

A Case Study on the Integration of Wuyi Culture and Kindergarten Regional Activity

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Abstract

Wuyi Mountain in China is a world cultural and natural heritage site, which has nurtured Wuyi culture, including world heritage culture, Zhuzi culture, Minyue culture, tea culture and red culture. Kindergarten regional activities are a kind of autonomous exploration activities for preschool children. The integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities is an important way to enhance children's sense of identity with Wuyi culture. This study took Wuyi Kindergarten A as an example, and used interview method, observation method and case analysis method to investigate the current situation of the integration of Wuyi culture and kindergarten regional activities. Through the investigation, the researchers found that the teachers' cognition level of Wuyi culture is uneven, the selected cultural types and application areas are relatively single, the materials in regional activities are unreasonable, the organization and implementation of regional activities are improper, and the integration of educational resources from all parties is insufficient. Then, the reasons for the current situation were analyzed, and the solution strategies such as teachers should clarify their own roles, teachers should improve their professional abilities, the kindergarten should carry out teacher training activities, and the forces of all parties should be coordinated and integrated were proposed.

Keywords: Wuyi Culture, Regional Activity, Integration Study

Introduction

China has significant regional differences from east to west and north to south, with unique cultures arising from various customs and practices. According to documents released by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, "Chinese outstanding traditional culture should be integrated into all areas of enlightenment education, basic education, vocational education, higher education, and continuing education" (CPC Central Committee General Office & State Council General Office, 2017). Kindergartens are an essential part of basic education and serve as the foundation for school and lifelong education. As traditional Chinese culture enters campuses, research on the integration of local and ethnic culture with kindergarten curriculum has gradually become popular in the field of preschool education. The integration of local culture and kindergarten curriculum is an important way to effectively inherit local culture, promote cultural identity in young children, and achieve their comprehensive development.

The researcher searched for relevant literature in the CNKI database using the keywords "local culture and kindergarten regional activities" and found that there were relatively few references available, with most of them being journal articles. Most of the literature focused on the integration of local culture and kindergarten curriculum, while few studies extended local culture into regional activities. There is almost no research on the integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities in the researcher's context. In summary, based on organizing and analyzing existing research related to the current study, the researcher attempted to investigate the integration status of Wuyi culture and kindergarten regional activities using observation, interviews, and case analysis methods. Through investigating and analyzing the current situation, feasible suggestions and strategies were proposed.

Methodology**Literature Review Method**

In this article, more than 70 pieces of relevant literature were reviewed through the CNKI database, including master's and doctoral dissertations, academic monographs, journal articles, and online resources. The literature covers aspects such as Wuyi culture, kindergarten curriculums, kindergarten games, and regional activities, especially research on the integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities. By comprehensively understanding the current state and shortcomings of existing research, the research questions and objectives of this study were determined.

Interview Method

The interviewees of this study are the director of the Academic Affairs Office and 10 frontline preschool teachers from Kindergarten A. After two months of observation, the researchers analyzed the current situation of the integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities in Kindergarten A. In order to explore the underlying reasons for this situation, the researchers developed a relevant interview outline, which consists of four parts. The first part is the personal information of the interviewees; the second part focuses on the utilization of Wuyi culture in the kindergarten; the third part delves into the implementation of integrating Wuyi culture into regional activities; and the fourth part examines the difficulties and suggestions for the integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities.

Case Study Method

The case study method, also known as case analysis or typical analysis method, is a scientific analytical approach that involves an in-depth and thorough study of representative cases to gain a comprehensive understanding. In this study, typical cases of the integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities are collected and analyzed, focusing on the arrangement of the regions, the usage of materials provided to the children, and the types of cultures integrated during the process.

Observation Method

This study adopts informal observation, during which the researchers use pre-designed observation tools for observation and record-keeping. The observation content mainly includes aspects such as the creation of a relevant regional environment, the provision of regional materials, the implementation of regional activities, and the activities of the children. This is done in order to understand the application of Wuyi culture in regional activities and provide empirical evidence for further research.

