Vol.6 Iss.6 2025 Communication & Education Review
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2025.101

Integrating Literary Aesthetic Education with Values-Oriented Learning: A Case Study of Zhengde Polytechnic College

Xiaoxiao Wang, Yixing Zhou*
Zhengde Polytechnic College, Jiangsu, China
***Corresponding author, E-mail: 249310158@qq.com**

Abstract:
This paper presents a practical teaching case from a higher vocational college in China. It links classroom instruction with co-curricular activities to integrate literary aesthetic education with values-oriented learning. In this study, values-oriented learning refers to embedding values reflection in learning tasks, with attention to professional responsibility, teamwork, and communication. Drawing on Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience, the study adopts a qualitative teaching-case design and documents implementation across multiple semesters. Evidence comes from classroom records and lesson plans, co-curricular documentation, and student-produced outputs generated through poetry activities, gratitude-letter writing, World Book Day recitations, and stage-play rehearsals. Several practice patterns are described. In class, multimodal entry, interpretive dialogue, and expressive practice supported students' engagement with texts and collaborative communication. Co-curricular activities extended interpretation and expression beyond the classroom through sustained practice and traceable artifacts. This exploratory study does not claim causal effects; instead, it offers practice-based insights for higher vocational general education.

Keywords:
literary aesthetic education; aesthetic experience; values-oriented learning; co-curricular activities; higher vocational general education

1. Introduction

1.1 Vocational Education and Values Development

Rapid technological change and industrial restructuring are reshaping occupational standards and competency requirements. In response, Chinese higher vocational colleges—including Zhengde Polytechnic College—are revisiting their talent-development goals. Internationally, this agenda connects with postsecondary vocational education and training (VET), though China's higher vocational colleges operate within a distinct institutional and policy context shaped by national policy frameworks, degree structures, and program–industry coordination mechanisms.

In China, the amended Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (2022) emphasizes

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

improving educational quality, strengthening alignment with socioeconomic development, and supporting the cultivation of technical and skilled workers (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China [NPC], 2022). This policy direction has increased expectations for vocational colleges to prepare graduates who are both technically competent and socially responsible.

In teaching practice, employers and colleges increasingly expect graduates to demonstrate not only job-specific technical proficiency but also broader capabilities, such as cultural understanding, interpersonal communication, teamwork, and professional ethics and responsibility. In this context, general-education courses may serve as practical sites for cultivating communication, collaboration, and professional responsibility through routine learning tasks. When values-oriented learning is delivered as a standalone unit, it often remains disconnected from disciplinary content, task goals, and students' everyday decision-making. By contrast, when values-related reflection is embedded in routine learning processes, it is more likely to become discussable and actionable within students' learning experiences.

In the Chinese higher vocational policy context, values-oriented curriculum development is often discussed as part of institution-wide efforts to strengthen the integration of value reflection into everyday teaching (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2020). In this study, values-oriented learning is used in a practical and task-based sense. It refers to values-related reflection that emerges when students interpret texts, discuss meanings with peers, and practice public expression within course tasks. In the higher vocational context, the focus is placed on professional ethics and responsibility, teamwork, and communication as articulable and actionable learning-related values. This usage is an operational definition for the present teaching case rather than a comprehensive philosophical account of values education; it highlights how values-related reflection can become visible and explicit through routine learning processes.

To support this in routine teaching, the reform linked in-class learning with course-aligned co-curricular activities so that interpretation and expression could be practiced across settings. In the Chinese higher vocational context, College Chinese (a required general-education course focusing on Chinese language and literature) often uses widely taught literary texts and course-aligned co-curricular activities as familiar entry points for interpretation and expressive practice.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Dewey's Theory of Aesthetic Experience

Aesthetic education offers a practical pathway for integrating values-related reflection into learning because it connects values and conduct to students' lived engagement with content. Dewey (1934) describes aesthetic experience not as decoration, but as an integrated process in which "doing" and "undergoing" shape both thinking and feeling, enabling meaning to emerge through experience.

In literature learning, students engage with characters' situations, choices, and tensions through close reading, interpretation, discussion, and performance-based retelling. The aim is not to transmit fixed moral conclusions, but to organize conditions under which students can engage with texts in ways that invite reflection. In this course context, "doing" and "undergoing" were operationalized through recurring routines such as recitation, interpretive dialogue, script drafting and revision, role division, and rehearsal-based performance practice. When such engagement is sustained, reflection may become more personally meaningful and practically oriented.

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Building on this view, this paper examines how literature-centered aesthetic experience can be organized to support values-oriented learning related to professional ethics and responsibility, teamwork, and communication in a higher vocational general-education context.

