

Analysis and Reflection on Kindergarten Teachers' Observation and Recording in Free Play

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Abstract—Teachers' behaviors of observation and recording are investigated in free play in kindergarten through the methods of questionnaire, interview and observation, and the following problems are found: kindergarten teachers have no thorough understanding of observation and recording in free play; the observation and recording methods of kindergarten teachers in free play are simple; kindergarten teachers are short of normative behaviors of observation and recording and so on. Analysis is performed on these problems, so as to put forward corresponding strategies to solve the problems, enhance teachers' abilities of observation and guidance in free play, and thus to improve the level and quality of games for infants.

Keywords—free play; kindergarten teacher; observation and recording

I. INTRODUCTION

It is pointed out in Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trail) that "teachers should pay attention to the infants' behavior and reaction in activities, perceive their needs sensitively, make response in appropriate methods timely, to form the cooperative and exploratory teacher-student interaction".¹ The Professional Standard for Kindergarten Teachers (Trail) points out in incentive and evaluation field of professional abilities that "it is suggested to understand and evaluate infants in an objective and comprehensive way by way of observation, conversation, home contact, work analysis and other methods."² It is thus clear that the ability of observing children's behavior has been one of the most important professional abilities for kindergarten teachers in current society. Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trail) also indicates that "kindergarten education should respect infants' personality and rights, respect the law of their physical and mental development and characteristics of learning, lay equal stress on protection and teaching with games as the basic

activity, pay attention to individual differences and promote personalized development of each infant".³ Free play is favored by infants thanks to its features of spontaneous, autonomous and free. The observation and recording of kindergarten teachers in free play is particularly important, as teachers can learn about children's level of games, individual differences and directive strategies. The author finds in the process of kindergarten investigation that, kindergarten teachers neglect the importance of observation of infant behavior in free play in terms of concept, and short of normative guidance of observation and recording in terms of behavior. As a result, kindergarten teachers will attach importance to free play and observation and recording in free play through the research of kindergarten teachers' observation and recording in free play.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The author takes the observation and recording behavior of kindergarten teachers in free play as research object, and gives questionnaires to 80 kindergarten teachers selected from different levels of kindergarten. The questionnaire investigates kindergarten teachers' observation and recording in free play from three aspects. The first is investigation of teachers' basic conditions, namely teachers' theoretical foundation and attitudes of observation and recording. The second is the investigation of teachers' observation and recording behavior, namely behaviors before activity, in the activity and after activity. The third is teachers' evaluation of their own observation and recording behavior.

The questionnaires were given out one after another starting from March 2017. A total of 80 questionnaires were given out and 80 were taken back, with the recovery rate of 100%. 74 questionnaires were effective, so the effective recovery rate was 92.5%.

III. RESEARCH RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This part describes the observation and recording of kindergarten teacher in free play mainly from three aspects of preparation before free play, observation and recording in free play, evaluation after free play.

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A. Investigation of Teachers' Preparation Before Free Play

1) Teachers' recognition of the importance of observation and recording in free play

TABLE I. TEACHERS' RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVATION AND RECORDING IN FREE PLAY

Question	Options	Number of People	Percentage
Do you think the observation and recording of infants in free play important?	Yes	70	94.6%
	No	4	5.4%

As shown in "Table I", in the investigation of "Teachers' Recognition of the Importance of Observation and Recording in Free Play", 94.6% of the teachers believe the observation and recording in free play is important, and thus it is clear that most teachers pay attention to this behavior. Only 4 teachers hold the opposite viewpoint. This is affected by the factors of kindergarten, and more by factors of their own. It can be seen that, kindergarten teachers do pay attention to the observation and recording of infants in free play, but the recognition of observation and recording in free play is not in-depth.

2) *Implementation of observation plan before free play:* A good plan is half success. The observation outline listed under the plan plays the role of guidance for teachers' observation and recording. Making clear the objectives, object, contents and methods of observation under the plan will enable teachers to observe with purposes in a planned way.

