

# *Practical Research on Children's Food Education Curriculum Guided by the Aesthetics of Daily Life*

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the practice and research of children's food education curriculum guided by the aesthetics of daily life. It first elaborates on the purposes and current status of children's food education, as well as the significant meaning of integrating the aesthetics of daily life into children's food education. On this basis, the paper details the experimental design and implementation of three food education courses, including guiding children to make simple foods and popularizing nutritional knowledge. It highlights the innovation of combining the aesthetics of daily life with food education, breaks the limitations of traditional food education, and adopts diversified teaching methods to stimulate children's interest. Then, it analyzes the core ideology and design concept of the courses, discusses the experimental results, and puts forward implementation strategies such as home-school collaboration and curriculum feedback.

## **1. Introduction**

The concept of "food education" was first proposed in 1896 by Ishizuka Sakugen, a famous Japanese health preservation expert, in his book Food Regimen. Ishizuka Sakugen once said, "Physical education, intellectual education, and moral education are all based on food education."

Research on "food education" in China started relatively late. It was not introduced until 2006 by Professor Li Lite from China Agricultural University. However, it has been promoted and achieved certain results in some cities. For example, Shanghai has launched food education courses as pilot programs in some primary and secondary schools, covering food safety education and nutrition and health education. Teaching plans are customized according to students' ages and characteristics, aiming to enable children to "learn while playing" through vivid and easy-to-understand forms, so as to strengthen their acceptance and understanding of nutritional knowledge. Then, under the

guidance of the aesthetics of daily life, what kind of children's food education curriculum can best meet the development needs of children?

## **2. Current Status of Children's Food Education Curriculum Guided by the Aesthetics of Daily Life**

At present, the development of children's food education curriculum guided by the aesthetics of daily life needs to be improved.

On one hand, with the increasing emphasis on the all-round development of children, food education has gradually attracted the attention of schools, teachers and parents. Kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in some cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing, have taken the lead in carrying out various forms of food education practice activities. In terms of curriculum arrangement, many schools organize children to make traditional festival foods like Mid-Autumn mooncakes and Dragon Boat Festival zongzi (glutinous rice dumplings) in combination with traditional festivals. During the hands-on process, children learn about the characteristics of food ingredients and production techniques, and experience the aesthetic elements contained in traditional dietary culture, such as the shape design of mooncakes and the color matching of zongzi. These practices can better stimulate children's perception of beauty. At the same time, some educational institutions and public welfare organizations also actively participate in this field. By holding food education workshops and parent-child cooking activities, they integrate the aesthetics of daily life into food education, guiding children to appreciate the natural beauty of food—such as the shapes of different vegetables and the color differences of fruits—and cultivating their aesthetic ability towards food.

On the other hand, the popularization of food education courses is insufficient. From the perspective of regional distribution, the practice of food education courses is mainly concentrated in economically developed first-tier and second-tier cities, while children's food education in vast rural areas is still in a relatively blank state, with an obvious urban-rural gap. In terms of the curriculum system, there is a lack of unified standards and systematic training. The food education courses in many schools are only carried out sporadically, with insufficient depth and breadth of content, making it difficult to form a complete educational chain integrating aesthetics and food education. Moreover, some teachers and parents have insufficient understanding of the importance of the aesthetics of daily life in children's food education. When carrying out food education activities, they often focus more on the inculcation of nutritional knowledge, while ignoring the cultivation of children's aesthetic ability and artistic imagination. As a result, the value of food education courses in the aesthetic dimension cannot be fully reflected.

In addition, teaching resources related to food education, such as professional teaching materials and teaching aids, are relatively scarce, which restricts the further development of children's food education curriculum guided by the aesthetics of daily life. However, with the spread of the concept of food education and the development of more food education courses, and with the joint efforts of parents, teachers and schools, it is believed that children's food education guided by the aesthetics of daily life will move towards a more scientific and improved direction, better meeting the development needs of children.

## **3. Experimental Design and Implementation**

At present, the children's food education curriculum guided by the aesthetics of daily life has problems such as unbalanced development between urban and rural areas, scattered curriculum systems and insufficient resources. Specifically, food education in rural areas is blank, there are no unified standards for courses, teachers and parents ignore aesthetic cultivation, and professional

resources are insufficient—all of which restrict the development of the curriculum<sup>[1]</sup>. To solve these pain points and produce specific teaching cases, this experiment was carried out.

The experiment targets children aged 4-7, designs easily replicable courses using common food ingredients, and explores solutions suitable for rural areas. With "food cognition + aesthetic experience + practical operation" as the core, it builds a complete process and forms a promotable framework to meet the all-round development needs of children.

