

Practical Strategies for Integrating Local Opera Singing into Preschool Music Literacy Cultivation from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance

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Abstract: From the perspective of the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, this study explores practical strategies for integrating local opera singing styles into the cultivation of preschool music literacy. After literature research, field investigation, and teaching practice, it analyzes the application value of the artistic features of local opera singing styles in preschool education and seeks effective methods for integrating them into music education in kindergartens. Research shows that local opera singing styles are rich in cultural connotations and artistic charm, and have unique advantages in cultivating children's musical literacy. Therefore, integrating them into preschool music education is beneficial to children's understanding of traditional culture, the development of musical abilities, and the cultivation of aesthetic tastes. This study proposes the following practical strategies: Select suitable opera segments for young children and design interesting teaching activities; use multimedia technology to create vivid and interesting learning scenarios; organize opera experience activities to bring children closer to traditional culture; and conduct teacher training to enhance their knowledge of opera and teaching abilities. This research result has certain theoretical and practical significance for promoting local operas into kindergartens, facilitating the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, and innovating preschool music education.

Keywords: Inheritance of intangible cultural heritage; Local opera; Singing style; Preschool music; Cultivation of quality

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1. Introduction

The gene pool of Chinese culture contains a rich array of intangible cultural heritages. The preservation and continuation of these precious assets are important issues in current cultural development. Local operas, as a key component of this heritage, carry unique regional characteristics and profound cultural accumulation.

According to official statistics, by the end of 2022, a total of 348 projects related to traditional Chinese opera had been included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, accounting for nearly one-fifth of the total. However, their continuation is facing many challenges. In the field of early childhood education, the teaching value of traditional culture is increasingly valued^[1]. The relevant guiding documents formulated by the education department propose that early childhood education institutions should integrate traditional excellent cultural elements into their daily teaching activities. The *Guiding Opinions on Infant and Toddler Care Services*, released in 2019, also particularly pointed out that early art cultivation should be closely combined with traditional culture, which reflects the country's high regard for children's cultural enlightenment.

Local opera singing is an important part of Chinese culture, holds a unique position in the field of art, and also undertakes the function of cultural inheritance. Relevant research indicates that the early childhood stage is a crucial period for establishing cultural cognition and aesthetic ability^[2]. If local opera elements can be introduced into kindergarten education, it will not only help stimulate children's interest in local music but also assist them in establishing an understanding of traditional culture from an early age. According to the statistics of the China Preschool Education Research Association in 2021, over 80% of preschool teachers believe that traditional culture plays an important role in preschool education work. However, less than a quarter of the teachers indicated that they have the ability to effectively apply traditional art forms such as local operas to their daily teaching activities. This phenomenon indicates that in the current practice of preschool education, how to organically combine local opera singing styles with teaching activities remains an urgent problem to be solved^[3].

This research, from the perspective of the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, focuses on the characteristics of local opera vocal styles and their educational significance. We explored how to apply it to the cultivation of preschool children's musical abilities and analyzed various problems existing in current practice. Through this research, we hope to put forward some practical methods and suggestions to provide a theoretical basis and support for the inheritance and development of local opera vocal styles in early childhood education.

2. The connection between local opera singing styles and the cultivation of preschool music literacy

2.1. Characteristics of local opera singing styles and their educational value

The singing styles of local operas have distinct regional, stylized, and rhythmic characteristics. From the perspective of musicology, most of them employ the pentatonic scale of ethnic groups, with orderly pitch fluctuations, diverse rhythm changes, and strong expressiveness. The singing styles of local operas such as Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera, and Huangmei Opera each have their own unique features. Among them, the singing styles of Peking Opera are grand and bold, those of Kunqu Opera are gentle and elegant, and those of Huangmei Opera are fresh and magnificent^[4]. These various singing styles offer young children a rich and diverse musical experience. A survey conducted by the China Art Education Research Institute in 2021 indicated that children who have been exposed to local operas have better pitch discrimination ability and rhythm perception than their peers who have not been exposed, with a difference rate as high as 27.3%.