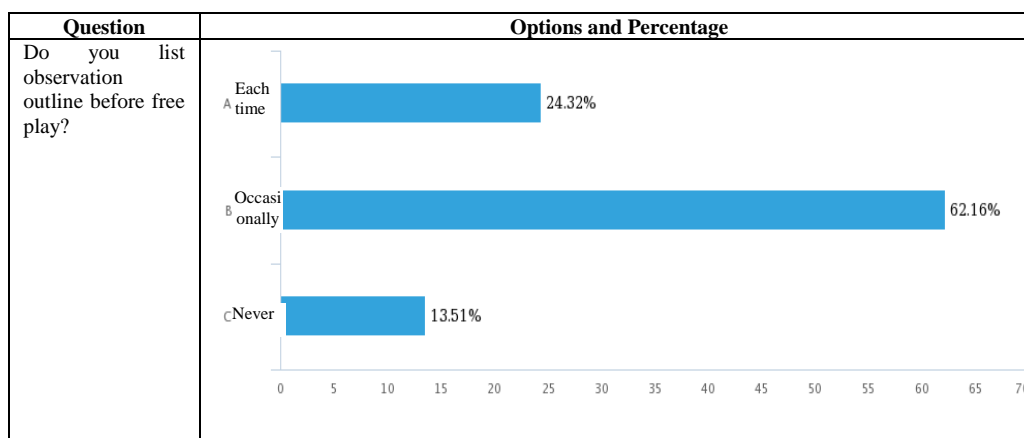
TABLE II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN BEFORE OBSERVATION

Question	Options	Number of People	Percentage
Do you think the plan before observation important?	Very important	40	54.1%
	Important	30	40.5%
	Not very important	4	5.4%
	Not Important	0	0%

It can be seen from the "Table II", in the investigation of "Implementation of Plan before Teachers' Observation", 54.1% of the teachers think the plan before observation very important, 40.5% of the teachers think the plan important, no teacher think the plan not important. It is clear that, most teachers pay attention to the plan before observation in terms of concept.

3) Observation outline listed before free play

TABLE III. OBSERVATION OUTLINE LISTED BY TEACHERS BEFORE FREE PLAY



It can be seen from the data in "Table III" that, kindergarten teachers do pay attention to listing of outline before free play, but few teachers list the observation plan each time in practice. As a result, the kindergarten teachers are required to attach importance to the plan before observation in terms of concept, and put the concept into actual practice. This requires kindergarten to normalize and supervise teachers' behaviors.

4) Conditions of issuing observation and recording table before free play in kindergarten

TABLE IV. CONDITIONS OF ISSUING OBSERVATION AND RECORDING TABLE IN KINDERGARTEN

Question	Options	Number of People	Percentage
Does the kindergarten issue the observation and recording table uniformly?	Yes	48	64.9%
	No	26	35.1%

