

Research on the Present Situation and Strategy of Kindergarten Children's Drama Education in Xi'an*

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Abstract—With the continuous penetration of the concept of drama education in the field of education, Xi'an Kindergarten began to explore drama education in kindergartens and curriculum practice in recent years. Through investigations, it was found that the children's drama education in Xi'an Kindergarten presented the status quo from "results-oriented to method-oriented, using drama technology to integrate curriculum, and regularly conducting drama teaching and research training". In the analysis of the status quo, it puts forward the idea of "considering the 'tool theory' and 'essential theory' orientation of drama education, paying attention to children's drama experience and expanding the theme of drama, with teachers improving their own drama and educational ideas", in order to enable drama education to be better combined with kindergarten education.

Keywords—kindergarten; drama education; status quo and strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Drama, as a kind of stage performance art, refers to the art of stage narrative performances in the form of body movements, stage language, music and dance, and drama props. When talking about drama education in the past, it generally refers to the education of the targeted and professional talents of the relevant personnel of the drama school. In this article, "children's drama education" refers to "education through drama". Its focus is not on stage performances, nor on cultivating professional actors. Instead, it applies the form of drama to the field of education as an educational content to make drama become a medium for teachers and young children to teach and learn. Lin Meijun (2010) extended the connotation of children's drama education to "an impromptu spontaneous classroom activity. The focus of its development is on the process of participant experience reconstruction and the "spontaneous" expression of its actions and spoken words. In a naturally open classroom atmosphere, a leader uses the skills of questioning,

storytelling, or props to generate motivation and encourage participants to use the game instinct of "pretend" to imagine through various drama activities such as physical rhythm, improvisation, facial features, and situational dialogue, and use their body and voice to express. In the group interaction, each participant must face, explore and solve the problems and situations faced by the story characters or themselves, thereby experiencing life, understanding the relationship between people and me, building self-confidence, and then becoming a free creator and problem, the solver, the integrateds of experience and the social participants." [1]

Drama education has its unique educational value, and its procedural, non-performance and participatory characteristics make it very suitable for kindergarten teaching. Children's creativity, cooperation, emotional stability, imagination, and communication skills can be improved in drama education. For school teaching, drama can enable children to participate more actively in the classroom, effectively attract children's interest, stimulate their desire to explore, enhance the aesthetic ability of art, and meet the educational and teaching needs of teachers and schools. The broad value and importance brought by drama in education has gradually been recognized. In September 2015, the State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving the School Aesthetic Education Work", clearly proposing to use the various art forms such as drama, film and television to strengthen school aesthetic education work. This is the first time that the drama has been explicitly proposed to formally become part of the school's aesthetic education curriculum, and drama education has received more and more attention.

With the continuous penetration of the concept of drama education in the field of education, since 2013, Xi'an has begun to explore drama education in kindergarten teaching and curriculum practice. During this period, the Northwest Music and Dance Center took the lead. Xi'an organized children's drama education seminars, drama workshops and drama practice teaching and research every year to train kindergarten directors and teachers. Many kindergartens

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began to explore drama education. In 2017, in order to better practice drama education in kindergartens, the four kindergartens with different cultural backgrounds in Xi'an became the bases for drama education practice. Up to now, Xi'an Kindergarten has been moving forward in the process of implementing drama education though with confusion.

II. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S DRAMA EDUCATION IN XI'AN

A. From Results-oriented to Method-oriented

1) *Results-oriented drama education*: In the early days of exploring drama education, Xi'an Kindergarten adopted a model that borrowed the script of the Jiangyin Second Experimental Kindergarten. That is to say, the kindergarten carries out the drama month and it is implemented in the field activities, such as the creation of scripts in language activities and children, the creation of lines, the production of props and costumes in art activities, the selection of music in music activities, and the creation of movements. At the same time, the drama activities are extended to regional activities, such as the construction of children's props modeling, the construction of the scene, the performance area to practice dialogue and plot. In addition, drama education is also integrated into the daily life and home-kindergarten cooperation. For example, the activities in the daily life set goals around the drama activities carried out in the class, and organize the activities; the home-kindergarten activities are to let the parents and the children participate in the drama month together and create the theatrical theme selected by the class. In the end, the children and teachers integrate all the resources of the previous period to perform the drama.

