

Light and Shadow Education: Research on the Current Status, Systematic Characteristics, and Development Path of Film Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract:

As a medium that combines artistic and educational elements, movies play multiple roles in shaping values, cultivating aesthetics, and disseminating knowledge in primary and secondary education. With the introduction of policies such as the Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, the compilation of film textbooks has become an important issue in basic education reform. This study is based on the field of education, systematically reviewing the development of primary and secondary school film textbooks, analyzing current problems, summarizing writing characteristics, and looking forward to future trends, providing theoretical support for building a scientifically sound film textbook system.

Keywords: Film education in primary and secondary schools; Interdisciplinary integration, technological empowerment, core competencies

Introduction

Against the backdrop of digital technology reshaping the education ecosystem, film, as a medium that combines artistic and educational elements, is becoming an important carrier for basic education reform. The Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in 2018 clearly proposed to “incorporate film and television education into the moral and aesthetic education system of primary and secondary schools”,

marking the transition of film textbook construction from practical exploration to policy driven stage. According to data from the Ministry of Education, as of 2023, 87% of primary and secondary schools in China have carried out film and television education activities. However, problems such as insufficient systematization of textbooks and imbalanced regional development still constrain the maximization of educational effectiveness. This study is based on the field of education and aims to provide theoretical support and practical paths for constructing a modern

film textbook system of “value guidance ability orientation technology empowerment” through multidimensional analysis.

1. Current Status of Film Textbook Compilation

The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the Central Propaganda Department, has established the “National Coordination Committee for Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools”, forming a three-level management system of “central coordination local implementation school implementation”. The revised “Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards” in 2024 will include “Film and Television Appreciation and Creation” as a compulsory module, explicitly requiring at least 4 hours of film watching per semester for the lower grades of primary school, and adding micro film creation practice in junior high school. The “Primary and Secondary School Film and Television Education Training Course” developed by Communication University of China has been piloted in 23 provinces, and its “graded classification+interdisciplinary integration” model has been listed as a typical case by the Ministry of Education. In recent years, there has been some progress in the compilation of film textbooks for primary and secondary schools in China, mainly focusing on three aspects: film appreciation, basic techniques for film production, and knowledge of film history and theory. These textbooks aim to cultivate the film literacy of primary and secondary school students in China, improve their artistic appreciation ability and creativity, and lay a solid foundation for their personal growth and future higher education. However, it cannot be avoided that film textbooks still face some challenges. For example, there is currently a lack of a unified teaching syllabus and textbook content that does not match the cognitive level of primary and secondary school students nationwide.

Firstly, from the perspective of the main composition of textbook writing, this group is mainly composed of university film and television teachers, frontline teachers in primary and secondary schools, and experts in the film industry. This diversified writing team helps to balance theoretical depth and practical guidance, avoiding content that is disconnected from reality; At the same time, education authorities and relevant educational institutions actively organize seminars and professional training on textbook writing to improve the theoretical level of industry writers.

Secondly, in terms of works and authors, a number of excellent primary and secondary school film textbooks have

emerged over the years. For example, Professor Wang Zhimin from Beijing Film Academy wrote “Appreciation Language of Chinese and Foreign Films” (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008), which systematically introduces the basic concepts, development history, and main genres of film, providing a comprehensive film knowledge framework for primary and secondary school students. This book helps students gain a deeper understanding of film language and techniques through vivid case analysis and interpretation of classic films. In addition, Stephen Asher’s “Handbook of Film Production” (Electronic Industry Press, 2015) starts from a practical perspective, emphasizing the combination of theory and practice. It provides detailed explanations of various aspects of film production and is accompanied by rich practical cases and operational guidance, which plays a good role in helping middle school students practice and understand the practical characteristics of film art on their own.

The French “Film Classroom” program includes film as a subject in the high school entrance examination, cultivating critical thinking through films such as “Spring in the Cowherd Class”; The National Alliance for Film and Television Education in the United States is promoting “Career Experience Week”, simulating roles such as directors and editors to help students plan their future development. China has learned from its experience and added a “film and television career enlightenment” module to junior high school textbooks, such as setting up a “campus documentary shooting” task in the textbooks of Communication University of China, accompanied by industry standard operating guidelines.

These textbooks have their own unique content arrangement, but they all reflect the authors’ in-depth thinking and innovative attempts in film education for primary and secondary schools. For example, the “Appreciation Language of Chinese and Foreign Films” mentioned earlier systematically constructs a film knowledge system through modules such as “Film Language,” “Film Type,” and “Film Master; The “Film Production Manual” has designed practical chapters such as “Script Creation,” “Camera Language,” and “Post Production,” encouraging students to try film creation hands-on.

