

# Investigation on the Current Situation of Calligraphy Teaching in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School Against the Background of New Curriculum Reform

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## ABSTRACT

The new curriculum reform is one of the key contents of China's education reform, which provides a directional goal for primary education. In recent years, traditional Chinese culture has received increasing attention from people, and calligraphy, as a representative of excellent traditional Chinese culture, has received even more attention. However, calligraphy has been implemented in primary education for many years, but there are still limitations. The purpose of this study is to investigate the current teaching status of calligraphy in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School against the background of the new curriculum reform, and investigate and discuss the problems that arise in calligraphy teaching through interviews and communication. For example, insufficient understanding of calligraphy classes, teachers who are not specialized in calligraphy, students' lack of expertise in calligraphy tools, and students' weak interest in calligraphy are the main factors affecting calligraphy teaching. This study also summarizes effective paths for primary school calligraphy teaching, including equipping professional calligraphy tools, creating a calligraphy atmosphere, and improving the professionalism of teachers' calligraphy teaching, in order to explore the deep value of calligraphy education and provide reflection and reference for the classroom teaching research of teachers in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School. But how to help primary school calligraphy education overcome its difficulties still requires the joint efforts of schools, parents, teachers, and society.

**Keywords:** *New curriculum reform, Primary school calligraphy, Current teaching situation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

During educational internship, the researcher entered the calligraphy classroom at Huangzhou Experimental Primary School. It was found that the calligraphy class at Huangzhou Experimental Primary School has significant limitations, and the school does not attach enough importance to calligraphy teaching. At the same time, students' lack of interest in calligraphy also has a certain impact on the development of calligraphy courses.

Through understanding the calligraphy curriculum of Huangzhou Experimental Primary School, the researcher can summarize the current

situation of calligraphy teaching, explore areas that need improvement in calligraphy education, and enhance the ability of calligraphy teaching in Huangzhou District.

### 1.2 Research Purpose

Calligraphy is a precious asset of the Chinese nation, a unique traditional culture, and an important part of traditional culture. As an important carrier of the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture, it has intricate connections with calligraphy education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the current situation of calligraphy teaching in experimental primary schools in Huangzhou District against the background of the new curriculum reform, in order to identify various

factors that affect the current situation of calligraphy teaching in primary schools, summarize the effective ways of calligraphy education in primary schools, and explore its deep practical significance, so as to improve students' calligraphy learning level, enhance their comprehensive quality, promote their all-round development, explore a new approach, and enhance national and cultural confidence.

### ***1.3 Research Significance and Value***

Calligraphy, as one of the categories of art, is both a tool for cultural exchange and has practical value. Learning calligraphy for elementary school students can promote the formation of aesthetic awareness, enhance national confidence, and a nation must have cultural support in order to be strong. Improving students' interest in learning and writing ability, in response to the national education policy of quality education, is also a reflection of the improvement of education quality. By analyzing the current situation of calligraphy teaching in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School, it is aimed to expand the traditional calligraphy teaching mode and improve the level of calligraphy teaching, provide new ideas for calligraphy teaching, offer practical suggestions for calligraphy teaching in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School, and propose paths and methods for calligraphy teaching.

### ***1.4 Current Research Situation in China and Foreign Countries***

In terms of the importance of calligraphy, the new curriculum reform points out the importance of primary school handwriting education in the "Several Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Strengthening Calligraphy Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools". The notice issued by the Ministry of Education on the "Guidelines for Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools" clearly stipulates that calligraphy should be included in primary school teaching. Wang Duan analyzed in the primary school art curriculum standards that calligraphy teaching is beneficial for students' individual development. At the same time, the "Outline of the National Medium - and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan" also mentions the importance of calligraphy teaching.

