

Three-Dimensional Construction of Traditional Culture Courses in Kindergartens—Content Transformation and Educational Empowerment Based on Batang Folk Opera

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Abstract: The exploration of paths for transforming ethnic cultural resources' preschool education with Batang Folk Opera as the carrier can facilitate content transformation and educational empowerment of traditional culture in the early stage of children. Batang Folk Opera shows unique values in inheriting ethnic culture, cultivating local emotions, and promoting early childhood development, but it also faces practical dilemmas, such as insufficient curriculum content appropriateness, fragmented organization, and low transformation efficiency because of reasons for the three dimensions: screening mechanisms, integration logic, and support systems. Therefore, this thesis puts forward some optimization paths, such as reconstructing the adaptation standards for traditional cultural resources; building an integrated framework to achieve interdisciplinary integrated development and forming a triple guarantee mechanism to promote collaborative education among kindergartens, families, and communities.

Keywords: Traditional Culture Courses; Three-Dimensional Construction; Content Transformation; Educational Empowerment

1. Introduction

Traditional operas, as important components of China's excellent traditional culture, are vital curricular resources for kindergartens^[1]. Batang Folk Opera embodies unique artistic forms and humanistic spirit^[2]. by integrating Batang Folk Opera into kindergarten curricula, ethnic minority areas can not only enrich kindergarten course contents, allowing young children to learn new contents in a joyful atmosphere, but also cultivate children's love for their hometown and stimulate their sense of identity and pride in their own ethnic culture. However, Batang Folk Opera also contains some complex religious rituals and abstract symbols that do not match cognitive characteristics of young children. How to transform cultural elements in Batang Folk Opera into curricular resources which can conform to children's physical and mental development rules, while preserving their unique cultural essence and achieving educational goals, has become an urgent topic to explore in the field of preschool education.

2. Value Dimensions of Batang Folk Opera in Kindergarten Education

As an important carrier of ethnic culture, Batang Folk Opera provides a unique perspective for the construction of kindergarten curricula. Its educational values are shown in three dimensions: cultural inheritance, emotional cultivation and developmental support.

2.1 Inheriting Ethnic Culture

With the continuous development of society and the economy, Batang Folk Opera, as an outstanding representative of ethnic culture, also faces crises in terms of its inheritance and development. Integrating Batang Folk Opera into the five major domain activities of kindergarten

curricula can enable children to naturally engage with ethnic cultural symbols and understand their cultural connotations while perceiving artistic forms and participating in performance practices through the gamified and life-oriented educational approaches^[3]. This enlightenment education not only injects new vitality into the inheritance of Batang Folk Opera art, but also cultivates children's sense of identity with ethnic culture, thus, laying a foundation for them to become the main force of cultural inheritance in the future. For example, by simplifying movement choreography, adopting cartoonized mask designs and using story-based teaching methods, we can preserve essences of Batang Folk Opera while adapting to physical and mental development characteristics of young children. In this way, children can imperceptibly become inheritors and promoters of traditional culture.

2.2 Stimulating Children's Love for Their Hometown

Local culture education is an organic component of children's hometown education. Early childhood is a critical stage for the formation of cultural cognition and emotional attachment. By systematically developing educational activities on the theme of Batang Folk Opera in kindergarten curricula through multiple approaches such as environmental creation and artistic experiences, we can guide children to perceive artistic charm and humanistic values of hometown culture through personal feelings and experiences. For example, by setting up a Batang Folk Opera mask display area and organizing role-playing activities of "Little Batang Folk Opera Troupe", children can gain a three-dimensional understanding of local culture through the collaborative participation of multiple senses. This is not only a kind of cultural enlightenment but also an opportunity for children to feel and experience characteristics of local hometown culture, which can help children better understand local cultures while enhance their sense of closeness and belonging to their hometown. In this way, children will love their hometown better.

2.3 Promoting All-round Development of Children

Batang Folk Opera, which integrates multiple art forms, such as music, dance, literature, and fine arts, can promote the coordinated physical and mental development of children from multiple dimensions. At the physical development level, rhythmic singing and dancing movements in Batang Folk Opera can improve children's limb coordination and sense of rhythm. For example, basic dance steps such as turns and twists, can be used as materials for rhythmic activities and morning exercises through appropriate simplification. The unique cultural connotations and artistic expressions of Batang Folk Opera can enrich children's cultural knowledge, allowing them to understand more about local history, culture, customs, religious beliefs and other knowledge. This can then expand the breadth of their thinking and improving their language expression abilities. Besides, the unique handicraft practices of Batang Folk Opera, such as mask making, can also cultivate children's creativity and aesthetic literacy. This comprehensive art education, featured by the combination of cultural inheritance with core literacy cultivation in a way that conforms to children's cognitive characteristics, can lay a multi-dimensional foundation for lifelong development of children.