The drama education at this stage stimulated the creativity and participation of teachers and young children to a certain extent, and also recognized the recognition of parents. The kindergarten presented a series of children's plays such as "Duck Bike", "Three Little Pigs", and "Caterpillars Changing into Butterfly", etc. However, the problem in this period was that due to the geographical and cultural differences between Xi'an and Jiangyin kindergartens, it was difficult for Xi'an teachers to completely clone Jiangyin's creative drama. In the process of practice, teachers also lacked the basic knowledge of drama education. There was much confusion which was hard to solve in specific operations. In the drama education, the traces of children's rehearsal were relatively heavy. The children were still dominated by the teacher's will, and the children's initiative to explore and solve problems independently was sacrificed. Some teachers even thought that the role of drama education was to present a relatively good performance of children's dramas for the kindergartens or parents, and to focus more on the results brought about by the combination of drama and education. The original intention of drama education, the value that drama brings to children had not been fully explored.

2) *Method-oriented drama education*: The contact with the "Drama in Education" model has provided new ideas for the development of drama education in Xi'an Kindergarten. "Drama in Education" refers to the classroom teaching method that uses the skills of drama and theater under the guidance of the instructor's planned and structured teaching strategies, such as impromptu performance, role playing, observation, imitation, and games. [2] "Drama in Education" emphasizes the spontaneous and impromptu participation process. Through various discussions and plays, participants can use the body and voice to express the role situation in the present, solve the role problem, and then obtain cooperation ability, creativity and self-affirmation. [3]

Driven by the goal of "doing the most suitable drama education for kindergartens", Xi'an Kindergarten found that both in terms of ideas and methods, "Drama in Education" have strong operability in both education and teaching. This also makes "Drama in Education" become the most important mode of drama education in Xi'an kindergartens.

In this oriented drama education, the teachers of each kindergarten take the picture book as the main theme, taking into account fairy tales and so on as the drama teaching content. Teachers use picture books and stories as carriers and tools to enable children to create and carry out drama activities, such as the bottom class drama activities, "Step by Step, Keep Moving", and the top class drama activities "You Seem Delicious", and "Different Lucy", etc. At the same time, the teacher prepares lesson plans and design activities based on the process of "Drama in Education". The processes in the "Drama in Education" activities mainly include "warm-up games", "theme activities", "relaxation activities", etc. Nowadays kindergarten teachers have been able to use the "Drama in Education" technology to design and organize the drama activities more smoothly.

For example, in the drama activity of "Alai does not sleep", the teacher organized an "animal parade" in the warm-up game. In the theme activity, the teacher asked the children to perform "pots collapsed", "drilling the garden with mud", "bathing in the toilet with water everywhere" and other scenes, and discussed "What did Grandma say? What is her feeling?" "What mistake did Alai make?" "What kind of idea can we give our grandmother, can Alai not be naughty?" In the relaxation activities, teachers allowed children to lie down and relax.

This stage of education and drama is regarded as an effective method and used as an educational tool in kindergartens, assisting teaching and strengthening teaching effects. In the drama teaching, the teacher realizes the gameplay contained in the "Drama in Education", echoes the children's game spirit, and also feels the promotion of the children's knowledge and experience in the activity. In the design of the drama activities, the children's past performances under the control of the teachers were changed, and the prescribed lines were changed to let the children grow up in discussion and sharing, and learn the way to solve problems in inquiry learning. From focusing on the final presentation, to focusing on children's development, it can mobilize and awaken children's body movements and

sensory imagination by creating scenes that are difficult to achieve in real life; it can also make young children learn to communicate and cooperate with others, empathize with experience, use imagination and creativity to think about problems while understanding and playing; it is good for helping young children explore and express their beliefs in accepting the emotions and thoughts of different young children; it can help teachers to understand the "waiting for flowers" in accepting children, being no longer afraid that young children are not creative or unable to express. Teachers began to use "Drama in Education" to create a space for teaching and learning that is free, pleasant, development, and growth.