In terms of calligraphy teaching techniques, as stated in Wang Jun's article "Primary School

Calligraphy Teaching Should Emphasize the Teaching of Writing Actions", "we attach great importance to the teaching of writing actions in calligraphy teaching"; Zhang Huayu and Lv Shen mentioned that in calligraphy teaching, it is necessary to combine students' learning stages and analyze their psychology. Tu Xiuhuan proposed the application of techniques in calligraphy teaching in his "Preliminary Study on Calligraphy Teaching Techniques". There is a must to motivate students' interest in writing well, organize various calligraphy competitions, and make students have a sense of competition. Yin Shaochun commented on the ten-year experiment of art curriculum standards and proposed that calligraphy should not only focus on art itself, but also be applied in practice.

In terms of the current situation of calligraphy teaching: Yao Bingbing pointed out in "The Difficulties and Breakthroughs of Calligraphy Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools under the New Curriculum Reform: Taking Calligraphy Teaching in Qingtian County as an Example" that the government has only limited funding, and many schools have not subscribed to calligraphy textbooks in order to save expenses. Jia Jing and Li Yifei mentioned in their article "Research on the Existing Problems and Countermeasures of Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools under the New Curriculum Reform: Taking the Experimental Zone of Beijing Normal University Textbook as an Example" that the professional supporting facilities of calligraphy courses are backward and the problem of class hours is prominent.

In terms of addressing the current situation of calligraphy teaching, Su Haixia proposed the construction of a teacher team and the improvement of salary and benefits in the "Investigation and Countermeasures on the Current Situation of Art Education in Rural Primary and Secondary Schools in Yili, Xinjiang" through field research in Xinjiang. In the process of calligraphy teaching, in addition to being applied to art subjects, it should also be combined with Chinese language. Yin Shaochun also pointed out in "The Reform of Art Curriculum at the Beginning of the Century" that calligraphy is compatible with other disciplines, attaches importance to the role of teaching evaluation, and combines it with textbooks. In addition, Bai Shoucheng's ideas on the importance and revision measures of textbooks are very innovative. The analysis of the current situation starts from the aspects of schools, teachers, students, parents, etc.,

and also considers measures from a social perspective.

## **2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CALLIGRAPHY TEACHING**

Calligraphy, as a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, embodies the spirituality of nature, condenses the wisdom of art, nourishes the righteous spirit, and gathers a large number of talents. In primary education, mastering calligraphy plays a significant role in improving students' overall quality. As the inheritor of Chinese culture, learning calligraphy can allow people to experience the vast atmosphere brought by different calligraphy works, which is an important way to cultivate national spirit. The new curriculum reform points out in the "Several Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Strengthening Writing Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools" that "the importance of writing education in primary schools promotes the updating of teachers' teaching concepts". The new curriculum reform requires students to learn calligraphy, broaden their knowledge, and promote their comprehensive and personalized development. The "Guidelines for Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools" issued by the Ministry of Education clearly states that "starting from the spring semester of 2013, calligraphy education will be incorporated into the teaching system of primary and secondary schools, and students will learn hard pen and brush calligraphy in different age groups and stages". This means that starting from 2013, calligraphy education will be carried out in primary and secondary schools across the country, rather than what most people used to think of as "amateur interest classes". Calligraphy represents the culture of a country. Calligraphy has evolved with the development of history, from oracle bone script, seal script, clerical script, regular script, cursive script, running script, etc., all of which use Chinese characters as carriers and integrate with literature, history, aesthetics and other arts, carrying tradition and national spirit. Calligraphy is an important part of traditional Chinese culture and a valuable asset. Learning calligraphy is an important way to promote quality education, and it is also a manifestation of excellent Chinese culture. The development of culture relies on inheritance. If it is separated from inheritance, empty talk about development is absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Lu Xun once said: "There are three beauties in Chinese characters. The beauty of beautiful

