



Pre-service Preschool Teachers' Practice Inspection and Quality Improvement of "Child Behavior Observation and Support"

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Abstract. The Professional Standards for Early Childhood Teachers state that teachers must master the fundamental methods of understanding children, such as observation, conversation, and record-keeping. Pay attention to children's daily performance; discover and appreciate each child's progress promptly; focus on motivating and protecting children's motivation and self-confidence and effectively use various methods. This shows that early childhood teachers must be good observers. Under such standards, preschool education majors in teacher training colleges and universities should focus on developing pre-service early childhood teachers' observation skills in training talents, timely changing their teaching and training plans, and growing associated information. We should also consider the effectiveness and needs of pre-service early childhood teachers in learning about knowledge and practice interaction, reform, and innovation in education and teaching approaches. The study indicated that pre-service instructors are "fast to learn" but "slow to adapt" to children's observations. This study uses empirical and action research to assess pre-service teachers' observation and support of children's activities. Pre-service teachers can observe and encourage children's behaviors by improving their skills in several areas. Observation and support let pre-service teachers "notice, comprehend, and support" children's behaviors.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers · Child behavior observation and support · Practice inspection

1 Introduction

The Outline for the Development of Chinese Children (2021–2030) clearly states that children are the country's future and the nation's hope. Therefore, we must adhere to and improve the mechanisms most conducive to children, promote their overall development, and strengthen the teaching force. The Ministry of Education's Guidelines for Children's Learning and Development for 3–6 Years Old require teachers to shift their focus from teaching and teaching materials to children's learning and development and provide teachers with a "justifiable" grasp of the continuum of children's learning

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and development and to observe and interpret young children. Observing and supporting children's behavior is an essential professional skill for early childhood teachers, a basic requirement for modern child-centered kindergarten programs, and a cornerstone of kindergarten quality improvement. Many countries worldwide have identified child behavior observation and support as a priority for educational reform. The OBE concept emphasizes the importance of student learning outcomes, and the Professional Standards for Early Childhood Teachers clearly state the importance of teachers' observation skills. Therefore, improving pre-service teachers' ability to observe and support children's behavior is an important issue that needs to be addressed in the preschool education field in China. It is also the key to improving the professional skills of pre-service teachers.

2 Concept of Definition

2.1 Children's Behavior Observation

Children's behavior observation refers to the process in which teachers purposefully collect children's information using various senses, instruments, and tools to obtain factual data and finally analyze, interpret and judge children's behavior in the natural situation of kindergartens. According to the definition of the concept, in one-day activities of kindergartens, teachers' observation of children's behavior includes four steps: "attention (observation object) - focus and background (observation target) - senses, instruments to collect data and information (supervisor's intervention observation record) - Judgment (analysis and interpretation of children)".

2.2 Children's Behavior Observation and Support

Combining the concept and connotation of "*children's behavior observation*" and "*support*", this study defines the "children's behavior observation and support" of kindergarten teachers as in the natural situation of kindergartens. Teachers collect children's information with the help of various senses, instruments, and tools in a targeted way to obtain factual data and analyze, interpret and judge children's behavior to understand their current situation, interests, and development needs. Moreover, provide appropriate developmental support for each child's learning and development (Kun, 2018).

2.3 Pre-service Teachers' Practice Inspection Dimension of "Children's Behavior Observation and Support"

This study is based on the research of 186 third-year students of preschool education and examines the dimensions of observation objectives, observation methods, and observation records. During the research, the researcher conducted a test in the first class and asked the students to watch the documentary "*Lilliput*" and write down the observed contents. Further, the researcher checks and gives feedback on the student's homework. On this basis, the researcher explains the concept of observation and its objectives, the application of observation methods, and the way of observation records.

Table 1. The first inspection of the “observation target.”

