

Research on Practical Pathways for Integrating Qilu Culture and the Spirit of the Qingdao into Adolescents' Moral Education

Wenjie Sun, Haiqing Kong

School of Education, Qingdao Binhai University, Qingdao 266540, China

Abstract: Based on cultural identity theory, this study explores practical pathways for integrating Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao into youth moral education. Qilu culture, serving as a value foundation centered on “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity,” cultivates adolescents’ moral resilience and cultural identity. The spirit of Qingdao, acting as a developmental driving force characterized by openness, innovation, and pragmatism, stimulates adolescents’ innovative vitality and practical capabilities. The two share intrinsic compatibility in value orientation, character development, and practical approaches. Addressing the educational functions of Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao, this study proposes a systematic implementation framework across three dimensions, namely, resource accessibility, communication system development, and home-school-community collaboration. This aims to promote the organic integration of traditional culture and modern spirit, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for cultivating youth who embody both cultural confidence and contemporary values.

Keywords: Qilu Culture, The Spirit of Qingdao, Youth Moral Education.

1. Introduction

In the current globalized context where diverse values intertwine, China’s youth moral education faces profound challenges, primarily manifested in the coexistence of a latent crisis in cultural identity and the contemporary demand for innovative literacy. Exploring how to effectively leverage high-quality local cultural resources to build a moral education system that both strengthens foundational values and stimulates innovative vitality has become a subject of significant theoretical value and practical significance. As quintessential representatives of regional culture, Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao offer a unique dual analytical perspective and resource foundation for this endeavor. However, examining current educational practices reveals that their integration into moral education still faces practical challenges such as insufficient synergy and inefficient conversion mechanisms, preventing their profound value from being fully realized. Therefore, grounded in cultural identity and modern moral education theory, this study employs a core analytical framework of “roots” and “wings.” It aims to systematically demonstrate the intrinsic compatibility and contemporary value of integrating Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao into youth moral education. The research focuses on exploring systematic and actionable implementation pathways, seeking to provide theoretical references and practical paradigms for enhancing the effectiveness and innovation of moral education in the new era.

2. The Essence and Characteristics of Qilu Culture and the Spirit of Qingdao

Qilu culture, with Confucian ethics as its core element, possesses a strong inherent directionality and order-building function. First, at the level of values, it systematically

established a moral framework centered on the core principles of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity. Benevolence embodies compassion for others; righteousness signifies appropriateness; propriety defines norms; wisdom enables discernment; and integrity ensures sincerity. Together, these principles provide clear moral standards and a value system for individual conduct within social relationships.[1] Second, at the practical level, it closely links individual moral cultivation with societal ideals, forming a progressive sense of family and national devotion that evolves from “cultivating oneself and managing one’s household” to “governing the state and bringing peace to the world.” [2] This grand narrative of integrating self-realization into collective welfare endows individual lives with profound meaning and a sense of historical mission. Thus, Qilu culture provides a deep foundation of values and ethical resilience for the character development of young people, enabling them to maintain moral stability and clarity amidst the impact of diverse values.

The spirit of Qingdao, with its maritime civilization as a foundation (as exemplified by Qingdao here), represents an outward-expanding cultural form that emerged during the modern opening of ports and the wave of globalization.. Firstly, an open and inclusive cultural mindset. Qingdao’s cultural environment exhibits an unprecedented openness to absorption, objectively endowing it with the capacity to attract diverse talents, technologies, and capital. Secondly, a pioneering innovative spirit. The history of exploration towards the unknown seas and the modern era’s vigorous development of national industry and commerce have jointly shaped a spirit that eschews rigid adherence to tradition, embracing bold exploration and innovation. Thirdly, a pragmatic and innovative approach to action. The time-sensitive and high-risk nature of maritime trade has fostered a style of conduct that eschews empty rhetoric in favour of tangible results and a pragmatic focus on outcomes. The combined effect of these three elements endows the spirit of

Qingdao with crucial achieve success and how to forge innovation. It enables them to embrace new knowledge with an open mind, confront challenges with innovative courage, and resolve problems with a pragmatic spirit.

