

Exploring the Moral Values of Trust and Care through Process Drama in a Chinese Primary School: The Case of Workshop *A Lion in Paris*¹

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Abstract

Based on an in-depth case study of a workshop adapted from the picture book *A Lion in Paris*, this paper explores the possibilities of introducing drama to promote primary children's moral values of trust and care in the Chinese educational context. It points out that process drama may offer an ensemble-based and playful pedagogy to complement the rigid and didactic teaching in the existing *moral curriculum Moral and Legal Education*². It then argues for the potential of story-based drama as an innovative pedagogy that may help the pupils develop the virtues such as trust and care. The fieldwork was undertaken in a public primary school in Beijing, in which the workshop was taught to 16 children on a voluntary basis. The evidence suggests that the incorporation of educational drama as an extra-curricular activity of a primary school is workable, and this new approach can be seen to some extent to assist pupils in establishing trustworthy and caring relationships in a drama classroom. The author hopes the study might stimulate more and deeper research on the use of the drama pedagogy in similar contexts.

Keywords: care, moral education, primary school education, process drama, trust

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Introduction

As is generally accepted, China has been undergoing rapid economic and social changes and improvements since the policy of economic reform and the opening up to the world in 1978 (Li, 1990; Meyer, 1988). In this process, modern values such as openness, freedom, dialogue and pluralism are liberated in line with the improvement of people's living quality, which are now permeating people's mind and social life (Qi & Tang, 2004). As a leading academic in the research field of moral education in China, Professor Lu Jie argues that the market economy has shaken the foundation of the traditional society and made it possible to transform moral education fundamentally. According to her, people in China have started to get involved in the market economy as independent agents while slowly breaking away from dependent relationships formed by kinship, terrain and sub-groups; thus, there is now space for new types of human relationship to flourish. She believes such space is essential for carrying out contemporary moral education for a new generation with autonomous personalities, as it offers the possibility of cultivating "self-determined, liberal, democratic, equal and fair individuals" (Lu, 2004, p. 74).

However, the Chinese government saw a need to uphold the socialist nature of the school and society in order to maintain the stability of the social order, in face of the emerging diversity in terms of economic forms, values and lifestyles. Fearful of a crisis of values, the political leaders always tried to renew the system of socialist values with strategies to serve the communist market economy and ideology (Yu, 2008). Thus, as the soul of the educational system and a powerful ideological tool of the government, the basic aim of moral education in the Chinese context is to train students ideologically and provide mental support for socialism and communism (Li, 2011; Li et al., 2004). In such a background, the main problem of moral education as a taught course in primary schools springs from its didactic nature, being shaped by Marxist ideology, socialism, patriotism, as well as the need to equip pupils with certain ideas appropriate for the progress of the nation. Its nature is always confined to the ideology of communism, the

pursuit of political intention, rather than the cultivation of autonomous moral thinking (Li et al., 2004). As many researchers point out, the moral education taught in China has long been dominated by a didactic and rigid approach, without effectively taking into account the pupils' physical and affective needs (Cheung & Pan, 2006; Lee & Ho, 2005; Tse, 2011). Consequently, the curriculum neither encourages the pupils' learning interests nor equips them with the moral qualities outlined in the guidelines.

Based on these considerations, I propose that process drama may offer a dynamic and playful pedagogy for primary-aged children to complement the current moral course *Moral and Legal Education*. As a physical activity, drama may arouse students' interests, which can also engage their independent moral thinking and encourage them to work together (Morgan & Saxton, 1987; Nicholson, 2014; Winston, 2004). Using drama to cultivate children's ethical qualities is still a new and under-researched field in the Chinese educational context. As a trial, this paper attempts to examine the possibilities of enhancing young children's moral values of trust and care through drama. The reason for concentrating on these virtues is due to the suggestion given by the experimental school in my study, as all the participants come from Grade three and Grade four, for whom cultivating the values of trust and care are important ethical themes in their textbooks³. Thus, this study takes the drama workshop *A Lion in Paris* as an in-depth case study to explore in what ways the drama approach may enhance the ethics of trust and care for the pupils, and examine critically its processes and effects in the current educational environment. By doing so, the research aims to offer an understanding of drama as an innovative pedagogy and its potential in promoting children's moral development in Chinese primary schools.

