

# **Children Create Their Own Drama with the Help of the Teacher: An Action Research on the Curriculum Implementation of Theme-Integrated Drama in Preschools in the Mainland China\***

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## **Abstract**

The action research conducted here on the curriculum implementation of Theme-integrated Drama in preschools in the Mainland China aims to find out how, with the guidance of the teacher, children create their own drama works by integrating their experience in drama expression, drama creation and drama performance. To implement the curriculum, different themed drama activities are often designed for different age groups; for example, “Trees and Birds” for the class of five to six year olds. Such activities include three phases. In the phase of drama expression, children in particular roles have an opportunity to express their views of the surrounding world. Then the children are encouraged to create plots and scenes around a conflict where their role is dramatized, and then to discover and solve problems. This is the phase of drama creation. In the last phase, previously acquired experience in drama expression and drama creation are integrated into the drama performance. Through that experience children gain a sense of accomplishment when presenting their own *drama works* in front of the *audience*.

**Keywords:** preschool theme-integrated drama curriculum; drama expression; drama creation; drama performance; action research

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## Introduction

Early childhood education in mainland China exhibits marked regional differences. One of which is reflected in their educational models. For example, in more developed southeastern areas, the theme-integrated curriculum has begun to be widely adopted in preschools as a result of the western influence. In contrast, the traditional subject curriculum still dominates the underdeveloped western areas. *Guidance Outline on Preschool Education (Advanced Copy)* (2001) issued by the Ministry of Education in China defines five main areas of preschool education, namely, health, language, society, science and arts. Both theme-integrated curriculum and subject curriculum are involved. Generally music and fine art are the main subjects in arts, yet drama seldom is. In mainland China, preschool drama education often takes the forms of performance play, story performance and fairy-tale performance. Among them, the fairy-tale performance regards “drama performance” as the core of the drama education; that is, the teacher helps children to get familiar with the story or the script, assigns roles, and arranges rehearsals, and finally children give performances in front of audiences. Sometimes in order to further pursue the effect of stage performance, the teacher will make use of the sound track of the drama and ask children to act with the recording instead of speaking. Although the children are very interested in theater, they gradually get tired of it because of the repeated, rigid and passive rehearsal process as well as various higher demands set by the teacher.

With the introduction of the western drama education such as “creative drama”, “drama in education”, “theatre in education” (Rosenber, 1987; McCaslin, 1996) to mainland China (Zhang, 2004), relative amount of research in the preschool drama curriculum has been conducted. The preschool drama-integrated curriculum (Zhang, 2005), a course focusing on the children’s drama experience in such areas as art, science and society, finds its sources of themes from stories, music, art, film and other works of art, incidents and ideas. It draws upon the experience of the western drama education. This is one of the first explorations into drama education in China’s preschools beyond the limited use of only stories or scripts. Yet, the drama curriculum is still new to the country.

An earlier trial in the drama curriculum was made in Taiwan’s preschools by

Meijun Lin, who drew greatly upon the western drama education experience. Lin (2005) divided the curriculum into two levels—for beginners and for advanced learners. The beginner curriculum focuses on “expression and operation of body and speech” and the advanced-curriculum on “story drama”. Lin also studied the courses through action research. However, one major problem is revealed. There is not much chance for the children in the advanced course to make use of their experience gained from the beginner course. In this sense, Lin’s two-level courses are in need of a link in terms of children’s ability development.

In the West, dramatic play is a form of drama education for young children. Joe Winston and Miles Tandy (2001) implemented their drama curriculum and offered to young children in such a playful preschool classroom where children’s imagination and creativity are effectively stimulated. The teacher and the children work together in a cooperative manner. They make their own play or drama, design the focus or build the suspense. They also invite the children from other play areas to join in, comment and help solve the fictional conflicts that are often initiated through the teacher’s intervention. Such organization of teaching with the performance play area is similar to the practice in the preschools in mainland China. Lesley Hendy and Lucy Toon (2001) used drama within the preschool curriculum to help develop not only children’s social, cognitive and language skills but also appreciation for drama as an art form, which suggested that the creating role play areas and interactive story-making are important and the dramatic conventions to isolate, freeze or focus moments in the action are more suitable for use with four, five and six-year-olds. However, they used published and well-known stories as sources for inspiration, though they did not follow the story line and act out the play (Hendy & Toon, 2001). Therefore, my research aims at enriching the sources of child’s drama works.

