84), 243–244.

Gu, X. (2001). Etiquette and Chinese culture. People's Publishing House.

Jackson, P. W. (1968). Life in classrooms. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Kohlberg, L. (1981). The philosophy of moral development. Harper & Row.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Prentice-Hall.

Ministry of Education. (2020, May 28). Guidelines for integrating ideological and political education into university curricula. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.
http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html

Ministry of Education. (2025). Notice on launching the “Skill Development for National Strength Through Education” series of educational initiatives. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.

Peng, L. (2004). Ancient ritual civilization of China. Zhonghua Book Company.

Piaget, J. (1932). The moral judgment of the child. Kegan Paul.

Qian, H., and Yan, L. (2026). Analysis of challenges and innovative approaches to ideological and political education in higher vocational colleges in the context of social media. Journal of News Research, (7), 199–201.

State Council. (2019, January 24). National vocational education reform implementation plan. Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-01-24/content_5357261.htm

Wu, X., and Chen, S. (2020). Reflections on integrating traditional etiquette culture education into ideological and political course teaching for vocational college students. Journal of Liaoning Normal University (Social Sciences Edition), (6), 22–24.

Xu, P. (2019). Research on the integration of ritual culture into ideological and political education in higher education. *Think Tank Era*, (15), 157–158.

Yin, Y. (2024). Application of action research in improving the teaching effectiveness of ideological and political courses in higher vocational colleges. Modern Vocational Education, (5), 48–51.

Yu, L., and Zhou, X. (2015). On the contemporary value of China's excellent traditional ritual culture. *Academic Exchange*, (10), 215–218.

Yue, Z. (2023). Practical approaches for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into ideological and political education in higher vocational institutions. *Journal of Jiangsu College of Economics and Trade*, (5), 47–49.

Zhang, R. (2019). Research on methods for integrating traditional ritual culture into college students' ideological and political education. *School Party Building and Ideological Education*, (1), 91–93.

Zou, C. (2000). China's ritual culture. Social Sciences Academic Press.