

Pathways for Ideological and Political Education through the Integration of Local Cultural Resources into University Preschool Education Courses

—A Case Study of the “Treasures of Hometown” Project

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Abstract

Integrating local cultural resources into university preschool education courses is both a professional task for developing preservice teachers' competence in kindergarten curriculum design and an important means of fostering cultural identity, a child-centered perspective, and professional responsibility. To address the display-oriented use of cultural materials, the absence of children's experience, and the external addition of value objectives, the “Treasures of Hometown” action-learning project was implemented in the course Kindergarten Curriculum. The teaching case involved 52 second-year students organized into 10 groups. A purposively selected corpus of 10 matched initial and final plans, 10 peer-review records, 10 reflections, and 10 teaching field-note records was independently coded by two researchers and reviewed by a third. The analysis examined observable changes in cultural understanding, child-centered judgment, and professional responsibility across linked materials. Within this corpus, students' work shifted from displaying cultural symbols toward justifying educational value, designing experiences through which children could perceive, manipulate, inquire, interact, and express, and documenting responsibility for cultural accuracy and curriculum quality. These case-based findings suggest that ideological and political education in preschool education courses can be embedded in disciplinary judgment through authentic tasks and developmental assessment; they are not intended as population-level or causal estimates.

Keywords

Local Cultural Resources, Preschool Education Major, Curriculum-Based

1. Introduction

The Guidelines for Integrating Ideological and Political Education into University Curricula state that comprehensively advancing such education means embedding value guidance in knowledge transmission and competence development, helping students form sound worldviews, outlooks on life, and values; this is both inherent in and indispensable to talent cultivation. The Guidelines also call for overcoming the disconnection between professional education and ideological-political education (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). The Guidelines for Improving Education in Fine Traditional Chinese Culture encourage schools to identify and use local resources of fine traditional Chinese culture and to offer specialized local and school-based curricula (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2014). For preschool education majors, local cultural resources connect preservice teachers' lived experience with their learning about kindergarten curriculum-resource development, children's ways of learning, and responsibility for cultural continuity.

Previous studies have clarified the broad direction of curriculum-based ideological and political education and local cultural curriculum development. Qiu argues that such work should return to the value foundation of university education and that teachers, teaching materials, resource identification, and institutional support are crucial (Qiu, 2017). He proposes approaching it from curriculum theory, coordinating explicit and implicit curricula, ensuring broad participation, and establishing a scientific quality-assessment system (He, 2019). In preschool education, Lin emphasizes that local culture must be selected and, where necessary, transformed before entering kindergarten curricula (Lin, 2019). These studies suggest that educational value does not arise automatically from cultural symbols; it depends on professional curricular transformation.

However, earlier assignments and classroom observations revealed three recurring problems. First, cultural materials were treated as displays: students collected local products, buildings, songs, dances, and crafts but equated finding distinctive items with completing curriculum development. Second, children's experience was absent: plans emphasized historical background, technical procedures, and symbolic meanings while children mainly watched, listened, and imitated. Third, value objectives were externally attached: phrases such as "love one's hometown" and "strengthen cultural confidence" appeared at the end of activities without explaining how such values would develop through children's actions or preservice teachers' curriculum-design practice. The central issue, therefore, is not whether local culture enters the professional classroom, but how cultural materials become curriculum that children can experience, and how preservice teachers develop cul-

tural understanding, a child-centered perspective, and professional responsibility through that transformation.

Accordingly, this teaching-case analysis addresses three research questions: 1) How did the participating preservice teachers interpret and select the educational value of local cultural resources? 2) How did they transform adult-oriented cultural knowledge into activity experiences appropriate for young children? 3) What observable changes in cultural understanding, child-centered judgment, and professional responsibility were evident across drafts, peer-review records, final plans, and reflections? Section 3 describes the participants, corpus, analytical procedure, and project process, while Section 4 reports the evidence corresponding to these three questions.

2. The Intrinsic Relationship between Curricularizing Local Cultural Resources and Ideological-Political Education

2.1. Local Culture as a Potential Curriculum Resource Requiring Professional Development

Wu distinguishes material curriculum resources from conditional curriculum resources and notes that even material resources remain only candidates until they have been pedagogically processed and implemented (Wu, 2001). Thus, Liubao tea, arcade buildings, Zhuang embroidered balls, Dong songs and dances, and local foodways are not ready-made kindergarten curricula merely because they possess distinctive cultural attributes. Students must examine their relationship to children's lives, material manipulability, potential for experiential development, and feasibility, then decide what to retain, transform, or omit. Resource development is therefore both a technical process and a value-laden choice concerning children, culture, and education.