The present research intends to explore the preschool drama curriculum as an independent discipline in China. Different from the traditional approach that emphasizes performance results, it aims to construct true drama education in which young children play a major role and are the true creator of the drama. Meanwhile, it will incorporate and further develop western achievements, including Joe Winston and Miles Tandy’s model. The issues to be addressed include: 1) How to incorporate drama education into the theme-integrated curriculum in preschools. 2) How to integrate the children’s

experience with drama expression, drama creation and drama performance within the theme-integrated drama curriculum. 3) How teachers should facilitate children to create their drama works. However, the theme-integrated drama curriculum in my study is not typical of Chinese early years classrooms; it is still in a pioneering stage.

## **Definition of Basic Terms**

The three basic terms in the theme-integrated drama curriculum adopted in the present research are, namely, drama expression, drama creation and drama performance, which describe the three interactive phases in the development of children's drama awareness. Herbert Reid (1943), the British art educator, stated in his discussion on art education that "the personification and objectification in play could become drama" (1993, p.222), indicating that informal play could be developed into art. "Pretend play" is remarkable since it is one of the first activities that can be observed in the behaviour of early childhood (Hendy & Toon, 2001, p.3). This ability (fantasy or make-believe) to share in pretend play was noted in children as young as eighteen months (Hendy & Toon, 2001, p.12). They tend to pretend to be other roles than themselves, such as "Mum or Dad", "doctor or nurse", "driver or passenger" in their pretending play or role play. Such behaviour is associated with drama expression, where children express themselves by the use of dramatic symbols. When children begin to create plots in their dramatic play, they enter the period of dramatic creation. "It is their expression in drama form, but must not be confused with drama or interpreted as performance" (McCaslin, 1996, p.6). Instead of watching, they give conscious performance. Finally, children's desire to perform for others grows, entering the phase of drama performance. In order to improve the traditional drama education situation in China where importance is only attached to drama performance, the theme-integrated drama curriculum lays more stress on drama expression and drama creation which are taken as a basis for drama performance. So children's natural drama instincts will be protected and the multiple functions of drama education are more likely to be fulfilled.

## **Preschool Theme-integrated Drama Curriculum**

The preschool theme-integrated drama curriculum is a series of actions centering on a specific theme, which includes drama expression, drama creation and drama

performance.

## **Drama Expression**

Indeed, movement, dance, mime, and drama merge in the expression of feelings and ideas (McCaslin, 1996). Geraldine Brain Siks (1977) thought that children use their bodies and voices to express themselves spontaneously. The most essential concepts that children need to explore and apply are fundamental in the role of a player. These include (1) relation, concentration, and trust; (2) body movement; (3) use of five senses; (4) imagination; (5) language voice, and speech; and (6) characterization (Siks, 1977).

Based on these research, drama expression in my study describes a situation where children express their individual inner feelings and thoughts about every role in an imaginary world. It includes physical expression and speech expression. Physical expression in my study has the following types: “imitation” is the ability to represent or reproduce various features and details of people or things in the use of five senses; “posing” is the ability to use body to create static shape; “control” is the certainty of the speed, movement, space, weight, height, size, distance and other relativities of physical activities; “imagination” is to create an imaginary world based on true beliefs; “feeling” is the emotions permeating all the drama expression.

## **Drama Creation**

Drama creation, simply put, is the creation of the drama by children together with teachers. In creative drama, the teacher is not concerned with the printed script but rather the narrative structure which includes elements such as plot, conflict, climax, denouement, characters, dialogue, and so on (McCaslin, 1996). Drama creation in my study comes from the opinions on the play structure of creative drama. So, it means that children confront dramatic conflicts, search for options to solve problems, constantly generate new ideas, and turn the inner thoughts into visible and audible actions. Drama creation includes three tasks; namely, characterization, creation of plots and creation of scenes.