2. Characteristics of Film Textbook Compilation in Primary and Secondary Schools in China

Priority should be given to selecting films that convey the core socialist values in textbooks, such as “Ne Zha: The Birth of the Demon Child”, which uses the theme of “breaking prejudice” to guide students to establish correct

values. The textbook design of Zhoucun District focuses on the theme of “patriotism in red movies”, interpreting the spirit of characters in the historical background of “The Awakening Age”, and strengthening the infiltration of moral education. The compilation of film textbooks for primary and secondary schools in China has achieved certain achievements in the construction of content systems. Many textbooks can systematically introduce the basic concepts, development history, and main genres of film, providing students with a comprehensive framework of film knowledge. For example, some excellent textbooks help students gain a deeper understanding of film language and techniques through vivid case analysis and interpretation of classic films. In addition, some textbooks also focus on cultivating students’ critical thinking and guiding them to analyze and evaluate film works from multiple perspectives.

Based on specific works and authors, analyze their advantages and disadvantages as follows:

1.1 Achievement analysis

In recent years, the compilation of film textbooks for primary and secondary schools in China has gradually formed an education system with Chinese characteristics. Firstly, a systematic knowledge framework for textbooks has been constructed. For example, taking Professor Wang Zhimin’s edited book “Language of Appreciation of Chinese and Foreign Films” (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008) as an example, the textbook takes film history, audio-visual language, and genre analysis as the core modules, and constructs a hierarchical framework from “technical cognition” to “art appreciation” and then to “cultural reflection”. When explaining montage theory, this work concretizes abstract concepts through the analysis of classic fragments from “Little Soldier Zhang Ga”. This systematic arrangement conforms to the cognitive laws of teenagers and helps them establish a complete film knowledge system.

For example, Professor Li Rui’s book “Fundamentals of Directing” is a particularly suitable introductory book for high school students in film and television art, providing clear guidance on how to appreciate film art. For example, the “Misconceptions” section of the “Film Analysis” chapter in this book clearly identifies several misconceptions in interpreting films, such as mystifying, manipulating theories, overinterpreting, and interpreting symbols, and warns against the common thinking misconceptions among middle school students in China.

The work explicitly states that “documentaries must be based on real people and events, which is the fundamental

condition of documentaries.”¹ However, documentaries must have a certain level of expression Basic Course for Directing. Because replicating life is almost meaningless in art. Copying not only causes artistic boredom, but also loses the meaning of creation. So, if you take something as the subject of a photograph, you must find out what the angle of the photograph is. What touched you, or is it necessary to share it with everyone, communicate it with others, and let them see it? Beauty is not a concept of being good-looking, nor is it a concept of being handsome and beautiful. Beauty is the beauty in art, which has a certain artistic value and significance.

Secondly, the textbook focuses on guiding values and cultural inheritance. Professor Li Yizhong’s “Film and Television Appreciation Course” (published by Higher Education Press) focuses on selecting films with ethnic cultural characteristics such as “Old Stories in the South of the City” and “Chaos in the Heavenly Palace”. By analyzing the patriotism and traditional aesthetics in the films, the socialist core values are integrated into the case analysis. In 2023, Professor Zhou Xing led the team of “Aesthetic Appreciation of Chinese Film Art” at Beijing Normal University and was approved as a “National Online First Class Course”. The course uses mainstream films such as “Ne Zha: The Birth of the Demon Child” as texts, explores the theme of “identity recognition”, guides students to think dialectically about the relationship between personal growth and social responsibility, and embodies the educational philosophy of “using film to transform people”.

Finally, the textbook emphasizes innovative attempts at interdisciplinary integration. Wang Kaidong’s “Middle School Chinese Film Class” (Lijiang Publishing House, 2015) compares film narrative with literary classics, compares the novel “Blessing” with its film adaptation, and analyzes how the language of the camera enhances the tragic color. This design breaks down disciplinary barriers and enhances students’ abilities in text interpretation and visual thinking.

1.2 Shortcomings and Challenges

However, while the compilation of film textbooks for primary and secondary schools has achieved certain results, it also faces many problems and challenges. The lagging of systematic construction is one of the prominent problems, with 73% of textbooks still stuck at the level of simple film recommendations, lacking advanced design of “perception understanding creation”. The research results in Linyi City show that 62% of rural school textbooks

1 Li Rui Basic Course for Directing [M]. Beijing: China Ethnic Culture Press, 2023.8:100

rely on a fragmented model of “teaching infiltration+club activities”, which has failed to form a three-dimensional system that connects national curriculum, local curriculum, and school-based curriculum.

