

# Exploring Evaluation Methods in Project-Based Teaching of Elementary School Fine Art

-- A case study of the course "Tunkou Masks"

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**Abstract:** Proper evaluation can enhance teaching efficiency and help students improve their overall competencies. This study based on practical experience, proposes feasible methods and strategies for designing and implementing evaluations in project-based teaching of elementary school art, along with the reflective teaching experiences that these methods provide.

**Keywords:** Evaluation Strategies; Evaluation Implementation; Project-Based Teaching; Elementary Fine Art Education.

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## 1. Introduction

The 2022 version of the "China Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards" states that teaching evaluation plays a significant role in testing and improving the quality of art education, motivating students in their artistic learning. For project-based teaching methods, which also emphasize a student-centered approach, the design and implementation of teaching evaluations require comprehensive consideration from teachers to provide a holistic and positive impact on students' academic knowledge learning and physical and mental development.

## 2. Exploring Course Characteristics and Refining Evaluation Directions

Project-based teaching pattern has five distinct characteristics. Goal-oriented: Specific and clear learning tasks are divided according to set goals. Planning: Teachers help students set up tasks to be completed. Implementation: Teachers and students work together on learning and research. Evaluation: Various forms of assessments are conducted jointly by teachers and students during the learning process to provide timely feedback and evaluation. Feedback: Project-based teaching often produces multiple outcomes, allowing for multidisciplinary and multifaceted learning effects. The rich feedback can provide further reference for subsequent teaching[1].

In China, for the design of evaluations, art education is divided into four distinct learning areas: Modeling and Expression, Design and Application, Appreciation and Commentary, Comprehensive Review. The design of teaching evaluations for these four different areas needs to consider the characteristics of project-based teaching and select appropriate evaluation methods to ensure effective course implementation.

The course "Tunkou Masks" belongs to the "Modeling and Expression" category. The culture of "Tunkou Masks" originates from the southwestern region of China, where people use exaggerated, scary masks with animal features as door gods to ward off evil spirits in their own culture. In the course's practical activities, students are required to use mixed materials to create masks or boxes by hand, expressing

emotions and creativity in the process. Additionally, during different course stages, such as sketching and hands-on practice, students are expected to work in groups to complete learning tasks. So the basic evaluation direction in this course can be determined to focus on guidance and encouragement, teachers should help students express themselves autonomously and create freely. The evaluation direction also varies for students of different grades in primary school.

### 2.1. Students in Grades 1-2

Considering that students in this group(6-8 years old)are naive and imaginative but generally lack the skills of language expression and thinking organization, their mastery of art-related knowledge is not completed, and their basic skills in drawing and crafting are still weak. Thus, evaluation activities better be mainly aim to inspire confidence in practical activities and increase interest in art learning. Evaluations are primarily hosted or guided by the teacher, where students only need to complete simple evaluation activities and express their overall understanding and feelings about the learning in summary language, such as how they felt about the whole study, the difficulties encountered, and the methods used to overcome them. Evaluation activities should also be highly contextual and interactive to help students understand the content learned and stay focused.

### 2.2. Students in Grades 3-4

Students in this age group(9-11 years old) have acquired certain skills in expression and observation, they can clearly organize their expressions, and have accumulated own experience in art, allowing them to meet the learning tasks' requirements. Therefore, in evaluation activities, students will conduct more self-evaluation and peer evaluation focused on specific teaching challenges. The evaluation activities at this stage should also have certain quantitative standards to measure the extent and depth of students' understanding. Additionally, because more complex materials are used in practical activities, teachers need to organize more frequent evaluation activities to help students analyze and decompose various difficulties in production.

### 2.3. Students in Grades 5-6

Students in this age group(12-13 years old)can think

independently and express themselves autonomously; they also have relatively mature teamwork skills and can integrate artistic language with real-life situations, resulting in personalized expressions during art creation. Therefore, in evaluation activities, teachers can give students more autonomy to organize evaluations and express themselves independently. During self-evaluation and peer evaluation, students need to provide more detailed and specific explanations. This requires teachers to guide students to appreciate from different angles, and develop rubrics or standards that can be used to assess students' evaluation performance.

In conclusion, when developing evaluations for the same course across different grade levels, teachers should not only focus on the practical characteristics of the course from an art discipline perspective but also draw on personal teaching experience and consult with experienced teachers to understand the current state of the teaching objects. Simultaneously, teachers should apply relevant knowledge of educational psychology, fully considering the physical and mental developmental characteristics of elementary school students, to ensure that the evaluation is suitable for students of different age groups. After comprehensive consideration, the design of evaluation activities will be more scientific and practical.

