

Exploring the way to integrate traditional festivals into early childhood education

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Abstract

Traditional festival culture, with its long-standing heritage and profound cultural significance, plays a vital role in early childhood education. Integrating this cultural heritage into preschool curricula helps cultivate children's moral development and fosters the proper formation of their worldview, values, and life philosophy. This paper first examines the importance and significance of incorporating traditional festival education into early childhood programs. It then identifies challenges in implementing such cultural education for young learners, concluding with practical strategies for effectively integrating traditional festivals into early childhood education practices.

Keywords

Traditional festival, preschool education, traditional culture.

1. Introduction

Chinese traditional festivals embody the cultural DNA and spiritual essence of our nation, serving as vital vehicles for nurturing children's cultural identity. Integrating these traditions into early childhood education not only develops practical skills through hands-on activities like making zongzi during Dragon Boat Festival or crafting rice cakes during Mid-Autumn Festival, but also cultivates well-rounded personalities by teaching values such as respecting elders, cherishing children, and fostering patriotic sentiments. The "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" underscores that character development in early childhood is crucial for lifelong growth. Concepts embedded in traditional festivals – including the principles of "harmony as the highest virtue" and "filial piety as the foremost virtue" – provide vivid educational materials for cultivating healthy thinking patterns. However, current challenges in traditional festival education remain: some teachers lack sufficient knowledge, focusing on superficial activities over substantive content; insufficient collaboration between families and kindergartens, coupled with commercial promotions diluting the core spirit of festivals. How can we overcome these obstacles to truly embed traditional festivals into children's hearts as a foundation for cultural inheritance? Drawing from educational practice, this article explores effective pathways to integrate traditional festivals into early childhood education, offering practical references for kindergartens to conduct relevant activities.

2. The educational value of traditional festivals

Kindergartens are increasingly emphasizing patriotic education for young children. The values conveyed through traditional Chinese festivals and folk culture can strengthen children's sense of belonging, identity, and pride in their homeland^[2]. As a concentrated embodiment of the cultural heritage and ideological essence of the Chinese nation, integrating traditional festival culture into early childhood education helps cultivate children's cultural awareness, deepen their understanding of traditional values, and significantly support their individual development and the cultivation of well-rounded personalities. Incorporating this cultural element into educational activities holds immense value. Specifically for kindergarten

education, the significance of integrating traditional festival culture can be summarized as follows 错误,未找到引用源。:

First, it helps cultivate healthy thinking qualities in young children. The "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" emphasizes that early childhood education should focus on nurturing positive character traits to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and development. As an integral part of China's excellent traditional culture, traditional festival culture not only features rich content and diverse forms but also embodies noble values such as valuing harmony, respecting the elderly and caring for the young, mutual assistance, patriotism, and dedication to work. These ideological elements contribute to the formation and development of healthy qualities in children, subtly shaping their positive character through daily interactions 错误,未找到引用源。.

Second, it is conducive to cultivating children's hands-on ability. Early childhood education is vital, as it requires not only cultural preservation but also the cultivation of children's practical skills. This approach helps foster holistic development while allowing young learners to better understand and experience China's rich cultural heritage through hands-on activities. When implementing traditional festival-themed programs, educators should not only teach cultural knowledge but also guide children in creating seasonal crafts. For example, making mooncakes during Mid-Autumn Festival, wrapping zongzi (sticky rice dumplings) for Dragon Boat Festival, and cutting paper window decorations for Spring Festival. These activities not only enhance children's manual dexterity but also deepen their understanding of traditional culture through real-world practice.

Thirdly, it enriches the content of kindergarten educational activities. During the preschool stage, young children have relatively limited capacity to absorb and comprehend knowledge. Consequently, most kindergarten teaching activities are conducted through games, with educational content primarily consisting of various play-based activities. This approach often results in superficial and monotonous content. The integration of traditional festival culture provides new perspectives and directions for kindergarten education, enabling more diverse and varied activity formats. This significantly enhances children's learning experiences and serves as an effective pathway to improve the quality of early childhood education.

Fourth, it facilitates the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture. To make the preservation and dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture a cornerstone of education, educators must maintain steadfast traditional values. The preschool years serve as the critical period for nurturing cultural awareness and when children are most receptive to traditional festival culture. By organizing festive activities through engaging, gamified approaches during this stage, young learners can deepen their understanding and appreciation of traditional festivals through hands-on experiences. This helps children recognize the charm of cultural traditions, thereby gradually strengthening their cultural consciousness and effectively preserving and promoting outstanding festival heritage.

3. Problems in traditional festival cultural education

3.1. Teachers are not rich enough in relevant knowledge

Kindergarten teachers serve as both guides in educational activities and practitioners of traditional Chinese festival culture. While their role is crucial in integrating these cultural elements into curriculum design, many educators lack comprehensive understanding of traditional festivals. Their knowledge systems remain fragmented, with insufficient recognition of their educational value and inadequate research in this field. This results in unscientific approaches to curriculum planning, content selection, activity organization, and effectiveness evaluation, ultimately leading to suboptimal teaching outcomes. Furthermore, some teachers fail to fully appreciate the significance of China's outstanding traditional culture. Although

incorporating cultural elements into early childhood education supports sustainable development, outdated teaching methods persist due to teachers' failure to update their educational philosophies. Their limited understanding of traditional culture's importance compromises its effective integration into early childhood education. Additionally, insufficient professional development training leaves many educators ill-prepared for conducting activities, as there are few pre-activity research discussions among teachers.

