

# Study on the Application Situation of Chinese Unit Learning Plan Pointing to the Key Competences in Primary School

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**Abstract:** With the promulgation and implementation of the *Chinese Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition)*, Key Competences has become an important goal of teaching reform in basic education. It is urgent to renew the professional learning scheme based on Key Competences, and the unit learning plan becomes an effective scheme to cultivate students' Key Competences because of its advantages of unit integration. On the basis of clarifying the value and significance of unit learning plan, combined with student questionnaire and teacher interview, this paper studies the current situation of the application of unit learning plan in primary school Chinese teaching, analyzes the current situation and existing problems of the design and use of unit learning plan, and puts forward suggestions for the optimization of unit learning plan pointing to the subject Key Competences.

**Keywords:** Unit Learning Plan, Key Competences, Primary School Chinese, Application Situation.

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## 1. Introduction

The "*Chinese Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition)*" points out that Chinese teaching in primary schools should be based on the guiding ideology, curriculum objectives, curriculum content, students' psychological development level, zone of proximal development (ZPD) and other requirements of the compulsory education curriculum standards, combined with the actual situation of teaching, creatively cultivated "cultural confidence, language application, thinking ability and aesthetic creation" of the Key Competences into teaching activities.[1] This requires educators to regard the unit as a whole according to the competences goal, teaching content and students' actual situation when designing the teaching plan. Professor Cui Yunhuo, director of the Curriculum and Teaching Institute of East China Normal University, pointed out that the Key Competences of a subject is not a accumulation of knowledge points, but refers to "what can be done with what knowledge in what situation (key ability), willingness and habit to do the right thing (essential character), and pursuing or insisting on doing the right thing (value concept)." [2] Therefore, the teaching oriented to the Key Competences of the subject needs to change the traditional teaching design of "knowledge point + lesson time", adopt unit lesson preparation, and design a unit learning plan that will structure knowledge, contextualize tasks, and advance thinking before teaching. The maximum value of any new thing needs to be realized in the process of improving theory and practice, and this is also true of the unit learning plan. This paper according to the unit learning plan and subject Key Competences, investigate and analyze the current situation of unit learning plan applied in primary school Chinese teaching, and put forward the optimization countermeasures of design and use of unit learning plan pointing to subject Key Competences, in order to clarify the value of unit learning plan to promote the development of students' subject Key Competences.

## 2. Unit Learning Plan and Key Competences

### 2.1. The Development and Meaning of the Unit Learning Plan

The birth of the unit learning plan is not sudden, it is the localization product of the combination of Chinese educational thought and other countries' educational thought. In foreign countries, some educational theories and ideas can find some elements of the source framework of the unit learning plan, such as the 1980s Japanese scholars put forward a learning material that included learning objectives, learning situations, and learning methods. Vygotsky argued that learning activities should not be completed alone, but should be combined with real situations and completed by teachers and students together. Ausubel proposed the "advance organizer" teaching strategy, that is, before acquiring new knowledge, teachers provide fulcrum and materials for students to achieve their goals. Rogers, a representative of humanistic psychology, believes that the individual is a complete existence, and the individual's experience of the outside world is self-realization as the goal. Learners are not passive learners in the learning process, but actively understand the outside world and realize their self-value. American educator L. D Fink pointed out that "teaching should create meaningful learning experiences for students. Meaningful learning experiences make students full of interest in learning, followed by high vitality, and the whole learning process will let students learn more meaningful things" [3]. The above theoretical research can find the trace of the unit learning plan. In China, since Professor Cui Yunhuo put forward the unit learning plan in 2013, it has gradually been favored by researchers and educators, and its followers have been growing. From Shanghai to Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Sichuan and other provinces and cities, the theoretical research and practical exploration of unit learning plan continue to develop in depth.

