

Research on the Current Situation of Incorporating Folk Songs into Kindergarten Education Activities from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission

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Abstract: Children's rhymes, as a kind of folk language culture that accompanies children's growth, carry rich regional cultural connotations and play a crucial role in early education as an important form of enlightenment. With their concise and elegant sentence structures and unique rhymes, they are like lively musical notes flowing in children's innocent hearts, thus being hailed as "the songs flowing in children's hearts"^[1]. Due to their unique artistic value, children's rhymes have been included in the category of intangible cultural heritage. The organic combination of intangible cultural dialects, folk wisdom, and children's rhymes education has injected new vitality into the dynamic inheritance of culture and has become a vivid practice of the current educational model of teaching children through entertainment. Through humorous and lively content and diverse interactive forms, children's rhymes not only cultivate children's aesthetic ability and musical literacy but also enhance their language ability and strengthen their sense of belonging to local culture in an imperceptible way. However, with the acceleration of urbanization and the wide spread of Mandarin, intangible cultural dialect children's rhymes are facing a severe crisis of decline. Based on this real situation, from the perspective of protection and inheritance, this paper deeply studies the current situation of intangible cultural dialect children's rhymes in kindergarten education activities, explores innovative paths, and aims to provide new ideas and methods for maintaining their cultural vitality.

Keywords: Cultural heritage inheritance; Children's rhymes; Kindergarten education

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

To strengthen the protection and inheritance of China's intangible cultural heritage, the state has successively issued policy documents such as "Opinions on Implementing the Project of Inheriting and Developing Fine

Traditional Chinese Culture” and “The ‘14th Five-Year Plan’ for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” emphasizing the importance of the protection of intangible cultural heritage and proposing specific goals and tasks for its inheritance and development. Kindergartens, as important venues for children’s early education, shoulder an irreplaceable and significant mission in cultural inheritance. The “Trial Guidelines for Kindergarten Education” clearly states: “Make full use of social resources to guide children to actually experience the richness and excellence of the culture of our motherland, feel the changes and development of our hometown, and stimulate children’s love for our hometown and our motherland.” The “Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3–6” emphasizes that “Let children come into contact with excellent literary works, enabling them to feel the richness and beauty of language, and help children deepen their experience and understanding of the works through various activities.” These educational policies and concepts provide clear guidance for kindergartens to carry out intangible cultural heritage education. Taking Fuzhou nursery rhymes as an example, in kindergarten teaching, Fuzhou dialect nursery rhymes are organically combined with teaching content, creating a music environment that is familiar and friendly to children, allowing children to accept dialect nursery rhymes in their familiar and beloved nursery rhyme songs ^[2], among which “Civilization Tour” and “Luk Er La Mei” were selected as excellent nursery rhymes.

1.2. Practical cases of nursery rhyme education activities carried out in kindergartens

From the perspective of inheriting intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the multi-dimensional exploration of integrating children’s rhymes into kindergarten education activities reveals that the ICH cultural inheritance model based on dialect as the carrier and children’s rhymes as the medium can effectively achieve the deep integration of excellent traditional culture and early childhood education. It has been practiced in many provinces and cities. For instance, Huangshan Kindergarten in Lijiang City incorporated Naxi ethnic language children’s rhymes into its own curriculum. Through weekly special courses and the “relay” teaching model, children can feel the charm of ICH in the melodious dialect rhythm. At the same time, a transmission chain of “school–family–society” was constructed ^[3]. For example, Wisdom Tree Kindergarten in Linxiang City and Boya Kindergarten in Xinhui District created and performed children’s rhymes in Cantonese and Linxiang dialects, which not only retained language characteristics but also stimulated children’s interest in local culture ^[4]. The dynamic inheritance of such ICH children’s rhymes has sown cultural seeds in children’s hearts through innovative curriculum design and teaching methods, strengthening the dual functions of cultural identity and language inheritance and injecting new vitality into it. The book *Selected Traditional Children’s Rhymes of Fujian* edited by Wang Meitian includes 156 traditional children’s rhymes from places such as Fuzhou, Xiamen, Quanzhou, Longyan, and Zhangzhou ^[5]; *Goddess Songs of Tulou* compiled by He Zhixi includes 24 Hakka children’s rhymes ^[6].

