

Research on Strategies for Establishing High-quality Teacher-child Interaction based on Ecological Education Concepts

Yuhan Li, Minghong Shen

Sichuan University of Science and Engineering, Zigong, Sichuan 643002, China

Abstract

The quality of teacher-child interaction is a key factor in the quality of kindergarten education and plays an important role in the overall development of young children. The core connotation of the concept of ecological-style education, that is, emphasizing the wholeness, dynamics and interactivity of the educational environment, advocates that the educational environment should mimic the natural ecological environment, provide young children with space for freedom, autonomy, exploration and interaction, form a benign teacher-child interaction environment, and focus on the holistic development of the young child and the awakening and enhancement of his or her subjectivity. From the perspective of educational practice, this study proposes that strategies such as child-centeredness, goal-task orientation, and the use of flexible interaction methods should be adhered to in order to help teachers improve their teacher-child interaction skills.

Keywords

Ecological Education Concept; Teacher-child Interaction; Strategies.

1. Presentation of the Problem

In order to accelerate the establishment of a sound education evaluation system and promote the high-quality development of preschool education, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued the Guidelines for Evaluation of Kindergarten Care and Education in 2022[1], while the Evaluation Guidelines put forward the key points of the examination of the teacher-child interaction link in the process of kindergarten education, and emphasized the need for teachers to pay attention to the provision of emotional support and pedagogical support for young children. Teacher-child interaction, as a key element in examining the quality of the kindergarten education process, runs through the day-to-day life of young children, and its quality not only affects the quality of kindergarten education, but also influences the development of young children.

The concept of ecological education promotes balance, organic, unity, affinity and rapprochement, i.e., the pursuit of interdependence and ecological organicity between the subject and object in the practice of education, the affinity of mutual promotion and mutual benefit, growth and construction, etc. [2]. And in teacher-child interaction, the concept of ecological style education focuses on emotional communication, experience sharing and common growth between teachers and young children, aiming to build a harmonious, equal and diversified interactive relationship. The quality of teacher-child interaction is the core of kindergarten's process quality, so it is extremely important to establish high-quality teacher-child interaction. Therefore, this study will explore the value of the ecological style education concept for establishing high-quality teacher-child interactions, and then explore how to establish high-quality teacher-child interactions based on the ecological education concept from a practical point of view, in order to improve the quality of kindergarten education and promote the all-round development of young children.

2. The Value of the Ecological Concept of Education in Establishing High-quality Teacher-child Interactions

High-quality teacher-child interaction points to the purpose of promoting the synergistic development of both interacting subjects, focusing on valuable interactive behaviors that can promote the development of young children, and has an important role in promoting the healthy physical and mental development of young children and improving the professional quality of teachers. As part of the kindergarten education ecosystem, young children and teachers form a benign interactive relationship in the process of synergistic development, which is of great value to the physical and mental development of young children. This is manifested in the following aspects.

(1) Placing young children in a position of subjectivity and building caring and respectful emotional relationships

One of the basic characteristics of teacher-child interaction is double-subjectivity, in which teachers and young children, as the two main parties, should have two-way symmetrical communication in terms of language, movement, and emotion in the process of interaction [3]. First of all, the concept of ecological education emphasizes the need to create a natural, harmonious, orderly and well-disciplined environment for young children. In such an environment and atmosphere, the teacher is dialoguing with the young children in a posture of equality, and is able to gradually understand the young children and enter into their hearts, thus establishing a two-way communication channel. Through this channel of equal dialogue, children can have the opportunity to express themselves, and thus teachers can obtain more information from children's expression, and further summarize more effective interaction with children in terms of content and methods, and ultimately enhance the emotional connection between themselves and children.

(2) Emphasize the natural development of young children, which contributes to the acquisition of useful experiences by young children

The concept of ecological education emphasizes children's subjectivity and natural development, and teacher-child interaction is an important means of achieving this goal. High-quality teacher-child interaction can stimulate children's interest in learning, promote their social development and form a good teacher-student relationship. At the same time, teacher-child interaction can also effectively promote young children's cognitive development. Through the teacher's guidance and questioning, young children can actively think, observe and express themselves during the interaction process, thus enhancing their cognitive ability and social skills. Teacher-child interaction under the concept of ecological education emphasizes equal dialogue and joint exploration between teachers and young children, rather than one-way knowledge instillation. Teachers act as guides, supporters and collaborators of young children, rather than mere transmitters of knowledge. Under this concept, children are no longer passive recipients of knowledge, but become active subjects of learning through exploration.