The problem of insufficient adaptability and targeting cannot be ignored. Part of the textbook content tends to be “adult oriented”, using complex narrative films such as “Parasite”, which exceeds the understanding ability of elementary school students. At the same time, the phenomenon of resource imbalance is more obvious, and the textbooks of rural schools are limited to classic films such as “Sparkling Red Star”, lacking works of the times such as “Changjin Lake”, and the update cycle of urban and rural textbooks differs by 2-3 years.

The weak professional strength also constrains the quality of textbook writing. In the writing team, film and television professionals account for less than 15%, resulting in a lack of depth in artistic analysis in the textbook. Despite the integration of university and industry resources in the programs of Communication University of China, interdisciplinary teams for “education+film and television” are still very scarce nationwide.

Secondly, the teaching evaluation system is becoming more standardized. The development of teaching materials tailored to the cognitive characteristics and interest needs of students of different age groups is not yet sufficient. The interest and interactivity of textbooks need to be improved, and how to better stimulate students’ interest in learning remains a long-term issue to be addressed in the future. Textbook exercises often use the “film review writing+multiple-choice questions” model (such as after class exercises in the Higher Education Press’s “Film and Television Appreciation”), which lacks assessment dimensions for students’ creative expression (such as shot script design and theme short video planning). The tendency towards standardized answers may suppress students’ personalized interpretations.

Finally, there is an imbalance in film education resources across the country. Due to the unique national conditions of our country, schools in rural areas are limited by objective factors such as equipment and teaching staff, and the requirements for filming practice in film education are still in a difficult state of implementation. For example, some green screen cutout technology teaching that relies on hardware devices is often difficult to achieve in underdeveloped areas.

3. Future Innovation Path

Digital transformation will empower textbook innovation with technology. In the development of integrated media textbooks, VR technology will be combined to create

immersive viewing scenes, such as allowing students to “travel” to the mural creation site through the VR film “Dunhuang: Flying Apsaras”; Develop interactive digital teaching materials, click on the video screen to analyze shooting techniques and link extended reading resources. In terms of intelligent recommendation and personalized adaptation, big data analysis is used to analyze students’ viewing preferences and ability levels, and to push movie clips with strong language expression to students with weak writing skills, achieving “precise education”. It is expected that by 2025, 30% of textbooks will integrate intelligent recommendation systems.

Deepening core competencies will achieve a transformation from knowledge transmission to ability construction. In terms of strengthening the cultivation of advanced abilities, the textbook will add tasks such as “film adaptation and re creation” and “cross-cultural film comparative analysis”. For example, by comparing “Drinking, Eating, Men and Women” with “Julie and Julia”, the differences between Chinese and Western food cultures will be explored to enhance students’ cross-cultural communication skills. In terms of career education penetration, combined with the professional scene of the film and television industry, design a “Career Experience Week” activity, allowing students to simulate the division of labor in the film and television crew, respectively serving as directors, screenwriters, editors and other roles, and learn about career paths through lectures by industry professionals.

Interdisciplinary and international approaches will further expand the boundaries of textbooks. In the integration of large units and thematic approaches, with “climate change” as the theme, interdisciplinary projects are carried out to cultivate students’ systematic thinking by integrating environmental documentary “An Inconvenient Truth”, science fiction film “The Day After Tomorrow” and science courses. In terms of localizing international experience, we draw on Italy’s “Film and Television Education into Curriculum” program to develop teaching materials that combine Chinese characteristics with a global perspective, such as selecting cross-cultural films like “Wrestling, Dad”, to guide students to understand diverse values.

The improvement of the evaluation system will establish multiple quality standards, covering ideological (30%), educational (30%), artistic (20%), and appropriateness (20%) evaluation indicators, and introducing teachers, students, parents, and film and television experts to participate in the evaluation. In terms of dynamic iteration mechanism, textbook compilation has shifted from “one-time completion” to “continuous updating”, revising content every quarter based on educational policies, technological development, and student feedback, and timely

incorporating new films such as “Chang’an 30000 Miles” that combine educational significance and contemporary popularity.

With the deepening of educational informatization, the digitization and multimedia integration of primary and secondary school film textbooks will become an important trend. Future textbooks will increasingly adopt interactive e-books, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) technologies to provide students with immersive learning experiences. For example, students can “step into movie scenes” through VR technology and intuitively experience the use of camera language and scene scheduling. Meanwhile, the development of online learning platforms and mobile applications will also provide students with more flexible and personalized learning methods.

Interdisciplinary integration is another important development direction. Future film textbooks will place greater emphasis on integrating with disciplines such as literature, history, and music to cultivate students’ comprehensive artistic literacy. For example, when explaining the narrative structure of a movie, narrative techniques from classical literature can be combined; When analyzing movie music, music appreciation and music theory knowledge can be integrated. This interdisciplinary integration not only deepens students’ understanding of film art, but also promotes its comprehensive development.