3. Realistic Challenges in Curriculum Content Construction

The construction of curriculum contents based on Batang Folk Opera should strive for a dynamic balance between characteristics of traditional art and children's development. In this process, educators will face challenges in the three aspects of curriculum content selection, organization and transformation.

3.1 Contradictions in Content Selection

In the exploration of integrating Batang Folk Opera into kindergarten curriculum systems, educators face fundamental contradictions in content selection, which means that they should identify a way to find a balance between faithfully inheriting cultural essence while aligning with scientific concepts of modern early childhood education.

Classic plays of Batang Folk Opera embody rich historical narratives and moral metaphors and theocratic narratives, such as sacrificial rituals. These elements tend to conflict with modern scientific cognition and may easily confuse young children. For example, when a child asks the question, "Are we burning paper money for the Mountain God? Why?" teachers may find it difficult to explain cultural connotations of religious rituals in languages that can be understood by children, which may

lead to cognitive confusion. Meanwhile, some abstract symbols in traditional arts, such as the symbolic meanings of mask patterns, exceed cognitive abilities of young children. Because of that, educators should transform cultural symbols into concrete expressions that can meet cognitive characteristics of children. Secondly, a large number of abstract symbolic symbols in Batang Opera, such as the complex religious patterns on masks, the hidden meanings of clothing patterns, and the ritual meanings of specific stylized movements, greatly exceed the cognitive level of 3-6-year-old children who only rely on concrete image thinking. Children may find it hard to decode cultural codes behind the symbols, which will lead to the blockage of cultural transmission. Thirdly, traditional plays have multiple plot lines, long duration and complex character relationships. The historical backgrounds or ethical dilemmas they include are far from children's limited life experience and emotional understanding. Therefore, they may fail to arouse resonance and sustained interest of children.

Our pursuit of cultural authenticity may lead to cognitive conflicts in young children while excessive simplification and adaptation may cause the loss of cultural connotations. This contradiction affects the educational transformation efficiency of traditional culture and poses severe challenges to educators' cultural literacy and educational wisdom.

3.2 Fragmentation of Content Organization

Currently, when Batang Folk Opera is integrated into kindergarten curricula, people may face such problems as fragmented content organization, which may result in superficial cultural inheritance and its failure in realizing its holistic educational value. This issue manifests in three aspects. First, elements of Batang Folk Opera are mechanically disassembled into isolated teaching activities. For instance, art activities merely involve mask coloring or simple copying, while language and social activities rarely connect with narratives and character emotions of the opera. What children gain is scattered skills and they will lack overall perception and understanding of the cultural connotations of Batang Folk Opera, such as rhythm expression of emotions, characters symbolized by masks and values transmitted by stories. Second, there is a lack of progressive design based on children's age characteristics. For example, mask coloring activities are introduced in the junior class while mask painting activities are unchanged in the senior class. The simple and repeated contents may lead to repetitive contents without spiral advancement in cognitive depth or skill challenges. The arrangement fails to design a sequence of cultural experiences that gradually deepens and proceeds from the surface to the core according to children's cognitive levels, interests, and developmental needs. As a result, children only have a superficial understanding of Batang Folk Opera for a long period of time, making them difficult to form a framework for gradually deepening cultural comprehension.

Isolated teaching activities are isolated from cultural elements of the holistic context. For example, the rhythm of tap dance is separated from its theatrical background of expressing joy or narration, so children are only exposed to decontextualized fragments and may find it hard to construct a complete cognitive schema of Batang Folk Opera culture. They may only form vague and scattered cultural impressions, resulting in low efficiency of cultural inheritance. In addition, children obtain superficial and fragmented cultural experiences, making them unable to achieve the deep educational goal of promoting all-round development through cultural immersion. In order to solve this problem, educators need to comprehensively consider cultural characteristics of Batang Folk Opera, domain education and children's development when they select related contents.