Literature Review

Process drama for enhancing children's moral development

The term "process drama" was first raised by Cecily O'Neill in the 1990s. It builds upon the traditional participatory practices established by

drama in education in the 1970s and 1980s, principally by practitioners like Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. Process drama has its own theories and practices. As described by Howell and Heap (2005), process drama is “a form of theatre applied within an educational context in which learners, in collaboration with the teacher, create drama for exploration, expression, and learning” (p. 60).

It is commonly agreed in the research field of educational drama that one of its key educational effects is its ability to get children to think about issues of values and explore ethical dilemmas. Particularly, drama educators Jonathan Neelands and Joe Winston present different theories and models to how drama can bring about change in children’s values. I will draw upon both of them in my approach and my own understanding of how drama can work in the Chinese context.

Firstly, as believed by Neelands (2002), when acting in drama “the boundaries between self and other meet and merge”, and “the core of our humanity, the essence of compassion, the beginning of morality are to be found in our capacity to merge self with other” (p. 8). Neelands (2009) then suggests using the “ensemble-based” learning in drama to provide young people with a better version of the reality on an achievable scale that celebrates the virtues of collaboration and togetherness. He also describes the principles of the ensemble-based model of drama, in which he puts the uncrowning of the power of the teacher as a primary goal (Neelands, 2009). In light of Neelands’ theories, I try to create an equal learning atmosphere by reminding myself to be less authoritarian as the teacher in order to enhance the pupils’ independent thinking and promote a sense of togetherness in the classroom.

Secondly, Winston (1998) has argued “how, within a dialogical relationship between drama and traditional stories, children can interpret, negotiate and articulate moral meanings” (p. 7). In his practice, Winston emphasizes the playful nature of drama practice, who believes that the spirit of play is an indispensable precondition to learning and creative thinking for

young learners. According to him, the playful activities in drama may help to temporarily release the students from their routine lives by “creating and sustaining the illusion of an alternative reality in which they can play and imagine things differently, re-creating the world as they would like it to be” (Winston, 2015, p. 14). Thus, creative and imaginative play is advocated in my drama practice and playfulness becomes a key measurement for me to reflect upon the actual teaching effects.

To sum up, both drama educators inform my thinking and affect the present study that helps me to conduct a new approach in the Chinese context. As suggested by Henry (2000), drama has the potential to be a useful tool for social sciences such as education, for it offers “a dynamic, integrated and dialogical model to replace more static and predictable paradigms” (p. 59). Thus, it is the contention of this paper that drama can provide an approach that is suited to move the rigid and didactic teaching that is evident in moral education in China into a more collaborative and playful way of learning for the group of children in my drama classroom.

Promoting ethics of trust and care through process drama

As summarized by Helen Nicholson (2002), a general understanding of trust involves “a correspondence between belief and expectation, commitment to a person or situation, responsibility for oneself, co-operative behavior and care for others” (p. 82). In the specific research context of drama education, Gavin Bolton (1980) points out that the first task of the drama teacher is to establish trust in the classroom. Michael Boyd defines the value of trust in drama as “the ability to be appallingly honest and to experiment without fear” (as cited in Winston, 2015, p. 87)⁴. In the practical level, Neelands (2004) regards an atmosphere of trust as a premise and foundation for producing positive learning environment, and suggests setting up a contract to guarantee the establishing of trusting relationships among participants by negotiating the behavioral boundaries and certain ground rules. Besides, Nicholson (2002) argues that the creation of trusting relationships in educational drama relies more on the visible enactment of

trust as a performative act in changeable situations based on continuous dialogue, as compared with the unobservable individual feelings built on shared and stable ethical values leading to social harmony. She also stresses that trust can only be achieved in response to specific risks in unfamiliar situations when students actively and willingly tackle challenges with the support and guidance of the drama teacher (Nicholson, 2002).

