

# Research on the Construction of Kindergarten-Based Curriculum Rooted in the Yellow River Delta Culture

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## Abstract

Local cultural resources possess profound cultural connotations and serve as vital components in constructing kindergarten curricula. The Yellow River Delta region is rich in natural, folk, and petroleum cultural resources. Developing a kindergarten-based curriculum based on these elements can foster positive emotions in young children, enhance cultural confidence, and promote the development of various abilities. When selecting cultural content from the Yellow River Delta, kindergartens should prioritize suitability and engagement. During activities, emphasis should be placed on children's participation and experiential learning, with attention to contextual and immersive environments. In implementing the kindergarten-based curriculum, a child-centered approach should guide goal-setting and content selection. This includes integrating the Yellow River Delta culture into diverse thematic activities for a comprehensive experience, creating immersive environments to naturally incorporate the culture, and conducting in-depth project activities to explore the Yellow River culture thoroughly.

## Keywords

Local culture, Yellow River Delta culture, kindergarten-based curriculum.

## 1. Introduction

In today's world of multicultural integration and development, cultivating people through culture has become an essential pursuit of education. Culture is interwoven into every element of educational activities, and only by fully leveraging its educational function can education nurture individuals with cultural awareness and cultural confidence<sup>[1]</sup>. Culture plays a vital role in promoting individual and societal development. Through exposure to and immersion in excellent culture, individuals can develop cultural identity in their thoughts, perspectives, cognition, and emotions. The preschool period is a critical time for cultural enlightenment in children. Exposing young children to exemplary cultures holds significant educational value. Adults should select high-quality culture that children are receptive to and use it to develop kindergarten-based curricula that enhance the quality of children's lives. Local cultural resources not only carry profound cultural connotations but are also easily accepted by children due to their relevance to their daily lives. Therefore, local culture should be regarded as a crucial component of kindergarten curriculum development. By guiding children to experience and engage with tangible aspects of their environment, we can foster the development of their emotions, abilities, and experiences.

## 2. The Educational Value of Yellow River Delta Culture for Children

The Yellow River, revered as the Mother River of the Chinese nation, nurtures the Yellow River Delta at its estuary. According to the "Yellow River Delta Efficient Ecological Economic Zone Development Plan" approved by the State Council in 2009, the planning area encompasses 19 counties and cities across six prefecture-level divisions, including Dongying and Binzhou in Shandong Province, with a total area of over 26,500 square kilometers<sup>[2]</sup>. As a national nature

reserve, the Yellow River Delta boasts unique geographical features, rich cultural heritage, and distinctive cultural characteristics with profound historical significance. This region is home to the unparalleled grandeur of the convergence of the Yellow River and the sea, and hosts the most extensive and intact wetland ecosystem of a temperate estuary on Earth. A vast array of wild, rare flora and fauna thrive here, forming breathtaking landscapes such as the sun setting over the meandering river, flocks of soaring swans, and vast expanses of reed catkins drifting like snow. Building on this unique natural environment, the Yellow River Delta has developed a distinctive and time-honored folk culture over its history. This includes diverse paper-cutting traditions, the charmingly simple “Tumbler Clay Dolls” of Hezhang Village, exquisite willow weaving craftsmanship, and the melodious Lü Opera. Furthermore, the Shengli Oilfield, China's second-largest oilfield, is located in Dongying City at the Yellow River's estuary. Over more than 50 years of development, the Shengli Oilfield has gradually formed a rich system of petroleum cultural resources, encompassing both material assets and spiritual cultural dimensions. Therefore, constructing a kindergarten-based curriculum rooted in the culture of the Yellow River Delta can holistically support the development of preschool children's emotions, spirit, and cognition.