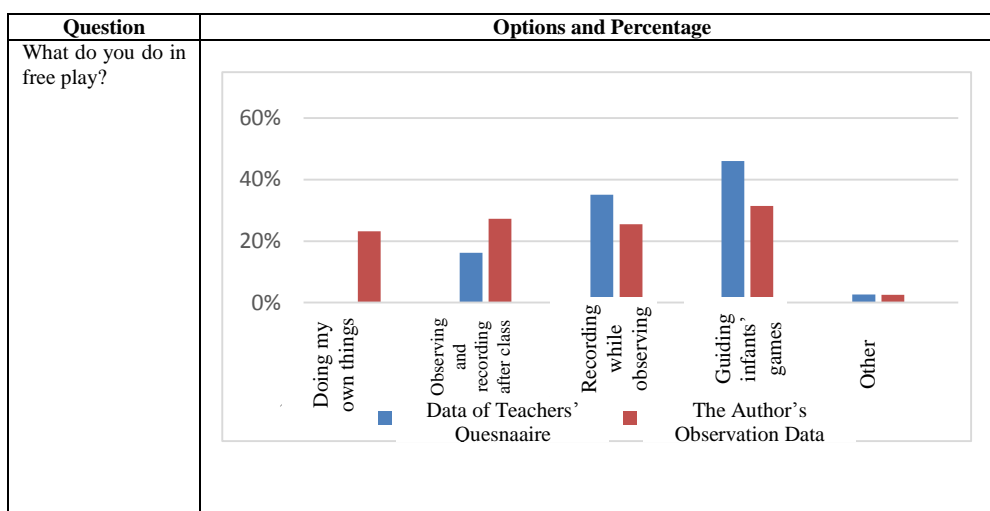
Issuing the observation and recording table or not indicates the kindergarten management's attitude toward this link. It can be known that most kindergartens pay attention to teachers' behavior of observation and recording, but there are 35.1% of kindergartens still not issuing observation and recording table uniformly. The author learnt about three aspects of reasons for kindergartens not issuing the observation and recording table uniformly through conversation with the investigated teachers against this phenomenon: 1. The kindergartens do not pay attention to this aspect; 2. The kindergartens do not assess teachers by way of observation and recording for "burden alleviation" for teachers; 3. The kindergartens do not want to limit teachers' observation and recording by issuing such table uniformly, and hope the teachers to design observation and design according the actual conditions of their own classes.

B. Investigation of Teachers' Observation and Recording in Free Play

The observation and recording behavior of teachers in free play is the reflection of their viewpoints towards children and games. It is mainly investigated through teachers' actions in

free play, the observation methods and recording methods, and makes comparisons with conditions observed by the author in practice, so as to learn about kindergarten teachers' behavior of observation and recording in free play.

TABLE V. TEACHERS' BEHAVIOR IN FREE PLAY



As show in the "Table V", in the questionnaire of teachers, no teachers choose the option of "doing my own things" in infants' free play, but according to the observation of the author in practice process, some teachers will perform "doing my own things" in the process of infants' free play, which varies from person to person. It is found in the investigation

that, 46% of teachers will choose to guide infants in their free play, and the percentage of teachers who observe and record is also obviously larger than that of teachers who observe and record after class. It can be seen that, teachers' guidance and positioning of free play is deficient at present.