Results

Disparities in Teachers' Knowledge and Understanding of Wuyi Culture

Upon investigation, it was found that teachers in Kindergarten A, varying in teaching tenure and age, displayed differing levels of awareness and understanding of Wuyi culture. Younger teachers, particularly those not originally from the Wuyi Mountain area, tend to have lower consciousness and recognition of the culture. Some teachers lack a proper understanding of the connotations of Wuyi culture and are unclear about its value, which leads to a low integration of Wuyi culture in regional activities. When questioned about the value and significance of Wuyi culture in early childhood education, although all teachers responded affirmatively, only three considered it from the perspective of traditional cultural heritage, while two discussed its role in cultural education and enhancing cultural confidence. Interviews with teachers revealed that while some have a deep understanding of China's excellent traditional culture, others approach it sentimentally rather than analytically, failing to fully grasp the educational value of the culture for young children.

Interview Excerpt One

Location: Kindergarten classroom

Researcher: What do you believe Wuyi culture encompasses? How did you come to know about it? And what value does Wuyi culture hold for kindergarten education?

F2: Wuyi culture includes local folk songs, tea culture, tourism culture, Minyue culture, folk culture, and folk (sports) games, as well as the ancient residences in Xiaomei Village, which mark the beginning of the Thousand Mile Tea Route. Being a local, my knowledge comes mainly from traditions passed down through generations and personal experiences, and also from what I've learned through various websites. These cultural elements have a comprehensive impact on the children.

Researcher: Do you often integrate Wuyi culture into regional activities? How is it applied in the kindergarten's regional activities?

F4: I do integrate Wuyi culture with regional activities, but not frequently. We tend to focus on this aspect when there are visits or inspections from higher-level leaders or experts. For example, I conduct activities such as creating ink paintings with tea, and in the middle class,

we have some role-playing games related to tea, like a tea house, selling tea sets, brewing tea, and tea art lessons. I also provide molds for printing cakes for children to use in the art area.

Through interviews, it was found that teachers have varying levels of awareness and understanding regarding the types and educational values of Wuyi culture, demonstrating inadequate initiative to integrate Wuyi culture into regional activities. Regional activities are a significant means of curriculum implementation, and active learning by children within these activities should be emphasized. Teachers have not successfully extended Wuyi culture into regional activities due to their limited recognition and comprehension of the educational value of Wuyi culture, which results in the integration of Wuyi culture and regional activities remaining superficial.

Monolithic Selection and Application of Wuyi Culture Types in Areas

Wuyi culture encompasses tea culture, tourism culture, revolutionary culture, Zhu Xi culture, culinary culture, folklore, and ancient residential culture, among others (Qi, 2009). Interviews with teachers have revealed that some only have a superficial understanding of Wuyi culture or are familiar with only certain aspects of it, lacking a comprehensive and profound knowledge of the culture. This results in a one-sided and uniform approach to conducting regional activities with a Wuyi cultural theme. Regional activities, being integral to thematic curricula and an essential method of implementation, should be distributed evenly across various activities to reflect the content and characteristics of Wuyi culture, rather than being frequently limited to one or two specific areas.

Interview Excerpt Two

Location: Kindergarten office

Researcher: Which aspects of Wuyi culture have you chosen to integrate into regional activities and why? Which areas are more closely integrated with Wuyi culture?

F3: I have primarily chosen to integrate tea culture and local folk songs, which are familiar to the children and lend themselves well to expansion. The integration mainly takes place in the tea arts area, role-play area, and language area. This includes storybooks related to the culture, children's songs, and learning about rare and endangered plants and animals.

The interview reveals that, during the regional activities, the most frequently utilized aspect of Wuyi culture is tea culture, followed by tourism culture. There is less incorporation of folklore, revolutionary culture, culinary culture, and ancient residential culture. Furthermore, observations indicate a singularity in the areas where Wuyi culture is applied, with a preference for the art area, role-play area, and language area. In contrast, there is less integration of Wuyi culture in the science area, intellectual development area, construction area, performance area, manipulation area, and outdoor play area.

Insufficient Integration of Activity Materials with Wuyi Cultural Elements

Observations of the activity materials in Kindergarten A reveal that the design and production of these materials are generally directed towards the characteristics of the regional activities themselves, and not sufficiently integrated with elements of Wuyi culture. The playful nature of the materials does not deeply mesh with the cultural elements.

Moreover, some area settings are arranged merely for visual appeal, making it difficult for children to interact effectively with the environment and the materials provided. For instance, in Class M's tea art performance area, teachers decorated the space using fabrics featuring tea-picking attire, but the children did not comprehend the symbolism of the fabric patterns or their relation to tea. The researcher also noted that the materials placed in the area not only lacked prominent cultural elements but also their intrinsic playfulness and flexibility; they were too rigid and shallow, failing to fully utilize and explore the cultural resources of Wuyi.

