



PhD thesis

The potential of process-centred drama in activating the new curriculum reform in the post-2000 basic education system in China

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The Potential of Process-Centred Drama in Activating the New Curriculum Reform in the post-2000 Basic Education System in China

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of PhD
by Research

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February 2024

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I declare that the work presented is wholly my own, unless clarified as part of the submission.

2 Material submitted for another award

*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award

3 Research Ethics

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Abbreviations and explanations

DiE	Drama in Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IDEA	International Drama/Theatre and Education Association
IDEC	International Drama Education Congress
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCR	New Curriculum Reform
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	Process-Centred Drama
TiE	Theatre in Education
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Abstract

This thesis explores the potential of process-centred drama (PCD) for achieving the standards of the New Curriculum Reform (NCR) in mainland China. In order to fulfil the objectives of cultivating (*Yuren*, 育人) and the all-round development (*Quanmian Fahzhan*, 全面发展) of learners, the NCR advocates a new teaching model which is strongly relevant to pupils' life with a 'participatory, actively-involved, enquiry-based and task-based' approach. In this thesis, the benefits and profound significance of PCD as an innovative teaching strategy for filling the gap in existing pedagogic practices in the educational context of mainland China is investigated. This study makes use of mixed research methods and includes semi-structured interviews with Chinese educators, UK-based specialists and experienced facilitators, as well as case studies in UK-based theatre-in-education (TiE) and workshop observations. The two case studies with Big Brum and Freshwater focus on the existing practice of PCD in educational settings, facilitation skills and the response of learners through the engagement of PCD activities. In addition, this research investigates these practices from the perspective of Chinese educational ideas such as *Yuren* and all-round development, as well as Confucius's ideas of reflective learning (*Xue Er Bu Si Ze Wang*, 学而不思则罔) and enjoying learning (*Xue Er Bu Yan*, 学而不厌). The thesis also offers a recommendation outlining a possible direction for the future growth of PCD in mainland China.

Keywords: Drama education, New Curriculum Reform, process-centred drama

Introduction

Research background

The State Council released the implementation of the New Curriculum Reform (NCR) in mainland China in 2001 through a new educational policy entitled *Decision for the reform and development of basic education*. The initial part of this thesis provides an outline of the NCR with a particular focus on how process-centred drama (PCD) emerged and developed in arts education within the context of the NCR. Further, it explores the ways in which PCD might offer pertinent tools to meet the demands of the NCR. The latter places an emphasis on the involvement of learners in participatory activities as well as the promotion of enquiry-based, discussion-based and task-based learning. Additionally, it seeks to nurture the educational idea of *Yu Ren* (cultivation), which is distinguished by learning which emphasises educational value and learning that continues throughout life.

The NCR symbolises a profound shift from the previous conventional educational approach outlined in the *Compendium of curriculum reform for basic education (trial)* introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2001. This earlier approach has been criticised for curricular content which is removed from pupils' real-life experiences and characterised as complex, challenging, and outdated. It relies heavily on rote memorisation, mechanical training and summative assessments. Essentially, the NCR focuses on fostering comprehensive growth in learners to equip them for a competent future workforce that will be capable of meeting the diverse needs of a fast-changing society, as well as lifelong learning.

Drama education was initially incorporated into the arts curriculum in 2007, but its progress has been gradual and disconnected. Although there is an increasing interest in and commitment to the development of drama education, some problems continue to exist. The inclusion of PCD in the revised *Arts education standards* announced by the MoE in March 2022 marked a significant advance for the progress of drama education in mainland China. Nevertheless, there are challenges associated with the execution of the objectives delineated in the NCR. To begin with, the majority of primary and secondary schools in China have for many years focused on a product-oriented and competition-valued instructional approach. For instance, drama classes or clubs in schools are usually structured as rehearsals of classic theatre productions culminating in participation in student arts festivals at several local, regional and national levels. Consequently, pupils lack the opportunity to engage in process-centred drama education learning which fosters

all-round development, creativity and problem-solving skills in a participatory and discussion-based environment, as described in the NCR. Furthermore, there is a severe shortage of facilitators who are capable of offering participatory, enquiry-based and discussion-based PCD sessions for learners to engage with learning material. The absence of adequate structured teacher training poses significant obstacles to comprehending and applying this novel approach.

Arts education, also called aesthetics education, emphasises cultivating pupils' good qualities by immersing them in arts experiences in the Chinese education system. The aim of arts education in Chinese schools, according to Linman (2013: 305), is to cultivate in pupils "arts perception, understanding, evaluation and artistic creativity", as well as to develop good personal qualities and wisdom. The function of arts education in Chinese educational settings can be summarised as cultivating arts capacity, edifying temperament and inspiring wisdom (Linman, 2013: 305). Arts education is now receiving increased attention as a crucial element of the NCR initiatives. Research in the field of arts education has been continuously evolving since 2000 and enhancing the essence, principles and objectives of arts education. Overall, arts education is recognised as a potent means of enabling students to attain all-round development. Consequently, the number of drama schools in Beijing has increased to twenty-five and Shanghai now has seventeen, indicating a growing enthusiasm for drama education. Nevertheless, the complete implementation and execution of the NCR in arts education have been very slow for a number of reasons, such as the lack of recognition of its place in the curriculum and the shortage of arts teachers. Furthermore, drama classes in school settings still prioritise the acquisition of performing skills, which is further influenced by taking part in product-oriented and competition-valued student arts festivals in the majority of schools. Moreover, the primary motivation for pupils to pursue drama courses is to perform on stage, to get admission into theatre academies and ultimately to pursue careers as professional actors. Usually, at the end of each semester and academic year, pupils rehearse and perform in a school or professional theatre for their peers and parents. Some schools have established collaborations with the Central Theatre Academy in Beijing and Shanghai Theatre Academy with the purpose of preparing pupils for participation in drama summer camps or classes, then training to become professional actors in a university in the future. Even so, there is a discrepancy between the current practice and understanding of the integration of drama in schools and the demands in the NCR of a novel teaching approach that draws on "participatory, actively involved, enquiry-based

and task-based” methods for cultivating pupils’ all-round development (MoE, 2010). This particular aim outlined in the NCR suggests that arts education should focus on cultivating pupils for educational purposes rather than solely on skill acquisition.

In October 2016, the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing and Shanghai Theatre Academy organised the inaugural Symposium on Theatrical Pedagogy in China's primary and secondary schools. As a result of this event, two books were published entitled *Primary and secondary school drama education* and *Secondary school drama education* edited by Hao in 2017. Nevertheless, researchers continued to prioritise the proficiency of learners in performing activities, which diverges significantly from the expectations of the NCR for participatory instruction and active learning methods.

Research positionality

As a Chinese drama teacher conducting research in the UK, I am aware that I occupy a distinctive position as an ‘insider’ in the context of Chinese drama education and an ‘outsider’ in the UK setting. This dual role enables a nuanced comprehension and reflection of both contexts, akin to Breen’s (2007: 170) concept of being ‘in the middle’. Insider research, as defined by Kanuha (2000: 441), referred to the practice of conducting research within communities and populations to which the researchers themselves belong. In addition, Asselin (2003: 100) noted that the researcher as insider shares the same identity, language and experiential foundation with the participants of the study. According to Dwyer and Buckle (2009: 59), being an insider has various advantages. It naturally promotes trust and openness among participants, leading to more in-depth data collection. It also creates a safe environment where participants are more inclined to share their experiences. Additionally, insiders are able to collect and extract genuine data from participants. Dwyer and Buckle (2009:59) further emphasised that engaging in detailed reflection and being conscious of one's personal biases and perspectives will be beneficial in minimising any issues associated with insider membership.

Viewed from an alternative standpoint, being an individual who is not part of a particular group might occasionally enhance one's comprehension of the dynamics within that group. Fay (1996: 223-245) put forward four reasons which highlight the advantages of being an outsider in research. Usually, as insiders, individuals often lack the essential objectivity to fully comprehend their own experiences due to their deep immersion in them. Consequently, an outside observer can have the extra capacity to comprehend and understand these experiences. Moreover, individuals have an abundance of overlapping,

confusing, ambiguous, mixed and occasionally contradictory intentions, motivations and emotions. As a result of these particular aspects of the human experience, it is possible for another person to sometimes have the capacity to understand the complexities which individual themselves cannot. In addition, those who are not actively participating in an experience can have an extra ability to understand the broader perspective, including its interconnections and patterns of cause and effect, in comparison with those who are immediately involved. Fay suggested that we conceal our authentic selves out of fear and the need to protect ourselves, which makes it extremely difficult to untangle ourselves from these feelings. Observers who are not directly participating in an experience can possess a broader understanding of the situation and can effectively overcome any potential self-deception. From this discussion, it is clear that both insider and outsider status have both advantageous and disadvantageous aspects. Researchers must have a thorough comprehension of these factors in relation to their precise position within the group under investigation.

McNess, Arthur and Crossley (2013: 58-59) emphasised the potential of blending the insider-outsider positions to offer novel viewpoints in comparative research. They elaborated on this dynamic approach, highlighting the importance of a nuanced comprehension of how individuals might situate themselves as insiders or outsiders, or perhaps both, in relation to the research context. Their suggestion was to include a comprehensive understanding of how various conventional boundaries, such as nationality, language, ethnicity, culture, gender and age, can affect research. Additionally, it is important to recognise and understand different ontological, epistemological and disciplinary boundaries which might arise and how these boundaries can have an impact on the generation of new knowledge. The example provided by Katyal and King (2011: 338-339), two western researchers who conducted their research in Hong Kong, supports this viewpoint. They found that despite being perceived as outsiders due to cultural differences, they possessed an insider position within the educational institutions which they observed from a professional perspective. As an outsider with a different race, background, study and teaching experience, I am conducting research in the UK educational context. Despite this, my expertise in the field of PCD enables me to take on the role of an insider. I conducted semi-structured interviews with specialists and experienced facilitators, as well as carrying out case studies and observing workshops. The dynamic nature of my position in the research is adaptable and constantly evolving, aligning with the concept of being an 'inbetweener' as defined by Milligan (2016: 248).

The researcher's 'inbetweener' qualities are defined by not exclusively belonging to one identity or another and not being fully positioned either within or outside during the investigation.

To summarise, my role in this study comprises insider, outsider and inbetweener roles, which is particularly appropriate for a Chinese drama teacher conducting research in the UK context as it enables a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural educational practices. With expertise as a Chinese drama teacher, I offer a comprehensive understanding of Chinese educational norms and practices. This viewpoint is extremely important for the purpose of comparing, contrasting and contemplating the drama education experience in the UK with that of China. In the UK, I have assumed the role of an external observer, providing a novel and impartial perspective on the practices of drama education in the UK. This viewpoint enables observations and analysis of novel techniques and approaches. I also held the role of an inbetweener, specifically as a Chinese drama instructor, to carry out research in the UK. Additionally, I am also an insider in terms of my specialised knowledge in the sector of PCD. The various roles of insider, outsider and inbetweener enabled me as a researcher to have a distinctive comprehension of PCD activities from a cross-cultural standpoint. On this basis, this research provides insights for the development of PCD in accordance with the demands of learners and NCR initiatives. It also contributes to the discussion of PCD in the western context from this unique perspective.

Research questions

To guide the research, the following research questions are addressed in the thesis:

1. What aspects of learning are emphasised in the NCR that specifically concern arts and drama education in mainland China? How has it affected drama education in schools since its introduction?
2. What are the connections between NCR's educational ideas and fundamental theories of PCD?
3. In what ways can PCD meet the urgent demands outlined in the NCR, and how might it facilitate the understanding and implementation of the policies?

Research contributions

This research contributes to the field of educational drama in both practical and theoretical aspects. First, this research connects the theoretical foundations of PCD with its practical

implementation in educational settings. This study enhances understanding regarding the essential principles of using PCD to empower pupils' active learning and all-round development. It explores the ways in which PCD offers potential to engage pupils in discussion-based and enquiry-based learning, which is also highly emphasised by the NCR policy initiatives.