In terms of the ethic of care, it was first raised in the American psychologist and ethicist Carol Gilligan's work *In a Different Voice* (1982) from a feminist perspective. In this book, she argues that women's moral selves are usually embedded in the attachment with others in specific contexts, focusing on interpersonal relationships, and seeing compassion and responsibility as a virtue. This Gilligan defines as an ethic of care; such a moral ideology is different from the male model of an ethic of rights advocated by her mentor Lawrence Kohlberg (1971), emphasizing autonomy, rationality and generalized standards. Winston (1998) accepts Gilligan's definition of morality as "an ethic of care" and suggests that story-based drama can teach children to value such a virtue by concentrating on their emotional connections with each other and respecting individual differences in the drama community. He also argues that drama may stimulate what Aristotle called *orectic* potential for young children, which is "our innate capacity to reach out to others, one of the givens of our social nature, particularly evident in childhood" (Winston, 1996, p. 195). Besides, Edmiston (2008) points out that educational drama offers imagined spaces for children to safely and playfully explore the social relationships and situations of other people in a fantasy world to enrich their normal social lives, in which they may "encounter and dialogue with viewpoints that would never be faced in everyday life" (p. 171). In this way, children have the chance to develop their imagination by trying to connect with other people across time and space, taking their standpoints into consideration. This helps to cultivate their moral attitudes of being empathetic (Edmiston, 2008). Furthermore, Neelands (2009) believes that drama enables young people to use their imagination freely to express and create credible and coherent experiences in a make-believe world, which provides them with the horizon and capacity to act for a

brighter future.

In light of these educators' theories and practices, firstly, I set up a contract with the pupils before the commencement of the drama workshop to promote the ethic of trust. Besides, as far as I can see, there is a lack of emphasis on the cultivation of risk-taking and problem-solving abilities when teaching the ethic of trust in the current moral curriculum with focuses on the delivery of honest role models such as Ming Shanbin (明山賓) and abstract ethical instructions such as "Clever deceit is inferior to clumsy sincerity" (巧詐不如拙誠)⁵. Therefore, I concentrate on the artistic creativity and unpredictability of the practice of trust, and try my best to make sure the students feel safe enough to experiment in certain risk-taking situations in the process drama. Secondly, I have also paid attention to drama's potential in helping the pupils respect individual differences in the drama community. Besides, to my understanding, the main sources for the existing moral textbooks stem from common and real-life events centered around the children such as whether to share textbooks with their deskmates who forgot to bring them (Lu & Gao, 2004), which may lead to a possible lack of imaginary space for young children to wish to reflect within. Thus, the cultivation of the pupils' empathetic attitudes through imagination in drama is advocated in the present study. The development of the pupils' imaginative capacities may also enable them to act for a better future.

Methodology

Case study was adopted as the methodological approach that caters to the qualitative nature of this piece of research. As suggested by Winston (2006), the artistic nature of case study chimes with the knowledge generated by drama, for they both "seek out rather than solve problems, provoke rather than answer questions, deepen our understanding rather than rush to closure" (p. 45). Moreover, case study offers in-depth understanding of important aspects of a certain area that would enable the researcher to discover the significant features and conceptualize them for future study (Punch & Oancea, 2014). With regard to this paper, the case is the scheme of A

Lion in Paris as a specific and bounded system (Stake, 1995), aiming to explore how process drama could be accepted in the Chinese educational context as a newly introduced teaching strategy to enhance primary children's moral values such as trust and care.

The drama scheme was conducted to a group of children in a public primary school in Beijing, China. Situated on the outskirts of the city and founded in 1936, the school has about 360 pupils studying in 12 classes now, with two classes in each grade. The study purposively chose this elementary school mainly due to the following reasons. First, it has a specialty and tradition in teaching athletics, calligraphy and traditional instruments in children's spare time, to guarantee them enough playful time through sport and music. Second, the headmaster Mr. Jiao showed interests in my project and hoped to bring in drama activities in his school as a trial. Therefore, I chose this school that enjoyed a healthy ethos and the headmaster's support to guarantee the productivity of the drama workshop. 16 participants (6 girls and 10 boys) took part in my study on a voluntary basis, and they came from a newly founded drama society of this school. They were around 10 years old and came from different classes in Grade three and Grade four. Some of the pupils came from the same class and were already friends before taking part in the drama society, but the majority of the participants were unfamiliar with each other. A quick survey also showed that none of them had heard of the story adopted in my workshop nor experienced any process drama work before.