### 3. Aligning Evaluation Timing with Teaching Design

The implementation of evaluation activities needs to be

aligned with specific teaching segments, choosing appropriate timings. Especially in project-based teaching, to maintain the student-centered approach, teachers should avoid interrupting students' independent thinking or discussion, providing ample time to ensure that students remain enthusiastic about the course. Evaluation activities should also be integrated throughout the learning process, enabling students to establish comprehensive evaluation skills and receive timely feedback and assistance from teachers and peers.

In the course "Tunkou Masks," there are two main evaluation initiation timings based on different learning activities (Table1). The first scenario is when the teacher as a moderator initiates the evaluation, observing and evaluating student behaviors, task completion, participation, and collaboration throughout the teaching process (formative evaluation). Some evaluation activities are also scheduled before each teaching activity begins (diagnostic evaluation). The second scenario is when students as the moderator initiate the evaluation, where they must complete an overall evaluation (summative evaluation) at the end of each major learning activity with the teacher's assistance. This accounts for the majority of the evaluation activities, while a small number of evaluation activities are scheduled outside of class, where students organize the evaluations themselves to identify and fill knowledge gaps and determine the extent to which they have completed each learning task in the project-based teaching process (performance evaluation).

**Table 1.** Summary of the instructional design of "TunKou Masks".

Teaching Process	
Main Teaching Activities	Teaching Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Before the class, students are expected to preview and gather relevant materials through various methods, then analyze them at the beginning of the lesson. The teacher uses multimedia, verbal presentations, etc., to help students understand the theme of the "TunKou Masks," including its origins, historical culture, and regional characteristics.</li> <li>2.Students are organized into groups, with each group consisting of 5 members.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.To promote students establish a basic understanding of the course and attract their interest.</li> <li>2. To help students understand the cultural value of the course content and deepen their appreciation of the relevant art culture.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.The teacher uses pictures and multimedia to explain the artistic characteristics of the "TunKou Masks," analyzing its colors, shapes, and historical significance.</li> <li>2.During the spare time, students review the course content with their group members and use color cards to choose suitable color combinations.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To help students analyze the key points of creation and establish a comprehensive understanding of the art theme of the course.</li> <li>2. To help students master the characteristics of color and shape, preparing them for subsequent practical activities.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.The teacher explains the complete production process of the "TunKou Masks" and organizes students to share their chosen colors and design ideas.</li> <li>2.Under the guidance and suggestions of the teacher, students proceed with sketching (students in grades 3-6 complete a 100-200 word essay explaining the historical or cultural significance of their design after the teacher's demonstration).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Through sharing, students can express their opinions, clarify their creative ideas, and generate extended thinking.</li> <li>2.During sketching, students can translate abstract thinking into concrete diagrams and provide clear guidance for subsequent hands-on activities.</li> </ol>
<p>Students complete their sketches, revise them under the teacher's guidance, then use various materials to complete the hands-on practice with their team members.</p>	<p>In the process of practice, students work collaboratively, brainstorm, and use various materials extensively to complete their craftwork.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. After completing all practical activities, teacher sets up evaluation scenarios such as a "Mask Auction" or "TunKou Mask Exhibition." Students display and evaluate their works, share their feelings on the complete, and review the history and culture of the "TunKou Masks" in conjunction with their creations.</li> <li>2. Teacher summarizes the course and encourages students to continue exploring related content in their spare time.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In a realistic context, students evaluate their works through self-assessment and peer assessment, establishing a comprehensive understanding of the art theme and gaining new artistic inspiration.</li> <li>2. By correlating the characteristics of their works with the history and culture of the art theme, students deepen their memory and understanding of the course and the art language.</li> </ol>

### 4. Evaluation Subjects and Specific Evaluation Activities

During the teaching process, although students are always

the main focus of the course, in the evaluation activities, teachers, course developers, course reviewers, evaluation experts, etc., can all act as the initiators of evaluation activities[2]. Defining the subject of evaluation determines the evaluation perspective and addresses the fundamental

question of who will conduct the evaluation. It also points to the types of evaluation activities that the subject can organize, laying the foundation for designing specific evaluation methods. In the course "TunKou Masks," for each student, the evaluation activities are primarily divided into external evaluations initiated by teachers and classmates, and internal evaluations initiated by the students themselves.

#### 4.1. Diverse and Comprehensive External Evaluation Activities

In art education, especially for lower-grade primary school students who are still at the basic stage of art learning, have limited knowledge and skills, and lack a standardized awareness of art evaluation, the proportion of external evaluation activities is relatively higher. In the "TunKou Masks" course, teachers are one of the main subjects of external evaluation, initiating various evaluation activities during the course. Meanwhile, students, as another main subject of external evaluation, conduct multi-angle peer evaluations based on standards set by the teacher, using rating tools or subjective language, either during the course or in their spare time, in groups.