TABLE VI. TEACHERS' OBSERVATION METHODS

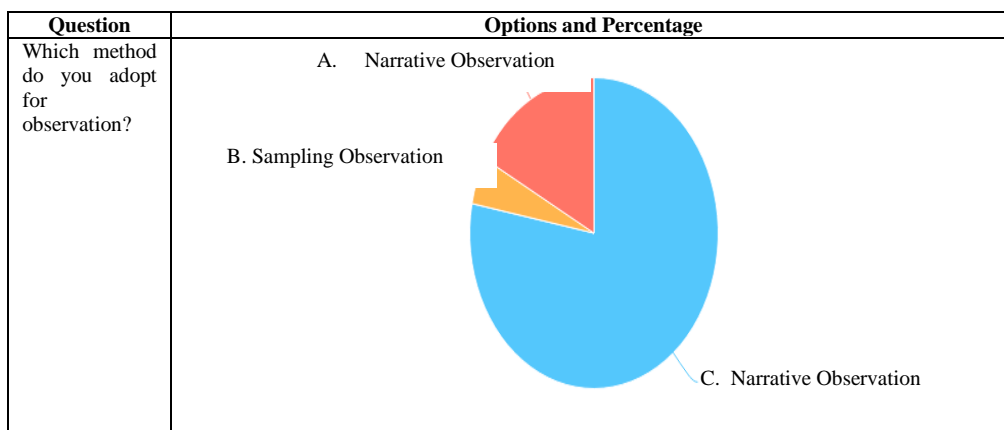
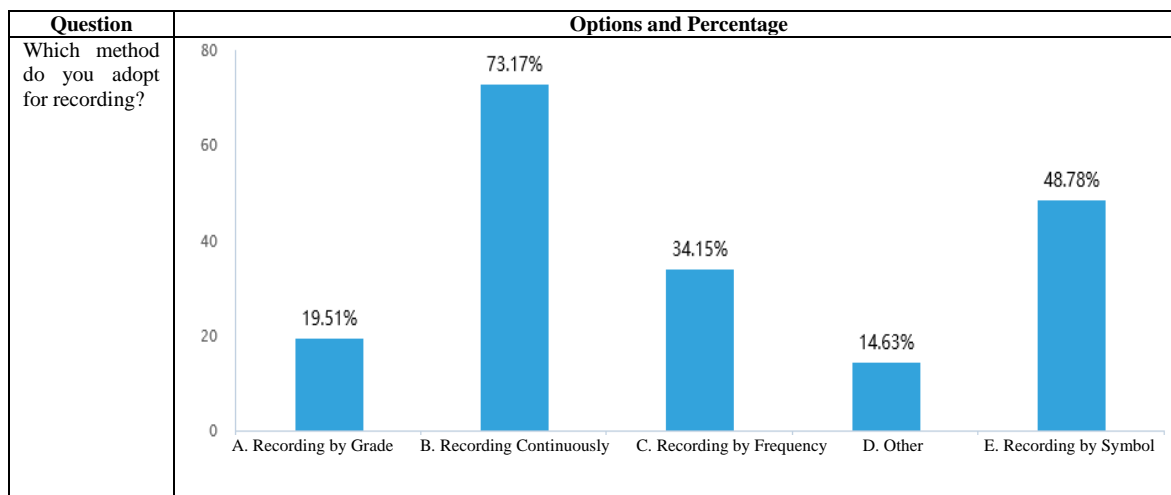


TABLE VII. TEACHERS' RECORDING METHODS



It can be known from the “Table VI”, in teachers’ methods of observation in free play, one method is used the most, namely “narrative observation”, accounting for 78.05% in the statistical chart of questionnaire. Sampling observation method and evaluating observation method account for 4.88% and 17.07% respectively. In the recording methods, “recording continuously” account for 73.17%, and teachers choose other method account for about 30%. It is clear that, the recording methods of teachers in free play are simple, so they should adopt multiple methods for recording. The author learnt about that the reason of simple observation and recording methods includes three aspects by way of observation and interview with teachers: 1. Teachers are not skilled in observation and recording methods; 2. Teachers are short of theoretical foundation and experience relating to observation and recording; 3. Kindergarten is short of appropriate guidance. As a result, kindergartens are required to take initiative to cooperate and supervise teachers’ behavior, and strengthen kindergarten teachers’ recognition of observation and recording.

C. The Use of Observation and Recording Information by Teachers After Free Play

TABLE VIII. CONDITIONS OF BEING USED AS ACTIVITY ORGANIZATION BASIS AFTER OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

Question	Options	Number of People	Percentage
Do you use the information as activity organization basis after observation and recording?	Frequently	36	48.6%
	Occasionally	34	45.9%
	Hardly	2	2.7%
	Not at all	2	2.7%

As a kind of tool, the observation and recording enables teachers to make reflections on their teaching. In addition, teachers can learn about the current development level of infants, their interests and needs through recording of infants’ behavior in free play, thus to promote teachers to organize activities in a better way through recoding and analyzing of the observed information, so as to promote the infants’ development. Viewing from the investigation, more than 94%

of the teachers will use the information as activity organization basis after observation and recording. It is clear that teachers will construct their relationship with infants and activities by constant reflections. (See “Table VIII”)

IV. REFLECTIONS ON KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS’ OBSERVATION AND RECORDING IN FREE PLAY

The author has the following reflections on kindergarten teachers’ observation and recording in free play by summarizing 80 kindergarten teachers’ questionnaire of observation and recording in free play, observation and recording of the class and the communication with the teachers.

