

Practical Research on Kindergarten Teaching With Paper-cut Picture Books

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Abstract

Paper-cutting is as an excellent Chinese folk art with a long history and strong practicability. The application of paper-cutting to kindergarten picture book activities is conducive to the inheritance and development of folk culture. In addition, integrating activities with paper-cut picture books into kindergarten curriculum is good for achieving “cultural transmission” through education and promoting the development of young children. This paper explores the essentials of using paper-cut picture books in Grade-1, Grade-2 and Grade-3 Kindergarten activities.

Key words: Kindergarten; Paper-cut picture books; Activity implementation

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INTRODUCTION

Picture book is a modern reading product that has been emerging since only recent years. Picture books use the combination of graphic and text to tell complete stories.

As the name implies, pictures constitute a significant portion of and plays an important role in each picture book. This is mainly because the pictures can not only help with the narrative but also convey aesthetic knowledge through graphic arts. As such, picture book is known as “the best book for children”. Paper-cutting is a famous intangible cultural heritage in China. The art of paper-cutting is rich in Chinese cultural connotations and a treasure of Chinese culture. Paper-cutting is unique in ways of artistic expression as it is the art of hollowing out, which appears hollowly clear visualization and offers artistic aesthetics to people. By incorporating the artistic expression of paper-cutting into picture books, we can not only present and carry forward an excellent Chinese traditional folk art with highly distinctive artistic expression but also effectively enhance the artistic beauty of picture books, making them more creative and artistic, and further enriching the picture book system. In 2013, a set of paper cut picture books titled “The Story of the Four Seasons” suddenly enlightened us to the beauty of combining a traditional Chinese folk art with modern picture books, letting viewers gain a first look at the unique artistic expressions brought by paper-cut picture books and deeper understanding of the ingenious aspects of paper-cutting art in terms of expression techniques, image design, and craftsmanship. At the same time, such combination can effectively preserve the original advantages of the picture book in terms of story-telling and presentation. All in all, the perfect combination of paper-cuts and picture books gives rise to a new form of practical product that exudes a strong sense of paper-cut art.

With the continuous advancement of kindergarten-based curriculum, more and more paper-cut art elements are introduced to the kindergarten curriculum system and they start to play an important role in enriching

kindergarten curriculum. In the process of participating in teaching activities that involve paper-cut picture books, young children can experience in first hand the strong attraction of traditional culture and expand their cognitive territory. At the same time, these activities can also help carry forward folk paper-cut art as one of China's intangible cultural heritages.

1. EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF ACTIVITIES WITH PAPER-CUT PICTURE BOOKS

1.1 Promoting Children's Skill Development

Participation in activities with paper-cut picture books is conducive to Children's skill development: Since their enrollment, kindergarten children start to engage in paper-cut related activities such as paper graffiti, symmetrical and yin-yang paper-cutting at Grade-1 and Grade-2 and creative paper-cutting at Grade-3. Participation in these activities enables continuous development of children's paper-cutting skills and their ability to do creative paper-cutting. Also, long-time paper-cutting exercise is conducive to developing the ability of refined hand movement.

1.2 Contributing to the Development of Good Learning Habits

Paper cutting is a meticulous and systematic activity. When participating in activities with paper-cut picture books, the children must first prepare all kinds of materials and tools needed for the job, then carefully operate according to the prescribed procedures, such a process can help improve their planning skills. In addition, activities with paper-cut picture books require children to be focused and patiently observe and imitate, therefore improving their ability in self-control and imitation.

1.3 Improving Communication and Cooperation Between Young Children

Young children of each class should be divided in to groups when conducting activities with paper-cut picture books, so that the activities become a platform for communication and cooperation among children in the same group. For example, if teacher indicates that there should be certain division of labor within a group, then young children of a group cooperated with each other to complete the creation of the paper-cut picture book, during which they will talk and negotiate with each other, run into conflicts and try to find ways to solve them, all such actions are of great importance to their development. In addition to improving young children's ability to find and solve problems, the process of jointly creating paper-cut picture books through mutual help, cooperation, division of labor, negotiation can also help them develop a positive attitude towards learning and living and boost their self-confidence.

1.4 Highlighting the Traditional Cultural Characteristics of Kindergarten-Based Curriculum

Incorporating paper-cut picture books into the kindergarten curriculum system will enable more people to appreciate the beauty of merging together a traditional folk art and modern picture books and let more people know that an ancient Chinese folk art can also be expressed in such a fashionable and interesting manner. The continuous development of paper-cut picture book activities in kindergarten will enable young children to establish a good sense of traditional Chinese folk culture and the charm of paper-cutting arts. Using picture books to carry forward and innovate paper-cutting arts is a good way to highlight the traditional cultural characteristics of kindergarten-based curriculum; in addition, kindergarten activities with paper-cut picture book can help further enrich the kindergarten curriculum system and provide effective insight into the further development of the system.