3.3 Limitations in Content Transformation

Current Batang Folk Opera curriculum faces three dilemmas in content transformation: symbolic translation, movement adaptation, and emotional resonance. First, symbolic translation tends to be superficial. Teachers' understanding of cultural symbols in Batang Folk Opera mostly stay at the simple substitution of visual symbols, while ignoring their cultural gene connotations. For example, they mistakenly regard "yak horn" pattern symbolizing power as a decorative element, leading to the breakage of cultural genes. Children are exposed to visual fragments without cultural cores, making them unable to understand spiritual meanings behind the symbols. This will finally result in the rupture of cultural gene transmission.

Second, dancing movements of Batang Folk Opera may violate physical and mental development laws of children. The three-step-one-lift footwork in traditional Batang Folk Opera dance requires frequent flexion and extension of knee joints. Due to insufficient lower limb strength, children often deform the movements. Forced imitation not only violates the "child development-oriented" principle

but may also cause physical discomfort or psychological pressure, which undermine the pleasure of cultural experience.

Third, the emotional resonance mechanism remains unestablished. Cultural value transmission stays at the sensory stimulation level of bright costumes and lively drumbeats, which fail to build a channel for value internalization. Children often equate the performance of Princess Wencheng with role-playing, but ignore the spirit of national unity contained in her journey to Tibet. This reflects that their cultural cognition remains at the sensory stimulation level and that they need a channel for value internalization. As a result, cultural inheritance degenerates into formal display with form but no spirit, and the spiritual core fails to infiltrate children's minds.

4. Multidimensional Analysis of Reasons for Curriculum Content Dilemmas

In order to solve the above practical challenges in curriculum content construction, this thesis analyzes the causes from three dimensions: the screening mechanism, the integration logic and the support system.

4.1 Anomie in Screening Mechanism and Inadequate Transformation Capability

The root of dilemma in content selection is the lack of a scientific and systematic screening mechanism and supporting framework during the integration of traditional cultural resources into the modern early childhood education system.

When screening Batang Opera resources, the biggest challenges that teachers face is the lack of a clear and operable evaluation standard system, because of which, teachers find it hard to judge which cultural elements should be retained and strengthened, and which need to be transformed or discarded. In addition, the cultural inheritance goal of emphasizing authenticity and complete craftsmanship may be disconnected from the specific cultivation of the five major domains in Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6 Years Old. Kindergartens have failed to establish an effective mapping and connection mechanism between specific elements in Batang Opera, such as character behaviors and ritual actions, and the specific target items in the Guidelines, leading to the loss of direction in screening. Furthermore, teachers have insufficient professional support and transformation capabilities. They fail to have an in-depth understanding of cultural connotations of Batang Opera, such as the religious and historical origins of specific symbols. At the same time, they also lack professional ability to creatively transform complex cultural elements into child-friendly forms, such as converting abstract symbols into concrete images and splitting long stories into short ones. What's worse, the shortage of relevant training, expert guidance and high-quality transformation case resources makes teachers feel powerless in practice.

4.2 Systematic Absence of Curriculum Integration Mechanism

In essence, the fragmentation of content organization comes from the systematic absence of a curriculum integration mechanism, which is specifically reflected in three key aspects: horizontal integration, vertical articulation, and contextual reconstruction.

Horizontally speaking, teaching activities in the five major domains operate independently and there is a lack of organic connections around the core theme of Batang Opera culture. For example, learning tap dance is only regarded as artistic expression or physical exercise, without simultaneously exploring the mathematical patterns implied in rhythmic rules or the linguistic and social development values contained in stories. There is no clear awareness and design framework which uses cultural elements as carriers to integrate multi-domain learning and development.

Vertically speaking, the progressive goals and contents of Batang Opera in terms of cognitive depth, skill complexity, and emotional experience at different levels for small, middle, and large classes have not been systematically planned in accordance with typical performance and ability requirements of children of each age group regulated in the Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6 Years Old. This has led to the phenomenon of low-level repetition, such as painting masks in small classes and still painting masks in large classes.

In addition, teachers overlook the integrity of the culture. When organizing content, they fail to place specific elements of Batang Opera, such as rhythmic patterns, masks, and roles, in their original cultural narratives, emotional expressions, or ritual contexts for understanding and presentation to

young children. The activities they designed also fail to reconstruct or simplify cultural contexts for isolated skill practices or art activities through story-telling, role-playing, scene simulation, etc., which may result in children learning cultural fragments.