2. Problems existing in the current integration of intangible cultural heritage children’s rhymes into kindergarten education activities

2.1. Double alienation in the selection of activity content

Firstly, in the process of integrating intangible cultural heritage children’s rhymes into kindergarten education, the tendency of one-sided content selection and “de-localization” during the adaptation process is particularly prominent. Many kindergartens focus excessively on children’s rhymes with strong entertainment value when choosing them. However, rhymes such as those about labor and dialects, which are relatively complex and require teachers to possess solid historical and cultural knowledge as well as proficient teaching skills, are rarely adopted

in kindergarten education. Secondly, when adapting ICH children's rhymes, some teachers, in order to facilitate children's understanding and singing, overly "de-dialectize" during the adaptation process. When all dialects in the rhymes are replaced with Mandarin, although the language becomes more accessible and easier to understand, it reduces the difficulty for children to comprehend and loses the original regional characteristics and cultural charm.

2.2. Monotonous teaching implementation methods

During the implementation of teaching, the teaching methods adopted by kindergarten teachers are rather monotonous. The survey data shows that most teachers only use the collective recitation method to carry out nursery rhyme teaching activities. This single teaching method lacks game-based and context-based design, resulting in boring and uninteresting teaching activities that fail to attract children's attention and have a generally low level of participation from children. In collective recitation, teachers usually lead children to read nursery rhymes sentence by sentence, paying too much attention to the pronunciation and rhythm of the language, while neglecting the cultivation of children's interests and active participation. Although this method can cultivate children's language expression ability and rhythm sense to some extent, and enable children to initially experience the beauty of the rhymes' rhythm, due to the lack of innovation and interest, it is difficult to fully mobilize children's enthusiasm and initiative.

2.3. Teachers' lack of ability to deeply explore resources

At present, some teachers have obvious shortcomings in the aspect of cultural exploration, which seriously restricts the effective implementation of education on intangible cultural heritage folk songs. In the actual teaching process, they merely stop at the shallow level of having children memorize the words and sentences, completely neglecting the in-depth analysis of the rich cultural connotations, such as social life, folk customs, and traditional values contained in the folk songs. As a result, the function of inheriting regional culture is weakened, and the cultural value of intangible cultural heritage folk songs is greatly discounted. From the perspective of teaching skills, teachers often limit themselves to the traditional mode of explanation and demonstration, and their teaching methods lack innovation and diversity. They also fail to effectively integrate community and family resources to expand teaching scenarios, thereby providing more powerful support and assistance for the education of intangible cultural heritage dialect folk songs.

2.4. Lack of nursery rhyme environments in kindergartens

Kindergartens have exposed obvious deficiencies in the environmental creation for the education of intangible cultural heritage dialect nursery rhymes. The proportion of kindergartens that have specially set up intangible cultural heritage corners is relatively low, which reflects that most kindergartens do not attach sufficient importance to the display and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. In fact, setting up an intangible cultural heritage corner is an important way to effectively integrate intangible cultural heritage elements into kindergarten education, and it has extremely important and specific value in indoor environmental creation^[7]. This not only fails to attract the attention of children in a timely manner but also fails to meet children's desire for exploration of new knowledge. Eventually, children's interest in it gradually fades, and the important role of intangible cultural heritage corners in education and teaching cannot be fully exerted.

2.5. Lack of collaborative mechanisms among families, schools, and communities

The participation and support of parents towards the education of intangible cultural heritage provided by

kindergartens and communities show a polarized trend. Families with high educational attainment usually fully recognize the significance of ICH nursery rhymes for children's growth and actively participate in it. On the contrary, for left-behind children's families, due to the long-term absence of parents from home for work, grandparents have cognitive limitations and lack sufficient understanding and attention to ICH nursery rhyme education. The lack of a collaborative mechanism between kindergartens and communities prevents both parties from effectively integrating community ICH resources, making it difficult to form a powerful educational synergy and thus unable to provide more opportunities for children to come into contact with and understand dialects.

3. Strategies for improving the integration of intangible cultural heritage nursery rhymes into kindergarten education activities

3.1. Construction of the curriculum system

3.1.1. Building the framework of the “three-dimensional goals”

In the dimension of cultural cognition, a dialect voice library (including eight Min dialect variants) was set up, and symbol decoding games were designed to help young children recognize and understand different dialects. In the dimension of emotional identification, “Grandparent-Grandchild Singing Together” activities are carried out to strengthen cultural memory through intergenerational communication and enhance children's emotional identification with local culture. In terms of behavioral formation, design intangible cultural heritage practice passports to record children's experiences of participating in traditional festivals and cultivate their awareness and behavior of inheriting intangible cultural heritage in practice. Taking the “Kneading Rice Balls Together” course at Fuzhou Children's School as an example.