In summary, Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao respectively embody the stabilizing and innovative forces within the cultural structure. The former establishes order through internal moral imperatives, representing “upholding the right path”; the latter seeks breakthroughs through outward-looking practical exploration, representing “pioneering new frontiers.” The tension between these two forces is precisely the source of cultural vitality. Therefore, viewing them as a complementary and symbiotic cultural community-integrating their dual strengths of “value foundations” and “development momentum”-provides invaluable resources and a unique pathway for nurturing well-rounded youth personalities that embody cultural confidence alongside global vision, moral steadfastness alongside innovative dynamism.

3. The Intrinsic Compatibility Between Qilu Culture, the Spirit of Qingdao, and Youth Moral Education

3.1. Alignment of Value Orientations: From “Cultivating Oneself to Serve the Nation” to “New Era Individuals”

In his article “Inspiring the Youth of the New Era to Shoulder Responsibilities in Building Modernization with Chinese Characteristics,” General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to fully inspire the youth of the new era to shoulder responsibilities in building modernization with Chinese characteristics.[3] The ideal of “cultivating oneself to serve the nation” advocated by Qilu culture and the “serving society” orientation embodied by the spirit of Qingdao together provide rich cultural nourishment for cultivating a new generation capable of shouldering the great mission of national rejuvenation, forming a consistent spiritual lineage from tradition to modernity.

On one hand, Qilu culture has laid the foundational moral grounding and patriotic ethos for the new generation of our era. First, it establishes moral agency centered on “self-cultivation.” The opening lines of *The Great Learning* state: “From the Son of Heaven down to the common people, all must take self-cultivation as their foundation.” This emphasis on inner moral cultivation aligns perfectly with the noble character and sound personality required of the new generation. Through the disciplines of “investigating things, gaining knowledge, sincerity of purpose, and rectifying the mind,” young people can establish a stable core of values. Secondly, it builds a sense of social responsibility and patriotic sentiment that extends from the self to others. As Mencius states: “When one is in adversity, one cultivates oneself; when one is in prosperity, one benefits all under heaven.” The progressive path of “cultivating oneself, harmonizing the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world” inextricably links personal destiny with the fate of the nation and the world. This spirit of responsibility-taking the world as one’s own duty-is precisely the traditional cultural expression of the social responsibility and patriotic spirit required of the new generation.

On the other hand, the spirit of Qingdao endows the new generation with a global perspective and a pragmatic

character. First, its “openness and inclusiveness” forges a global outlook. Compared to traditional Shandong culture, Qingdao's urban spirit is more open-minded, less burdened by tradition and conservative mindsets—a trait linked to its large immigrant population. [4] This cultural DNA endows Qingdao Spirit with a world-facing embrace, resonating with the “international perspective” required of the new generation. Secondly, the character of “innovation and pragmatism” hones a spirit of action. Prioritizing industry and commerce is the primary feature of Qingdao's urban cultural spirit. [4] Throughout its development history, from the era of national industry and commerce to the age of marine science and technology, Qingdao has consistently embodied the cultural trait of transforming ideals into tangible actions. This trait is deeply rooted in its industrial and commercial heritage, forming the core and intrinsic driving force of Qingdao’s cultural accumulation. It seamlessly aligns with the “striving spirit” and “practical capabilities” demanded of the new generation, guiding youth to translate their patriotic aspirations into concrete innovative actions and pragmatic work.

3.2. The Alignment of Character Development: The Unity of Moral Resolve and Innovative Vitality

The cultivation of sound character stands as the core mission of moral education for adolescents. Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao provide comprehensive cultural support for youth character development through the dual dimensions of “upholding integrity” and “pioneering innovation,” thereby achieving a dialectical unity of “moral fortitude” and “innovative vitality.”

