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Dr. Carmel O'Sullivan and Niamh Price

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Perceptions of Play and Drama in Education in Early Years Classrooms in China

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Abstract

Set against the background of the Chinese government’s commitment to universalise early childhood educational provision, this exploratory study investigated the value attributed to play and drama-based teaching and learning in early childhood education from the perspectives of parents, teachers and Head Teachers from Suzhou in Jiangsu Province. Adopting a mixed methods approach involving online surveys and semi-structured interviews, the findings indicate that while parents expressed interest in dramatic play-based approaches to education in their children’s classrooms, broader societal and philosophical influences about the purposes of education prevail, and they were concerned about their children falling behind in a highly competitive education system. Teachers and Head Teachers were similarly aware of the value of dramatic play in young children’s development, but lacked the knowledge, skills and resources to implement a dramatic play-based approach to teaching and learning in their classrooms. The data support proposals for greater investment in initial teacher education and in continuing professional development in the areas of play-based pedagogies such as Drama in Education.

Key words: early years education, play-based learning, Drama in Education, Chinese education system.

Early Childhood Education in a Chinese Context

This inquiry was set against the backdrop of one of the most pressurized education systems in the world (Lucenta 2012). In a climate of expectation and pressure from parents on children to succeed from very early in their lives (Wang 2014), ‘Rote memorization, listening and copying’ are key features of Chinese education (Thakkar 2011: 53). Emphasising

‘academic achievement and promotion for the most talented, making learning a heavy burden and killing a love of learning for learning’s sake’ (Paine & Fang 2006: 282),

Chinese education culminates in the Gaokao or National College Entrance Examination. It is claimed that the Gaokao is

‘not just a test, but the beginning or end of a student’s future’ (Lucenta 2012: 76).

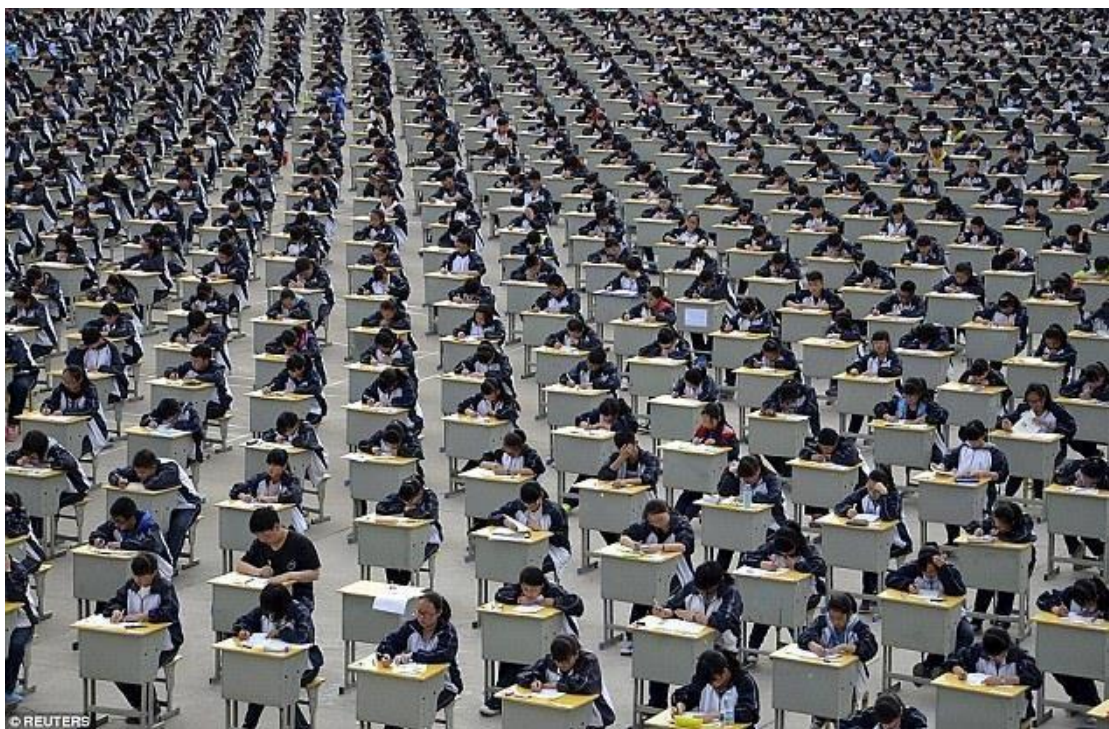


Figure 1: Students sitting the Gaokao (Chan & Chow 2015)

China faces additional challenges in its education system relating to under resourcing in rural areas, inadequate teacher qualifications, with only a third of teachers and Head Teachers qualified to high school level or below (Ministry of Education 2013), and unregulated private practices, particularly in preschool education. Following the trend internationally, China has started to reform its early childhood provision in an effort to revitalize its education sector overall and improve children’s readiness for school and success in later life. Researchers in China are calling for greater investment in the early stages of children’s schooling to help eventually increase

access to Higher Education for all (Xie 2015; Weiyi 2015). Recognising a link between improving the quality of learning for children and increasing access to Higher Education, the Chinese government has committed 50 billion Yuan (over 5 and a half billion pounds sterling) to transform early childhood education (ECE) which it sees as the first and most important step in transforming its education system (Chen 2015). It is acknowledged that the impact of ECE lasts a life time; positive experiences can switch children 'on' to learning, and negative experiences can have detrimental effects on their subsequent learning, damaging children's curiosity and motivation, and limiting their creative, imaginative and entrepreneurial potential in later life (O'Sullivan and Price 2016). ECE is not a new phenomenon in China, and some commentators writing almost 40 years ago argued that it is not talent that makes a difference to a person's life chances, but participation in ECE (Xingchu 1983). However, it is recognised that in reforming China's ECE sector, public feelings should be respected, and widespread support and acknowledgement for these reforms should first be obtained (Yingqi 2008). Recognising that school is but one element of the learning environment that is the larger society, Webe (1978) argued that education in China was an integral part of the process of revolutionary social change, and consequently required mass involvement. Li and Wang (2008) recognize that top down reforms employing imported ideas have resulted in a significant policy-practice gap where teachers are aware of Western style models but there is little evidence of them in teachers' practices. They argue that curriculum reform must take into consideration the culture, language, teachers' and parents' opinions, available resources and the prevailing education system. In recognising that ECE in China is strongly influenced by sociocultural changes, Zhu and Zhang (2008) suggest the evolution of a hybrid of traditional, communist and Western cultures in order to promote meaningful reform and development.

Despite multiple waves of reform in China since the 1980s to transform ECE

'into a Western-style, progressive model' (Li and Wang 2008),

little attention has been paid to the area of early years pedagogy and learning through play, including dramatic play. A recent study comparing Chinese and German children's perceptions of play in kindergartens found that the Chinese children remembered academic learning content while the German children associated learning with play and remembered more play events (Wu 2015). Wu's findings highlight a significant difference between these two groups of children's understanding of the relationship between play and learning, and she advocates a play-based pedagogy, which integrates learning elements in a play-oriented curriculum (Wu 2015). Three pioneers of early childhood education in China, Xingzhi Dao (1891-1946), Xuemen Zhang (1891-1973), and Heqin Chen (1892-1982) recognised the importance of play, creativity and 'learning by doing' in young children's development many years ago (O'Sullivan and Price 2016). Despite the fact that the importance of play and active learning in an integrated curriculum was mentioned in the *Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures* issued by the National Education Committee of the People's Republic of China in 1989 (Zhu & Zhang 2008), little attention has been paid to this area in policy or practice until

relatively recently. In the *Early Learning and Development Guidelines for Children Aged 3 to 6 Years* (Ministry of Education 2013), the arts have been included as one of five areas of study for kindergarten teachers, and are listed as one of the five learning domains for children (Health, Language and Early Literacy, Social Development, Sciences, including Mathematical Learning, and Arts). The *Early Learning and Development Guidelines* (ELDG) have been designed to support the implementation of the *National Outline for Medium and Long Term-Educational Reform and Development (2010-2020)* (China State Council, 2010) and the *State Council's Commentary on the Development of Contemporary Preschool Education* (GUO FA 2010 No.41). The ELDG provides guidance to kindergarten teachers and parents on educational practices that promote the development of the whole child. They are forward looking in identifying that children learn through play and advise teachers not to take curriculum content from primary school grades, highlighting that intensive skills training is inappropriate for young children. They offer a potentially rich and stimulating curriculum for young learners, in an approach which suggests that children take the lead in creative and imaginative exploration through play. While there is increasing interest amongst policy makers, practitioners and parents in the relationship between dramatic play and learning in the classroom, there is as yet no formal reference to dramatic play or drama in curriculum documents.

