

Existing Issues and Improvement Strategies in Primary School Chinese Reading Instruction Evaluation

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Abstract: In primary school Chinese language education, reading instruction plays a crucial role. It serves as an effective method for cultivating students' reading habits and is also an important pathway for enhancing their comprehensive literacy skills. However, beyond the instruction itself, the evaluation of reading teaching is an integral part of Chinese language education that cannot be overlooked. Reading assessment not only permeates the entire teaching process but also exerts a positive influence on stimulating students' interest in reading and improving their reading abilities. With the continuous advancement of the times, the cultivation of students' core literacy has gradually been elevated to a more important position. Based on this, in order to adapt to the new changes and new situations in reading instruction in the new era, reading instruction evaluation needs to conform to the trend of the times and make timely adjustments to the evaluation of primary school Chinese reading instruction. With the goal of improving students' core literacy, the evaluation of primary school Chinese reading instruction should be continuously optimized and improved. Only in this way can students' core literacy be better enhanced.

Keywords: Reading Instruction, Teaching Evaluation, Elementary Chinese Language Education.

1. Research Background and Significance

In 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China reviewed and approved the "Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era," emphasizing the need to "improve outcome-based evaluation, strengthen process-based evaluation, explore value-added evaluation, and improve comprehensive evaluation." [2] The release of this document established new standards for evaluating primary school Chinese reading instruction. The "Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" specifies that students' core competencies encompass four dimensions: cultural confidence, language application, thinking skills, and aesthetic creativity. [1] Primary school Chinese reading instruction is a critical component in cultivating students' core competencies, while its evaluation serves as a primary channel for enhancing reading abilities and fostering these competencies. The document explicitly states that formative evaluation focuses on the learning process, while summative evaluation concentrates on learning outcomes. Both forms of assessment are indispensable, with a greater emphasis on formative evaluation throughout the assessment process. [1] As indicated by the curriculum standards, educational researchers emphasize the importance of qualitative evaluation, encouraging educators to adopt diverse assessment methods in practice and affirming the necessity of reforming reading instruction evaluation.

The elementary Chinese reading curriculum possesses both humanistic and instrumental characteristics. While enabling students to apply acquired knowledge and skills to solve problems, it also cultivates aesthetic awareness and appreciation for China's outstanding traditional culture. Therefore, language application and practice, as well as students' aesthetic experiences, should all be incorporated into the assessment of Chinese reading. Currently, elementary Chinese reading instruction faces numerous challenges, such as: monolithic assessment methods, singular assessment

subjects, limited assessment content, and ambiguous assessment objectives [5].

In summary, this paper will examine the existing problems, underlying causes, and improvement strategies in primary school Chinese reading instruction.

2. Existing Problems and Causes in Primary School Chinese Reading Instruction Evaluation

2.1. Existing Problems in Primary School Chinese Reading Instruction Evaluation

2.1.1. Monolithic Evaluation Methods

Current primary school Chinese reading evaluation primarily relies on language exams as the assessment tool, using test scores as the main criterion—a form of summative evaluation. Influenced by exam-oriented education, most schools now assess students' reading abilities solely through language test scores. This summative approach yields a rather one-sided reflection of learning outcomes, capable only of testing knowledge and skills explicitly taught by teachers. It fails to measure students' reading interest, reading methods and strategies, or reading volume. Moreover, each student is a unique individual. Their diverse educational backgrounds lead to varied perspectives on any given subject. Relying on traditional exams to assess reading proficiency largely restricts students' thinking. This approach not only hinders the development of divergent thinking but also impedes the improvement of reading abilities [5].

