

Analysis of the Current Situation and Practical Exploration of English Education in Kindergarten Senior Classes: A Case Study of New Hope Kindergarten in Xuzhou District, Yibin City

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Abstract: With the rapid development of Chinese society, economy, and technology, the era demands versatile and specialized composite English talents, which places more practical requirements on the reform of English language teaching. The value of English education in early childhood development is not only reflected in language acquisition itself but also lays a solid foundation for cultivating children's open-mindedness, cultural confidence, and lifelong learning abilities. Through a case study on the current situation of English education in kindergarten senior classes, this paper conducts an in-depth investigation from aspects such as English curriculum design, teaching methods, hardware facilities, and home-kindergarten collaboration. In response to the problems identified in the research, it proposes methods and approaches with reference value for enhancing the effectiveness of English education activities in kindergarten senior classes, focusing on four aspects: strengthening home-kindergarten connections, rationally utilizing information technology and resources, enhancing teacher development, and creating an immersive language learning environment.

Keywords: kindergarten senior classes; English education; practical exploration

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly developing information age, society places increasingly high demands on the comprehensive quality and abilities of individuals. To keep pace with the times and adapt to the needs of societal development, lifelong learning has become an inevitable trend, and mastering a foreign language has emerged as an urgent requirement for learners. Language acquisition necessitates long-term and systematic training. China's "Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" states: "Language is a tool for communication and thinking," emphasizing the importance of language learning for early childhood development. A vast number of early childhood educators and experts and teachers engaged in research on English language acquisition are actively exploring how to guide children in learning English while effectively teaching them Chinese. The aim is to equip them with the ability to see the world through this learning and, in the future, to convey China's excellent culture to the world. The New Hope Kindergarten selected by the author is a private kindergarten in the Nan'an Street jurisdiction of Xuzhou District. Although not large in scale, its approaches to conducting English education activities for senior class children share common characteristics with many kindergartens in its jurisdiction. Analyzing its situation can effectively identify specific problems existing in early childhood English education within this region. If these problems can be resolved or improved, it can provide valuable reference and insights for local preschool English education, allowing more children to experience a fruitful journey in English learning.

2. Current Situation and Issues of English Education Activities in Kindergarten Senior Classes

2.1 Analysis of the Current Situation of English Education Activities in Kindergarten Senior Classes

Based on an analysis of 31 parent questionnaires collected from the senior class of New Hope Kindergarten in Xuzhou District, it is evident that parents place significant emphasis on their children's language development and support the provision of English courses. English education is a complex and challenging task, particularly at the early childhood stage. Although this kindergarten offers

English classes, the teaching methods are relatively singular, resulting in a somewhat passive learning experience for the children. Regarding Question 5 of the questionnaire (the primary forms of children's participation in school-based English education activities), the selection rate for "songs and nursery rhymes" was 100%, for "videos and animations" it was 90%, while the other two options ("reading English picture books" and "games and activities") each received less than 40%. Through interviews with parents, we also learned that they hope to guide their children's learning through richer and more diverse forms of English education, extending beyond the confines of the classroom alone. At New Hope Kindergarten, English classes are held twice a week, each lasting half an hour; if it is an outdoor activity session, the duration is slightly longer. Teachers rely heavily on English animations to deliver teaching content and are accustomed to employing a one-way lecturing mode, resulting in relatively limited interaction with the children. Although this approach allows for the presentation of complete teaching material within the constrained 30-minute class period, in the long term, it diminishes the children's learning enthusiasm and capacity for independent thinking, which is detrimental to the cultivation of critical thinking skills. The teaching aids, tape recorders, and cameras provided by the kindergarten generally meet teaching needs, and in the classroom, teachers primarily depend on a 55-inch smart TV. On the ground floor of the kindergarten, there is a dedicated reading corner for children's picture books and books. However, the number of English picture books is extremely limited, which is not conducive to expanding the children's extracurricular English reading. To a certain extent, this also fails to provide teachers with adequate resources for effectively conducting teaching activities both inside and outside the classroom. The existing electronic equipment in the kindergarten, such as computers and projectors, is relatively outdated. While these devices can still be used for teaching, they often require repairs and maintenance to ensure normal operation. The design and arrangement of classrooms and activity areas lack content that supports English teaching. For instance, appropriate English signage could also facilitate children's language acquisition within contextual settings. Due to factors such as parents being occupied with work or lacking proficiency in English, the majority of parents are unable to personally participate in their children's English learning or related activities. In interviews with teachers, both educators responsible for teaching the senior classes indicated that the level of parental cooperation poses a significant challenge in their instructional work. This is not due to parents' unwillingness but rather stems from their limited capabilities.