## **Drama Performance**

Early years children are capable and skilful enough to perform with conviction and quality (Hendy & Toon, 2001). In addition, drama performance is indispensable for Chinese drama education. Drama performance in my study describes the situation where two or three small groups of children give performances of a story (complete or partial) to other mates in their class under the guidance of a teacher in a specialized performance space. They exchange their roles as the “audience” and the “actors and actresses” and they share the drama work created by themselves.

## **Method**

Action research was adopted as the major study method. The research team was composed of two cooperative parties—the teachers from the kindergarten in Nanjing, China, and myself. The kindergarten had done a research on the performance play, focusing on content, materials and the interaction between teachers and children. We constantly tailored and improved the design and implementation of the course by taking the steps of planning-preparing-implementing-reflecting-replanning.

The research started from September 2008 and rounded up in June 2011, lasting for three years (six semesters). The research was conducted with three classes in each semester: a class of three to four-year-olds (twenty-five children), a class of four to five-year-olds (thirty children), and a class of five to six-year-olds (thirty-five children). One themed drama activity with the duration of two to three weeks is done in each class in one semester. During the implementation of the themed drama activities, a weekly seminar and a term meeting were held. Altogether seventeen themed drama activities (see Table 1) were done. Even of which were co-planned by the teachers from the kindergarten and me (see Table 1 with the asterisk \*), and the others by the other teachers.

The thematic sources covered art works (stories, music, arts, cartoons etc.), incidents, phenomena, articles and ideas. The teaching contents also varied according to ages. The class of three to four-year-olds focused on drama expression but began to try preliminary drama creation. The class of four to five-year-olds focused on drama expression and drama creation but began to try drama performance. The five to six-

year-old class, based on further development in drama expression and drama creation, improved their drama performance.

Table 1: Preschool themed drama activities

Time	Class of 3 to 4-year-olds		Class of 4 to 5-year-olds		Class of 5 to 6-year-olds	
	Theme	Source	Theme	Source	Theme	Source
09/2008 -06/2009	Get the turnip out*	Story	The story of duckling*	Song	Travelling in Space*	Event
04/2009 -06/2009	The small tadpoles look for their mothers*	Story	The happy puppet	Articles	Going to elementary school*	Event
09/2009 -12/2009	A line of ducklings	Nursery rhyme	XiYangyang Greets the New Year	Cartoon	A tour on Christmas	Phenomenon
04/2010 -06/2010	The birthday party of a doll*	Song	The story in the restaurant*	Event	Trees and Birds*	Ideas
09/2010 -12/2010	The lovely mice*	Cartoon	The general mobilization in the submarine*	Cartoon	Make up the number*	Story
04/2011 -06/2011	Raining	Phenomenon	A story that happens on the farm	Story & Picture book		

## Findings

In 2010, the research in the themed drama activities for the class of the five to six-year-old children, which included three sections of drama expression, drama creation and drama performance, made noticeable progress. The findings of the research are illustrated in the activity “Trees and Birds”. The head teacher who had cooperated with the author had rich experience in teaching young children about drama education for three years. Altogether there were thirty-five children aged between five and six years old. And this class is the only class that has participated in activities of drama since Reception Class. The theme “Trees and Birds” comes from children’s ideas: What is the relationship between trees and birds? Why are they so happy? When the trees in the forests are being destroyed, what may happen to trees and birds? These questions made the children think what relationship human beings should develop with nature.

The themed drama activities of “Trees and Birds” set forth the following aims on the part of the children:

1. To imitate what the birds and trees look like and how they live by using body, voice and facial expressions;
2. To encourage children to think about the stories that might happen in the forests, and compose interesting stories through discussion, posing, acting, etc.;
3. To learn to cooperate with their teammates in order to solve problems;
4. To enhance their awareness of a harmonious relationship among people, animals and plants, care for nature and environmental protection.

The order of the themed drama activities of “Trees and Birds” (see Table 2) is based on children’s drama experience concerning drama expression, drama creation, and drama performance. The work of drama was developed by both the teachers and children.