### 3.1. Experimental Information

This study conducted a one-month children's food education curriculum for children aged 4-7, which was divided into three course practices. This curriculum design refers to the relevant research conclusions in the field of early childhood food education: children of this age group have limited attention span, so short-term intensive courses are more likely to maintain their learning interest, and intermittent practice can effectively consolidate the effect of knowledge absorption.

The curriculum relied on the teaching venues and resources of "Wisdom Star" Kindergarten of South China Business College Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. It was organized by class to ensure that every child could deeply participate in the course links, facilitating teachers to carry out targeted guidance and process observation. During the practice, teachers guided children aged 4-7 to make simple foods, popularized nutritional knowledge in class, and added knowledge about color matching to enhance children's understanding of food and aesthetics.

For example, in the first class, teachers carried out a practical course themed "Fruit and Vegetable Platter Making and Popularization of Fruit and Vegetable Knowledge". This course helped children gain a better understanding of the nutritional knowledge of fruits and vegetables, express their understanding of beauty in the process of arranging platters, and think while practicing, so as to increase their interest in food education courses.

### 3.2. Experimental Design

#### 3.2.1. Theme Design

Focusing on the core of "food cognition + aesthetic experience + practical operation", each course has a clear theme, namely "Fruit and Vegetable Platter Making and Popularization of Fruit and Vegetable Knowledge", "Handmade Glutinous Rice Cakes and Observation of Ingredient Changes", and "Making of Pear Jelly and Knowledge Popularization". The themes are arranged in a progressive manner to improve children's cognition and operation ability of food.

The theme design draws on the application logic of Tao Xingzhi's life aesthetic education concept in food education, emphasizing the integration of knowledge imparting and aesthetic cultivation through daily activities, and avoiding the one-sided inculcation of knowledge<sup>[2]</sup>.

#### 3.2.2. Content Design

Combining the cognitive characteristics and hands-on ability of children aged 4-7, common food ingredients with bright colors (such as strawberries, carrots, glutinous rice flour, and autumn pears) are selected as teaching carriers. This avoids the difficulty in hands-on operation caused by complex ingredients and reduces the difficulty of knowledge understanding.

This design follows the core principle of content selection for early childhood food education courses—being close to children's life experience. It uses familiar and colorful food ingredients as media to help children establish a basic food cognition system, improve their aesthetic ability, and build an aesthetic system<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3.2.3. Teaching Design

- **Knowledge Introduction:** Basic information such as food nutrition, food safety, and color matching is delivered intuitively through forms like animated videos and physical displays. This link design refers to the multi-sensory teaching method in early childhood food education. Forms like animated videos can effectively stimulate children's curiosity and conform to the concrete cognitive characteristics of children of this age group<sup>[4]</sup>.
- **Practical Operation:** Hierarchical tasks are designed. Younger children focus on simple food preparation such as cleaning ingredients and arranging platters; older children are given more complex operations such as processing ingredients (e.g., cutting vegetables into pieces) and color matching. Teachers conduct on-site patrols and guidance throughout the process to ensure operational safety and experience effect, and to ensure that every child can gain a sense of accomplishment in practice<sup>[4]</sup>.
- **Aesthetic Integration:** Elements of the aesthetics of daily life are integrated into practice to guide children to creatively match food ingredients according to their colors and shapes<sup>[3]</sup>—for example, piecing together fruits and vegetables into patterns like small animals and flowers. This deepens children's cognition of the form and beauty of food during creation. Emphasis is placed on cultivating children's aesthetic ability in food-related activities to achieve the coordinated development of healthy eating concepts and aesthetic literacy.

### 3.2.4. Experimental Steps

- **Preparations:** Teachers compile detailed teaching plans in advance, clarifying the time allocation and teaching objectives of each link; prepare safe operating tools (such as children's special peelers and knives), fresh ingredients, and teaching auxiliary materials (such as nutritional knowledge animated videos and modeling molds); explain pre-class safety precautions to children and emphasize operational standards.
- **In-class Implementation:** The course is carried out in accordance with the process of "knowledge introduction - demonstration teaching - independent practice - result exchange". Teachers conduct patrol guidance during the practice link, answer children's questions in a timely manner, encourage children to use their imagination for creative creation, and record children's participation and knowledge mastery at the same time. This implementation process refers to the classic framework of early childhood experiential teaching, guiding children to gradually deepen from cognition to practice through the progressive link design.
- **After-class Extension:** Family practice tasks are assigned, such as asking children to assist their parents in preparing family meals and sharing the nutritional knowledge learned in class. This promotes home-school collaboration, consolidates the course learning effect, further improves children's cognition and application ability of food, and helps children transform food education knowledge into daily eating habits.

