

Preschool Teachers' Beliefs Concerning Their Performance of Teaching by Using Picture Books

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Abstract: Many preschool teachers have discussed the conundrum that follows utilizing picture books for teaching, which is the poor quality of teaching effectiveness, and the need for support is extensive. Despite numerous research providing remedies, it appears that the problem has not been fully resolved. The aim of this study is to find out the latent reasons of this phenomenon. This study interviewed teachers' beliefs of their performance about using picture books to teach. 9 preschool teachers participated. The findings demonstrated that teachers' lack of confidence led them to assume that they were failing miserably while using picture books to teach. Additionally, teachers' beliefs on using picture books in teaching are greatly influenced by the appraisal of a high-quality teaching. Based on the interviews, preschool teachers' beliefs about teaching using picture book also be indecisive due to external feedback.

Keywords: preschool education, picture books, beliefs, teaching performance

1 Introduction

Numerous studies have demonstrated that picture books may not only naturally and vividly express complex literary ideas, but also help children develop their personalities, artistic aesthetic ability, creativity, and imagination[1][2][3][4]. As a result, preschool administrators started to enhance the picture book teaching guarantee method. For instance, preschool managers started spending a lot of money on picture books and creating picture book reading areas in each classroom in order to promote and encourage preschool teachers who teach using picture books[5]. Additionally, preschool teachers started concentrating on honing their picture book teaching skills[6]. Picture books have increased in quantity and accessibility during the past ten years, both of which are positive developments[7]. Parents have also begun to pay attention to the influence of picture books in early childhood education. Therefore, it can be seen that the value of picture books for children's development has been widely recognized by researchers, preschool managers, teachers and children's parents.

Also, it has been noted that the teaching strategies for using picture books in preschool teachers' classes are welcoming and practical. For example, the preschool provides a large number of picture books for teachers to use[8]. Nevertheless, despite the preschool actions, preschool teachers stated that they still require guidance due to a lack of confidence. For example, Hu and Chen reported that preschool teachers still lack confidence when selecting teaching models and strategies when using picture books to teach[2]. This is because picture book instruction has not been practiced for a very long period. This discrepancy makes preschool

teachers' beliefs an necessary consideration to explore teaching by using picture books in preschool and give empirical evidence on the potential effects of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Since teachers' confidence plays a significant part in the creation of a high-quality class, taking into account how they consider about their teaching strategies and the picture books they use in their classes is a crucial consideration[9]. The positive beliefs is related to better teaching outcomes and higher satisfactory teaching performance when preschool teachers direct their behaviour and effort in their teaching situations[10].

Numerous studies have been conducted on teachers' educational motivation, confidence, and use of picture books in teaching, as well as on their relationships to successful teaching practices. However, preschool teachers' own understanding of their performance of teaching by using picture books have seldom been studied. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate preschool teachers' own beliefs concerning their teaching performance.

The aim of this study was to identify the latent, significant causes of why preschool teachers continue to report needing support despite the fact that other studies have provided answers. The main research question for this study is: How do preschool teachers describe their performance of teaching by using picture books? The sub-questions of this study were: What are preschool teachers' perceived sources of knowledge on a high quality class? Is there any relationship between preschool teachers' beliefs and influence from outside ?

2 Method

2.1 Participants and procedure

There were 9 preschool teachers from one preschool in Taian in China participated in this study. The reason why this preschool took part in this study was that it collaborate with the researcher's working place to increase their preschool teachers professional development of teaching by using picture books, especially for newly hired teachers in need of extensive support. The participating preschool teachers' professional experiences are presented in Table 1. The ethics committee of the university approved the study before the commencement of the data collection in 2022.

Table 1. Participates' professional experiences.

Name(Names have been de-identified)	CH	CE	HU	LU	QI	LA	ZI	FE	BI
Working years	2	2	3	5	8	10	15	17	21
Age	24	25	25	27	30	32	35	39	41

This study used qualitative data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews to explore participants' beliefs in relation to their performance in teaching by using picture books.