View module	View Dimension		
Observation target	no target	target is fuzzy and loose	target is clear and focused
Frequency distribution (person)	180	6	0
Total (person)	186		

Table 2. The third inspection of the “observation target”

View module	View Dimension		
Observation target	no target	target is fuzzy and loose	target is clear and focused
Frequency distribution (person)	0	99	87
Total (person)	186		

3 Observe the Concept Change of the Objective from Scratch

The observation target guides and leads in applying observation methods, observation records, and analysis. The pre-service teachers' mastery of the observation target has gone through a process from scratch.

3.1 Lack of Understanding of Observation Objectives

Examining the observation target can enable the researcher to grasp the situation of the subjects to carry out teaching well (Table 1).

The first inspection results show that, except for 6 students who know that observation needs to have observation objectives, the rest do not know that observation needs to have observation objectives. Moreover, the observation objectives of the 6 students are all fuzzy and loose, and they do not know how to locate the observation objectives. Therefore, based on the first inspection, the researcher adjusted the teaching objectives in time and combined them with the actual situation to let the students clarify the positioning of the observation objectives through the combination of theory and practice.

3.2 Improve Concept Cognition in Practice

The students lack understanding of the observation objectives due to the lack of theoretical accumulation and weak practical ability. Therefore, students are constantly trained to position the observation objectives based on changing teaching methods and integrating teaching objectives.

After integrating theoretical teaching and practical training, Table 2 shows that in the third inspection, all students knew that the observation objectives were put forward

during the observation, and 87 people had clear and focused goals. Compared with the first inspection, this is a qualitative leap. However, in the follow-up inspection, this trend has increased.

3.3 Change of Observation Method from Single to Integrated

In the learning process, the researchers use the method of explanation and practice one by one to learn the observation methods. Therefore, the students also grasp the relevant knowledge one by one. However, with the development and change of actual needs, they often need to integrate different methods to obtain more abundant and intuitive materials when making observation records. For example, in the inspection process, some students usually use the method of descriptive recording to make an observation. In contrast, others prefer to use quantitative recording methods, such as time sampling and frequency observation. Through multiple inspections and training, students gradually learn to integrate the narrative, sampling, judgment-oriented, and graphic methods they have learned to obtain more diversified observation materials. During the final examination of the students, it was found that most students could use the first two or three observation and recording methods for integrated observation. However, only three students used the fourth method, the graphical method, for observation and recording. In the process of questioning, it was found that the students who did not use the graphic form did not mean that they did not understand it but that the graphical method was more troublesome in drawing and coding. However, this does not affect students' mastery of appropriate observation methods.

3.4 Observe and Record the Quality Improvement from Rough to Concise

In the process of observation and recording, teachers are required to describe children's behaviors and educational phenomena in an objective language, which can objectively record children's behaviors and educational phenomena without prejudice, imagination, stereotype, and evaluation, and present objective facts. However, in the process of inspection, it is found that pre-service teachers often fail to grasp the key points in the process of observation and recording; the language recorded is subjective, and the description of children's behaviors contains prejudice, a tendency to imagine, stereotype, and evaluate. Nevertheless, with the continuous guidance and inspection of teaching and practice, most pre-service teachers can keep an objective and neutral attitude to recording children's behavior during observation and recording, and the skills of accurate recording have developed rapidly.

3.5 Interpretation and Reflection: From One-Sided and Non-professional to Comprehensive and Professional Development

The observation of children's behavior is to support children's development. As educators, we should look at the surface results of children's behavior from a positive perspective and make professional analysis and support from the perspective of children's learning and development. In the process of inspection, it is found that pre-service teachers'

interpretation of children's behavior is primarily formalistic. They often use "*omnipotent language*" in the analysis process and cannot accurately locate the reasons behind the surface behavior. As a result, it is of no value and significance to talk freely when providing behavioral support to children, and there is no substantive strategy. Therefore, after systematically explaining the concept and basic technology of children's behavior observation, the researcher also combined with the practice to train the essential characteristics of children's learning, the basic age characteristics of children's development, the concept and performance of individual differences, and other knowledge blocks. Let prospective teachers learn to look at and interpret problems from the children's perspective and find the best answers to move toward professional development.