In addition, future textbook development will place greater emphasis on cultivating students’ creativity and critical thinking. The textbook will be designed with more open-ended questions and projects, encouraging students to engage in independent thinking and creativity. For example, a project can be set up to adapt classic literary works into movie scripts, allowing students to practice creative writing and visual expression skills. At the same time, the textbook will also guide students to analyze film works from multiple dimensions such as culture, society, and history, cultivating their critical thinking and multi-cultural understanding abilities.

The future trends and breakthrough paths of film education in primary and secondary schools in China can be analyzed from the following aspects:

Firstly, in the future trend, with the country’s emphasis on aesthetic education, film education will gradually become an important component of primary and secondary school curriculum, and the popularization and deepening of film education. Movies not only enhance students’ aesthetic abilities, but also cultivate their critical thinking and creativity. The breakthrough path of film education in primary and secondary schools in our country is mainly reflected in incorporating film education into the regular curriculum system, developing film textbooks suitable for different age groups, and training professional teachers,

giving official recognition from the position of professional teachers, rather than playing the role of “temporary substitute”.

Secondly, emphasize the integration of technology and education. With the development of digital technology, the future trend of movies will inevitably be closely integrated with film technology. Technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) will be widely used in film education, providing immersive learning experiences. Therefore, the breakthrough path in the future lies in how to use technological means to enrich teaching forms, such as using VR technology to let students “step into” movie scenes and enhance interactivity. This requirement also emphasizes the balance between practice and theory. Film education will pay more attention to practice, encourage students to participate in film production, and cultivate hands-on abilities. Open a film production workshop, organize students to shoot short films, participate in film festivals and other activities.

Then, in the future, film education will truly achieve interdisciplinary integration. Film education will be deeply integrated with other disciplines such as Chinese, history, art, etc., becoming an important tool for interdisciplinary teaching. The future breakthrough path lies in how to design interdisciplinary courses, such as how to learn historical events or literary works through film.

Again, in the future, film education and industry will achieve a combination of localization and internationalization. While promoting excellent international films, we should also focus on the inheritance and innovation of local film culture. The breakthrough path is how to introduce Chinese classic films, combine them with local culture for teaching, and draw on international experience to have an international perspective and international communication ability. Here, we can refer to Pan Yu’s “Research on Chinese Film Education and Directing Curriculum in the Postmodern Context” (published by China Film Publishing House, 2015) for an analysis of the training mechanism of Chinese film directors.

Finally, improve the evaluation system for film education. In the future, China’s primary and secondary school film education will gradually establish a scientific evaluation system for film education, focusing on process evaluation and diversified evaluation; Develop evaluation criteria that focus on students’ participation, creativity, and critical thinking. The development of film education in primary and secondary schools in the future will pay more attention to popularization, technological integration, interdisciplinary integration, localization, and practicality. By drawing on relevant works and authors’ research achievements, theoretical support and practical guidance can be provided for breakthroughs in film education.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the compilation of film textbooks for primary and secondary schools presents a development trend driven by policies, innovative practices, and diverse explorations, with characteristics of education, hierarchy, practicality, and integration. However, it still faces challenges such as insufficient systematization and lack of professionalism. In the future, we need to rely on technology empowerment, deepening literacy, and an international perspective to build a modern teaching material system that is “value led, ability oriented, and dynamically adapted”.

To promote the further development of film textbooks for primary and secondary schools, the following countermeasures and suggestions are proposed: strengthen interdisciplinary team building, establish a joint writing team of “educational theory+film and television art+technology development”, and enhance the professionalism and innovation of textbooks; Establish a national level resource platform, integrate high-quality textbook cases, film libraries, and teaching tools, and promote regional balanced development; Improve the mechanism for textbook certification and promotion, establish national quality standards for textbooks, and promote the implementation of excellent textbooks through pilot demonstrations and experience exchanges.

Future research can further explore the deep integration

of film textbooks with new technologies such as artificial intelligence and metaverse, conduct long-term tracking studies on educational effects, and provide richer theoretical and practical support for building a film and television education system with Chinese characteristics in primary and secondary schools.

Explanatory note

[1]Li Rui Basic Course for Directing [M]. Beijing: China Ethnic Culture Press, 2023.8:100

[2]Kang ning Exploration of Problems in the Promotion of Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools: Observations Based on Research Data on Film Education in the Beijing Tianjin Hebei Region [J]. Journal of Zhejiang Normal University (Social Sciences Edition), 2019, 44 (02): 65-70

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