On one hand, Qilu culture instills profound “moral fortitude” in the character development of young people. First, this manifests in steadfastness of value choices. Confucianism emphasizes “aspiring to the Way, grounding oneself in virtue, relying on benevolence, and engaging in the arts” (*The Analects*, Chapter 7), demanding the establishment of an unwavering life direction. In today's era of diverse values, this “fortitude” enables young people to maintain clear-headed value judgments amidst a complex and multifaceted social environment. Second, it manifests as a spirit of moral self-discipline. Zengzi’s reflective practice of “examining myself three times daily” and Mencius's noble resolve to remain “uncorrupted by wealth and honor, unshaken by poverty and low status, and unbending before force and might” underscore the establishment of individual moral agency. This spirit of self-discipline serves as the inner strength for youth to resist external temptations and uphold moral boundaries.

On the other hand, the spirit of Qingdao infuses the character of young people with vibrant “innovative vitality.” First, it manifests in an open and inclusive mindset. As a pivotal city along the Belt and Road Initiative, Qingdao's “embracing all rivers” spirit cultivates in youth a character that respects diversity and excels in learning. In today's globalized world, this inclusive mindset is a crucial prerequisite for innovative thinking. Second, it manifests as the courage to pioneer. The city’s enduring spirit of enterprise inspires youth to explore boldly and break new ground.

The unity of “resolve” and “vitality” is key to cultivating well-rounded personalities in the youth of the new era. It avoids both the conservative tendency of resolve without vitality and the restless tendency of vitality without resolve,

providing rich cultural nourishment for cultivating socialist builders and successors who are well-rounded in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education.

3.3. Alignment of Practical Pathways: Synergy Between “Internalization in Mind” and “Externalization in Action”

First, Qilu culture established a mechanism for cultivating moral self-awareness. Qilu culture, particularly its Confucian ideological system, constructed a systematic pathway for moral internalization, promoting the formation of moral agents through a dual mechanism. On one hand, the cognitive internalization mechanism of “equal emphasis on learning and thinking” stresses deepening value recognition through rational reflection. Confucius's dictum, “Learning without reflection is meaningless; reflection without learning is dangerous,” reveals the dialectical relationship between reception and construction in the cognitive process. In moral education practice, it requires guiding learners to understand the intrinsic logic and value implications of moral norms through critical thinking, thereby achieving a transformation from heteronomy to autonomy. On the other hand, the emotional experience mechanism of “introspection and self-reflection” cultivates moral sentiments through continuous introspective practice. The practices of “examining oneself three times daily” and “seeking within oneself” emphasize the internalization of moral character through self-reflection. This aids in establishing a stable moral psychological structure and cultivating the moral consciousness of “prudence in solitude.”

Second, the Shandong Spirit constructs a mechanism for shaping practical character. At the goal dimension, the practice-oriented principle of “serving the world through practical application” establishes the efficacy orientation of moral education, emphasizing the transformation of moral cognition into problem-solving capabilities. This embodies the practical wisdom of linking theory with practice. In contemporary educational practice, this orientation integrates deeply with labor education and social practice. Through ethical engagement in real-world contexts, it facilitates the transformation of moral cognition into moral action. Such contextualized learning effectively fosters the development of moral reasoning abilities and the cultivation of behavioral habits. Methodologically, the innovative spirit of “daring to be the first” provides a practical methodology, encouraging the breaking of conventions and bold exploration, thereby infusing moral practice with innovative vitality. [6] Innovative models in modern education, such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and inquiry-based learning, concretely embody this spirit. By creating challenging scenarios, these approaches stimulate students' innovative thinking and practical courage, cultivating their ability to address complex moral issues. Educational practice demonstrates that this problem-oriented learning approach significantly enhances students' moral judgment and practical capabilities.