4.3 Structural Defects in the Curriculum Implementation Support System

The limitations in content transformation reflect the structural defects of the curriculum implementation support system. Teachers tend to have insufficient cultural transformation capabilities. Most teachers only master superficial cultural knowledge. For example, their understanding of Batang Opera remains at the surface level of mask styles and dance names and they fail to give an in-depth comprehension of symbolic systems, ritual connotations, and spiritual values. They also lack the professional ability to transform abstract cultural genes into age-appropriate educational strategies. For example, they do not know how to translate “yak spirit” into a tangible concept like “using strength to help friends” that can be understood by preschoolers. Because of that, their teaching is confined to superficial imitations of wearing masks, learning movements, and performing fragments.

On the other hand, teaching resources are developed at a severe lagging speed. Adult-oriented cultural products, such as complex narrative plays and fast-paced dances, are directly used in activities without adaptation to the characteristics of young children. There is a lack of stratified resources systematically adapted based on children's cognitive characteristics, physical abilities, and interest points.

What's more prominent is the closure of the practice field. Activities in kindergartens are often confined to classrooms and Batang Folk Opera is simplified to classroom tasks. For example, children only paint masks in the art area without experiencing it in outdoor festivals. This separates the original connection with real life, festival rituals, and the natural and humanistic environment, making cultural learning lose its soil and vitality.

5. Optimization Paths for Curriculum Contents

In order to address practical dilemmas in constructing traditional culture curricula, we need to reconstruct the curriculum generation logic with systematic thinking and put forward optimization paths from three aspects: content generation, content organization, and content implementation.

5.1 Three-dimensional Adaptation Model for Content Generation

The key to solving the above problems lies in establishing a systematic and operable screening and transformation model for traditional cultural resources. The three-dimensional adaptation model can provide a clear path for integrating Batang Folk Opera into kindergarten courses. The three-dimensional screening model for content generation can screen and realize the transformation of traditional cultural resources for early childhood education from three dimensions, including the cultural value, the children's experience, and the teaching feasibility. The cultural value dimension, focusing on universal values and early childhood moral education goals, screens elements with positive ethical connotations and strips away conflicting elements. For example, in Prince Nosang, the hunter rescuing the dragon god reflects the spirit of mutual assistance. The children's experience dimension evaluates the suitability of content with children's cognition and emotions based on characteristics of children's concrete imaginal thinking and game-based learning, such as concretizing abstract symbols. For instance, complex religious patterns are transformed into natural images familiar to children^[4] and majestic animal faces are simplified into cute animals like lions and tigers. The teaching feasibility dimension considers the operability of curriculum implementation, designs activity plans that meet conditions of kindergartens, such as splitting long plays into micro-theme activities, and considers potential values of activities for the development of children's language, art, sociality, and other multi-domain aspects.

Taking traditional masks as an example, the cultural value dimension preserves the circular outline symbolizing unity and color combinations with auspicious meanings. Experience dimensions of children can transform complex religious patterns like ritual instruments into natural motifs familiar to young children, such as suns and flowers. The teaching feasibility dimension designs a themed activity titled “Mask Metamorphosis”, by using materials like felt, linen, cardboard, and feathers for making simplified masks. This guides children to touch, observe, and describe texture differences, establishing sensory connections. Through the systematic application of the “Three-Dimensional Adaptation”

model, Batang Folk Opera is transformed into educational resources that are perceptible, understandable and playable for children, while retaining its spiritual essence. When applying this model for screening and transformation, teachers need corresponding professional support, including teacher training and expert guidance, to achieve a win-win situation for cultural inheritance and children's development. This approach provides a replicable path for integrating traditional culture into modern early childhood education.

5.2 Three-Line Integration Framework for Content Organization

The key to breaking the dilemma of fragmentation lies in constructing a “three-line integration” content organization framework with culture as the soul, domains as the path, and development as the foundation. This framework achieves organic integration and spiral advancement between cultural inheritance and children's development.

Cultural main line anchors core cultural elements and aims to provide the soul and central cohesion for content organization, which can ensure that the essence of culture remains intact. In practice, key elements are selected based on the three-dimensional adaptation model, such as the typical rhythm pattern “dongda” of tap dance and the core symbolic meanings of masks. Then, cross-domain and cross-age continuous inquiry themes are set around these core elements, like “The Drumbeats of Batang and Heartbeats” and “Friends Behind the Masks.” Using these cultural elements as anchor points, they run through the entire series of related activities, ensuring the continuity and focus of cultural cognition. For example, the “dongda” rhythm pattern serves as the core element running through the theme of “Exploring Drumbeats.”

