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Current Status, Causative Factors, and Optimization Strategies of Teacher-Child Interaction in Kindergarten Physical Activities From the Perspective of the Assessment Guide

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Abstract

Under the guidance of the Kindergarten Care and Education Quality Assessment Guide, the quality of teacher-child interaction in kindergarten physical activities has garnered significant attention. Current interactions suffer from issues such as monotonous patterns, conservative content, and superficial quality, primarily stemming from insufficient understanding of educational concepts, the inertia of traditional teaching methods, a lack of professional knowledge, and an imperfect training system. To address these challenges, efforts should be focused on creating a game-based physical activity environment, enhancing teachers' professional competence, improving kindergarten physical education infrastructure, deepening training practices, and optimizing assessment methods, thereby fostering comprehensive improvement in the quality of teacher-child interaction.

Key words: Teacher-Child Interaction; Kindergarten Physical Activities; Assessment Guide; Optimization Strategies

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In accordance with the relevant requirements of the Assessment Guide issued by the Ministry of Education in 2022, teacher-child interaction has been explicitly identified as a core element for enhancing the quality of the educational process. Research indicates that high-quality teacher-child interaction not only promotes the coordinated development of children's physical and mental well-being but also effectively facilitates teachers' professional growth, serving as an important pathway for achieving educational goals and improving the quality of care and education (Huang, 2025).In the practice of kindergarten education, physical activity, as an essential educational component, holds unique value in cultivating "well-rounded children" (Zhu and Guo, 2025).The Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3–6 emphasizes that "a well-developed body, a happy mood, strong physical fitness, coordinated movements, good living habits, and basic life skills are important indicators of children's physical and mental health" (Liu, 2013).Numerous studies have shown that maintaining appropriate intensity and duration of physical exercise during early childhood has positive effects on strengthening fundamental motor skills, cultivating good character, enhancing cognitive levels, and promoting social behaviors in young children (Li, et al, 2019).

1. CURRENT STATUS OF TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

As an indispensable component of physical activities, teacher-child interaction has become increasingly prominent in its importance. Such interaction not only positively influences children's future social development but also plays a significant role in the

professional growth of teachers. Some researchers have found that the overall quality of teacher-child interaction in kindergarten physical activities is above average (Li and Luo, 2023), indicating substantial room for improvement among early childhood teachers in this aspect. Other researchers, using the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) as the primary research tool to examine the quality of teacher-child interaction in physical activities, identified issues such as low child engagement, poor quality of teacher feedback, and the failure of teacher-child interaction to realize the multifunctional value of physical activities for child development (Wang, 2025). Similarly, based on the CLASS assessment system, studies on teacher-child interaction quality in mixed-age physical activities revealed problems across emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support domains, with causative factors analyzed from the perspectives of teachers, children, and kindergartens respectively (Tan, 2024). Further observational research has shown that teacher-child interaction during physical education activities is uneven, characterized by adequate safety supervision but insufficient individualized guidance for children, a lack of emotional support from teachers (exhibiting a "high start, low follow-through" pattern), and neglect in guiding peer interactions (Ding, 2023). Another researcher, adopting the scientific dimensions proposed by Professor Liu Jingbo for teacher-child interaction as a measurement tool, summarized the effectiveness of teacher-child interaction in a senior kindergarten class in Kunming, identified existing problems, and proposed optimization recommendations (Qian, 2023). A review of existing research reveals that although the promulgation and implementation of the Assessment Guide provide significant guidance for kindergarten development, teachers still face numerous practical challenges in organizing and conducting physical activities that urgently require resolution. Overall, while existing studies have reached some consensus, there remains space for deeper exploration regarding the quality of interaction, personalized support, and process-oriented evaluation. This provides a basis for further analysis of problems and the proposal of strategies in this study.

Based on the above analysis, although existing research has revealed the overall landscape of teacher-child interaction in physical activities, the underlying structural and systemic contradictions still require in-depth analysis. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the practical challenges and underlying causes on the basis of clarifying the current status.

2. MAIN ISSUES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ASSESSMENT GUIDE

2.1 Monotonous Interaction Patterns

In terms of interaction methods, excessive teacher dominance leads to monotonous interaction patterns, characterized by a predominance of mechanical, command-based exchanges, which significantly undermines children's autonomy and engagement. During physical activities, teachers tend to over-rely on traditional instructional and demonstration approaches, often adhering rigidly to pre-designed lesson plans and lacking the flexibility to adapt to children's on-the-spot reactions and needs. For example, in a rope-skipping activity, a teacher might strictly follow predetermined steps to teach basic techniques without encouraging children to experiment with different skipping styles or engage in free exploration. This restricts children's autonomy and limits their opportunities for self-directed exploration and learning. Additionally, there is a notable neglect of integrating play into physical education. An overuse of directive language by teachers results in activities that lack fun and engagement. For instance, during balance beam exercises, a teacher may simply instruct children to walk across the beam one after another, without incorporating playful scenarios—such as a "little squirrel crossing a river"—to spark children's interest. The reasons behind this are multifaceted: on one hand, teachers have a superficial understanding of the "child-centered" philosophy emphasized in the Assessment Guide; on the other hand, they are influenced by the inertia of traditional teaching models. Coupled with heavy daily workloads, teachers often struggle to respond promptly to children's interactive needs.