meaning is to feel the heart, the beauty of sound is to feel the ear, and the beauty of form is to feel the eyes." The greatest benefit of calligraphy is to temper students' mental state, making them more confident and firm. In addition, it can also cultivate students' aesthetic awareness. Primary school calligraphy teaching, like art teaching, should pay attention to and grasp students' aesthetic awareness. Calligraphy can cultivate sentiment and foster patriotism. Calligraphy is a form of inheritance of Chinese culture, carrying the concerns of literati and artists for the country and the people for five thousand years. Learning calligraphy can allow you to experience the grandeur brought by different calligraphy works, which is an important way to cultivate patriotism. Learning calligraphy requires time security. Naughty students can be quiet, inattentive students can focus, and impatient students can also have patience. However, despite the many functions and values of calligraphy, it has brought great impact to the art of calligraphy in the current era, which is reflected in calligraphy teaching. With observation and reflection in the teaching process, the problems in calligraphy education require the joint cooperation of schools, teachers, parents, and all aspects of society.

## **3. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CALLIGRAPHY TEACHING IN HUANGZHOU EXPERIMENTAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The research has been carried out through internship, field investigation, and interview with teachers at Huangzhou Experimental Primary School. The basic situation of calligraphy teaching in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School is as follows: the calligraphy classes offered are only in the art classes in September each semester, and the school's calligraphy courses are mainly for grades three to six. There are two calligraphy classes per week for grades three to five, and one class per week for grade six. Therefore, students in grades three to five only attend 8 calligraphy classes per semester, while sixth grade students only attend 4 classes. Students have limited time for calligraphy classes. There are 0 professional calligraphy teachers in the school, and 3 teachers who have received calligraphy training. Due to internship reasons, the subjects of investigation are mainly in third and sixth grade, and there are mainly the following issues.

### **3.1 Insufficient Understanding of Calligraphy Classes**

#### **3.1.1 Insufficient Time for Calligraphy Learning**

During the internship, it was in the midst of the "Calligraphy Month" at Huangzhou Experimental Primary School. In response to the new curriculum reform policy, the school incorporated calligraphy into the teaching classroom. The school calligraphy program was only launched in September of the new semester, with limited class hours and concentrated in one month. Calligraphy requires daily practice, and mastering calligraphy is not something that can be done overnight. Merely focusing on studying during the "Calligraphy Month" not only makes students feel bored, but also causes them to learn later and forget the earlier, resulting in minimal effectiveness in calligraphy teaching. The school's art gallery has many student works, but most of them are simple sketches, creative paintings, and traditional Chinese paintings, with very few calligraphy works. There are various types of interest courses in school after-school tutoring, but there are few students who learn calligraphy. Most of them participate in music, printmaking, etc., and there is too little time to learn calligraphy.

#### **3.1.2 Lack of Interest in Calligraphy Learning**

The third and sixth grades are the second and third stages of physical and mental development for young children, and these two stages are integrated and connected. The age difference and psychological changes between the two also affect the development of calligraphy courses. Third grade students are still in their infancy and have a strong curiosity for new things. Therefore, in the classroom, third grade students will respond appropriately to the teacher's teachings, but their writing may not be standardized. They only simply describe the strokes explained by the teacher and seek praise from the teacher after hastily completing the assigned tasks; And sixth grade is different from third grade, with the pressure of further education. Most sixth grade students do homework on other subjects in class and are not very interested in art classes. They focus more on whether the characters are "like or not" rather than experiencing the beauty of calligraphy, especially when conducting calligraphy classes on the basis of art classes. The subjects originally intended for

relaxation were used for calligraphy classes, which naturally resulted in weaker classroom feedback compared to third grade students. Although sixth grade students are required to carry standardized calligraphy tools, there will be a portion of students who do not carry brushes, which also makes teachers less strict with the requirements of sixth grade students.