Learning through Play and Drama

It is acknowledged worldwide that play in ECE is a key facet of quality classroom provision, and notwithstanding the debate around definitions and contested discourses about different forms of play (Wood, 2014; Aras, 2016), there is universal support for the role of play in young children's development and learning. However, Vong (2012) testifies that while play as an educational concept has entered many kindergartens in China, it has not yet become a core idea or prioritized as a teaching and learning process. Hu and Szente (2009) found that kindergarten teachers are highly motivated, enthusiastic and well trained in encouraging active participation in large classrooms, but note that pressure caused by academic competition leads parents to prioritise memorization of songs and poems, rather than learning through play. In addition, Chinese early years teachers lack skill, experience and confidence in facilitating learning opportunities through play (Vong 2012), and are strongly influenced by the Confucian principles of scholarship, rote learning and academic progress. In referring to what she calls a 'traditional teaching culture', Cheng (2012) queries the extent to which a play-based pedagogy can be achieved in China in a curriculum with considerable external prescriptive objectives.

This study was interested in examining the extent to which a policy-practice divide is operational in relation to teachers' and parents' perspectives on implementing a play-based, active learning curriculum in ECE classrooms. It hypothesized that Drama in Education following the tradition of Heathcote, Bolton, and O'Neill, could occupy a middle ground between (i) direct academic instruction within a drill and practice tradition, and (ii) an as yet weakly evidenced play-based approach in China. Drama in

Education proponents claim that it provides structured pathways to learning for all learners in an inclusive environment, using a playful, creative, exploratory and participatory pedagogy with defined content knowledge. It has the potential to cultivate children's cognitive and non-cognitive skills within the framework of the *Child Friendly Kindergarten Curriculum* (CFKC) and the ELDG (O'Sullivan and Price 2016). Drama in Education can be used within a play-based pedagogy which supports learning across disciplines including literacy, mathematics and science (Fleming 2018; Braund 2015; Hui et al. 2015; Howell & Heap 2017; Tam 2010; Erdogen & Baran 2009; O'Sullivan 2017; Smyth & Smyth 2009). A Drama in Education approach acknowledges the centrality of language to expression, which is particularly important in the context of the relationship between oral language development and a student's future ability in reading, academic achievement and social disposition (Piazzoli 2018). Incorporating drama strategies into storytelling has been found to improve students' abilities to remember details and form a connection to the text, enabling advanced levels of sophisticated thinking to occur (Wright et al. 2008; Anderson & Dunn 2015).

The Current Study

Set in the city of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, this exploratory study sought to ascertain the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers and Head Teachers towards play-based pedagogies in their ECE classrooms, and to solicit parent attitudes towards a novel teaching and learning approach in China using the elements of play, make-believe, story and drama to create a structured and experiential teaching and learning approach.

The research objectives were:

- To explore whether play-based and drama in education approaches are features of Chinese early years settings.

- To ascertain the practices, professional skills and knowledge of teachers in this area.

- To consider Head Teachers' attitudes towards play-based learning and a drama in education approach in early years classrooms.

- To gauge parent attitudes towards the role and value of play-based learning and a drama in education approach in their child's learning.

Methods

This small-scale exploratory study adopted a mixed-methods approach, using content and statistical analyses on the quantitative data in an inductive process (Patton 1990). Qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic approach. Following initial coding, tentative categories were analysed at a deeper level to generate a number of themes. Extract examples were selected which

relate to the themes, research aims and relevant literature to explicate the findings. The study operated in accordance with the European Early Childhood Educational Research Association's ethical code and principles (Bertram et al. 2016), and informed consent was received from all participants. Ethical approval was received from The School of Education in Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

Four groups of participants contributed to this study:

1. Self-selecting Chinese parents completed an 18 item online questionnaire.
2. Five Chinese Head Teachers completed a 14 item online questionnaire.
3. Semi-structured individual interviews (30 minutes) with six self-selecting Chinese parents.
4. Two focus group interviews (45 minutes) with three Chinese teachers, pre and post observing a demonstration lesson delivered by one of the authors who was an experienced Irish early years teacher working in an international school in Suzhou and who used drama regularly in her day to day teaching.

The participants were chosen based on the following criteria:

- Participating parents must be Chinese nationals with children primarily aged between 3-7 years.
- Participating teachers must have been trained in China with experience working in local Chinese state schools and be currently teaching an early years class.
- Participating Head Teachers must be in a school leadership position currently within the municipality of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China. The school they work in must have early years classes.

An online semi-structured questionnaire was made available to Chinese parents of young children in the local public school system. Parents were invited to share their opinions on the value of play in educational settings and as a learning medium. Based on the evidence from the literature in China, learning through play and drama was hypothesised as a new concept for a large majority of responding parents. Therefore, definitions of key terms and examples were provided in most sections (see Appendix 1). Invitations to participate were written in Mandarin and published in the local newspaper, a local newsletter and also placed on local school noticeboards. An online instrument was preferred over the traditional survey owing to access issues and language barriers. Li & Wang (2008) report that the internet has increasingly become the preferred means of information exchange in China, highlighting the availability of broadband and the anonymous nature of the internet in encouraging people to express their opinions freely as key advantages for its use in educational research. An online semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was completed by five Chinese Head Teachers in local public schools exploring their knowledge and practices in relation to play and Drama in Education. Contact was

initially established with one Head Teacher, who sent the survey link to her network of colleagues. Informed by the literature, it was assumed that these Head Teachers were familiar with play and its importance in ECE. However, we were interested in finding out whether these Head Teachers knew anything about dramatic play or learning through drama, and also exploring the extent to which play was facilitated and valued in their schools. All respondents were practicing, in-service school Heads. A Chinese national fluent in English translated data from both questionnaires.

Six self-selecting Chinese parents responded to an advertisement (published in Mandarin in the local newspaper) to participate in a semi-structured individual interview of approximately 30 minutes duration, about their knowledge and opinions of play and drama in ECE. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Three of the parents had some English and a translator was present at all interviews. Table 1 summarises the respondents' profiles (pseudonyms are used).

Table 1

Parent Name	Age of Parent	Education Level	Profession	Family
Ling	29	University	Business Administrator	Mother to a 26 month old daughter
Wu	32	University	English Teacher	Mother to a 33 month old daughter
Mei	33	Community College	Secretary	Mother to a 7 year old son
Yufeng	34	Community College	Secretary	Mother to 25 month old twin boys
Fen	36	University	Elementary Teacher / High School Councillor	Mother to a 4 year old son
Amber	37	University	Human Resources	Mother to a 9 year old son

Finally, three Chinese early years teachers participated in a pre- and post-demonstration lesson focus group interview about their knowledge, practices and attitudes towards play and drama-based learning. The teachers were invited to observe a 30-minute exemplar lesson (see Appendix 3) based on a Drama in Education approach (*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*). This lesson was conducted in one of the teacher's classrooms in an international school, where all of the children were Chinese nationals but spoke a little English. A follow up focus group interview was held shortly after the lesson to critically appraise the approach and discuss whether a Drama in Education method could be applied in a Chinese context. Both interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. All of the teachers spoke

English and a translator was available if required. Pseudonyms are used in this study. Jenny had been teaching for 18 years, and qualified after a two-year training programme. Susie has been teaching for 12 years, and Joy for nine years. Both Susie and Joy qualified after three year training programmes. These teachers had experience of working in the public school system, but at the time of the study were working in the same international school as one of the researchers. All three stated that they had not received any CPD in the area of play while working in the public school system, but had attended a one-day International Baccalaureate training course on play-based learning after having moved to the international school.

Results

Parent Survey Data

51 respondents completed the online parent survey. A majority of respondents (31) were parents of children aged between 3-6 years. Most parents (91.8%) reported that their child had opportunities to play at home, with 76.6% indicating opportunities to play every day. A combination of indoor and outdoor play was reported (68.9%); with 31.1% citing mostly indoor play, and no respondent selecting the option of mostly outdoor play. A significant majority of children have play opportunities at school or at day-care (84%). Over a third of parents (36.4%) stated that their children play mostly with other children, while 40.9% play with parents, and 22.7% play mostly on their own. A majority of parents agreed that play is essential and may help in the social, emotional and personal development of their child, positively impacting on cognition and learning as can be seen in Figures 2 to 5.

