

Problems and Solution Strategies of Teacher-Child Interaction in Kindergarten Role Games

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Abstract: *In kindergarten education, interaction and communication between teachers and young children constitute the core means and realization of educational activities. It is found that the interaction initiation in role play presents significant asymmetry, and young children are often in a passive position; at the same time, there is a relative lack of emotional communication in the game, and young children are difficult to fully experience the fun and emotional resonance of the game. In addition, teachers showed more negative emotions during the game. What's more, teachers' timing and choice of methods in guiding children's play are inappropriate. To address the above problems, this paper proposes corresponding improvement strategies. First, teachers should ensure children's autonomy in play; second, teachers should pay more attention to children's emotional performance and psychological needs in play; at the same time, teachers should endeavor to create a harmonious and enjoyable atmosphere for teacher-child interactions; and lastly teachers should provide targeted guidance at the right time.*

1. Formulation of the Problem

In the practice of kindergarten education, role play, as an indispensable form of education that promotes the all-round development of young children, has always carried the deep expectations and visions of educators. As emphasized in China's "Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (for Trial Implementation)", "Kindergarten education should respect the personality and rights of young children, respect the rules of their physical and mental development and their learning characteristics, take play as the basic activity, give equal importance to both preservation and education, pay attention to individual differences, and promote the development of the individuality of each young child." By simulating social situations, role play provides a safe and free space for young children to explore, helping them to recognize social roles, learn social rules, and improve their self-expression and teamwork abilities in the process of playing, thus promoting their harmonious development in social, emotional, cognitive and physical aspects.

However, the quality of teacher-child interaction has become a key factor affecting the educational effect of role play. Good teacher-child interaction can not only stimulate children's interest in play and promote their active learning, but also help them build positive self-knowledge and social interaction skills. However, in practice, although many teachers have deeply realized the importance of teacher-child interaction, they still face many challenges in its implementation.

From the perspective of the subject of interaction, teachers often unconsciously assume the leading role in role play, limiting children's autonomy and creativity. This highly controlled play environment is contrary to the concept of "letting the child be the master of his or her own activities" advocated by educator Montessori, and is not conducive to the development of children's self-awareness and individuality.

In terms of interactive content, teachers tend to focus too much on knowledge transfer and skills training, while neglecting the fun of the game itself and the emotional experience of young children. As American psychologist Erik Erikson emphasized, young children's emotional experience

in games is crucial to their psychological development. Over-emphasizing knowledge learning may make young children lose interest in the game and even develop an aversion to learning.

The nature of teacher-child interaction is often characterized by unidirectionality and directives, and lacks the opportunity to stimulate young children's thinking through questioning and guidance. This is far from the viewpoint of "young children are active constructors of knowledge" advocated by the constructivist learning theory, and is not conducive to the cultivation of young children's thinking and problem-solving abilities.

From the results of the interaction, teachers often pay too much attention to the achievement of preset goals and neglect the individualized development and emotional experience of children in the process of play. This is inconsistent with the concept of "paying attention to the wholeness of young children's learning and development and respecting the individual differences in young children's development" advocated in China's "Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6", and may lead to young children's sense of self-fulfillment and fulfillment not being adequately satisfied in the game.

Aiming at the above problems, this paper aims to deeply analyze the status quo and problems of teacher-child interactions in kindergarten role games, and put forward solution strategies in combination with specific cases. For example, teachers can encourage young children to choose and create their own roles by designing open-ended game themes and plots to enhance their autonomy and creativity; at the same time, teachers should focus on emotional communication in the process of the game, pay attention to the emotional experience of young children in the game, and let the game become a source of joyful growth for young children. In addition, teachers can also use questioning, guiding and other strategies to stimulate children's thinking and cultivate their problem-solving ability. Through these measures, we can effectively promote the effectiveness of teacher-child interaction, enhance the educational value of role play, and lay a solid foundation for the comprehensive

development of young children.

