

Research on the Integration Strategy of Drama Education and Primary School Chinese Curriculum

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Abstract

This study adopts a deep qualitative research method to systematically explore effective strategies for integrating drama education into primary school Chinese curriculum management. By collecting practical experience and insights from eight frontline teachers through semi-structured interviews, Excel software was used to analyze the interview data thematically, revealing the challenges faced by teachers in time management, resource allocation, and parent communication during the integration process. Strategies such as utilizing spare time, seeking school support, and strengthening home school cooperation were also extracted. There are evidences of students' language expression ability, thinking vitality, and emotional cognition and promotion of interdisciplinary integration of Chinese language curriculum in this study that emphasizes the integration of drama education. Hence, not only has this study enriched the theory of interdisciplinary education management, but it also provides a specific implementation path for integrating drama education with primary school Chinese curriculum, which has practical guidance significance for optimizing the curriculum system and improving teaching quality.

Keywords: drama education in performing arts, primary school Chinese curriculum, interdisciplinary curriculum, educational management, qualitative research, SDG No.4 (quality education).

Introduction

In today's era where education management innovation is highly valued, interdisciplinary education has gradually become the core strategy for improving education quality and students' comprehensive literacy. Drama education can significant results to improving students' language abilities with artistry, practicality, and education, it's also stimulating thinking vitality, and deepening emotional cognition. This study explores strategies for integrating drama education into the primary school Chinese language curriculum to support the goals of The United

Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates for equitable and quality education for all and promotes lifelong learning opportunities. The author offers a feasible way to optimize the curriculum system, enhance educational equity and improve students' comprehensive literacy through scientific management strategies.

Research Background

With the advancement of education reform, interdisciplinary education has become an irreversible trend. Drama education as a comprehensive educational model has received attention in school curriculum management. Welksek (2022) mentioned that drama offers a unique perspective on human experiences and is a powerful tool for analyzing complex phenomena, supporting students' overall development. Research (Sabri, R. R., & Mohammed, I. Q. (2022); Saunders, J. N. (2022) shows that drama education enhances language skills, innovative thinking, teamwork, and social skills, while also promoting balanced development in listening, speaking, reading, and writing through engaging methods like situational text models. However, the integration of drama education in primary school Chinese language curriculum still faces challenges such as systematic strategies, inadequate teacher professional abilities, and evaluation mechanisms (Yuanyuan, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to explore effective integration strategies between drama education and primary school Chinese language curriculum, inject vitality into educational management practices, optimize the curriculum system, and enhance students' comprehensive literacy.

Problem Statement

Despite government support for integrating arts into education to foster students' comprehensive development, drama education in primary schools faces challenges. It's still not widely incorporated into the mainstream curriculum, and there are few examples of interdisciplinary integration between the Chinese curriculum and drama. Statistics show that less than 30% of schools nationwide have included drama education in their teaching plans, and even fewer schools are able to achieve a deep integration of drama education and Chinese language curriculum (Winston, J., & Zeng, C. (2020). In addition, the school management does not attach enough importance to interdisciplinary integration, and lacks clear policies and management measures. Therefore, this article research how to effectively integrate drama education with primary school Chinese language curriculum through educational management, provide theoretical contributions to interdisciplinary development.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the integration strategy of drama education and primary school Chinese language curriculum from the perspective of educational management. Specific objectives include:

- i. Analyze the current situation and existing problems of integrating drama education with primary school Chinese curriculum;
- ii. Propose integration strategies and implementation paths based on educational management;