The educational value of local opera singing mainly lies in three aspects: cultural inheritance, artistic cultivation, and ability development. In terms of cultural inheritance, the aesthetic tastes and values of the Chinese nation are all contained in opera singing, which can help children establish a sense of cultural identity from an early age. In terms of artistic cultivation, the unique musical expression form of opera singing can enrich children's musical experience and cultivate their diverse musical aesthetic abilities. In terms of ability development, the process of learning opera singing can train multiple abilities such as memory, expression, and

coordination, which is beneficial to improving children's comprehensive quality ^[5]. The *Follow-up Study on the Effects of Traditional Music Education for Preschool Children* published in 2023 shows that children who have been exposed to local operas for a long time have significant improvements in language expression ability and social and emotional development.

2.2. The connotation and cultivation objectives of preschool music literacy

After children participate in music activities, the comprehensive manifestation of their basic music knowledge, skills, as well as their abilities to perceive, experience, and express music, is known as preschool music literacy. It encompasses basic abilities such as musical hearing, sense of rhythm, and musical memory, as well as higher-level qualities such as musical emotional experience, aesthetic ability, and creative expression. In recent years, the concept of preschool music education has shifted from merely focusing on skills training to fostering comprehensive qualities. It centers on children's development and emphasizes the process and emotion of music experience. The *Guidelines for Children's Learning and Development Aged 3–6* requires that the cultivation of preschool music literacy should pay attention to four dimensions: stimulating children's interest, perception and experience, expression and creation, and cultural identity ^[6].

The cultivation of preschool music literacy mainly focuses on four aspects. The first is to arouse children's interest in music and build a positive attitude towards it. The second is to develop children's basic music abilities, such as auditory discrimination, sense of rhythm, pitch accuracy, and simple music expression ability. The third is to enrich children's musical emotional experience to improve their aesthetic perception ability. Fourth, it is necessary to broaden the cultural horizons of children's music to form a preliminary sense of cultural identity. In 2022, the National Institute of Education Sciences of China released the *Framework for Evaluating the Artistic Literacy of Preschool Children*, which indicates that high-quality preschool music education should focus on the overall development of children ^[7], organically integrate the cultivation of musical abilities with emotional and social development, and attach importance to the introduction of diverse music cultures to provide children with rich music and cultural experiences.

3. The current situation and challenges of integrating local opera singing styles into the cultivation of preschool music literacy

3.1. Current situation analysis of integration into practice

In recent years, the application of local opera singing styles in the field of preschool education has shown a diversified development trend. This is attributed to the continuous promotion of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage into Schools" policy. According to the statistics of the Art Education Committee of the Ministry of Education in 2022, currently, more than a quarter (27%) of the model kindergartens across the country have carried out various types of opera education activities, with an increase of 15% compared to 2018 ^[8]. Specifically, kindergartens have developed four main implementation methods in practice: Firstly, they organize various opera activities to expose children to traditional culture. For instance, special lectures and festival performances can be held to help young children initially understand the knowledge of traditional Chinese opera. Secondly, elements of traditional Chinese opera should be naturally integrated into daily teaching activities. For instance, learning classical arias in music classes and telling stories about traditional operas in language classes. The third is to incorporate elements with the characteristics of traditional Chinese opera into the environmental decoration of kindergartens. For instance, a dedicated opera corner can be set up, with relevant props and materials placed there to facilitate children's free exploration. The fourth is to actively

introduce external resources. For instance, inviting professional troupes to the park to carry out interactive experience activities, or organizing children to go to the theater to watch performances^[9]. These practices have effectively promoted the inheritance and development of traditional opera culture, and at the same time, enriched children's artistic experiences.