3.6 Change of Support Strategy from Single General to Multi-focused

The ultimate purpose of observation, recording, and analysis is to learn to support. Therefore, if what we have done before is to be visible and understandable, we must finally end up with meeting support. That is to say. Teachers are required to provide appropriate support for the observed children's behaviors to promote their development of children, such as the development of learning quality, the development of large muscle movements, the development of language, and the development of inquiry ability. In the inspection process, it is found that candidates lack appropriate strategies to support children's follow-up learning and development based on children's observations in the support strategy section. Therefore, after combing and integrating the knowledge in different fields, candidates are asked to find the best solution in the "brainstorming" and make a point-to-point strategic response. All strategies are required to be operable and feasible. In the final review, it was found that most candidates could focus on point-to-point, put forward diversified support strategies, and strive to be specific and operable.

4 Ways to Improve Pre-service Teachers' Ability to Child Behavior Observation and Support

This study focuses on the current situation of pre-service teachers' ability to observe children's behavior and the practical review of child behavior observation and support and identifies the gap between theoretical learning and functional development of pre-service teachers' observation of children's behavior at different learning stages. Through the creation of an open group learning environment, independent education, and group learning, students will be able to improve their ability to observe and support children's behavior through an "open-dialogue-interaction" dynamic learning mechanism that includes "*four dialogues*" and "*two interactions*". The following approaches are used.

4.1 Update the Teaching Content of the Course Under the Concept of OBE

The concept of OBE emphasizes the guidance of students' learning effect. The evaluation guide for nursery education in kindergartens (2022) regards class-focused observation

as one of the essential evaluation methods. According to the new trend of preschool education development and in combination with the actual needs of students' development, it promotes, expands, integrates, and updates teaching content from a single point to multiple points from point to area. Through the learning mode of dialogue, pre-service teachers can have a dialogue with teachers, children, classmates, and themselves, clarify the purpose of observation and record methods, and learn to analyze and support. At the same time, in the process of education and teaching, we should pay attention to the importance of the interactive learning mode in the pre-service teachers' learning process. In self-knowledge interaction, we should check our ability to observe and support children's behavior and find and supplement the deficiencies. In the interaction with the situation, the students will analyze and support the children's behavior with theoretical knowledge and professional quality, find the existing problems, and promote the development of children.

4.2 Building a Multi-dimensional Learning Environment Group

Students' learning needs to be carried out in a positive environment through diversified ways. Therefore, we should create different teaching environments and combine collective education, group learning, independent learning, and other methods to build a diversified class learning environment and a kindergarten practice environment for teaching. In collaborative learning, we constantly update and internalize our professional knowledge and draw the nutrition of professional knowledge from the collective. Through group learning, pre-service teachers can learn to refine and sort out the shortcomings in group sharing and reporting to achieve the optimal understanding of the most knowledge. The whole learning environment group is inseparable from the students' self-regulated learning ability. Therefore, it is necessary to build an atmosphere of self-regulated learning, change from mandatory to habitual, and provide students with a high-quality self-regulated learning environment.

4.3 Enrich Course Resources

In the research process, we integrated various online resources, linked local kindergarten resources, built rich curriculum resources, and enriched the learning content in the learning series "1 + N" (Fig. 1). The "1" is a compulsory learning series, including learning observation recording methods, clarifying observation goals, making observation plans, analyzing behavioral performance (5W + H, i.e., who, what, when, where, what, how), and proposing support strategies. "N" is the selective observation recording board, including observation in life activities, learning activities, play activities, and sports activities. In this process, teachers' professionalism, and teachers' training, are enhanced through the acquisition of knowledge in the professionalism category. Furthermore, acquiring professional knowledge enriches professional knowledge about the essential characteristics of children's learning and the basic characteristics of children's development. As a result, self-observation skills are qualitatively improved, and professional observation and curriculum design skills are optimized.