2.1.2. Single Evaluation Authority

Influenced by exam-oriented education, evaluation methods primarily rely on tests, with teachers serving as both examiners and evaluators. Teachers' assessments of students' reading abilities are confined to the reading knowledge and skills acquired in school, exhibiting a degree of subjectivity and one-sidedness. This approach fails to comprehensively evaluate students' reading proficiency. For instance, teachers struggle to discern students' daily reading interests, reading

volume, or reading habits through language arts exams alone. During the implementation of reading assessments, teachers often neglect involving parents and students in the evaluation process. Even when such involvement occurs, it may be merely formalistic without substantive impact. Neither teachers nor students engage in thorough reflection on the assessment outcomes, failing to leverage the results to improve students' reading. While some teachers assign post-class reading tasks, insufficient communication between parents and teachers prevents feedback on students' reading progress from reaching educators [5].

2.1.3. Evaluation Content is Limited

Currently, student reading evaluations primarily rely on scores to assess reading proficiency, focusing on mastery of unfamiliar vocabulary, text structure, and summarizing main ideas. These assessed skills represent rote knowledge repeatedly emphasized by teachers—information imparted through instruction that students memorize to achieve high marks. Knowledge acquired through memorization is easily forgotten over time and is only useful for answering questions designed by the teacher. Since this knowledge has not been processed and internalized within the student's own knowledge system, it fails to accurately assess their true reading proficiency. Modern teaching emphasizes moving beyond traditional evaluation methods that prioritize outcomes over processes. Therefore, relying solely on exam content to assess reading ability is insufficiently comprehensive and unscientific [5].

2.1.4. Ambiguous Evaluation Goals

Evaluation objectives serve as the foundation of assessment activities. In traditional reading instruction, teachers often lack clear objectives, resulting in activities that do not align with learning goals. This ambiguity about "what to teach and how to teach" leaves students uncertain about "what to read and how to read," disconnecting teaching, learning, and assessment. Due to unclear evaluation objectives in reading instruction, many teachers rely on experience and intuition when conducting reading assessments. They habitually focus whole-book reading evaluations on testing students' memorization and accumulation of content, neglecting the cultivation of reading habits and the absorption of the text's intrinsic spiritual power [6].

2.2. Reasons for Existing Problems in Primary Chinese Reading Instruction Evaluation

2.2.1. Teachers Underestimate the Importance of Evaluation

The new curriculum standards emphasize that language arts evaluation should primarily enhance teachers' instructional capabilities and, consequently, students' learning abilities. Classroom evaluations significantly influence students' future learning trajectories. Some teachers merely superficially adopt the new curriculum's pedagogical principles without truly internalizing them, remaining stuck at the level of formality or superficial implementation. Currently, many elementary Chinese language teachers focus solely on imparting reading techniques and methods during instruction, primarily relying on note-taking and repetitive drills to improve reading skills. In such an environment, students lack meaningful feedback from teachers, making it challenging to further enhance their reading abilities. Evaluation should not only assess students' knowledge and

skills but also embody "humanistic care." Teachers embodying new-era evaluation concepts serve as catalysts for educational assessment reform. Only when educators recognize the importance of evaluation will they adopt reasonable and comprehensive approaches in reading assessments [5].

2.2.2. Lack of Scientific Approach in Teaching Evaluation

China's deeply entrenched "five-only" evaluation philosophy has fostered severe utilitarianism in education. Schools prioritize outcome-based assessments, using tests to evaluate reading abilities for screening and selection purposes. Teachers are forced into the constraints of exam-oriented education, creating an evaluation system dominated by scores and admission rates. This leads to narrow evaluation methods and content, primarily relying on tests because they provide simple, visual indicators of reading performance. Assessment content primarily consists of questions covered in teachers' regular lessons and exercises. Students can achieve high scores simply by completing tasks as instructed. Many teachers, particularly those resistant to change, lack awareness of scientific evaluation principles. Despite education circles emphasizing the integrated development of teaching, learning, and assessment, these teachers persist in treating scores as the sole teaching objective, hindering the cultivation of students' core competencies. If the education evaluation orientation that prioritizes scores alone is not promptly changed, it will inevitably lead to education authorities and teachers pursuing students' test scores and grades. Problems such as single-dimensional evaluation methods, single teaching subjects, and vague teaching objectives will also remain unresolved. The "Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era" points out that we should attach importance to process-based evaluation and explore the path of process-based evaluation. [2] The objectives of the compulsory education Chinese language curriculum also clearly state that formative evaluation should be combined with summative evaluation to comprehensively evaluate students and pay attention to their learning process [1].

