

The Multidimensional Impact of Stage Play Rehearsals on College Students' Moral Education and Practical Approaches

Jian He

Wuzhou University, Wuzhou, Guangxi, China

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Abstract: Moral education in higher education institutions constitutes a fundamental component of fostering students' comprehensive qualities, yet traditional teaching methods have increasingly revealed their limitations. Stage play rehearsals, as an immersive and interactive practical approach, offer a novel pathway for enhancing moral education among university students. This study examines the profound impact of stage play rehearsals on college students' moral development across four dimensions—moral cognition, moral emotion, moral will, and moral behavior—while exploring concrete measures to strengthen its educational efficacy, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for reforming moral education models in higher education institutions.

Key words: stage play rehearsal; moral education for college students; moral practice; immersive education

1. Introduction

In the new era context, moral education in higher education institutions not only bears the primary responsibility of cultivating future generations capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation, but also faces practical challenges such as the lack of appeal in traditional rote-based approaches and insufficient student engagement. The “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions in the New Era” clearly emphasizes the need to integrate the strengths of traditional ideological education with modern information technology to enhance its contemporary relevance and attractiveness. Stage drama performance is a comprehensive creative activity that combines various artistic forms—including literature, performance, music, and visual arts. During rehearsals, role immersion, collaborative teamwork, and emotional communication inherently facilitate moral education practices. Inviting college students to participate in stage drama rehearsals helps overcome the temporal and spatial limitations of traditional moral education, transforming abstract ethical principles into concrete emotional experiences and tangible actions, thereby shifting moral education from one-way instruction to genuine emotional integration.

2. The Internal Logic of Integrating Moral Education into Stage Play Rehearsals for College Students

2.1 The alignment between the artistic characteristics of stage plays and their moral education objectives

Theater performances possess three fundamental characteristics: storytelling, emotional engagement, and fostering interaction, which align closely with the cognitive, affective, volitional, and behavioral teaching objectives of moral

education. Firstly, narrative structure serves as the primary expressive tool of theater, employing a clear storyline to present diverse moral scenarios and value judgments, thereby helping university students appreciate the significance of ethical principles in real life. Secondly, empathy constitutes the emotional core of theater; through role-playing, students deeply experience characters' emotional fluctuations and moral dilemmas in various situations, enhancing their understanding of others' feelings. Lastly, participatory involvement forms the foundation of theatrical production—every stage, from scriptwriting and character assignment to multiple rehearsals, requires students to actively participate as central actors, translating moral theories into concrete actions.

2.2 The contextual characteristics of the rehearsal process align well with the principles of moral development

The cultivation of moral character represents a dynamic transition from cognition to action, which must occur within specific contexts. Stage play rehearsals create a realistic moral scenario for university students: participants must deeply internalize their characters' values during rehearsals and express the characters' moral sentiments through language, actions, and facial expressions. This experiential approach fosters ethical reflection among students and encourages active engagement with moral issues. Throughout rehearsals, conflicts and collaborations frequently arise—such as regarding character differences, dialogue adjustments, and stage design coordination—which help create authentic scenarios that enable students to learn how to navigate interpersonal relationships and solve real-world problems, thereby gradually developing solid moral behavioral habits through practice.

3. The Multidimensional Impact of Stage Play Rehearsals on College Students' Moral Education

3.1 Deepening Moral Awareness: From Theoretical Understanding to Practical Perception

Traditional moral education primarily relies on classroom lectures, often limiting students' understanding of ethical norms to theoretical concepts. By engaging in stage play rehearsals through role-playing, college students transition from passive observers to active participants, gaining a deeper comprehension of the core principles of morality. For instance, when rehearsing scenes from the red-themed play "The Age of Awakening", students delve into the life stories and ideological evolution of revolutionary pioneers like Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, reflecting on their sense of mission and responsibility during national crises. This proactive exploration process enables students to transform abstract concepts such as patriotism and spiritual aspirations into tangible insights. Moreover, moral conflicts between different character roles encourage students to consider diverse value systems. Through performing family scenario dramas by portraying characters across various age groups, students grasp the practical significance of filial piety and communication in interpersonal relationships, thereby gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted and complex nature of ethical norms.

3.2 Cultivating Moral Emotions: From Passive Acceptance to Active Empathy

Moral emotions serve as the primary driving force behind ethical behavior. By participating in stage play rehearsals, college students cultivate empathy and a sense of responsibility through emotional resonance. During rehearsals, students must accurately perceive the emotional shifts of their characters. For instance, when portraying vulnerable groups facing difficult circumstances, they should grasp the characters' helplessness and aspirations to develop empathy for others' suffering; when playing roles requiring social responsibility, they need to experience the character's sense of duty and pressure, thereby strengthening their personal accountability and mission awareness. When rehearsing plays focused on rural revitalization, students playing the role of village-based first secretaries vividly experience the dedication of grassroots workers by simulating scenarios such as mediating villagers' disputes and promoting industrial development, further reinforcing their sense of social responsibility. Additionally, collaborative rehearsals and mutual support within teams enhance students' collective consciousness and teamwork skills, fostering harmonious interpersonal relationships through emotional connection.