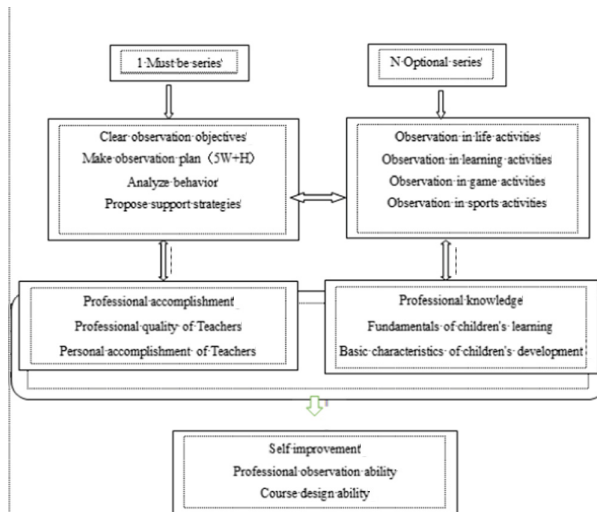


Fig. 1. “1 + N” learning menu

4.4 Reconstruction of Course Teaching Methods

For students to meet the requirements of the course, the course is conducted in the form of “in-class + out-of-class” interactive learning, group discussion, and knowledge reporting. Based on the fact that the course “Observation and Guidance of Early Childhood Behavior” requires students to have a high level of comprehensive and professional literacy, this problem can be solved through an emotional cycle of learning mechanisms in the teaching of this course (ure 1). Firstly, students systematically learn the relevant learning contents of observation records and verify them with specific situations. Secondly, they make hypotheses in multiple learning styles, enter into particular situations by participating in observation, reflect on them in a cyclic progression, revise and improve them, and finally achieve the requirements of forming opinions and changing the status quo. In continuous “learning - practical training”, students master observation methods, know how to record and analyze, and learn to evaluate and support. Furthermore, in this process, they continuously improve and perfect their observation ability so that students’ professional identity is gradually formed, maintained, and changed, laying a good foundation for their future work.

4.5 Review Knowledge Learning and Practice Ability

The high standards demanded by society pose a significant challenge to the development of early childhood teachers and preschool early childhood teachers possess specific theoretical knowledge. At the same time, they are confronted with the problem of low levels of practice and a lack of practice. Thus, the “high and low” issues must be addressed through a helpful review. The learning and development of pre-service kindergarten teachers is a dynamic process. Therefore, in the specific education teaching situation, through the

assessment of “single point - multiple points - integration” of the learning module content, students’ mastery of the relevant knowledge learning blocks and practice blocks is identified, combined with individual self-assessment, group mutual assessment, and overall teacher assessment in an open, interactive, and dialogical way. The assessment and review are conducted in an open, interactive, and dialogical learning environment. Through the pre-service teachers’ homework reports and presentations, students’ knowledge of observation concepts, mastery of observation and recording methods, clarity of observation goals, analysis of observation records, and support strategies were assessed and examined one by one, and a complete review system was formed.

5 Conclusion

The professional development and identity of pre-service teachers come from their sense of accomplishment in their professional courses, as well as the process of transforming their thinking and behavior through knowledge acquisition, initial mastery of teaching-related skills, and continuous improvement and refinement of their professional qualities. Pre-service teachers’ “observation and support of children’s behavior” addresses the issues of “what is there”, “seeing”, “understanding”, “supporting, and “support”. Therefore, in the actual situation, pre-service teachers should be able to grasp the basic requirements of observation, combine the elements and requirements of professional observation records to develop an observation plan, and put it into practice. Furthermore, in the actual situation, pre-service teachers should be able to analyze and interpret children’s behavior from the front structure - single point structure-multi-point structure - correlation structure, and grasp children’s behavior comprehensively. Therefore, it is imperative for pre-service teachers to respond to different educational contexts and to use the correct theories to analyze and solve problems in other contexts.

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