#### **3.1.3 Incorrect Writing Habits**

During class, it is found that less than half of the students in a class were able to use a brush correctly. Students have become accustomed to their writing habits when doing homework, and holding the brush has also become a problem when learning calligraphy. The main problem is that the hand is held too low, close to the tip of the pen, leaning against the base of the thumb and the tip of the index finger, pressing the brush holder into the first web. Of course, teachers patiently explain to students the posture of holding a calligraphy pen during class, but children's observation skills are not strong enough, and simply sketching is useless. There are also many students in a class, and the teacher can only take care of some of the students in front of them, so their energy is limited. Sometimes even teachers use brooms or wooden sticks in the classroom as brushes, magnifying them to allow students to observe the method of holding the brush up close. But this also has a drawback, that is, while students are curious, they may also shift their attention away from how to hold the pen correctly. The teacher also explains the problem of holding a pen differently in different grades. In third grade, students will listen carefully to the teacher's explanation, but due to non-standard tools, the characters written are often not aesthetically pleasing; and the response of sixth grade students to the teacher's explanation is also plain. ("Figure 1")



Figure 1 Teaching in class at Huangzhou Experimental Primary School.

### 3.1.4 *Insufficient Attention on Calligraphy from Parents*

With the advancement of science and technology, calligraphy has gradually been replaced by computer keyboards, which is a kind of ideological negligence, not only for students but also for parents. In work, often forgetting to write with a pen and using a computer instead of manual writing; Parents treat the calligraphy homework assigned by the teacher as a task for their children to complete, causing them to not experience the joy of calligraphy and not deeply appreciate traditional culture. How can we make students truly value and understand calligraphy when parents cannot personally teach and children cannot be influenced by it?

## 3.2 *Unprofessional Writing Tools*

Through three months of on-site inspections and classroom observations, it was found that most of the calligraphy tools carried by students were watercolor brushes and watercolor paints. As is well known, the completion of calligraphy requires a brush, ink, brush paper, regular calligraphy practice paper, and felt. Setting aside everything else, as the most basic tool, the brush cannot be popularized in teaching, making it difficult to carry out and learn calligraphy courses. But an interesting phenomenon is not easily overlooked: third grade students are equipped with calligraphy tools such as watercolor paints and brushes; as senior sixth grade students, their tools are professional brushes and ink. ("Figure 2")



Figure 2 Calligraphy tools for third grade students of Huangzhou Experimental Primary School.

## 3.3 *Teachers That Are Not Majoring in Calligraphy*

### 3.3.1 *Lack of Profound Calligraphy Skills*

Most calligraphy teachers are art teachers, and there are many art teachers whose majors are not

calligraphy. Firstly, teachers themselves lack systematic learning and a solid foundation in calligraphy. Before teaching, teachers need to put more effort into researching calligraphy courses. For calligraphy classes, due to limited space, most teachers can only stick paper on the blackboard and demonstrate calligraphy techniques on the blackboard. How can students lay a solid foundation for calligraphy learning without a teacher with professional calligraphy skills to teach?

### 3.3.2 *Simple Teaching Methods*

The development of science and technology has also promoted the advancement of teaching methods. Nowadays, calligraphy teaching also utilizes multimedia technology. Most calligraphy teaching in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School uses PPT to present the knowledge to be learned immediately after class, getting straight to the topic, and students' attention does not quickly enter the classroom state. Without using effective teaching methods to attract students before class and creating a positive atmosphere, it is difficult for students to fully concentrate on absorbing new knowledge. Teachers only focus on completing the teaching content themselves, regardless of whether students actively participate in the classroom or actively digest knowledge. Calligraphy teaching activities require both teachers and students to complete together. Without the active participation of students, they cannot gain anything.

### 3.3.3 *Simple Evaluation Methods*

After the teacher assigns calligraphy homework, students will show it to the teacher after completing the assigned tasks, hoping to receive the teacher's evaluation. But the teachers only give the students overall grades, without providing detailed evaluations and suggestions from various aspects such as strokes, so that students did not gain anything after receiving evaluations.

## 4. SOLUTIONS

By analyzing the current situation of calligraphy teaching in Huangzhou Experimental Primary School, starting from understanding the current situation of students' learning attitudes and learning methods, this paper analyzes the influencing factors. Students have different physiological levels and age groups, so it is important to have a deeper understanding of the reasons for learning differences. It is also necessary to analyze the



current situation from various levels and propose targeted paths and suggestions from the perspectives of schools, teachers, etc.