The domain penetration line includes goals of the five major fields and naturally transforms cultural carriers into pathways so as to achieve multi-domain development objectives. Before designing specific activities, we should analyze specific goals of each domain in the Guidelines that can be naturally borne and achieved by core cultural elements. For instance, rhythms can be linked to the cognitive understanding of mathematical patterns and artistic expression while mask role-playing can be associated with language expression, social comprehension and emotional awareness. Comprehensive activities that can simultaneously promote the development of multiple domains need to be designed around these core cultural elements.

The hidden development line for children shows a spiral progression of abilities. It proceeds step by step, deepening layer by layer to ensure that content organization aligns with the age characteristics and developmental laws of young children, achieving continuous accumulation of experiences and a spiral advancement of cognition.

With “Exploring the Drumbeats of Batang Folk Opera” as an example, the cultural main line aims to explore the core rhythm pattern “dongda” of Batang tap dance. During the exploration process, we can simultaneously develop children’s abilities in multiple fields, such as artistic perception and expression, mathematical logical thinking, language expression, and social interaction. According to the age characteristics of children, activities for the younger classes should focus on perception and exploration, those for middle classes should emphasize understanding and expression while those of senior classes should concentrate on creation and cultural connections. The activity objectives at each age level are clearly stratified so as to enable children to achieve holistic development in a true sense through continuous and deepening cultural immersion.

5.3 Three-Layer Guarantee Mechanism for Content Implementation

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the Batang Folk Opera curriculum, a trinity guarantee mechanism integrating teacher empowerment, resource adaptation, and field reconstruction has been established. In terms of teacher cultivation, on the one hand, through workshops, core cultural genes, such as the auspicious meanings of mask patterns and the blessing connotations of the “three steps and one lift” dance steps are sorted out. A toolkit named Guide to the Educational Transformation of Batang Folk Opera Elements is also developed to provide practical examples of symbol simplification, plot adaptation, etc. On the other hand, special training programs should be done simultaneously. Through case studies and practices, such as the development of detachable masks, we can enhance teachers’ abilities to transform cultural symbols into age-appropriate educational strategies. In terms of resource development, a hierarchical resource system is constructed. At the basic level, sensory enlightenment kits, including tactile masks, rhythmic instruments, and interactive picture books, are produced to establish an initial cultural impression through multi-sensory experiences. At

the advanced level, an interactive digital resource library with such functions as slow-motion playback of dance movements is developed to adapt to mobile devices. In terms of field reconstruction, a collaborative immersion network involving kindergartens, families and communities is created. Within kindergartens, a Batang Folk Opera cultural corridor equipped with interactive display boards and material supermarkets is set up. The themed exhibitions are rotated regularly. Parent-child cultural task cards are provided to guide them to record simplified family versions of the opera or visit intangible cultural heritage inheritors. Communities collaborate to carry out the “Mini Batang Folk Opera Festival” to deepen children's understanding of cultural values through task chains, such as cultural challenge games.

The trinity mechanism composed of teacher empowerment, resource adaptation, and field reconstruction can directly address root causes of the dilemma in content transformation, including the ability faultage, resource shortages and closed fields. Through systematic support, it can ensure that cultural genes of Batang Folk Opera are accurately interpreted, technical requirements are scientifically adapted, and spiritual values can resonate emotionally. In the end, it achieves a qualitative change from formal imitation to cultural immersion and enables young children to receive truly profound enlightenment in a safe, suitable, and meaningful cultural environment.

6. Conclusion

Integrating Batang Folk Opera into kindergarten curricula is a profound practice of safeguarding cultural heritage and nurturing children's ethnic identity and affection. This practice can not only provide young learners with unique artistic nourishment and emotional experiences but also shoulder the crucial mission of cultural inheritance. These explorations aim to transcend superficial imitation, ensure that cultural essences of Batang Folk Opera permeates children's minds in a way that aligns with their physical and mental development. Through joyful perception, experience, and creation, children will become genuine appreciators of ethnic culture and budding torchbearers of its future. Therefore, this practice can offer a replicable practical paradigm for the creative transformation of traditional culture within preschool education.

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