2.2 Issues in the Implementation of English Education Activities in Kindergarten Senior Classes

2.2.1 English Teaching Concepts Need Updating

Regarding the question "How do you view English education in kindergarten," all four teachers interviewed agreed that implementing English education activities at the kindergarten stage is essential. The teachers emphasized that this period is a crucial stage for the development of children's language abilities. Through English learning, children can not only enrich their cognitive world and broaden their horizons but also lay a foundation for future learning. If children can express themselves in English, it can also greatly boost their confidence in language learning. However, some teachers hold limited perspectives, remaining only at the superficial level of English learning. They regard English teaching merely as a form of skill training, overlooking the genuine needs of language learners. This conceptual deviation leads to a lack of flexibility and specificity in their practical implementation. Consequently, they are unable to formulate effective English teaching plans and methods based on the developmental characteristics and needs of the children, resulting in less-than-satisfactory teaching outcomes. Some teachers consider "being able to speak and read" as the primary criteria for measuring the success of English teaching for young children, neglecting the cultivation of children's language application skills.

All four teachers also mentioned during the interviews that they did not have any experience in minoring in English education while majoring in early childhood education. They received pre-service training only because the kindergarten introduced English courses. Due to the limited duration of the training, the teachers generally lack experience and professional knowledge in English teaching. Therefore, in practice, they find it difficult to quickly identify suitable solutions to problems, and the implementation of teaching requires a significant amount of preparation time.

2.2.2 Lack of Diversity in Teaching Methods

Currently, teachers incorporate forms such as games, songs, nursery rhymes, and drawing into their English instruction, and they also utilize video resources to assist teaching. However, in terms of instructional design, there is a preference for the traditional "explanation-practice-speaking" teaching model. With the continuous development of technology and internet capabilities, various online platforms, applications, digital resources, and artificial intelligence-assisted teaching methods are

emerging one after another, greatly expanding the channels and resources for English learning. Examples include online video courses, interactive learning software, and virtual reality experiences. Nevertheless, the hardware and software teaching resources within the kindergarten are relatively limited. The resource most frequently utilized by teachers in the classroom is often only the internet-connected television in the classroom. Whether these resources can be effectively and appropriately leveraged in English education and teaching activities has thus become a new area for early childhood teachers to study and explore.

2.2.3 Lack of Systematic English Teaching Materials

The English teaching and activity design at the kindergarten are not supported by a dedicated textbook and rely entirely on the preparatory work done by the instructors before class. While teachers do reference and draw content from some English teaching materials, such as HongEn Children's English, Tsinghua Children's English Graded Readers, and Pearson Preschool English, controlling the interactivity of the content or its level of difficulty adds significant complexity to their lesson preparation. Teachers prepare some simple English teaching materials based on the actual situation of their class, but the knowledge points are fragmented and lack a systematic structure. The two teachers responsible for English teaching activities in the senior classes also mentioned during interviews that the school's teaching resources are limited, with few purchased English books available. Consequently, lesson preparation heavily depends on extensive online resources.

2.2.4 Low Level of Parental Involvement

While most parents recognize the importance of English learning and hope that their children can better adapt to future development through such education, they have not fully leveraged their role in correctly guiding their children towards effective English learning. Parents often purchase relevant books and toys, or even enroll their children in extracurricular training programs. In reality, parental companionship can play a more significant role. Even if parents lack the ability to tutor their children academically, they can still provide greater emotional support, practical assistance, and encouragement. Furthermore, due to constraints in time, energy, and capability, parents often cannot effectively participate in their children's English learning process. This significantly limits the effectiveness of the children's English learning, particularly at home. Under these circumstances, the school bears greater responsibility and needs to guide parents on how to better support and supervise their children's learning.