Second, this research provides insights into the effectiveness of PCD in cultivating pupils' active learning, creativity, critical thinking and all-round development through semi-structured interviews with UK-based specialists, Chinese educators, facilitators from two leading UK-based TiE companies and workshop observations. These interviews provide practical insights to help drama educators learn and implement PCD skills, especially since the NCR encourages teachers to shift their role from knowledge holder to one which combines facilitator, curriculum contributor and researcher. This research also offers evidence and recommendations for policymakers and curriculum developers for future policy development in the Chinese context. It further offers insights on teacher training to equip teachers with a set of comprehensive facilitation skills for PCD, including questioning, role-play and knowledge of PCD development.

Third, this research contributes to future studies in the field of educational drama, particularly in the context of cross-cultural enquiries. It also broadens the discussion of the field by providing a lens on the Chinese educational context and philosophy, in particular in drawing out connections between Chinese educational philosophy and PCD ideas, such as active learning, all-round development, reflective learning and enjoying learning. This research also contributes to the development of PCD in the Chinese context, especially given the severe shortage of translated publications and academic discussion about existing challenges and opportunities in the Chinese context.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 1 offers a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of the NCR as well as the objectives of drama education in the Chinese educational system after 2000. Chapter 2 outlines the mixed research methods applied in this research, comprising semi-structured interviews with Chinese educators, UK-based specialists and experienced facilitators, two case studies of Big Brum TiE company and Freshwater TiE company, as well as non-participant observation in PCD workshops delivered by these two leading TiE companies in various age groups. In Chapter 3, the findings from semi-structured interviews with six UK-based specialists to

explore the relationship between drama and education will be presented. It further contains a discussion of the ways in which PCD might activate pupils' learning. Chapter 4 sets out the findings from ten semi-structured interviews with ten Chinese educators. It discusses their evolving perception of PCD and their reflections on integrating drama into educational settings in mainland China. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of a case study of Big Brum to explore the utilisation of questioning techniques for enhancing learners' engagement. It includes non-participant observation of the company's touring interactive workshop entitled *Along the Silk Road* and semi-structured interviews with previous and current artistic directors. Chapter 6 presents a case study of Freshwater with a focus on applying role-play techniques to enrich and promote pupils' learning in various topics in the curriculum. Chapter 7 contains a discussion of the findings, personal reflection and recommendations based on the data collected through the various research methods. The thesis concludes by discussing proposals for integrating PCD into the Chinese education system to a greater degree and supporting the advanced development of PCD in mainland China.

Chapter 1

Field Review: the New Curriculum Reforms and Process-centred drama in mainland China and PCD in the UK

This chapter provides an overview of the current educational landscape in China, in particular highlighting the shift from traditional, exam-focused methods towards a more holistic, learner-centred approach, as presented in the NCR. This is followed by a review of the history of drama education in China and an outline of the emergence, development and current status of PCD in this context. In order to begin drawing out potential connections and affinities between PCD and the requirements of the NCR, the chapter also offers a basic review of the development of PCD in the UK, outlining its significance and potential as a transformative tool in educational settings.

Drama/Theatre-in-Education (DiE/TiE), educational drama and process drama are some of the current terminologies used in the field of educational drama. Although I acknowledge that there are differences between these terms, such nuanced distinctions hold less relevance in the context of the present study which is concerned with the broader educational ideology of moving towards a holistic, learner-centred educational approach. The emphasis placed on process over product or performance is a common thread which runs through all of the definitions. I have therefore chosen to draw out this emphasis on process by using the term ‘process-centred drama’ (PCD). This enables a research focus centred on the processual in terms of connecting learners with the learning materials through engaging in activities to learn knowledge in a fun way.

1.1 Necessity for innovative teaching and learning methods noted in the NCR

1.1.1 The background, objectives and characteristics of the NCR

China’s educational system has an extensive history which dates back to the sixteenth century BC. The basis of the current dominant examination-based system can be attributed to the Confucian heritage. Exam-oriented education has been deeply engrained in Chinese culture and society, and this has had inevitable consequences. The current education system in China promotes competition and academic performance through hierarchical examinations. According to Dello-Iacovo (2009: 248), Chinese education is still largely characterised by the dominance of tests and rote learning.

The New Curriculum Reform has been described as a remarkable extensive, comprehensive and ambitious endeavour to overhaul the basic education system since the People's Republic of China was established in 1949 (Yin, 2013: 331; Guo, 2012: 87). The emergence and development of the NCR can be attributed to both domestic and global transformations. Regarding global advancements, Liu and Fang (2009: 407) pointed out that new information technology developed as a result of globalisation. On the national scale, the Chinese economy has transitioned from a centrally planned system to a market-oriented structure. Consequently, the level of international competitiveness has escalated. Guan and Meng (2007: 579-580) argued that creative talents are crucial in deciding ultimate success in the global environment. In 1983, Deng Xiaoping, the former Chairman of China's Central Military Commission, asserted that education should be oriented towards the global context, future prospects and the process of modernisation. He also emphasised the significance of education in achieving socialist progress (Niu, 1996: 75). The MoE released the *Action plan toward the revitalisation of education in the twenty-first century* in 1998 (hereafter referred to as Action Plan 1998). This plan recognised the significance of the knowledge economy and asserted that the country's overall national strength and global competitiveness would be increasingly influenced by the level of educational development, science and technology and knowledge innovation. Education was identified as a strategic priority for development. Nevertheless, the educational framework, ideas, approaches and endeavours for cultivating talent in China remained inadequately developed, unable to effectively meet the demands of modernisation. The dearth of internationally renowned creative people has emerged as a key constraint on China's innovation capacity and competitiveness.

In order to achieve the aims of socialist modernisation and revive the Chinese nation, it therefore became necessary to react to the pressing demand and revitalise China's educational system. The State Council and the MoE released a sequence of documents pertaining to the NCR between 2001 and 2022 as shown in Appendix 1, which will be discussed later in this section and in the next section. These policy documents primarily sought to foster learners' inventive mindset and practical abilities with the objective of promoting their all-round development. Education officials acknowledged the potential benefits of having a skilled workforce and sought to convert the significant pressure of a growing population into an abundant supply of human resources through a reform of basic education.

The primary objective of the NCR is to shift the focus from excessive reliance on

knowledge transmission to prioritising the cultivation of active learning. The MoE (2001) summarised the main focus of the prevailing instructional approach in various aspects. The curriculum content deviated from real-life situations, which were characterised as “complex, challenging, and antiquated” and the excessive focus on rote memorisation and mechanical training was prevalent in curriculum implementation. For instance, during the early morning session, learners were engaged in a process of reading and memorising textbooks. This happened before the first official session in the morning with the purpose of assisting learners in reviewing their prior learning and previewing the upcoming sessions. The curriculum emphasised summative assessment.

This educational model, as argued by Guan and Meng (2007: 582), was characterised by a heavy reliance on teacher-centred instruction, an extensive focus on classroom discipline and a substantial emphasis on textbook-oriented learning. This outdated conventional educational approach was in contradiction with constructivist theory, which asserts that learning is an active process of constructing a conceptual framework (Cobern, 1993: 109). From a constructivist standpoint, it was necessary to develop a new curriculum which is aligned with contemporary educational thought.

In addition to evaluating the existing instructional model, the *Compendium of curriculum reform for basic education (trial)* also outlined the features of a proposed teaching model to be adopted from various perspectives. First, the course content should be highly relevant to the learner's life, learning interests and prior knowledge. In addition, the pedagogical approach should be interactive, engaging pupils in active participation, centred on enquiry-based and task-based activities in order to cultivate learners' numerous abilities, such as problem-solving, communication and collaboration. Moreover, formative evaluation should be employed and should replace previous competition-valued evaluation. This shift would prioritise learners' needs and progress in order to establish an approach for promoting pupil development and constructing a curriculum. Furthermore, learning activities should be grounded in the processes of comprehension, experience, reflection, exploration and creation. Teachers and learners are not mere executors of the curriculum, but rather active participants and creators in its development.

The NCR's emphasis on the comprehensive development of learners was intended to move away from education concentrated on exams and advocated the reformation of educational principles and methodologies. It prioritises the enhancement of pupils' capacity to learn new knowledge, cultivating analytical and problem-solving abilities, and

fostering individual expression, collaboration and social skills.

In 2001, the MoE launched the *Tenth five-year (2001-2005) national plan for education*. This plan highlighted the NCR's focus on transforming educational practices to achieve high-quality education. The plan was to achieve this by introducing novel instructional strategies for teachers and adopting new learning approaches for learners. The primary attributes involved a number of perspectives. The instructional function was modified to foster all-round learners with the aim of constructing a highly skilled workforce for the future. It promotes an inclusive educational methodology, exemplified by active engagement, analytical reasoning and collaborative investigation. Learner-centred learning replaced the curriculum-centred framework and promoted interdisciplinary integrated education. Evaluation centres on the learning process of pupils in order to facilitate their comprehensive growth.

In brief terms, the NCR for basic education seeks to develop an interactive approach to learning and teaching in which the pupils are no longer passive recipients but active participants and problem-solvers. This is achieved through the use of discovery-based learning, cooperative learning and engaged learning approaches. These intentions present significant obstacles for drama education in China, and this thesis suggests that PCD can offer potential for activating this novel approach to teaching and learning in China.

1.1.2 Arts education and its supporting cultivation

The NCR series of documents contain arts education. The objectives, essence and principles of arts education have been continuously refined and enhanced by various further publications on arts education. In 2001, the MoE issued a document entitled *National development plan for arts education in schools (2001-2010)*. This document highlighted the significance of enhancing arts education in schools to advance the quality of education effectively and foster the holistic development of learners. It set out a strategic plan for the forthcoming decade of arts education advancement in educational institutions. The MoE released the *Senior secondary school art curriculum standards (trial)* in 2003 with the intention of establishing uniformity in arts teaching throughout primary and secondary schools. This served as a legal framework and a tool for promoting arts education as a crucial component of high-quality education. Three policy publications (MoE, 2007a, 2007b and 2008) were published. Liu (2021) and Liu (2019) argued that these policies advanced arts education by examining its core objectives and the underlying structure of the curricular system.

From 2010 onwards, policymakers began elucidating the values, principles and methodologies of arts education in successive policy statements. In 2010, the MoE released an agenda called the *Outline of the national mid- and long-term plan for educational reform and development 2010-2020*. This statement highlighted that the objective of arts education was to foster learners' "exploration, innovation, and problem-solving skills". It reinforced the notions of all-round development and cultivation in arts education. It also suggested employing heuristic (启发的, *Qifa de*), enquiry-based (探索的, *Tansuo de*), discussion-based (讨论的, *Taolun de*) and participatory (参与的, *Canyu de*) instruction. This novel pedagogical approach offered advantages to learners by equipping them with the skills to acquire knowledge, fostering their curiosity and establishing a conducive atmosphere for learning, which would promote learners' self-expression and cultivate their analytical thinking abilities, thereby transforming them from passive recipients to active participants. In summary, this significant document facilitated the expansion of basic education programmes and the enhancement of the variety of instructional and learning methods, met the needs of learners with varying abilities, and explored innovative approaches to identifying and nurturing emerging talents.

In 2013 the MoE issued a supplementary document entitled the *Guidelines of comprehensively deepening the reform of education*, which specifically focused on arts education. Li, Pang and Li (2023: 2) commented that this statement indicated that arts education was given equal importance as moral education, intellectual education, physical education and labour education.¹ It was integrated into the curriculum alongside these four areas of education implementation.

