

The Effective Way of Integrating Traditional Culture Into Outdoor Game Teaching in Preschool Education

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Abstract: This study investigates the deep integration of traditional culture into outdoor play-based teaching in preschool education, addressing the prevalent lack of cultural depth in current outdoor activities. A three-phase framework—cultural decoding, contextual reconfiguration, and experiential generation—is proposed to systematically bridge this gap. By developing a multidimensional assessment model to identify age-appropriate cultural elements, the research innovatively designs immersive play scenarios and tiered experiential activities. Coupled with transformative teacher guidance strategies, this approach effectively translates traditional cultural symbols into tangible learning experiences for children. Empirical validation demonstrates significant improvements in preschoolers’ cultural awareness, collaborative skills, and family-school cultural engagement. The findings offer a replicable paradigm to address cultural transmission challenges in early education, fostering the dynamic inheritance of cultural DNA throughout childhood development.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; English Speech; Multidimensional Evaluation; Teaching Practice

1. Introduction

Recent preschool reforms emphasize outdoor play for physical, social, and cognitive growth, yet 60% of programs rely on standardized equipment like slides, with traditional folk games constituting <15%. This superficial integration reflects “cultural hollowing,” failing to leverage play’s potential for cultural transmission. Integrating traditional philosophies (harmony with nature, social ethics) into outdoor activities offers solutions. Neuroscientific studies show multisensory engagement in nature enhances cultural symbol retention, while traditional games’ rhythmic rituals and cooperation align with preschoolers’ embodied cognition^[1]. Transforming cultural concepts into play frameworks—through folk games’ narratives or nature-based rituals—strengthens worldview formation, addressing both educators’ content-cognition alignment challenges and systemic resource underutilization.

2. Integration Mechanisms of Traditional Culture and Outdoor Play-Based Pedagogy

2.1 Intrinsic Alignment Between Traditional Culture and Children’s Cognitive Development

Traditional culture embodies an educational philosophy of learning through play, rooted in the transmission of abstract cultural values via tangible, experiential activities. This approach resonates with the staged nature of children’s cognitive development, which relies heavily on sensory engagement and active exploration—paralleling the Confucian principle of unity of knowledge and action. Ritual sequences of traditional festivals, symbolic systems of folk art, and rule-based designs of classical games all carry cultural meanings in perceptible, interactive forms^[2]. These elements naturally align with preschoolers’ embodied learning processes, transforming abstract cultural DNA into concrete, child-friendly experiences. Such congruence establishes a cognitive foundation for cultural transmission, mitigating disconnection or alienation in intergenerational knowledge transfer.

2.2 Functional Synergy Between Outdoor Pedagogy and Cultural Inheritance

The uniqueness of outdoor play-based teaching lies in its open spatial dynamics and evolving contextual interactions, which mirror the ecological wisdom of harmony between humans and nature inherent to traditional culture. Natural elements (e.g., seasonal cycles, terrain variations) and social dynamics (e.g., collaborative problem-solving, rule negotiation) in outdoor settings jointly serve as multifaceted carriers of cultural experiences. Children’s development of spatial awareness, motor coordination, and social skills

through outdoor activities deeply correlates with traditional values such as ritual-musical cultivation and collective-individual balance. Unlike structured indoor environments, the fluidity of outdoor spaces enables the organic emergence of cultural symbols, shifting cultural transmission from passive knowledge delivery to active meaning-making by children.

3. Effective Strategies for Integrating Traditional Culture into Outdoor Play-Based Pedagogy

3.1 Content Selection

Outdoor cultural play integration demands a triaxial framework (cultural value, child cognition, play adaptability) to avoid superficial transplantation. Culturally significant elements—festival ethics, folk craft aesthetics, historical narratives—must align with preschoolers’ concrete cognition (seasonal patterns, architectural motifs, shadow puppetry) [3]. Adaptability prioritizes safe materials (e.g., hemp ropes), simplified rules, and hands-on feasibility. This systematic filtering strips complex historical contexts while retaining core values like agrarian wisdom, ensuring play-based cultural learning through tangible symbols and participatory experiences.

3.2 Environmental Design

Outdoor spaces should integrate natural landscapes, cultural symbols, and interactive dynamics. Use sculpted earthen mounds mimicking the Great Wall or bamboo groves reflecting classical gardens to evoke cultural ambience. Embed tactile symbols like hemp rope climbing nets shaped as Chinese knots or pebble mosaics of ancient cosmology. Design responsive environments [4], such as a “Solar Term Observatory” tracking plant growth and weather patterns. Chengdu’s Sichuan Linpan-themed space exemplifies this: bamboo waterwheels, stone mills, and terraced tea gardens let children grind grains and channel water, connecting agrarian culture to hands-on play. This fusion of nature, heritage, and interactivity transforms spaces into experiential learning landscapes.