"Unit learning plan" is a professional plan in which teachers design and demonstrate "how students learn" based on what

they expect students to "learn" in a certain unit, so that students can construct experience or knowledge independently or socially. [4] The "unit" of the unit leaning plan is not the "content unit" presented in the textbook, which is organized on the basis of systematic subjects, but the "learning unit of a series of activities". "Learning unit" is a complete learning event formed by organizing or structuring knowledge, skills, problems, situations, activities, evaluations, etc. A learning unit consists of competences objectives, class hours, situations, tasks, knowledge points, etc. The unit is a structured whole that organizes these elements according to certain needs and norms.[5] Different from the traditional teaching plan that points to the subject content, it only focuses on "taught", that is, "what to teach" and "how to teach", and the user is the teacher. The unit learning plan points to the learning experience and focuses on "learning", that is, what to learn, how to learn, to what extent, and how to judge whether to learn. Its users are students and also pays attention to learning by doing, speaking, understanding and teaching (teaching others), Implement the consistency of "teaching-learning-evaluation". It is the carrier of "teacher-student" and "student-student" interaction. The unit learning plan is a cognitive map manual that standardizes or guides students' learning, and it is also a reusable curriculum resource for students.[6]

## 2.2. The Path for Students to Develop Key Competences

Chinese subject teaching in primary school should be based on promoting the development of students' competences, and on the premise of cultivating students' language ability, and carry out teaching activities around four aspects of the Key Competences of the subject, namely "cultural confidence, language application, thinking ability and aesthetic creation". However, traditional teaching and scattered knowledge points have been unable to correctly and efficiently implement the Key Competences of students. The cultivation of the Key Competences of the subject requires the use of knowledge to do things in a real situation (key ability), willingness and habit to do the right thing (essential character), and pursuing or insisting on doing the right thing (value concept).<sup>[2]</sup> This requires teachers to identify the path for students to develop Key Competences in teaching design, and effectively learn and apply basic Chinese knowledge in real task situations. As shown in Figure 1, students can effectively solve problems in real situations by using the knowledge they have learned through language application and thinking ability, deepen their understanding and application of knowledge, build cultural confidence, and cultivate aesthetic creativity. In this process, they gradually develop key ability and essential character, and form values. In addition, the visualization of students' learning experience enables teachers to detect, evaluate and guide students' learning process in real time according to their teaching experience and teaching wisdom. It can be seen that the unit learning plan plays a key role in the development of students' Key Competences, which makes learning no longer an endless pile of knowledge points and makes students' learning more colorful and interesting.

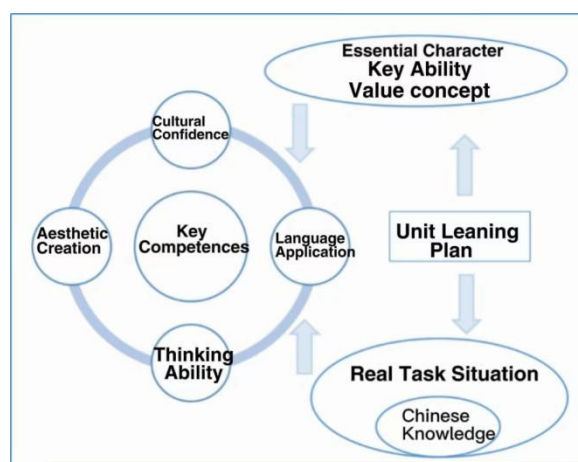


Figure 1. The Path for Students to Develop Key Competences

## 2.3. The Key Competences Goal Takes the Unit Learning Plan as the Way

### 2.3.1. Unit Learning Plan Is Conducive to the Structure of Subject Knowledge

Unit learning plan focuses on the structure of knowledge and the connection of class hours, and builds a scaffold for students' continuous learning, which is conducive to the structure of subject knowledge. Unit learning plan connects the original scattered class hours into a big situation by creating a number of continuous small situations. Students browse the unit learning plan before class to clarify the learning content of the unit, construct an advanced learning process in class, and truly acquire new knowledge and methods in the understanding and application. Finally, by setting unit homework and post-study reflection, students can complete the knowledge arrangement and expansion of the whole unit. The design idea of "whole - part - whole" will integrate the learning unit and connect the thinking between class hours and class hours. The well-designed unit learning plan is conducive to the structure of subject knowledge.

