

# Ways of Integrating Yangming Culture into Primary School Moral Education in Guizhou Province

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## ABSTRACT

The development of Yangming Culture, which is now full-fledged, is inseparable from the geographical characteristics and human environment of Guizhou Province. To integrate Yangming Culture into primary school moral education in Guizhou, the current status of moral education at local primary schools should be taken into consideration. Moral education at primary schools in Guizhou should be based on the merits of the cultures of local ethnic minorities and mountain regions, with Wang Yangming's Study of Heart serving as a guide. From the viewpoint of moral education, the core of Yangming Culture can be summarized into four main conceptions, namely "to get the hang of things," "mind is the pattern," "the extension of innate knowledge," and "the unity of knowing and doing." Through a questionnaire survey on a total of 567 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders from primary schools in all the nine cities and prefectures in Guizhou, the research group got a basic knowledge of the current status of moral education at local primary schools and explored ways to integrate Yangming Culture into primary school moral education in Guizhou from both theoretical and practical viewpoints.

**Keywords:** traditional culture, the Study of Heart, moral education at primary schools, ways of integration

## 1. INTRODUCTION

President Xi Jinping points out that "China's national rejuvenation is based on the thriving Chinese culture." The Study of Heart, put forward by Wang Yangming, a great statesman, thinker, and educator in the Min Dynasty, is one of China's important cultural heritages, and the conception of "the unity of knowing and doing," also proposed by Wang Yangming, has a far-reaching impact both in China and around the world. Over the years, President Xi Jinping has stressed the significance of "the unity of knowing and doing" at least eight times at important conferences. When President Xi Jinping delivered his speech at the teacher-student symposium at Peking University in 2018, he pointed out that students should "unify knowing and doing, try hard to be men of action with ideals, knowledge, and competence, and make remarkable accomplishments in the new era." [1] In recent years, however, research on the integration of the Study of Heart into moral education at primary

schools is still scarce, and relevant practice is even rarer. Wang Yangming's thoughts, which extolls people-oriented education, attach great importance to people's conscience and natural inclination to be morally good. Studying ways to incorporate Wang Yangming's Study of Heart into moral education at primary schools in Guizhou can not only introduce an innovative approach to moral education at local primary schools but emphasize the dominant role of students in moral education. In addition, drawing experience from the cultural achievements in ancient China can also help enhance students' cultural confidence.

## 2. INSIGHTS FOR MORAL EDUCATION IN YANGMING CULTURE

Wang Shouren, with the courtesy name "Yangming," was born in the eighth year of Chenghua (1472) (under the reign of Emperor Xianzong of the Ming Dynasty) and died in the seventh year of Jiajing (1529) (under the reign

of Emperor Shizong of the Ming Dynasty). Taking into consideration the thoughts of Yangming scholars, including Chen Lai, Feng Youlan, and Suzuki Teitaro Daisetz, the research group believes that the insights for moral education involved in Yangming Culture present themselves in four main dimensions, namely moral knowledge, moral emotion, moral consciousness, and moral behavior. The corresponding terms that can be found in Wang Yangming's thoughts are "to get the hang of things," "mind is the pattern," "the extension of innate knowledge," and "the unity of knowing and doing."

### ***2.1 To get the hang of things: moral knowledge***

While Lu Jiuyuan took *The Mencius* as the basis of his thought, the overall conception and structure of Wang Yangming's philosophy are more closely connected to *The Great Learning*. Though Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi had the same view on what kind of things people should investigate, Wang Yangming claimed that his idea on the investigation of things "has its own significance" [2]. "To get the hang of things" means to gain knowledge through close study of the very essence of things while preserving the subjectivity of the mind. When it comes to moral education at primary schools, "to get the hang of things" can be understood as teachers and students learning and analyzing relevant moral knowledge under the guidance of the highest moral consciousness inherent in their minds.

### ***2.2 Mind is the pattern: moral emotion***

According to the Study of Heart, the relationship between the mind and the law of all things is the core of neo-Confucianism. In ethics, "conscience" is a notion that bears much resemblance to the "moral subject" in Kant's thoughts. The Study of Heart, though in which "conscience" is often referred to as "mind," represents exactly such a "moral subject." "Mind is the pattern" can be understood as one's innate inner drive to pursue high moral standards. When it comes to moral education, "mind" can be seen as the moral subject, which stresses practice and takes the quest for the highest virtues as its responsibility; "pattern" refers to the moral law, and the "law" here indicates laws made by human beings rather than the universal laws of nature [3]. "Mind is the pattern" can thus be interpreted as moral subjects striving actively to meet the requirements of the moral law.