### **2.1. Fostering Positive Emotions and Enhancing Cultural Confidence**

For young children in their early developmental stages, the goal of cultivating cultural confidence should not be set too high to avoid exceeding their actual capabilities. It primarily involves helping children develop a preliminary understanding of their national and ethnic culture, fostering a strong interest in and affinity for it, a sense of identification, and the ability to consciously practice it. Integrating the Yellow River Delta culture into the kindergarten-based curriculum allows children to interact with this rich cultural heritage through playful and life-oriented approaches. By guiding children to explore, appreciate, recognize, and investigate various natural landscapes and cultural elements, they gradually build an emotional connection with the Yellow River Delta culture. Through hands-on activities and experiential learning, their perception of this culture evolves from superficial awareness to a deep-seated appreciation, eventually shaping their beliefs. This process nurtures an innate confidence in the Yellow River Delta culture. Such profound identification and confidence in their local culture not only broaden preschoolers' perspectives and enhance their enthusiasm for learning in daily life but also provide strong support for their future social adaptation, enabling them to collaborate and interact more comfortably with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

### **2.2. Expanding Children's Experiences and Developing Various Abilities**

First, thinking skills. By integrating the Yellow River Delta culture into the kindergarten-based curriculum, children participate in cultural experiences through various methods, developing their thinking skills through diverse inquiry-based activities. For example, in themes related to the Yellow River Estuary wetlands, children are guided by questions to explore in depth: Why is the Yellow River's water yellow? How were the wetlands at the Yellow River Estuary formed? What should we do? Under the guidance of these questions, children and adults collaboratively consult materials and seek answers, gradually understanding the significance of the Yellow River Estuary wetlands and spontaneously developing an awareness of the need to protect the Yellow River. Second, aesthetic appreciation and practical skills. The Yellow River Delta's unique natural landscapes and rich folk culture provide children with aesthetic enjoyment. For instance, multimedia presentations of the spectacular convergence of the Yellow River and the sea, where the river water fans out across the blue sea, offer children a dreamlike experience of natural beauty. When appreciating distinctive paper-cuttings, vivid clay sculptures, and diverse dough figurines, children are exposed to delightful artistic beauty. By engaging in activities such as drawing, cutting, and molding to express the beauty of Yellow River culture, children develop hands-on skills as well as the ability to experience and express beauty. Third, social development skills. Lü Opera, a representative local opera of Shandong Province, is characterized by its unique

vocal style, accessibility, closeness to daily life, ease of learning and singing, and its integration of education with entertainment. The numerous social roles in Lü Opera help develop children's social cognition, while “mini performance stages” based on Lü Opera enhance their communication and cooperation skills. Fourth, language expression skills. Ancient folktales from the Yellow River Estuary convey values of helping others and maintaining an optimistic, open-minded attitude toward life. By appreciating and performing these folk tales, children develop their language abilities.

### **3. Practical Principles for the Kindergarten-Based Curriculum on Yellow River Delta**

The Yellow River Delta culture is extensive in content, diverse in forms of expression, and profound in meaning. However, not all aspects of this culture are suitable for preschool children. When selecting and implementing curriculum content related to the Yellow River Delta culture, it is essential to recognize its complexity and depth, while adhering to the following three principles.

#### **3.1. Principles of Appropriateness and Engagement**

Delta must be carefully processed and selected before being integrated into the kindergarten-based curriculum. First, the chosen content should align with the educational goals of kindergarten education, possessing positive educational value and contemporary significance, and should foster positive emotions and cultural confidence in young children through exposure to exemplary culture. Second, the selected cultural content must be appropriate for the children's age characteristics and individual differences, with the breadth and depth of the content reasonably tailored to their zone of proximal development. For example, younger children can start with dietary culture such as the Yellow River hairy crab and the Yellow River swordfish, while older children can explore natural landscape cultures like wetland culture and estuary culture. Finally, the selected cultural content should emphasize engagement and relevance to daily life, as young children are in the stage of concrete operational thinking and their learning begins with things that interest them. For instance, vivid clay sculptures from the Yellow River floodplain and diverse dough figurines, among other folk cultures, can greatly spark the interest of preschool children.