2.2. Children's Experience as the Basis for Curricular Transformation

For local culture to enter the kindergarten curriculum meaningfully, it must move beyond the presentation of knowledge and symbols and become experiences through which children perceive, manipulate, inquire, interact, and express. Shen describes local resources as an integrated experiential system that can meet children's higher-order learning and developmental needs only through progressively developing experiences (Shen, 2024). In this project, children's experience serves both as a criterion for judging whether a resource can become curriculum and as a lens that requires preservice teachers to justify resource selection, activity design, and age appropriateness. It is the key link between developing local cultural resources and professional learning.

2.3. Professional Practice as a Route to Value Formation

Value guidance cannot be separated from professional learning. Hao identifies the integration of knowledge and educative value as the logical starting point and fun-

damental purpose of curriculum-based ideological and political education (Hao, 2021). In the project, students had to respect the integrity of local culture, avoid simplification or exoticization, select and adapt content according to young children's learning characteristics, and improve their curriculum-design competence through collaboration, defense, and revision. Cultural identity, a child-centered perspective, cooperation, and professional responsibility were thus embodied in resource selection, activity design, justification, and revision rather than appended to the professional task. The overall logic was "cultural understanding - professional transformation - value formation".

3. Design and Implementation of the "Treasures of Hometown" Project

3.1. Project Positioning and Data Sources

The project was embedded in Chapter 4, "Development and Utilization of Kindergarten Curriculum Resources," of the core undergraduate course Kindergarten Curriculum. It was implemented in the first semester of the students' second year over 34 class hours. Participants were 52 preschool education majors from Class 1 and Class 2 of the 2022 cohort (26 students in each class), organized into 10 project-learning groups. Instruction combined lectures, case analysis, project-based teaching, and small-group discussion. Each group selected representative natural, everyday-life, or cultural resources from members' hometowns or familiar regions and prepared an implementation plan for their development and use in kindergarten. Each plan covered resource description, educational value, target age, children's prior experience, activity sequence, materials and settings, guidance points, and proposed assessment. Online preparation, classroom discussion, group project work, peer review, simulated defense, and post-class reflection formed a continuous process from draft through feedback and revision to the final plan.

This study adopts a qualitative teaching-case analysis. The analyzed corpus comprised 10 initial plans, 10 corresponding final plans, 10 peer-review records, 10 student reflection texts, and 10 teaching field-note records. The corpus did not include materials from every enrolled student; instead, one complete and information-rich set of materials was purposively selected from each of the 10 groups to represent typical patterns of project work. Materials were included when they documented the same project from initial design through peer feedback and final revision and contained sufficient information to trace the rationale for changes. No otherwise eligible material was excluded. Representative student excerpts are anonymized as S1-S3. Because the materials were not collected through an experimental study or standardized assessment, the analysis does not support population-level, causal, or statistical-significance claims.

Qualitative Analysis Procedure

Two researchers independently read and coded the complete corpus in three

stages. First, they conducted descriptive coding of passages and document changes related to resource selection, cultural interpretation, children's actions and experiences, activity sequencing, responses to feedback, and revision rationales. Second, they compared each group's initial and final plan alongside its peer-review record, reflection, and field notes, and grouped recurrent codes into higher-order patterns. Third, through comparison and discussion, the researchers consolidated the patterns into three outcome categories: cultural understanding, child-centered perspective, and professional responsibility. A third researcher reviewed the coding framework, category definitions, and supporting evidence; disagreements or ambiguous cases were resolved through discussion and re-examination of the original materials.

The categories were identified through observable evidence rather than value statements alone. Cultural understanding was coded when students verified cultural information, explained a resource's relationship to local life, identified educational value, or revised stereotyped, superficial, or decontextualized representations. A child-centered perspective was coded when plans replaced adult explanations with opportunities for children to perceive, manipulate, inquire, interact, or express; adjusted difficulty, materials, duration, or sequencing for age appropriateness; or explicitly justified decisions using children's prior experience. Professional responsibility was coded when students substantiated resource choices, responded to peer or teacher critique, documented reasons for revision, addressed cultural accuracy or material safety, coordinated group decisions, or assumed accountability for curriculum quality. Claims of change were made only when at least two linked sources within a group, particularly a draft-final plan pair plus a review or reflection record, provided convergent evidence.