### 2.3.2. Unit Learning Plan Make "Big Tasks", "Big Problems" and "Big Projects" Possible

The subject Key Competences is not the accumulation of knowledge, but the sum of the essential character, key ability and value concept of the students who face the "big task", "big problem" and "big project" by using knowledge to do things, being willing and habit to do the right thing, pursuing or insisting on doing the right thing. The sum of these three points points to students' "cultural confidence, language application, thinking ability and aesthetic creation". Therefore, the cultivation of subject Key Competences depends on the task situation in the process of teaching practice. In the past class design, there have been specific "small" situations, but such "small" situations can not implement students' competences goals. Unit learning plan through unit integration, set a strong correlation of "big" situation, making "big tasks", "big problems" and "big projects" possible, while enriching students' learning experience.

### 2.3.3. The Unit Learning Plan Follows the Rule of Forming the Key Competences

The continuous influence of subject Key Competences determines that it needs to be constructed continuously when it is formed. The traditional method of forming knowledge, skills and values through dispersed class hours in a short time cannot achieve the competences goal, nor can it obtain the

sustained influence of the subject Key Competences. "Unit design is the bridge of "connecting the subject Key Competences and the goal of the knowledge point".<sup>[4]</sup> Unit learning plan breaks through the previous problem of fragmented teaching, improves the degree of subject knowledge structuralization, increases the correlation between class hours and class hours through large situational tasks, designs the learning progression between class hours and class hours, builds the continuous unit integration of unit learning plan, and follows the formation norm of subject Key Competences.

### **3. The Application of Unit Learning Plan to Chinese Teaching in Primary Schools**

#### **3.1. Positive Aspects of the Application of the Unit Learning Plan**

##### **3.1.1. Students' High Acceptance of the Unit Learning Plan**

Students' acceptance and love of unit learning plan can reflect whether they can devote themselves to study, and to some extent, it shows the real effect of unit learning plan applied to practice. Based on the survey results of "Understanding and attitude towards unit learning plan" in student questionnaire and teacher interview, the author finds that 75.58% of students like unit learning plan teaching; 80.02% of the students said that they had no difficulty in using the unit learning plan at the beginning; 83.20% of the students said that the exercises of the unit learning plan were moderate and did not increase their learning burden. It can be seen that the unit learning plan is highly popular at the student level, and the possibility of applying the unit learning plan to primary school Chinese teaching is enhanced.

##### **3.1.2. Teachers' Teaching Concept and Behavior Change**

As the guide of teaching activities, teachers' teaching concepts and behaviors have a great influence on students' learning activities, and the teaching concepts and behaviors conducive to the realization of students' Key Competences are compulsory courses for every educator. In the process of teacher interview and survey, respondents all said that their teaching concepts and behaviors changed greatly when designing and using unit learning plans. In the past, they would unconsciously pay attention to the teaching of knowledge, and uphold the traditional teaching concept of "teacher-centered, knowledge-oriented", so the teaching behavior is also restrained. The unit learning plan makes it pay more attention to students' learning, "how to learn, where to learn, how to evaluate" have become the focus of consideration when designing the learning plan. In addition, teachers also said that after understanding the unit learning plan, their concept of integration and innovation is stronger. It can be seen that teachers have unconsciously paid attention to the development of students' Key Competences in Chinese.

##### **3.1.3. Schools and Subject Gradually Implement the Unit Learning Plan**

Due to the high popularity of unit learning plan among students and the change of teachers' teaching concepts and behaviors towards unit learning plan, each primary school in the district has successively carried out teaching research and observation activities to introduce unit learning plan into the classroom. Due to the colorful and interesting classroom atmosphere in teaching and research activities, other primary

schools and teachers have also conceived the idea of applying unit learning plan to primary school Chinese teaching. Since the first unit learning plan teaching and research activities, more than 50% of schools in the district are conducting unit learning plan practice research. At the end of the interview, the interviewees also said that not only Chinese subjects, but also mathematics, English, science and other subjects in many schools use unit learning plans.