1.3 Literature Review and Research Purpose

Existing studies suggest that the educational potential of aesthetic education may be limited when it is weakly connected to everyday teaching practice. Ren and Wang (2025) note that some aesthetic education courses show limited practical impact when learners remain passive recipients. Wang (2021) emphasizes the role of literary classics in supporting aesthetic appreciation and reflection on life meaning, while Sun (2022) highlights the importance of clear goals and pathways under an outcome-based education framework. Fu (2023) and Zhang & Yu (2024) discuss coordinating in-class instruction with co-curricular activities through sustained planning. Pan (2022) highlights the integration of cultural education and values-oriented learning through literature and film. In addition, Zhang (2025) examines common problems in aesthetic education work in higher vocational colleges and proposes corresponding improvement strategies.

Despite these contributions, fewer studies provide detailed accounts of how aesthetic-experience principles can be enacted through linked in-class and co-curricular arrangements in higher vocational general-education courses. This paper presents a practice-based teaching case from Zhengde Polytechnic College. The purpose is to document instructional design logic and implementation processes, and to identify practice-based insights relevant to integrating literary aesthetic education with values-oriented learning. This paper describes instructional arrangements and implementation processes rather than evaluating outcomes. The contribution lies in documenting how a formal curriculum–co-curricular linkage can be organized around literary texts to make values-related reflection discussable within ordinary learning tasks.

Against this background, this paper examines how a formal curriculum–co-curricular linkage can be organized around literary texts to make values-oriented learning feasible and discussable within routine tasks in higher vocational general education.

2. Methodology

This paper examines a practice-based teaching case at Zhengde Polytechnic College, drawing on qualitative materials generated during the reform of a required College Chinese course over an observation window covering multiple consecutive course offerings from May 2024 to September 2025. Data collection was completed by September 2025, and the manuscript was prepared after the observation window. The course was a required general-education course during the observation window and provided a stable instructional context for describing routine teaching practice and course-aligned co-curricular arrangements. Data sources included classroom process records, instructional design materials, documentation of co-curricular activities, and student learning artifacts such as scripts, rehearsal logs, reflective notes, and performance recordings. Although the recitation/competition component had been in place before the observation window and had involved earlier classes, this paper focuses on how it was aligned with in-class instruction and course-linked activities within the defined period.

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

2.1 Course and Participants

Participants included approximately 380 students, typically between 18 and 20 years old, drawn from six program areas: engineering cost, environmental art design, digital media technology, accounting, and two programs in electronic and information technology. All participants were enrolled in the College Chinese course during the observation window. Co-curricular activities reported in this paper were designed as course-aligned extensions open to enrolled students.

2.2 Researcher Role, Ethics, and Data Handling

In this practice-based teaching case, the researcher was also a member of the teaching team and took part in the design and implementation of the reported course reform. The analysis is based on reflective review of routine teaching practice rather than independent external observation. Teaching plans, classroom records, co-curricular activity documentation, and student learning artifacts (e.g., scripts, rehearsal logs, reflective notes, and performance recordings) were reviewed to describe recurring instructional arrangements and representative learning outputs within the observation window. Student identifiers were removed, and examples are presented in a non-identifying manner. Student-produced recordings are referenced as process evidence but are not reproduced in this report. Participation in the course-linked activities held outside scheduled class sessions was voluntary, and opting out did not affect course grading.

2.3 Participation, Assessment, and Evidence Boundaries

Co-curricular activities were designed as course-aligned extensions and were open to all enrolled students. Participation was encouraged, but performance quality and competition outcomes were not used as determinants of final course grades. Course assessment relied primarily on routine coursework and participation records. As a result, observed engagement is interpreted as course-related participation rather than grade-driven compliance. Student perspectives are accessed indirectly through learning artifacts and observable participation, including student-produced scripts, rehearsal logs, reflective notes, performance recordings, and records of participation or recognition.

2.4 Analytic Approach

The study used qualitative thematic analysis to summarize recurring instructional arrangements and learning opportunities across materials. The teaching team reviewed lesson records and artifacts to identify repeated patterns in (a) how aesthetic engagement was initiated, (b) how interpretation was supported in peer dialogue, and (c) how expression tasks were carried from the formal curriculum into co-curricular activities. Codes were iteratively refined by comparing lesson records with co-curricular documentation and student artifacts, and patterns were checked for consistency across semesters within the observation window. The analysis prioritized traceable instructional moves and observable products over claims about internal change. Findings are presented as practice-based descriptions of mechanisms and enabling conditions rather than claims about causal effects.