B. Using Drama Technology to Integrate the Curriculum

As a very comprehensive art form, drama has a unique advantage in the integration of kindergarten curriculum. In the process of drama education, Xi'an kindergarten teachers consciously integrated the drama activities with the kindergarten field.

In the Xi'an kindergarten curriculum integration, drama mainly integrates the technology in "Drama in Education" with the teaching in five fields. British drama teaching scholar Jonothon Neelands and others summarized 70 major categories of drama teaching strategies. [4] The drama techniques commonly used in Xi'an Kindergarten are mainly "fixed frame", "construction space", "weather forecast", "story magic wand", "sitting needle felt", and "speaking words", etc. When designing and implementing the lesson plans, the teachers integrate the field activities into the collective teaching activities with the drama as the teaching means, making the activities and courses more three-dimensional rich and lively.

For example, the drama observation activity "Howling like a wolf", the teachers deconstruct and reconstruct the picture book. In the combination with the language field, after "into play" as a zoologist, the teachers let the young children write the dog's notice from the perspective of the painter's main character, Michelle. After "out of play", the teachers let the children tell why the Michelle's puppy would leave home, using the "needle felt" to let the child play Lycra or Michelle to talk about their own words to train the children's complete language expression ability and the logic of language organization; in the combination with the science field, the teachers let the children discuss the difference between wolves and dogs; in the combination with the social field, using the "speaking words", the teachers let the children replace Lycra said a word to Michelle, which allows young children to understand others from the perspective of others.

The use of relevant techniques of educational drama to integrate curriculum in kindergartens is an important way for kindergarten teachers to get started quickly. It can be seen that in the drama integration course of Xi'an Kindergarten, the use of drama technology creates problems for teachers, constructs situations, triggers children to ask questions and think about problems, and provides a good strategy for creative expression. In this process, teachers began to break

through the traditional teaching methods and classroom process views, and changed the design of activities and teaching concepts.

The biggest advantage of drama is that in the virtual situation, it can let the children face the problem, put in the real emotions and thinking to solve the problem and express themselves. In particular, it has a very unique role in integrating art, language and society. However, in practice, teachers have also found that drama has certain limitations in the areas of logical thinking while integrating science and mathematics. However, for many years, Xi'an Kindergarten has been exploring ways to integrate in the fields. Nowadays, it has found a more feasible way in drama education. This is a reward for both drama education and kindergarten teaching.

C. Regularly Carrying out Drama Teaching and Research Training

When Xi'an Kindergarten just changed to "method-oriented drama education", because teachers did not have a deep contact with drama education, how to write drama teaching plans, how to set up drama courses, how to grasp the humanistic value in drama, how to grasp the process of drama, and whether the middle school teacher needs to give the child technical advice in activities, etc., are problems that confuses the teachers.

In order to make the drama education more solid and in-depth, the kindergartens adopted a method of inviting drama experts to enter the park regularly to carry out drama teaching and research and to train teachers. Every two weeks, the drama experts go to the Xi'an Drama Education Practice Base Kindergarten to teach with the teachers, and systematically train the teachers from the use of drama games, the study of educational drama paradigms, and the writing and design of teaching plans. Teaching and research has been going on for more than a year now. In the teaching and research, the teachers of the kindergartens have a clearer understanding of the development of the drama activities. In the communication with the experts, they have also constantly updated and reflected on their views on "Drama in Education", and have the courage to change the concept of controlling the classroom and children in the past. In the teaching, the teachers are dared to let go, put their eyes on the children, understand the children's creativity, listen to the children's words, observe the children's behavior, and constantly give feedback to the children in the situation. In the presentation of the drama teaching and research promotion and the drama class, the infiltration of the drama activities has gradually shifted from the form of drama to the understanding of the "class" and the grasp of the child's psychology.

III. SUGGESTIONS AND COUNTERMEASURES

Based on the analysis of the current situation of kindergarten children's drama education in Xi'an, the following suggestions and countermeasures are proposed for its future development.