Improper Implementation of Regional Activities

The researcher, through observation, identified issues with the improper organization and implementation of regional activities, which manifest as follows: the objectives set for regional activities against the backdrop of Wuyi culture are not comprehensive, with teachers prioritizing general goals over those related to Wuyi culture. Teachers lack proper and effective guidance; most do not know how to effectively guide children to gain cultural experiences, leading to situations of either over-intervention or neglect. Furthermore, teachers' evaluations at the end of regional activities are often rushed or oversimplified, focusing only on the children's participation and neglecting to assess the cultural elements of the region itself.

Interview Segment Three

Location: Kindergarten office

Researcher: How do you evaluate the regional activities after they have ended? Do you conduct targeted evaluations concerning education and teaching related to Wuyi culture?

F2: After the activities, we guide the children to share and discuss any difficulties they encountered as well as highlights and new play methods. We emphasize different aspects of the evaluation based on the children's age groups: the immediate experiences for younger children, the consolidation of experiences for middle-aged groups, and the ability of the older children to discover new problems and explore solutions. There is seldom specific mention of evaluations focused on Wuyi culture.

Researcher: What strategies do you think should be used to integrate Wuyi culture into regional activities?

F5: We should start from the children's perspective, paying attention to their interests and needs. Secondly, there needs to be a focus on diversity and stratification in the deployment of materials, an aspect that our kindergarten has yet to sufficiently develop.

Following observations and interviews, it has been discovered that there is a lack of objectives concerning Wuyi culture within the regional activities for young children. Teachers tend to base their selection of Wuyi cultural content on rather simplistic criteria, mainly considering the interests of children, the suitability of content to child development, and less on the educational substance of the content itself. Evaluations of regional activities by teachers are not sufficiently diverse, with a greater focus on the development of children's cognition and abilities, while neglecting the emotional and experiential aspects of children's engagement in these activities. Regarding strategies for integration, there appears to be

confusion and a lack of understanding. Often, practices are imitated from others or are carried out in compliance with directives from leaders.

Insufficient Support from Community and Family Resources

Interviews revealed that in the organization of regional activities under the theme of Wuyi culture, teachers merely ask parents to provide some data or information, thus relegating them to a supportive role without deep involvement. Parental participation in kindergarten activities tends to be passive, not fully serving as a communicative link between the family and the kindergarten. Given the prioritization of child safety, kindergartens rarely organize outings for children, which prevents the effective utilization of community resources. Moreover, most community resources are challenging to integrate into the kindergarten setting, and the lack of full utilization of these resources in the design of regional activity plans inevitably affects the effectiveness of the activities.

Interview Segment Four

Location: Kindergarten conference room

Researcher: Wuyi Mountain city has a wealth of cultural resources. Does your kindergarten take children on outdoor visits or conduct related activities? And do you involve parents in these activities?

F7: In the past, we would take children to the Da'an revolutionary base to participate in "Exploring Zhu Xi" outdoor parent-child activities. Nowadays, due to various factors and safety concerns, such activities are rarely organized. However, we encourage parents to take their children to experience Wuyi culture, and the kindergarten neither prevents nor actively participates in this. We seldom ask parents to come to the kindergarten to assist. Mostly, teachers collect materials themselves, and sometimes we ask children to bring certain waste materials from home for use in regional activities.

Interviews and investigations have revealed that most parents rarely take the initiative to explore Wuyi culture-related educational and teaching activities with the kindergarten, particularly in the area of regional activities, leading to a waste of resources from all parties. Nowadays, due to various constraints, there are seldom organized outdoor field visits to experience Wuyi culture within the kindergarten, resulting in children having less opportunity for the direct, hands-on experience essential for understanding the spiritual essence of Wuyi culture.

Analysis of Causes

Teacher Professional Lethargy and Lack of Motivation to Learn

Teachers have a certain level of awareness and knowledge of Wuyi culture, particularly well-known aspects like tea culture and tourism culture, but this understanding is often superficial. They have a general idea but have not employed more scientific and in-depth methods to analyze and understand the spirit and connotations of the local culture. Wuyi culture, with its distinct characteristics, requires teachers to have a comprehensive and profound understanding of its cultural essence and to recognize its educational value to design effective Wuyi cultural educational and teaching activities. This necessitates teachers to become learners and researchers, fully utilizing their initiative and professional wisdom to explore the educational value of various aspects of Wuyi culture and the ways to integrate

them into kindergarten curricula (Mo, 2019). Due to the busy and trivial nature of kindergarten work, teachers spend a lot of time dealing with inspections from higher authorities and manual material preparations, leading to teacher lethargy in the profession. This results in a lack of effectiveness in the design and implementation of activities related to Wuyi culture and even a negative attitude towards them (Zhao, 2017).