### **3.2. The Existing Problems of Application of Unit Learning Plan**

#### **3.2.1. Design Aspect**

First, unit learning plan is difficult, because it involves a lot of unit content, and the learning plan needs to be directed towards the Key Competences goal of the subject, and factors such as students' learning situation, zone of proximal development (ZPD), and whether students can use it independently and efficiently should be taken into account. Second, without a model like a textbook reference book, teachers need to spend a lot of time and energy to polish a relatively complete and scientific unit learning plan. Even if the time, energy and wisdom of many teachers are gathered to design a seemingly complete unit learning plan, teachers still lack confidence in its accuracy, scientificity and operability. Third, some teachers may unconsciously abandon essentially "old" ideas or methods that are suitable for students' development in order to pursue formal "new". Fourth, because the unit learning plan has too many words, it may be a reading burden for elementary school students, who may lose interest in learning when they see a few thick pages full of words. In addition, students also pointed out some problems, such as: the unit learning plan guide part of the development of insufficient materials; The form of unit assignments is monotonous, and some of them are even repeated with class assignments, which increases the homework burden of students. The layout of the unit learning plan is too tight, and there is not enough space for students to revise, summarize and reflect.

#### **3.2.2. Using Aspect**

First, the teacher's misuse of unit learning plan. For example, the teacher did not issue the unit learning plan before class, and the students did not understand the whole unit, the period, and the content of the guidance; Students are not given enough time to learn independently, teachers suddenly teach in class, students' knowledge and experience are not enough, and the classroom effect can not reach the effect. In addition, teachers are not sure about the proportion and method of teaching, guidance and students' independent learning, which leads to the traditional teaching method of "teachers talk and students listen" which mainly focuses on PPT or textbooks, and the well-designed unit learning plan is idle. Second, students' misuse of unit learning plans. Students only use unit learning plans as preview materials and use unit learning plans less frequently during and after class, which not only violates the original intention of unit learning plans but also reduces the classroom learning effect. After class, students do not use unit learning plans for review, summary and reflection, which also wastes good learning resources. Third, teachers rely too much on unit learning plans, resulting in a rigid teaching process. Due to their trust in the unified and well-designed unit learning plan and their lack of teaching experience, some young teachers will rely too much on the unit learning plan in class, unconsciously ignoring the innovative ideas of some students, and the innovative

thinking is not guided, and the teaching wisdom of teachers is not developed. Fourth, the teaching process has "class hours" without "units". This is also one of the symptoms of teachers relying too much on unit learning plans. Some teachers only implement the teaching process in class hours, ignoring the correlation between class hours and class hours, and students' learning is led by teachers to the state of "seeing the trees, not seeing the forest", and it is difficult to implement the Key Competences goals of subject.

### **3.2.3. Other Aspects**

In addition to the design and use mentioned above, students and teachers also raised some teaching situations. For example, students pointed out that teachers sometimes pay more attention to unit learning plans than students; There are not enough interesting activities in class; There are not enough opportunities for discussion among students. In addition, some teachers do not balance the character and learning situation of students when grouping, resulting in the effect of group activities can not reach the expectation.

## **3.3. The Cause Analysis of the Existing Problems in Unit Learning Plan**

### **3.3.1. Teachers Lack Confidence in Their Own Professional Abilities**

As the unit learning plan is in the research and promotion stage, and the specialization process of the program is constantly updated, there is no complete and scientific model of the unit learning plan as a reference. Teachers need to design unit learning plans in line with students' competences development based on their own teaching experience and theoretical research. Because of the uniqueness of primary school Chinese, teachers need to consider both the characteristics of primary school and the humanistic characteristics of Chinese in the design of unit learning plans, which is very challenging for teachers. Therefore, teachers lack confidence in the unit learning plan designed by themselves, which to some extent indicates that teachers lack confidence in their own professional ability.

### **3.3.2. Teachers Lack of Theoretical Learning and Teaching Experience**

In the design of unit learning plan, teachers are confused because of the lack of theoretical learning and the lack of paradigm as a reference, and they pursue the form of unit learning plan meticulously, ignoring the student-centered and text-centered, and design a surface unit learning plan with "fake" situations and "fake" tasks. In the use of unit learning plan, teachers' missing teaching experience and theoretical research will also affect the unit learning plan classroom. On the one hand, new teachers' grasp of students' learning situation and textbook analysis is not as good as that of old teachers. Therefore, when "teaching events" occur, new teachers cannot bring unit learning plan into full play. On the other hand, some old teachers are inferior to young teachers in theoretical research, so they still use the old teaching concept and teaching behavior. If the school needs to use the unit learning plan in class, some old teachers will behave as "wearing a new hat, walking the old road", similarly, classroom teaching is still "seeing the trees, not seeing the forest" form. Therefore, the effect of unit learning plan has not been brought into play, and students' Key Competences goals are difficult to implement.