In 2015, the State Council announced a significant policy entitled *Views on comprehensively strengthening and improving arts education in schools* (referred to hereafter as *Views 2015*). This policy document clearly outlined the objectives of arts education, which included enabling learners to experience enjoyment in life and excellence in the arts, fostering an interest in the arts and cultivating noble traits. Furthermore, *Views (2015)* highlighted the significance of incorporating arts education and culture into schools, promoting the idea of "cultivating learners through arts, and nurturing them through culture" (*Yi mei yu ren, yi wen hua ren*, 以美育人、以文化人). It also set a specific time frame for schools at all levels to implement diverse forms of arts

¹ Labour education seeks to foster pupils' practical skills at home. It includes activities such as cleaning and cooking and teaches them about agriculture and industry through visits. It also seeks to encourage pupils' interest in handicrafts, such as paper-cutting and rope-knotting.

courses. Simultaneously, the MoE developed a curriculum framework with the aim of significantly enhancing arts education and instruction. In addition, *Views* (2015) emphasised the significance of arts education, which was not only based on fundamental creative knowledge and comprehension, but also enhanced by its comprehensiveness (*Zonghexing*, 综合性) and practicality (*Shijianxing*, 实践性). Moreover, as stated in *Views* (2015), arts instruction in basic education should prioritise the cultivation of artistic imagination and creativity, as well as enhancing pupils' overall arts experience. This document also highlighted the importance of cross-curricular teaching by emphasising the integration of arts education across different disciplines. To summarise, this significant policy statement greatly improved the instruction of arts education by adopting a cultivation-oriented (*Yuren Wei Daoxiang*, 育人为导向) strategy, which effectively countered the prevailing instrumental perspective on art learning.

In 2019, the State Council introduced a third elemental policy, *Views on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School arts Education in the New Era* (referred to as *Views 2019*). This policy reinforced the recognitions of arts education as a means to foster imagination and creativity. It served as a programmatic document and action guide, incorporating new era characteristics, in order to effectively advance the reform and development of arts education in schools. Yu and Jiang (2022: 363) asserted that *Views* (2019) confirmed the significance of arts education and elaborated on the implications and cultivation value of arts education. Furthermore, *Views* (2019) reinforced the concept of integration and elucidated the value and concepts of curriculum construction.

In 2022, the MoE issued *National standard for arts education in the compulsory stage*, which for the very first time included PCD in the drama curriculum and outlined the drama disciplines encompassing four aspects: expression (*Biao Xian*, 表现), creation (*Chuang Zao*, 创造), appreciation (*Xin Shang*, 欣赏) and integration (*Rong He*, 融合). Expression involves the creation and communication of stories, the simulation and presentation of objects and the development of awareness of the principles of performance. Creation involves the devising and composition skills of playwriting, the development and analysis of characters and the mastery of performing skills. Appreciation encompasses both the literary and artistic appreciation of performance. Integration involves the coordination of PCD activities using dramatic strategies and the use of drama as a means of learning.

Based on the discussion above, it is evident that the policymakers acknowledged the

outdated approaches to instruction and sought to implement an educational reform to cultivate a wide range of skills and abilities in learners for their future. Many terms are frequently used in the NCR's set of policies regarding the pedagogic approach for learners' development, including all-round development, creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration. For educational purposes, cultivation-oriented methods encompass participatory and active involvement, enquiry-based and task-based approaches. The evolution of drama education is therefore undergoing a transformation, with a noticeable shift away from the competition-oriented teaching approach towards activities which emphasise cultivation and all-round development.

1.1.3 The aesthetic qualities of engagement: the 6Rs as the fundamental characteristics and value of drama and theatre in PCD

As stated above, the implementation of arts education in the context of the NCR has shown a trend towards prioritising pupils' experiences through various art forms in the classroom. Linman (2013: 305) states that the purpose of arts education in Chinese schools is to cultivate in pupils the capacity to perceive, understand, evaluate and create art. He provides a summary of the function of arts education as including the cultivation of awareness of the arts, the cultivation of temperament and the inspiration of wisdom. According to him, arts education as an immersive educational tool can enhance pupils' all-round development.

This thesis proposes that PCD also has the potential to enhance learners' expression and communication skills, empathy development, curiosity and problem-solving skills. PCD significantly contributes to the holistic development of individuals in offering opportunities for development specifically through its aesthetic form.

PCD aligns with Dewey's aim of incorporating creativity and aesthetic awareness into the act of doing (1929: 358-359), as the participatory nature of PCD facilitates an experiential learning process that effectively merges perception with action. This integration is particularly pertinent within the Chinese educational context, where traditional pedagogical methods often prioritise rote learning over creative engagement. By embracing PCD, educators can foster a more holistic approach that nurtures pupils' creative and critical thinking skills.

Its impact is evident across several dimensions: on a personal level for learners, PCD facilitates the exploration of identity, values, and beliefs, which in turn fosters enhanced

self-awareness and personal growth; on a social level, it promotes effective communication and a deeper understanding of social dynamics through collaborative dramatic activities, thereby improving interpersonal skills in diverse scenarios; in cognitive terms, it stimulates critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as participants analyse characters and themes and engage in improvisation; on an emotional level, it provides a medium for expressing and understanding emotions, nurturing both emotional intelligence and empathy; and in educational terms, it renders the learning experience more engaging and memorable by using drama to illuminate curriculum content, making abstract concepts more tangible and accessible.

Anderson (2005: 119) posits that the history of drama education can be understood as a series of debates centred around dichotomies such as process versus product, theatre versus classroom, and artist versus teacher. This discourse highlights the ongoing tension in educational settings, including in China, where the distinction between creative expression and academic achievement can sometimes hinder the development of a more integrated curriculum. In this light, the critiques offered by Jackson (2005: 106), Schonmann (2005: 36) and McCaslin (2005: 12) are particularly relevant in challenging the perceived dichotomy between drama and theatre within the classroom, asserting that these elements are fundamentally complementary.

Recognising this complementarity could enhance drama education in the Chinese context by allowing for a richer, more interconnected learning experience. By breaking down the barriers between these dichotomies, educators can create an environment where learners are encouraged to explore their creative potential while also developing the skills necessary for academic success. The applicability and significance of PCD within the Chinese educational landscape warrant further exploration across several key aspects:

Firstly, challenges to conventional educational models: the Chinese education system has long been dominated by exam-oriented practices, compelling pupils to rely on rote memorisation to excel in standardised tests. This approach constrains the development of creativity and individual expression. By incorporating PCD as a pedagogical strategy, educators can effectively challenge this conventional model, enabling learners to learn through active participation and practice, thereby cultivating critical thinking and innovative capacities.

Secondly, promotion of holistic education: as discussed in the previous section, recent trends in Chinese educational policies increasingly emphasise holistic education,

prioritising the all-round development of learners. The implementation of PCD aligns seamlessly with this objective, transcending mere knowledge transmission to foster emotional, social, and creative growth. Through dramatic activities, pupils can apply their knowledge in situational contexts, enhancing both the practicality and enjoyment of their learning experiences.

Thirdly, cultural identity and self-expression: given the rich and diverse cultural landscape of China, PCD serves as an effective vehicle for learners to explore their cultural identities while engaging in self-expression and emotional communication. Through the medium of drama, participants are better positioned to understand and articulate their feelings and experiences, thereby bolstering their self-confidence and sense of identity.

Finally, transformation of the teacher's role: within the framework of PCD, the role of the teacher evolves from being a mere disseminator of knowledge to that of a facilitator and collaborator. This shift realigns the orientation of the teacher's role in the NCR, encouraging educators to adopt more innovative teaching methodologies, motivating students to engage actively in the learning process. Particularly in the Chinese educational context, such a shift can alleviate the pressures faced by teachers while enhancing classroom interactivity and student motivation.

In short, PCD offers substantial potential and value within the Chinese educational landscape, serving not only to enhance the curricular content but also to create a dynamic and participatory learning environment that fosters the comprehensive development of learners. Drawing from my personal teaching experience, I find that the insights of Jackson, Schonmann and McCaslin are equally applicable to the Chinese context, particularly in relation to incorporating drama and theatre into classroom instruction. Such integration aligns seamlessly with the fundamental qualities of artistic beauty, which encompass the synthesis of sensibility and rationality, the harmony of form and content, universality and particularity, necessity and contingency, as well as the combination of the ideal and reality. These aesthetic dimensions, when applied within the framework of PCD, are further encapsulated in the value of drama and theatre, which is characterised by the 6Rs: relating and reconstructing, representation and resonance, reflection and resilience. Thus, the aesthetic form of drama and theatre not only enriches PCD but also embodies its core pedagogical objectives, ensuring that learners engage in an educational process that is as intellectually rigorous as it is artistically profound.

1) Relating pupils' existing experiences and reconstructing them in a fictional world

Engaging in drama enables gaining insight into and understanding of ourselves, others and the world, as a number of authors have argued: Dewey (1958: 290) places great importance on the significance of the arts as an experiential process, asserting that it has the capacity to alter one's perspective and enhance one's understanding. He also places a strong emphasis on the process of participating in art to convert knowledge into an aesthetic experience. Nicholson (1999: 56) suggests that the arts offer a variety of viewpoints for understanding and interpreting the world around us. Wright (2006) emphasises the significance of participating in role play for the development pupils' self-concept. Water (2021) argues that the aesthetic form of drama and theatre creates metaphors of our lives that engage learners and function in both cognitive and emotional domains.

In analysing and drawing from the authors above and from personal experiences, a significant aspect of incorporating drama and theatre in the classroom emerges as relating to the realm of imagination. It provides immersive experiences which go beyond ordinary life, enabling pupils to enter different imaginary events and views. Additionally, it can instil a sense of security by creating distance from personal emotions and familiar everyday routines. Through participating in such embodied experiences, learners are empowered to investigate, test and communicate their thoughts and feelings in a controlled setting. Simultaneously it involves the process of reassessing pupils' existing knowledge and personal experiences within a conceptual framework to enable them to identify the concerns which affect their everyday lives, to express their perspectives through role-playing, detach their emotions within a framework and investigate causes and potential solutions through creative exploration. This encompasses not only the appreciation of aesthetics but also a shared understanding gained through personal experience. This creates a collective aesthetic experience, which is an adjustable form that includes cognitive, emotional and perceptual experiences. By relating personal experiences to dramatic content, learners can find personal relevance and meaning in their learning, enhancing both their educational and artistic growth.

Moreover, reconstructing personal experiences through drama and theatre involves a process of envisioning and reinterpreting experiences and narratives. This approach enables pupils to examine other viewpoints and cultivate a deeper comprehension of the

subject matter. As Schonmann (2005: 38) states, engagement in drama and theatre education entails acquiring an understanding of theatrical art and attaining a comprehensive appreciation of aesthetics. By reconstructing narratives, learners acquire a deeper understanding of various viewpoints and cultural circumstances, thus enhancing their overall educational experience.

2) The symbolic representation of real-life experiences

In the realm of drama and theatre education, the essence of representation is multifaceted, encompassing the vivid portrayal of characters, narratives and emotions. Firstly, drama and theatre delve deeply into the perspectives of characters, the sequence of events, the intricacies of plot and the multi-layered of storytelling and interpretation of text. Secondly, drama and theatre are distinguished by their focus on the nuances of gesture, affect, rhythm, the physicality of performers and their dynamic engagement with the audience. The process of representation can symbolically encapsulate the lives of pupils, abstracting complex issues and emotions to render them explorable. As Gallagher (2005: 92) emphasises, drama leverages its aesthetic attributes to accomplish its educational objectives because it is a process of perceiving, enjoying and creating, which perfectly aligns with Dewey's idea of learning by doing in an aesthetic experience (1929: 358-359). In short, in the context of PCD, the participants' physicality serves as the fundamental vehicle for engagement, allowing pupils to represent their views and attitudes through a spectrum of activities. This embodiment is the most identifiable feature of PCD compared with fact-based learning in the classroom which mainly takes place through a teaching and learning approach based on asking-answering questions.

Essentially, the art form of drama and theatre offers a holistic experience for participants in PCD, serving as a medium for the embodiment of knowledge. This allows the fictitious world to serve as a varied and inclusive environment which fosters diverse conversations and experiences. In such a heterogeneous and supportive environment, the role of the teacher evolves from being a controller to becoming a guide and enabler. Additionally, the role of the learner transforms from being a passive recipient to becoming co-constructor, thereby empowering them. Howell and Heap (2005: 64) stress the role of the educator in a PCD classroom as a teacher-artist who integrates the roles of playwright, director, actor and teacher; they also explain how this multi-functional teacher-artist works to guide learners in PCD lessons as follows:

First, the teacher takes on a complex role, combining roles of playwright, actor, director

etc. The teacher must act as a playwright, considering how to help the children to develop the storyline in a way which facilitates learning. The teacher must also take on the role of director, guiding the children in delivering the educational content through the most effective dramatic performance structure. As the leading actor in the classroom-company, the teacher must deliver a captivating performance which both engages and challenges the children while also supporting them in creating their own roles. Finally, the teacher must assume the role of the head as leading the teaching process, simultaneously managing all of these responsibilities while also having a deep understanding of the pupils' real-life contexts, including the classroom, school, community, culture and curriculum.