3.2. Overall Pathway and Assessment Framework

The project comprised six iterative phases: resource investigation, value analysis, experiential transformation, activity sequencing, plan defense, and reflective evaluation. These phases were both operational steps for producing curriculum plans and an analytical framework for observing professional learning and value formation (Table 1).

3.3. Implementation of the Six Phases

3.3.1. Resource Investigation: From Cultural Symbols to Lived Contexts

Before class, students investigated distinctive hometown resources, their relationship to local life, children's possible encounters with them, and ways of turning them into kindergarten resources. Working by region or cultural interest, they consulted relatives and local materials on such resources as Wuzhou Liubao tea and the arcade city, Yulin Yuntian Palace, Zhuang embroidered balls, Sanjiang Dong songs and dances, Hengzhou jasmine, and Chongqing hotpot and stilt houses. The task shifted resource collection from copying online lists to re-examining hometown life in authentic contexts.

Table 1. Teaching pathway and observable outcomes of the “Treasures of Hometown” project.

Phase	Core Question	Main Learning Activities	Intended Values and Competencies
Resource investigation	How is the resource connected with local life?	Collect products, buildings, crafts, songs, dances, and customs from families, communities, and local documents.	Inquiry awareness; cultural concern
Value analysis	Why should the resource enter kindergarten curriculum?	Analyze cultural meaning, life relevance, developmental value, and implementation conditions.	Cultural understanding; value judgment
Experiential transformation	How can children perceive, manipulate, and express?	Transform adult knowledge into material exploration, play, cooperation, and artistic expression.	Child-centered perspective; professional ethics
Activity sequencing	How can related experiences develop continuously?	Organize whole-group, learning-center, daily-life, and family activities according to experiential progression.	Systems thinking; rigor
Plan defense	How can professional standards test the plan?	Present, question, and revise for progression, child appropriateness, and cultural integration.	Openness; collaboration; responsibility
Reflective evaluation	What views of culture and children does the work embody?	Compare drafts and final plans; explain revisions, learning changes, and possible applications.	Reflection; professional responsibility

3.3.2. Value Analysis: Selecting Resources by Educational Value

Students reviewed materials in terms of relevance to life, cultural meaning, developmental value, and feasibility. Liubao tea, for example, could support observation and comparison, work experience, sharing, and an initial appreciation of its relationship to local production and life; stilt houses could reveal how people adapt intelligently to mountainous environments. Through questions about suitability, experiential opportunities, and necessary omissions or adaptations, the teacher moved students from asking what was distinctive to explaining why content should be selected and how far it should be transformed.

3.3.3. Experiential Transformation: Turning Cultural Content into Children's Activity Experiences

Students compared an embroidered-ball plan that used the object merely as decoration with a sequence of cultural discovery, geometric inquiry, and emotional communication. They learned that the appearance of a cultural symbol does not itself constitute curricularization; culturally meaningful content must become activity that children can perceive, manipulate, investigate, communicate through, and express. Students consequently transformed stilt houses into an inquiry on building a stable house on a slope and local foods into observation, preparation, and sharing activities. Cultural value was embedded in joint action, problem solving, and expression rather than transmitted only through explanation.

3.3.4. Activity Sequencing: Organizing Continuity of Experience

To avoid isolated novelty, activities progressed from near to distant, perception to inquiry, and participation to expression. The Liubao tea plan moved from observing leaves to simulated processing, cooperative tasting, and designing tea gifts; the embroidered-ball plan moved from cultural form to geometric structure and then to blessing and emotional expression; the Dong song-and-dance plan established participation through movement and rhythm before cooperative performance. Students thus considered both the suitability of individual activities and the experiential relationships among them.

3.3.5. Plan Defense: Improving Curriculum Design through Presentation, Peer Review, and Revision

Peer review focused on coherence and progression, child appropriateness of content and materials, and the soundness of cultural transformation. Groups presented not only plans but also rationales, while peers proposed feasible revisions concerning story length, rhythmic difficulty, material safety, and experiential connections. Each group recorded the original design, diagnosed problems, revisions, and reasons. Assessment shifted from judging products to making thinking visible and supporting improvement; cross-regional exchange also encouraged respect for cultural difference and evidence-based professional judgment.