2.2.3. Teachers Neglect Student Initiative

Reading is a dialogue—a conversation between teachers and students mediated by textbooks and texts. Reading instruction involves teaching and guiding students to engage in effective dialogue with texts. This process deepens understanding of the text itself while cultivating aesthetic thinking through the text, allowing students to experience the joy of appreciation. Reading instruction assessment should also be a collaborative process involving both teachers and students. On one hand, as guides for students' reading learning, teachers should be able to consider students' reasoning when answering questions from their perspective and provide targeted feedback based on identified issues. On the other hand, since the teaching process is one of mutual growth between teachers and students, the evaluation process should also foster shared progress. Teachers should allow sufficient space for peer and self-evaluation to enhance students' reading assessment abilities. Finally, students are individuals in the process of development. During instruction, teachers must consider students' age characteristics when evaluating, using assessment to enhance teaching and boost students' interest in reading learning [3].

3. Strategies for Improving Reading Assessment in Elementary Chinese Language Education

3.1. Transforming Traditional Evaluation Concepts to Align with New Curriculum Reform Principles

The new curriculum reform principles establish the following standards for teaching evaluation: First, the fundamental purpose of evaluation is to promote development. We should move away from the selection and screening focus of traditional exam-oriented education. Reading instruction evaluation should emphasize students' progress across all dimensions and dynamic development, highlighting improvements in teachers' reading instruction to motivate both teachers and students and enhance the quality of reading instruction. Therefore, when providing written or oral evaluations in reading instruction, teachers should primarily employ encouraging feedback that incorporates students' learning attitudes and methods to foster reading skill development. Second, teachers should adopt comprehensive evaluation content. Reading instruction evaluation should adopt a holistic perspective, focusing on comprehensive assessment across moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education dimensions. It should emphasize multifaceted examination and appraisal to prevent oversimplification or partiality, thereby facilitating the achievement of teaching objectives beyond traditional reading knowledge and skills. Such narrow approaches hinder students' all-round development. Third, diversify the evaluation subjects. Traditional reading evaluations centered on teacher assessments, neglecting student agency. Under the new curriculum reform philosophy, emphasis is placed on the joint participation of students, teachers, parents, and administrators in the evaluation process. Students are the primary agents of learning; in reading instruction evaluations, focus should be placed on cultivating students' abilities for self-evaluation and peer assessment. Simultaneously, the enthusiasm of parents and administrators should be mobilized, encouraging their active involvement in students' reading evaluations to collectively enhance students' reading abilities. Fourth, differentiated evaluation criteria. Each student is a unique individual with distinct strengths. Applying uniform standards to all students through traditional one-size-fits-all approaches fails to promote holistic development. Therefore, teachers must tailor evaluation criteria to individual reading levels when assessing students. Fifth, focus on developmental processes. Emphasize integrating formative and summative assessments. In reading instruction evaluations, teachers should not solely judge students by outcomes but prioritize the learning and exploration journey. Growth-oriented assessments help students recognize improvements and areas needing development at each stage, fostering self-awareness of progress and shortcomings to drive growth. Sixth, evaluation methods should be diversified. Traditional testing methods only partially assess students' reading abilities in terms of knowledge and skills, failing to comprehensively reflect their actual reading proficiency. Therefore, reading evaluations can also incorporate oral tests, activity reports, classroom observations, post-class interviews, in-class and out-of-class assignments, and growth records to track changes in students' reading learning. Seventh, evaluations should reflect the latest educational concepts and trends in

curriculum assessment. Reading instruction evaluation should align with the concepts of the new curriculum reform. Based on educational objectives, it should conduct targeted educational evaluations that meet the requirements of core competencies, with the "well-rounded individual" at its core, thereby promoting the implementation of educational goals and teaching objectives [1, 2].