3.3 Cultivating Moral Willpower: From Cognitive Weakness to Resolute Action

Rehearsing stage plays is an exceptionally challenging process that requires students to devote significant time and effort, ranging from mastering the script and refining movements to final performances. This experience plays a crucial role in cultivating college students' moral integrity and perseverance. Firstly, challenges encountered during rehearsals—such as misrecited lines, movement errors, or team disagreements—help develop students' stress resilience through repeated practice and constructive communication, thereby strengthening their ability to overcome difficulties. Secondly, prolonged rehearsals foster tenacity; some productions may take months to complete, requiring students to balance academic commitments with rehearsals while gradually developing consistent dedication. Finally, the tension surrounding performances enhances self-control: facing audience expectations and stage pressures, students learn to adjust their mindset, focus on performance, and find ways to motivate themselves under high-pressure conditions.

3.4 Cultivating Moral Behavior: From Normative Understanding to Practical Implementation

The primary objective of moral education is to help students internalize ethical principles as personal values and demonstrate them in practical actions, with theatrical productions serving as a bridge for translating these principles into practice. During rehearsals, team collaboration requires students to adhere to discipline and respect others—such as attending rehearsals punctually, working actively with partners, and following the director's instructions. These behavioral patterns often naturally extend to real-life situations like classroom activities or club responsibilities. Moreover, moral role models in the play inspire students to emulate such qualities; for instance, after portraying characters who value integrity, students may prioritize honesty in their daily studies by avoiding homework plagiarism and keeping promises. Additionally, post-performance feedback sessions enable students to reflect on their behavior and continuously refine their approaches to practicing ethics.

4. Optimizing the Pathways of Stage Play Rehearsals in College Students' Moral Education Practices

4.1 Establishing a three-tiered collaborative moral education system for stage plays involving schools, academic departments, and classes

Higher education institutions should develop comprehensive moral education programs for stage plays, establishing a three-tier collaborative model that integrates university-level guidance, departmental implementation, and class-level coordination. At the university level, the Student Affairs Office shall lead efforts in collaborating with departments offering literature and arts-related majors to formulate an implementation plan for stage play-based moral education, while providing dedicated funding for scriptwriting and rehearsal activities. At the departmental level, thematic productions should be designed according to each department's academic characteristics; for instance, the Law School could focus its production concepts on the spirit of the rule of law. At the class level, students are encouraged to independently organize small-scale stage productions and hold performance events at the class level, aiming to achieve comprehensive coverage of moral education.

4.2 Strengthening the integration of ideological and political elements into theatrical productions

The primary purpose of theatrical performances is to demonstrate their effectiveness in moral education, requiring the seamless integration of ideological and political elements. On one hand, this approach enables a deep exploration of the essence of traditional Chinese culture—such as adapting classic stories from *The Analects* and *Mencius* to distill core values like benevolence, propriety, and righteousness; on the other hand, it incorporates contemporary themes into creative works by producing original productions that highlight achievements of the new era, including poverty alleviation, technological progress, and rural revitalization, thereby emphasizing the mission and responsibility undertaken by today's youth. This encourages students to engage in scriptwriting and inspires them to incorporate personal ethical reflections into their plays, thereby presenting moral education content in a distinctive manner.

4.3 Establishing a support system that integrates professional guidance with diversified evaluation methods

Given that university students often lack experience in stage play creation and rehearsal, universities can establish dedicated guidance teams by inviting faculty from the theater and film industries as well as professional actors from external theater troupes to provide students with comprehensive support in scriptwriting, performance techniques, and stage management. During this period, a diversified evaluation system should be implemented, incorporating students' level of engagement during rehearsals, teamwork skills, and moral development into the assessment criteria, thereby avoiding reliance solely on performance outcomes as the sole evaluation metric. Organizing campus drama festivals and stage performances provides students with platforms to showcase their talents while fostering their sense of honor and motivation for participating in stage-based moral education initiatives.

5. Conclusion

As a form of deeply participatory moral education practice, stage play rehearsals have opened up a new approach to character development for university students. By integrating practical experience into specific contexts, they exert positive influences on college students across four dimensions: moral cognition, emotions, willpower, and behavior, thereby shifting moral education from theoretical instruction to practical implementation. Moving forward, universities should prioritize optimizing the practical approaches to moral education through stage plays, establish systematic and professional collaborative frameworks, thoroughly explore the educational efficacy of stage performances in ideological cultivation, guide young learners to develop noble ideals and strong moral qualities, and nurture outstanding talents for realizing the China Dream of national rejuvenation.

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Author Biography:

Jian He (March 1981), male, Zhuang ethnic group, native of Nanning, Guangxi, lecturer, holds a Master's degree, Wuzhou University. His research focuses on college student career planning and aesthetic education.