A. Taking into Account the "Tool Theory" and "Essentialism" Orientation of Drama Education

There are two orientations in Chinese and Western drama education. One is the orientation of "tool theory", that is, the use of drama as a means to promote children's development or improve the effect of teaching; one is the orientation of "essentialism", that is to say, the artistic aesthetic function of drama is the main goal of education. [5] Xi'an Kindergarten drama education nowadays tends to be more "tool theory" orientation, which has positive significance for children's development and teaching promotion. However, if teachers only use drama as a means and tool, it is easy for teachers to neglect the children's needs in the drama and to deviate from the essential value of children's drama art in order to accomplish the teaching goals. Without a rational thinking about kindergarten drama education, the essence of children's drama education will not be tapped. When the drama and kindergarten fields are combined, drama is only an extension of activities in various fields.

Drama activities are a kind of aesthetic activities, and the content of activities is closely related to children's aesthetic sensibility, aesthetic imagination and aesthetic creativity. The picture books, props, costumes, etc. involved in the drama activities can stimulate children's interest in art. Teachers should understand the meaning of the essence of art in the drama education and cultivate children's aesthetic ability. Moreover, before the development of drama teaching and research, Xi'an kindergartens have many years of art teaching and research experience, and has a strong backing for cultivating children's artistic aesthetic ability. In drama education, it is a way to continue the exploration to let young children gain educational experience and gain aesthetic experience, and take into account tool theory and essentialism.

B. Paying Attention to Children's Drama Experience and Expanding the Theme of Drama

Kindergarten children's drama education activities are carried out for young children. Its development and organization are inseparable from the children's drama experience. Education will eventually return to the level of "I am myself", and the goal of drama education is to understand the communication between people and the outside, the heart and the world through the role play. [6] Every child is a natural drama playwright. The love of drama is born. They play the wooden bar pretend they are chivalrous persons and role-playing as a family with their partners. When the children are not aware of it, they have learned to introspect through role-playing and gain drama experience. On the one hand, the teachers of drama education need to take into account the original drama experience of young children. On the other hand, they should also clarify the difference between children as the main body of drama education in participating in learning drama and other groups, and guide children to understand the characteristics of drama in the experience and pay attention to children's characteristics in the development of drama.

The foundation of the development of drama activities depends on children's interests. In addition to the most

common picture books and fairy tales in Xi'an kindergartens, the theme can be extended to inspire children's creative inspiration, so that they can actively contribute in every available resources of drama, such as, interesting children's dreams, things happening around them, and even small stories they have created. It will be great to combine the experience of children in the process of perceiving the world with drama and make it become a unique drama experience for children.

C. Teachers Improving Their Own Drama and Educational Philosophy

The teacher is the implementer of the drama activity. The teacher's concept and teaching level of the drama education determines what the drama can bring to the child. If it relies solely on Xi'an's existing teaching and research and training, and lacks of examination and reflection on its own ideas and coaching, drama education will eventually flow into form. Teachers should first understand themselves, take the initiative to grow and improve themselves, and then it is possible to better support the development of young children. As a pre-school teacher, drama education should be connected with the theory of early childhood development, so that drama education can grow stronger in the soil of education. Although there is a fixed development process in education and drama, teachers have methods to find and have models to follow. If they are designed to meet the needs of early childhood development and the procedural, participatory and creative characteristics of drama, teachers must first understand the essence of drama education and have a profound theoretical foundation of drama. In this way, under the model, various drama techniques and guiding strategies can be flexibly used in different courses to stimulate and maintain the intrinsic motivation of the children in the drama activities.

IV. CONCLUSION

The significance of drama education is that every child who participates in it can be educated. Children can imagine, become, and create any person and thing in the drama, gaining recognition and affirmation of themselves and others in the situation. This is the most educational value of drama education. The drama education of Xi'an Kindergarten is in its infancy, and there are still many places that need to be improved and enhanced. Fortunately, the teachers and kindergartens have already seen the significance of drama education for young children. The sparkles can't be reduced. It is expected that Xi'an kindergartens will better integrate drama and education soon, so that more children can feel the charm of drama.

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