2. The Status of Teacher-child Interaction in Role Play

2.1 Subjects of Interaction

In role play, teachers usually take the role of the designer and guide of the game, and this status often makes them unconsciously become the dominant player of the game. From setting the theme of the game, assigning the roles, to planning the plot, teachers almost take care of everything, while the children participate more as executors. For example, in a role-play game of "Little Fireman", the teacher would plan every part of the game in advance, including receiving the alarm call, rushing to the fire scene, and then carrying out fire-fighting and rescue, etc., and the children only needed to mechanically play the roles according to the teacher's detailed arrangements. This highly teacher-driven mode of play greatly restricts children's autonomy and creativity in the game. They are unable to promote the development of the game according to their own interests and ideas, and can only passively follow the rhythm of the teacher.

2.2 Interactive Content

Currently, the interactive content of role-playing games is generally biased towards knowledge transfer and skill training, to the neglect of the fun of the game itself and the emotional experience of young children. In many games, teachers over-emphasize the learning of certain knowledge or skills, such as recognizing firefighting equipment, learning fire escape methods, etc. These are important, but over-emphasis will make the game boring. For example, in a "hospital" role-playing game, the teacher may keep on instilling medical knowledge into the children, while ignoring the children's interest and emotional involvement in playing the roles of doctors and nurses. Although such a game seems to be full of educational significance on the surface, it may actually make children lose interest in the game and even become resistant to it.

2.3 Interactive Nature

Teacher-child interaction in role-play is often characterized by unidirectionality and directivity. Teachers more often use direct instructions, such as "you should do this", "you do not do this right", etc. Although this direct and forceful way can quickly convey the teacher's intention, it deprives children of the opportunity to think. For example, in a role-play game of "supermarket shopping", the teacher may directly tell the children how to place the goods and how to calculate the price, without leaving room for the children to think and explore on their own. Such interaction not only fails to stimulate children's interest in playing, but also may inhibit their thinking.

2.4 Interactive Results

As a result of the above problems, the interactive outcomes of role-playing games are often biased towards the achievement of the teacher's preset goals, while neglecting the individualized development and emotional experience of

children in the process of playing. In many games, teachers pay too much attention to whether the children have accomplished a certain task, such as whether they have successfully ordered or delivered food, but neglect the children's emotional experience and self-satisfaction in the game. For example, in the role game of "restaurant waiter", although children could complete the tasks of ordering and delivering food according to the teacher's instructions, their emotional experiences such as happiness, sense of accomplishment and interaction with peers were not fully paid attention to in the game. The result of such a game, although it seems to be well organized on the surface, may actually make the children lose their enthusiasm for the game and even become frustrated. Therefore, teachers should pay more attention to children's emotional experience and personalized development when designing role-playing games, so that the games can really become a stage for children's happy growth.

3. Problems of Teacher-child Interaction in Role Games

3.1 Asymmetry of Interacting Subjects

The problem of asymmetry of interaction subjects is particularly prominent in kindergarten middle class role play. Teachers tend to be the active initiators of interaction, while young children are more in the state of passive acceptance. This asymmetrical mode of interaction not only limits the initiative and creativity of young children, but also may lead to the loss of interest in the game. The reason for this is that, on the one hand, teachers' view of play and role perception affect the opening of interaction. Although most teachers recognize that play should be based on children's independent activities, they still need to provide guidance to children due to the fear of their imperfect physical and mental development. However, teachers' identity choices and behaviors when intervening in play often determined the nature and outcome of interactions. On the other hand, although children in the intermediate class already have a certain level of play and awareness of rules, and are able to play independently or cooperatively with their peers without guidance from the teacher, it is difficult for children to initiate interactions with the teacher due to the teacher's managerial status in the school, especially for those who are introverted. Negative responses or outright refusal by teachers further reduced the number of interactions initiated by children.