The story *A Lion in Paris* by Beatrice Alemagna was first published in French by Tate Publishing in 2006. I used the Chinese version translated by Xu Jun in 2010 for my teaching. This story tells of a lion who, bored of his rural life on the grasslands, goes to the big city of Paris to try his luck. The story was chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, it explores the theme of acceptance of a stranger by the local community. It provides an ideal text for designing activities that could engage children to explore and practice the values of trust and care through group work. For instance, the pupils were expected to be compassionate when they were asked to explore the lion's

difficult situations as an outsider. Some activities were also designed for them to help a stranger from a different culture where they needed to overcome language barriers in a playful way, such as playing the game charades. Secondly, to my thinking, this story could have a special meaning for current China. As is generally accepted, China has been experiencing rapid urbanization since 1978, and the flow of rural-urban migration is considered one of the largest in world history. In the process of social transformation, the traditional value system based on family bond has been challenged. More and more young people had to explore their own identities and learn to get along with strangers instead of familiar relatives, which is similar to the lion's experience in this story. In this way, it might be beneficial for the children as future citizens to explore this fictional tale beforehand in the drama class.

The drama scheme was designed by me first, then revised and developed by Professor Joe Winston in Warwick University. To establish a reliable learning environment, I set up a contract with the children for discussing certain ground rules for drama practices beforehand. The workshop itself included two sessions and each session lasted for about 45 minutes. As the drama society the pupils joined held weekly activities on Thursday afternoon, there was one week interval between the two classes.

The first Session began with warm-up activities and three tableaux – “a lion in the street”, “a friendly lion in the street” and “a friendly lion in the street that everyone ignores” - to get the children physically and mentally involved. The teacher kept the friendly but ignored lion in the last group and asked children to imagine what he was thinking in that situation. Then voluntary students were invited to touch the shoulder of the lion, trying to speak out his feelings or ideas. After setting free the lion, children were also asked if they ever felt in that way and in what circumstances. After that, the teacher told them the original story and displayed the illustrations using slides. Based on the story, the teacher asked the pupils what the lion's worst moment might be and why. Based on their ideas, they were encouraged to form still images to illustrate such moments. The players were then invited to play the hug game in which some children were left out by intention and

the others were encouraged to offer help to them. In the end, the pupils were invited to imagine a child of their age visiting Beijing, who was a complete outsider just like the lion. The teacher informed them this child's story would be explored further in the next lesson and maybe they could offer kind help when necessary, as they had in the last activity.

In the second Session, the children were encouraged to raise their favorite places of Beijing's monuments that the child might pay visit to. They were then invited to form still images of these tourist attractions. Staying in their groups, they were asked to think about the problems the imagined child might face in these places regarding language barriers. Then the pupils were invited to form still images to illustrate those situations such as the child could not order food/buy ticket/ask the way/find a place to pass the night, and the passersby were not being helpful in those circumstances. After that, the teacher played the game of charades by letting the children guess what she was doing using only body language, such as brushing the teeth and waiting impatiently for a bus. The students were then encouraged to find a partner and name each other A and B. Each A was given a piece of folded paper, with a problem a stranger might encounter such as being hungry/thirsty/sick and so on. All the As were asked to send the messages to the Bs only by facial expression and body language, and the Bs had to offer help once they understood. After several minutes' play, voluntary pairs were invited to show before other workshop participants. The session ended by the performing.

Different methods were adopted for "data triangulation" to ensure the concurrent validity of the data (Cohen et al., 2000), and also help to provide a thick description of the case (Patton, 1990). The research instruments utilized in the study included (1) video and audio recordings of the sessions; (2) quick field-notes taken in class and reflective journals kept right after class; (3) transcription of conversation with the teacher, Ms. Qi⁶; (4) transcriptions of group interviews with the children. As there was one week interval between my sessions, that afforded me some time for evaluation and reflection after conducting the first lesson. In total, I generated four 20-minute group

interviews with the pupils - two times after each session and six participants each time. The interviews were implemented in a semi-structured manner for detecting problems and possible meanings that emerged from my teaching. To get relatively comprehensive views from each of the participants, I was careful to divide the groups in accordance with their genders, personalities and friendships when conducting the interviewing. Our conversations were transcribed verbatim in Chinese.

In terms of ethical considerations, permission to approach the children was gained in advance from the headmaster. Consent letters with a brief explanation of the study were given out, read and signed by the pupils' parents before the commencement of the workshop. The participants' personal information was also kept as confidential and reported anonymously. In this paper, when presenting the children's opinions, I used the animal names made by themselves for our drama workshop (for example, Girl Horse) for the assurance of their privacy protection.

Key Findings and Analysis

To be consistent with the research concern, I will analyze how the moral values of trust and care were explored in the study respectively, interwoven with my own observations and reflections, the students' voices and ideas, suggestion from the colleague and relevant theoretical considerations, in order to provide a balanced and holistic interpretation.