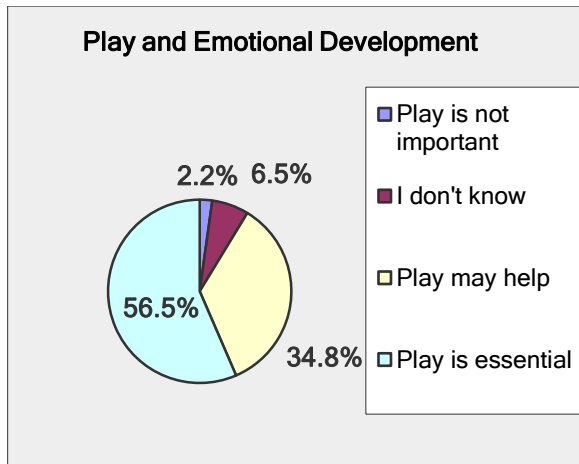


Figure 2: Play and emotional development

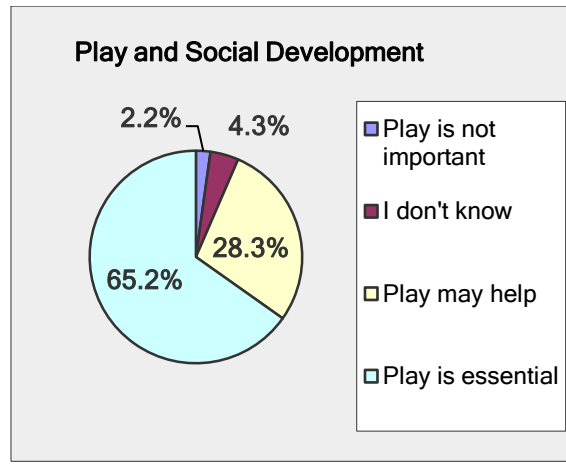


Figure 3: Play and social development

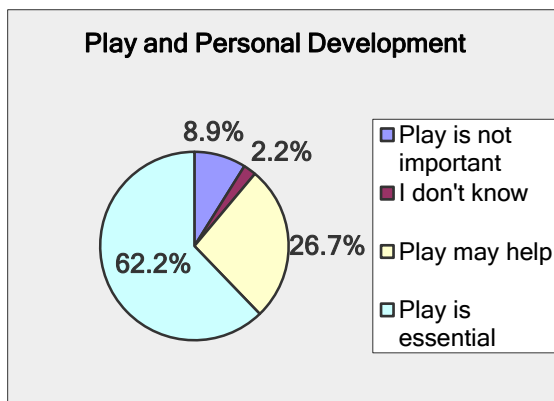


Figure 4: Play and personal development

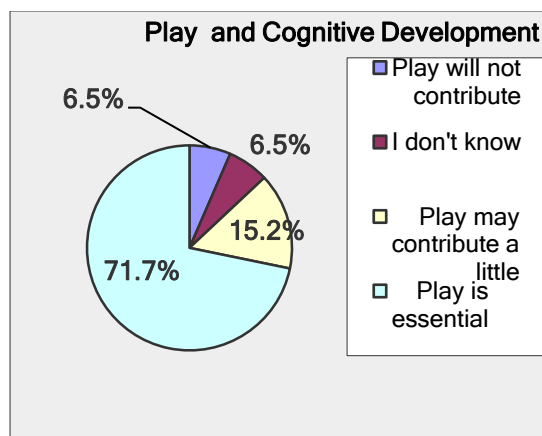


Figure 5: Play and cognitive development

However, when asked about how their child learns best at school, parents reported that a combination of rote and collaborative learning is the most effective way their child learns (67%). At the other ends of the spectrum, 13% selected rote only and 14% indicated collaborative learning only. Whilst the majority affirmed the positive role of play in their child's holistic development, they suggested that play in school should happen only at break times or once or twice a week. When asked to comment on two different ways to learn about the number three, one reflecting a traditional approach and the other describing a dramatic play-based approach using the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, over 84% chose the dramatic play approach.

Head Teacher Survey Data

Five Heads completed the online survey. All affirmed that play is on the timetable for children in the Early Years classes at their schools. Children have opportunities to play indoors and outdoors, with an emphasis on recreational play in the classroom. When asked which types of play they would expect teachers to use, four Heads supported the use of socio-dramatic play in the early years, acknowledging that play is beneficial for the social, emotional, personal and cognitive development of

children, and three reported that they would expect constructive play, exploratory play, manipulative play, physical play and games with rules to be used in their ECE teachers' classrooms. However, all insisted that young pupils should experience the curriculum and their learning through direct teacher instruction as the main teaching method with play relegated principally to recreation during free periods.

In relation to their attitude to teacher training in play pedagogy, all expressed a belief that teachers do not need a high level of pedagogical knowledge in the area of play. When asked about planning for play, only one indicated that play can be planned for, with most referring to it as a spontaneous activity. Additional comments suggested that

‘孩子的主要课程比游戏更重要。学术的主题是我们如何评估孩子们’
 。 *The core subjects are more important. It is how the children are assessed'* (PT2);

‘游戏过程中,孩子应该成为游戏的主体,教师的职责是从旁观察,确保孩子从游戏中充分体验和学习’
 。 *I think there are more important things to learn in training. Teachers need to monitor the play, but the children will be the ones playing'* (PT4).

This is commensurate with the role of teacher observation and formal recording of children's behaviour during playtime which features in teacher training programmes in China. However, whilst not endorsing a role for teachers in children's dramatic play, one Head noted that

‘孩子成为教学的主导,教师了解孩子的需求从而安排教学材料’
 。 *The children tell us what to do and we provide the materials. We must open our minds to the children'* (PT5).

Based on the description provided in the survey, Drama in education was reported as a pedagogy that is not currently used in their schools and was unfamiliar to the Heads, with only two suggesting that it may be somewhat useful if used in conjunction with other teaching strategies. This is in contrast to the parent data where 84% expressed interest in a Drama in Education approach. With classes typically ranging from 30-50 children, the Heads were concerned about large class sizes and space in which to pursue dramatic play:

‘孩子的数量太多会成为一个难题。 *With too many children, this is difficult'* (PT1); ‘太多孩子会导致教学空间的缺乏’
 。 *There are too many children to do it. There is not enough space* (PT5).

The OECD estimates that the average Chinese class size in the State elementary system is 38 students, but the range extends to between 50 and 60 children in many areas (Paton, 2014).

Parent Interview Data

Data from the six parent interviews is presented under three themes which emerged from the data analysis: cultural pressure; conflicting perceptions of the Chinese public education system; and perceptions of a Drama in Education teaching and learning approach.

(1) Cultural Pressure

The word 'pressure' emerged throughout the data, relating particularly to a culture of competition amongst parents. For example, Wu noted that parents tend to make their children learn poetry, songs and sentences to '*amaze people*', without them understanding their true meaning. Ling agreed, observing that parents routinely compare what their child knows against the knowledge of other children. The dominant source of pressure appeared to be the family unit, with Ling observing that

'we [parents] put a lot of hopes and expectations on them ... so that they could get more achievements. They could be someone really important, famous or something. I can't say it's not right'.

This sentiment is echoed by Amber, who believes that

'most Chinese parents... put too much personal wish on a kid. The little kid'.

The notion of passivity as a desirable trait among children was also evident in the data with four of the six parents discussing it. For example, Ling commented that 70-80% of Chinese parents would prefer a child who does not ask many questions and accepts what they are told.

The data reveal that worries about the future and a desire for children to succeed leads parents to place high expectations on their child. Amber noted that her son's classmates have all of their free time scheduled around extra-curricular classes and

'have few times playing' as a result'.

When asked why this might be, she replied that it is

'Success. They need success. They want family to be success and all they wish for is put on the little kid. They don't think he is human'.

She shared a story about her son's 7-year-old friend who wished he could retire like his grandfather because of the pressure he feels. In contrast, while Mei's interview reflected her concerns about the '*strict examinations*' her first grade son will need to undertake to enter high school and university, she accepted this pressure as a regrettable but necessary feature of Chinese life. When asked whether it is important that he participates in art and music lessons available at his school, she shook her head and replied '*I don't think so*', and highlighted the importance of Science, English and Mathematics which will help him to gain entry to university.

The data reveal a certain amount of pressure inherent in the schooling system itself, with Fen noting

'I don't want my son in the future to be just like A or B or C or D, as one of the alphabet. You know, I want him to be him. He is special, he is unique'.

However, each respondent expressed conflicting opinions during their interview. On the one hand, they appeared to espouse a child-centred approach to education, but on the other, they were keenly aware of the competitive nature of the education system. Ling noted that in the 1970s and '80s,

'not every Chinese child had the right to go to school and to do schooling, to have money, a chance to get education, to get higher education',

and she argued that there is an expectation on students now to make the most of the opportunities they have. The competitive nature of parents, combined with exam expectations, were cited as reasons why

'most of the Chinese parents would prefer more direct instruction, instead of spending a lot of time to make some realise who they are as people, to find out their own nature' (Ling).