3.2. There are deviations in the implementation of traditional festival education activities

In today's educational landscape, there is an excessive focus on knowledge transmission. Teaching priorities often center around children memorizing nursery rhymes, retelling stories accurately, and understanding festival origins, while neglecting the emotional and intellectual impact of traditional festivals. There's a tendency to prioritize superficial forms over substantive values. As times evolve, the importance of keeping pace with modern trends becomes evident. Traditional festival activities must adapt to contemporary standards to gain wider acceptance and better realize their inherent value. Currently, kindergartens predominantly rely on outdated practices when organizing traditional festivals, mechanically replicating established educational models or imitating exemplary lesson designs. These approaches lack innovation in both format and content, rarely considering age-specific characteristics or contemporary relevance. To create visually appealing environments, most kindergartens emphasize teacher-centered setups where educators meticulously display elaborate artworks, overlooking the fundamental purpose of environmental design: supporting children's development. While teachers' presentations dominate, children's hands-on participation diminishes. Adults may perceive such elaborate displays as meeting developmental needs, but from children's perspective, these are merely decorative pieces. Reduced engagement in both activities and environmental creation leads to misguided educational priorities.

3.3. Society and family fail to form a joint force with kindergarten

While China has established protective regulations for certain traditional festivals, these frameworks still require refinement. The preschool education sector lacks concrete implementation measures, with no mandatory guidelines or specific requirements for kindergarten activities^{错误,未找到引用源。}. This results in insufficient motivation for teachers and a lack of regulatory oversight. Currently, commercial interests drive social media to overpackage traditional festivals, often neglecting their profound cultural significance and the spiritual values they convey. Such commercialization creates associations between traditional festivals and commercial products, leaving children confused about their true meanings. With China's opening-up, foreign "Western festivals" have significantly impacted traditional celebrations. The confusion between imported and native traditions leaves children unable to distinguish between authentic and imitative celebrations. Furthermore, some parents misunderstand the educational value of traditional festivals while prioritizing academic development over emotional growth. Neglecting these cultural elements hinders children's understanding of China's heritage. As primary educators, parents should complement kindergarten programs through family education that supports traditional festival learning.

4. Specific ways to integrate traditional festivals into preschool education

4.1. Kindergartens pay more attention to traditional festival education

Kindergartens should proactively organize teaching research and training programs to enrich teachers' knowledge of traditional Chinese festival customs. Schools can incorporate these cultural elements into their curriculum through offline workshops, online seminars, or inviting

knowledgeable parents to share insights. Additionally, they should enhance training on national policies to stay updated with educational trends, using theoretical knowledge to better support kindergarten operations. Teaching research plays a crucial role in guiding activity implementation. As a primary teaching method, it also serves as an alternative instructional approach. Effective teaching requires active engagement—especially for young teachers whose experience may be limited. They should adopt a positive attitude toward research activities, learn from peers' best practices, and share innovative ideas to maximize educational impact. Kindergartens should allocate dedicated funds for traditional festival events, ensuring sufficient resources for environmental setup. Decorative displays featuring festive themes can enrich classroom spaces, allowing children and families to gain cultural enrichment. Finally, showcasing exemplary cases and achievements from these festivals through archival documentation will help establish enduring traditions that continue to thrive. By prioritizing traditional festival activities, kindergartens can cultivate lasting cultural heritage that endures through generations.

4.2. Teachers improve the education level of traditional festivals

Early childhood educators serve as the primary implementers of kindergarten education. Children's knowledge acquisition largely depends on teachers' own expertise, making traditional festival knowledge particularly crucial for preschool teachers^[5]. Educators should lead by example through self-directed learning—using online resources or visiting local libraries to explore folk culture traditions. When organizing educational activities, they should integrate the spiritual essence of traditional festivals into their programs. Beyond conventional knowledge transmission and activity-based learning like nursery rhymes and crafts, all educational goals should align with the cultural significance of these festivals to evoke emotional resonance. Moreover, teachers should consciously innovate in festival education by grounding lessons in natural and social contexts that resonate with children's daily lives. They should creatively enhance and preserve traditional festival culture to maximize its educational value. Educators can also draw inspiration from successful international practices in festival organization. For environmental setup, teachers should actively collect materials, store them in designated areas to create material corners, and encourage children to independently select materials during activities, fully respecting their role as active participants.

4.3. The coordination of family, society and kindergarten

First, strengthen national policy guidance by formulating detailed policies and regulations to direct and promote the development of preschool education. At the national level, more comprehensive documents and supervision guidelines regarding traditional festival education should be established. Relevant departments should enhance top-down oversight and guidance for kindergartens during specific activities, using inspections to drive action and improve the implementation of traditional festival education in kindergartens^{错误!未找到引用源。}. Simultaneously, we should strive to find a balance between promoting traditional festivals and pursuing commercial interests, fostering mutual benefits. The government should continue to intensify promotional efforts for traditional festivals, leveraging national resources to raise public awareness. For example: organizing "How Much Do You Know About Traditional Festivals" campaigns on major satellite TV channels; arranging various cultural heritage promotion activities; and aligning program curricula with China's excellent traditional culture through institutions like the National Radio Art Troupe and Film Administration. Secondly, as a supplement to kindergarten education, parents should clarify their roles in early childhood education and fulfill their responsibilities. When conducting traditional festival education activities, parents should reinforce learning content in a timely manner, organize corresponding social practice activities for children, and supplement practical components not covered in kindergartens.

5. Conclusion

Traditional festivals are a cultural treasure of the Chinese nation. In today's multicultural world, how to enhance their appeal and vitality remains a crucial question for us to ponder. With increasing attention from all government levels toward traditional festival celebrations, kindergartens—serving as the foundational stage of school education and an essential component of basic education—should actively plant the seeds of Chinese traditions in young minds. Kindergartens should adopt multicultural education principles in designing festival activities, highlight the cultural essence of traditional festivals when selecting content, create environments that align with these traditions while emphasizing culturally rich settings, and ensure both festive atmosphere and children's enjoyment during celebrations.

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