Literature Review

Global Perspective

- i. Early research: The ancient Greek philosophers Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates all made preliminary explorations of the value of theatrical education. Aristotle supported its philosophical values, Plato believed that drama could promote social cohesion and moral development, and Socrates pointed out that drama education enhances students' ability to explore philosophy through emotional and social attraction (Cho et al., 2022; Lazou et al., 2023; Paterakis et al., 2024).
- ii. Modern development: With the rise of modern educational theory, drama education has gradually received attention. Sabri and Mohammed (2022) found that the value of drama education is reflected in aspects such as "personality development" (22.972%) and "happiness and play" (9.459%), enriching the educational experience of young audiences. Vitsou and Kamaretso (2020) demonstrated the positive role of drama education in improving peer relationships among refugee children through case studies, providing empirical support for the application of drama education in diverse contexts.
- iii. Latest progress: Carnoy-Torabi et al. (2020) published a feasible case of how to integrate a drama curriculum into a French and literature curriculum. Oterino et al. (2022) noted that drama education has significant advantages in alleviating students' learning anxiety and promoting emotional development. However, all aspects of social-emotional learning can have a positive impact on students' academic performance, especially self-management (Abuameerh et al., 2024).

Local Perspective

- i. Chinese background: In recent years, the research direction of integrating Chinese curriculum into drama education has become a hot topic. Yuanyuan (2019) analyzed the challenges of teachers' lack of professional competence and lack of system integration strategies in the current integration practice. At the same time, drama education is also gradually exploring the application of new technologies, such as the use of virtual reality to design

- drama education games proposed by Chen,Y (2024).Zhang, S., & Sakulwongs, N. (2024) combined Tiktok and heuristic teaching to apply to the teaching of drama performance in grade 10 in Yunnan Province.
- ii. Latest research findings: In recent years, domestic scholars have achieved significant results in integrating drama education with primary school Chinese language curriculum. Cao, Y. (2024) pointed out that educational drama has unique value in stimulating students' curiosity, communication skills, and exploratory spirit, while also having a positive impact on language acquisition. Sheldon et al. (2022) analyzed that drama education can deepen students' understanding of the story background, enhance teaching effectiveness. Feng, M. (2022) examine how drama teaching can enhance students' empathy and independent thinking skills, emphasizing their role in moral growth and holistic development. Solih et al. (2024) found that integrating emotional intelligence (EI) principles into education can improve academic performance and personal growth. Together, these studies highlight the value of drama and emotional intelligence in developing well-rounded, emotionally intelligent students, providing important insights for future educational practice.

Key Literature Review of IV

- i. IV1: Integration Strategy: Vitsou and Kamaretsou (2020) demonstrated the successful application of integration strategies in specific contexts through case studies, providing reference for the design of integration strategies between drama education and primary school Chinese language curriculum.
- ii. IV2: Educational Management Support: Yuanyuan's (2019) research emphasizes the importance of educational management support in the integration process, including policy formulation, resource allocation, teacher training, and other aspects.
- iii. IV3: Teacher Professional Development: Dimnjašević, I. (2020) found that continuous professional development helps teachers improve interdisciplinary and drama teaching skills, enhancing integration effectiveness.

Supporting Theories for Research

This study is based on three fundamental theories:

- i. Educational management theory: Through scientific management methods to ensure the improvement of teaching quality. The theory of educational management provides macro guidance for the formulation and implementation of integrated strategies,
- ii. Interdisciplinary education theory: Interdisciplinary education theory is one of the important theoretical supports for this study. It advocates for the intersection and integration of knowledge, encouraging problem-solving through different disciplinary perspectives and methods. It supports the

organic integration of drama education and primary school Chinese curriculum;

- iii. Educational psychology: This theory focuses on the psychological changes and developmental patterns of students during the learning process, providing a scientific basis for improving teaching effectiveness.

Research Framework

Based on a thorough review and analysis of relevant literature, this study establishes a framework for integrating drama education with the Chinese curriculum in primary schools, based on educational management, interdisciplinary education and psychology. Key factors (e.g., integration strategies, teacher development, and management support) and their impact on integration effectiveness were identified, while also addressing students' psychological needs and learning changes to improve outcomes through interdisciplinary and psychological approaches.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses qualitative research, particularly semi-structured interviews, to explore individual experiences and perspectives. This approach is chosen for its ability to provide deep insights into the complex process of integrating drama education with the primary school Chinese curriculum (Merchán et al., 2023), offering a detailed understanding of educational practices.