She added that in 10 to 30 years time, Chinese parents might realise that allowing children to inquire for themselves is a better way of learning, but in discussing a creative versus traditional Chinese approach to teaching, Fen stated:

I am sure in the future they [Chinese parents] will like it, but right now they only think this [the current system] is the best way for them. So it needs time to make them to realize, and at the end, they will find that something we hold for so many years is totally wrong. I am sure one day they will be here with me, but it just needs time.

Several respondents referred to the need for better teacher education to accommodate change and help shift parents' mentality in the future but they were unanimous that such thoughts and aspirations are not for now. Their comments demonstrated that the larger socio-historical, political and economic realities of today dominated the perspectives of this group of parents.

(2) The Chinese Public Education System and Conflicting Perceptions

There was consensus among four of the six parents that the current public education system is based on the principle that the teachers tell their child what they need to know, and are typically taught just one way of doing something, with few opportunities to think independently. Fen likened the system to children being placed in a 'square box' where non-conformity is not acceptable. Yufeng suggested that the teacher should be

'a mentor, guiding understandings',

rather than the current situation where the teachers

'always have the standard answer. Most Chinese education seems just tell them to do one thing by the one way... never have the option to discover by themselves'.

The lack of creativity in the public education system was criticised by all parents, some of whom believed that children should

'study in a creative way their whole life' (Mei).

However, they acknowledged that this was at odds with the expectations of the Chinese education system and in particular the standard examination responses it demanded from students. There was strong consensus amongst parent interviewees of the importance of nurturing the child as an individual rather than viewing him/her as a component in the system. At odds with the traditional notion of children passively accepting what they are told, all parents reinforced the importance of discovery learning and individuality where children are not just seen as the *'belongings'* of the parent (Yufeng), a consequence of the one child family policy (Zhou, 2018).

The same degree of internal conflict was evident in this discussion however, where on the one hand Wu, for example, compared China to other countries, noting that elsewhere educators guide students *'step by step'* in their learning, whereas in China,

'the children are rushed'.

But on the other hand, she expressed a worry that if her child spends one week learning to count from 0-5, and other children can count from 0-60,

'this will influence their future learning' (Wu).

Despite her knowledge and declared empathy with Western approaches, Wu's comments reveal her concern about an experiential approach to learning, rather than pushing ahead to keep pace with other children in China. Data from five of the six parents revealed a similar tension between wanting to have a more child-centred approach but experiencing a genuine fear of falling behind in the Chinese education system, which parents believed would be detrimental to their child's future. All agreed that academic success is expected from the very beginning of their schooling.

(3) Perceptions of a Drama in Education Approach

A Drama in Education approach was orally described by one of the researchers to the parents using an exemplar lesson based on Goldilocks and the Three Bears, which is a well-known story in China. This researcher is an experienced Irish teacher

who uses dramatic play and Drama in Education in her ECE classes. All reported being receptive to this way of teaching, and attributed their positivity and enthusiasm towards it as a reflection of its attempt to break away from more traditional practices of children being told what to think and do, and enabling them to inquire collaboratively. For example, Yufeng noted:

Personally, I like to get different answers. So if you choose three different ways to teach them, for me that would be much more acceptable because not everything has just has one way to do it. So children can discover, they can find their own solution to solve the problem.

Again, the value of a discovery learning approach was highlighted by all parents. Labelling the Drama in Education example as a collaborative, playful approach which was identified as a new strategy for all them, several shared the view that this is

'how I would like to teach my child' (Fen).

There was a feeling that adopting a dramatic approach could better sustain the interest of their children:

'If the teacher can play some games, some interesting things I think, the children can focus on it for a long time' (Mei).

Four parents suggested that Drama in Education would be successful at *'putting the knowledge in the brain'* rather than telling the children to learn something (Wu). Whilst exhibiting a high degree of enthusiasm towards a Drama in Education approach as understood only through the example discussed with the researcher, it was noted however, that other Chinese parents might view such an approach as a

'waste of time' (Wu)

worrying that their children

'aren't learning enough' (Fen).

Despite expressed receptivity towards a new approach to learning, more traditional understandings of play emerged consistently throughout the data, with several referring to the tradition of memorisation as a means of play and learning. Yufeng noted that her 25-month-old twin boys have been practicing play through memorisation of numbers with their grandmother, but admitted that

'I don't think it's understanding, they just keep learning, keep copying'.

Teacher Interview Data

Data from the teacher focus group interviews (pre and post observation of the demonstration lesson) are presented under four themes: the role of play in Early

Years classes; play in the public school system; perceptions of a Drama in Education teaching and learning approach; and teacher training and professional development.

(1) The role of play in Early Years

The teachers reported a strong culture of play in their ECE practices, which is unsurprising considering they were working in an international school at the time of being interviewed. All three had previously worked in public State schools so had experience of both systems of education. Role-play, free play and play with choices were mentioned:

If, for example, we teach them a story, tell them a story, then we play the role-play, and we play for that game. Somebody act this one, somebody act that one, they can choose. I wanna be mom, I wanna be grandma, I wanna be the wolf, then somebody be the audience. (Jenny)

We can give everybody a different character. If anybody didn't get a character maybe they can all read the story together or do the actions together, be the audience, or they do a character at a different time, a second time. (Joy)

The data suggest that play is used within lessons such as Chinese language instruction in order to further learning. All three expressed an understanding of the importance of play in the educational development of young children. Jenny and Susie spoke about the importance of play for socialisation while Joy discussed the place of play in language acquisition. She noted that play is

'especially important as some kids don't have the language so use actions' (Joy).

Joy mentioned the importance of choice within play, providing play opportunities to the class within the context of clear rules and guidance. This was somewhat at odds with Jenny, who only allows play for those children who have finished their work:

Sometimes if they finish the activity so quickly, so neatly, so nicely, so fast, then they can free play. Looks like we praise them: 'You did a great job, you have free play. Because you are very slow, you have no time play'. So for the kids, if they do nicely, quickly and listen carefully, focus on the lesson, they have time to play. (Jenny)

The issue of classroom management and class size were identified by all teachers as challenges associated with using play in their classrooms:

'Sometimes, it is very hard to control the play' (Jenny); 'If there are lots of children, then it's hard to control' (Susie).

These challenges were similarly reported by the Head Teachers, but Joy had discovered effective ways to reduce classroom and behaviour management issues by

'giving them rules, or give them certain areas to play in'.

(2) Play in the public school system

The teachers were asked their experiences of play in the local public education system. All three explained that typically children start the day with formal lessons and play-time happens in the afternoon, when children play at centres or areas in the classroom using role-play cards to depict what character they are. According to Jenny

'in the local early years school, lesson time is only lesson time, only write, listen, sit down. Then afternoon, after they snack, they wake up, and have playtime'.

Joy's experience was similar, noting that

'In their teaching, maybe not lots of play but after their lesson, the local children get lots of playtime'.

The challenge of large class sizes in public schools was mentioned frequently. Highlighting that the numbers of children makes using play difficult in such settings, Joy remarked that play is not used as a teaching and learning approach but only as an activity at the end of the day. The term role-play was used commonly to describe children's dramatic play during their own free play time but also during story telling time when role-play cards were used. Surprisingly, role-play activities were not identified as learning by the teachers.

Based on their experience of working in local schools, all agreed that the role of the teacher during play sessions is to write down observations about the children as they play. Susie noted that teachers are not looking for anything in particular:

'maybe just watching, nothing very formal to write'.

In the best examples reported, teachers incorporate themes from their main lessons into afternoon play where possible, such as using money at the shop if learning about number, or using Playdoh if focusing on art. The consensus amongst these teachers is that the children choose where they want to play, as opposed to the teacher allocating children to play centres and rotating them. Joy explained that the children choose first thing in the morning, and put their name at the centre where they will later play. The number of centres depends on the size of the room, but 3-6 centres in each classroom, changed twice a year is typical in these respondents' experience. In terms of teacher intervention or facilitation, it was noted that

'different teachers do it in different ways' (Susie).

Some teachers join in with the play, others observe, and some discuss the play afterwards with their children. However, there appeared to be no standard practice in this regard.