3. Strategies for Optimizing English Education Activities in Kindergarten Senior Classes

3.1 Strengthen Home-School Connections to Promote Home-Kindergarten Collaboration

3.1.1 Key Points Parents Should Achieve

To ensure the effective implementation of early childhood English education, we need parents to actively cultivate a positive home environment conducive to their children's learning. Firstly, family members can cooperate and support each other in various ways, such as jointly participating in the child's English learning activities or games. This not only strengthens parent-child bonds but also allows the child to experience the joy and value of learning. As the difficulty of language knowledge increases, the child continues learning driven by interest and motivation, building upon a foundation of acquired language knowledge. Secondly, family members can foster a positive learning atmosphere by establishing reading habits. Whether the books are in Chinese or English, parental role modeling is believed to enhance the child's thirst for knowledge. Accumulating language knowledge through continuous reading lays the groundwork for subsequent language acquisition. Furthermore, by jointly appreciating and discussing excellent English songs or movies, children can gain more opportunities for listening and speaking practice while enjoying art, thereby developing an appreciation for multiculturalism. Simultaneously, parents should maintain timely communication with teachers to provide feedback on their child's learning progress, enabling teachers to better guide the child's learning at school. Only through the joint efforts of family members and school teachers can the ideal outcomes truly be achieved. Regarding early childhood English education, parents should also prioritize the selection of high-quality English reading materials and resources. These materials should not only feature high-quality textual expression, exquisite illustrations, and clear, comprehensible language structures but also possess rich and diverse audio and video resources to stimulate children's interest. Moreover, during the English learning process, it is necessary to formulate a scientifically effective training plan and implement it following certain steps. Achieving this allows children to gradually

adapt to this new language system. We should also pay close attention to the children's learning progress, promptly adjusting the content or format to meet their learning needs.

3.1.2 Key Points the Kindergarten Should Achieve

a: Strengthen teacher training efforts and provide more learning opportunities to equip them with higher professional competence, thereby better meeting the demands of modern education and teaching.

b: Regularly organize parent-teacher meetings or open house events to help parents better understand the kindergarten's various systems and teaching situations, thereby promoting communication and exchange.

c: Organize diverse cultural and recreational activities, such as parent-child sports days, handicraft competitions, and campus cultural festivals. These activities not only bring joy to the children but also enhance emotional interaction between teachers and students and strengthen parent-child relationships.

d: Within the campus culture development, create an English learning corner with a rich cultural atmosphere to provide children with a perspective to view the world. Through the above measures, the kindergarten can effectively foster a positive environment for home-school cooperation and further stimulate teachers' work enthusiasm and motivation.

3.2 Rational Utilization of Information Technology and Resources to Optimize Teaching Methods and Curriculum Design

3.2.1 Rational Use of Information Technology to Assist Teaching

Within the context of today's information-based society, the continuous development of information technology has gradually made the internet an integral part of people's daily lives. It is also continuously transforming our work and lifestyles, offering boundless opportunities and developmental possibilities. In the field of education, utilizing multimedia and artificial intelligence technologies to enhance the teaching and learning of English subjects has become a trend. These technologies more effectively stimulate young children's enthusiasm for learning. For instance, in daily English teaching, with the assistance of AI, teachers can create authentic scenarios such as parks, restaurants, and supermarkets. Through carefully designed course content or activities, they can guide children to communicate and solve problems within these contexts.

3.2.2 Utilizing Abundant Online Teaching Resources

Through the Internet, teachers can explore a wealth of English learning resources. In addition to functional electronic dictionaries, there are various English learning platforms, free resource websites, English learning websites, AI courses, and more. A diverse range of online course resources suitable for children is also increasingly abundant. Selecting high-quality English educational resources and applications can significantly enhance children's interest in learning. During the interview process, the two teachers responsible for senior class instruction mentioned that due to the lack of suitable textbooks, the teaching materials for English courses are almost entirely sourced from the Internet. How to select and integrate these abundant online resources and compile them into materials appropriate for conducting English teaching and activities in senior classes has become a new challenge for teachers. Appropriately and rationally utilizing online resources can make English classrooms more lively and engaging, and the teaching content can be more targeted.

3.3 Strengthen Faculty Development and Enhance English Professional Competence

3.3.1 Strengthen Professional Skills to Become Well-Rounded English Teachers

Firstly, teachers should continuously improve their professional abilities and comprehensive qualities to become educators whom children like and respect. This requires teachers not only to possess a solid professional foundation and rich teaching experience but also to demonstrate good moral character and a sense of social responsibility, enabling them to care for and respect each child. Secondly, teachers should actively participate in various teaching and research activities, as well as training programs, to constantly update their professional knowledge and educational philosophies, and apply the latest technologies and methods to English teaching. Simultaneously, they should enhance their own English learning to improve their professional competence in the language. Most importantly, we should always prioritize the physical and mental well-being of our students and care for the

development of every child.