#### ***4.1 Equipped with Professional Calligraphy Tools***

Calligraphy has its unique characteristics and requires very strict tools. Professional calligraphy tools such as pens, ink, paper, and inkstones must be equipped. The first thing to pay attention to in order to write good calligraphy is to find suitable tools. Only in this way can students appreciate the professionalism of calligraphy and know that to write good calligraphy, they need to experience and practice it themselves.

#### ***4.2 Creating a Strong Calligraphy Atmosphere***

The Ministry of Education, in accordance with the spirit of the "National Medium - and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline (2010-2020)", has put forward some opinions on the development of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools: The first is to fully recognize and carry out the important significance of calligraphy education, and cultivate and develop basic writing skills for primary and secondary school students through calligraphy education. Second, at the same time, the Chinese language curriculum in compulsory education should also be taught calligraphy according to the curriculum standards, and even the third and sixth grades of primary school should have one calligraphy class per week; Art and art courses in compulsory education should be taught in various forms of calligraphy according to the characteristics of different subjects. Calligraphy teaching can also be conducted in primary and secondary schools through comprehensive practical activities, local curriculum, and school-based curriculum. Firstly, schools can add interesting calligraphy courses in terms of types for students to choose from. Secondly, excellent calligraphy works of students can be displayed in the art education corridor for mutual appreciation and evaluation among students. Finally, schools can organize more calligraphy and painting competitions to promote students' learning, such as reciting classic Chinese poetry, and combining education with entertainment. The biographies and works of famous calligraphers from various dynasties can be decorated in the classroom, allowing students to immerse themselves in the world of calligraphy,

appreciate traditional culture, develop a love for excellent Chinese traditional culture, and cultivate students' aesthetic standards. Siyuan Experimental School, located in Huanggang, has better infrastructure than Huangzhou Experimental Primary School. The school has renovated a dedicated calligraphy classroom, which can be customized according to the situation. ("Figure 3")



Figure 3 Calligraphy classroom of Siyuan Experimental School in Huanggang City.

When introducing teachers, schools should hire professional calligraphy teachers or teachers who are proficient in calligraphy. Alternatively, teachers can have the opportunity to observe excellent demonstration classes and seminars, participate in calligraphy exchange and learning, promote the innovative development of calligraphy courses, and lay a foundation for the professionalism of teachers. The school exchanges learning with other schools, sees how they offer calligraphy courses, and shares experiences. At the same time, the school will appropriately increase the salary level of teachers and stabilize the teaching staff.

#### ***4.3 Improving Teachers Are Not Majoring in Calligraphy***

The first is the improvement of teachers' professional level. It is necessary to actively participate in training opportunities provided by the school, observe high-quality demonstration courses from other schools, exchange experiences with other teachers, understand common calligraphy tools such as pens, ink, paper, and inkstones, read professional books on calligraphy, and seek guidance from other teachers during teaching and research activities. There is a must to focus on research classes, actively broaden research ideas, and innovate calligraphy teaching classrooms. While teaching according to the textbook content, it is also necessary to enrich the textbook content and have a clear awareness of the sections in the content.

The second is to respect students' learning patterns. Calligraphy begins in third grade, and

third grade teachers should teach students the essentials of holding a pen and the correct calligraphy posture, starting with practicing strokes. Students should understand the differences between different horizontal and vertical strokes, and master the basic methods of starting, running, and ending strokes. It is necessary to attract the attention of third grade students. The most important thing about calligraphy is observation and copying. Starting from copying strokes, practice makes perfect. By the time students reach a higher grade, they can copy calligraphy, experience changes in strokes, intensity, and rhythm, and ensure that the font is standardized, the structure is reasonable, and the appearance is neat and beautiful. From lower grades to higher grades, it is important to dissect brushwork and gradually progress, from structure to font, from font to style, so that students can truly gain something and learn something. Calligraphy has its own particularity, and it needs to be linked with the "Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition)" and the "Compulsory Education Chinese Language Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition)". Calligraphy has been included in Chinese language teaching, and both hard and soft pens should be used simultaneously. Hard pens are taught in first and second grade; Soft pens are taught from third grade. Given that calligraphy classes are now conducted in art classes, teachers can use artistic thinking to teach students to observe the shape of each character and the composition of its radicals from different perspectives. Calligraphy is not only for appreciation, but also for developing students' intelligence and balancing their brain function. Practicing calligraphy is a dynamic process that requires the brain to command the cooperation of hands, eyes, and heart, which is a way for the brain to simultaneously develop and increase coordination. Secondly, practicing calligraphy can cultivate children's endurance and self-confidence. Learning calligraphy requires time. In this process, naughty students will calm down, distracted students will focus, and impatient students can also improve their patience.