Research Object and Sample Selection

- i. Target group: The target group for this study is the class teachers of art schools in third- and fourth-tier cities in China, who are good at interdisciplinary integration in academics and also teach Chinese courses in daily teaching.
- ii. Sampling technique: In this study, a snowball sampling strategy was used. First of all, the schools in which the sample is located are recommended by the Education Bureau or relevant industry associations. Secondly, teachers with combined experience in drama education and Chinese language courses were selected from these schools as participants. Finally, participants were encouraged to recommend other eligible colleagues to participate in the interview, so as to expand the sample size and ensure the diversity of the sample (Williamson et al., 2024).
- iii. Sample size: interview 8 teachers, which is considered sufficient in qualitative research as it allows us to delve into the unique experiences of each interviewee while maintaining the operability and analytical depth of the study.

- iv. Sample selection criteria: The sample selection criteria focus on teachers' actual work experience, in-depth understanding of the integration process, and willingness to share.

Validation of Instruments

- i. Reliability: To ensure the reliability of interview data, I conducted sufficient pre interview training to ensure that each interviewee is proficient in interview techniques and maintains consistency in questions. At the same time, nonverbal behaviors and informal comments of the interviewees are also recorded at any time during the interview process to increase the richness and accuracy of the data.
- ii. Validity: The effectiveness of the interview outline has been verified through team discussions and expert reviews. In addition, adjust the questioning method in a timely manner based on the feedback from the interviewees during the interview process to ensure that the questions accurately capture their true thoughts and feelings.
- iii. Pilot study: Before the formal interview, the author selected 2 teachers for a pre-interview to test the validity and applicability of the outline, and revise it if necessary.

Data Collection

- i. Permission acquisition: The author provided potential interviewees with information about the study's purpose, methods, and confidentiality, obtaining written consent through school management or direct contact.
- ii. Data collection time: Interviews are scheduled at teachers' convenience over a two-month period, with flexible timing to ensure respect and attention to each participant.
- iii. Interview recording: Interviews are recorded and transcribed for analysis, with key observations and feelings also documented as supplementary materials.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Alignment of consistency

RQ1: What are the main challenges that teachers face when integrating drama education?	RQ2: How do teachers respond to these challenges and what strategies have they adopted?	RQ3: What benefits does integrating drama education bring to teaching and students?
1 How to effectively integrate drama education within a limited time and maintain students' enthusiasm for learning.	Reasonably arrange classroom time, design drama activities based on the content of the text, and communicate with parents through various means to help them understand the significance of drama education.	Student participation has significantly increased, and language expression ability has been enhanced; Students have a deeper understanding of the course content.
2 Teachers need to possess professional skills in drama education and be able to fully integrate students' learning interests with the goals of Chinese language education.	I have adopted various coping strategies. I focus on improving my skills in drama education and planning my time effectively.	Role playing allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the emotions of the characters in the text, enhance classroom interest, and deepen memory.
3 Some parents and society still have certain cognitive biases towards the application of drama education in Chinese language curriculum.	Strengthen communication with parents and demonstrate to them the benefits of drama education in improving students' overall quality.	Drama activities help students better understand the text, improve their reading interest and expression ability.
4 The challenge lies in improving students' performance ability and confidence, as well as optimizing resource allocation.	Regular rehearsals and performance activities to help students improve their confidence, while also attempting to provide support as much as possible in situations where resources are limited	Drama exercises enhance students' expression and confidence, significantly improving their communication skills.

5	Time management and communication with parents.	Utilize spare time or class meeting time for drama rehearsals and communicate with parents about the significance of drama education.	Provide students with opportunities to showcase their personalities, increase classroom participation, and cultivate a spirit of cooperation.
6	Resources and parental cognition.	Try to communicate with parents as much as possible to help them understand the benefits of drama education. At the same time, we will also try more methods of resource optimization.	By combining performance with the content of the text, students can easily remember what they have learned.
7	How to effectively implement drama education and truly benefit students from it.	Participate in more training and seminars to learn practical application methods of drama education in different disciplines	Using props to create a dramatic atmosphere and enhance students' understanding of the context in the text.
8	How to balance its relationship with Chinese language teaching.	Clarify the positioning of drama education and ensure that the scheduling does not affect traditional teaching.	Drama education enhances students' desire for expression and confidence, and has a more significant effect than simple language training.