2. HOW TO ORGANIZE ACTIVITIES WITH PAPER-CUT PICTURE BOOKS

The early childhood is a very important stage in an individual's lifetime growth. The implementation of activities with paper-cut picture books can help better inherit and promote the Chinese folk art. At the same time, participation in these activities can also enable children to better perceive the diversity and difference of cultures around the world and to establish a high sense of national cultural identity from an early age. At the kindergarten stage, not many children have any actual sense of traditional folk arts, and even fewer of them can get in touch with paper-cut picture books in real life. Therefore, we should start to implement this activity from Grade-1, gradually guiding them into the world of paper-cut picture books, from knowing it to understanding it and ultimately actual participation in it.

2.1 Clarifying the Development Priorities of Children of Different Ages in the Field of Art

We need to avoid bluntly teaching them skills when conducting education with paper-cutting picture books. It is necessary to clearly understand the characteristics of children of different ages and to identify relevant development priorities according to these characteristics. Each teaching activity with paper-cut picture books consists of a series of sub-items. It is a project that emphasizes on both the process and the results. There are paper-cut picture book works suitable for children of each age group. In education with paper-cutting picture books, teachers should decide the direction of the next stage of development according to the development level of the previous stage. Therefore, when organizing activities with

paper-cut picture books, kindergartens need to consider how to set development priorities for children of different grades.

(a). For children at Grade-1, we need to cultivate their interest in “paper-playing activities” through a variety of activities such as “tearing, pasting, and kneading”. According to the characteristics of children at this age in body movements and motor perception, the focus of Grade-1 phase shall be using activities such as tearing stickers, paper kneading and tearing to let young children know that a piece of paper that can be changed into a variety of shapes and experience the wonders in making such changes by themselves. In addition, children should learn how to distinguish different colors and textures of papers based on the materials and types of such papers. The purpose of the above activities is to fully pique the children’s interest in playing with papers.

(b). The cultivation of good paper-cutting habits shall be focus of teaching Grade-2 children to try simple paper-cutting. Due to the development of muscle strength and flexibility, toddlers entering the first semester of Grade-2 should be able to try paper cutting for the first time. At this stage, situational teaching should be adopted and the focus of which shall be on how to cut paper along with straight or broken lines. The purpose of teaching at this stage is to let children explore the most basic method of paper cutting. First of all, the premise and basis for the development of children’s paper-cutting skills shall be the cultivation of good paper-cutting habits, such as the correct and safe use of scissors. Teachers can use graphic logos to let children understand the precautions of using scissors, and cultivate their safety awareness in the everyday paper-cutting exercises, so that they can master the rules and correct methods of using scissors. In addition, parents’ meetings can be convened to communicate the safe use of scissors to parents and let them understand the importance of it, so that parents and teachers can joint force in developing good and correct scissor-using habits among the children. Secondly, the key elements for guiding young children to develop good paper-cutting habits also include how to take tools, arrange materials and tools and how to sort and collect materials after doing the activity.

(c). The focus of the Grade-3 phase is creative paper cutting, which is designed for the development of good learning quality. With the increase of age and the deepening of learning, Grade-3 children have more experience in paper-cutting and should be more willing to challenge themselves and try out various forms of paper-cutting. Important paper-cutting objects for this stage include silhouettes, life logos, bookmarks, and paintings etc. An important goal of such activities is to enable young children to express their understanding of daily life and some literary stories through creative paper-cutting; in addition, teachers should guide the children to collaborate

in groups, which can help develop their learning qualities such as patience, focus, persistence, daring to challenge and prosocial behaviors.

2.2 Experiencing the Fun of Paper-Cut Picture Books Through Picture Book Demonstrations

Kindergartens can open in different classes different experience zones featuring paper-cut picture books, such as experience zones featuring daily life paper-cut picture books, fairy-tale paper-cut picture books, children’s song paper-cut picture books, mythology paper-cut picture books. Children of the same grade should be allowed to independently choose a experience area they are interest in and create different types of paper-cut picture books to exchange with each other. The value of experiencing the activities of paper-cut picture books for young children lies mainly in: First of all, they can learn about different types of paper-cut picture books, experience the fun of creating paper-cut picture books and become interested in paper-cut picture books; secondly, they can understand the materials needed for paper-cutting activities. With the help of the teacher, they can try to learn the process of and skills required for making paper-cut picture books; thirdly, these activities can enhance their interpersonal skills and let them take pride in the distinctive culture of their class.