3.1.2. Building a scientific curriculum system

The construction of a curriculum system is the core to effectively integrate nursery rhymes into the educational activities of kindergartens. When selecting course content, fully consider the age characteristics and cognitive levels of children, and choose representative, interesting, and educational nursery rhymes. For example, in the small class, simple, vivid, and rhythmic nursery rhymes such as “Little Star” and “Little Rabbit Be Good” can be chosen to help children initially perceive the beauty of language rhythm and rhyme; in the middle and large classes, nursery rhymes with richer content and certain cultural connotations, such as “Three-Character Classic” and “Disciple's Rules,” can be selected to guide children to deeply understand excellent traditional culture and cultivate good moral and behavioral habits in the process of learning nursery rhymes.

3.2. Innovation in teaching methods

3.2.1. Innovating traditional teaching models

Firstly, teachers can design a rhyming game with a gamified learning approach, breaking down the content of the rhymes into multiple levels. In the game, children start by reciting a rhyme accurately and fluently, then move on to rhyme-related knowledge quizzes, and finally perform the actions of the rhymes. Secondly, teachers can create a “Non-heritage Market” scenario, setting up various stalls in the classroom to simulate the buying and selling of non-heritage items. In the “Non-heritage Market,” children can sing rhymes related to buying and selling while conducting transactions. Through this contextualized teaching method, children can more vividly experience the atmosphere of non-heritage culture, and at the same time improve their language expression and social skills.

3.2.2. Empowering the teaching process with science and technology

Teachers can make use of AR technology to create children's rhyme cards under certain conditions. By scanning multi-modal children's rhyme cards, one can trigger 3D scenes, dialect voice libraries, and animated stories. For instance, they can design augmented reality games such as "Children's Rhymes Monopoly." They can also construct a knowledge map of regional culture by integrating children's rhymes with geographical, historical, and folk customs data. They can also design teaching aids like "Children's Rhymes Magic Box." Firstly, it is equipped with dialect voice chips, which can trigger original ecological singing, allowing young children to listen to the most genuine interpretation of children's rhymes. Secondly, it sets up AR scene cards, and by scanning them, historical scenes can be presented, enabling young children to feel as if they have traveled through time and experienced the background of the era depicted in the children's rhymes, effectively improving the accuracy rate of young children's correct understanding of related knowledge.

3.3. Optimizing teacher training and integrating social resources

3.3.1. Optimizing the teacher training system

By establishing a hierarchical training system, we aim to enhance teachers' cultural inheritance literacy in a targeted manner. For novice teachers, systematic basic theoretical training on intangible cultural heritage children's rhymes is conducted. Through special lectures (inviting ICH experts to interpret the inheritance context) and online courses (providing teachers with the opportunity to independently study the cultural analysis module), a complete knowledge map is constructed. The focus is on strengthening the cultivation of teaching basic abilities, such as the pronunciation rules of dialects and the interpretation of folk customs imagery. For teachers with certain teaching experience, the "practice-research" double helix training model is implemented. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in ICH field investigations, and together, a "children's rhymes cultural gene bank" is established to enhance teachers' ability to interpret cultural connotations and transform them into teaching content.

3.3.2. Integrating all kinds of social resources

Kindergartens can form joint teams with traditional intangible cultural heritage (TICH) inheritors and folklorists, have teachers participate in the practice of TICH bases, complete the entire process training of "collecting-organizing-teaching transformation" for "children's rhymes," implement the "master-apprentice system" for mentoring and guidance, and regularly carry out on-the-job learning and teaching discussions. Kindergartens can also collaborate with universities and communities to offer TICH experience courses, jointly create a "children's rhymes inheritance workshop," and set up three functional areas: dialect theater (inviting folk artists to perform on-site), folkloric laboratory (equipping with interactive devices for children's rhymes related to festivals), and children's rhymes story sessions (analyzing the background of TICH). At the same time, kindergartens can also reach out for cooperation with museums and cultural centers, making them the central database for children's rhymes in reality, and launching the series of activities "Children's Rhymes in Museums."

3.4. Improving the mechanism of cooperation and co-education between home and kindergarten

Establishing a communication platform for home-kindergarten interaction enables the timely sharing of

information regarding nursery rhyme education activities. Parents can witness scenes of children learning nursery rhymes in class, the wonderful moments of participating in nursery rhyme performances, as well as their progress and growth achieved during the activities. Parents can also share their experiences and insights on the platform, promoting communication and cooperation among parents. Kindergartens can invite parents to participate in the development of course resources, such as “Little Fatboy Wearing a Mask” created by parents of Taijiang Experimental Kindergarten, integrating epidemic prevention knowledge into the Fuzhou rhyme pattern: “Little Fatboy Wearing a Mask, The Virus Will Run Away Quickly.” The home-kindergarten cooperation and co-education mechanism is an important guarantee for integrating nursery rhymes into kindergarten education activities. It can integrate educational resources from both families and kindergartens, forming educational synergy, and jointly promoting the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage nursery rhymes in early childhood education.

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