Through the implementation of the above links, the aim is to adopt diversified teaching methods, introduce experiential teaching while imparting knowledge, and allow children to personally participate in links such as food cooking and platter arrangement. This stimulates children's interest in learning food education and makes the food education curriculum more attractive. At the same time, combining the aesthetics of daily life with children's food education breaks the limitation of traditional food education which focuses more on the inculcation of nutritional knowledge and the cultivation of eating habits. It emphasizes enriching children's experience of food education from the perspective of the aesthetics of daily life, and cultivates children's aesthetic ability and love for life.

## 4. Discussion on Experimental Results

Through the practice and observation of three rounds of action research, it is found that the children's food education curriculum guided by the aesthetics of daily life has effectively achieved the preset goals. Children have made significant progress in three dimensions: knowledge, skills and emotions, which verifies the feasibility and effectiveness of this curriculum design.

### 4.1 Good Effect of Children's Food Education Curriculum

Centering on the three cores of "food cognition + aesthetic experience + practical operation", the curriculum has achieved good teaching effects, which are specifically reflected in the following aspects:

- **Improved Knowledge Mastery:** Through animated videos, physical displays and teacher explanations, children have gained a preliminary understanding of the nutritional value of common food ingredients and food safety knowledge. Post-class feedback shows that more than 85% of children can accurately state the nutritional effects of more than 3 kinds of vegetables or fruits, and can simply distinguish between healthy and unhealthy foods.
- **Enhanced Hands-on Ability and Aesthetic Expression:** In practical links such as "fruit and vegetable platter making" and "glutinous rice cake making", children not only learned basic food processing skills (such as cleaning, simple cutting, and platter arrangement), but also could creatively combine ingredients according to colors and shapes to make patterns like smiling faces and flowers. This indicates that children have gradually established the cognition and expression ability of food beauty in the process of hands-on practice.
- **Positive Change in Emotional Attitude:** The curriculum emphasizes "cherishing food" and "respecting labor". During the participation in the production process, children have realized the hard work behind food, showing a stronger sense of frugality and gratitude. At the same time, through collective cooperation and result display, children's self-confidence and social skills have been enhanced.

### 4.2 Strong Internal Connection between the Aesthetics of Daily Life and Children's Food Education

The integration of the aesthetics of daily life and children's food education is not only an innovation in form, but also forms an organic connection at the conceptual level:

- **Aesthetic Elements Enhance the Attractiveness of Food Education:** Aesthetic methods such as color, shape and platter arrangement make the originally abstract "nutritional knowledge" intuitive and interesting, stimulating children's learning interest and participation enthusiasm. For example, in the "pear jelly making" activity, children observed the transformation of pear juice from liquid to jelly state and added petals and leaves for decoration. This not only helped them understand the state change of food, but also made them feel the beauty of food shape.
- **Aesthetic Ability and Eating Behavior Complement Each Other:** It is found in the curriculum that under the guidance of aesthetics, children are more willing to try food ingredients they originally disliked (such as carrots and green vegetables), because they pay more attention to the "appearance" of food rather than just the taste. This indicates that aesthetic education can subtly influence children's food choices and promote the development of healthy eating habits.
- **Integration of Cultural Inheritance and Aesthetic Education:** In the process of making pear jelly, a traditional food, children not only learned the production skills, but also understood the cultural connotation and aesthetic symbol behind autumn, realizing the educational goal of "cultivating people with beauty and educating people with culture".

### 4.3 Suggestions on Teaching Strategies for Children's Food Education Curriculum

Based on the practical experience of this curriculum, the following teaching strategy suggestions are put forward to promote the sustainable development of children's food education curriculum guided by the aesthetics of daily life:

- **Hierarchical Curriculum Design:** According to the differences in cognitive and hands-on abilities of children of different age groups, design stepped tasks. Younger children should focus on observation, imitation and simple operations; older children can appropriately add links such as creative design and team cooperation to ensure that every child can grow within their "zone of proximal development".
- **Strengthen the Systematic Integration of Aesthetic Elements:** It is suggested to integrate basic aesthetic knowledge such as color theory and plastic arts into the curriculum system, and form an aesthetic teaching path of "cognition - imitation - creation". For example, teaching aids such as "food color map" and "shape template" can be used to help children establish a preliminary sense of aesthetic structure.
- **Promote Home-School Collaboration and After-class Extension:** Encourage parents to participate in food education activities, such as completing family cooking tasks together and keeping a "food diary", so as to form a positive cycle of "school guidance - family practice". At the same time, schools can regularly hold "food education achievement exhibitions" or "parent-child food festivals" to enhance the continuity and social influence of the curriculum.
- **Strengthen Teacher Training and Resource Development:** It is suggested to carry out special teacher training on the integration of the aesthetics of daily life and food education, so as to improve teachers' understanding and implementation ability of the combination of aesthetic education and food education. At the same time, develop supporting teaching materials, teaching aids and digital resources to provide support for the promotion of the curriculum.

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