3.3.2 Enhance Overall Professional Competence and Strengthen Faculty Development

"A single flower does not make spring, while a hundred blossoms in full bloom bring spring to the garden." The excellence of individual teachers alone can hardly drive the comprehensive improvement of the school's educational and teaching outcomes. Regardless of how outstanding an individual teacher's abilities may be, they still require team collaboration and institutional support. The school should focus on the sustainability of teachers' professional development, assisting them in formulating detailed career development plans tailored to their individual needs and clarifying their professional goals. The school can also regularly organize various teaching observation activities, establishing an open platform for exchange to promote mutual learning and growth among teachers with different levels of experience. Furthermore, inviting experts and scholars to the campus to share the latest theoretical research advancements and practical experiences through special lectures, reports, and other formats is beneficial. Fostering a positive and uplifting humanistic environment also contributes to enhancing the overall quality of the teaching staff and strengthening emotional exchange among its members.

An effective evaluation system plays a pivotal role in faculty development. Evaluations of teachers should be based on fairness and impartiality, establishing objective and scientific standards to measure individual teachers' abilities and contributions. These standards should be comprehensive and integrate various dimensional factors, such as the level of knowledge and skills, teaching and research capabilities, innovative capacity, practical application skills, and professional ethics. The evaluation process should be dynamic. In addition to quantitative assessments, we must also consider the practical challenges teachers face, such as heavy workloads, family factors, and individual anxieties, in order to provide timely care and support. Only in this way can each teacher genuinely leverage their strengths, contributing to the collective progress and development of the teaching team.

3.4 Implement Diverse English Education Activities and Create an Immersive Language Environment

3.4.1 Utilize Modern Educational Resources to Create Authentic Life Contexts

Teachers can utilize various resources and AI technology to create rich English learning scenarios. For example, tools like Doubao and Jimeng AI can be used to generate interactive cartoon characters, allowing children to role-play and complete dialogue exchanges with these characters within pre-designed simulated shopping scenes. Teachers can also leverage outdoor activities by taking children to places like supermarkets or parks, encouraging them to communicate in English within real-life contexts. For instance, while selecting their favorite snacks in a supermarket, children can describe their preferences and needs to a teacher playing the role of a shop assistant. Through these authentic activity settings, children can use the language in a relaxed and enjoyable manner.

3.4.2 Design Gamified English Teaching Methods

Kindergarten English education should focus on cultivating children's interest and level of engagement, with gamified education serving as an effective approach. In senior class English education, designing games can capture children's attention and enhance their learning motivation. Games can also be tailored according to the children's age and personality traits, such as role-playing games or English word chain games. This helps children grasp English knowledge points more comprehensively and effectively, thereby increasing their learning interest and outcomes. Through gamified education, children not only acquire new knowledge in a pleasant atmosphere but also develop their teamwork awareness and creative thinking, laying a solid foundation for their future development. Teachers can utilize modern educational resources and technology to create diverse and rich language contexts, conducting English learning activities in a gamified manner. This approach both stimulates young children's interest in learning and improves teaching effectiveness. Designing gamified English teaching formats requires teachers to organically integrate knowledge with games, which necessitates continuous improvement of their professional competence and accumulation of experience to meet the demands of modern education and teaching. In exploring the practice of gamified English teaching, kindergartens can not only effectively promote home-school cooperation but also further stimulate teachers' work enthusiasm and motivation, fostering the sustainable development of early childhood English education.

Conclusion

This study takes the educational practices involving senior class children and English teachers at New Hope Kindergarten as its primary research subjects. Through analyzing the design and implementation of teachers' educational activities, as well as conducting interviews with both parents and teachers, it identifies three major issues present in English education activities and explores potential solutions. It proposes actionable strategies for implementation aimed at enhancing the kindergarten's English education and teaching standards, thereby laying a solid foundation for the development of children's English language proficiency. The author hopes that by fostering home-kindergarten collaboration, improving faculty quality, and creating a diversified language environment, children's learning interest can be stimulated, providing them with a relaxed and enjoyable immersive language learning environment. Limited by the author's own academic level and practical experience, some objective practical problems discovered in the research still require resolution through ongoing practical exploration. These include issues such as how to bridge the significant information gap in early childhood English education across different regions, the imbalance of teaching resources, and the integration of interdisciplinary research into teaching practices. The author will continue to conduct in-depth investigations and research on the implementation of English education activities in senior classes within local kindergartens. The aim is to integrate English as a bridge connecting different disciplines into foundational early childhood English education, hoping that through continuous effort and experimentation, tangible contributions can be made to the development of foundational early childhood English education in the local area.

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