Ethical Considerations

- i. Data confidentiality: Strictly abide by the principle of data confidentiality, anonymize all interview data, and only use it for this study, so as to ensure that the privacy and rights of the interviewed teachers are not violated.
- ii. Informed consent: Prior to the interview, teachers were given a detailed description of the research objectives, methods, data use, and confidentiality measures, so that they could fully understand and voluntarily participate.
- iii. Respect and impartiality: Maintain a respectful and non-judgmental attitude during interviews, listen to teachers' views, avoid leading questions, ensure equal treatment, present research results objectively, and avoid bias.

Findings and Discussion

Overview of Key Findings

Through interviews with eight primary school Chinese teachers (3 to 15 years of teaching experience) in third- and fourth-tier cities in Jiangxi Province, this study reveals the challenges, coping strategies and teaching benefits of integrating drama education into their Chinese curriculum. Providing unique perspectives for integrating drama education into primary school Chinese language curriculum.

RQ1: The main challenges faced by teachers in integrating drama education **The interview revealed three main challenges**

The challenge of time management: The content of primary school Chinese language curriculum is compact, and teachers have reported that it is difficult to add drama activities within the existing curriculum arrangement.

"Chinese language classes have a lot of content, and in order to complete established teaching tasks, adding drama rehearsals often requires extra time." (A2 11/09/2024)

This time pressure is particularly evident in larger classes.

"It is difficult to ensure that every student participates in drama rehearsals in a class with a large number of students, resulting in a lack of consistency in the implementation of activities." (A4 29/09/2024)

Shortage of resources: Primary schools in third - and fourth tier cities face significant limitations in terms of resources.

"Due to the lack of dedicated space for drama rehearsals, students can only perform between desks, and props are basically made or reused by teachers themselves." (A3 17/09/2024)

"The school's budget is tight and cannot provide sufficient support for drama activities." (A6 01/10/2024)

Therefore, the implementation of theatrical activities is limited by material conditions, and teachers need to creatively solve these problems.

Parents' understanding and support: Drama education has not yet been popularized in third - and fourth tier cities, and parents have insufficient understanding of its teaching value.

"Some parents believe that drama activities are just entertainment activities and can affect students' academic performance." (A1 03/09/2024)

"Sometimes it is necessary to arrange extra parent teacher meetings to explain to parents the help of drama education on children's expression and social skills." (A5 01/10/2024)

This cognitive bias increases the communication burden on teachers.

RQ2: Strategies for Teachers to Address These Challenges

Faced with the above challenges, teachers have explored various effective strategies based on teaching practice:

Flexible time arrangement: In order to cope with the challenges of time management, teachers flexibly arrange drama activities in their spare time, class meetings, and lunch breaks, which not only does not affect normal courses, but also enables continuous drama education.

"We will use our lunch break for group rehearsals, which will not take up Chinese class time while ensuring student participation." (A6 01/10/2024)

This flexible arrangement reduces the pressure on teachers and improves the operability of drama education.

Innovative resource utilization: The problem of insufficient resources has prompted teachers to adopt many creative solutions.

"I would work with students to make props from waste materials, which not only reduces costs but also stimulates students' sense of participation and creativity." (A3 17/09/2024)

"I use multimedia tools to play classic theatrical performances, allowing students to experience the effects of theatrical art through visual and auditory means even in the absence of props." (A5 01/10/2024)

Strengthening communication between families and schools: Teachers have adopted various ways to showcase the effectiveness of drama education to parents, such as through parent teacher conferences, class WeChat groups, and regular displays of student performances, to help parents better understand the value of drama education.

"I posted videos of student rehearsals in the class group and received positive feedback from many parents, gradually changing their perception of drama education and establishing a home school cooperation support system." (A4 29/09/2024)

RQ3: Benefits of integrating drama education

Teachers unanimously agree that drama education has significant effects in primary school Chinese language teaching in third - and fourth tier cities, especially in improving students' language expression, teamwork, and emotional understanding.