Then, various teaching methods are adopted. In the teaching process, there is a must to avoid teaching too much theoretical knowledge about the use of pens, stroke movement, stroke writing, and character structure, which is hollow and boring, making the bachelor feel intimidated and lose interest in learning. Stimulating students' interest in calligraphy learning is the focus of the teaching process. For example, when teaching how to use a pen, multimedia videos, animation effects, etc. can

be combined to attract students' attention and enhance their interest in learning calligraphy. At the same time, it can explain the life experiences of calligraphers, so that students understand that calligraphy learning is not achieved overnight, and they need to be persistent and consistent. The teachers actively research teaching methods and find the most suitable approach for students' learning.

Furthermore, it is necessary to broaden students' horizons. In the past, due to limitations in time and space, it is difficult to display all ancient inscriptions. However, teachers need to constantly summarize during the teaching process. Through careful selection and layer by layer selection, they need to find the most suitable inscriptions for primary school students to observe and learn from, and use their usual efforts to improve their classroom achievements. They should organize these summaries and bind them into books for students, so that they can not only learn in the classroom. It is necessary to inspire and cultivate students' aesthetic ability through various calligraphy works with beautiful fonts, styles, and intentions. During the process of learning calligraphy, students may inevitably feel bored. Teachers should provide students with sufficient motivation and confidence in teaching, observe calligraphy, and use knowledge to broaden their horizons.

The last is to use multiple evaluation methods. Compared to the single evaluation of teachers, multiple evaluation methods can be used, such as self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, and student-student evaluation. The evaluation of students' calligraphy works can be based on aspects such as brushstrokes and shapes. After giving encouraging evaluations, teachers should also inform students of their shortcomings in writing, so that they can correct them in a timely manner.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Calligraphy is a treasure in traditional culture. If a country wants to become strong, it should not only focus on military strength but also on soft power. Chinese excellent traditional culture is the spiritual lifeline of the Chinese nation. Chinese excellent traditional culture is the "root" and "soul" of the Chinese nation, and the fundamental basis for the inheritance and development of a country and a nation. If it is lost, it will cut off the spiritual lifeline. Calligraphy often provides students with the greatest help in refining their inner qualities,

increasing their confidence and determination. The "Full-time Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards" place great emphasis on experience and practice, advocating for students to combine cognitive and emotional activities through experience and practice, and promote knowledge internalization. Under the promotion of the new curriculum reform, calligraphy education is also imperative. On the other hand, calligraphy should advocate for the full development and utilization of curriculum resources, especially local natural and cultural resources. The development and utilization of curriculum resources is a very important aspect of curriculum reform. In addition to necessary teaching facilities, the expansion of the extension of curriculum resources and the full utilization of curriculum resources can enrich teaching activities and improve teaching efficiency.

Creating an atmosphere that promotes excellent traditional Chinese culture requires not only schools, parents, and teachers, but also the assistance of various social forces. Of course, due to limited knowledge, the suggestions put forward are not deep enough and need to be verified through practice.

In ancient times, there was a saying among scholars about the "Six Arts", namely "ritual, music, archery, riding, divination, calligraphy, and mathematics". Among them, "calligraphy" is an essential basic skill. It is hoped that today's students can continue to learn this treasure, achieve success in their studies, and benefit from it for a lifetime.

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