A. Kindergarten Teachers’ Recognition of Observation and Recording in Free Play Is Not in Depth

The recognition of kindergarten teachers toward the importance of observation and recording in free play affects teachers’ behavior directly. The observation and recording of teachers in free play is the reflection of their viewpoints of children and games. The recognition of kindergarten teachers’ observation and recording in free play is not in depth, which reflects in that teachers’ observation is superficial, which is the daily observation without specific plan. The analysis of infants’ behavior is not deep enough to influence the infants’ physical and mental development. As a result, the training of kindergarten teachers’ recording ability should not be merely training of specific observation skills, but certain educational theory is needed to be used as support. In this way, the kindergarten teachers can analyze infants’ behavior in depth, so as to make effective evaluation.

B. Kindergarten Teachers Are Short of Plan and Objectives for Observation and Recording Before Free Play

As shown in “Table VII”, 54.1% of teachers think the plan before free play is very important, 40.5% think the plan important, no teachers think the plan is not important. It is clear that most teachers attach importance to the plan before observation in free play. However, in the investigation of “Do the teachers list observation outline before free play”, 62.16% of teachers only list the observation outline before free play occasionally, and 13.51% of teachers do not list the outline at

all. It can be seen that, kindergarten teachers do pay attention to listing of outline before free play, but only few teachers are capable of listing the outline each time in practice.

Kindergarten teachers are short of plan and objectives of observation and recording in free play. The root-cause lies in kindergarten teachers' lack of special training of observing infants in games. The special training of teachers' observation and recording in free play will enable teachers to learn about the difference of free play observation and the observation of other activities, why should teachers observe free play, how to present observation, master observation skills, expand and use observation. In this way, kindergarten teachers' objectives and plan for observation and recording in free play are improved, so that they can perform the targeted observation and recording.

C. Simple Observation and Recording Methods of Kindergarten Teachers in Free Play

The methods for observation and recording are diversified, but according to "Table V", only one method is used the most by teachers in free play observation, namely "narrative observation". The reason is that this method is easily to be used by teachers in actual activities in kindergarten. The "recording continuously" accounts for 73.17% in the methods of recording. Continuous recording is to record the actual typical event, a description of actual situation. It is effective for teachers, and the recorded events are typical, which can help teachers to reflect their own behaviors. The authenticity of teachers' observation and recording is enhanced by this observation and recording method, so teachers should consider the observation objectives in the process of observation and recording. Various observation and recording methods should be used flexibly to enrich teachers' observation, so as to promote the development of teachers' professional abilities and infants' growth. Teachers choosing other method account for about 30%. It is clear that, teachers' recording methods of free play are simple, and they should adopt multiple recording methods.

D. Lack of Teaching and Research and Training Activities of Observation and Recording in Kindergarten

Teaching & research and training activities are the most important way for teachers' professional learning and development. In teaching & research activities, teachers can communicate and share their experience, so as to obtain support and sympathy and arouse their own learning and reflections. Moreover, carrying out the teaching & research activities also shows that kindergarten lays stress on the observation and recording of teachers, thus to promote professional development of teachers in a better way. For the teachers, it can enhance their basic theoretical knowledge, update their information resources, and enable them to get access to frontier technology and methods of preschool education.

In the investigation of "teaching & research activities of observation and recording for teachers in kindergarten", 40.54% of the kindergartens carry out the activities frequently, 43.24% of the kindergartens carry out the activities occasionally. What deserves to be paid attention is that there are still 16.22% of kindergartens haven't carried out any teaching & research activities about teachers' observation and

recording, which indicates that some kindergartens, including the management and teachers, do not pay attention to the role of observation and recording for teachers' professional development and infant growth. Therefore, the teachers are required to study and receive training further for recognition improvement.