### **3.3.3. The Research Depth and Breadth of Unit Learning Plan Are Shallow**

Historical experience shows that any educational reform needs to go through a large number of in-depth studies and updates again and again. The success of educational reform cannot be separated from the firm heart, the support of teachers and the promotion of society. At present, part of the reason for the above problems in the unit learning plan is that the depth and breadth of classroom teaching using the unit learning plan are not enough. Although more and more schools and disciplines have joined the research of the unit learning plan, in general, the research is not strong enough.

## **4. Suggestions on the Optimization of Unit Learning Plan Pointing to the Subject Key Competences**

### **4.1. Strengthen the Study of Unit Learning Plan Design Theory**

#### **4.1.1. Design Tasks in Real Situations according to the Reality**

Setting context in teaching has become the norm in the current primary school classroom. However, some teachers do not make clear what context is and what context is effective for teaching when setting context tasks, and they set "false" context or "small" context with low relevance. The purpose of creating the situation is to highlight the practicability of Chinese learning, enhance students' awareness and enthusiasm in learning and using Chinese on various occasions, stimulate students' awareness of problem exploration and improve students' problem-solving ability, and guide students to use language in small situations with strong relevance and diversified big situations. The *Chinese Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2022 edition)* states in the "teaching" suggestion that "create a real and meaningful learning situation to highlight the practicability of Chinese learning".<sup>[1]</sup> Therefore, when creating situational tasks, teachers should contact the actual situation and pay attention to the authenticity of learning situations. For example: The problem to be explored and solved is real and connected with students' experience; students should really do things in this specific situation and task; students can transfer and apply knowledge and skills when doing tasks, and their thinking ability and problem-solving ability can be improved in this process; Finally, it is better to set some situational tasks that keep pace with The Times and students are interested in, so as to improve the "innovation" and "attraction" of the unit learning plan.

#### **4.1.2. Pay Attention to the Differences of Students and Design the Advanced Learning Process**

The unit learning plan presents the student's learning experience, so the design of the unit learning plan must put the student in a central position and think about the learning process from the perspective of the student. So that students not only know "what to learn", "how to learn" and "whether to learn", but also reflect the learning progress in the whole learning process. This requires teachers to be familiar with the teaching materials, curriculum standards and the learning situation of students in the class. The teaching materials and curriculum standards serve the uniform pattern of all teachers and students, and the differences of each student, such as the differences in learning experience, cognitive ability and the zone of proximal development (ZPD), will become the key

and difficult points that teachers must pay attention to and solve in guiding students to advance learning. After getting familiar with each student's cognitive ability and existing experience, the teacher constructs knowledge, thinking and situation, and designs a continuous "step" according to the process from easy to difficult. Students start from existing experience, and the teacher sets the "next step" according to their cognitive ability. Finally, students climb the "learning ladder" constructed by the continuous "step" and reach the peak of the subject Key Competences.

#### **4.1.3. Design the Overall Homework of Unit according to the Key Competences Goal**

The difference between unit homework and class work lies in its "unitarity". Therefore, unit homework should be combined with students' learning situation according to unit Key Competences goal. When designing the whole homework of the unit, the homework content should be determined according to the learning goal, the homework difficulty should be determined according to the level of competences, and the homework level should be set according to the differences of students. Unit whole homework is the integration of textbook homework rather than stacking, is the expansion of textbook homework rather than increasing. As an effective supplement to the textbook homework, it is necessary to pay attention to the moderate amount, moderate difficulty and moderate type of homework when designing the whole unit, so as not to increase the burden and fatigue of students. At the same time, the overall homework unit must not separate knowledge, skills and values, and strive to see the shadow of real situation and detectable competences in each homework.