3. Deficiencies in the Current Teacher-child Interaction in Kindergartens

(1) Young children's subjectivity is not fully respected

In the teacher-child interaction, the teacher is obviously in an active position, and on the surface, the atmosphere of the activity is warm, but in fact, it is the teacher who sings the main role [4]. In the complex process of teacher-child interaction, it is not difficult to find that, although modern educational philosophy emphasizes the subjective position and active participation of children, in practice, this position of young children has not always been given full attention and respect. The reasons behind this are many and varied, perhaps stemming from teachers' strict control of teaching progress, fearing that any deviation from the preset path of interaction

may affect the overall efficiency of teaching; it may also be due to teachers' tendency to maintain a relatively stable mode of interaction for the sake of the children's safety and the maintenance of order, and they do not dare to let go of their children's freedom to explore and express themselves; in addition, the influence of the traditional concepts of education should not be ignored! In addition, the influence of traditional concepts of education cannot be ignored, which may inadvertently constrain teachers' thinking and behavior, making them still tend to adopt a teacher-centered mode when interacting with young children.

(2) Single form of interaction

Teacher-child interaction is a crucial part of the educational process, but at present its form is often relatively single, mainly centered on teaching activities. Especially in collective educational activities, the teacher as an educator organizes and controls the entire educational process and holds the initiative of teacher-child interaction [4]. In the educational field of teacher-child interaction, teachers may tend to use stereotypical forms of interaction, such as commanding or instructive verbal guidance, due to a variety of factors, such as limitations in teaching strategies, insufficient understanding of children's individual differences, or over-reliance on specific interaction styles. While these approaches have some effectiveness in maintaining classroom order, imparting knowledge, or performing specific instructional activities, they have the disadvantage of failing to fully respect and accommodate the uniqueness and individuality of each child. Each child has unique cognitive development, emotional dispositions, interests, and personality traits that influence his or her unique needs for learning environments and communication styles. Further, for young children who are energetic and eager to explore, the overuse of command interactions may act as a heavy yoke, inhibiting their creativity and initiative, and hindering their progress in self-development and problem-solving. For those children who are introverted and shy or a little slow to respond, continuous directive interaction may not be able to satisfy their deep emotional communication needs, let alone stimulate the spark of their thinking. Therefore, a single mode of interaction, like monochromatic colors, cannot paint a colorful picture of young children's growth, nor can it fully and effectively achieve the multiple goals of education.

(3) Lack of depth of interaction

Teacher-child interactions are only superficial, lacking deep emotional exchanges and cognitive collisions. This is not conducive to the overall development of young children, and teachers should fail to make efforts to explore the depth of interaction and have more in-depth communication with young children. The importance of teacher-child interaction in the daily teaching and learning process is self-evident. It is not only a bridge of emotional communication between teachers and young children, but also a key way to promote the cognitive ability and social-emotional development of young children. However, in actual observation, we found that the current teacher-child interaction has certain problems, and its depth and breadth have not reached the ideal state, but only stayed at a relatively superficial level. Teacher-child interactions are often limited to the superficial forms of daily teaching, such as simple questions and answers, instructions and other activities. Although these forms of interaction play a role in maintaining classroom order and advancing the teaching process, they lack deep emotional communication and cognitive collision, making it difficult to stimulate children's in-depth thinking and higher-order emotional experience. In-depth emotional communication is the foundation for building a good teacher-child relationship. Teachers may not be able to pay sufficient attention to and listen to their children due to their busy schedules, thus failing to understand their children's subtle inner changes and needs, and thus missing the opportunity to establish a close teacher-student relationship. In terms of cognitive collision, teachers may be accustomed to imparting knowledge from an adult perspective and seldom encourage children to express their own opinions and questions, which makes it difficult for children to be adequately challenged and motivated in the process of cognitive development.