In the actual operation process, the practices of each region have their own characteristics. For instance, Xuhui District in Shanghai has launched the "Yue Opera in Kindergartens" project, integrating Yue Opera singing with children's music activities and adopting a systematic curriculum arrangement. In Haidian District, Beijing, a special activity titled "Peking Opera Facial Makeup and Children's Rhymes" was launched, aiming to cultivate children's interest in traditional opera^[10]. Kindergartens in Huangmei County, Anhui Province, have launched the "Little Huangmei Opera Inheritors" course, which has achieved good results. According to the statistics of the China Preschool Education Research Association in 2023, 78.3% of teachers believe that the singing style of traditional Chinese opera can enhance children's musical performance ability, while 82.1% of parents reported that their children are more interested in traditional culture. However, there are still many problems with this work at present, such as uneven development among regions, a lack of unified standards for content selection, and relatively single teaching methods. Overall, it is still in the exploratory stage^[11].

3.2. Main challenges faced during the integration process

The integration of local opera singing styles into the process of cultivating preschool music literacy faces many challenges. First of all, the insufficient professional ability of teachers is a major problem. The 2022 National Survey Report on the quality of Preschool Teachers shows that only 11.7% of preschool teachers have received professional opera training, and 89.3% of teachers claim to lack relevant teaching abilities^[12]. Most teachers have limited knowledge of local opera. It is impossible to accurately grasp its artistic features and cultural connotations, let alone transform them into teaching content suitable for young children. Secondly, resource development and adaptability are also difficult problems. Traditional opera singing is highly professional and difficult. Many original materials are not suitable for young children to learn from. Moreover, there are very few preschool children's opera educational resources on the market at present. High-quality textbooks, audio and video materials, and auxiliary teaching aids are particularly scarce. A survey conducted by the Department of Basic Education of the Ministry of Education in 2021 indicated that 84.6% of kindergartens stated that they did not have suitable resources for traditional Chinese opera education for children^[13].

4. Practical strategies for integrating local opera singing styles into the cultivation of preschool music literacy from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage inheritance

For local opera singing, an important component of intangible cultural heritage, to be integrated into preschool music education, there must be a scientific and reasonable curriculum design and optimization of teaching content. The development data of China's preschool education field in the past five years shows that 46.7% of kindergartens across the country have attempted to incorporate traditional cultural elements into their daily teaching. However, the systematic curriculum design specifically for opera singing is still insufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to select appropriate content from opera singing based on the physical and mental development characteristics of children aged 3 to 6 to build a teaching system that progresses step by step and from simple to complex. Specifically^[14], local opera singing styles are classified into three levels based on their difficulty: cognitive enlightenment, imitation experience, and creative expression, to respectively meet the

learning needs of children in small, middle, and large classes. Moreover, corresponding teaching goals, contents, and evaluation standards should be set for each level^[12].

In optimizing teaching content, attention should be paid to the organic integration of “simplification” and “interest.” The complex syllables, rhythms, and performance techniques in traditional opera singing can be appropriately simplified while retaining the basic charm and artistic features. Opera singing can also be combined with forms that children like, such as stories and games, to make the teaching content more interesting and attractive. For instance, by picking out beautiful singing segments from classic operas such as “Liang Zhu” and “The Western Chamber,” and taking out the parts that are easy to learn, and adding vivid and interesting pictures and story backgrounds, children can feel the charm of opera singing in a relaxed and happy atmosphere, thereby achieving the two goals of intangible cultural heritage inheritance and musical literacy cultivation^[15].

5. Conclusion

The local opera singing style was integrated into the cultivation of preschool music literacy in this study for practical exploration. This not only enriches the content and form of preschool music education but also provides a new way for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. Research shows that appropriately selecting local opera segments, designing interesting teaching methods, applying multimedia technology, and conducting immersive opera experience activities can effectively stimulate children’s interest in traditional opera culture, enhance their musical perception, expression, and creation abilities, and cultivate their sense of national cultural identity. Moreover, the improvement of teachers’ professional qualities is the key guarantee for the smooth implementation of this practice. This practice strategy not only responds to the national policy call for traditional culture education and intangible cultural heritage inheritance but also provides a feasible model for the integration of traditional culture and modern education in the field of preschool education, which has a positive effect on promoting the inheritance and development of local opera art.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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