

Original Paper

Research on the Integration of Traditional Chinese Culture into Kindergarten Curriculum in Ethnic Regions

Chen Jiang¹

¹ College of Education and Psychology, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610225, China

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Abstract

Based on the background of early childhood education curriculum, kindergartens in various regions have begun to pay attention to the development of kindergarten curriculum. Most of teachers search for the characteristics of kindergarten curriculum that is suitable for young children's age groups. The excellent Chinese traditional culture, as an important element with Chinese cultural symbols, is gradually being used by kindergarten teachers. When carrying out activities, kindergartens in ethnic regions integrate traditional Chinese culture into the development of kindergarten curriculum. This study starts with the background of integrating traditional Chinese culture into the development of kindergarten curriculum. Through interviews with preschool teachers, it identifies the current problems and reasons, and proposes some suggestions for better integrating traditional Chinese culture into the kindergarten curriculum.

Keywords

Traditional Chinese culture, Kindergarten curriculum, Kindergarten curriculum development

1. Introduction

From 2001 to 2012, kindergarten curriculum entered the local stage of curriculum reform. Kindergartens in various regions began to carry out early childhood education curriculum reforms. It gradually resulted in the emergence of the curriculum concepts and types. In September 2001, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trial)" (referred to as the "Guidelines"), which set relevant requirements for kindergarten curriculum. It was proposed that the development of kindergarten curriculum should consider its own actual situation and strive to develop curriculum suitable for young children by combining local regions, local kindergartens and classes. Under the lead of Guidelines, there is an increasing number of distinctive kindergarten based courses

which have achieved remarkable results and characteristics in promoting the construction of kindergarten based courses. China is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country with rich Chinese culture. Many folk stories, fables, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and nursery rhymes have been included in the curriculum development. As multicultural educator Banks pointed out, the curriculum content should reflect the history, experiences, and values of other ethnic groups, giving minority students the opportunity to understand their own country and national culture. At present, cultural elements are increasingly prominent in the research of kindergarten curriculum. Just as Fei Xiaotong proposed the concept of “the diversity and unity of the Chinese nation”, it emphasizes the diversity of national culture and focuses on inheriting traditional Chinese culture as its main function and role.

2. The Background of Integrating Traditional Chinese Culture into the Development of Kindergarten Curriculum in Ethnic Regions

In the mid-1980s, many early childhood education curriculums from abroad began to be introduced into China, such as Montessori courses, Reggio courses and High Vision courses etc. Some kindergartens imitated the curriculum concepts and models that resulting in the development of kindergarten based curriculum like a fleeting observation. However, many kindergartens based curriculum imitates its appearance without substance. For example, some kindergartens in China are named after Montessori and purchase lots of expensive Montessori teaching aids, but it have little actual knowledge of Montessori’s true philosophy. Moreover, this phenomenon lead kindergarten based curriculum to move towards a misconception and become a “testing ground” for various curriculum models. Therefore, developing the characteristics of kindergarten based curriculum has become the direction of teaching and research in recent years, and the integration of traditional Chinese culture has injected new vitality into kindergarten curriculum.

The researchers have collected some relevant studies that are more distinctive in the development of kindergarten based curriculum. On the one hand, it mainly focuses on the construction of kindergarten based curriculum under the background of kindergarten’s characteristic culture. For example, Xi Qianwei’s “Case Study on the Development of Curriculum in the Traditional Culture of the 24 Solar Terms”; Xie Jijia’s “Research on the Development of Kindergarten Science Curriculum Based on Natural Environment”; Liao Runling’s “A Study on the Development of Red Culture Curriculum Resources in Kindergartens in Zunyi City” and other studies mostly use the method of case study to demonstrate how each kindergarten’s characteristic curriculums is developed. On the other hand, regarding the integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements into kindergarten based curriculum, the main point is on the development and research of integrating ethnic culture into kindergarten curriculum. It mainly uses case studies, interview methods and observation methods. For example, Long Piao’s “Practical Research on Integrating Li Ethnic Folktales into Kindergarten Curriculum” takes Hainan Li ethnic folktales as a starting point, supplementing the research content of Li ethnic folktales in kindergarten curriculum. And through literature review, interviews and case studies, it

investigates the significance, methods, difficulties and strategies of integrating Li ethnic folktales into kindergarten curriculum. Gan Tian's "Research on the Current Situation and Influential Factors of the Integration of Chuxiong Yi Culture into Kindergarten Curriculum" conducted a survey on the principals and teachers of 16 kindergartens in Chuxiong City, analyzing the goals, content, organizational implementation, evaluation and other aspects of the kindergarten Yi culture curriculum. Different teachers from different regions were compared to discover the current situation and influencing factors. Wu Haodong's "Research on the Basic Principles and Paths of Developing Kindergarten Based Curriculum in Ethnic Areas - Taking the Cultural Resources of the Tujia Ethnic Group in Eastern Guizhou as an Example" proposes three principles and four paths for developing the cultural resources of the Tujia ethnic group, namely the basic principles - the principle of life, the principle of nationality, and the principle of integrity; Basic path - theme activities, regional activities, game activities, and environmental creation; Luo Wangyue's "Research on the Development and Utilization of Yi Culture Curriculum Resources in Kindergartens in the Yi Region" takes the kindergarten in Liangshan Prefecture, Sichuan Province as an example, and uses case study and observation methods to conduct research on the development of Yi culture curriculum resources.