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

3. Aesthetic Learning in the Formal Curriculum

In the College Chinese course, instruction was organized around literary texts as core resources for aesthetic engagement and interpretive practice. Values-oriented learning was embedded in students' encounter with imagery, emotion, and expressive form, rather than presented as a separate instructional component.

Across observed lessons, instruction was typically organized in four steps: multimodal entry, interpretive dialogue, expressive practice, and brief reflection. This structure was intended to connect affective response with textual analysis and collaborative learning.

3.1 Interpreting Imagery and Aspiration: "Jian Jia"

Traditional teacher-centered instruction often struggles to meet the requirements of integrated aesthetic and values-oriented learning, especially when it relies on conceptual definitions and test-oriented interpretation. Situational reconstruction was used to create aesthetic environments that elicit emotional resonance and support subsequent reflection.

In teaching "*Jian Jia*" , a poem from the Book of Songs (Shijing), the lesson used multimedia resources to construct an immersive audiovisual context prior to textual explanation. Ink-wash animation depicting reeds and frost, accompanied by the guqin piece *Wild Geese Descending on the Sandbank*, enabled students to experience the poem's atmosphere. Within this context, students were invited to explore "the beloved one" not only as a romantic figure but also as a possible symbolic representation of virtue, ideals, or life goals. Metaphorical lines describing arduous journeys were connected to students' experiences of learning and career development, creating opportunities for discussion of perseverance and aspiration as meanings emerging from the aesthetic experience rather than as externally imposed conclusions.

Teaching "*Jian Jia*" illustrated how literary imagery supported interpretive dialogue. The poem's reference to *yiren* remained deliberately ambiguous, allowing students to propose multiple interpretations, such as a loved person, a worthy figure, or an idealized aspiration. Repeated spatial expressions such as "by the water," together with progressively intensified descriptions of difficulty, created a sense of distance and persistence. Rather than prescribing conclusions, the lesson offered opportunities for students to connect textual interpretation with reflections on learning effort, goal-setting, and sustained engagement.

3.2 Emotional Resonance and Expressive Practice: "Song of Burying the Flowers"

In teaching the "*Song of Burying the Flowers*" excerpt from *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Hongloumeng), a segment from the 1987 CCTV television adaptation (China Central Television, 1987) was used as an audiovisual teaching material to support attention to tone, rhythm, and emotional cadence. Classroom discussion began with students' immediate affective responses and then moved toward close reading of diction and imagery associated with impermanence and constraint.

Performance-based rehearsal of selected excerpts required coordination of voice, pacing, and role division. This process translated interpretation into expressive practice and provided a structured context for collaborative discussion. Classroom records suggested that students participated actively in text-centered discussion as they worked to align interpretation with performance.

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

3.3 Multimodal Entry and Historical Context

In several lessons, literary or historical texts were introduced through carefully selected recitation videos and audio materials. Classroom records documented strong student attention and emotional engagement, followed by short written reflections. In this paper, these responses are treated as indicators of engagement within specific instructional moments rather than as evidence of enduring value change.

4. Aesthetic Learning in Co-Curricular Activities

In this paper, co-curricular materials are treated as evidence of participation and traceable learning processes rather than as proof of learning outcomes or attitudinal change.

Across the observation window, the teaching team organized recurring course-linked co-curricular practices alongside routine instruction in the required College Chinese course. These included festival-themed poetry events, a gratitude-letter writing-and-reading activity, themed speech sessions in selected classes, stage-play rehearsals and performances based on literary texts , and a recitation competition around World Book Day 2025. Across activities, artifacts such as annotated scripts, rehearsal records, performance recordings, brief reflections, and evaluation notes were retained as process evidence of participation and traceable learning processes rather than as proof of learning outcomes or attitudinal change.

4.1 Case 1: Mid-Autumn Poetry Event as Course-Linked Practice

During the Mid-Autumn Festival period in 2024, around 380 students across six majors were enrolled in the course. The themed poetry activity was integrated into scheduled teaching time, and students participated through group-based selection, annotation, and rehearsal tasks. Students worked in small groups to select poems, annotate texts, plan recitation structure, and rehearse with musical accompaniment.

Learning outputs generated through this process included annotated scripts, rehearsal schedules, audio recordings of practice sessions, and short reflective notes. Classroom and activity documentation indicated that groups revised their scripts multiple times in response to peer feedback, adjusting pacing, role distribution, and expressive emphasis. These materials documented sustained engagement with literary interpretation through collaborative practice.