To sum up, this approach brings together the multiple roles of teacher and artist, transforming the teaching and learning relationship into one characterised by both teachers and learners taking on roles of co-artists for the artistic experience, initiators of inspirational learning and enablers of fruitful discussions. Heathcote (1988: 90) emphasises that the accessibility of PCD elevates pupil's emotional, expressive and social capacities by dramatizing real-world issues. The metaxis between real and fictional, as well as self and character, enables the pupil participants to make their own decisions in resonance with the meaning-making process in the PCD classroom. The form of interactivity in this experiential learning process moves the learners into an artistic world, which includes symbolic, abstract and conceptual perception and understanding.

3) Reflection and resilience

Reflection is an essential component of a PCD session. Heathcote (1979: 147) emphasises the application of theatrical elements as instruments to enhance pupils' understanding of life experiences, to help them reflect on particular situation and enable them to develop a new perspective on their reality. She also emphasises the significance of collective reflection, a practice which is typically not available to individuals through individual reflection. This process is a crucial guide for decision-making in the real world (Heathcote, 1979: 230). A time/space transformation occurs in the PCD classroom, converting an ordinary physical classroom into a creative space, allowing participants to engage with aesthetic situations inside the narrative space. Moreover, the aesthetic experience in PCD offers an effective means of cultivation through its educational and moral modulation, enabling individuals to cultivate themselves while experiencing and reflecting on their own being. It is also a process of integrating the intellect and the body, which fosters a whole-person development.

In the Chinese context, this aligns perfectly with the Confucian theory of reflective learning, which suggests that learning without reflection might result in confusion. Engaging in reflection without acquiring knowledge can result in difficulties (学而不思则罔, 思而不学则殆). It also aligns with the ancient Chinese concept of self-awareness that involves sensing the self, others and the world. The learning in PCD promotes reflection and resilience through participating in an aesthetic experience.

Resilience in PCD further involves the ability to overcome obstacles and to persevere in the presence of difficulties. The variable and improvisatory nature of theatrical performance develops resilience in pupils, guiding them to adapt and react to shifting conditions. Schonmann (2005: 37-38) emphasises that the basis of PCD lies in its artistic and aesthetic aspects and that PCD offers an effective way of gaining self-knowledge. Through actively confronting the challenges involved in working in collaboration, individuals develop resilience and perseverance, which are crucial abilities for achieving success in both the arts and life.

In summary, the aesthetic value of drama and theatre in the context of PCD lies not only in their use as educational tools but also in their intrinsic artistic value. This can be categorised into six key aspects (referred to as the 6Rs): relating and reconstructing, representation and resonance, reflection and resilience. This process involves a transformation from an imaginary to an authentic experience: it is a process which entails a shift from externalisation to internalisation. Furthermore, this experience pedagogically empowers pupils by enabling them to perceive themselves, others and the world. It enables them to embody their experiences artistically and to reflect on them socially. By giving the highest priority to the artistic and aesthetic aspects of drama and theatre in PCD, these activities have the potential to motivate and captivate pupils' attention, thinking and comprehension of the learning content and contribute to the cultivation of lasting all-round development.

1.2 Initial development and evolution of drama education in mainland China

In order to address the ways in which PCD might be implemented in secondary schools in China, it is necessary to consider the history and current role of drama in the educational context. In this section, I provide a field review of drama education in China, including an overview of drama in schools prior to 1949. This is followed by an exploration of existing practices and a summary of research conducted in this field. It

further presents a field review of the development of PCD in the UK context.

1.2.1 Pre-1949: early instances of utilising drama in education

The traditional Chinese Opera has been the dominant performance style in China for eight centuries; it has various categories in different regions due to the vast territory of the country. The most typical categories of Chinese traditional Opera are Beijing Opera, Yue Opera, Huangmei Opera, Ping Opera and Yu Opera. The themes of Chinese traditional Opera are extensive, ranging from historical narration to love stories and comedy content. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government invited a group of artists and theorists to reform the traditional Opera to reflect the significant political and economic changes in China.

According to Zhu (1914: 9), the first recorded school drama activity in mainland China took place in 1896. These activities consisted of plays presented in foreign missionary schools. Huang (2016: 45) stated that St John's College, established in 1879 in Shanghai by American missionaries William Jones Boone and Joseph Schereschewsky along with a priest from Shanghai, was the first educational institution in China to showcase theatrical performances in the western tradition. Zhong (2010: 18-22) also explored the theatrical events which took place in this institution from 1896 to 1911. These events encompassed English spoken performances of Shakespeare's plays during summer graduation ceremonies and Chinese productions for Christmas Eve. A play entitled *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* (*Heinu yu tian lu*, 黑奴吁天录) was performed by Spring Willow Society (*Chunliushe*, 春柳社) in 1907. Liu and Wetmore (2009: 320) and Fan (2016: 70-72) considered this performance as the starting point of Modern Chinese drama, also known as *Xin Ju* (新剧) or 'new drama'. Simultaneously, a group of Chinese intellectuals who had progressively returned from overseas started to engage in western theatre and actively endeavoured to develop a novel genre of Chinese plays. Their newly devised theatre practices served political and instructional purposes as a response to their discontent with the failure of Chinese classical drama to depict contemporary socio-economic realities. Subsequently, as a result of limited awareness and comprehension of western theatre, the emerging form of performance faced substantial challenges in scriptwriting, directing techniques, theoretical understanding of performance and other related areas, leading to its swift abandonment.

The May Fourth Movement, also known as New Culture Movement (*Xinwenhua Yundong*, 新文化运动), which emerged in 1915, aimed at critiquing the traditional Chinese

feudal culture and embracing western ideals of science, democracy and culture (Liu & Wetmore, 2009: 321). According to Yu (2009: 2), the activists in this movement viewed drama as a powerful means of promoting radical transformation and bringing about social change. During the late 1920s, school drama troupes emerged as the dominant driving force in Shanghai, ultimately reaching a peak during this period. At the same time, a group of erudite individuals who had pursued drama education abroad played a vital role in establishing and fostering the development of drama in China (including figures such as Zhao Taimou, Yu Shangyuan and Xiong Foxi). The Drama Department of the National Beijing Art School was established in 1925. Around 1930, the Guangdong Drama Institute and Drama School was established by Ouyang Yuqian. These drama schools employed European and American methods of realistic drama whereas school troupes such as those at Nankai and Tsinghua Universities played a role in advancing the development of drama (Wang, 2012: 138-140; Feng, 2011: 39-40).

Mackerras (2008: 3) stated that in 1930, a left-wing theatre movement was formed with the active participation of workers and students in amateur dramatic events. The proposal was made to promote patriotic dramatists to actively participate in the resistance against Japanese invasion and the national salvation effort by adopting a slogan of national defence drama. The drama activities during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression signified the beginning of modern drama's prosperous period from 1931 to 1945. Ten national salvation drama teams and one children's theatre troupe were established by students in Tianjin, Shanghai and Wuhan. Their purpose was to perform drama in rural areas and on the front lines. These theatre groups predominantly created short plays, live dramatic performances, songs and dances which depicted life in wartime. Xu (2016:199-200) stated that the Children's Troupe played a pivotal role during this period.

This historical progression illustrates the crucial contribution of drama in schools to the emergence and advancement of Chinese theatre.

1.2.2 Around the new millennium: the introduction of PCD and its expansion

During his time at Tianjin Normal College in 1980s, Yafen Wu adapted stories from Chinese secondary school textbooks into play scripts (known as *Keben Ju*, 课本剧) (Xie, 1990: 32). This marked the first instance of integrating drama into educational settings in mainland China. In 1997, Professor Yingning Li actively advocated the implementation of educational theatre in China. This was done through the publication of papers and the

delivery of lectures at Shanghai Theatre Academy, following her participation in a Studies in Theatre-in-Education summer course in the UK at the University of Central England in Birmingham (UCE). She subsequently embarked on a substantial amount of educational drama practice in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou over the next decade. Following the inclusion of drama in the Chinese basic education curriculum in 2011, a number of teachers incorporated educational drama into many subjects and explored a wide range of topics. Yang (2011) and Zhang (2012) explored the use of educational drama to enhance learners' acquisition of Chinese language and literature. Li (2011) and Wang (2013) examined the application of drama in music instruction. Li (2014) and Zhang (2014) incorporated the use of drama into English teaching. Wang and Yan (2018) recommended the incorporation of educational drama in the instruction of mental health in secondary schools.

The establishment of drama education conferences also facilitated the dissemination and advancement of educational drama in China. Since 2015, the International Drama Education Congress (IDEC) has taken place in Beijing on an annual basis. The primary participants in these conferences were educators specialising in Chinese, English and arts disciplines. These conferences have sought to enhance the knowledge of fundamental concepts and methodologies in drama education on a global scale, encompassing pedagogical strategies and the field of educational drama. There are however still disparities between the workshop concepts proposed by international experts and those of local/Chinese educators at these conferences. As an illustration, the IDEC largely emphasises workshops conducted by international specialists from countries such as the UK, Australia and Canada. These workshops often revolve around topics and objectives which are relevant to curricula in various contexts which are not necessarily applicable to the Chinese education system. In 2016 the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing organised the first National Drama Education Seminar for primary and secondary schools. Additionally, they published *Primary and secondary school drama education* in 2017, which contained a collection of chapters that specifically explored the implementation of drama education, including educational drama, in basic education. In 2019, the publication *Senior secondary school drama: arts and Yuren* was released, which primarily focused on the implementation and study of theatrical education in Shanghai.

1.2.3 Rising interest in PCD practice and research

The preceding section shed light on the pioneering efforts to introduce drama into

educational settings; in this section, I delve into the recent surge of interest and activity surrounding PCD in the Chinese context. The growth of PCD in China has been influenced by a number of factors, including educational reforms, increased international collaborations and a growing awareness of the potential benefits of drama in education. Building on the historical foundation of drama education in China, we now transition into the contemporary landscape of PCD practice and research. In this section, I explore the current state of PCD practice and research in China, providing insights into the evolving landscape, challenges and opportunities that define this dynamic field. Additionally, I examine the growth in PCD-related publications and research topics, shedding light on the areas of focus within the realm of educational drama in China. As we navigate the rising interest in PCD, we shall uncover the multi-faceted nature of this educational approach and its implications for the broader educational context in China.

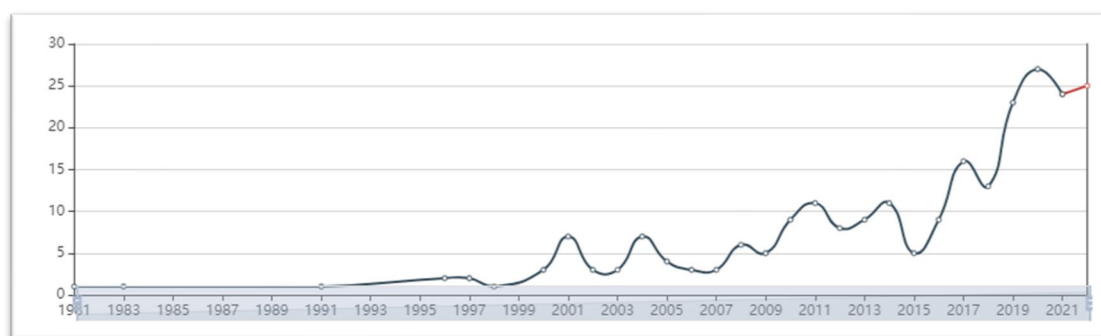


Figure 1-1 The number of articles about PCD published in China from 1981 to now

The statistical data in Figure 1-1 on articles published each year from 1981 show that little research on PCD was carried out prior to 2000; researchers such as Li (1997), Shu (1999) and Wang (1998) focused on introducing educational drama in China. From 2000 onwards, there has been a consistent rise in the number of published articles, with a notable increase occurring between 2010 and the present. These publications include those of Cao (2003), Ma and Zhao (2007), Wu (2009), Zhang (2009), Wu (2010), Xu (2011), Cen (2011), Tong (2011), Zhang (2012) and Li (2013). These publications range from introductions, educational functions, international experiences, existing practices and integration into the inter-curricular teaching of PCD.