The moral value of trust in the drama classroom

Establishing trust through setting up a contract

As mentioned previously, the participants engaged in the study had little or limited drama experience. From classroom observations, I noticed their attitudes towards my sessions were either curiosity or excitement, as they found out they were given more free space in a classroom devoid of chairs and desks in the drama classes compared with their normal lessons.

According to Halstead & Pike (2006), it is a distinctive feature of drama lessons that participants work in physical nearness in a free space which requires self-discipline, otherwise it may result in disruptive behaviors as a potential challenge for young children (p. 79). Besides, Nicholson (2002) points out that establishing trustworthy relationships in the drama classroom might be more difficult than the traditional courses, as the learners need to engage all their bodies, emotions and intellects in the learning process of drama. Thus, they not only have to generate feelings of trust within a group of players, but also to pay attention to each other's physical, emotional and intellectual well-being when working together (p. 83).

Bearing this in mind, I followed Neelands' (2004) ideas to set up a contract with the children by negotiating some ground rules and behavioral boundaries. In the process of making the contract, I was aware of my authority as the teacher and tried to promote the ensemble-based learning that celebrates the virtues of justice and collaboration as Neelands (2009) suggests. Edmiston (2008) also pays attention to the unavoidable power relations between children and adults in the drama practice; therefore, he proposes that it is necessary for the educator to "share power with children as much as possible in order to create trusting collaborative relationships and spaces" (p. x). In this way, the pupils in my class were encouraged to take turns to express his/her opinion, even the quietest members of the group contributed ideas. I also used the strategies of *voting and signing your name* to make sure the participants truly identified the rules they raised as proposed by Morgan & Saxton (1987, pp. 146-147) (italics in the original). After discussion, these rules were written on a piece of paper, such as *do not play wildly, do not laugh at others, respect each other's right to speak, get along peacefully* and so on. These ideas reflected the pupils' willingness to build up a safe and reliable learning community. In the after-class interview, children all showed positive attitudes towards the contract. They thought it useful in guiding their behaviors as they felt the rules made by themselves sounded reasonable and were willing to obey.

In the light of my experience in the following workshop, I was also

aware that it would be better for the drama teacher to raise some of the drama conventions in the contract for children to discuss before the process drama work was conducted. For example, it appeared the pupils were reluctant to work with new friends when dividing into groups. I reflected on this incident in my research journal that I should scaffold children's learning in a drama class by informing them beforehand that sometimes they could work with their friends but sometimes they had to work with unfamiliar children and make new friends. As suggested by Winston & Tandy (2009), it takes time for children to get used to working with different children in drama lessons - explaining this in the contract may help them to adapt more quickly to this new teaching approach. In this way, by explaining the rationale of the convention, they may also learn to build up trust gradually in an unfamiliar context (Nicholson, 2002).

According to Neelands (2004), the contract in drama is more than an agreed sanctions system, it embodies an ongoing dialogue to guarantee the quality of learning and interpersonal relations in a drama class; that all participants shall take responsibility for the maintenance of the contract (p. 54). The setting up of a contract has the potential in building a trustworthy and fair environment for the children to regulate their behaviors and negotiate the climate for learning. Such an outcome requires the efforts of both the students and the teacher.

Exercising trust by facing challenges in mixed gender groups

As a collaborative art form, Nicholson (2002) identifies trust in educational drama as being inherently connected to artistic creativity and spontaneity, involving continuous negotiation and re-negotiation based on specific contexts and social settings. She argues that, although such a learning process might be risky, this encourages active involvement and creative experimentation for the participants (Nicholson, 2002). Following Nicholson's suggestions, I paid attention to the challenging circumstances emerging from children's new learning experiences through drama to enhance the level of trust felt among the group.

For instance, in the first session, the reality showed that the children were reluctant to form mixed gender groups and work with unfamiliar players using hug games. From the interview, I came to realize this group of children did not have enough experience in teamwork, especially in choosing partners by themselves. However, the majority of them expressed a willingness to make new friends and try a new form of grouping, which they thought might be more interesting and stimulating. Besides, according to their teacher Ms. Qi, boys and girls tended to become sensitive about gender issues in the age group of around 10 years old, as such they might feel shy about words such as “Hug” and “Kiss”; she suggested that I create more chances to enhance the communication across genders, which might be beneficial for their integrated growth.