Table 2: Themed drama activities of “Trees and Birds”

Number	Name of activity	Drama expression	Drama creation	Drama performance
1	I am a tree	posing imagination controlling		
2	Various trees	posing		
3	Little tree grows quickly	imagination imitation		
4	Little birds in the forest	imitation		
5	The party of birds	imitation imagination		
6	The happy times of the trees and birds	feeling imagination	characterization	
7	The visitor to the forest	feeling imagination	characterization	
8	The forest meeting	feeling imagination	creation of plot	
9	Tree and bird are saved	posing imagination, controlling, feeling	creation of plot	
10	The story of forest	posing imagination controlling feeling	creation of scene	melodrama

## Step 1: Drama Expression as the Beginning

For little kids, drama is one of the important means of expressing themselves. We have already known that children are good at expressing ideas through body, and acting through imaginative minds. The drama expression is the dialogue between body and minds. Children's natural instincts for drama make it quite plausible to take drama expression as a good start.

Drama expression is reflected in the first five themed drama activities of "Trees and Birds" (see Table 2). Firstly, the children played as trees and birds, made the freeze-frame of all kinds of trees and birds or imitated their postures by oneself or cooperatively. Secondly, the children presented the birds' life in their natural habitat, such as looking for food, flying, swimming and sleeping, and they expressed their understanding of speed, movement, height while flying as a bird.

In the first activity "I am a tree", it is seen how the children led by the teacher expressed the knowledge about the tree through drama.

**Introduction:** The pictures of the tree which the children had drawn previously. For instance willow, peach trees, holly, and pine were shown to the children for them to freely assume the model of branches after observing. Then the teacher led them to find the body as the trunk, the arm as the branches and the hands and the fingers as the crotch. Following the order of "freeze-frame" given by the teacher, the children demonstrated different models of "tree". Some were willows (whose waist curved sideways and arms drooped), some were peach trees (whose arms pointed outwards. Hands were made the shape of flower) and some were pines (whose body was very straight. Hands were raised with a small tower). **Analysis: These are activated by the child's experience of drawing pictures of the trees referring to their assumed models of the trees. But no further details such as the characteristics of trunk, branch and leaves were shown, as the children had just had their first try and had not received the teacher's assistance.**

**The posing of different trees:** The teacher showed the children different pictures of trees, such as willow, welcome pines, down ash, plane tree, wisteria tree whose

postures were different. Six children chose one of the pictures, assumed the model, and others and teachers helped them to modify details like the leg, the waist, the arm, the finger, etc.

**The gesture of trees in the wind and rain:** The teacher imitated the sound of the wind and said, “The wind is coming!”. A child danced with his arm and said, “Willow branches will move around.” Another child’s hands swung back and forth, and said, “The leaves will move around too.” When the teacher saw the children’s feet moving on the land, she asked “can the trunk move?” The children immediately stood still. Teacher changed the wind force several times. When it was strong, children shook their arms and waist (on behalf of the branches) with much strength. When it was weak, children waved their arms or hands (on behalf of the leaves) gently. The teacher said, “Tick, tick...it’s raining. What will the tree look like in the rain?” A child shook his arms with the “Tick” sound and the rhythm of the rain. When the sound of the rain was loud, he shook his arms with more violent movements. When it was small, he did more gently. If he did a good job, the teacher would invite him to perform in front of the whole class for others to observe. **Analysis: The use of the size of the wind and the rain helped the children develop a good control of the body.**

**The end:** The teacher played the role of “Bara magic fairy”. With the magic wand in her hand the teacher changed the children into a seed, a small bud, a small tree and a big tree in turn, and asked them to freeze the posture as a big tree. Suddenly, “Bara magic fairy” said, “The wind is coming,” “It is raining”, “The big trees,” etc., while swinging with different gestures according to the size of wind and rain. At last, “Bara magic fairy” waved the magic wand and said, “The wind has gone. The rain has stopped. The sun has come out.” All the children calmed down and opened their arms to welcome the sun. In the end, the teacher invited a child to play “Bara magic fairy”, and played the game again. **Analysis: From the teacher-assisted games to the games done by the children independently, children can enhance their awareness of drama experience, and further develop their new experience.**

**Teacher’s reflection:** *Before the activity, I was thinking of the difference between the sound of the wind and the sound of the rain, but I had no idea. However, children’s body movements brought me a little inspiration. When the wind came, all the branches*

were waving. When the rain dropped on the leaves, it was ticking and the branches were shaking. The children's natural reactions and my temporary inspiration finally enlightened the rest of the children upon the difference between the sound of the wind and that of the rain. **Analysis: The teacher realized that children's drama expression inspired her guidance, and her guidance further stimulated children's expression. In the themed drama activity, the children were not the trainee. They were creators with rich imagination.**