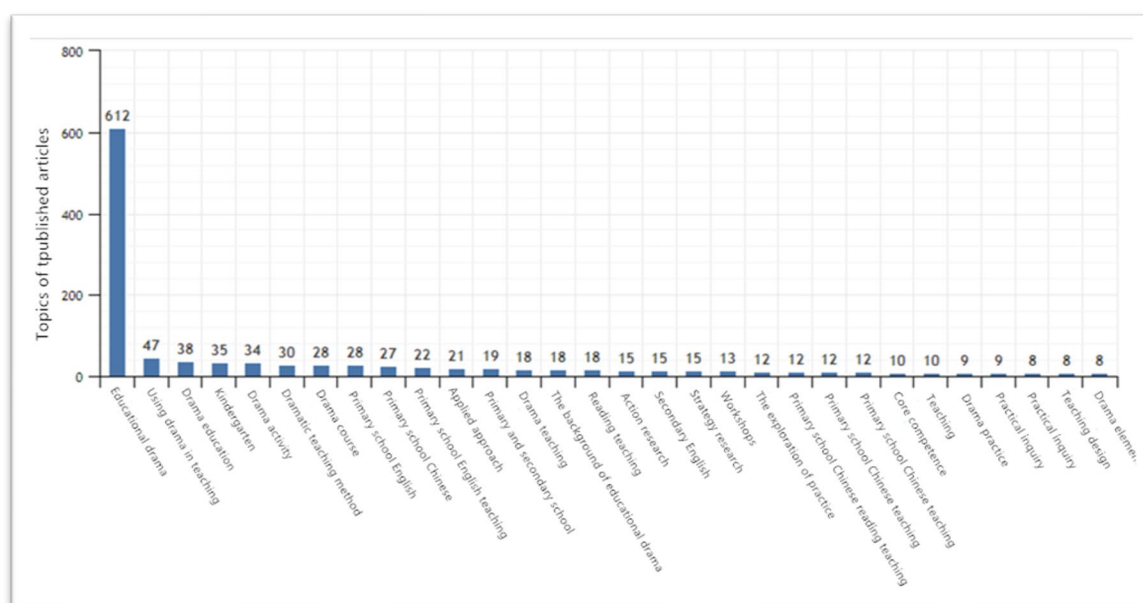


Figure 1-2 Topics of research on educational drama in China (Zhi Wang, in Chinese)

As Figure 1-2 shows, the predominant subject of the published articles has been educational drama, with a total of 612 articles. This number significantly surpasses the count of articles on any other topic and is even fifteen times greater than the number of articles on other subjects. The second most prevalent subject has been the pivotal issue of 'drama-in-education'. There have been over twenty publications on drama education and its practical methodologies for employing PCD in cross-curricular teaching. Debates in these articles regarding fundamental literacy, the creation of educational materials and the use of theatrical elements in school settings are limited in number but significant in importance. The figure illustrates a minimal level of interest in these subjects, suggesting that the comprehension and adoption of PCD is to date not very established. Even so, the research publications do demonstrate significant interest and show that discussions regarding the relationship between PCD and core competency have been established. Additionally, some researchers have made efforts to deliberate on the structure of a PCD curriculum.

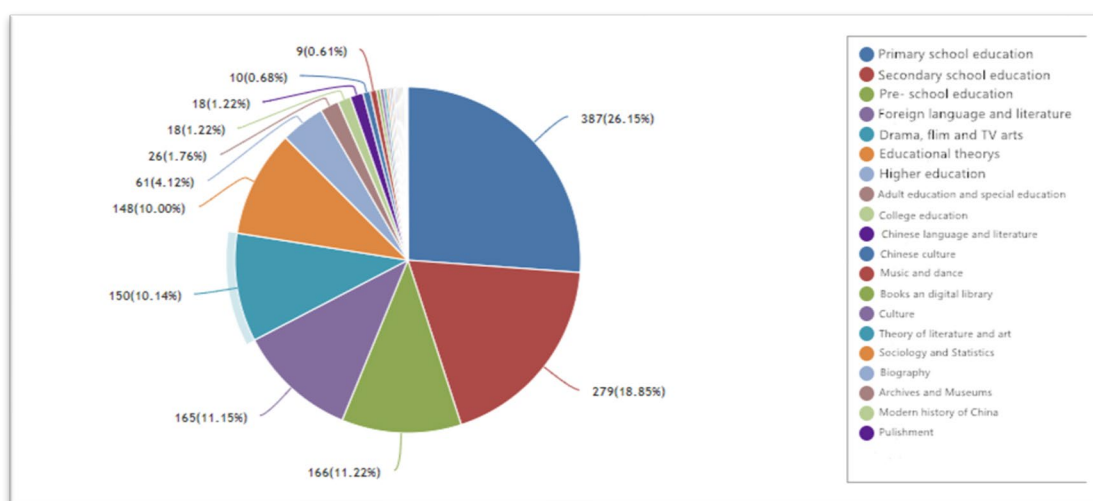


Figure 1-3 Distribution of research on educational drama in China after 2000

Figure 1-3 shows the distribution of PCD studies, with over 50% of them focusing on the elementary education level. In June 2023, there were a total of 387 studies on elementary school education, which accounted for 26.15% of the total and these numbers are of course increasing constantly. The number of articles discussing secondary school education was 279, representing 18.85% of the total. Additionally, there were 166 articles on pre-school education, accounting for 11.22% of the total. Significantly, the number of drama, film and TV arts, as well as educational theory studies, is quite comparable, constituting approximately 10% of the overall total. To summarise, these data show that the basic education system has the highest demand for PCD. Additionally, they indicate that most authors possess an understanding and acknowledgment of the significance of PCD in the field of education.

Several studies (Zhou, 2015; Liu, 2016; Zhang, 2019; Zeng, 2019) have documented the present condition of drama education in primary and secondary schools in mainland China. Zhou (2015) and Liu (2016) provided an overview of the three classifications of existing drama education practices implemented in schools. First, Zhou stated that drama supports the teaching and learning of Chinese and English. Nevertheless, the current implementation of PCD in schools is limited for pupils, assuming a character based on dramatising learning content and reciting text from a book without fully grasping the concept of PCD (Zhou, 2015: 6). Liu characterised this approach to incorporating drama into cross-curricular instruction as a shallow comprehension of PCD. Second, drama clubs serve the purpose of fostering pupils' interest for drama (Liu, 2016: 52). Zhou (2015: 7) stated that whoever is responsible for managing a drama club is typically someone who

has either obtained a degree in the performing arts or has prior experience in the field of drama. By contrast, theatre education in drama clubs offers a higher level of artistry and comprehensiveness, which involves applying theatre elements, a coherent story and persuading audiences, compared with the drama classes in schools. However, the primary objective of regular drama club rehearsals is to present performances in student art festivals at school, regional and national levels. The drawback of this particular form of theatre practice which focuses on performance presentations is that it exhibits a tendency towards elitism, especially in terms of how members are chosen and rejected. It also goes against the fundamental objective of education for cultivation and pupils' all-round development (Zhou, 2015: 13) in emphasising competition. The third model uses drama as an art form to teach basic acting skills to enhance performance. For instance, practising by closely observing an individual's behaviour in their everyday life might establish the character's perspective and intrinsic traits, and subsequently enable the observer to construct a distinct scene which involves this character. It also emphasises the goal of delivering exceptional dramatic performances and is employed to re-enact and showcase classic theatre productions. Zhou (2015: 12) noted that the feedback from pupils indicates that drama games and devising activities, as opposed to repetitive rehearsals, are the most enjoyable aspects of the session.

The discussion above shows that policymakers and many schools have acknowledged the advantageous role of drama in educational settings. Nevertheless, the specific method for fostering learners' acquisition of communication and problem-solving abilities, all-round development, as well as *Yuren* (育人, cultivation), has yet to be established in order to advance the objectives of the educational reform. Moreover, as previously stated, there is a current dispute over whether drama serves as an educational tool for addressing various subjects and resolving learners' everyday issues, or if it primarily functions as an artistic medium for the acquisition of performing skills. Ultimately, it is crucial to engage in a thorough discussion and validation of the teaching objectives in order to advance the implementation of PCD, which this thesis contends is the most effective approach for attaining the aims of NCR.

Liu (2016: 55-57) and Huang (2020: 39-42) investigated the primary obstacles to drama education in schools, identifying the principal challenge as the limited availability of qualified drama instructors. In fact, the majority of drama instructors in schools are Chinese and English-language teachers who have only rudimentary knowledge and limited practical exposure to conducting drama sessions. Furthermore, a shortage of

qualified drama instructors continues to divert the current drama programmes in schools from adhering to the standards set by the NCR. There is also a dearth of instructional resources available to educators. The existing instructional models might be regarded as a streamlined rendition of university texts designed for the study of professional acting and directing. The lack of adequate drama instruction at the primary and secondary school levels contributes to a misconception which emphasises performance presentations and fails to achieve the teaching objective of cultivating individuals (*Yuren*) and promoting all-round development (*Quanmian Fazhan*).

Overall, the use of PCD in China is on the rise as a result of the MoE's focus on its advantages, as well as the increasing number of conferences and talks centred around the use of PCD in educational settings. There is nevertheless a dearth of rigorous research in this field, with the majority of existing studies being qualitative practitioner summaries which rely on individual investigations. These summaries lack the support of a well-established theoretical framework and a comprehensive grasp of the idea of PCD in the Chinese context. There are limited translations of key publications in the field of PCD despite the fact that some English publications do exist, but the context is different and these are not readily accessible.

1.3 PCD in the UK: development and current status

The emergence of PCD in the UK was rooted in the extensive historical tradition of incorporating drama into the education system. Allen (1979), Robinson (1981), Rosenberg (1987), Bolton (1998) and Davis (2014) elaborated on this extensive history. Allen (1979: 10) stated that in 1898, a *Board of Education Report* highlighted the favourable impact of theatre in the classroom, specifically referring to the positive effects of engaging in practical drama on enhancing language skills and improving cognitive and expressive abilities. He added that these beneficial effects of theatre were reiterated in 1929 in the Board's *Handbook for Teachers in Elementary Schools* and further emphasised in a 1934 report of an adult education committee on theatre in Adult Education.

In 1910, the Board of Education acknowledged the benefits of dramatic action. In 1919, it outlined three elements of drama: writing, reading and acting (Board of Education, 1919: 315). This illustrates that the significance of drama has been moderately acknowledged by educational authorities for over a century, and its presence in schools has been steadily increasing. At the same time, a notable transformation took place in the field of education,

greatly influencing the advancement of PCD. This transformation was known as the Child-Centred Movement, or the New Educational Movement, and was strongly influenced by the ideas of Rousseau (1914) and Froebel (1912). In his 1923 book *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, John Dewey introduced the influential concept of 'learning by doing'. The child-centred approach placed emphasis on the educational requirements of the child and redefined the role of the teacher as a guide or facilitator. One core principle of this movement was the conviction of these progressive educators that learning is best achieved through direct experience rather than memorisation and that all forms of artistic expression are natural vehicles for experiential learning and self-expression. Moreover, the significance of theatre as a method for creating experiential learning in the classroom was identified and promoted (Roseberg, 1987: 19). In the UK, a new discussion and trend emerged driven by the child-centred approach, and process drama played a crucial role in the movement's comprehension of the significance of process in the learning experience. Hornbrook (1989: 4) asserted that the drama education movement could be traced back to the revolutionary ideals of late eighteenth century Romanticism, and specifically to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's child-centred concepts in educational play.