(3) Perceptions of a Drama in Education approach

There was mixed reaction to the Drama in Education exemplar lesson the teachers observed. One of the researchers who taught in the international school, led a 30 minute lesson on Goldilocks and the Three Bears with 17 four year old children from Joy's class. The three teachers received a copy of the lesson plan before the session, and sat behind the children. The children had previously read the story with their class teacher (Joy). The teachers were encouraged to share candid, professional feedback after the lesson. As critical observers, they were invited to observe the method and give feedback about both the potential benefits and drawbacks of such an approach, as well as whether this approach would be something they would try in their own practice. There was a deliberate emphasis on the importance of critical appraisal, which aimed to set the scene for an honest discussion in the post-lesson interview.

They praised how well the children moved about the classroom, singing and drawing about the topic as well as talking about their ideas whilst in role as characters from the story. They commented on how interested the children appeared to be:

'this is not like a traditional teacher telling a story but children also can act and they are in the story, and we can see the children are all very happy' (Joy).

The consensus was that this lesson was different to a traditional Chinese lesson because children were not appointed to particular character roles nor did they use physical props. The teachers discussed the fact that in this approach all children were involved. They indicated that while they would be willing to try this method they noted that other Chinese teachers may not be, as public schools have large classes, which could lead to classroom management and control issues.

In their opinion, this method would be suitable for children aged 3-6, suggesting that older children may not enter into the make-believe of the drama as easily. They acknowledged that any topic could be explored through this play-based approach, but indicated a preference to lead the direction of children's play and the drama, and not follow the ideas of the children as demonstrated during the exemplar lesson. Joy noted that if allowed to generate their own ideas:

'the children will just distract from the topic'.

There was consensus that the teacher should lead and decide what is going to happen next in the drama.

(4) Teacher training and professional development

There was a positive response to the prospect of further training and up-skilling in dramatic play and drama in education pedagogies during the post-lesson interview. The opportunity to acquire new strategies was welcomed:

I think if you have the chance, teachers need to train how to plan to let the kids play. Because we just use the old experience ... it's limited. Getting new things in, we can open our mind to find new ideas. (Jenny)

Susie agreed with this view citing that *'more training or some active opportunity to watch the other schools'* would be beneficial in improving current practices. All teachers explained that when they trained to be teachers, their courses and curricula were more vocational and skills oriented than theoretical, where they learnt how to do painting and play musical instruments with young children, rather than explore philosophically why these activities are important in early childhood development. This they felt, limited their ability to move beyond their existing practices and embrace new approaches.

Discussion

This study investigated parents' and teachers' attitudes to play and Drama in Education approaches to teaching and learning in early years classrooms in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. The study was conducted during a time of considerable change at policy level in the Chinese education system, particularly within the early childhood and Higher Education sectors (Zhou 2011; China State Council 2014). Changing political agendas in an attempt to stave off the impact of global economic recession and uncertainty, had led to a climate of intense pressure in governments worldwide, as they tried to manage annual fiscal targets and longer term strategic planning frameworks (Deev & Hodula 2016), whilst meeting the increasingly diverse needs of their citizens. Slowly emerging from the 'One Child Policy' which ended in 2013, China is entering a new era where entrepreneurship and creativity are being recognised as the hallmarks of creating a new educated workforce to compete on the international stage. China has somewhat reluctantly begun to re-embrace the concepts of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in order to maintain and strengthen its position as an economic super-power and a potential world 'thought leader' (Xu 2012). Education has been identified as playing a key role in the modernisation and reform agenda of Chinese society (China State Council 2010, 2014). While considerable resources are being invested in the area, it is likely to take some time for these to permeate through the system at all levels.

The data reported in this small-scale study, whilst not conclusive, appear to highlight a contradiction in Chinese society. They reflect not only a potential clash between traditional Chinese values and culture and an increased awareness of Western ideology and educational approaches, but a more pressing reality where intense competition for a limited number of university places is likely to counteract any progress which the Ministry of Education hope to achieve in its goal to modernise the education sector by 2020. The concept of pressure was a dominant theme across all data sets in this study. Societal pressure and a desire to succeed at all costs were evident in parent interviews. The parenting style of Chinese parents, influenced by the tenets of Confucianism, 'place a high priority on educational success and that success is often measured by the test scores' (Huang & Gove 2015: 392). One

potential consequence of this trend is reputed to be social and mental health issues for only children who grow up surrounded by adults, lacking interaction with children of their own age (Lee 2012). Crucially, with only one child, there is often considerable pressure placed on the child to succeed. Chen (2003) acknowledges that while the socialization of young only-children is essential, 'individual parents' over-emphasis on students' academic performance over-shadows parents' concern for their children's social capabilities' (76). The majority of parents in this study expressed a belief that play is essential or important for the social, emotional, cognitive and personal development of their child, but this claim was undermined by the finding that almost two thirds (64%) of children play mostly alone or with adults. This may indicate a lack of understanding amongst parents of play as a social construct. It also highlights the socio-cultural and political dimension of children's participation in play, which can be influenced by ethnicity, social class and economic factors (Wood 2014). In a society where grandparents play a significant role in child rearing, particularly in rural areas (Zhou et al. 2014), children being partially or wholly raised by an older generation could suggest that former traditions and practices in relation to play are still dominant today. The role of kindergartens and ECE settings in the socialization of children is particularly strong in a society where many parents spend long hours at work or are migrant workers (Li & Wang 2008). The limited opportunities for children to explore, play, interact and 'be themselves' in highly regimented and inflexible ECE settings as reported in this study, is therefore of concern. It may be explained by the extensive up-scaling project undertaken by the Ministry of Education to provide universal ECE to all children within an ambitious time scale. Lack of resources, lack of qualified teachers and large class sizes are likely consequences of these sweeping changes, which make the introduction of child-centred pedagogies in these settings highly challenging. In addition, the long hours of academic study reported by parents and the somewhat gruelling and regimented timetable in ECE discussed by teachers adds further complexities to a system which arguably focuses more on quantity of engagement than quality. The necessary time spent to *explore* a concept through a play-based learning method like Drama in Education cannot as yet compete with parents' and teachers' expectations of keeping pace with others throughout China. As reported by all respondents, if it takes a week to explore the numbers 0-5 through a drama-based approach, others in China may have studied 0-60 during the same time period, and time is a commodity that cannot be ignored in what is perceived as an all-consuming drive to succeed in the terminal examination, the Gaokao.

However, the data from parents, Head teachers and the three participating teachers suggest a positive response to the drama exemplar of Goldilocks and the Three Bears used in this study to describe a Drama in Education approach to learning and teaching. There appears to be interest in a more active and child-centred model of teaching and learning in Chinese ECE. However, strong reservations permeate the data. On the one hand, parents expressed interest in incorporating elements of a play-based Drama in Education approach, aspiring for their children to be happy, capable and independent thinkers. But on the other, they feel pressurized by society, family members, teachers' and other parents' aspirations and ambitions; all located within the context of the existing Chinese education system which continues to place

a huge emphasis on achievement through academic attainment and competition. Similarly, Head Teachers and classroom teachers recognized some value in a drama-based approach, but expressed concerns about class size and classroom management issues. The data suggest that much additional work is needed in these schools to demonstrate the intrinsic and educational value of *learning* through play to teachers and Head Teachers. This is evident from the practice of denying children access to play unless they have finished their work quietly, quickly and neatly, and the fact that none of the Head Teachers reported a need for high level teacher pedagogical knowledge in play. It would appear that while there is cautious interest in play and drama-based pedagogies, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about what such practices might look like in action, how they would be facilitated, and concern about whether they would prove effective in a highly competitive education system. Based on the evidence from this exploratory study, there is an appetite for change among parents, and to a lesser degree among teachers, but while providing opportunities for continuing professional development in play pedagogy and other more structured interactive approaches such as Drama in Education would be welcomed, the size and scale of the shift required to transform the sector should not be underestimated. Despite the Chinese Government's attempt to modernize education from the early years sector upwards, there is a risk that ECE in China will remain intrinsically linked to the preparation of students for the final terminal examination, and will not develop its own identity as a separate and fundamental stage of development for young children.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore parents', teachers' and Head Teachers' perceptions about play and dramatic play in early childhood education, and what they know about Drama in Education. The data support proposals for greater investment in initial teacher education and in continuing professional development in the areas of play-based pedagogies such as Drama in Education. Teachers demonstrated a certain level of awareness of the value of play in ECE, but it appeared that this was not always translated into practice. Efforts to improve current play practices may succeed if new knowledge and ideas are made available to teachers via CPD opportunities that develop both theory *and* practice (Cheng 2012). Any success however would be contingent on engaging Head Teachers' support for such practices. Heads typically lead by example, and the message emerging from this study was that play pedagogy is not strongly embedded in the underpinning philosophy or practices of the participating schools. The interaction of traditional Chinese culture with predominantly Western approaches to pedagogy, assessment and school culture requires further investigation. It would be valuable to explore how classical Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism which support the primacy of a teacher's role in children's education through vertical power relations can be mediated with a more horizontal approach typical of dramatic play and Drama in Education.