## **Step 2: Drama Creation as the Main Body**

In the present study, drama creation starts from characterization, having the characters confronted with certain conflict in a fictional setting, which provides opportunities for the children to think and solve problems as in the role. In the themed drama activity "Trees and Birds", the happiness of the trees and the birds, and the quiet life form a conflict with the pain of the badly destroyed forest, and the volatile disaster. In class, the teacher showed the contour map of "Forest visitors" for the children to visualize the forest visitors (the good people are hunters, farmers, small girl, small magic fairy, scarecrow, etc.; the bad people are robbers, thieves, etc.) who represented themselves by their clothing, tools, and the way they walked. The children were also asked to guess these people's intentions of coming to the forest. Then they held the "Forest Meeting" as the roles of the trees and the birds to discuss how to deal with robbers' and thieves' destruction. With the teacher playing the "bad person" or the "good person", who also took part in the discussion on how to help trees and birds to defeat robbers, thieves, and the children playing the trees and the birds, the children finally created the fictional situation of how robbers and thieves destroyed the forest. This is a dramatic style of learning, which can combine image thinking with abstract thinking, perception with creation, and imagination with action.

In the second activity "The visitor to the forest", in which the visitor became the focus of drama creation, the teacher encouraged the children to discuss who the good person (bad person) was, how he was dressed, and why he came here; then she requested children to express these roles by using voice and facial expressions.

**Introduction:** The teacher showed two sketches of characters, and told the children

that two visitors came to the forest – one being a kind person both the birds and the trees like, the other not.

**Discussing visitors of the forest:** The teacher led the children to discuss the good/bad person, and wrote down the children's ideas on the sketches. For example, the children spoke of robbers as bad persons: they had sword/gun; they also brought dynamite; they wore tights; they brought black bags; they wore black hats and black shoes; they wore blinkers; there was a skull head on their hats; boys often had beard; and they smoked. **Analysis: Children's first concerned the robbers' special tools, then moved to their clothes, and finally focused on their characteristics of physical appearance and behaviors.**

Children also regarded thieves as bad persons. They immediately considered the way thieves walked: they walked quietly; they were sneaky; they were mysterious. The children imitated the manner of walking of thieves:

C1 (boy)-Put hands on the shoulders. Walked with small steps. Stood still.

C2 (boy)-Head shrank, with hands in front of the head, walked slowly with big steps. Then both hands slid back and forth in the front.

C3 (girl)-Head shrank, nervous expression. Hands were in front of the head. Moved slowly and little by little.

**Analysis: Most of children's imagination and imitation of thieves were stimulated by TV programs and films. They were outstanding in mimicking the thieves' facial expressions, walking speed and strength, which all had some degree of dramatic tension.**

Then, children talked about thieves' tools and clothes: he had a key; he also had a piece of glass to open doors; he wore a black mask; he wore black gloves. Then the teacher led the children to further discuss what the thief would do in the magic forest: at night, the thief stole things when the birds were sleeping. **Analysis: When talking about thieves, the children mostly liked to depict them based on the real life experience. When the teacher set the context of magic forest, the roles whom the children played began to have connection with the drama.**

**Children dressed themselves as visitors of the forest:** The children took off their own clothes, and dressed themselves up. The good persons were as follows:

I am a little girl, I am looking for the little magic fairy to play games; I am also a little girl, I want to compare beauty with the big tree; I am a farmer, I plant trees and flowers so that the bird will have a nest, and the air will be much fresher in the evening; I am the little magic fairy, I come here to play the magic power because there are bad persons

The bad persons were as follows:

I am a robber, I am searching for money (the teacher responds: this robber is powerful, he wants to search for money in the forest, and also wants to catch birds) I am a thief, and I want to take away the children.

**Analysis:** Girls usually wanted to be good persons, such as a little girl and the little magic fairy. Some boys liked to be good ones, such as the hunter, the farmer, the scarecrow and so on, and some wanted to be the bad ones, such as the robber and the thief. Character designs showed different gender characteristics.