4. Practical Pathways for Integrating Qilu Culture and the Spirit of Qingdao into Moral Education for Youth in the New Era

4.1. Strengthen the Dissemination and Inheritance of Qilu Culture and the Spirit of Qingdao, and Promote the Development of Moral Education

4.1.1. The Government Must Effectively Guide, Coordinate, and Regulate the Development of Cultural Resources

Only through improved resource management and optimized infrastructure development can the inheritance and advancement of Qilu culture and the spiritual resources of Qingdao be promoted. Based on thorough research, the government should formulate specialized development plans and establish dedicated funds for cultural preservation, prioritizing support for cultural projects of significant historical value and moral education significance. For instance, modern cultural education bases such as Confucianism experience centers and maritime spirit exhibition centers can be systematically planned and constructed, providing comprehensive institutional safeguards and financial support for cultural resource preservation and transmission. Simultaneously, active guidance should be provided to encourage social participation, establishing long-term mechanisms for government-social capital cooperation. Enterprises, universities, cultural institutions, and other diverse entities should be encouraged to offer professional support in curriculum development, technical assistance, and operational management, thereby achieving complementary resource advantages.[5]

4.1.2. Digital Empowerment and Creative Expression of Cultural Resources

Leveraging modern information technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence, systematically integrate dispersed cultural resources through digital collection, virtual recreation, and intelligent exhibition methods. It is recommended to establish the “Qilu Culture Digital Resource Repository” to digitally preserve and showcase precious resources including Confucian classics, historical artifacts, and intangible cultural heritage projects. Simultaneously, develop immersive experiences such as VR/AR recreations of ancient academy lectures and Qingdao's port-opening history, presenting traditional culture in vivid, intuitive forms. Furthermore, encourage and support the creation of new cultural products-including animations, short videos, and digital art-centered on Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao. This will integrate cultural resources with contemporary aesthetics, achieving creative transformation and innovative development while enhancing the appeal and influence of cultural dissemination.

4.1.3. Enhance Effective Collaboration between Schools and Cultural Resources Such as Educational Bases and Museums

Establish a deep cooperation mechanism between schools and cultural venues to develop a series of thematic research-based learning curricula. It is recommended that education and cultural departments jointly formulate an implementation plan for “school-museum collaboration,” clearly defining curriculum objectives, content standards, and evaluation

systems. For example, schools could organize student visits to the Confucius Museum and Confucianism Experience Center in conjunction with teaching classical works like *The Analects*. When studying modern and contemporary history, arrange visits to practical bases embodying Qingdao's spirit, such as the Qingdao Urban Development Exhibition Hall and Haier Industrial Exhibition Hall. Simultaneously, encourage museums and memorial halls to develop specialized educational courses and interactive experiences tailored to different grade levels, staffed by professional educators. This will effectively bridge cultural resources with school curricula, establishing a multidimensional educational model integrating classroom instruction, on-site teaching, and practical experiences.

4.2. Establish a Dissemination System for Qilu Culture and the Spirit of Qingdao, Expanding the Scope of Moral Education

4.2.1. Enhance the Professional Competence of the Moral Education Workforce in Inheriting and Interpreting Qilu Culture and the Spirit of Qingdao

On one hand, establish a systematic training mechanism to organize teachers in-depth study of Confucian classics and exploration of Qingdao's historical and cultural heritage, enabling them to profoundly grasp the ethical essence of "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity" in Qilu culture and the contemporary characteristics of the city's spirit of "openness and innovation." On the other hand, teaching capacity development should be strengthened. Through specialized workshops, model lesson observations, and collective lesson planning, educators should master effective methods for transforming traditional cultural essence into engaging instructional content. They should learn to employ modern teaching approaches such as case studies and scenario simulations to enhance the appeal and persuasiveness of cultural transmission. This will cultivate a high-caliber teaching force proficient in moral education theory and deeply knowledgeable about local cultural heritage.[6]