#### **3.2. Principles of Participation and Experiential**

Learning Children's thinking is concrete and imagery-based. They understand the external world through direct contact with objective things via various sensory organs. In other words, children's learning takes place in specific exploratory operations, and only things they have personally experienced can connect with their existing knowledge. Therefore, the implementation of the kindergarten-based curriculum on Yellow River Delta culture should emphasize the firsthand participation and experiential engagement of preschoolers. Teachers should construct the curriculum based on children's subjective needs, selecting content closely related to their lives, and view curriculum implementation as a dynamic, constructive process. From topic selection and activity design to material preparation, children should be allowed to participate comprehensively throughout the entire process. During implementation, children should be given ample space to fully explore and operate according to their own understanding of the curriculum. This approach enables them to genuinely internalize the Yellow River Delta culture and experience the diversity of existential life through participation.

#### **3.3. Principles of Contextualization and Immersion**

A key characteristic of local culture is its strong immersive quality. It permeates all aspects of people's daily lives in various common forms, silently shaping children's experiential systems and

cognitive patterns. Children's understanding of the external world relies heavily on concrete contexts. Therefore, integrating the Yellow River Delta culture into the kindergarten-based curriculum should be achieved through contextual creation and daily life integration. First, it is essential to create immersive cultural experience scenarios related to the Yellow River Delta. By designing specific and vivid learning environments, teachers can transform abstract curriculum knowledge into operational activities that are visible and tangible to children. Through exploration, discovery, sharing, and expression, children can closely interact with the Yellow River Delta culture and independently engage in deep learning. Second, the Yellow River Delta culture should be integrated into daily routines. Elements of this culture can be incorporated into various aspects of the children's daily activities, such as area-based play, mealtimes, and rest periods.

#### **4. Implementation Pathways for the Kindergarten-Based Curriculum on Yellow River**

The Yellow River Delta culture encompasses a wealth of educational resources. To construct a kindergarten-based curriculum on this foundation, teachers must first clarify the educational value and principles, then conduct an in-depth analysis of the educational elements within the Yellow River Delta culture and their intrinsic connection to preschool children's development. This involves defining educational goals and content, selecting appropriate instructional methods, and maximizing the promotion of preschoolers' growth.

##### **4.1. Objectives of the Kindergarten-Based Curriculum on Yellow River**

In the process of designing and implementing the Yellow River Delta culture curriculum, teachers must respect children's central role, align with their developmental patterns, and pay attention to their developmental needs, with the aim of promoting their holistic development. In terms of affective objectives, the goal is to cultivate children's strong interest in the Yellow River Delta culture<sup>[3]</sup>. By engaging with the natural landscapes, characteristic foods, traditional festivals, and ethnic clothing of the local culture, children can experience inner joy and appreciate the magnificence of their native culture. This will foster a sense of closeness, identification, and pride in the local culture, gradually shaping behavioral orientations centered on love for home and country, as well as social engagement. Regarding competency objectives, the focus is on developing children's ability to engage with the Yellow River Delta culture. For instance, with guidance from adults, they can participate in traditional customs, prepare traditional foods, and appreciate scenic views. Through these experiences, they can internalize the values embedded in the local culture. In terms of cognitive objectives, the aim is to help preschoolers develop a preliminary understanding of the Yellow River Delta culture and familiarize them with its representative cultural symbols. The above three curriculum objectives are inseparable and mutually reinforcing—they are both prerequisites for and facilitators of one another. When setting these goals, teachers should fully consider preschoolers' existing experiences and learning states, using integrated activities to promote the coordinated development of children's cognition, abilities, and emotions.