3.2 Lack of Emotional Interaction

The lack of emotionality in the interaction between teachers and children in role play is mainly manifested in the content of the interaction. Teacher-initiated interactions are mainly concerned with the smooth running of the game and the development of children's level of play, while paying less attention to children's emotional feelings and life abilities. Teachers' demands for discipline and rules during play are high and often accompanied by negative emotional characteristics, leading to children's refusal behaviors. In addition, when the children took the initiative to show themselves or express their emotions to the teachers, the teachers were less likely to respond positively, making the teacher-child interaction in the game more negative and passive. This lack of emotional interaction is closely related to

the teacher's view of children and play. In teachers' eyes, young children are a group with poor self-discipline and need to be strictly managed. Teachers' authority creates more negative emotions on both sides of the interaction, and the lack of emotional interaction is further exacerbated by the fact that teachers view play as another form of educational activity, ignoring the educational value of play itself.

3.3 More Negative and Ineffective Interactions

Negative and ineffective interactions occupy a certain proportion in role games. Although neutral interactions accounted for a large proportion of teacher-child interactions, in terms of interaction effects, these neutral interactions often did not play a positive role in the development of the game, and sometimes even interrupted the development of the game plot. In addition, teachers showed more negative emotional characteristics when initiating interactions and responding to children, especially when disciplining and dealing with children's complaints. Such negative emotions not only affect the atmosphere of the game and the emotional experience of the children, but may also have a negative impact on the psychological health of the children. Emotional negativity among early childhood teachers is a common problem in the current kindergarten day activities and is closely related to teachers' burnout. As teachers need to spend a lot of time taking care of trivial matters such as clothing, food, housing and transportation of young children, it leads to hard work and great pressure. At the same time, factors such as large class sizes and heavy teaching and learning tasks also exacerbate teachers' burnout, making it difficult for them to ensure that they can respond positively to children every time.

3.4 Inadequate Teacher Guidance Strategies

In role-playing, teachers' guidance strategies are crucial to the smooth progress of the game and the development of children. However, in the process of actual implementation, the problem of inappropriate teacher guidance strategies occurs from time to time. Some teachers often interrupt children's thinking and give orders when they are engaged in the game, or directly intervene to tell children the answer without waiting for them to think and try to solve the problem on their own. Others intervene without understanding the situation, leading to misunderstanding of the children. These inappropriate instructional strategies not only affect the process of play and the children's experience, but may also have a negative impact on children's development. The reason for this is that teachers have a high degree of control over children's play and lack careful observation and in-depth understanding. Meanwhile, teachers' professionalism is also an important factor affecting guidance strategies. Some teachers lack professional knowledge and skills in play guidance, which leads to too much randomness and blindness in the guidance process.

In response to the above problems, it is recommended that kindergarten teachers in the middle class focus on equal interaction with children, strengthening emotional communication, reducing negative and ineffective interactions as well as improving the effectiveness of instructional strategies in role play. At the same time, kindergartens should also strengthen the training and support

for teachers to improve their professionalism and game guidance skills.

4. Recommendations for Effective Teacher-child Interaction

4.1 Respect for Young Children's Autonomy in Play

Role play, as an activity with a high degree of autonomy for young children, is centered on the ability of children to explore and create according to their own wishes and interests [1]. In role play, teachers should change their roles from "managers" and "supervisors" to play partners of the children, respecting the children's wishes and giving them full autonomy. This means that teachers need to respond patiently to children's requests, pay attention to their needs and interests in play, understand children's behavior from their point of view, take a rational view of children's mistakes in the process of play, and face every interaction with children with a positive emotional state. For example, in a role-playing game of "Little Supermarket", children spontaneously assigned roles, with some playing the role of customers, some playing the role of cashiers, and some playing the role of salespersons. However, in the course of the game, one of the children suddenly wanted to play the role of "supermarket manager" and wanted to make some new rules for the game. Instead of rejecting the child's idea, the teacher patiently asked him why he wanted to be the "supermarket manager" and encouraged him to discuss the new rules with the other children. In the end, the children worked together to formulate new rules, and the game became more interesting and enriched. In this process, the teacher respected the children's autonomy in the game, stimulated their imagination and creativity, and promoted communication and cooperation among the children.