### ***2.3 The extension of innate knowledge: moral consciousness***

"The extension of innate knowledge" is the ultimate representation of Wang Yangming's philosophy, and the conception has given rise to and greatly influenced the blossoming philosophical ideas in the mid and late Ming Dynasty. Wang Yangming once said, "One's nature is what one is endowed with; Tao is one following his nature,

and moralization is the self-cultivation based on one following his nature ... Tao is one's innate knowledge, which is an unchallengeable measure of what's right and wrong as well as a moral guide for all human beings" [4]. In Wang Yangming's point of view, one's innate knowledge is Tao, the supreme moral law. But only with the help of one's spiritual awareness can one's innate knowledge become the supreme moral law. When it comes to moral education, "the extension of innate knowledge" can be understood as the growth of one's moral consciousness until it conforms to the universal moral law in human society. Thus, in the field of moral education, "the extension of innate knowledge" can be categorized as a conception stressing moral consciousness.

### ***2.4 The unity of knowing and doing: moral behavior***

In March of the third year of Zhengde, Wang Yangming was relegated to a position in Longchang, Guizhou, where he "lived in poverty," "endured difficulties that helped to build character," and finally "experienced a moment of enlightenment in the middle of a night and continued to explore the mystery of mind for a whole year." According to the chronicle of Wang Yangming's life, when Wang Yangming gave lectures at Guiyang Academy in Guizhou, "he started to talk about the unity of knowing and doing ... He established the system of knowledge and action, and supported his arguments by quoting from the Five Classics. After talking about and reflecting on his thoughts for several days, an epiphany finally struck him. [5]" It can be seen from the chronicle that Wang Yangming started to promote "the unity of knowing and doing" with the help of literary classics early when he was in Guiyang. In his time, people had knowledge of things but seldom put it into practice, and Wang Yangming was strongly against this. In Wang Yangming's view, "the unity of knowing and doing" stresses knowledge presented through action rather than action guided by knowledge. When it comes to moral education, "the unity of knowing and doing" can be interpreted as the unity of moral knowledge and moral behavior, which advocates moral principles embodied in practice.

### ***2.5 The current status of moral education at primary schools in Guizhou***

Moral education means the internalization of moral principles. People's different perceptions of moral education lead to different views on the emphasis and constituent parts of moral education. Existing viewpoints on moral education in the academic world include behaviorism, intellectualism, emotionalism, and volitionalism. Taking into consideration the views of ancient philosophers including Socrates and Hume and the thoughts of modern Western scholars including

Dewey, as well as domestic scholars including Huang Xiangyang and Gao Desheng, the research group believes that moral education can be broken down into four interrelated dimensions, namely moral knowledge, moral emotion, moral consciousness, and moral behavior.

To know better about the current status of moral education at primary schools in Guizhou, the research group designed a questionnaire with an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.89. The

questionnaires were sent out online for students to complete during the nine months from September 2020 to May 2021. Apart from sending online questionnaires, several members of the research group visited nine primary schools in Guizhou to ensure the validity of the data collected while gathering first-hand information about moral education at local primary schools.