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Appendix 1: Parent Questionnaires

Parent Questionnaire 父母调查
<p>1. Please indicate your child's gender:</p> <p>你的孩子是: Boy 男孩 Girl 女孩</p>
<p>2. Please indicate your child's age: 年龄: <1</p> <p>1-2 3-4 5-6 6+</p>
<p>3. Do you work in a school? 你在学校工作吗苏州新加坡国际学校? Yes 是</p> <p>No 否</p>
Parent Questionnaire 父母调查
PLAY 玩耍
<p>'Play' in this survey is defined as an activity that your child engages in for fun or pleasure. It can include playing games with rules (like board games), dressing up, 'pretend' play (like setting up a shop), outdoor play (like running or climbing trees) or playing with toys or objects (such as playdoh, lego, baby dolls or kites).</p> <p>“玩耍”指的是孩子认为好玩的活动，包括有规则的游戏(棋类游戏)，换装打扮，角色扮演(如开超市)， 室外活动(爬树)或者玩玩具(橡皮泥，乐高，娃娃或者放风筝)。</p>
<p>4. Does your child have opportunities to play at home?</p> <p>你的孩子有机会在家玩耍吗? Yes 是</p> <p>No 否</p> <p>Comment (optional):其他意见(可选)</p> <input type="text"/>
<p>5. How often does your child play at home? 多常你的孩子在家玩耍?</p> <p>Every day每天</p> <p>A few times a week每周若干次</p> <p>Once a week or less每周一次或更少</p> <p>Comment (optional):其他意见(可选)</p> <input type="text"/>

6. Does your child play: 如果有, 你的孩子在哪里玩耍:

Mostly indoors 多数在室内

Mostly outdoors 多数在室外

A combination of both 两者都有

7. Is this play mostly: 你的孩子如何玩耍:

Solitary (alone) 独自

With adults (parents) 和成人

With other children (siblings or friends) 和其他孩子

Comment (optional): 其他意见(可选)

Parent Questionnaire 父母调查

LEARNING STYLES 学习方式

8. Does your child play while at school, kindergarten or day care?

你的孩子在学校, 幼儿园或者托儿所玩耍吗?

Yes 是 No 否

9. Cognition is the ability to think and learn. 认知是指思考和学习的能力。

Cognitive development refers to skills such as problem solving, thought processing, decision making and remembering. 认知发展

指的是解决问题的能力, 思考能力, 决策能力和记忆。

How important do you think play is for your child's learning and cognitive development? 你觉得玩耍对于学习和认知发展有何重要之处?

Play will not contribute to my child's learning and cognitive development.

玩耍对于孩子的学习和认知发展没有帮助。

I don't know if play contributes to my child's learning and cognitive development. 我不清楚玩耍是否对学习和认知发展有帮助。

助。

Play may contribute a little to my child's learning and cognitive development.

玩耍或许能对学习和认知发展有所帮助。 Play is essential to develop my child's learning and cognitive development. 玩耍对于学习和认知发展有至关重要的作用

Comment (optional): 其他意见(可选)

10. Social development is a child's ability to do things like cooperate and play with others, pay attention to adults and teachers, and move with ease from activity to activity. 社交发展是指孩子与

他人合作，玩耍，注意成人及老师的能力，以及活动转换时是否保持情绪稳定。

How important do you think play is for your child's social development?

你认为玩耍对于孩子的社交能力发展重要吗？

Play is not important in developing my child's social skills.

玩耍对于孩子社交能力的发展不重要。

I don't know if play is important in developing my child's social skills.

我不知道玩耍对于孩子社交能力的发展是否重要。

Play may help my child to develop social skills.

玩耍对于孩子社交能力的发展或许有帮助。

Play is essential for my child to acquire social skills.

玩耍对于孩子社交能力的发展至关重要

Comment (optional):其他意见(可选)

11. Emotional development is the process of learning how to understand and control emotions. 情绪发展是指学习如何理解和管理情绪。

How important do you think play is for your child's emotional development?

你认为玩耍对于孩子的情绪发展重要吗？

Play is not important for my child's emotional development.

玩耍对于孩子的情绪发展不重要。

I don't know if play is important for my child's emotional development.

我不知道玩耍对于孩子的情绪发展是否重要。 Play may help my child's emotional development. 玩耍或许对孩子的情绪发展有帮助。

Play is essential for my child's emotional development.

玩耍对于孩子的情绪发展至关重要

Comment (optional):其他意见(可选)

12. Personal development refers to overall development and incorporates many areas, including self-identity, self-esteem, confidence and responsibility.

个体发展是指个体在各个方面的发展，包括自我认知，自我评价，自信和责任心。

Play is not important for my child's personal development.

玩耍对于孩子的个人发展没有帮助。

I don't know if play is important for my child's personal development.

我不清楚玩耍对于孩子的个人发展是否有帮助。

Play may help my child's personal development.

玩耍对于孩子的个人发展或有帮助。

Play is essential for my child's personal development.

玩耍对于孩子的个人发展至关重要

Comment (optional):意见(可选填)

Parent Questionnaire 父母调查

13. Play at school can happen in many ways. 在学校玩耍有很多方式。

'Free play' is when the child plays without adult intervention, such as dressing up or with lego. This play can happen when the child is alone or with others.

“自由玩耍”是指在没有成人介入的情况下

进行的玩耍，例如打扮或乐高。可以孩子独自进行，也可与他人共同进行。

In general, how often do you think children should have free play while at school?

总体而言，你觉得孩子应该有的自由玩耍频率为？

Children should have free play for most of the day. 一天中的大部分时间

Children should have free play only at break and recreation times each day. The rest of the school day should be focused on developing skills through direct teacher instruction.

只有在休息娱乐的时间，其余的在校时间应用于教师指导下的学习。

Children should have free play only occasionally, perhaps once or twice a week. The majority of time should be spent developing skills through direct teacher instruction.

偶尔，每周一至两次。大部分的时间应用于教师指导下的技能发展。

I don't know how often I think children should have free play at school.

我不清楚孩子拥有自由玩耍的频率。

Comment (optional): 意见(可选填)

14. 'Structured play' has a learning goal, and is facilitated by the teacher.

“有计划玩耍”是在教师帮助指导下完成，具有一定学习目的。

In general, how often do you think children should have structured play while at school? 总体而言，你觉得孩子应该有的有计划玩耍频率为？

Children should have structured play for most of the day. 一天中的大部分时间
Children should have structured play only occasionally, perhaps once or twice a week. The majority of time should be spent developing skills through direct teacher instruction.

偶尔，每周一至两次。大部分的时间应用于教师指导下的技能发展。

I don't know how often I think children should have structured play at school.

我不清楚孩子拥有有计划玩耍的频率

Comment (optional): 意见(可选填)

15. How do you think your child learns best at school? (If your child has not yet started school, how do you think they would learn best?)

你认为孩子在校学习最有效的方式是什么?(如孩子尚未入学, 你认为什么是最好的学习方式?)

Rote learning: The teacher identifies the learning area, decides the important parts and teaches the children what they need to learn. The teacher directs the learning exclusively based on the facts of the subject matter.

强记学习:教师确定教学范畴, 决定学习重点以及有必要学习的内容。由教师根据学习内容主导学习。

Collaborative learning: The teacher identifies the learning area and works with the children to develop their knowledge and skills, incorporating creative instruction and learning through play.

协作学习:教师确定教学范畴, 通过创造性教学方式, 与学生共同学习知识拓展技能。

A combination of the two 两者结合

I don't know. 不清楚

Comment (optional): 意见(可选填)

Parent Questionnaire 父母调查

DRAMA IN EDUCATION 教育中的表演

Drama in Education is a creative teaching and learning strategy in which the teacher uses play to introduce new skills, ideas and content. In the early years, it allows children to find out about things, try out and practice ideas and skills, take risks, explore their feelings, learn from mistakes, be in control and think imaginatively. The teacher uses story, make-believe and play as the context to achieve learning goals.

教育中的表演是一种创造性的教学手段, 教师运用表演导入新的知识技能。在早年, 学生从而发现新事物, 尝试新事物, 锻炼习得技能, 敢于冒险, 拓宽思路, 从错误中学习, 学会控制, 富有想象力的思考问题。教

师通过故事，根据上下文表演从而达到教学目的。

16. Imagine your child is learning about the number '3' at school. Below two lesson approaches are outlined. Please indicate below which way you would prefer your child to be taught this:

试想你的孩子学习数字“3”，以下两种教学，你更倾向于哪一种？

The teacher shows the children the number 3. The children practice counting to 3 and writing 3. The children are given materials to make sets of 3 Children learn about 3 by working quietly at their desks, with all children doing the same thing at the same time.