3. The Problems of Integrating Traditional Chinese Culture into the Development of Kindergarten Curriculum in Ethnic Regions

3.1 The Relatively High Understanding of Traditional Chinese Cultural Resources and Lack of Better Application

Punit's research found that the higher a teacher's awareness of multiculturalism, the more responsible and conscious they are, and consciously incorporate the concept of cultural diversity into curriculum design and teaching activities. The acceptance and identification from kindergarten teachers will directly affect the traditional Chinese culture as an important curriculum resource to integrate into early childhood education. By interviews methods, researchers learned that 19 teachers hold a positive attitude towards integrating ethnic culture into kindergarten curriculum. They believe that integrating traditional Chinese culture as an important resource into kindergarten curriculum can not only allow children to have access to more diverse cultural forms and feel the charm of multiculturalism, but also have a positive effect on enhancing the ethnic identity of minority children. In addition, kindergarten teachers have a positive and supportive attitude towards the development of cultural curriculum resources in their own environment and their professional development, and can clearly recognize the unique value of traditional Chinese culture in curriculum resource development.

3.2 Insufficient Understanding of Local Ethnic Cultural Elements and Less Mastery and Depth of Resources

Due to the in-depth understanding of local ethnic cultural curriculum resources, preschool teachers are unable to engage in curriculum development activities. During the survey, researchers learned that some kindergarten principals and teachers currently have an average level of understanding of local

ethnic cultural curriculum resources. They not only lack sufficient understanding and attention to local ethnic architecture, clothing, transportation, folk literature, games, sports and competitive activities, but also do not know how to apply ethnic arts such as singing and dancing and weaving, which have more local ethnic cultural characteristics. In addition, there is a utilitarian tendency among teachers to utilize ethnic culture, and a part of teachers believe that the purpose of utilizing ethnic culture is to highlight the characteristics of kindergarten education and create brand effects.

3.3 The Passive Awareness of Integrating Traditional Chinese Culture into Kindergarten Based Curriculum Development

Researchers find that the proportion of teachers who independently organize educational activities do not archive the further expectations. On the one hand, there may be a lack of motivation in action due to inadequate understanding. On the other hand, they face significant difficulties in their own professional qualities. Some local preschool teachers often stay at a superficial level and only use many preserved well and relatively mature resources of traditional Chinese culture. In the interview, about the topic of traditional festival culture, teachers have organized relevant activities for some common and popular festivals, such as the National Day, the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. In terms of traditional architectural culture, teachers mostly use pictures and videos to show the Chinese characteristic buildings, such as the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square and the Great Wall. However, many young children have not seen these buildings with their own eyes and their cognitions can only rely on the teacher's explanation.

4. Analysis of the Reasons for Integrating Traditional Chinese Culture into the Development of Kindergarten Curriculum in Ethnic Regions

4.1 The Relatively Few Mature Curriculum Resources about Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements of Kindergarten Based Curriculum

Teachers can be used some folk literature resources as kindergarten courses, such as mature fables, stories, and poems, which are relatively mature in content. According to the interview results, 18 teachers have told children the fable story of "Grandma Bear", 10 teachers have told children nursery rhymes such as "Gods and Heroes", "Three Brothers", and "Wandering Orphan Snake Mother", which are more commonly used in teaching activities to regulate the atmosphere and guide teaching activities. But this kind of way is mostly a superficial introduction to literary texts, without delving into the essence of traditional Chinese culture. In addition, due to the widespread implementation of Chinese language education in local kindergartens, some folk cultures based on Yi and Tibetan languages are difficult to be absorbed and utilized by kindergartens. Kindergartens are mostly limited to utilizing and introducing the art of painting reflected in their masks, which were included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists. Few teachers actively explore and develop the typical ethnic singing and dancing art forms in the local area.

4.2 The Unreasonable Allocation of Teachers' Energy and Time Because of Kindergarten Administrative Management Content

Many teachers are busy with a large amount of formal work, such as the writing of various plans and summaries, which take up a lot of time and energy of teachers. Teachers have less time to pay more attention to young children and design meaningful teaching activities based on their interests, needs and activity outlines. If kindergartens can liberate teachers from the mundane and dogmatic work of daily management, teachers can not only be proficient in the education process, but also make better reflection on their own work. Teachers can observe and understand their interests and development needs through contacting with them. Thus, it is important for kindergarten teachers to consciously integrate traditional culture into kindergarten based curriculum by their normal teaching work and activities.