Therefore, I decided to draw lots instead of doing the hug games to help them overcome gender barriers in the second session. I prepared some folded-papers with written numbers from one to four beforehand. When the children were about to show the tableau form of their favorite public places, I asked them to take turns to pick up a folded piece of paper and go to the designated place to meet other members who held the same number. In this way, I divided 16 children into four groups randomly, with boys and girls mingled in each group.

According to Nicholson (2002), participants can achieve feelings of trust in drama classes only when they are actively willing to face new challenges after weighing the potential risks and rewards in a specific situation or relationship. Accordingly, the teacher should pay close attention to the social context in which the drama takes place, and have a good understanding of the children’s preceding experiences and knowledge that may influence their actual practice. In this way, he/she can offer appropriate support or intervention that enables the participants feel safe enough to experiment in the new learning experiences. In my class, after making sure the children were ready to accept new challenges for a more harmonious relationship across genders, I decided to use lottery to split the class more randomly, with the expectation to help the participants overcome unfamiliarity and enhance

the dynamics of the group.

Besides, to promote the ethic of trust in drama, Bolton (1980) suggests using role-playing in specific contexts to protect the participants from being threatened so as to enable them to engage with a “feeling quality” creatively. He expresses “So the only way it seems to me is to ‘protect’ them into a context that does not expose, a context that naturally permits them to indulge an ‘introverting’ emotion while gradually opening up the topic” (Bolton, 1980, p. 81). In light of Bolton’s theories, the pupils were invited to raise their favorite tourist attractions by themselves, and then represent these public places through still images in which they participated with enthusiasm and delight in their mixed gender groups.

For instance, one group decided to show the roller coaster in their tableau form. Boy Pig came out with the idea to lie on his stomach to perform the tracks. He then invited Girl Horse to sit on his back to be a tourist. Their discussion was as follows, being transcribed from the video-recording and translated from Chinese.

Boy Pig: Come on, sit on my back.

Girl Horse: Are you sure?

Boy Pig: Yes. As I am the tracks and you are the visitor.

Girl Horse: OK. But will you be tired?

Boy Pig: No, of course not. (16 June 2016)

Sitting on the boy’s back, Girl Horse opened her arms with an excited facial expression. Their performance impressed everyone and won a loud applause. In the interview, Girl Horse told me initially she was shy to sit on a boy’s back, but the imaginary role of the visitor made her feel easier to take the challenge and she finally chose to trust Boy Pig’s advice; besides, Boy Pig expressed his delight to be trusted by Girl Horse, that made him feel his ideas were supported and cherished.

This incident suggests that the process of playing the imaginary roles

brought fresh dynamics to the trusting relationship between Girl Horse and Boy Pig. The fictional context made it easier for them to shed their initial shyness, enabling them to trust and touch each other in order to present the joyfulness of a visitor riding a roller coaster. Similarly, other pupils also made new friends in their mixed gender groups and demonstrated the virtue of trust as “a performative act” (Nicholson, 2002) by taking the roles such as the animal in Beijing Zoo, the maple tree in the Fragrant Hills Park, and the photo of Chair Mao in Tiananmen Square. They delightedly created these still images in close physical proximity, which also illustrated that this group of children managed to develop a more trustworthy and intimate association through the playful elements rooted in the drama practice. According to Winnicott (1971), the trust embedded in such play is essential for children’s personality development, making them feel safe and confident enough to closely connect with each other in the learning space, where they can learn to “be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self” (p. 54).

The civic virtue of care in the drama classroom

Learning to respect different self-expressions in a community

Based on an analysis of Hannah Arendt’s theories of citizenship, Winston (2004) argues that the values in a public domain should help to generate dialogue and form collective civic action for people from different backgrounds to understand and appreciate each other while maintaining their diverse personalities. In relation to drama education, he proposes that different roles in drama can introduce children to the domain of public morality by encouraging them to find their own voices and meanwhile learn to respect others’ self-expressions; such practice demonstrates “the ethic of care” and helps to prepare active citizens ready to take part in a pluralistic society (Winston, 2000).

Following Winston’s advice, I tried to encourage children’s differing expressions in the drama classroom for establishing a caring learning

environment. For instance, in one activity in the first session, a group of four girls made a tableau that showed the lion being terrified and ignored by the passersby when he had just arrived in Paris. In their scene, three girls performed the passengers, walking towards the audience in the shape of a triangle. When Girl Seagull showed the fearful emotions of the ignored lion by turning her back on the others, some children suggested that she should have some eye contact with the other performers, as well as the rest of the class. However, I supported Girl Seagull's original choice and their group received applause.