Teachers' Limited Ability to Guide Wuyi Culture Regional Activities

During the investigation at Kindergarten A, researchers found that some teachers play merely superficial roles as "knowledge givers, discipline upholders, and conflict mediators" in regional activities, wandering from place to place without truly understanding the developmental state of the children. These teachers guide the children's activities quite arbitrarily (Li, 2015). There is also a lack of careful observation of children, with some teachers not even aware of what children are thinking or wishing to do. They do not understand the children's existing cognitive experiences and merely watch them manipulate materials, indicating a weakness in the teachers' ability to guide regional activities. While all five teachers interviewed held positive attitudes towards integrating Wuyi culture with regional activities, they commonly expressed concerns about infrequent organization, lack of experience, and insufficient energy when it comes to implementing such strategies.

Lack of Training in Relevant Professional Skills

Teachers' own cultural competence and skill proficiency significantly influence the conduct and outcome of activities (Li, 2015). However, teacher training directly impacts the enhancement of these professional skills (Mao, 2020). The inefficient use of Wuyi cultural educational resources in regional activities is chiefly due to teachers' weak awareness in developing and utilizing these resources and their inadequate theoretical and practical abilities in this domain. According to the survey, teachers have limited opportunities for relevant professional training due to various constraints. Those who have participated in training reported that the content often focuses on a few practical issues, with the method being more about inculcating so-called new educational concepts, and barely touching upon the content of Wuyi culture. Moreover, with the high number of kindergarten teachers, equitable training opportunities are challenging to distribute. Even though some kindergartens conduct "secondary training" where trained leaders or core teachers retrain their peers, the impact is significantly reduced (Wu, 2017).

Inadequate External Resource Support System

The external support system primarily refers to the policy support provided by educational authorities in terms of activity funding, talent, and institutional support, as well as the facility support provided by the community for Wuyi cultural activities and human resource support in that collaboration between home and kindergarten (Cai, 2020). An investigation in Kindergarten A revealed that higher education authorities have yet to issue special policy support for Wuyi culture, nor have they included it in the mandatory assessments for kindergartens. Parent committees have limited understanding and play an insufficient role in the inheritance of traditional culture. Additionally, the connections with community street offices are not tight enough, and the kindergarten's concept of running a Wuyi culture-themed institution has not been thoroughly communicated, leading to a lack of broader support (Ding, 2019). These issues are detrimental to the kindergarten's ability to

conduct Wuyi culture-related regional activities, as they prevent the development of a corresponding external support system.

Implications and suggestion

(i) Teachers Should Deeply Understand and Master Wuyi Culture to Enhance Learning Enthusiasm

Teachers should proactively learn about relevant cultural knowledge, fostering an awareness of integrating Wuyi culture with regional activities. They can achieve a holistic understanding of Wuyi culture through various methods including websites, literature, field experiences, book consultations, and explanations from experts (Wang, 2019). Consulting knowledgeable colleagues and specialists, teachers can accumulate a wealth of knowledge on Wuyi culture, enhancing their initiative and eagerness to learn. This will enable them to conduct more effective cultural education and teaching activities, foster comprehensive and harmonious development in children, and reflect the professional ethical standards that encourage lifelong learning among teachers.

(ii)Enhancing Teacher Professional Competence and Strengthening the Organization and Implementation of Regional Activities

Firstly, teachers should establish activity objectives that reflect the characteristics of Wuyi culture, including both general developmental goals for children within regional activities and goals related to the inheritance of Wuyi culture. Given the rich content and broad scope of Wuyi culture, it is essential to select content that matches the developmental traits of children and is applicable to regional activities. Secondly, teachers can follow several principles when selecting content: principles of interest, educational value, operability, appropriateness, and child-centeredness (Sun, 2020). Thirdly, the design and production of regional materials should increasingly consider the integration of cultural elements, applying Wuyi culture evenly across different types of regions, having innovation and cultural relevance in materials, and continuously exploring new and unique cultural materials to pique the interest of children. Teachers should be observant of children's usage rates and how they handle materials containing elements of Wuyi culture, adjusting in line with children's interests to meet their needs for active exploration (Li, 2019). Fourthly, during the activities, teachers should pay close attention to children's engagement, identify and meet their needs with targeted guidance, and intervene appropriately to guide exploration and learning in the context of arising issues. Fifthly, a multifaceted evaluation should be conducted at the conclusion of regional activities, assessing children's engagement, the use of regional materials, and the teacher's instructional strategies, as well as incorporating cultural dimensions, especially the degree of children's identification with Wuyi culture. A combination of self-evaluation by children, peer evaluations, and teacher assessments is advocated to share discoveries and issues encountered by children during Wuyi culture-related regional activities. This guidance facilitates exchange and sharing among children, thereby advancing the development of regional activities and enhancing education quality.