2.6 Basic Information

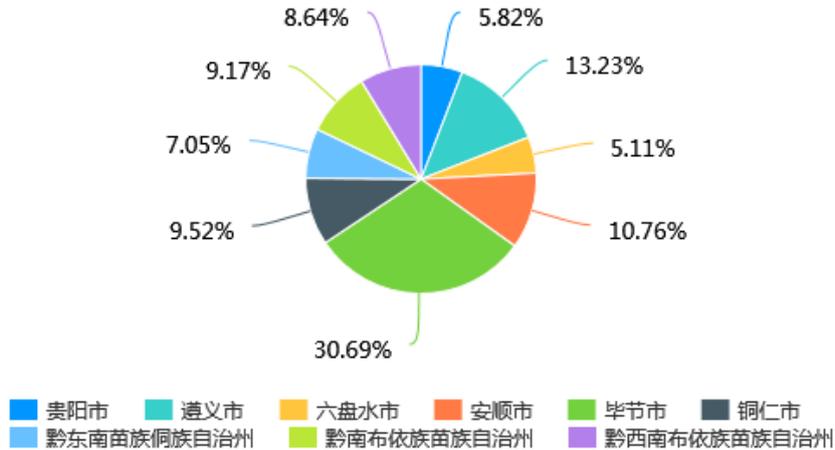


Figure 1 Geographical distribution of the students participating in the survey

贵阳市: Guiyang 遵义市: Zunyi 六盘水市: Liupanshui 安顺市: Anshun 毕节市: Bijie 铜仁市: Tongren 黔东南苗族侗族自治州: Southeast Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture 黔南布依苗族自治州: South Guizhou Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture 黔西南布依苗族自治州: Southwest Guizhou Buyi and Miao Autonomous Prefecture

A total of 567 primary school students from all the cities and prefectures of Guizhou Province participated in the survey. Details about the participants can be found in Figure 1.

Province. Among them, there are 151 fourth graders, 336 fifth graders, and 80 sixth graders, making up 26.63%, 59.26%, and 11.44% of all the participants, respectively. It can also be seen that the fifth graders account for the largest share of the participants while the sixth graders constitute the smallest part. More details about the participants can be found in Figure 2.

Participants in the survey are fourth, fifth, and sixth graders from all the cities and prefectures of Guizhou

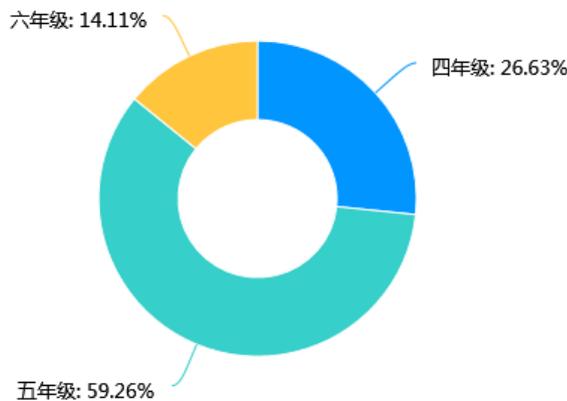


Figure 2 Age distribution of the students participating in the survey

四年级: Fourth Graders 五年级: Fifth Graders 六年级: Sixth Graders

### 3. RESULTS

From the results of the questionnaire survey, it can be seen that the students surveyed have a generally good command of moral knowledge, but their performance can be improved when it comes to the demonstration of moral knowledge through actions (examples include whether to run a red light on a crosswalk). The students' moral emotions tend to be diverse, as when it comes to questions with more than one acceptable answer, the students' responses vary dramatically, which reflects the necessity of guidance on the part of teachers. Most of the students have relatively high moral consciousness, but

when participation in real-life activities is involved, the students' responses aren't quite satisfying. The students' performance on moral behavior isn't satisfactory (examples include issues concerning throwing garbage and being late for appointments). Though the students gave relatively good answers to three sets of multiple-choice questions, considering the pressure offered by the teachers, the places chosen for the students to fill out the questionnaires, and the fact that the cases involved in the questions didn't really happen, the research group believes that the students' moral behavior should be improved. Suggestions for improving student performance on the four dimensions of moral education in primary schools in Guizhou can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1** Student performance on the four dimensions of moral education in primary schools in Guizhou and corresponding suggestions

Dimensions	Student Performance and Suggestions
Moral Knowledge	Learning results of moral knowledge are generally satisfactory, but students should be encouraged to show their command of moral knowledge through their actions.
Moral Emotion	Students' moral emotions tend to be diverse, where relevant guidance is necessary.
Moral Consciousness	Most students have strong moral consciousness, but students should be encouraged to participate in more manual labor activities and social practices.
Moral Behavior	Students' performance on moral behavior is not satisfactory, which should be improved by paying more attention to students' daily actions.

### 4. WAYS TO INTEGRATE YANGMING CULTURE INTO MORAL EDUCATION AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GUIZHOU

#### 4.1 Theoretical approach

Guizhou culture combines the characteristics of Han culture with that of ethnic minorities, including Miao, Yao, Di, Qiang, Baiyue, Pu, and Liao. The abundance of mountains and the altitude led to inconvenient transportation in Guizhou, which caused the cultural development in Guizhou to lag far behind that of other regions in the country. With views of scholars including Shi Jizhong [6], Shen Manxiu [7], and Zhou Chunyuan [8] taken into consideration, characteristics of Guizhou culture can be summarized in two sentences – that is, cultures of ethnic minorities are intertwined with that of mountain regions. Multiple ethnic minorities exist harmoniously together, while mountain regions are quaint and idyllic, with each region having its distinctive culture.