Before the interviews began, participants had been informed about the research project and the rights they had as respondents. Besides, the researchers used a recorder to record the interviews after obtaining the consent of the interviewees. The interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes and were conducted at the soundproof reading room in preschool. These were recorded and transcribed. Recordings and transcripts are stored securely.

2.2 Data analysis

This study drew on the five written forms of qualitative research proposed by J. Van Maanen when conducting data analysis[11]. First, realist tale. Reproduce the participants' views on the questions as truly as possible, describe and analyze the interviewees' evaluation of their performance, and use their language as much as possible to describe the results of the research. Second, confessional tale. Introduce the methods used by the researcher and the reflections made during the research process, and restore the interview scenes and conversation fragments. Third, impressionist tale. Detailed description of the circumstances in which the incident occurred and the interviewee's reaction and facial expressions. Fourth, critical tale. Conduct an in-depth discussion from the perspective of the social and cultural context. Fifth, formal tale. Although this study did not attempt to use the research results to verify a certain theory, the research design and questioning methods have reflected some of the study's preconceived notions.

3 Results and Discussion

The aim of this study was to shed light on influential factors on teachers' beliefs of their performance when teaching by using picture books. By means of the semi-structured interviews, preschool teachers described the external factors that also can be interpreted as being influential on their beliefs.

Firstly, the results showed that preschool teachers hardly had positive beliefs about their performance when teaching by using picture books since the lack of self-confidence. First of all, most of these teachers mentioned that they were not trained how to use picture books to assist teaching when they were students. Because of this, they believed that during preparing for teaching activities by using picture books, their knowledge is not enough to support them in making the best choice when choosing picture books and selecting teaching methods.

"I didn't learn how to use picture books to teach when I was in the university. When choosing picture books, I actually didn't have a knowledge system for my reference. I just chose what I felt was suitable... Yes, but as to why I think this one (picture book) is suitable and that one is not? I actually don't have a better answer, I choose it based on my experience." (QI)

"I am not confident in the teaching methods I used when teaching by using picture books, because in all my study life, I have never learned how to use picture books to teach, including now, I am actually looking for such off-line training courses about teaching by using picture books, which is also very difficult." (CH)

In addition, they thought that their own teaching skills by using picture books are limited, which also affected their beliefs about their performance. These teaching skills mainly include: First, classroom language skills. Classroom language is an important factor that affects the effectiveness of teaching activities[12]. Teachers believed that when reading picture books to children, presenting the content vividly can improve the quality of teaching and promote the improvement of children's creativity.

“When I read and role-played the different characters in a picture book in different tones, the children became excited, and some objects of their own imagination will appear on their drawings ...”(ZI)

Second, interpreting the content of picture books. Picture books contain multi-faceted and multi-level educational connotations. Teachers required to fully explore the educational content in picture books to improve the quality of teaching[13]. Most of these teachers believed that they do not understand the content of picture books deeply and their ability to interpret picture books needs to be further improved.

“I know that there are many ways to understand picture books, but I think I can’t understand them deeply. I explain some literal meanings, and I also talk about the practical life principles or latent knowledge in the stories, but I don’t think it’s enough” (LA)

Third, teaching body language. Body language is a bridge for teachers and students to transmit information and express feelings. Teachers use body language to help students better understand the meaning of their teaching content, so as to achieve the purpose of teaching[14].

“...when some animals are happy, they will dance to celebrate. At this time, I know the children are very expecting me to organize them to perform together, or just for me to imitate. But I’m not good at dancing. At this time, I will become very unconfident to perform.” (BI)

Therefore, combining all these influence factors, preschool teachers tend to put teaching by using picture books considered as an not easy things.

Secondly, the evaluation of a high-quality teaching has a great influence on teachers’ attitude towards teaching using picture books. All teachers mentioned the evaluation standards for a high-quality teaching promulgated by the preschool. They believed that a high-quality teaching must reach this standard first. In addition, they also believed that the performance of teachers and children in and after class is also a factor for judging whether a high-quality teaching. On the one hand, they agreed that children can listen carefully in class, and whether teachers can successfully teach according to the preset teaching process are necessary factors to judge a high-quality teaching.