**The end:** Setting plot suspense. The teacher said,

There are persons liked and disliked by the trees and the birds. What would happen to them? I will bring these things (the crown, high-heeled shoes, and the magic wand, the hat, and real eyeshades and black cloak) back. Do you want to dress yourselves up and play this story again?

**Teacher's reflection:** *In this themed drama activity, I outlined drawing as the strategy, i.e. writing down children's ideas by using the schema they can understand. Such discussion stimulated the children's rich imagination, and aroused children's experience; moreover, children shared each others' experience.* **Analysis:** The outline drawing strategy can bring children's scattered experience into a whole. It is also convenient for the children to fully characterize the characters by using their bodies and dressing up materials.

### Step 3: Drama Performance as the Ending

In the beginning and developing stages of themed drama activity, children gained

rich experience in understanding and performing the roles, and in creating the plot; but they had not fully reproduced the drama, nor had they shown their drama work to the audience. Thus, drama performance became the representation and final integration of fragmented experience in drama expression and drama creation. However, children in the class of three to four-year-olds and the class of four to five-year-olds did not usually have enough opportunity of performing with the audience; only children in class of five to six-year-olds took part in the drama performance.

In the themed drama activities of “Trees and Birds”, the last performance, “The story of forest”, was designed to give children an opportunity to show fragments of the created plot to their partners. First, the teacher led the whole class to complete the performance during the process of creating plot, then to set certain performance settings. The children were divided into two groups, in turn to be the actors and the audience, and then they performed the drama after a simple dress-up. The following shows how the children completed the performance led by the teacher:

**Warm up:** Trees and birds in the forest. The music began, and the teacher asked the children to imagine: Who am I in the forest? What will I do? The children who played as the trees made various gestures in groups of two and three. Children who played as birds flew or stopped, looked for food, walked, or chased. Trees and birds lived happily in the forest. **Analysis: This is to strengthen children’s previous experience of drama expression.**

**Development:** New roles (the little magic fairy and the hunter) were introduced to perform the happy times in forest. The teacher played ‘the little magic fairy’ to enrich the physical performance of trees and birds. The little magic fairy said, “I often come here to play. Sometimes I can conjure the wind or the rain. I can also conjure the sun.” The trees and the birds changed their gestures in the wind, the rain, and also in the sunshine, and played games happily with the little magic fairy. Then, the teacher asked two children to act as the hunter, and discussed how the hunter hunted with the whole class. All the children were involved in the action of hunting. **Analysis: This is to strengthen children’s previous experience of drama expression and drama creation. At the hunting point, the teacher helped children to turn their ideas into dramatic actions, and improve their expressiveness of dramatic art behavior.**

**Climax:** The bad person came to the forest. The teacher read the narration to introduce new roles-- “One day, some bad people came to the forest.” Then the teacher asked who they were. Some children thought they were thieves; some thought they were robbers. The children first chose the thief as the role to create a story for acting. The teacher asked two children to act as the thieves and inspired the trees, the birds and the hunter to respond to thieves’ behaviors along as the plot developed in which the thief wanted to cut the trees. When he chopped the tree with an axe, the tree bent down with great pain. The birds flew toward the thief regardless of danger, and the thief waved towards the bird with the sword. Just then, the hunter passed by. He pointed at the thief with a gun, and the thief ran away. The teacher read the narration to draw a conclusion-- “but the tree injured with much pain”. **Analysis: The teachers and the children created the drama plot together. The teacher helped the children to develop actions by introducing characters and setting questions while the children answered teacher’s questions and performed their own story by physical expressions and dialogues created in-role. There appeared new experience for the physical expression of trees and birds, in which the teacher’s further assistance was necessary.**

**The end:** The happy life in the forest. The teacher played the role of “little magic fairy”: The little magic fairy appeared and she wielded a magic wand, “Bala Bala small magic wand, let the tree turn good quickly!” Some “trees” stood straight. Some moved their arms. Some of them shook their heads. The little magic fairy asked, “Trees, do you feel better?” The trees responded, “I feel better. There is no more pain. How magical it is! Thank you, little magic fairy.” The teacher got out of the role and asked the birds, “How do you feel when you see trees are well? What will you do? The birds answered, “I don’t feel sad any more. I am happy. Thank you, little magic fairy.” The birds flew around the trees. The music rose, and the trees shook slightly to the music, and the birds flew happily in the forest. The teacher drew a conclusion: Since then, the trees and birds lived a happy life. **Analysis: The end is mostly a further consolidation of former experience, and a happy ending is just what the children wished.**