Improving students' language expression ability: Teachers have found that drama activities, especially role-playing, greatly enhance students' oral expression ability and confidence.

"The role-playing situation allows students to express and experience more naturally, improving their oral expression ability." (A1 03/09/2024)

Stimulating students' interest in learning: Drama education adds interactivity and fun to Chinese language courses, significantly enhancing students' learning motivation and classroom participation.

"Some children who originally didn't like Chinese are now looking forward to taking drama activity classes." (A2 11/09/2024)

The unique fun of drama education makes the classroom livelier, and students' learning enthusiasm is greatly increased.

Enhancing students' teamwork and emotional understanding: Teachers generally believe that drama activities enhance students' empathy and teamwork awareness through cooperation, role exchange, and other means.

"During the rehearsal process, students learned to cooperate with each other and gradually understand others' perspectives, demonstrating better cooperation skills and emotional management." (A8 29/10/2024)

"In the role-playing of the text, students not only understood the emotions of the characters, but also learned how to collaborate with peers, forming deeper emotional connections." (A5 01/10/2024)

In-depth Analysis and Interpretation

Educational Management Perspective

With limited resources, teachers in third- and fourth-tier cities can effectively integrate drama education into the Chinese curriculum in primary schools through reasonable time management and resource integration. Despite the scarcity of resources, they have achieved good results through flexible scheduling and innovative use of resources. Research shows that educational innovation in resource-limited settings relies on teachers' creativity and flexibility. Syafaruddin et

al. (2024) suggest that education administrators should prioritize resource sharing and cooperation among teachers to improve resource efficiency.

In addition, home school cooperation is also an important means of supporting teachers in promoting drama education. In order to gain parents' understanding and support for drama education, teachers have adopted the methods of showcasing students' works and regular communication, gradually increasing parents' sense of identification. Home school cooperation can effectively enhance parents' understanding of curriculum innovation (Pöntinen et al., 2023) parental participation and support directly affect students' performance and learning motivation in the classroom (Burke, K. 2019). By building a home school interactive platform, schools can help teachers promote drama education more widely, further reducing their communication burden and increasing parents' acceptance of drama education.

Based on the above findings, it can be suggested that school management can promote collaboration and resource sharing among teachers by creating a shared prop library and organizing teacher resource sharing meetings when resources are limited. With the continuous improvement of resource integration strategies, the implementation effect of drama education in third - and fourth tier cities will be further enhanced, and a reference management model will be provided for other regions.

Educational Psychological Perspective

Drama education not only improves students' language skills, but also provides valuable opportunities for emotional understanding and social skills development. Studies have shown that role-playing and situational simulation in drama allow students to experience and express emotions, enhancing self-confidence and emotion regulation (Liu et al., 2024). Based on the feedback from the participants, students can understand the emotions of the characters during the rehearsal, and improve social sensitivity and empathy. Therefore, the authors believe that drama education has a positive impact on students' mental health.

Drama education can effectively alleviate students' learning pressure, improve social confidence and desire to express, and thus improve classroom participation and emotional state (Mardas, G., & Magos, K. 2020). This study shows that students who participate in drama education are more academically adaptable, mentally resilient, and have better emotional regulation, which helps them cope with stress more easily in the future.

From the perspective of educational psychology, the authors suggest that emotional experiences should be integrated into the drama curriculum, and that students' social skills and emotional cognition should be improved through role-playing and situational interaction, which will have a profound impact on language learning, mental health, and social development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study re-examines the application effects, practical challenges and coping strategies of drama education in primary school Chinese courses. Through systematic analysis of teacher interviews, the specific implementation effects of drama education are revealed and practical insights are provided for primary schools in third- and fourth-tier cities with limited resources. And from the perspective of educational management and educational psychology, the author provides theoretical support and practical reference for the application and promotion of this study.