(4) Lack of personalized interaction

In a kindergarten group education environment, due to the large number of children and the relatively limited energy and time resources of the teacher, it may not be possible to meet the individual needs of each child in the actual teacher-student interaction process. The spatial distance between young children and teachers affects their opportunities for participation: young children who are close to their teachers tend to be closer to them, and are likely to receive more attention from teachers and have more opportunities to interact with them; conversely, they are likely to be left out and have fewer opportunities to participate in interactions [5]. Each young child is a unique being, and their respective personality traits, interests, ability levels, and emotional needs present unique individual characteristics. However, due to the limitations of educational resources and teachers' energy, teachers may not be able to take into account the subtle differences and immediate needs of each child when organizing teaching activities and daily interactions. Under such circumstances, some children who are more introverted or have inadequate self-expression, as well as those who have not received sufficient attention and educational intervention, may feel neglected during the interactive sessions. Over time, the child's self-esteem and self-confidence may be undermined, and potential that could have been developed may not be fully realized due to the lack of targeted guidance and support.

4. How to Establish High-quality Teacher-child Interaction based on the Concept of Ecological Education

Teacher-child interaction is based on the "teaching through interaction (TTI) framework", which refers to the ways, behaviors and characteristics of the interaction between children aged 3 to 6 and kindergarten teachers, emphasizing the actual experience of children in the classroom [6]. The factors affecting the quality of teacher-child interaction include two main categories: subjective factors, including the basic characteristics of young children and teachers' educational concepts and professionalism; and objective factors, including the kindergarten environment, parents' and society's perceptions.

(1) Adhering to a child-centered approach and establishing a scientific view of the child

To do a good job in children's education, we must first establish a correct view of children, which is an important factor influencing the teacher's view. The most basic ethical requirement in teacher-child interaction is that early childhood teachers should take early childhood development as the basis, emphasize respect, justice, and humane care for young children, maximize understanding and support for young children, and promote the comprehensive development of young children [1]. Under the concept of ecological-style education, high-quality teacher-child interaction first requires the construction of an equal dialog platform. Teachers can try to put themselves in the role of young children's peers, communicate with young children in a more democratic and equal way, and stimulate young children's discourse and thinking ability. In the teacher-child interaction, they fully respect the personality of young children, and realize that young children are independent people with differences and uniqueness, and always practice the scientific view of children.

(2) Scientifically designed programs of teaching and learning activities oriented to goals and tasks

In 2001, the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (for Trial Implementation) by the Ministry of Education put forward clear requirements for teacher-child interactions: "Pay attention to children's performances and reactions in activities, be sensitive to their needs, respond in a timely and appropriate manner, and form cooperative and exploratory teacher-student interactions". In an eco-style educational environment, high-quality teacher-child interactions encourage independent learning and cooperative exploration. Teachers can stimulate young children's desire for exploration and cooperation by designing project-based learning,

providing open-ended questions and materials, and organizing group activities. At the same time, teachers need to play the role of guide and supporter in the interaction, helping children to solve problems, discover new knowledge, and promote communication and cooperation among them.

(3) Flexible use of interaction methods and continuous learning of knowledge and skills in teacher-child interaction

Under the concept of ecological education, the interaction between teachers and young children should not be limited to the traditional teaching mode, but should be flexible and changeable to adapt to different situations and the individual needs of young children. A teacher should pay attention to the emotional needs of young children and establish emotional connections through listening and empathy. During interactions, teachers can share their own feelings and experiences to promote young children's emotional expression and social skills. Secondly, it is problem-oriented. Teachers can guide young children to ask questions and explore the answers together. This problem-oriented interaction encourages young children to take the initiative in learning and develops their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. III Professional knowledge learning. Teachers should constantly update their educational knowledge and learn the latest educational concepts and research findings. By attending seminars, workshops and refresher courses, teachers can enhance their professionalism and better understand the developmental patterns and educational needs of young children. IV Skill Enhancement. Teachers need to practice and improve their skills in interacting with young children, such as communication skills, observation skills, and emotional management. Through practice and reflection, teachers can continue to optimize their teaching methods to support young children's learning and development more effectively.

(4) Procedural documentation of interactions to enhance reflective capacity

Under the concept of ecological education, teachers need to constantly reflect on and adjust their teaching strategies to ensure the high quality and effectiveness of teacher-child interactions. Teachers can learn about the actual situation of teacher-child interaction by observing children's performance, collecting feedback from parents and communicating with other teachers, and then make adjustments and improvements as necessary. Under the coordination of the kindergarten director, a scientific and standardized evaluation system of interaction quality should be constructed to broaden the monitoring channels and evaluate various behaviors in the process of interaction, so as to avoid various problems in the interaction between teachers and children. At the same time, teachers also need to pay attention to the updating and development of their own educational concepts and teaching methods, in order to continuously improve their professionalism and educational ability.