The geographical characteristics and human environment of Guizhou provided Wang Yangming with spiritual nourishment, and it was in Guizhou that the core

idea of his Study of Heart became fully-fledged. Wang Yangming was, therefore, full of tender affection for the province. The people in Guizhou, who had grown up under the influence of Wang Yangming's thoughts, were primitive and ignorant while unaffected and honest. The benevolent and down-to-earth nature of the people won Wang Yangming's love and praise. Hence before Wang Yangming left Guizhou, he lamented, "The approaching day of departure keeps plaguing me; it makes our meeting possible only in the dreams." He also sighed, "When one day I miss my old friends elsewhere, I'll dream of being back here" [9].

Primary schools in Guizhou, as important local educational institutions, should cultivate young people's critical understanding of all the fields of significance, hence making primary school education an important driver of social and moral progress. If the family and society focus on passing the customary morality down the generations, moral education at schools tends to pay more attention to the establishment of moral ideals that can adapt to the development of society in young people's minds. Hence Durkheim, the renowned French sociologist, emphasized moral rationalization. He said, "Morality should not only refrain from losing its inherent

elements but be enriched through the inflow of new elements." [10]. Primary school moral education, therefore, should be a combination of the traditional task of moral education, social customs, and some "new factors. In this essay, it can be easily seen that the "new factor" is Yangming culture.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that three factors need to be taken into consideration before a theoretical approach to the integration of Yangming

culture into moral education at primary schools in Guizhou can be found. The three factors include the current status of primary school moral education and the problems with it, the core insights for primary school moral education involved in Yangming Culture, and the characteristics of Guizhou culture. An attempt at integrating the three above-mentioned factors with moral education at primary schools from a theoretical viewpoint can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2** Theoretical suggestions for the integration of Yangming Culture into primary school moral education

Conceptions in Yangming Culture	Emphasis	Current Status and Problems	Cultural Factors	Theoretical Suggestions
To get the hang of things	Emphasizing knowledge while stressing the importance of the highest moral consciousness in one's mind	Learning results of moral knowledge are generally satisfactory, but students should be encouraged to show their command of moral knowledge through their actions.	Cultures of ethnic minorities and mountain regions in Guizhou Province (There isn't a universal norm, as the cities and prefectures can take actions based on their own cultural characteristics. In	Help students acquire relevant knowledge under the guidance of moral consciousness; encourage students to give full play to their "heart"; familiarize students with knowledge about ethnic minorities and the importance of mutual respect.
Mind is pattern	Emphasizing emotion, stressing the consistency between personal emotions and social moral principles	Students' moral emotions tend to be diverse, where relevant guidance is necessary.	cities where cultures of ethnic minorities flourish, for example, the merits of these cultures can be introduced into moral education at primary schools. The same can be	Stress the consistency between moral subjects and moral norms; acquaint students with the nature of moral principles; provide students with the necessary guidance in values; instill in students the importance of mutual understanding and respect.
The extension of innate knowledge	Emphasizing consciousness, stressing the importance of giving full play to one's "heart."	Most students have strong moral consciousness, but students should be encouraged to participate in more manual labor activities and social practices.	applied to cities where cultures of mountain regions thrive. In Zunyi, for example, the culture of Shatan Village, the Red Culture, and the Bazi Culture can be included in moral education at primary schools)	The perfect state is one in which one's moral consciousness is fully in line with the ethical values of human society. More manual labor activities should be introduced. Teachers should encourage students to practice mutual understanding and see things from others' points of view.

<p>The unity of knowing and doing</p>	<p>Emphasizing behavior, stressing good actions out of one's own will</p>	<p>Students' performance on moral behavior is not satisfactory, which should be improved by paying more attention to students' daily actions.</p>	<p>In the unity of moral consciousness and moral practice, the moral practice serves as a touchstone. Teachers should improve students' moral behavior by paying more attention to their daily actions. Students should be encouraged to behave properly under the guidance of their moral knowledge. Activities with distinctive local characteristics can be introduced into moral education.</p>
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**4.2 Practical approach**

The theoretical approach can be followed by the exploration of integration in everyday teaching. Taking into consideration the current status of primary school

moral education and based on the interviews with primary schools in all the nine cities and prefectures in Guizhou about the organization of moral education activities, the research group made a preliminary plan for the integration of Yangming Culture into moral education at primary schools in Guizhou (see table 3 for details).