A similar arrangement was also implemented during the Qingming Festival period in 2025 within the observation window, focusing on remembrance, seasonal imagery, and reflective expression in shared settings.

4.2 Case 2: Writing and Reading Activities as Expressive Articulation

In one course-aligned co-curricular activity, students were invited to write short letters expressing appreciation to family members and to participate in a collective reading session. Selected texts were read aloud by student authors in class. Learning artifacts included handwritten drafts, revised versions submitted after peer comments, and brief reflection notes on the reading experience. Records from the activity indicated that students attended closely to tone and wording when preparing texts for public reading. These activities provided structured occasions for expressive articulation and listening, and are reported here as examples of participa-

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

tion in communicative practice rather than as evidence of internal value change.

4.3 Case 3: Recitation Competitions and Sustained Practice Cycles

Recitation competitions linked to World Book Day 2025 functioned as anchors for extended co-curricular practice. Preparation involved background reading, interpretive discussion, repeated rehearsal, and coordination of voice, music, and visual elements. Learning outputs generated during preparation included revised scripts, rehearsal logs documenting adjustments to delivery, and performance recordings.

Some student teams continued their preparation for off-campus events following the campus competition. In this paper, awards and recognitions are reported only as factual records indicating continuity of participation and sustained practice. They are not interpreted as evidence of learning effectiveness, but rather as documentation of extended engagement with literary expression beyond a single classroom session. Across activities, "process evidence" refers to materials that document revision and coordination over time (e.g., annotated drafts, versioned scripts, role allocation notes, and rehearsal logs), rather than single-session impressions.

4.4 Additional Co-Curricular Arrangements

Beyond the three focal cases above, co-curricular practice also included themed speech sessions, reading-sharing meetings, and stage-play rehearsals and performances based on literary works such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo Yanyi) and *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

During the observation window, Zhengde Polytechnic College ran recurring recitation activities as part of its co-curricular program, and the teaching team aligned selected iterations with the College Chinese course. Within the observation window, these competitions were incorporated as a key component of co-curricular education and aligned with the College Chinese course through theme design, rehearsal-based learning, and performance reflection.

Participation in provincial-level competitions created additional occasions for extended interpretive preparation and rehearsal-based refinement. Through collective study of historical materials and documentaries and repeated rehearsal, students were encouraged to subordinate technique to emotion, treating performance as meaning-centered articulation rather than purely technical display. According to Zhengde Polytechnic College's news release, the college's submissions won one first prize, two third prizes, and one excellence award in the vocational-institution student group, and one first prize and one third prize in the teacher group; two first-prize works advanced to the national competition, and Zhou Yixing received an Excellent Instructor Award (Zhengde Polytechnic College, 2025). In this report, these results are treated not as direct proof of value change but as factual records indicating continuity of participation and students' capacity to articulate literary meaning and values-related themes in a public and evaluative setting.

Students participated in differentiated roles including acting, narration, and stage coordination. Rehearsal records documented iterative adjustments to scripts and performance structure, supporting repeated interpretation through embodied practice.

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

5. Discussion

The case offers a concrete illustration of Dewey's view that aesthetic experience is an integrated process of "doing" and "undergoing." In the reported course, students engaged with texts not only through reading and teacher explanation, but also through voice, rhythm, pacing, and coordinated performance. These forms of expressive practice made literary meaning visible and discussable in action, especially when students negotiated wording, role division, and delivery. In this sense, the case supports the idea that aesthetic experience in education is not purely cognitive but is closely tied to embodied and collaborative activity.

The case also addresses concerns raised in prior research about limited impact when students remain passive recipients in aesthetic education (Ren & Wang, 2025). Rather than treating appreciation as an end point, the formal curriculum–co-curricular linkage created repeated occasions for interpretation and expression across settings. Co-curricular activities provided extended time, shared responsibility, and public presentation contexts, which encouraged students to revisit texts, refine scripts, and coordinate with peers. This structure created repeated opportunities for active participation through interpretation, revision, and coordinated expression.

In relation to discussions on clear teaching pathways under an outcome-based education framework (Sun, 2022), the case suggests that task pathways can be designed without reducing literary learning to narrow performance indicators. The course used learning outputs (e.g., scripts, rehearsal logs, and reflective notes) primarily as process evidence and supports for learning, while avoiding claims of direct or lasting value change. At the same time, because the lead researcher was also a member of the teaching team, interpretation of engagement and participation may reflect instructor perspectives; the analysis therefore prioritizes traceable instructional moves and observable products over claims about internal change.