Summary of Key Findings

This study mainly analyzed interviews with eight Chinese language teachers from primary schools in third - and fourth tier cities in Jiangxi Province, revealing their main findings in integrating drama education:

- i. Integration challenges: During the integration process of drama education, the teacher face significant challenges management problems that the resource scarcity, the curriculum schedule is tight, and the parents lack of communication which requires teachers to respond flexibly, especially when parents' understanding and support for drama education are insufficient, teachers need to pay more communication costs.
- ii. Response strategies: Teachers adopted to arrange extracurricular activities for drama, using homemade props and multimedia resources to make up for the lack of material resources, as well as get support from home and school by talking to them.
- iii. Teaching benefits: Drama education can significantly improve students' language expression ability, learning interest and emotional understanding ability. Teachers observed that drama education enhanced classroom participation, confidence, empathy and cooperation. For students in third - and fourth-tier cities, these benefits are crucial.

Implications for Educational Management and Practice

This study shows that drama education can be helpful in improving the quality of primary school Chinese teaching and improving students' comprehensive literacy. It is also in line with the requirements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) for high-quality education. When schools have limited resources, they can promote educational equity through resource sharing, teacher training, and home-school cooperation. Specific measures include: establishing a prop sharing library, regular resource sharing, providing training, and enhancing home-school interaction. These measures not only promote students' personalized development, but also support the cultivation of emotional and social skills, providing a feasible path to achieve the educational goals of SDG 4.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

- i. Sample size and geographical limitations: This study is limited to eight primary school Chinese language teachers from third - and fourth tier cities in Jiangxi Province, with a small sample size and a lack of regional diversity. This limitation may limit the generalizability of research results nationwide.
- ii. The singularity of data sources: This study mainly draws conclusions through teacher interview data, lacking multidimensional data support such as classroom observation or student feedback. The data from teacher interviews has a certain degree of subjectivity and may not fully reflect students' actual experiences and growth effects in drama education.
- iii. Time constraints: Due to the relatively short data collection time of this study, relying solely on limited interviews and retrospective data makes it difficult to comprehensively observe the long-term impact of drama education. This time constraint may affect the overall presentation of the impact of drama education on student development in research.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to further promote the application of drama education in primary school Chinese language curriculum, future research can explore in depth from the following aspects:

- i. Expanding sample coverage: Future research can expand the geographical and scale of the sample to include teachers and schools from different regions, especially extending the research scope to cities with other economic levels, in order to better understand the implementation effects and adaptability of drama education in different environments.
- ii. Multi-dimensional data collection: It is recommended that future research combine various data collection methods such as classroom observation, student interviews, or questionnaire surveys to obtain richer data on the implementation of drama education. Student feedback and classroom observations can more objectively reflect the actual effectiveness of drama education, thereby improving the scientific and comprehensive nature of research conclusions.
- iii. Long term follow-up study: Future research could adopt a longitudinal study design to track and investigate the long-term effects of students' emotional, social, and academic development after participating in drama education. This long-term data helps to more comprehensively evaluate the profound impact of drama education on students' comprehensive literacy.
- iv. Quantitative and qualitative research: Future research can further conduct quantitative research based on qualitative analysis, systematically evaluating the specific role of drama education in improving students' academic performance, social skills, emotional understanding, and other aspects through structured questionnaires or experimental designs. The support of

quantitative data will provide a more objective basis for the promotion of drama education.

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Biography

Huang Zeng is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Educational Management at INTI International University, Malaysia. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Chinese Language and Literature and has also received training in drama education. Prior to her postgraduate studies, she taught Chinese at a primary school in China. Her research focuses on the integration of drama-based pedagogies within the Chinese language curriculum at the primary school level.

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Wang Zexin is currently a PhD candidate at UCSI University. He specialises in mixed methods research and focuses on the application of motivational and Higher Order Thinking theories in dance education. His work explores pedagogical innovations in arts education and theory-driven instructional design.

Lu Ping is a doctoral researcher at UCSI University with a background in mixed methods research. Her research explores the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in higher education, particularly within the context of art education. Her interests also include the development of undergraduate art curricula for primary education programmes and related theoretical inquiry.

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