3.3 Play Design

Game design should adopt a “sensory → conceptual → creative” progression to deepen cultural engagement. Start with multisensory immersion (e.g., touching ritual bells or hearing ancient instruments) to spark curiosity. Next, use collaborative problem-solving tasks like building rafts or pulleys to reflect historical ingenuity. Finally, encourage creative reinterpretation, such as blending Hanfu elements with modern designs. Nanjing’s “City Wall Exploration” exemplifies this: AR overlays virtual fortresses onto playgrounds, merging strategy with ancient architecture. By layering complexity and cultural context, this tiered framework bridges tangible actions to abstract concepts, fostering cognitive growth through experiential learning.

3.4 Teacher Facilitation

Teachers should shift from cultural authorities to co-creators, using scaffolded guidance to foster organic learning [5]. Pre-play, spark curiosity with open prompts (e.g., incomplete paper-cut patterns) to explore symmetry. During activities like dragon dances, ask strategic questions (“How do movements reflect rituals?”) to link motion with symbolism. Post-play, solidify understanding through multimodal expression—building landmarks, dancing rituals, or storytelling. For example, Suzhou’s tea program engages children in smelling aromas, observing brewing, and practicing etiquette, grounding abstract traditions in sensory experiences. Dialogic co-construction replaces lectures, letting norms like respect emerge naturally through collaboration and reflection.

4. Practical Exploration of Integrating Traditional Culture into Outdoor Play-Based Pedagogy

4.1 Case Background and Design Philosophy

In 2022, a pioneering initiative titled “Song Dynasty Adventures” was launched at a provincial model kindergarten in Hangzhou’s Gongshu District, situated adjacent to the archaeological remains of the Southern Song Imperial Street. This strategic location provided unparalleled access to local cultural heritage, inspiring educators to reimagine outdoor play through the vibrant tapestry of Song Dynasty life. The project’s design philosophy drew direct inspiration from *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*—a 12th-century masterpiece depicting the socioeconomic dynamism of Bianjing (modern-day Kaifeng). By translating the painting’s teeming marketplaces, waterways, and communal rituals into child-scaled play scenarios, the program sought to bridge historical narratives with the developmental needs of 5–6-year-old children.

Collaborating with Zhejiang Normal University’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Research Center, educators undertook meticulous cultural excavation, identifying nine traditional Song-era pastimes for pedagogical adaptation. These included touhu (arrow pitching), a game of precision and etiquette; chuiwan (an early form of golf emphasizing patience and strategy); and puppet theater, which

integrates storytelling with manual dexterity. The selection criteria prioritized activities that naturally aligned with preschoolers' motor skill milestones (e.g., gross motor challenges in chuiwan) and social-emotional goals (e.g., turn-taking in puppet performances).

4.2 Impact Evaluation and Cultural Transmission Validation

A mixed-methods evaluation framework combining quantitative metrics and qualitative narratives revealed transformative outcomes. Quantitatively, pre- and post-intervention assessments showed dramatic gains in cultural literacy: children's ability to identify Song-era artifacts (e.g., ceramic inkstones, bronze mirrors) jumped from 38% to 81%, while instances of collaborative problem-solving—such as negotiating roles in a simulated rice trade or engineering bamboo water channels—increased by 180%. These figures were complemented by qualitative insights from play journals, where children organically adopted period-specific vernacular. Terms like “keguan” (客官, an honorific for patrons) and “zhanggui” (掌柜, shopkeeper) peppered their dialogues.

At the family-community nexus, 82% of parents reported children initiating discussions about Song Dynasty customs at home, such as explaining the symbolism of dragon boat festivals or demonstrating tea ceremony etiquette using toy sets. Furthermore, 63% of families participated in weekend workshops crafting traditional toys like bamboo flutes or paper lanterns, effectively extending cultural learning beyond classroom walls.

5. Conclusion

This study pioneers a “cultural decoding-contextual reconfiguration-experiential generation” integration pathway, establishing a theoretical and practical model for revitalizing traditional culture within preschool education. Moving beyond shallow cultural transplantation, the framework centers on children's cognitive development to creatively transform cultural heritage into lived experiences through immersive environments, gamified adaptation, and collaborative teacher-child engagement. Empirical results confirm its dual efficacy: enhancing young learners' cultural awareness and cooperative capacities while fostering home-school cultural partnerships, thereby resolving the longstanding dichotomy between cultural preservation and child-centered pedagogy.

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