4.3 The Weak Subjective Consciousness Due to the Great Influence of Objective Environment

There are mainly two aspects about the weak subjective awareness for kindergarten teachers. Firstly, for a long time, kindergarten teachers have relatively low professional status and poor sense of professional identity, which affect their work consciousness and autonomy. It can result in a weak subjective consciousness of kindergarten teachers. Secondly, the proportion of teacher-children in kindergartens are not reasonable enough because of insufficient investment in preschool education in ethnic regions. Most kindergartens do not meet the staffing requirements of "two teachers and one children-care work", and they far exceed the limit number of required children's standard in each class. This means that teachers undertake necessary educational work and take on a large number of childcare tasks for their daily lives. It is difficult for teachers to have the energy and time to think about the construction of kindergarten curriculum culture, and even they also lack the awareness of being the main body of kindergarten curriculum culture construction.

5. Effective Strategies for Integrating Traditional Chinese Culture into the Development of Kindergarten Curriculum in Ethnic Regions

5.1 Regarding Teachers: Building a Research and Development Team for Traditional Chinese Culture Courses in Kindergartens by Integrating Teacher Resources

The traditional cultural courses in kindergartens are mainly independently developed by teachers in the kindergarten. At present, preschool teachers generally lack relevant knowledges of local traditional regional culture. And also their understanding of traditional culture is not profound. In the basic teaching and research modules in all kindergartens, it is extremely important to add a lot of contents on traditional Chinese culture. It not only helps preschool teachers to familiarize themselves with the history, content, and value of traditional Chinese culture, but also comprehensively improves their traditional cultural literacy. In addition, it is more difficult for teachers to identify and select traditional cultural content and design related activities during the development of kindergarten based curriculum. Teachers need to start from the excellent traditional Chinese cultural characteristic curriculum and

improve the curriculum structure. In the future, research and development of kindergarten based courses should mobilize local experts, experienced teachers and parents from universities or other kindergartens to work together to develop kindergarten based courses with traditional Chinese cultural elements. Therefore, kindergartens should effectively improve teacher's traditional cultural literacy and educational ability and create a diversified research and development team for kindergarten based courses, which effectively ensure the sustainability and innovation of course development.

5.2 In Terms of Kindergartens: Building a Traditional Chinese Cultural Base and Strengthening the Development of Book Culture in Kindergartens

There are the fundamental conditions for educational activities based on the rich book and cultural resources. We often say that "a skillful woman cannot cook without rice", which is also applicable to teachers engaged in educational work. Leo Strauss pointed out in his article "What is Free Education" that "education is within or towards culture." The famous modern educator John Dewey pointed out in his article "My Educational Creed": All education is carried out through individual participation in human social consciousness. Through this way, individuals gradually share the wisdom and moral wealth accumulated by humanity. He becomes an inheritor of inherent cultural capital. Whether in the concepts of famous thinkers and educators, or in the cognition of ordinary people, education is related to the "possession" and "sharing" of cultural resources. Education cannot be separated from the fundamental condition of "possessing" and "sharing" cultural resources at any stage. If there is a sole criterion for judging the richness of kindergarten curriculum culture and the quality and effectiveness of kindergarten curriculum activities, then this criterion must be the level of book culture construction in the kindergarten. Before teachers become experts in the development of cultural resources in kindergarten curriculum, they must possess cultural resources and achieve spiritual "sharing" under the premise of formal "possession". This requires teachers to be able to purposefully acquire rich book cultural resources based on their own educational practice activities, and at the same time be able to use book cultural resources to organize educational and teaching activities. In this two-way process, teachers have achieved their own professional growth and gradually become expert teachers and course developers. From this, it can be seen that strengthening the construction of book culture in kindergartens in ethnic regions is not only beneficial for enriching the curriculum and cultural resources of kindergartens in ethnic regions, but also for enhancing the professional development level of teachers and improving their curriculum innovation ability.

5.3 Community and Family Aspects: Kindergarten and Family Work Together to Lay an Environmental Foundation for Integrating Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements into Kindergarten Based Curriculum

For children in ethnic areas, as their social life gradually expands, different cultures in the community gradually enter their world. These different cultures gradually being perceived, accepted and recognized by them. As American scholar F. Walter once said, students who do not receive education in their own culture may feel distant and rootless, but students who lack mainstream cultural education

will lose many economic, political, and social opportunities. In terms of integrating traditional Chinese cultural elements into kindergarten based on the content selection of curriculum, it is necessary to absorb cultural resources that are suitable for the development of the society and culture. It can incorporate them into the curriculum field and enrich the curriculum culture of kindergartens while inheriting and promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture. Education is the process of guiding individuals to achieve socialization. The educational process should start from the multicultural background of the target audience and construct the curriculum within this framework. Form starting from the real life experiences of young children, it can help their cultural experiences and reflect the characteristics of traditional Chinese culture in kindergarten curriculum activities.

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