The reason for this decision on my part was because I remembered a fieldnote I had written about this girl: "Girl Seagull, a sensitive girl, sometimes will keep some distance from others." From my observations in class, I noticed that she was a shy girl, for whom turning her back on others might represent the perfect way to express the fearful feelings of the lion. According to Robinson (1980), a key function of drama education is to help children make progress through social interaction and communication in an open learning environment. However, the potential for changing through interaction in drama does not appear naturally, but connects with the teacher's ability of monitoring, always needing to pay close attention to the social reality of the group (Robinson, 1980, p. 167). In this incident, Girl Seagull might have taken the suggestion as public criticism as a shy child. Therefore, I chose to appreciate instead of critiquing her.

As pointed out by Nicholson (2002), as the learning process in drama requires an openness to difference, the drama teacher plays an important part in nurturing the confidence of the individuals and cultivating the supportive atmosphere of the group. In Girl Seagull's case, I confirmed her understanding of the role and her classmates also learned to respect her own expression. In this way, this girl as an individual may feel accepted and appreciated in the public learning space of drama. To sum up, learning to respect individual differences demonstrates the ethic of care in my drama classroom and is the only way to maintain the dynamics of the group in the long term.

Imagination helps children develop empathy and act for a better future

According to Edmiston (2000), story-based drama helps children to learn to use their imagination to consider others' positions in the ways they need to behave for ethical action. Moreover, Neelands (1992) argues that drama enables children to experience and explore the lives of others in various situations, which helps them "to develop empathy and respect for others who are culturally, historically or socially different from themselves" (p. 6). Furthermore, as proposed by Winston (2015), with physical, affective and cognitive engagement, educational drama has the potential to activate what Aristotle called children's orrectic potential – "their inbuilt readiness to empathize with those who are suffering, to reach out to them with humanity" (p. 14).

In my study, children were invited to take turns to touch the friendly but ignored lion's shoulder and speak out his feelings and ideas as an outsider in the first session. That helped the pupils generate a more sympathetic attitudes towards the lion by seeing through his eyes, as they illustrated it in their words in the role:

Why do they all neglect me? Am I not good looking? Am I not friendly enough? (Girl Fish, 9 June 2016)

I am not the King of the zoo any more, and I really need some companies. (Boy Bear, 9 June 2016)

Besides, I also asked the pupils if they ever felt that way and in what circumstances.

I can feel the lion's low mood as no one wants to make friends with him. Sometimes when I get low scores in exams, I have similar experiences with him. (Boy Monkey, 9 June 2016)

When I came to this school as a transfer student one year ago, I felt

aggrieved as some classmates kept a distance from me. The situation changed when I made the first friend with a nice girl. I wish the lion can make an acquaintance with someone as well. (Girl Swan, 9 June 2016)

As revealed above, children were encouraged to share similar experiences with the lion from their daily lives in my drama practice. According to Edmiston (2003), both the teacher and students should not become immersed in an imagined drama world, separated from the everyday, but rather try to understand their imagined experiences in order to connect them with their daily lives and thereby develop deeper understandings about them. In my class, the pupils' imagined experiences of the lion linked with their normal social lives that helped to develop their imaginative capacities by connecting with others' situations and cultivate the ethical value of empathy.

In addition, Edmiston (1998) indicates that young learners can imagine equally the bright and the dark side of humanity safely and playfully in a drama classroom. It helps them to explore the ethical dimensions of certain situations, including both kind and bad-mannered behaviors (Edmiston, 1998, p. 57). In my class, children were also invited to experience how the imagined child might be treated disinterestedly by some cold-hearted passengers in the second session. As believed by Winston (2015), good drama practice includes rather than excludes the dark side of the world, which is not fearful but can be overcome "by a group of young children showing patience, cleverness and acting together" (p. 16). With regard to my study, the pupils were encouraged to play the game of charades and offer help to the imagined child in a friendly manner. Such a caring activity could suggest different behaviors to the pupils compared with the last one. As suggested by Edmiston (2000), drama can offer a vision of what our lives would be like and how the world can be made better if we act in a different way. A similar stance is taken by Neelands (2009), drama represents a pedagogy of hope, in which the youngsters can take actions for a better and brighter future.