3.3.6. Reflective Evaluation: Examining Changes in Professional Understanding

After class, students submitted revised plans, activity-guidance diagrams, resource lists, and reflections on changes in their understanding, revisions embodying a child-centered perspective, and future applications. The teacher analyzed drafts, peer feedback, revisions, final plans, and reflections together, focusing on cultural accuracy, educational value, experiential appropriateness, sequence coherence, and adequacy of revision rationales. Comparing work across stages enabled both teacher and students to identify changes in cultural understanding, child-centered judgment, and professional responsibility.

4. Qualitative Manifestations of Teaching Outcomes

The findings below are based on 10 matched draft-final plan pairs, 10 peer-review records, 10 reflections, and 10 teaching field-note records drawn from the 10 participating groups. Each claim was checked against the operational indicators defined in Section 3.1.1 and required convergent evidence from at least two linked sources within a group. The analysis therefore treats changes as patterns within this purposively selected teaching-case corpus rather than as estimates for all 52 students or for a wider population. The three categories reported below correspond directly to the research questions: identifying educational value, transforming cultural content through the logic of children's experience, and assuming professional responsibility. **Table 1** describes the intended values and competencies of the instructional phases; it was not used by itself as evidence of outcomes.

4.1. From Collecting Cultural Symbols to Identifying Educational Value

Across the selected corpus, initial plans commonly treated recognizable buildings, foods, songs, dances, and crafts as curriculum resources on the basis of regional visibility alone. Evidence of stronger cultural understanding was recorded when final plans added verified contextual information, explained links between a resource and local life, articulated its educational value for children, or removed superficial and decontextualized content. For example, the stilt-house plan changed from structural description to a slope-building inquiry, while the Liubao tea plan expanded from product information to observation, work, social interaction, and etiquette. These documented draft-final changes indicate that, within the analyzed cases, cultural identity was increasingly expressed through reasoned curricular choices rather than only through general statements of affection for one's hometown.

Student S1 wrote that investigating Chongqing hotpot utensils, preparation, and dining etiquette revealed cooperation through division of labor and a culture of sharing through communal dining. This helped the student understand that familiar elements of hometown life contain educational possibilities and strengthened the intention to cultivate children's cultural identity. The accompanying resource analysis and plan likewise shifted from regional distinctiveness to social relationships and educational meaning.

4.2. From the Logic of Adult Knowledge to the Logic of Children's Experience

The essential issue is not how much cultural knowledge is transmitted but whether it becomes experience consistent with young children's learning. The researchers coded a child-centered perspective when final plans replaced extended adult explanation with opportunities for children to perceive, manipulate, inquire, interact, or express, and when revisions adjusted content difficulty, materials, duration, participation, or activity sequence in relation to age and prior experience. Comparison of the 10 matched plan pairs, supported by peer-review and reflection records, showed these indicators in the analyzed cases; the finding is limited to the purposively selected corpus and is not presented as a frequency estimate for all participating students.

In revised work on Dong songs and dances, children no longer had to understand complex social structures; instead, they experienced cooperation through Duoye singing and dancing and explored movement imitation and rhythmic creation. Comparisons of Chuanjiang work chants and Zhuang folk songs likewise led students to adjust rhythmic difficulty, duration, and participation. S2 explained that turning stilt houses into an inquiry on building a stable house on a slope transformed an architectural object into direct experience of adaptive wisdom. The revised plan used concrete problems and manipulable materials so children could learn by building, comparing, and adjusting.

4.3. From Completing an Assignment to Assuming Professional Responsibility

The project involved investigation, drafting, presentation, peer questioning, revision, and reflection rather than a one-off written task. Professional responsibility was identified through observable actions: verifying cultural information, correcting simplification or exoticization, addressing material safety and age appropriateness, responding substantively to peer or teacher critique, documenting reasons for revision, and accepting accountability for curriculum quality. In the matched records, these indicators appeared when groups removed adult-oriented knowledge, adjusted materials and sequencing, and justified their decisions in revised plans. The evidence supports an interpretation of developing professional responsibility within these cases, rather than a generalized claim about every individual student.