##### **4.2. Content of the Kindergarten-Based Curriculum on Yellow River**

Delta Culture Curriculum content serves as the vehicle for achieving curriculum objectives and constitutes a crucial component of kindergarten curriculum implementation. The Yellow River Delta boasts abundant cultural resources and diverse forms of expression. Teachers should select educational content that aligns with the principles of appropriateness and child interest by exploring and evaluating the educational value of various cultural resources, integrating them into the five key domains of kindergarten activities. First, in the domain of health activities, teachers can design simplified versions of folk sports such as Digongquan and Fushou Changquan

to create physical education activities. These activities help promote the development of motor skills and hand-eye-brain coordination. Second, in the domain of language activities, teachers can utilize folk legends from the Yellow River Delta region and historical figures like the Military Sage Sun Tzu to develop language education activities. Through listening, reading, and storytelling, preschoolers can enrich their vocabulary and enhance their language expression skills. Third, in the domain of social activities, on one hand, adults can take children to visit natural landscapes and cultural sites in the Yellow River Delta, allowing them to personally experience the cultural characteristics of the region. On the other hand, cultural workers specializing in Yellow River culture can be invited to the kindergarten to conduct teaching assistance activities, guiding children to explore the wonders of the Yellow River Delta culture in an intuitive and engaging manner. Fourth, in the domain of scientific activities, teachers can guide children to investigate the formation of the Yellow River Estuary wetlands through experiments. They can also help children understand the process of petroleum formation and refining techniques through field visits and simulated demonstrations, fostering curiosity and a desire for knowledge. Fifth, in the domain of artistic activities, teachers can utilize local resources to guide children in creating clay sculptures with Yellow River mud or weaving with grass and willow. They can also design educational activities around folk dances such as Chen'guan Duan Sui Hua Gu and Yanduo Dou Hu, helping to develop children's artistic expressiveness.

### **4.3. Implementation Approaches for the Kindergarten-Based Curriculum on Yellow River Delta Culture**

**Integrate the Yellow River Delta Culture into Diverse Thematic Activities to Guide Children in Holistically Perceiving the Culture.**

A thematic curriculum refers to a series of educational and instructional activities organized by teachers around a central topic over a period of time. The kindergarten thematic curriculum is an integrated approach, where the theme often extends beyond the central topic itself to include related issues, phenomena, and events inherent to or associated with the central topic. Thematic curricula are the most commonly used organizational method in kindergartens. They break down the limitations of individual subjects and help children construct holistic experiences.

In the vast Yellow River Delta region, the cultural characteristics are distinctly regional, encompassing deeply rooted folk traditions as well as unique natural landscapes and petroleum culture. Kindergartens should systematically categorize the rich and diverse cultural resources of the Yellow River Delta, extracting distinctive and comprehensive thematic curricula. Regarding natural landscape culture, kindergartens can develop themes such as the magnificent confluence of the Yellow River and the sea, bird sanctuaries, and the wonders of traditional Chinese medicine, based on cultural resources familiar to young children. In terms of folk culture, themes like exploring Yellow River clay, discovering Lü Opera, vibrant paper-cutting, and creative weaving can be derived from various folk traditions. For petroleum culture, children can learn about towering drilling rigs, pump jacks, and Christmas trees through activities like "The Amazing Journey of Oil," helping them understand the oil extraction process, appreciate the hard work of petroleum workers, and experience the spirit of perseverance and innovation emblematic of the Shengli Oilfield. Furthermore, in implementing thematic curricula, emphasis should be placed on children's own hands-on activities and experiences to construct meaning. Teachers should support children through observation, active listening, respect, acceptance, trust, and responsiveness, while encouraging the continuous generation of new themes to meet developmental needs and foster children's capacity for self-directed learning.

Create an immersive Yellow River Delta cultural environment to comprehensively integrate the Yellow River culture.