4.2.2. Leveraging Major Festivals and Historical Commemorative Dates to Foster a Rich Cultural Environment for Education

Make full use of major festivals such as Qingming Festival, the Party Founding Anniversary, and National Day, as well as commemorative dates like Qingdao's founding and significant events in Qi culture, to systematically carry out themed educational activities. During Qingming Festival, organize "Honoring Ancestors, Carrying Forward Cultural Heritage" events to pay tribute to Qilu sages like Confucius and Guan Zhong. On Qingdao's founding anniversary, host "City Memories" themed exhibitions showcasing Qingdao's development journey and spiritual legacy. Through ceremonial education, experiential scenarios, and thematic practices, transform abstract cultural values into tangible, immersive educational experiences. This approach deepens students' recognition of the profound heritage of Qi-Lu culture and the contemporary relevance of Qingdao's spirit through active participation, turning significant milestones into pivotal opportunities for cultural education.

4.2.3. Cultivate a High-caliber Team of Youth Volunteers Dedicated to Cultural Dissemination and Public Welfare Services

Building a professional team of youth volunteers dedicated to moral education is a crucial pillar in establishing a cultural dissemination system. It is recommended that cultural volunteer service groups be formed within secondary and higher education institutions. Through specialized training courses on Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao, these young volunteers can gain a deep understanding of the contemporary relevance of Confucian thought and the spiritual essence of maritime culture. Simultaneously, organizing their participation in public service activities such as museum tours, community cultural outreach, and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions will enhance their ability to interpret and disseminate culture through practical experience. Establish a comprehensive incentive and support mechanism by incorporating volunteer service into comprehensive quality assessments. This will stimulate young people's sense of ownership and enthusiasm for participation, empowering them to become a vital force in disseminating outstanding local culture and practicing public service spirit.

4.3. Promote Shandong Culture and the Spirit of Qingdao, Ensuring the Implementation of Family Moral Education

4.3.1. Establish a Collaborative Mechanism Linking Home, School, and Community to Foster A Unified Approach to Moral Education within Families

Establishing a collaborative mechanism among families, schools, and communities is the key pathway to ensuring the implementation of moral education at home. Government education departments should take the lead in creating a regular communication platform. Through initiatives such as parent workshops and community cultural lectures, they should systematically explain to parents the wisdom of family traditions and precepts within Qilu culture, as well as the pioneering spirit embodied in the spirit of Qingdao. This will enhance parents' awareness and capacity to conduct moral education within their households. Schools should proactively open educational resources and organize distinctive practical activities like "Parent-Child Reading of *The Analects*" and "Family City History Exploration," extending cultural heritage from campus to home. Communities must actively cultivate cultural environments by organizing folk experience activities during traditional festivals, such as making zongzi (rice dumplings) and writing family letters, allowing the essence of fine cultural traditions to permeate daily life. Through institutional arrangements that clarify responsibilities, facilitate communication channels, and share educational resources, we will ultimately form an educational community grounded in family education, supported by school education, and supplemented by community education. Together, we will ensure that Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao take root and flourish in the moral development of our youth.

4.3.2. Develop Distinctive Cultural Resources for Families to Strengthen the Foundation of Moral Education within the Home

Developing distinctive cultural resources for families provides the material foundation for deepening moral education within households. It is recommended to organize expert teams to create a series of tiered family education

reading materials based on the core essence of Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao, such as *The Illustrated Stories of Qilu Family Traditions* and *The Qingdao Spirit Primer*, catering to the shared reading needs of families with children of different ages. Simultaneously, digital educational resources should be vigorously developed by establishing a “Cloud Cultural Center.” This platform would host an online repository featuring audio courses on Confucian classics, documentaries on revolutionary family traditions, and micro-videos showcasing intangible cultural heritage skills, enabling parents to learn during fragmented time. Additionally, interactive parent-child activity kits incorporating traditional cultural elements can be designed, such as “Traditional Etiquette Practice Cards” and “Hometown Heritage Exploration Maps,” transforming abstract cultural concepts into tangible, actionable activities. By providing these culturally relevant products that align with educational principles and resonate with family life, the barriers to implementing moral education at home are effectively lowered. This approach ensures the inheritance of Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao is seamlessly integrated into everyday family education.