3.2. Aligning with the Integration of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment to Enhance Teachers' Evaluation Capabilities

Assessment is a vital component of teachers' professional practice, and assessment literacy must become an integral part of their professional competence. Enhancing teachers' assessment literacy is the most pressing need in implementing quality education and advancing basic education curriculum reform, as well as a crucial task in teachers' professional development. Just as learning to teach is the most fundamental requirement for teachers, learning to assess is equally important. As educators, we must integrate teaching, learning, and assessment to achieve evaluation-driven instruction and evaluation-driven learning. [6] Current teacher training programs disproportionately emphasize teaching and learning methodologies, allocating far more time and resources to these areas than to assessment skills. This imbalance leads many teachers to overlook the assessment process, resulting in inadequate evaluation capabilities. Efforts should focus on the following areas: First, expand teacher training opportunities. Schools should regularly organize professional development activities, enabling teachers to absorb the latest pedagogical insights and observe exemplary reading demonstration lessons. This enhances their assessment capabilities, facilitates a scientific shift in teaching philosophy, encourages proactive adoption of new curriculum concepts, and lays a solid ideological foundation for effective teaching implementation. Second, strengthen teachers' learning mindset to ensure they gradually enhance their cultural literacy and professional competence. During interactions with students, emphasize encouragement, praise, and positive guidance to effectively stimulate learning interest. Finally, reinforce home-school communication and collaboration. Evaluation should encompass not only students' school performance but also their home behavior. Teachers must strengthen exchanges with parents to assess students' learning from multiple perspectives, thereby aligning with the principle of "promoting learning through evaluation [5]."

3.3. Respecting Students as Evaluation Subjects to Promote Personalized Reading

The new curriculum actively builds a student-centered evaluation model. The fundamental concept of this model is to place students at the core of their learning and development. In classroom teaching evaluations, attention should be paid to the role of students as the main actors, focusing on their learning process, level of participation, state of thinking, and overall well-being in the classroom. Attention should be paid to the comprehensive development of students, enabling each student to gain motivation, assistance, and the drive for progress from the evaluation. This enhances students' sense of agency and their core abilities, thereby promoting their overall development [3].

Before teaching, educators must not only master the curriculum but also understand their students. Thorough

knowledge of students is the fundamental prerequisite for effective evaluation. Although language arts teachers interact with students daily, some overlook this in routine teaching practices. Understanding students requires sustained effort and attention to details in classroom behavior and learning habits. Therefore, when preparing lessons, teachers should establish reasonable expectations, possess a foundational understanding of their students, and develop evaluation strategies in advance. This enables them to effectively manage the classroom, tailor instruction to individual needs, and ensure students fully grasp the lesson content. For instance, when designing instructional activities, teachers must carefully plan in-class evaluation strategies to fully engage students' enthusiasm for reading through assessment. This requires language arts teachers to understand each student's reading strengths and weaknesses. Only then can they pose targeted questions and provide focused feedback during reading instruction, thereby addressing gaps and elevating the class's overall reading proficiency [4].

4. Conclusion

Teaching evaluation is an indispensable component of elementary Chinese reading instruction. While current evaluation practices face numerous challenges, educators should embrace the philosophy of "using evaluation to enhance teaching and learning." This approach involves progressively refining the elementary Chinese reading evaluation system by optimizing content, diversifying methods, emphasizing the process, prioritizing evaluators, and clarifying objectives. With students as the core, evaluations should be grounded in their actual circumstances, acknowledge individual differences, and fully leverage the

teacher's guiding role to enhance students' reading abilities. Simultaneously, improvements in classroom evaluation for elementary Chinese reading instruction enable teachers to conduct timely assessments based on student feedback, reflect on lessons, make appropriate adjustments, and use evaluation to enhance teaching—ultimately elevating the quality of Chinese reading instruction. Furthermore, teachers can use evaluations to reflect on their own teaching shortcomings, implement timely improvements, enhance their personal literacy skills, and elevate teaching quality.

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