Cross-regional exchange further showed that cultural identity is not closed praise of local culture but an open, respectful, and mutually learning-oriented stance toward difference. S3 reflected that a future preschool teacher should help children discover the beauty of their hometown cultures and allow the seeds of cultural identity to take root through thoughtful selection and use of resources. The student's plan and revisions supported this statement through concrete changes in content, difficulty, and experiential order.

Overall, the 10 analyzed cases provided convergent evidence for three interrelated patterns: more explicit justification of cultural and educational value, more frequent use of children's experience as a design criterion, and greater accountability for revision and curriculum quality. These interpretations were derived from coded comparisons of matched draft-final plans and corroborated by peer-review records, reflections, and field notes. Reflection statements were not treated as sufficient evidence on their own. Given the purposive selection of representative texts and the absence of standardized measurement, the findings should be understood as analytically informative patterns in this teaching context rather than as causal effects or statistically generalizable outcomes.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Educational Mechanism

Local cultural resources do not automatically generate ideological-political educational outcomes. Their value depends on the combined operation of authentic professional tasks, the transformation of children's experience, and developmental assessment.

First, an authentic professional task provides a common vehicle for knowledge, competence, and value guidance. Students had to turn cultural materials into implementable kindergarten curriculum plans, requiring simultaneous attention to cultural meaning, child development, and curriculum design. Without cultural understanding, content becomes distorted or superficial; without knowledge of children's learning, activities follow adult knowledge logic; without rigor and re-

sponsibility, plans cannot improve through sustained defense and revision. Cultural identity, a child-centered perspective, and professional responsibility therefore became qualities necessary to complete the task.

Second, experiential transformation links cultural understanding with professional learning. Only when resources become experiences through which children perceive, manipulate, inquire, interact, and express can they truly enter kindergarten curriculum. Preservice teachers must reconsider content from children's standpoint and justify selection, organization, and age appropriateness. In doing so, they apply professional knowledge while understanding relationships among local culture, children's lives, social interaction, and experiential development.

Third, developmental assessment translates value understanding into observable, discussable, and improvable professional conduct. Assessment attended not only to completeness of the final plan but also to reasons for selection, appropriateness of design, grounds for revision, and group collaboration. A chain of evidence—draft, presentation, peer review, revision, final plan, and reflection—allowed students to identify problems through comparison and questioning and gradually internalize external criteria as a need to improve professional work.

The mechanism can therefore be summarized as follows: authentic professional tasks integrate professional learning with value guidance; experiential transformation curricularizes cultural resources; and developmental assessment turns professional understanding and value qualities into concrete action. The three operate jointly throughout plan development and improvement.

5.2. Practical Implications

First, teachers must balance the richness of cultural resources against the limited selectivity of curriculum. Not every locally distinctive element is suitable for kindergarten. Authenticity, educational value, child appropriateness, and feasibility should guide selection rather than fame, uniqueness, or visual appeal. Potential stereotypes, misinterpretations, and excessive commercialization require verification, field inquiry, and multiple perspectives.

Second, curriculum-based ideological and political education should be embedded in professional tasks and judgment. Value slogans should not be appended to plans, nor should cultural identity be reduced to emotional praise. Tasks should require students to understand child-centeredness, cultural responsibility, and teacher commitment through resource screening, goal setting, content organization, material provision, and activity assessment. Value requirements become integrated with professional education only when they function as indispensable criteria for solving professional problems.

Third, developmental assessment should match the curricularization process. Evaluation should address both final quality and how students understand resources, revise on the basis of children's experience, and respond to critique. Resource-analysis sheets, drafts, peer-review records, revision explanations, final plans, and reflections can corroborate one another. Indicators should use observ-

able professional language—accuracy of cultural understanding, appropriateness of content selection, continuity of activity experience, and adequacy of revision rationales—rather than abstract value labels.

In conclusion, integrating local cultural resources into university preschool education courses is not a matter of adding more local materials. It requires professional selection, transformation, implementation, and assessment so that students develop cultural understanding, a child-centered perspective, and professional responsibility while solving authentic curriculum problems. By turning resource development into a participatory, defensible, and revisable process, the “Treasures of Hometown” project offers a practical pathway for integrating knowledge transmission, competence development, and value guidance.

Author Contributions

Li Xue: Writing-original draft and revision; Yang Siyi: Data collection.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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