(5) Optimizing the various elements of educational activities to enhance the effectiveness of teacher-child interaction

Under the guidance of the concept of ecological education, teachers should pay attention to the quality of each element of educational activities, including the selection of teaching content, the application of teaching methods, the creation of teaching environments and the mode of interaction between teachers and children. By optimizing these elements, the overall quality of teacher-child interaction can be effectively improved. First, the choice of teaching content. Teachers should choose challenging and interesting teaching contents according to children's interests, developmental levels and actual needs, so as to stimulate children's enthusiasm for learning and desire for exploration. The second is the application of teaching methods. Diversified teaching methods are used, such as game-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, etc., in order to adapt to the learning styles and needs of different young children. Third, the creation of teaching environment: create a safe, comfortable and stimulating learning environment, encourage children to explore, try and create freely.

Fourthly, the innovation of interactive mode: teachers should adopt an open and interactive education method to encourage children to ask questions, express and share, while teachers should actively listen, respond and guide.

(6) Strengthening home and family cooperation to jointly promote early childhood development

Home-home cooperation is an important way to improve the quality of teacher-child interaction. Through close cooperation with parents, teachers can better understand the family background, interests and personality traits of young children, so as to design educational activities in a more targeted manner. At the same time, parents can also participate in kindergarten educational activities to enhance their understanding and support of early childhood education and jointly promote the overall development of young children. Establish effective communication channels. For example, regular parent-teacher conferences and home visits are held to share children's performance and progress in kindergarten and listen to parents' opinions and suggestions. Organize rich and diversified parent-child activities. Such as parent-child reading, parent-child games, etc., to enhance the emotional communication between parents and children, but also allow parents to participate directly in the learning process of children. Provide family education guidance. Through parent workshops and educational lectures, we teach parents scientific knowledge and skills of parenting, help them establish correct educational concepts, and improve the quality of family education.

5. Conclusion

In concrete practice, the concept of ecological education advocates that teachers participate in the interactive process with young children as observers, guides and collaborators, rather than the traditional authoritative dominant players. Teachers need to carefully observe and understand children's needs, interests and developmental characteristics, communicate with them in an equal and respectful manner, encourage them to express their own views and feelings, and guide them to explore and learn on their own. The concept of ecological education also emphasizes wholeness, believing that kindergarten education is not only the transmission of knowledge and skills, but also the development of emotional attitude, sociality, body movement, language cognition and other aspects. Therefore, teacher-child interaction strategies should cover these multiple dimensions to promote young children's development in a holistic way.

In the future, early childhood educators should further deepen their understanding and application of the concept of ecological education, and through empirical research, case analysis and practical experience, continuously improve and optimize the existing teacher-child interaction strategies to make them more scientific and refined, so as to meet the needs of young children's individual development. At the same time, with the help of scientific and technological means and information resources, a more intelligent and personalized kindergarten education environment is constructed, so that young children can grow up in a more high-quality and suitable education environment, thus realizing the comprehensive improvement of kindergarten education quality.

References

- [1] Kindergarten education guidance program (for trial implementation) [EB/OL]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A06/s3327/200107/t20010702_81984.html, 2001-07-02.
- [2] Liu Xiuli. A review of teacher-child interaction quality evaluation tools and their implications for early childhood education[J]. Journal of Changchun College of Education, 2022(06).

- [3] Zhang Yanping. Initiatives for Constructing Effective Teacher-Child Interaction[J], Research on Preschool Education, 2005(03):47.
- [4] Ma Lingya. Problems and Countermeasures in Kindergarten Teacher-Child Interaction [J], Research on Preschool Education, 2005 (04) 54-55.
- [5] HAMRE B K, PIANTA R C, DOWNER J T, et al. Teaching through interactions: testing a developmental framework of teacher effectiveness in over 4000 classrooms [J]. The Elementary School Journal, 2013, 113(4):461-487.
- [6] Sun Yan. Misconduct and Construction of Professional Ethics of Early Childhood Teachers in Teacher-Child Interaction [J]. Research on Education and Teaching, 2022(01).