The drama education movement led to a debate on the significance of drama. Johnson (1912) acknowledged that theatrical instruction placed excessive emphasis on aesthetic evaluation, asserting that the learning of perfect skills is not necessary for pupils to engage in the practice. Instead, he argued that it is crucial to highlight the significance of the learner's experience and needs. Johnson's theories facilitated the shift of drama education from a teacher-focused to a learner-centred approach. Subsequently, Henry Caldwell Cook examined dramatic activity as the act of staging plays or engaging in performances within educational settings, while also highlighting drama as a method of teaching. Cook (1914) explored the use of dramatic activity as a teaching approach. From 1889 to 1959, there was a growing presence of theatre-in-education teams and companies, such as Bolton Theatre, Canterbury Theatre, Belgrade Theatre and the London Theatre Centre. According to Roseberg (1975: 17-20), this indicates that the field was undergoing development during this time. During the 1940s, theatre was well-established in most schools and integrated into the English curriculum. This led to ongoing discussions regarding the purpose of drama education, whether it should prioritise performance or process, and whether it should be teacher-centred or learner-centred.

In 1943, the first Educational Drama Association was founded in the UK. Prior to the

1950s, debate centred around the essence of drama and theatre, encompassing both the creation of theatrical works and the study of language. Nevertheless, until the early 1960s, there was still ongoing debate regarding the inclusion of theatre in the curriculum. Slade (1954) had a significant impact on the field of theatre education. He promoted a 'play-way' approach to work, which was in opposition to the goal of achieving professional performance standards. In addition, Slade's followers originated the term 'drama is doing' to characterise his artistic creations. Brian Way, a renowned drama practitioner, was influenced by the child-centred education movement and followed Slade's notion, published his well-known *Development Through Drama* in 1967. Way had doubts regarding the actor training approach for youngsters and raised concerns about the educational merit of acquiring professional abilities for pupils. His insights contributed to a novel comprehension of drama education, promoting a shift towards prioritising the process rather than focusing on production.

By the late 1960s, drama had become the prevailing norm in education for its instructional efficacy. Dorothy Heathcote, a prominent figure in the development of process drama, expressed her rejection of the focus on acting in drama classrooms (Wagner, 1979: 3). Instead, she put emphasis on the significance of actively engaging in dramatic activities (Wagner, 1979: 147). She promoted the use of drama as an experiential learning instrument to enhance learners' reflective abilities. She also claimed that role-taking, a broad description of process drama, enables a deeper comprehension of a social milieu and facilitates creative engagement through identification within social situations. She also emphasised the significance of "experience in developing a person" (Heathcote, Johnson & O'Neill, 1984: 49). Gavin Bolton, a student of Heathcote and a process drama theorist and practitioner, advocated a drama education system which is primarily against the production-oriented teaching approach and instead enables learners to engage in making-meaning. He proposed process drama as a medium for exploring life experience, focusing on content rather than production. Bolton articulated an essential concept in process drama which was "drama as a learning medium". Both Heathcote and Bolton were workshop leaders at the *Riverside Conference* at the Riverside Studios in 1978, organised by Gerald Chapman and John Dale. This conference brought together a large number of directors, teachers, actors, educational advisers and actor/teachers to compare theatre directing and drama teaching. Through their observation of Heathcote and Bolton's workshop, these educators and theatre makers attempted to discover the shared elements and nature of those two approaches. Heathcote led a discussion about the role

of the drama teacher, who is “always the receiver” and “the creator of tension”, exploring the ways a drama teacher might be looking for “shifting perspectives and understanding” (Robinson, 1980: 15).

Beginning in the late 1970s, there was an increase in discussions about incorporating drama into schools. Scholars such as Seely (1976), Robinson (1980) and Hornbrook (1991) investigated the implications for teachers when including educational drama in the curriculum, recognising its critical role. In 1984, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) released a series of papers titled *Curriculum Matters* to encourage dialogue about curricula in the UK. The seventeenth document in this series, entitled *Drama from 5 to 16*, emphasised the importance of performance and provided a framework to help schools to develop policies and practices for teaching and learning drama. According to this paper, drama in schools is a practical artistic subject that relies on learners' ability to use their imagination to explore the actions, behaviours and reactions of individuals in specific situations, times and societies (HMI, 1989: 1).

O'Neill and Lambert (1990: 11) argued that process drama enables learners of different ages to utilise imagined roles in order to explore issues, events and relationships. Process drama was first formally introduced in drama education as explained by O'Toole and Haseman in their foundational book *Dramawise* (1986). O'Toole (1992: 2) later defined process drama as a genre of applied drama, further refining the concept of process in drama as the negotiation and renegotiation of the elements of dramatic form, resulting in a new form of drama which is shaped by the participants' contexts and purposes. This could involve activities centred within fictional role-taking and improvisation. Neelands (1992: 4) emphasised the crucial role of practical activities in process drama, viewing them as a means of creating meaning and acquiring experiential knowledge.

Neelands created a range of drama activities based on the work of others, including pair games, small-group tasks and whole-class exercises. The primary objective of these activities was to enhance learners' interpersonal abilities through collaborative group work and interactive communication. According to Neelands (1992: 3-4), drama activities offer learners valuable prospects to engage in imaginative thinking and creative re-enactment. Neelands also asserted that drama is not merely a subject but also a pedagogical approach which facilitates children's comprehension of themselves and others.

After O'Neill described process drama in detail in her book *Drama Worlds* (1995),

process drama was formally established as a common terminology in the field of drama education (Blatner & Wiener: 2007). After official acceptance of the term 'process drama', discussion then focused on the essential elements of the form. Kao and O'Neill (1998: x) noted that process drama is built up from the "ideas, negotiations, and responses" of the participants in order to "foster social, intellectual, and linguistic development". According to Howell and Heap (2005: 59), process drama is made up of facilitators and participants who seek to create meaning in and through learners' participation. Dunn (2016:127) defined process drama as a highly engaging participatory form capable of generating rich learning opportunities. Additionally, the argument shifted to the nature of the role of participants. Gustave J. and Weltsek-Medina (2007: 90) saw the function of participants in the formation of process drama with teachers acting as facilitators and learners as "co-playwrights, actors, and implicit audience members", with all roles mixed. Of course, this is different from writing from the playwright's perspective; it emphasises co-creating stories collectively, in short, enabling pupils to move from the literary approach to drama as interpretation of text to collective devising.

Discussions centred on the character of process drama itself. Taylor and Warner (2006: 5) discussed this in depth, stating that the characteristic of process drama includes focusing on learners' interactive participation and discovering diverse results in the process, with devising as an essential part of creating. Howell and Heap (2013: 6) explicated the prominent feature of process drama as "dramatic playing as a learning method and learning in context". Davis (2014) discussed the development of the field of PCD as well as advancing the direction of the debate on the theoretical insights on PCD. Fleming (2017: 90) expanded on process drama by incorporating a number of novel strategies and techniques. The teaching paradigm included tableaux (in which participants create a still image with their bodies in large or small groups), teacher-in-role (in which a teacher/facilitator assumes a role, usually of low status, to stimulate pupils' participation and thinking), alternative perspective techniques (involving more than one perspective on an event) and time shift (a strategy to help pupils understand the difference between 'narrative' and 'plot').

Dewey (1980:53) asserted the significance of the experience of art and the process of gaining experience as an act of reconstruction which offers new insights. The concept of process drama focuses on the process as a way of leading pupils to a deeper understanding of others and promoting self-reflection.

Various terms have emerged in the field of drama education over time, which include drama/theatre-in-education, educational drama and process drama. However, the emphasis on process rather than production/performance presents a common thread to all the descriptions above, which I propose to group together under the term ‘process-centred drama’, referred to as PCD. Furthermore, this emphasis on process is what this thesis explores, by which I mean a pedagogic approach to drama education which connects learners with the learning materials through participating in the various activities identified above.

The development of PCD in the UK has great importance for the Chinese context of NCR since it seeks to transform pupils from being passive learners to active participants in the learning process. Learner-centred education is particularly important in the Chinese context because of the significantly low teacher-student ratio (one teacher to 40 pupils on average), which hinders the prioritisation of students' needs in a typical classroom. However, when theatre is offered as an elective subject and involves physical participation, it enhances the role of learners as active agents, collaborators and co-artists in the experiential learning process.

The historical development of PCD in China has been the subject of extensive controversy, a situation that resonates with challenges encountered in the UK with regard to the reception of PCD in the past, with criticism arising from both the education and the theatre sectors regarding its artistic value and pedagogical relevance. This trend seems to be repeating itself not only in China, but also in other situated contexts in which there is a growing interest in implementing PCD to enhance pupils' learning experience. These challenges are exacerbated by a shortage of publications in Chinese about and by leading practitioners in the field of PCD, such as Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, who established the fundamental principles of PCD. These significant publications and dialogues have the potential to provide a compass for a solid foundation for the growth of PCD in the Chinese context. They can also provide a valuable baseline for further context-specific research and discourse between academics and practitioners.

Furthermore, the ongoing discussions in the field of PCD in China revolves around the role of drama in the curriculum – whether it should be considered as a separate and distinct art form or whether its methods and approaches might be integrated in and applied to various other subjects, such as Chinese, English and Music. Examining the historical origins can help prevent the repetition of past issues and mistakes, particularly when there

is an opportunity to delve into the artistic significance of drama and theatre within the framework of PCD, rather than pursuing a profit-driven approach to education.

In summary, this chapter points to a need for the continual development and adaptation of PCD in educational settings to meet new educational goals and adapt to rapidly changing landscapes. The chapter has explored how the NCR emerged in China as a response to global advancements and the country's shift towards a market-oriented economy. It sought to shift the focus from rote memorisation and test-centric learning to fostering active, creative and critical thinking skills in pupils. The inclusion of PCD in the *Standards (2022) for arts education* was a major step in the direction of increasing interest and recognition. Despite this progress, challenges remain in the widespread implementation of PCD in Chinese schools, primarily due to a lack of adequately trained facilitators and a prevailing focus on performance presentation over process. The exploration of PCD in the context of the NCR in mainland China and its comparison with the UK experience provides a solid foundation for understanding the potential and challenges of implementing innovative drama education strategies, which are further explored in subsequent chapters. Before that, I shall set out the research methods used in this study and the place of self-reflection within them.

Chapter 2

Research methodology

This chapter combines personal reflection on the teaching experiences which have propelled me towards this research endeavour and a discussion of the research methods selected for this project. The mixed-method approach encompassed personal reflection, semi-structured interviews with ten Chinese educators, six UK-based specialists and facilitators from two TiE companies, case studies of two leading UK-based TiE companies and non-participant observations of their teaching and touring workshops with various age-groups. Using a mixture of methods in research was advantageous as it enabled the collection of diverse data sources to illustrate the historical, philosophical and pedagogical evolution and principles of PCD. The diverse range of data provided a comprehensive overview of the relationship between drama and education.

2.1 A mixed-method approach

Ackroyd (2006: 6-7) stated that the predominant approach of research conducted in the field of educational drama is qualitative. According to Taylor (2006: 6-7), qualitative research involves a process of the analysis and understanding of a culture. In addition, he argued that qualitative research is advantageous for both practitioners and participants in drama activities. According to Leavy (2020: 2), qualitative research is commonly employed to investigate, describe or explain social phenomena. It aims to unravel the significance which individuals attribute to activities, situations, events or artefacts. Additionally, it seeks to obtain a comprehensive understanding of specific aspects of social existence and express novel or less studied domains. Gillham (2000: 11) highlighted the primary advantage of qualitative methods in their capacity to investigate complexities which surpass the limitations of more controlled approaches. He further pointed out that these methods enable researchers to examine a case from the viewpoints of the individuals involved and to investigate the process that leads to outcomes, rather than solely focusing on the significance of the outcomes themselves. In addition, he asserted that qualitative methods provide researchers with evidence to comprehend the circumstance and topic under study (Gillham, 2000: 10).