教师展示数字3，学生练习从一数到三，并练习书写3，然后用分得的教具摆出代表3的形式，所有练习均由学生在各自位子上进行。

The teacher tells the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three bears.' The class breaks into groups. Groups of children work on cooking 3 bowls of porridge, making 3 beds, and building 3 chairs. This involves the children reading, writing and learning about 3 through 'doing'. Children learn about 3 through play, without all children doing the same thing at the same time.

教师先讲“三只熊”的故事，然后把学生分组，完成一系列任务，比如做三碗粥，铺三张床，搭三把椅子。这些活动通过“行动”，达到对数字3的全面认知，学生在玩的过程中互相协作，并不是单独进行

A combination of both approaches. 两者结合

I don't know. 不清楚

Comment (optional): 意见(可选填)

17. Please tick the statement you most agree with: 请勾选你最同意的观点:

The Drama in Education strategy sounds like it could be useful for teaching some parts of my child's curriculum at school. 表演对学习的某些方面能有帮助。

The Drama in Education strategy would have no benefit or value for my child's formal learning. 表演对正式学习没有价值和益处。

The Drama in Education strategy sounds like fun, but it would not be useful as a means of teaching my child's curriculum at school.

表演听起来有趣，但对于在校学习没有帮助。

I don't know. 不清楚

Comment (optional): 意见(可选填)

18. At what age do you think your child should stop learning through play and drama in favour of more traditional styles of teaching and learning (e.g. textbooks / lecture style lessons only?) 你认为

孩子在何年龄应该停止玩耍学习，进而转向更为传统的教学模式?(例如教科书/说教)

Appendix 2: Head Teachers' Survey

Head Teachers' Survey
<p>“玩耍”在这次调查中的定义为孩子为了娱乐而参加的活动。它可以包括有规则的游戏(如棋盘游戏), 换装打扮, 角色扮演(如开超市), 室外活动(爬树)或者玩玩具(橡皮泥, 乐高, 娃娃或者放风筝)。</p> <p>在学校玩耍有很多方式。</p> <p>“自由玩耍”是指在没有成人介入的情况下进行的玩耍, 例如打扮或乐高。可以孩子独自进行, 也可与他人共同进行。</p> <p>“有计划玩耍”是在教师帮助指导下完成, 具有一定学习目的。</p>
Play at School 在校玩耍
<p>1. Is play on the timetable for students in the early years at your school?</p> <p>在早期的学校教育中, 玩耍被列入学生的课表内吗?</p> <p>Yes 是</p> <p>No 否</p> <p>2. How often does play happen in early years classes at your school? 在您的学校早期教育中玩耍出现的频率为,</p> <p>Every day 每天</p> <p>Every second day 每隔一天</p> <p>Once a week 每个星期一次</p> <p>I don't know 不清楚</p> <p>3. Which of the following statements do you mostly agree with?</p> <p>以下哪种阐述您最同意?</p> <p>Teachers can plan for play in the classroom. 教师可以在课堂上计划玩耍。</p> <p>Play happens spontaneously and cannot be planned for. 玩耍是自然而然发生的, 不可以被计划。</p> <p>A combination of the two. 两者结合</p>

Neither (please explain) 两者都不是(请解释)

Other (please specify)

Pedagogy

Pedagogical knowledge is deep knowledge about the processes, practices or methods of teaching and learning, and how it encompasses overall educational purposes, values and aims.

教学知识是关于教学过程, 教学实践, 教和学的方法的深层知识, 以及如何涵盖整体教学目的, 价值和目标的知识。

4. Do you think teachers need a high level of pedagogical knowledge to facilitate play in the classroom (i.e. require specific training in this area)?

您认为教师是否需要很高的教学知识在课堂上运用玩耍这一教学手段?(或教师需要经过特别训练)

Yes 是

No 否

Other (please specify)

5. Do children have access to both indoor and outdoor play at school?

孩子在校可以在室内或室外玩耍吗?

Just indoor play. 只在室内

Just outdoor play. 只在室外

oth. 两者皆可

6. If children have access to outdoor play, is this play:

如果孩子可以进行室外玩耍, 这种玩耍是

Instructional (e.g. used for daily group exercises, assemblies or listening to the National Anthem) 具有教学目的的(例如日常小组训练, 集合或者听国歌)

Recreational (e.g. the children can play freely) 具有娱乐性的(例如自由玩耍)

Both 两者皆有

7. Which of the following would you most expect teachers to use with their classes? (please tick all that apply) 以下哪几种是您最希望教师在课堂上运用的?

Socio-dramatic play (e.g. setting up a shop) 社会模拟类(开小店)
 Constructive play (e.g. sand play) 建造类(挖沙)
 Exploratory play (e.g. discovering how something works) 探索类(发现事物的工作原理) Manipulative play (e.g. beading) 手工类(串珠)
 Physical play (e.g. running) 体能类(跑步)
 Games with rules (e.g. hopscotch) 规则类(跳房子)
 Risk rich play (e.g. using real tools) 冒险类(运用真实工具)
 None of the above. 以上皆非
 Other (please specify)

Teaching and Learning 教和学

8. How do you think the school day should be structured for students in Early Years classes? 在早期教育中，您认为应该怎样安排课堂时间？

Mostly teacher-directed: the teacher chooses the content and teaches the child the associated skills and knowledge. 教师指导为主: 教师挑选上课内容并教授相关知识技能。

Mostly teacher-facilitated: the teacher chooses the content and supports the students to inquire within the topic.

教师指导为主: 教师选择上课内容并且指导学生探究问题。

Mostly child-led: the children have a high input into the content of what is taught and what they do.

孩子为主导: 孩子对学什么，怎么学有很高的投入度。 Other (please comment): 其他(请评价)

Other (please specify)

9. How important do you think play is for students' development in the following areas: 您认为玩耍对于孩子在以下不同阶段的发展中的重要性为?(1-不重要, 5-至关重要)

Emotional development (e.g. recognising emotions, expressing emotions appropriately, dealing with negative emotions) 情感发现(情感认知, 正确的情感表达, 应对负面情绪)

High importance

Some importance
No importance
I don't know
Social development (e.g. cooperation, making friends, transitioning between activities, sharing)社会发展(合作, 交友, 活动交替, 分享)
Cognitive development (e.g. learning and thought processing; problem solving, rationalising, decision making, forward planning)认知发展(学习和思考能力, 解决问题能力, 理性说明能力, 决策能力, 进一步计划的能力)
Personal development (e.g. self-esteem, self-confidence)个人发展(自尊, 自信)

<p>10. Each day, students should be exposed to the curriculum: 每天, 孩子的课程安排应该:</p> <p>Mostly through direct teacher instruction, with separate time scheduled for play and creative activities. 以教师直接讲授为主, 另加入玩耍和创造性活动。</p> <p>Mostly through play, experience and creative engagements facilitated by the teacher. 在玩耍中, 教师引导孩子通过参与活动 取得经验</p> <p>Other (please explain)其他(请说明)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 350px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>
<p>Drama in Education 教育中的表演</p> <p>Drama in education is a creative teaching and learning strategy in which the teacher uses play to introduce new skills, ideas and content. In the early years, it allows children to find out about things, try out and practice ideas and skills, take risks, explore their feelings, learn from mistakes, be in control and think imaginatively. The teacher uses story, make-believe and play as the context to achieve learning goals. 教育中的表演是一种创造性的教学手段, 教师运用表演导入新的知识技能。在早年, 学生从而发现新事物, 尝试新事物, 锻炼习得技能, 敢于冒险, 拓宽思路, 从错误中学习, 学会控制, 富有想象力的思考问题。教师通过故事, 根据上下文表演从而达到教学目的。</p>
<p>11. Is Drama in Education a strategy currently used by teachers at your school? 表演是否作为一种 教学手段被运用于您的学校教育?</p> <p>Yes是</p>

No 否

12. A class of 4-5 year olds is learning about the number '3' at school. Below two lesson approaches are outlined. Please indicate the way which you would prefer teachers to approach this: 一个4-

5岁孩子的班级正在学习数字3，下列两种课中，您更倾向于：

The teacher shows the children the number 3. The children practice counting to 3 and writing 3. The children are given materials to make sets of 3 Children learn about 3 by working quietly at their desks, with all children doing the same thing at the same time.