(iii)Conduct Regular Training and Teaching Seminars to Promote Professional Development of Teachers

Kindergartens should regularly organize teacher training focused on two main areas: knowledge of Wuyi culture itself and the professional ability to develop and design regional activities themed around Wuyi culture, laying a theoretical foundation for integrating Wuyi

culture with regional activities. Initiatives like Wuyi culture knowledge competitions could be conducted to further solidify early childhood educators' understanding of Wuyi culture. Additionally, kindergartens should frequently form specialized teaching research groups and hold teaching symposiums to address issues and confusion encountered in practice, exploring pathways and methods for merging Wuyi culture with regional activities and continually improving the quality of these activities. Principals should lead by example, supporting the implementation of relevant teacher training, establishing scientifically sound concepts, and providing backing for the preservation of Wuyi culture.

(iv) Establish a Reasonable Reward System to Encourage Teachers to Explore Boldly

Kindergartens need to establish a robust reward mechanism to motivate teachers to proactively pursue research on the integration of Wuyi culture with kindergarten regional activities, thereby mitigating instances of professional lethargy. Interview-based research has revealed that teachers at Kindergarten A lack information and time to study the confluence of Wuyi culture and regional activities. Therefore, it is hoped that an incentive system will inspire educators to boldly experiment, diligently explore, and cultivate a community of learners. There should be systematic assessments of each phase of activity development, rewarding teachers who achieve tangible results and encouraging the sharing of practical and effective methodologies and experiences.

(v) Collaboration Among Families, Society, and Kindergartens to Form a Synergistic Educational Force

On one hand, kindergartens should strive to garner support from various societal institutions such as tourism, cultural departments, educational authorities, and libraries. For instance, to better incorporate tourism culture into regional activities, organizing events like "Exploring Wuyi Together" could benefit from the assistance of the tourism department. In exploring tea culture, collaboration with local tea companies and tea expos can be pursued. When conducting folk cultural activities, local seniors and experts from Wuyi Mountain city could be invited to give presentations. On the other hand, parents' educational resources should be fully integrated to gain their support and understanding, and to leverage the opportunities for parental involvement in jointly promoting the comprehensive and harmonious development of the children's minds and bodies. Parents could provide suitable materials for regional activities, assist with gathering relevant information, and provide authentic and useful insights; they could also accompany children on visits to local sites related to Wuyi culture, observe tea-making processes, experience the art of tea brewing, explore the features of ancient dwellings, and taste local cuisine. Collaboration between families, society, and kindergartens should establish a combined educational force to collectively foster the overall harmonious development of children and contribute to the heritage of Wuyi culture.

Conclusion and Discussion

Wuyi culture is a precious legacy left from the thousands of years of Chinese civilization. Educating children about local culture through regional activities enriches the educational forms in kindergartens. By engaging in Wuyi culture education within autonomous regional activities, children can gain an in-depth understanding of Wuyi culture's connotations, experience the culture that inhabitants of Wuyi Mountain city should master, and contribute to the heritage of Wuyi culture.

The study of Wuyi culture's application in regional activities is a systematic and long-term project that requires the active cooperation and collaboration of outstanding individuals from all sectors, including early childhood experts, kindergarten principals, key teachers, relevant organizations, and parents. Only this collective effort can make it possible to provide characteristic Wuyi cultural activities in kindergartens and offer valuable aid for children's growth.

This research, which combines Wuyi culture with kindergarten regional activities, aims to provide more ideas and effective approaches to Wuyi cultural education. However, due to various objective restrictions, the limited capability of the researcher, and the insufficiency in theoretical academic research, this study has certain limitations, such as a small number of interview subjects, superficial teacher interviews and analysis, and some views and theories used may also be imperfect. The researcher will make greater efforts to enrich their theoretical framework and continuously improve their level of teaching practice.

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