2.3 Organization of Class-based Activities With Paper-cut Picture Books

(a). Teachers can guide children to watch demonstration of paper-cut picture books, let them understand the beauty of paper-cut picture books through visual perception. The teachers can organize all the children in the class to see classic paper-cut picture books on display in various experience areas, so that they can experience and feel the fun of paper-cut picture books.

(b). Try to incorporate paper-cutting pictures into art designing activities and explore the tactile aspect of paper-cutting. There is a big difference between classes with respect to styles of paper-cut picture books and the experience and ability gained from them, as such, priority should be given to incorporating paper-cut picture books into art designing activities. In this way, it will be convenient for young children to actively explore the materials and methods of making paper-cut picture books through art designing activities. Also, the children can cooperate and help each other in this kind of activities, which helps to cultivate their study habits such as concentration, collaboration, persistence and observation.

(c). Participate in the activities with paper-cut picture books and learn the techniques of paper-cutting in a fun and scientific way.

A picture book can tell a story while giving the viewer visual pleasure. As a whole, it is a book that tells an engaging story, but each picture in it can be viewed as an individual piece of graphic art.

The teacher can assign cutting of each picture of the book to different children and let the children participate in the activity as a collective group. During the creation process, the teacher can prepare a blank photo album to paste all of the children's paper-cut works, which will ultimately become a complete paper-cut picture book containing works of the whole class; the teacher also refer to the following production process: the children first cut out the images in the picture book - paste the works onto individual pages of the cardboard - punch holes in the cardboard - connect the joints - form a complete paper-cut picture book. The value of making a paper-cut picture book mainly lies in the children's free choice of working partners and scripts for story-telling. In making the book, the children can practice division of labor, cooperation and learn how to solve real-life problems.

(d). Example: Making a paper-cut picture book titled "Hungry Little Snake"

Before making the book, the teacher first led the children to read the picture book titled "Hungry Little Snake"



"Snake", so as to let them know about the shape and life habits of the snake and get a sense about how its body changes shape after eating. Such preparation can help reduce the difficulty of creating works required for the book and smooth out the creation process; after reading the book, the teacher presents the courseware and focus on guiding children to view the pictures and describe the changes in the shape of the snake after eating different foods, especially the changes in its belly; then the teacher can try to assign works for each page to different children, let them draw a picture showing the shape of the snake after eating and supplement their works based on what they saw and learned during the preparation; when the drawing works are done, the teacher can ask the children to try to make paper-cuts that shows the shape of the snake after eating; after they are done, the teacher asks the children show their own paper-cut works and tell the class the meanings of such works; finally, the teacher bound all the children's paper-cut works into a book to form a complete paper-cut picture book of the whole class (As shown in the figures below) .

3. POINTS FOR ATTENTION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES WITH PAPER-CUT PICTURE BOOKS

(a). Teaching concepts such as "children first" and "learning by doing" must be fully reflected in activities with paper-cut picture books. Producing "paper-cutting artists" is not the purpose of kindergarten-based paper-cutting activities, so it is not necessary to pay too much attention to the quality of the children's works. It is

important to improve the child's personal quality in the learning process, which shall be the main goal of related teaching activities. In addition, to fully reflect the "children first" teaching philosophy, the kindergarten teachers should always respect the children's fruits of labor and provide further guidance on the basis of their current paper-cutting skill level, so as to further enhance their abilities in this art. Based on the principle of "learning by doing", it is most important for children to know why "practice makes perfect" and promote the development of good learning attitude.

(b). Activities with paper-cut picture books must have systematical design, including a series of elements designed for the implementation of such activities. Contents of the activities shall include making, display, and appreciation of paper-cut picture books. In terms of activity design, the teachers must adopt holistic thinking and have a clear understanding of the priorities in the learning and development of children of different ages; the system design must be carried out in strict accordance with the process of related activities and design contents shall include activity contents, the focus of the activity and the path of implementation.

Simplicity is the best attribute of paper-cutting art. However, such simplicity shall not be interpreted as monotonous but the wonder of expressing in the simplest way what the author wants to tell the viewers. 2

The world is developing at a rapid pace, and many Chinese traditional folk arts are gradually fading away. Many Chinese cultural treasures have no practical use in the modern society and are becoming dying arts that

no one appreciates. However, no matter how the world develops, excellent national culture should not disappear and be forgotten. We shall let such arts catch up with the tide of the times, transform them into something that modern audience can appreciate by ways of continuous exploration and altering as well as science-based re-creation. Through continuous innovation and development, they can be inherited forever in ever newer forms. Attempts in the teaching with paper-cut picture books will point the way for the modernization of Chinese folk arts in the era of innovation and development.

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