“When children can pay attention to the teaching content, without a lot of whispering, running around, or looking at other things, then I would consider the class quality to be high.” (CE)

On the other hand, these teachers summarized the completion and quality of children’s works, as well as whether the teacher has completed the teaching targets as factors for judging a high-quality teaching.

“For me, I pay close attention to children’s tasks, for example, whether they express all the things that I required or emphasized in my class in their drawings, if they did, I will consider this to be in line with the requirements of a high-quality teaching.” (FE)

“Whether the teaching targets are successfully completed as expected can also be regarded as an evaluation factor, generally speaking, I will complete the teaching targets in every class, but how to complete it is different. Sometimes I did it as expected, but sometimes I was interrupted unexpectedly, at that time, I can only finish my teaching hastily, but even so, I still ensure that my teaching content are completed. But this kind of completion, I don’t think is a high-quality teaching.”(HU)

Finally, the semi-structured interviews explored preschool teachers' beliefs regarding received feedback. Teachers were very serious about the feedback they received during the discussion. These feedback come from four different groups: The first is feedback from preschools. The preschool has a teaching assessment committee, and their comments are the most important influencing factors. When receiving positive evaluation results, teachers began to express high emotions about their teaching by using picture books and were very satisfied with their performance. The corresponding good feedback from the perspective of teachers was that they would prepare for teaching more attentively. On the contrary, when the evaluation results are tend to be negative, they becomes frustrated and not optimistic about their performance either. Because of this, they begin to doubt whether the knowledge they have is correct. The depressed emotion will affect them for a long time, sometimes even for an entire semester.

“Once they(the teaching assessment committee) didn't give me some satisfactory reviews. After that time, throughout the semester, I rarely used picture books to help my teaching in class. I can't say that I'm not interested, I can only say that I don't dare to try”. (LU)

The second is feedback from the preschool's peer review. In the interviews, teachers mentioned that the preschool organizes teachers to participant and evaluate each other's teaching every semester. The positive comments from peers exceed the negative comments, teachers will have strong self-confidence in using picture books for teaching, and they will also be more supportive of advocating the use of picture books for teaching. On the contrary, they will think that their performance is not good enough. This can even cause teachers to lose confidence in daily chats between colleagues.

“The comments from peer reviewers also had a huge impact on my confidence in using picture books to teach. I remembered, once, I received many criticisms from my peers. From that time, I fell into an endless cycle of low self-esteem throughout the semester, and even I don't want to chat with my colleagues.”(ZI)

The third feedback comes from children. The initiative and interactivity performance by children in class also had an impact on whether teachers are satisfied with their performance of their teaching by using picture books.

“When children become actively in class, I think that my teaching methods are appropriate and my performance in class is also good.” (CE)

The fourth is feedback from children's parents. Good feedback interactions will make teachers more satisfied with their classroom performance.

“Children's parents will greet us when picking up their children. I remembered, once, a mother said my son likes the picture books you used, when he arrived home, he taught what he learned from you to me as you. At that time, I got so much confidence, and this feeling makes me happy for several days, which gives me the motivation to use picture books in teaching again.” (ZI)

4 Conclusion

This study creates important contributions to the literature on teachers' beliefs of their teaching performance in preschools. It is important to give preschool teachers their own voices

to better address their views of teaching by using picture books. Existing research mostly concerns teaching problems by using picture books to teach but is typically not able to explain teachers' beliefs of their performance. However, this study offered a deep understanding of influencing factors on teaching by using picture books through illustrating preschool teachers' beliefs on their performance and the feedback they received. It is important to benefit understanding on how preschool teachers perceive their performance and how their perceptions are built. The results showed that teachers believed that they were succeeding unwell when teaching using picture books due to a lack of self-confidence. In addition, the evaluation of a high-quality teaching has a great influence on teachers' attitude towards teaching by using picture books. Based on the interviews, preschool teachers' beliefs about teaching by using picture book also be indecisive due to external feedback. These results can be used to improve teaching modes of using picture books. In addition, preschool teachers' views of a high-quality teaching also be considered to motivate and cultivate their performance when they using picture books to teach. Furthermore, preschool teachers should receive adequate training on how to use picture books to assist their teaching and how to manage emotions at work.

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