Conclusion

Findings in this small-scale qualitative research has suggested that process drama has the potential in providing an ensemble-based and playful approach to complement the rigid and didactic teaching of trust and care in the existing moral curriculum *Moral and Legal Education* in the Chinese educational context. Firstly, in terms of cultivating the moral value of trust, children could learn to negotiate the behavioral boundaries and drama conventions by setting up a contract with the drama teacher to build a reliable environment together. Besides, as mentioned previously, the cultivation of children's risk-taking abilities is to a large degree neglected in their school course when delivering the moral concept of trust. In my practice, the fictional roles and specific contexts provided by drama helped the pupils face challenges in their new learning experiences and practice trust as a performative act, something essential for their personality development. Secondly, in terms of cultivating the moral value of care, rather than confirming standard answers in a strict manner, drama could help children learn to respect diverse self-expressions in a community. To be able to do so, it relies on the drama teacher's awareness and skill to manage the classroom sensitively and generously. Furthermore, instead of focusing on real life events as advocated in the existing moral curriculum, children were encouraged to develop the ethical attitudes of being empathetic through the imagined world created by drama. To some degree, the stimulation and enhancement of the pupils' imaginative abilities could also inspire them to act for a brighter future, and such drama practice represents a pedagogy of hope.

In terms of the limitation of the research, the class in my study was small, consisting of 16 children in total. From my experience, it is common that drama is included in Chinese primary schools as an extra-curricular activity in the form of a drama club or society, where students participate on voluntary basis. Thus, the present study can be seen as most pertinent to those teachers who already work with small groups in a voluntary class of this kind. Besides, this paper merely explored the values of trust and care as

a trial. Thus, more virtues are worth researching and discussing with young children through drama in a future study, such as justice, tolerance, solidarity and so on.

I hope this piece of research might be of value to anyone interested in using a drama approach to promote primary children's moral values in the Chinese context. As a trial in this new and under-researched area in China, I hope my study might stimulate more and deeper research to further our understanding of this resourceful approach.

Notes

- 1 This paper emerged from my PhD thesis at the University of Warwick with Professor Joe Winston as my supervisor. Without his support and guidance, the completion of this article would have been impossible, and for that I am deeply indebted to him.
- 2 In my fieldwork, the textbooks the participants used were the former version - *Morality and Society. Moral and Legal Education* for pupils in Grade three and Grade four were released in 2019. Generally speaking, these two versions of the textbook do not affect the objectives and results of the present study.
- 3 For example, see lessons *I am very Honest and Pass Love to Others* in the textbook of Grade three, lessons *Learn to Keep Promise and When Conflicts Appear* in the textbook of Grade four.
- 4 This was originally published in *Building relationships, The Stage*, 2 April 2009. I have taken it from Joe Winston's book *Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, published by Bloomsbury in 2015.
- 5 The examples are picked from the textbook *Moral and Legal Education* for primary children in Grade three, published by People's Education Press in 2019.
- 6 I came for seeking advice from Ms. Qi when encountering a problem in playing the hug game with the children. Ms. Qi works in the school's consulting room as a psychological teacher, taking care of children's mental health.

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過程戲劇對中國小學生信任與 關愛品質培養的個案研究

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摘要

本文為作者在中國一間小學內，以過程戲劇用於兒童道德教育的個案研究。工作坊改編自繪本故事《一隻獅子在巴黎》，用以探討在中國教育背景下，引入戲劇教學法促進小學生信任與關愛品質發展的可能性。作者認為，過程戲劇在某種程度上能夠提供一種團體協作、寓教於樂的教學方法，以補充中國小學主流的德育課程中偏重說教等不足之處。作者梳理了過程戲劇作為一種創新的教學方法用以培養兒童信任與關愛之美德的相關理論，並介紹了教案故事以及研究方法。北京一所公立小學的16名小學生在自願的基礎上參與了工作坊。研究結果表明，將過程戲劇以課外社團活動的方式納入中國小學是可行的，這種新的教學方法在一定程度上能夠幫助學生在戲劇課堂上建立相互信任、相互關愛的人際關係。作者希望藉此研究，拋磚引玉，吸引更多學者在運用戲劇教學法促進兒童道德發展的領域進行更多、更深入的探索。

關鍵詞：小學教育、信任、過程戲劇、道德教育、關愛