6. Conclusion

For other higher vocational colleges and for broader VET settings, the potential transferability lies in the linkage principle: align co-curricular activities with course texts, build repeated practice cycles, and design tasks that require collaborative communication. Transferability depends on stable course time, teacher support for rehearsal and feedback, and an institutional mechanism that supports co-curricular learning. A practical trade-off is that extended rehearsal cycles can increase teacher workload and, if not carefully framed, may shift attention toward competition performance rather than learning-oriented interpretation and communication practice.

Overall, this paper illustrates how literary aesthetic education was organized to create conditions for values-oriented learning in higher vocational general education. Through linked formal curriculum and co-curricular arrangements, aesthetic engagement with texts was connected to repeated opportunities for interpretation, expression, and collaborative practice. Rather than demonstrating causal effects of aesthetic experience on values development, the paper describes how instructional arrangements may open space for discussion of professional ethics and responsibility, teamwork, and communication within ordinary teaching practice. While the evidence is limited to practice-generated materials and indirect indicators of student engagement, the case offers practice-based insights that may inform the design of similar courses in higher vocational edu-

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

cation.

Funding

This study was supported by the 2024 Jiangsu Provincial Special Project on High-Quality Reform of General Education Course Teaching in Higher Education, titled *Research on Integrating Literary Aesthetic Education with Values-Oriented Learning* (translated by the authors; Grant No. 2024GZJX193).

本论文为2024年江苏省高校“高质量公共课教学改革研究”专项课题“文学美育与课程思政建设融合研究”成果，项目编号：2024GZJX193。

References

[1]China Central Television. (1987). *Dream of the Red Chamber* [TV series]. China Central Television.

[2]Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as Experience*. Minton, Balch & Co.

[3]Fu, L. (2023). Dongbei difang gaoxiao zhongguo xiandangdai wenxue lei kecheng xin meiyu yuansu de rongru yu chanchu yanjiu [A study on the integration and outputs of “new aesthetic-education elements” in modern and contemporary Chinese literature courses in Northeast local universities] [In Chinese]. *Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition)*, *36(5)*, 167–171.

[4]Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. (2020, May 28). Jiaoyubu guanyu yinfa “Gaodeng xuexiao kecheng sizheng jianshe zhidao gangyao” de tongzhi [In Chinese]. https://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html

[5]National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China. (2022, April 20). Zhiye jiaoyu fa (2022 nian xiuding) [In Chinese]. https://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c2/c30834/202204/t20220420_317575.html

[6]Pan, Y. (2022). Wenhua zixin yujing xia gaozhi yingshi wenxue meiyu lujing yanjiu [A study on aesthetic education pathways of film and television literature in higher vocational colleges under the context of cultural confidence] [In Chinese]. *Daxue, (20)*, 173–176.

[7]Ren, L., & Wang, T. (2025). Hanhua shijiao xia xinshidai gaoxiao meiyu de jiazhi huigui yu shijian [Value return and practices of aesthetic education in universities in the new era under the perspective of cultivation] [In Chinese]. *Journal of Hunan Industry Polytechnic*, 25(6), 38–43. https://doi.org/10.13787/j.cnki.43-1374/z.2025.06.007

[8]Sun, Z. (2022). Chengguo daoxiang (OBE) shiyu xia gaoxiao gudian wenxue de meiyu wenti tantao [An OBE-based discussion on aesthetic education issues in classical literature teaching in universities] [In Chinese]. *Yanshan Luncong*, *(1)*, 201–206.

[9]Wang, X. (2021). Yi meiyu shidai xinren: Wenxue jingdian de shenmei tezhi yu meiyu shijian [Educating new-era youth through aesthetic education: Aesthetic qualities of literary classics and practices] [In Chinese]. *Journal of Hotan Teachers College*, *40(5)*, 101–105.

[10]Zhang, J. (2025). Gaozhi yuanxiao meiyu gongzuo cunzai de wenti ji jiejue celue yanjiu [Problems and solutions of aesthetic education work in higher vocational colleges] [In Chinese]. *Journal of Chongqing Electric Power College, 30(6)*, 68–71.

[11]Zhang, J., & Yu, T. (2024). Gaoxiao dier ketang waiguo wenxue jiaoyu yu meiyu de ronghe yanjiu [Integrating foreign literature education and aesthetic education in the second classroom] [In Chinese]. *Yingyu Guangchang, (S1)*, 23–26.

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

[12]Zhengde Polytechnic College. (2025, September 16). Woyuan shisheng zai 2025 nian Jiangsusheng Zhonghua jingdian songdu dasai zhong zhanhuo jiaci [In Chinese]. https://zd.nuaa.edu.cn/contents/1471/18070.html

© 2025 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)