Then the children in two groups played the story for the class. The performances of the two groups were not all the same. For example, in one story, the thief cut the trees. In the other story, the robbers caught the kids. The two groups evaluated each other’s performance. **Analysis: Right now, the teacher had already successfully solicited the**

**drama performance, and the children became the creator of the drama work. They appreciated and evaluated each other and learnt from each other.**

**Teacher's reflection:** *Children in the class of five to six-year-olds enjoyed drama performance, in which they could dress themselves up in whatever way they like, and perform the created plots. However, they sometimes hurried to do actions and neglected facial expressions and dialogues. This was why their physical performances were not as rich and subtle as in the drama expression. Another problem is that they did not perform as vividly as described in the drama creation.* **Analysis: For five to six year-old children, it is difficult to perform by themselves without teachers' direct participation, because they cannot remove the scattered experience obtained in the drama creation and the drama expression to the drama performance. However, their own performances are still valuable, because they provide children the opportunity to fully present themselves before the audiences, which can lead them gradually to a better performance with their limbs, faces, voices and language. During the implementation, teachers play a vital or a difficult role in the beginning. But with the growing richness and smoothness of children's performance, the teachers can have capable children taking her place, and finally the teachers will get out of the performance step by step.**

## Conclusion

The "theme" of theme-integrated drama curriculum supports a correlated and supportive channel among drama expression, drama creation and drama performance, which helps the children under the guidance of teachers to create a complete drama work; thus they can be willing and be able to express themselves by using drama, learn to create drama, and take part in a drama performance.

With drama expression as the beginning the drama themed activities allows the children to express their particular roles and their views of the surrounding world, and then to re-create the role, the plot, and the scenes of drama around the conflict, and to discover and solve problems; and finally come to the performance of drama, in which previously acquired experience in the drama expression and the drama creation are integrated. The children could then gain a sense of accomplishment when completing

their own drama work in front the audience.

The children and the teachers working together to create drama meets the dramatic nature of children, so that children become the masters of drama creation, and with strong support and help from the teachers, their drama work gradually transforms from the state of game enjoyment to the state of stage performance.

The present research differentiates itself from the traditional Chinese model in two aspects. First, both the children and the teachers are the creators of the drama works, different from the dominating model in the mainland China where the children are mostly passive. Second, the children are provided with chances to express themselves by means of body and speech, sometimes even in a “chaotic” environment, which forms a sharp contrast with the traditional quiet classroom in China.

However, there are also challenges for the teachers in this model. They should progressively observe, reflect and value the movement and speech of the whole classroom, and select the main ideas from all kinds of ideas from children. As in China there are twenty-five to thirty-five children in one class in the kindergarten, the drama curriculum may not be carried smoothly as one whole group. It is suggested here that small group activities are more plausible in the drama curriculum for the mainland China.

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此為上文摘要中譯

# 兒童與教師共同創造戲劇——中國大陸幼稚園戲劇主題課程實施的行動研究

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## 摘要

本研究是在中國大陸某一幼稚園進行的戲劇主題課程的行動研究，通過兒童戲劇表達、戲劇創作和戲劇表演三個方面的戲劇經驗的整合，鼓勵幼兒在教師的指導下自己創作戲劇。本課程在幼稚園不同年齡班有不同的主題活動。本文以5-6歲年齡班「大樹和小鳥」主題活動為例，展示了本課程的實施的三個階段：第一階段是戲劇表達，幼兒通過角色扮演表達他們對周圍世界的觀點；第二階段是戲劇創作，幼兒在教師指導下圍繞戲劇衝突創作情節和場景，學會發現和解決問題；最後一個階段是戲劇表演，即戲劇表達和戲劇創作兩方面戲劇經驗的整合，幼兒在「觀眾」面前展示他們自己的戲劇作品。

**關鍵字：**幼稚園戲劇主題課程、戲劇表達、戲劇創作、戲劇表演、行動研究