2.2 Conservative Interaction Content

In terms of activity content design, an excessive emphasis on safety precautions leads to a conservative approach. When organizing physical activities, teachers tend to overfocus on safety concerns and rule enforcement, thereby avoiding activities that carry certain risks but are valuable for fostering children's courage and social development. For instance, challenging activities such as climbing and balancing exercises are often excessively simplified or entirely excluded. This not only restricts the development of children's motor skills but also deprives them of opportunities to gain a sense of achievement through overcoming challenges. In promoting the

development of children's gross motor skills, teachers may rely solely on equipment like climbing frames or balance beams without incorporating elements of fun and exploration into the activities, leading to a loss of interest among children. To ensure safety, teachers may also limit the intensity and difficulty of physical activities, opting for simpler and safer options, such as basic running or rope skipping. To prevent accidents, activities are often conducted in small, easily monitored spaces rather than utilizing broader, more challenging outdoor environments. Additionally, there is a tendency to reduce children's free playtime during physical activities, further constraining the scope of interaction. This phenomenon stems both from a lack of specialized knowledge in physical education among teachers and reflects the prevailing pressure in educational settings to prioritize safety and liability.

2.3 Superficial Interaction Quality

At the level of interaction quality, a common issue is the high frequency of interactions but a lack of depth. Due to unreasonable activity design by teachers in physical activities, teacher-child interactions are frequent but of low quality. Teachers often prioritize the imparting of motor skills while neglecting the guidance of emotional communication and social development, resulting in insufficient responses to children's individualized needs. In physical activities, teachers fail to provide personalized guidance based on factors such as children's varying heights, weights, and motor abilities, preventing children from fully realizing their potential. Teachers tend to offer uniform teaching content and challenge levels for all children, without considering differences in physical fitness and skill proficiency. Children who struggle with certain physical activities do not receive active responses or support from teachers, leading some children to perceive the activities as either too easy or too difficult. This negatively impacts the accumulation of exercise experience and the developmental growth of some children. Moreover, teachers often rely on a single evaluation method, assessing children's physical performance solely based on their performance in sports activities, while overlooking their performance in other areas such as teamwork and creativity. This results in low-quality interactions. The reasons for this are not only due to teachers' need for improvement in observation and evaluation skills and the relative weakness of practical guidance within the training system but also related to systemic factors such as the lack of process-oriented evaluation and an overemphasis on outcomes in the kindergarten assessment mechanisms.

The underlying reasons are not only due to the need for improvement in teachers' observation and evaluation skills and the relative weakness of practical guidance within the training system but are also closely linked to the institutional limitations of kindergarten evaluation mechanisms. Currently, many kindergartens' evaluation systems still exhibit a tendency toward "outcome-only orientation," placing excessive emphasis on quantifiable results such as the attainment of children's motor skills and the orderliness of activity organization, while neglecting process-oriented quality elements in teacher-child interactions, such as emotional support, responsiveness to individual differences, and children's participatory experiences. This type of evaluation indirectly leads teachers to prioritize "efficiency" and "safety control" during activities, making it difficult for them to genuinely focus on children's deeper developmental needs, such as emotional changes, social interactions, and individual expressions during physical activities. Consequently, the depth of teacher-child interaction and the realization of its educational significance are constrained. There is a clear gap between the emphasis on "focusing on the educational process" advocated in the Assessment Guide and the current situation, reflecting the absence of process-oriented evaluation in early childhood physical education and the inadequacy of the professional development support system for teachers.

Based on the above analysis of the problems, achieving substantial improvement in the quality of teacher-child interaction urgently requires the construction of a multi-dimensional and integrated improvement pathway from a systematic perspective. A targeted strategy framework is proposed, focusing on three key dimensions: environmental design, professional support, and evaluation optimization.

3. EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ASSESSMENT GUIDE

3.1 Respect Children's Physical and Mental Development and Create a Favorable Physical Activity Environment

In physical education activities, teachers should not only fully respect the laws of children's growth and development but also focus on cultivating their skills rather than overemphasizing physical fitness. Attention should be paid to fostering children's willpower and the transmission of sportsmanship, while implementing the requirement of the Assessment Guide that play should be the fundamental activity. Regarding environmental design, the Assessment Guide provides specific assessment points around "space, facilities, toys, and materials," aiming to promote kindergartens in creating rich, appropriate, child-friendly educational environments that support children's learning and exploration. Kindergartens should rationally

plan indoor and outdoor activity spaces for children, fully consider the alignment between environmental spaces and activity content, and establish complementary and interactive ecological relationships to create a positive psychological atmosphere for children to participate in physical activities. Sports equipment and materials should be scientifically provided, ensuring safety and accessibility both indoors and outdoors. Materials should align with children's motor development goals, age characteristics, and ability levels, and the diversification of material usage should be encouraged to stimulate new experiences in children. Children should be offered diverse opportunities for physical experiences to promote the development of their perceptual abilities. Emphasis should be placed on practicing basic movements such as walking, running, and jumping, and engaging in fun physical games using methods like "one object, multiple uses" or self-made equipment. At the same time, attention should be given to the interaction between motor development and systems such as perception, motivation, and emotion.

3.2 Enhancing Teacher Professional Competence and Improving Kindergarten Physical Education Development

The Assessment Guide outlines specific assessment points regarding the teaching staff, focusing on "professional ethics, staffing, professional development, and incentive mechanisms," with the aim of strengthening the development of the teaching team and enhancing teachers' professional capabilities. Kindergartens should establish a systematic, tiered, and categorized training system for teachers' physical education literacy, ensuring that teachers participate in at least one specialized training session per semester. The training should emphasize the enhancement of skills in designing physical activities, understanding children's motor development patterns, implementing safety precautions, and providing individualized guidance. Simultaneously, efforts should be made to actively build a collaborative education mechanism involving families, kindergartens, and communities, promoting the formation of an integrated physical education ecosystem where "family physical education serves as the foundation, kindergarten physical education as the core, and community physical education as the extension." In terms of physical education environment development, the supportive role of digital and intelligent tools should be actively explored. For instance, wearable devices such as smart wristbands can be introduced to monitor children's heart rates, duration of physical activity, and intensity distribution in real-time, helping teachers scientifically assess children's exercise load and physical responses. Based on such data, teachers can dynamically adjust activity content and intensity, achieving personalized guidance for children with different physical constitutions and motor abilities. This not only prevents insufficient or excessive exercise but also enhances the relevance and effectiveness of teacher-child interactions. Furthermore, tools such as interactive sports game software and motion behavior analysis systems can be utilized to diversify the forms of physical activities, increase children's interest in participation, and provide an objective basis for process-oriented evaluation. This contributes to the overall improvement of the scientific and systematic nature of kindergarten physical education development.

3.3 Deepening the Training Practice Process and Optimizing Assessment and Evaluation Methods

Kindergartens must ensure the continuous and orderly implementation of physical education activities for children, guaranteeing that their daily physical activity targets are met. Strengthening the pre-service training of early childhood teachers in physical education is essential, establishing a standardized training mechanism for newly recruited kindergarten teachers. This includes centralized experiential training through coaching, mentorship-based immersive training, and return-to-post practical training, among other forms. The training content should encompass a wide range of knowledge, including theoretical knowledge of physical education, motor skills, teaching strategies, safety precautions, the developmental patterns of children's fundamental motor skills, and theories related to children's physical and mental health. Partnerships with community sports institutions can be established to bring in professional sports coaches, thereby supplementing the teaching staff needed for specialized physical education instruction and practice. The Assessment Guide focuses on improving and optimizing evaluation methods by emphasizing process-oriented assessment, strengthening self-evaluation, and concentrating on classroom observations. Teachers can enhance their practical operational skills and teaching experience in physical education activities through demonstration teaching, hands-on practice, and the sharing of teaching experiences. Self-evaluation should be adopted as a regular tool for enhancing professional competence, ensuring a comprehensive, objective, and truthful reflection of the care and education processes and their quality, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the assessment.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of physical activities in kindergartens holds significant meaning for the growth and development of children themselves, and the process of teacher-child interaction can further facilitate children's clear understanding of sports activities and contribute to their personality development. The promulgation of the Assessment Guide provides clearer direction for effective teacher-child interaction. Teachers should

respect and care for children, establishing equal and close relationships with them, while kindergartens should create a favorable learning environment for teacher-child interaction, continuously deepen and refine the goals of physical education, and optimize assessment and evaluation methods. Only through coordinated efforts from multiple stakeholders, thoroughly studying and implementing the guiding principles of the Assessment Guide, and continuously innovating and making positive improvements, can we enhance the quality of teacher-child interaction and foster a conducive atmosphere for promoting the high-quality development of early childhood education.

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