5. Conclusion

This study, grounded in cultural identity theory and employing a core analytical framework centered on “roots” and “wings,” systematically explores the intrinsic logic and practical pathways for integrating Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao into youth moral education. The study concludes that the value foundation of “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity” embodied by Qilu culture, combined with the open, innovative, and pragmatic developmental momentum demonstrated by Qingdao Spirit, collectively form a complementary and symbiotic cultural community. This provides valuable regional resources for cultivating youth who possess both cultural confidence and contemporary spirit.

First, the two share profound intrinsic compatibility in value orientation, character development, and practical pathways. The Qilu culture's ideals of “self-cultivation for national service” and moral fortitude lay a solid foundation of patriotic ethos and ethical principles for youth. Meanwhile, Qingdao Spirit's global vision, innovative vitality, and pragmatic character equip young people with the spiritual wings and practical capabilities to embrace the future. This dialectical unity of “preserving the essence” and “pioneering the new” is crucial for shaping well-rounded youth personalities and enabling them to navigate diverse challenges.

Second, to organically integrate these elements into youth moral education, a systematic and actionable implementation pathway must be established. At the resource level, government leadership combined with social collaboration should create synergies. Digital tools should be leveraged to drive the creative transformation and innovative expression of cultural resources, while enhancing effective connections

between schools and cultural institutions. In terms of dissemination, efforts should focus on enhancing the cultural interpretation capabilities of the moral education workforce, utilizing major festivals and commemorative dates to cultivate an educational atmosphere, and nurturing a high-quality corps of youth cultural volunteers. Regarding collaborative mechanisms, the key lies in establishing a “home-school-community” educational alliance and developing distinctive cultural resources tailored for families, thereby effectively integrating cultural inheritance into everyday life scenarios.

In summary, synergistically integrating Qilu culture and the spirit of Qingdao—the “root” and the ‘wing’—into the youth moral education system not only effectively strengthens adolescents' cultural identity and moral judgment but also ignites their innovative spirit and practical courage. This achieves the dual educational objectives of “strengthening foundations” and “stimulating vitality.” This approach not only fulfills the imperative of preserving China's outstanding traditional culture and promoting local distinctive spirit but also offers a viable pathway to enhance the effectiveness and innovation of youth moral education in the new era. It provides an enlightening regional practice model for cultivating a new generation capable of shouldering the great mission of national rejuvenation. Future research and practice should further explore the establishment of evaluation mechanisms and sustainable models to continuously optimize this educational initiative.

Acknowledgments

Funded Project: This is one of the achievements of Shandong Provincial Education Society Research Project: Research on Pathways for Children and Adolescents to Inherit Shandong's Yellow River Culture in the Context of Omni-Media Perspectives: A Case Study of Qingdao (2023LXY058).

References

- [1] X.C.Meng, X.S.Hu: *History of Qilu Cultural Thought: From Regional Culture to Mainstream Culture* (Shandong University Press, China 2022), p.180-185.(In Chinese)
- [2] Z.M.Wang: *Qilu Culture and Chinese Civilization* (People's Publishing House,China 2015). p.82-101. (In Chinese)
- [3] Information on <https://www.cac.gov.cn>
- [4] S.B.Zhang, S.H.Ma: The Influence of Qingdao's Historical Cultural Context on Urban Cultural Spirit, *Journal of Ocean University of China*, Vol. (2007) No.4, p.24-28.
- [5] Q.F.Yan, M.Y.Du: Theoretical Understanding and Practical Approaches for Integrating Huaichuan's Red Cultural Resources into Youth Moral Education, *Journal of Jiyuan Vocational and Technical College*,Vol.23(2024) No.1, p.85-89.
- [6] X.L.Du:The Moral Education Function and Practical Strategies of Yellow River Culture for Youth in the New Era: A Review of “Comprehensive Survey of Yellow River Culture” ,*People's Yellow River*, 46 Vol.(2024)No. (6), p. 170-172.