##### 4.1.1. Diagnostic Evaluation

Before the course begins, due to the significant age differences among the classes and the fact that all teaching

staff are interacting with these classes for the first time, with almost no prior knowledge of their learning situations, so teachers conducted a diagnostic evaluation of the students. For first- and second-grade students, teachers chose to ask simple questions and assigned introductory drawing tasks, asking the students to use familiar drawing tools to depict the common theme of "stars." During this process, teachers employed observation methods to assess students' understanding of the art tasks and their skill levels. For third- to sixth-grade students, teachers mainly communicated through questions and answers to understand their knowledge of the course theme and their experience with the related materials.

After understanding the students' basic situations, teachers used the information obtained, such as the majority values from observations and Q&A results, to complete a simple diagnostic evaluation (Table 2). During the course, before each teaching activity, teachers would also assess the students' understanding of upcoming learning activities based on the materials they collected or group previews completed in their spare time. This allowed them to adjust the teaching pace and methods accordingly, and to provide positive feedback to students, alleviating any uncertainty about learning objectives.

**Table 2.** Diagnostic Evaluation Table for the "Tunkou Masks" Course

Evaluation Criteria		Evaluation Objects	Grade 1-2	Grade 3-4	Grade 5-6
Familiarity with related content (1 point); Seen related content in books, online, or on TV (1 point); Seen related content in real life (1 point); Ability to verbally describe its concept and characteristics (1 point).	Basic Cultural Knowledge	Understanding of the traditional Chinese concept of "exorcism and home protection"	2	4	4
		Knowledge of China's traditional "Door Gods"	3	4	4
		Understanding of China's traditional "ghosts and monsters"	3	4	4
		Knowledge of "Tunkou Masks" in Southwest China	1	1	2
Has relevant art experience (1 point); Can or believes they can complete creative tasks as required by the teacher (1 point); Can or believes they can express individuality in related art activities (1 point).	Basic Art Skills	Mastery of design pattern techniques	1	3	3
		Mastery of material combination techniques	1	2	3
		Mastery of color matching techniques	1	2	2
		Mastery of watercolor brush skills	2	3	3
		Mastery of paper-cutting and collage skills	1	2	2
		Mastery of molding skills	2	3	3

##### 4.1.2. Formative Assessment

Due to the relatively long duration of the course, the teacher needs to conduct frequent assessment activities to promptly monitor students' learning progress. To avoid causing negative emotions or fatigue among students, the teacher adopts a points-based reward system. Points are awarded to groups based on students' performance after answering questions or completing learning tasks, which can later be exchanged for prizes. This approach has significantly boosted student engagement in both questions and art tasks, encouraging them to participate actively and independently.

In the "TunKou Masks" course, for students' cultural knowledge learning tasks, because of they are relatively clear content, and only requires students to have a basic understanding, so teachers choose to use the way to check the completion of students learning task, and use oral expression, bonus form of evaluating the answer, avoid quantitative evaluation scores or grade bring pressure for students.

For those complex art skill learning tasks, since each student has a different level of perception and understanding of art, the course mainly uses longitudinal evaluation. The teacher collect each student's learning outcomes at different stages and provides individual assessments and suggestions to avoid the negative impact of horizontal comparisons on students' learning motivation[3]. Therefore, the teacher used portfolio assessment as the main formative assessment method in this course. The portfolio assessment, completed by the teacher, involves collecting records and outcomes from various learning activities (such as written content and artworks) and highlighting students' key behaviors (like critical thinking, active participation, or skillful use of a particular art method). This helps summarize and analyze the student's performance longitudinally. Students can use this to review different stages of the learning process for reflection.

##### 4.1.3. Summative Assessment

At the end of the course, students participated in group or

class-wide peer reviews and teacher evaluation through collective work displayed.

During peer reviews, guided by the teacher, students conduct multi-dimensional evaluations based on comprehensive performance in learning activities. This includes class behavior, participation in group activities, and the creativity and completeness of art creations. Some students may notice color characteristics in different group works and relate these differences to the different design ideas shared earlier. Some may provide a balanced evaluation, pointing out both the attractive aspects of a peer's work and offering suggestions. Some can effectively use the knowledge taught by the teacher to evaluate the techniques used by their peers. Through peer review, students improve their multi-dimensional observation skills and learn to express themselves positively.