Mixed-method research is defined as a type of research that involves the integration of multiple research techniques, methodologies, approaches, theories and terminology into a single study (Johnson et al., 2007: 101). The choice of mixed methods is grounded in

the complexity and depth of the research subject. In the current study, it supported the generation of primary data on the practical application of PCD, enriching the research with real-world examples of how PCD can be effectively integrated into educational contexts.

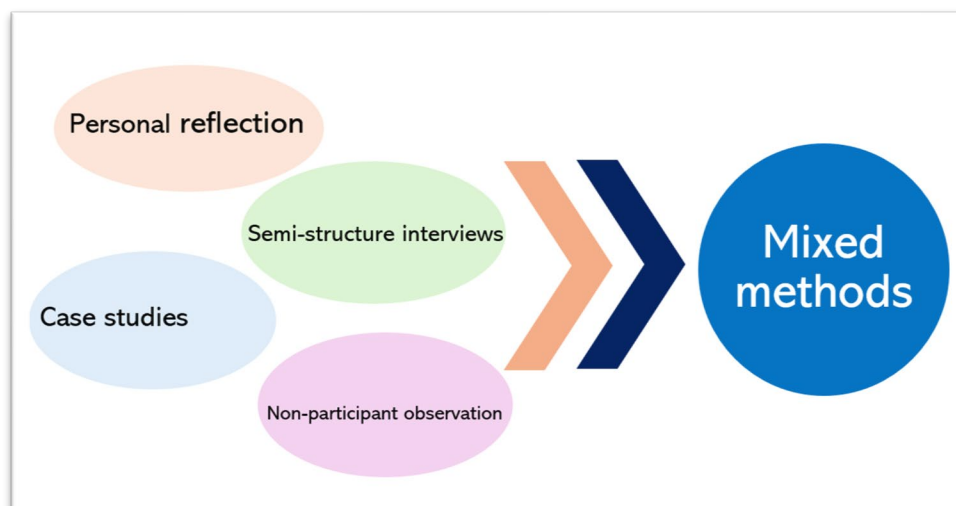


Figure 2-1 The mixed methods employed in this study

As Figure 2-1 shows, this study drew on the comprehensive insights provided by a mixture of research methods to explore the meaning and experience of individuals within the realm of PCD. The mixed-method approach enabled an holistic understanding of the intersection between drama and education, particularly focusing on the implementation of PCD and its potential for activating learners' active learning and all-round development.

2.1.1 Self- reflection as research motivation and method

The methodological approach of this research includes self-reflection from my previous teaching experience. According to Boyd and Fales (1983: 100), reflection involves the process of constructing and elucidating the significance of personal experiences, whether they are recent or past. Franks (2015: 50) defined self-reflection as a research method which entails observing and reflecting an individual researcher's perspective on the research process in order to enhance learning and facilitate innovation. Self-reflection is especially suitable for exploring the complex and individualised experiences of educators. As Lamb (2013: 37) commented, this method enables a deeper understanding of educators' viewpoints and professional practices.

The basis of my interest and passion lies in the intersection of drama and education, which

stems from my position as a drama teacher in Beijing. From 2015 to 2019, I taught drama through the form of optional courses as well as extracurricular drama clubs at various state schools in China, such as Beijing 109 Middle School, Gexinli Primary School and Xiangyang Primary School. Additionally, I worked as the primary contributor to a drama festival in a primary school in Chaoyang district. I was also a full-time drama teacher at the Chinese National Children Centre (CNCC) from 2017 to 2019. Throughout these sessions, I adhered to the school's primary purpose of preparing pupils to participate in competition-oriented student art festivals at both district and municipal level. An important consequence of this competition, which highly values the acquisition of performing skills, is the tendency for a narrow understanding of incorporating drama into education as primarily focused on presentation skills. This resulted in the prevalence of a product-oriented teaching style in the majority of institutions. Upon observing pupils' reactions to various activities during drama sessions, I recognised a significant amount of unexplored potential in the way they were able to create and develop perspectives. As a result, I began to investigate the use of drama as a means to encourage pupils to engage in deeper thinking about their individual and interpersonal growth. I discovered that they derived enjoyment from the investigation of multiple aspects of character, the potential for storytelling and their quest for solutions to challenges. Based on the favourable response from learners, I went in search of a comprehensive approach to incorporating drama into educational environments.

From 2017 onwards, I have participated in many master class workshops at the International Drama Education Congress (IDEC) organised by Beijing Foreign Language University. During the conferences, I attended several practical workshops conducted by experts from around the world. Jonothan Neelands explained process drama strategies, including the utilisation of the still-image, storytelling, role-play and other methods. In addition, he elucidated the process of creating a PCD session aimed at enhancing pupils' understanding of educational content by using drama. These practical workshops enhanced my critical reflection on my previous teaching methods, prompting me to implement these PCD concepts in my sessions. In addition, I expanded my understanding by reading Chinese translated publications on PCD which were accessible. Since 2017, I have been actively studying and implementing a teaching strategy focused on process drama at Beijing 109 Middle School and CNCC. I have employed a range of drama exercises and in this way have gradually enhanced my skills in this field. Furthermore, I initiated the use of process drama as a means of enhancing pupils' comprehension of

stories through the strategic design of thematic process drama workshops.

During these sessions, I deliberately chose a range of thematic topics to use as teaching materials which were tailored to the children's age group, learning capacity and the common difficulties they face in their everyday lives. The aim was to help them to improve their abilities and nurture their distinctive strengths in various ways. As an illustration, I classified various engaging resources for children between the ages of three to five. These include *Guess How Much I Love You*, which helps pupils to comprehend and articulate parental affection; *I Will Not Ever Never Eat a Tomato*, which is helpful for adjusting children's eating habits; *Elmer*, which promotes self-assurance in embracing one's uniqueness and fostering inclusivity; *Flora's Flowers*, which encourages perseverance and optimism in life; and *Belinda, the Ballerina* which addresses bullying and shows effective expression of emotions.

In addition, I adopted educational materials for pupils between the ages of six and nine consisting of Chinese traditional and foreign folk stories. These stories aim to foster moral values in learners, such as generosity and assisting those in need through the tale of *Magic pen Ma Liang*, honesty through *Bao Zheng interrogates the stone*, cooperation and helpfulness instead of jealousy through *Stone Soup*, and the importance of hard work and self-reliance through the *Fisherman and the Goldfish*. I employed diverse PCD methods in delivering these moral-themed workshops, aiming to connect pupils' life experiences with enduring children's stories.

Furthermore, I adapted stories and poems for learners aged nine and upwards, aiming to accurately depict events while also fostering their creativity through active exploration and adaptation of stories within small groups. For instance, I worked with the narrative of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Beijing folk stories* and old Chinese poems which promote peace in wartime. The purpose of these open-ended sessions was to enhance pupils' learning and imagination by engaging them in interactive drama activities.

For secondary school learners, I implemented PCD methods to enhance their comprehension of stories and develop their exploration of characters in diverse activities. After implementing these PCD approaches, I received positive feedback from both learners and parents. Pupils expressed their satisfaction with participating in my drama classes by responding and engaging in a dynamic way. Additionally, the parents reported that their children exhibited increased interpersonal skills and a greater willingness to express their emotions to both their parents and others. Furthermore, the children

displayed enhanced self-assurance in their schoolwork. The parents observed that their children in particular derived greater satisfaction from acquiring knowledge and honing their capacity to interact with narratives in textbooks compared with conventional classes. The transformations exhibited by the pupils prompted me to delve into the roots and historical development of PCD. Figure 2-2 shows the starting point of this research and how it informed the present research project.

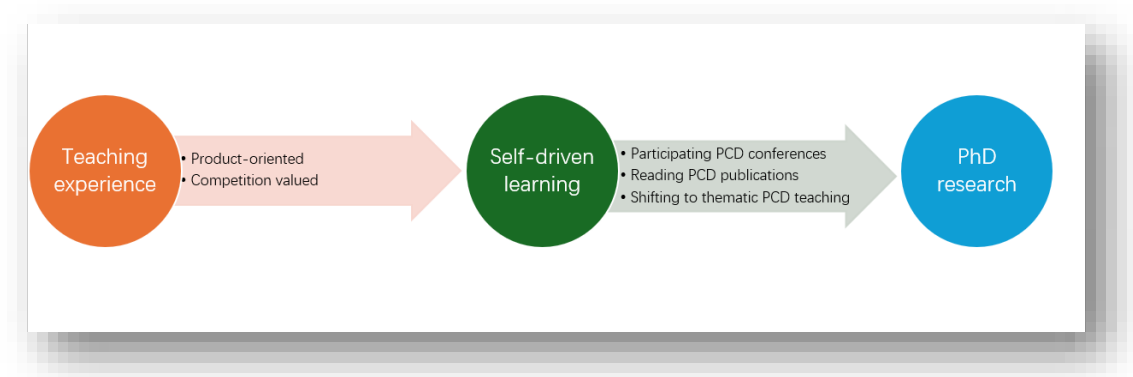


Figure 2-2 Self- reflection as research motivation and method

These experiences have not only motivated me to further explore the field of PCD, enhance my teaching skills and deepen my theoretical understanding, they have also influenced my perspective and approach to research. The utilisation of reflective practice, a methodology firmly engrained in the realms of education and artistry, has played a pivotal role in structuring my study. The reflective practitioner, as described by Schön (1983: 61-62), is consistently engaged in a process of self-exploration, critical assessment and knowledge acquisition. My reflections on integrating drama into educational settings for primary and secondary pupils have been crucial in identifying the research gap and formulating the questions that guide this study.

Personal reflection has served a dual function in this research, not only as an initial source of motivation shaping the research enquiry but also as a methodological tool. My extensive experiences of teaching drama in various educational settings in Beijing meant that I could draw on and relate to the research material from an insider perspective due to my first-hand experience of the challenges and potentials of integrating PCD into the curriculum. In this way, my personal experience stemming from my professional background has also underscored a quest to transition from a product-oriented to a process-oriented approach in drama education, aligning with the research's aim to explore innovative teaching strategies within the NCR framework.

2.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

As part of this research methodology, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of participants in the field of PCD as this would provide primary data from different perspectives and enable me to gain in-depth insights to present the potential of PCD into educational settings. The interviewees were ten Chinese teachers who had incorporated drama into their teaching practices for periods ranging from one to fifteen years. Additionally, there were six specialists in the field of PCD from the UK, two artistic directors from Big Brum and seven skilled facilitators from two leading Theatre-in-Education companies based in the UK.

Interviewing is a widely used method for gathering information in qualitative research. Yates, Clarke and Thurstan (2019: 2) defined an interview as a method of qualitative research which involves a structured conversation through questioning to collect data or information. The purpose of an interview is to delve into the significance of an issue and the perceptions of people with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the topic. This elicits elaborate depictions of the subject matter and extends existing information by incorporating insights gained from the interviewees' own experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 314). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the current study because they would give me the capacity to combine closed and open-ended questions, allowing for a structured yet adaptable discussion which facilitates an in-depth investigation of attitudes and opinions (Adam, 2015: 494). This approach was deemed to be especially beneficial for comprehending the subtle viewpoints of educators, facilitators and specialists who had diverse educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, educational ideas and PCD practices.

Semi-structured interviews were also used as they would enable a comprehensive insight into attitudes and issues related to PCD and could also offer valuable insights into the evolving comprehension of PCD, its use in educational environments and the potential for its future advancement in the Chinese context. I used open-ended questions to explore the problems and prospects of implementing PCD in the Chinese educational context in line with the requirements set out in the NCR. Using semi-structured interviews also allowed for an investigation of the significance of implementing PCD in the classroom by reflecting on teaching practices.

With regard to the UK context, semi-structured interviews supported the generation of primary research data for an analysis of the past decrease in the prominence of PCD in

UK educational settings. This decline can be attributed to various factors, including the lack of acknowledgment of its educational significance and the impact of exam-focused assessment methods. Additionally, the research delved into the challenges faced by UK educators in maintaining a balance between PCD and standardised testing requirements, highlighting the need for a more holistic approach to education.