4.2 Attention to the Emotional and Affective Development of Young Children

In role play, teachers should pay more attention to the emotional experience and emotional feelings of children and give them positive responses and care. This kind of emotional support helps to establish a safe and trusting teacher-child relationship, which makes children more willing to take the initiative to communicate with teachers. When children show positive behaviors in the game, teachers should give timely praise and encouragement; when children encounter difficulties or frustrations, teachers should listen patiently to their thoughts and feelings and give them appropriate guidance and help [2].

For example, in a role-play of "Little Doctor", a child was depressed because of his role as a "patient". After observing this, the teacher initiated a conversation with the child and asked him why he was unhappy. The child said that he didn't like playing the role of "patient" because "patients" always need to take injections and medicine. After listening, the teacher did not directly reject the toddler's idea, but guided him to think: "If you were a doctor, how would you help this 'patient'?" Through the teacher's guidance, the children gradually changed their roles and began to play the role of a "doctor" and actively provide help to other children. In this process, the teacher not only paid attention to the emotional development of the children, but also helped the children to

overcome the psychological barriers by changing their roles.

4.3 Creating a Positive and Relaxed Atmosphere

A positive and relaxed atmosphere plays a crucial role in the development of equal interaction between teachers and children. In order to create such an atmosphere, teachers need to take a series of measures to reduce their work pressure and enhance their sense of professional well-being. First, kindergartens should appropriately control the number of children in their classes to reduce the burden on teachers; at the same time, they should strengthen teachers' sense of efficiency, reduce overtime work and complicated paperwork, and focus on children. Secondly, resource sharing among classes is encouraged to discuss and cooperate in accomplishing tasks in order to reduce teachers' workload. Once again, administrators should be tolerant and rational about teachers' mistakes, motivate them more, and care about their material life and mental state. Finally, teachers themselves should enhance their learning, learn to effectively control and vent their emotions, and develop regular hobbies to reduce occupational pressure. For example, in a role-playing game of "Little Architects", teachers discussed the use and distribution of play materials. By sharing resources and cooperating in the division of labor, teachers not only reduced their work pressure, but also increased the fun and educational value of the game [3]. At the same time, teachers also paid more attention to emotional communication with the children and created a relaxed play atmosphere through positive responses and care. In this process, teachers not only created a positive and relaxed atmosphere, but also promoted equal interaction between teachers and children and the overall development of children.

4.4 Enhancement of Play Guidance Strategies

Teachers' guidance strategies in role-play are crucial to improving the quality of interactions. In order to improve the effectiveness of guidance strategies, teachers need to pay attention to the following aspects: firstly, pay attention to children and observe their behaviors carefully in order to understand children's play process, interests and expectations; secondly, respond to children's initiated interactions in a timely manner and inspire them to think and explore; thirdly, make clear the timing of interventions and give appropriate guidance and help when children need it; lastly, enter children's play in the role of a play partner and carry out dialogues and exchanges with children on an equal footing. Lastly, they enter into the children's games as play partners, and carry out equal dialogues and exchanges with the children. For example, in a role-play game of "Little Restaurant", teachers observed that children encountered difficulties in ordering and delivering food. Teachers then intervened in the game and guided the children to think about how to improve the ordering process and the efficiency of food delivery. Through questions, discussions and demonstrations, teachers not only helped the children to solve the problems, but also stimulated their creative thinking and teamwork skills. At the same time, teachers also participated in the game as partners and enjoyed the game together with the children. In this process, teachers not only improved the effectiveness of their play guidance strategies, but also promoted positive interactions between teachers and children and the overall

development of children.

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