V. SUGGESTIONS ABOUT KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' OBSERVATION AND RECORDING IN FREE PLAY

A. Deepening Their Understanding and Stimulating Their Motive Power in Observation and Recording in Free Play

Teachers' motive power determines their motivation of work. With respect to the problem that teachers do not have high enthusiasm in observation and recording in free play, managers can supervise, encourage and guide teachers to take initiative to throw themselves into the observation and related behaviors through their own participation. When teachers' observation and recording in free play influences the development of infants and teachers, the teachers will experience their professional progress brought by observation and recording, and enjoy the pleasure brought by teachers' behavior, thus their enthusiasm in observation and recording will be gradually stimulated from the depth of their heart, so as to improve their consciousness and initiative of participating in observation and recording in free play.

Teachers can also reflect their behaviors from the daily observation and recording, to obtain self-satisfaction. Active reflections can enable teachers to accumulate more experience and knowledge, to make their work easier, and to have stronger inner driving power and generate powerful driving force of work.

B. Strengthening Their Learning to Enable Them to Use Multiple Observation and Recording Methods Flexibly

Kindergarten teachers' observation and recording is a kind of recording reflection of teachers toward education. It plays an incalculable role for the development of teachers' professional ability. Therefore, teachers' learning should be strengthened, to make the simple observation methods diversified. Besides, concept needs to be changed to improve teachers' awareness of observation and recording. For instance, establish a portfolio for each infant to record the infants' behavior in games, and enrich and improve it constantly, thus the record can reflect infants' growth and development progress and teachers can learn about conditions of infants. In addition, multiple methods should be adopted to observe and record. For instance, first, observation and recording in writing, e.g.: case analysis is used most commonly, which records and analyzes in writing, with narration as the main form; second, observation and recording with chart, which can be designed by teachers according to specific conditions of infants in the class, to record some data first, and then make the specific recording, and finally carry out reflections; third, recording with cameras, technology develops rapidly in the current society, so teachers' observation and recording methods are flexible, as teachers can shoot on the spot and encode it, thus they can watch infants' behaviors repeatedly to learn about the infants in depth. Teachers can make cross application of these observation and recording methods according to actual

conditions, to enhance effectiveness and truthfulness of observation and recording.

C. *Intensifying Supervision and Management to Promote Teachers to Form Normative Observation and Recording*

In the aspect of promoting teachers' professional development, a lot of managers of kindergartens choose to start from management system, so they set up flexible and humanistic system. To achieve the target of supervision, teachers' development should be taken as the foundation for teachers' development. For instance, first, creating comfortable atmosphere, the influence on individual by group is based on empathy and common view, so kindergartens should promote teachers to establish harmonious interpersonal relationship for sharing, mutual aid and communication; second, respecting teachers' personality and their work, and creating conditions to meet teachers' reasonable requirements, to enable teachers to select the observation and recording method freely; third, managers should communicate with teachers equally with different methods, and shorten the distance between manager and teacher by taking advantage of interpersonal skills. The observation and recording of teachers are supported by certain system with administrative management's participation and encouragement. It is easier for teachers to form more normative observation and recording by flexible management of kindergarten under such management.

VI. CONCLUSION

Kindergarten teachers will attach importance to free play and observation and recording in free play through the above research of kindergarten teachers' observation and recording in free play. Moreover, the current conditions of kindergarten teachers' observation and recording in free play is understood in-depth in this paper, and the problems existing in reality are analyzed, such as the lack of plan and objectives in kindergarten teachers' behaviors, kindergarten teachers' lack of thorough understanding of observation and recording in free play, kindergarten teachers' lack of inner driving force and persistence for observation and recording, simple observation and recording methods adopted by kindergarten teachers. In addition, the appropriate behaviors of kindergarten teachers in observation and recording are summarized, and corresponding countermeasures are proposed, to promote effective development of free play in kindergartens, and to make contributions to the professional development of teachers.

The author hopes to arouse teachers' attention to the observation and recording in free play and stimulate kindergarten teachers' enthusiasm in observation and recording through this paper, so as to enable teachers to observe the infants and to learn about the infants more, thus to promote better development of the infants while promoting their own professional development.

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