**Table 3** Suggestions for the integration of Yangming Culture into primary school moral education in everyday teaching

Conceptions in Yangming Culture	Theoretical Suggestions	Exploration in Everyday Teaching
To get a hang of things	Help students acquire relevant knowledge under the guidance of moral consciousness; encourage students to give full play to their "heart"; familiarize students with knowledge about ethnic minorities and the importance of mutual respect.	Lesson plans, mini-lecture plans, class-meeting plans
Mind is pattern	Stress the consistency between moral subjects and moral norms; acquaint students with the nature of moral principles; provide students with the necessary guidance in values; instill in students the importance of mutual understanding and respect.	Work plans of the headteacher, work plans of the school, plans of the school union of young Chinese pioneers
The extension of innate knowledge	The perfect state is one in which one's moral consciousness is fully in line with the ethical values of human society. More manual labor activities should be introduced. Teachers should encourage students to practice mutual understanding and see things from others' points of view.	diaries, reports

<p>The unity of knowing and doing</p>	<p>In the unity of moral consciousness and moral practice, the moral practice serves as a touchstone. Teachers should improve students' moral behavior by paying more attention to their daily actions.</p> <p>Students should be encouraged to behave properly under the guidance of their moral knowledge.</p> <p>Activities with distinctive local characteristics can be introduced into moral education.</p>	<p>summaries, briefings</p>
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**5. CONCLUSION**

Theoretically, the guidance of Yangming psychology to guizhou primary school moral education mainly includes the following points: 1. Guided by moral consciousness, students are instructed to learn relevant knowledge and pay attention to the role of self "heart". Strengthen the connection with behavior. Education to increase national knowledge and mutual respect; Second, the mind is the reason. The moral subject conforms to the moral law so that students can truly understand the essence of moral norms. Strengthen the necessary guidance of values; Strengthening education for mutual understanding and respect; Three, conscience. To develop the moral consciousness of the heart to the extent that it completely conforms to the universal moral laws of human society. It is necessary to increase the practical content of students' actual labor and hands-on operation, so that students can understand and communicate with each other, and increase the education and experience of perspective-taking; 4. Unity of knowledge and action. The unification of moral consciousness and moral practice is more based on moral practice. Use knowledge to guide action and strengthen the implementation and practice of moral behavior. Increase practical activities in line with local conditions and characteristics.

From the practical point of view, first of all, school leaders, head teachers and section teachers of primary schools in Guizhou province need to attach great importance to moral education, and constantly carry out integration and innovation on the basis of grasping the core spirit of Yangming culture. In order to achieve the best effect, we should try to add teaching contents related to local culture and characteristics. In the concrete implementation process, "ge Wu" emphasizes knowledge, and emphasizes the importance of the highest moral consciousness of the individual mind, which is more reflected in the way of cultural lesson teaching plan, moral education lesson teaching plan, micro lesson teaching plan, class meeting teaching plan, class team meeting plan and so on. "Mind is principle" lays emphasis on emotion, emphasizes the subjective consistency between personal emotion and social law, and is more embodied in the form of teacher in charge moral education plan, school work plan, school moral education plan, school team plan and so on.

"Consciences" emphasizes consciousness, highlights the meaning of "consciences", and emphasizes the deep and comprehensive play of the function of "heart", which is more reflected in the way of essays, experiences and experiences. "The unity of knowledge and action" focuses on behavior, emphasizes sincere practice or practice, and is more embodied in the form of summary, briefing and so on.

In the current study, the research group believes that the integration of Yangming Culture into moral education at primary schools in Guizhou has its own significance. Moral education at primary schools in Guizhou has improved considerably in all four dimensions since the implementation of the program. In the recent questionnaire survey, the satisfaction of students, parents, and teachers all scored more than 96%. In primary schools in Guizhou, insights into moral education involved in Yangming Culture are demonstrated mainly through activity plans, lesson plans, mini-lectures, reports, summaries, briefings, and other effective forms. However, due to the difficulties in measuring the results of moral education, the limited cognitive ability of primary school students, and their inability to give effective feedback, the study failed to include any quantitative analysis of the improvement in the moral standards of primary school students. Relevant parts can be added in future research to make for a more comprehensive study.

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