The above optimization suggestions only involve part of the design of the unit learning plan. In addition, some additional resources can be provided for students to learn. For example, add colorful pictures to the unit learning plan to make it more interesting, leave blank Spaces in each section for students to revise or write innovative ideas, etc. Teachers can also listen to the opinions of students in real time in the practice process, and improve the unit learning plan according to the learning situation of the class.

## **4.2. Define the Application Principles of the Unit learning Plan**

### **4.2.1. Pay Attention to the Teaching Process and Strengthen the Evaluation Function**

In the process of teaching, teachers should attach importance to the performance of students' learning process and the evaluation of learning results. A major feature of unit learning plan is the consistency of its "teaching-learning-evaluation". Evaluation is not only the test of students' learning results, but also the evaluation of "whether they learn", "how they learn" and "what degree they learn" in the process of learning. Evaluation is used to detect the learning process in order to check the learning state in real time, so that continuous learning becomes the norm in the classroom. In addition, it also needs to carry out diversified evaluation: self-evaluation to arouse students' awareness of self-discovery and problem solving, improve students' autonomous learning ability; Strengthen the communication and cooperation between students by mutual evaluation, and increase the interest of learning methods; Teacher evaluation guides students' learning process, develops individualized guidance plans for different students, and strives to "evaluate according to differences" to strengthen the function of evaluation on

students' learning.

### **4.2.2. Reflect after Learning to Achieve Thinking Ability Improvement**

The post-learning reflection in the unit learning plan includes the review of knowledge points, the evaluation and correction of learning behaviors, the diagnosis of self-problems and help. The unit learning plan, which points to the subject Key Competences, has a post-study reflection part, so that students can review the fragmented knowledge at the end of the unit learning and form a logical knowledge system, so as to understand the essence of knowledge. In addition, students can use post-learning reflection to self-diagnose, such as: "In this unit, what am I confused about? The reason for my confusion? How do I solve this confusion?" Students' continuous reflection forces them to actively seek help from classmates and teachers, and correspondingly, opens their thinking to solve problems. On the other hand, students can also share their innovative ideas, achievements or strategies in the learning process with their classmates. In short, the learning process is a way to achieve advanced thinking, and the reflection after learning is another way to help students improve their thinking ability.

### **4.2.3. Clarify the Use Method and Play a Practical Role**

Practice research shows that some teachers and students misuse unit learning plans, so that the value of unit learning plans is not clearly revealed. In order to realize the ideal effect of the unit learning plan, teachers and students should make clear the function of the unit learning plan to train the subject Key Competences, and use the unit learning plan correctly. In view of the experience of practical misuse, the following suggestions are shared: First, the unit learning plan should be distributed once before class, so that students can browse the content of the unit as a whole and establish a preliminary impression. Second, in the course of teaching, teachers should avoid two extremes of relying on or giving up the unit learning plan, and do a good job of guiding students' learning process. Students are required to participate in the class of the unit learning plan, strive to "speak up when you have an idea", and do not miss any innovative ideas. Third, after class, unit learning plans are included in students' learning files, which can be used not only to store information but also to establish associations between old and new knowledge. Students can continue to study what they don't understand.

## **4.3. In-Depth and Two-Way Research of Unit Learning Plan**

In addition to strengthening the study of the theory of unit learning plan design and clarifying its application principles, education experts and teachers can expand the influence of unit learning plan and attract more subjects and schools to join the research of unit learning plan by setting up more lectures and teaching research activities focusing on unit learning plan teaching. Enlarge the depth and breadth of teaching research of unit learning plan from both theoretical and practical aspects. Any educational reform needs continuous updating of theory and practice, so does unit learning plan. In the two-way research process of horizontal and vertical, unit learning plan gradually moves towards a broader future.

## **5. Conclusion**

The application of primary school Chinese unit learning plan has obvious effects on the development of students' Key Competences, teachers' specialty literacy and the

improvement of school's professional quality. Although there are still many problems in the practice of unit learning plan, they can be solved. Therefore, for the future development of unit learning plan, we should have greater expectations and concentration, continue to reform curriculum teaching, and implement the concept of "changing students' learning methods, paying attention to students' learning experience, and developing students' Key Competences".

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