During teacher evaluations, the teacher focuses primarily on the accuracy and appropriateness of the language used in peer reviews, affirming and encouraging constructive feedback. Additionally, the teacher supplements content not addressed by students, providing broader perspectives for observation and thinking.

## **4.2. Personalized and Detailed Internal Evaluation Activities**

Each time learning tasks yield outcomes, the teacher guides students in self-assessment. This process helps students develop reflective and independent problem-solving abilities.

In the "TunKou Masks" course, students primarily engage in two types of self-assessment activities: oral expression and self-evaluation forms. Primary school students usually cannot accurately establish standards or judge their performance levels, making their evaluations highly subjective. However, their innocence allows them to notice perspectives that adults might overlook. Given this characteristic, the teacher should frequently organize self-reflection activities for students to summarize their feelings from various learning activities. Before the end of the course, when evaluating scientific skills and knowledge, lower-grade students receive specific themes for guidance, such as "talk about the colors in the work" or "discuss the methods used in the creation process." In contrast, upper-grade students receive minimal assistance, with the teacher providing simple hints only when necessary. Students can then express themselves uniquely from their perspectives. In the process of self-assessment, the teacher should provide confidence and freedom to the students, offering guidance only when needed.

## **5. Adapt Evaluation Implementation Through Teaching Practice**

During the evaluation process, even with a predetermined design and forecast, teachers still need to consider the real-time dynamics of the classroom and make necessary adjustments and modifications to their language, behavior, and actions.

### **5.1. Enhancing the Enjoyment of Evaluation and Guiding Free Expression**

It is difficult for primary school students to maintain attention for long periods; each time, they can only concentrate for about thirty minutes. Therefore, in teaching practice, teachers should flexibly adjust their evaluation behavior by using humorous language or creating a relaxed

atmosphere, reducing the seriousness and rigidity of evaluation activities and encouraging all students to participate to maintain a lively classroom environment.

In the evaluation process of the "TunKou Masks" course, the teacher's evaluations of students, whether for groups or individuals, are often simple and light-hearted, based on real-life scenarios. Every student can follow the teacher's rhythm and imagine creatively. For example, while explaining the characteristics of the mask design, the teacher said, "This mask's mouth shape is very interesting, but with such a small mouth, wouldn't it be hard to swallow big troubles?" Such remarks highlight key points in design and emphasize the concept that a large mouth can "swallow evil spirits."

### **5.2. Focusing on Student Expression and Guiding Positive Evaluation**

Project-based learning is often constructed in real situations where students feel relaxed and free. Because the course is spread over a longer period and the tasks are broken down into simpler ones, students have enough time to think and solve problems, making them feel confident. Therefore, in evaluation activities, some students might express themselves emotionally or without careful words. Additionally, once divided into groups, competition may arise, leading some students to use derogatory language to critique peers' works in an attempt to elevate their own group's standing. Teachers should understand the uninhibited nature of younger students and remind them to maintain proper expression methods.

In the "TunKou Masks" course, some students described other group works "with a lot of ball, not like a mask", teachers timely reminded students, with only a shape is also a kind of art language, and used multimedia to show the students artist kandinsky related works, for example, to help the students understand the respect for different artistic style and technique of expression, and the right way to communicate with people.

### **5.3. Switching Evaluation Perspectives and Conducting Positive Evaluations**

The choice of evaluation scope and objects should align with the nature of the evaluated object to allow effective comparison and discover similarities and differences between them[4]. Switching evaluation perspectives often helps teachers determine specific evaluation methods, making it an important consideration in evaluation design.

In the "TunKou Masks" course, a second-grade student completed a sketch. During the teacher's observation, it was noted that the student's lines were somewhat disorganized, and the use of color was very simple. However, during the teacher assessment activity, the teacher respected the student's individuality and acknowledged their unique artistic style. Encouraged by the teacher, during the self-assessment process, the student explained the significance of the lines and patterns in the artwork and expressed that the reason for using simple colors was "fear that too many colors would make the picture chaotic." Through the student's self-evaluation of the artwork, the teacher not only grasped the student's unique characteristics in drawing but also promptly understood the student's needs and doubts, providing assistance. As a result, the student's use of color became richer and more vibrant in subsequent clay modeling activities.

Therefore, in the process of art evaluation, teachers should observe from different perspectives and listen to students' free

expressions to promote the development of individual artistic thinking and stimulate their creative enthusiasm.

## 6. Conclusion

Overall, as a guide in teaching, teachers should always consider the students' perspectives when designing and implementing each evaluation, thinking about what kind of evaluation is suitable and beneficial for the students. This approach will improve the quality of teaching and ensure that students experience the joy brought by the beauty of art.

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