"Immersion" emphasizes the integration of children with the environment. It incorporates various natural and life elements into children's learning process, highlighting their active

emotional and cognitive engagement in hands-on manipulation and in-depth exploration of curricular subjects. This approach serves as a means to achieve autonomous development in experience, abilities, imagination, and more. Kindergartens can create an immersive Yellow River Delta cultural environment through three key aspects: First, kindergartens should showcase the rich culture of the Yellow River Delta in public areas for children to appreciate and perceive. This includes displaying images of distinctive landscapes such as the convergence of the Yellow River and the sea, the sunset over the winding river, and flying swans in halls and corridors. Additionally, folk cultural elements like exquisitely crafted grass and willow weaving, vibrant woodblock New Year paintings from Qinghe Town, cloth tigers symbolizing auspicious blessings, as well as traditional practices like Digongquan and Duansui Flower Drum, can be incorporated into hanging decorations, wall displays, and exhibition windows. Second, ample materials should be provided for indoor area activities, enabling children to explore the Yellow River Delta culture through hands-on engagement. Teachers can blur the boundaries between thematic and area activities, allowing children to engage in activities such as clay sculpting, dough figurine making, grass and willow weaving, and paper cutting in the art area, where they can also communicate and display their work. In the performance area, children can dress in Lü Opera costumes, attempt simple Lü Opera performances, or imitate folk dances. Third, the Yellow River Delta culture should be integrated into daily routines. For instance, during mealtime, introduce local delicacies like Lijin Pan-Fried Buns and Yellow River Swordfish. Before naptime, share folktales about the Yellow River estuary. Through environmental immersion, children gradually absorb diverse experiences of Yellow River culture and the humanistic spirit embedded within it.

Integrate various resources to carry out cultural project activities on the Yellow River Delta, enabling in-depth exploration of the Yellow River culture.

Project-based learning refers to a process in which learners, over a period of time, utilize their existing knowledge, experience, and skills to conduct sustained research or exploration on an engaging and authentic topic or problem. Throughout this exploratory process, learners continuously identify issues, and through researching and solving these problems, they acquire core experiences and knowledge. In practical activities related to Yellow River culture, teachers can adopt a project-based learning approach to address questions that children show sustained interest in. For example, after learning about the wetland culture at the Yellow River estuary, children may wonder how the various plants in the wetland grow, what the diverse birds in the wetland eat, where they come from, and where they fly to. When faced with such questions from children, teachers should encourage them to analyze the problems independently and seek solutions on their own. During the problem-solving process, for relatively simple questions, teachers can guide children to resolve them independently through experiments or online research. For more complex issues, teachers can help children actively seek assistance from parents or societal support, making full use of social resources such as the Yellow River Culture Museum and the Yellow River Wetland Park, or even consulting professionals engaged in Yellow River culture research to help solve the problems. Finally, teachers should guide children to reflect on the entire activity process through communication, sharing, and expression. This approach enables the complementary exchange of individual experiences among children, fosters innovative thinking skills through deep exploration of the Yellow River Delta culture, and promotes autonomous development.

## **5. Evaluation of the Kindergarten-Based Curriculum on Yellow River Delta Culture**

Curriculum evaluation serves as a crucial means of assessing the quality of curriculum development and implementation. The evaluation of the kindergarten-based curriculum on the Yellow River Delta culture should be conducted from multiple dimensions, focusing both on the

developmental progress of preschoolers and the implementation of the curriculum by teachers. The evaluation of children's development primarily centers on the achievement of objectives in areas such as emotional growth, competencies, and cognitive development. Adults should pay close attention to the process of children's development and establish a standardized evaluation framework to guide the assessment. Methods such as observation, interviews, analysis of children's work, and portfolio records are primarily employed for this purpose. The evaluation of teachers' implementation of the Yellow River Delta culture curriculum is conducted through self-assessment and peer review. This typically involves classroom observations and instructional evaluations to systematically assess aspects such as the appropriateness of curriculum objectives, the suitability of content, and the openness of organizational formats. Through regular discussions, reflections, and summaries, insights are gained regarding the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum organization and implementation, thereby clarifying directions for improvement. Additionally, the evaluation of the kindergarten-based curriculum on the Yellow River Delta culture should involve kindergarten administrators and parents. Through activities such as classroom observations, parents and administrators can provide objective assessments of curriculum implementation from various perspectives. In summary, the evaluation of the Yellow River Delta culture curriculum is comprehensive in scope and continuous as well as open in process, with the ultimate goal of promoting the holistic and sustained growth of preschoolers.

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