教师展示数字3，学生练习从一数到三，并练习书写3，然后用分得的教具摆出代表3的形式，所有练习均由学生在各自位子上进行。

The teacher tells the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three bears.' The class break into groups. Groups of children work on cooking 3 bowls of porridge, making 3 beds, and building 3 chairs. This involves the children reading, writing and learning about 3 through 'doing'.

教师先讲“三只熊”的故事，然后把学生分组，完成一系列任务，比如做三碗粥，铺三张床，搭三把椅子。这些活动通过“行动”，达到对数字3的全面认知，学生在玩的过程中互相协作，并不是单独进行。

A combination of both approaches. 两者结合

I don't know. 不清楚

13. Please tick the statement you most agree with: 请勾选你最同意的观点：

I think this strategy is very suitable in the early years setting. I would support children learning this way. 我认为这种手段非常适合，我支持在早期教育中运用。

I think it is suitable to use this strategy in conjunction with other teaching methods such as rote learning and direct instruction. 我认为将这种手段结合其他方法运用于教学中比较适合，例如强记和直接教授。

I think this strategy has limited educational value compared to other methods of teaching. 我认为这种教学手段相比其他教学手段局限了教育的价值。

I do not know enough about this strategy to comment. 我对于这种教学手段认识尚不清楚，不予置评。

Other: 其他:

Other (please specify)

14. At what age (approximately) do you think children should stop learning through play and drama in favour of more traditional styles of teaching and learning (e.g textbooks / lecture style lessons only?)

你认为孩子在何年龄应该停止玩耍学习，进而转向更为传统的教学模式?(例如教科书/说教)

Appendix 3: Lesson Plan: Goldilocks and the Broken Chair

Class Level: Pre-Kindergarten

Average age of students: 4

Class Duration: 45 minutes

Number of students: 17

Previous experience: The children have read the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. They have not done any drama in education work before.

Learning Outcomes: The children should be enabled to:

1. Interact with Goldilocks by asking questions and offering advice.
2. Make a decision about what Goldilocks should do.
3. Give one reason for their decision.
4. Use the verbal prompt: "I think you should...".
5. Collaborate with a partner to share ideas.

Specific needs within the group: 'Sam' has suspected ADHD and is receiving learning support.

Differentiation:

1. By task outcome: Sam will be encouraged to draw as much as possible but will not be repeatedly asked to draw in additional details. When he is done, he can go to the quiet area if he requests to do so.
2. By resources: Sam will have a small piece of playdoh available to manipulate during discussion time as needed.

Introduction:

1. The teacher will lead a guided narration activity based around the character of Goldilocks and the children will be invited to mime with guidance.
Let's put our coats on, today we're going for a walk in the woods. Oh what a lovely field! Let's swish through the long grass... Swish, swish, swish. Such beautiful flowers! What colours can you see? Let's pick some to bring home. What's that in the distance? I think it's a house! Let's skip over. We'll need to climb these big steps up to the door. My, these are steep! Let's knock and see who answers. Knock, knock, knock... there's nobody at home. Oh well, we can call back tomorrow. Let's sit on our circles again.

Development:

1. The teacher will show the children a red scarf and explain that when she puts it on, she will pretend that she is someone else. The teacher will explain that Goldilocks will be coming to meet them. The teacher will elaborate that she saw Goldilocks this morning, and she was upset, so she invited her to come in and talk to Pre-K. in case they might be able to help.

The children will brainstorm what may be wrong with her: the teacher might suggest that it has something to do with the 3 bears, but she can't be sure.

2. The teacher will prepare the children that she is going to pretend to be Goldilocks so they can find out what might be worrying her. She will leave the room and re-enter in role as Goldilocks wearing the red scarf around her shoulders, and sit with them in their circle.

The story:

When she enters, Goldilocks (TiR) will be carrying a piece of wood (to denote a chair leg) and looking upset. She will explain to the children that she has just been for a walk and was having a lovely day, when she found a beautiful cottage in the woods. She knocked on the door to see who lived there, but the door just swung open and nobody was home, so she thought it would be okay to go inside and take a look around. By that time, she was so hungry! There was lovely porridge and she thought nobody would notice if she ate some. It was delicious! Yummy ... but then the bowl was empty! She wasn't worried as she decided to make another bowl for the owner, and they'd never know it was gone in the first place.

But just before she was about to make some, she noticed 3 lovely chairs. Oh, they looked so soft and colourful! What would be the harm in sitting in one, just for a moment? So she chose the smallest, most comfortable chair to take a rest when SMASH! The chair broke and she fell on her bottom. At that point, she panicked. She hid the chair but there was one piece that was too big to hide, so she ran away holding it... and here it is (holding up the piece of wood). Goldilocks explains that has a problem now and needs the children's help! Should she just find a place to hide the last piece of the chair, and then the bears will never know it was broken? They might just think a thief stole it, and nobody would ever know she was responsible! Or ... Should she take the piece of chair back to the bears, and tell them what happened? She explains that she doesn't know the bear family very well, and they may be very angry with her.

The children converse with Goldilocks for a few minutes, before she says that she needs to go home but hopes they can think about her problem and advise her on what she should do. She leaves the room, and the teacher re-enters.

3. The teacher will distance herself from the role of Goldilocks and ask the children what happened while she was out of the classroom. A discussion will be facilitated about the two options Goldilocks has, and what the children think should happen. Children will be invited to share prior personal experiences that relate to this situation, and potential solutions may be generated from this.
4. The teacher will introduce the scaffold "I think she should...". The children will be arranged into pairs to discuss their ideas with a friend.
5. The children will work on the carpet to make a picture showing what they think Goldilocks should do. Children will be encouraged to show as much detail as possible: for example, if she chooses to hide the last piece, where does she hide it? Will she have help? If she returns it to the bears to explain, will the bears be angry or forgiving?

Conclusion:

The children will form a line while holding their pictures up. The teacher will reassume the role as Goldilocks and walk down the line, stopping to ask children what they think she should do. Children will be supported to use the prompt “I think you should...”. Goldilocks will reveal her decision at the end as negotiated with the children!

Notes on Authors



Dr. Carmel O'Sullivan is the Director of the Arts Education Research Group (AERG) in Trinity College, Dublin. She organises an international Summer School in Drama and Theatre in Education each year (M.Ed.). She is involved in a number of funded research projects, currently in the areas of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), early childhood education, arts education, and an arts-based work readiness programme for hard to reach young adults who face significant barriers to entering the workplace. Carmel and Niamh have collaborated on the publication of three books published by Renmin University Press on drama and early childhood practices in the Chinese education system.

Carmel O'Sullivan
School of Education
Room 3092
Arts Building
Trinity College
Dublin
Ireland

carmel.osullivan@tcd.ie



Niamh Price is from Ireland and has been teaching for eleven years. She is in her seventh year of teaching internationally in China. Prior to this, Niamh taught in Dublin. Niamh holds a Masters degree in Drama in Education from Trinity College Dublin, with a research specialisation in play and creativity in the early years classroom. She believes in the importance of establishing relationships with every student who crosses the threshold of her classroom and is committed to finding out not just what each child can do, but who they are. Creating environments that invite curiosity and exploration through play and drama is an essential feature of her practice.

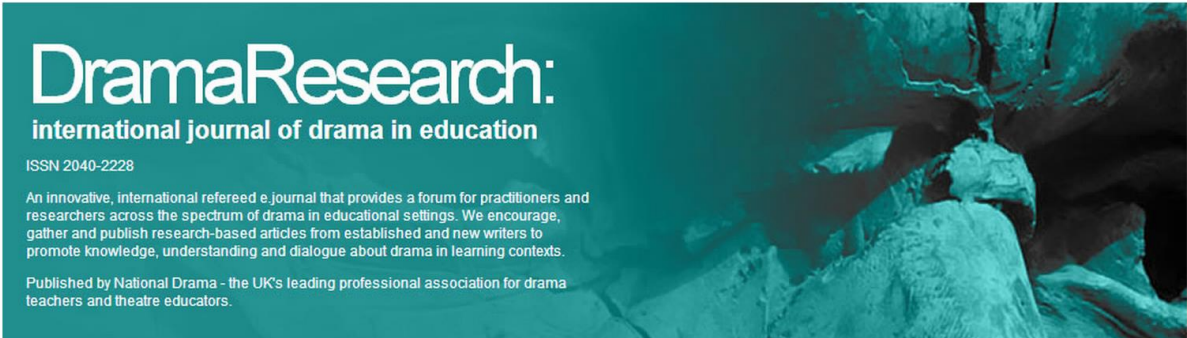

Niamh Price
Suzhou-Singapore International School
208 Zhong Nan Street
Suzhou Industrial Park
Suzhou, 205021
Jiangsu
China

pricen@tcd.ie

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