Other than the benefit of mapping the current practices of PCD in both countries, the semi-structured interview method also contributed to investigating rich and comprehensive views within the specific research domain. This was particularly suitable for the current study because of the wide range of interviewees who had different backgrounds, experience and teaching interest in the UK and China. Adams (2015: 494) recommended combining a variety of question types in order to thoroughly explore complex personal and professional perspectives. Barriball and While (1994: 330) also highlighted the characteristic of flexibility which semi-structured interviews offer; they stated that another advantage of semi-structured interviews is the capability for the interviewer to use a probing technique for clarifying responses and thus assuring comprehensive data collection. Adams (2015: 496) added that semi-structured interviews create a relaxed atmosphere which facilitates effective probing without causing concern to the interviewee. The unique blend of structured and flexible questioning in semi-structured interviews makes them particularly suitable for exploring complex topics such as using drama in educational settings. This interview method also enabled follow-up enquiries and a deeper comprehension of various aspects related to the evolving perceptions of PCD held by Chinese teachers and enabled me to gather the insights of UK-based specialists on key principles of integrating drama into educational settings, as well as reflections from UK-based facilitators on their facilitation skills in activating pupils' learning through drama. Barriball and While (1994: 332) recommended that making audio recordings of semi-structured interviews ensures the capture of detailed insights and helps to validate the "accuracy and completeness" of the acquired information. During the data collection, I recorded the semi-structured interviews (with the interviewees' consent) and parts of the interviews were conducted in Chinese translated by me. For ensuring accuracy by comparing them with my notes made during the interviews.

In summary, the use of semi-structured interviews was chosen for a variety of reasons. First, they provided an inclusive atmosphere which accommodated individuals with diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. Second, they enabled open interaction and

reflection on various aspects of PCD. Third, they enabled comprehensive data collection, covering the participants' entry into the field of PCD and their evolving perception of incorporating drama into educational settings.

2.1.3 Case studies

As well as personal reflection and semi-structured interviews, I also used case studies as a method to collect primary data for understanding current PCD practices in school settings in the UK. A case study is a research method which examines an individual subject of study to address a particular research issue. It employs several sorts of evidence to offer the most accurate responses to the research questions (Gillham, 2000: 1). Zonabend (1992: 52) stated that a case study entails an in-depth examination, reconstruction and analysis of the case(s) under investigation and emphasised the need to carry out a case study by integrating the viewpoints of the individuals directly involved in the scenario under exploration. Yin (1994: 23) and Zainal (2007: 1) described a case study as a method of research which investigates a contemporary occurrence in its real-life situation. Feagin and Sjoberg (1991) and Tellies (1997: 14) recommended that the case study method is highly valuable in qualitative research. First, according to Yin (1994: 1) and Gerring (2004: 342), case studies are particularly useful when a detailed and comprehensive investigation is required and enable the examination and understanding of intricate issues. Tellies (1997: 6), Gerring (2004: 346) and Zainal (2007: 4) all said that case studies offer extensive qualitative narratives which enable the exploration, description and explanation of real-life information, encompassing intricate components which might evade experimental or survey research. The efficacy of a case study as a valuable instrument in educational environments is acknowledged within the realm of social science (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006: 104). In addition, case studies have particular features, which include being process-centred (George & Bennett, 2004), involving descriptive inferences (Gerring, 2004: 346) and placing focus on the participants' perspective (Tellies, 1997: 11).

2.1.4 Non-participant observations

Non-participant observation, as defined by Biddle (1967: 338) and Liu and Maitlis (2010: 609), is the broadest and simplest research method used in classroom studies. In this method, the researcher enters a teaching environment unobtrusively in order to take detailed notes of what is happening and to acquire insights into the educational context. Non-participant observation is primarily useful for descriptive research (Barner-Barry,

1986: 139) and enables a sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of a particular object of study in a dynamic situation which would have been challenging to perceive through surveys or other less immediate approaches (Ostrpwer, 1998: 60). To achieve successful non-participant observation, it is crucial to meticulously document observations through comprehensive field notes (Biddle, 1967: 340; Liu & Maitlis, 2010: 610). This entails researchers using audiovisual recording to capture and document activities in the observed area. Non-participant observation provides numerous advantages for qualitative research. First, it offers distinctive and personalised perspectives on activities, as well as the significance they carry for individuals within the given environment. It enables the researcher to accurately document the dynamic character of participants' interactions with each other and their work environment while simultaneously observing these processes in real-time over a specific duration. Third, it enhances the depth and complexity of the data (Liu & Maitlis, 2010: 610).

To summarise, this study used a mixture of research methods for investigating PCD practices in the Chinese context and the challenges which educators are facing when they employ PCD in an education setting. This mixed-method format was also used for exploring the potential value of PCD in educational settings. It further produced primary data on the effectiveness of PCD in cultivating learners' active learning, creativity, critical thinking and all-round development. The various research techniques used were first, personal reflection by a drama teacher who was seeking an appropriate way to meet pupils' various needs as a driving force for conducting this research and the methods employed throughout this study. Second, the study involved semi-structured interviews to gather information about the current state of PCD in the UK and mainland China, educators' practices and changing perspectives on PCD, as well as insights from specialists in the UK regarding the relationship between PCD and active learning. Third, it examined the implementation of PCD in educational environments and investigated the responses of learners to various activities aimed at improving their comprehension of educational materials. This was accomplished through the use of case studies and non-participant observations conducted in two TiE companies in the UK.

2.2 Fieldwork and data collection: a cross-cultural perspective

2.2.1 Preparing and conducting semi-structured interviews in the UK and China

The research embraced a cross-cultural perspective by investigating the implementation of PCD in both the UK and China. The preparation for interviews with Chinese educators

involved a thorough review of policy papers and literature on PCD, ensuring a grounded understanding of the current state of drama education in China. Similarly, the preparation for interviews with UK-based specialists entailed an in-depth study of key publications and conference proceedings in the field of PCD. This comprehensive preparation ensured that the interviews were contextually relevant and informed.

My rationale for choosing the participants was driven by my determination to explore a diverse range of experience of drama education in mainland China. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken with ten Chinese teachers, some of whom had substantial experience in the field of Theatre-in-Education and Drama-in-Education, spanning periods from one to fifteen years. They were employed in both curricular and extra-curricular settings and based in locations throughout mainland China: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu province, Jiangxi province and Greater Bay Area. The interviews with the Chinese educators were conducted on the online platforms Zoom and Tencent Meeting. After informing the participants about the process which I had devised, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and later thematic analysis was carried out to identify common themes and patterns. The analysis focused on three aspects: teachers' initial entry into the field of PCD and their developing comprehension of PCD through practical experience, their reflection on pupils' engagement with the PCD learning experience, and their vision for the future development of PCD in mainland China. Efforts were made to ensure that the analysis accurately represented the participants' experience and reflection in a comprehensive and profound manner. The use of semi-structured interviews put a strong emphasis on flexibility and dynamism by using both closed and open-ended questions. This approach created a secure and relaxed environment conducive to the exchange of relevant information.

Semi-structured interviews were also held with six UK-based specialists. This enabled exploration of complex and occasionally sensitive issues related to the development of PCD, fundamental principles of facilitation skills, and valuable insights for the future development of PCD within a broader context. Oral history, according to Sommer and Quinlan (2018: 1-2), refers to first-hand accounts obtained through interviews with those who have witnessed or participated in specific events or ways of life. The objective of oral history is to preserve this information and make it accessible by others. Several of the six specialists interviewed in this study were students of Heathcote and Bolton, esteemed figures in the field of PCD. Some of them had actively participated in workshops conducted by Heathcote and Bolton. Their perspectives on the future through

reflecting on the past hold significant value, especially in the Chinese context, where there is a growing interest in integrating drama into educational settings. Drawing on the rich experiences and insights gained from their association with these influential figures, these specialists could offer valuable guidance and direction for the integration of drama education in Chinese educational settings.

Most of the semi-structured interviews with the UK-based interviewees were conducted in person but some of them were carried out on the online platform Zoom. Each conversation lasted for roughly 90 minutes, and audio recordings were made to ensure precise data collection. Note-taking served as a means to record the essential terms, notable points and the researcher's personal ideas during the interviews. The audio recordings of the UK-based specialists were transcribed and thematic analysis was employed to identify important recurring themes and particularly valuable insights. This analysis focused on providing a reflection of historical developments, insights into the philosophical and pedagogical approaches, as well as discussion of future directions of PCD. This application of semi-structured interviews with the UK-based specialists facilitated in-depth and engaging conversations for taking lessons from the practices in the UK and gaining valuable insights for the development of PCD in the future.

2.2.2 Preparing and conducting case studies in the UK

This research involved conducting case studies of two notable TiE companies to gather primary data on the current practice of integrating PCD into educational settings. Big Brum and Freshwater are among the largest TiE companies in the UK, specialising in engaging learners of various age groups in diverse aspects of learning. Prior to conducting the case studies, desk research was carried out to gather existing information about the two companies. Theses by Amoiropoulos (2013) and Bethlenfalvy (2017), as well as project reports such as ‘Human Spaces: An Evaluative Case Study’ by Bolton (2018), Ballin et al. (2020) and reports from Big Brum (2019a; 2019b), were consulted. Additionally, all teaching plans and recorded sessions from Freshwater were reviewed in order for me to become acquainted with their practices. This preparation provided a solid foundation for the workshop observations.

2.3 Ethical considerations

There are numerous ethical considerations to be taken into account when conducting research in educational settings, especially when conducting non-participant observations

of classes and workshops involving pupils under the age of eighteen. In terms of the protection of personal data, I followed the guidelines of the Middlesex University Ethics Committee after obtaining ethical approval for the study. Prior to undertaking the data collection, I outlined my research positionality to each set of participants. I initially introduced myself and provided an overview of the research. I then requested the participants to sign an informed consent form. I explicitly informed the participants about a recording that would be made for transcription purposes. I also emphasised their entitlement to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation. During the interviews with the Chinese educators, the specialists based in the UK and the facilitators from the two TiE companies, I made a conscious effort to maintain objectivity and refrain from expressing excessive personal opinions. This was done to minimise the risk of misinterpreting the intended meaning of each response. Instead, I make a note of the areas where I had queries and later sought clarification through follow-up questions in order to maintain a seamless flow of discourse. During the interviews with the Chinese educators, I modulated my insider perspective as a drama teacher in China to ensure their comfort and sense of security and to prevent them from feeling exposed.

During the workshop observations in schools, the facilitators explained to the pupils that my responsibility as a researcher was solely to observe the session. They emphasised that I would not assess or evaluate the pupils' engagement in order to prioritise their feelings of safety, freedom of speech and participation. This approach enabled me to maintain the authenticity of my observations by closely replicating the typical workshop atmosphere. Additionally, it minimised any potential disruption or influence I might have had on the facilitators and learners.

2.3.1 Confidentiality and anonymity: safeguarding participants

Participants in the interviews and workshop observations were given information sheets in order for them to understand the purpose of the data collection in this research. Additionally, an informed consent form was provided in order for me to obtain permission from participants to carry out the interview. Separate consent was obtained from the gatekeepers of the school where the drama workshop was conducted. The form included checkboxes to remind participants of their right to maintain the confidentiality of their name and personal information. It also reassured them that their personal information would be encrypted and kept anonymous in accordance with the safeguarding standards. In order to ensure protection, my DBS check copy was shared with the gatekeepers, and

I signed any relevant safeguarding paperwork provided by the gatekeepers. The drama sessions were recorded and photographed from a distant vantage point behind the classroom and subsequently the learners' faces were blurred to protect their identity and personal information. I chose to proceed in this manner in order to document the sequence of session activities and the pupils' responses to different drama activities. I took only notes in some workshops because some of the gatekeepers had prohibited any audiovisual recording of the session.

2.3.2 Informed consent discussions

Prior to beginning each interview, I explained my research and background, then obtained the interviewee's signature on the informed consent form and gave out the information sheets. Regarding the non-participant observation, before the start of each session, I explained to the gatekeeper and facilitators about my research intention to make observations. I then provided a clear explanation and acquired their permission to take notes and, in most cases, to record audiovisual content during the class. Additionally, before the session, the facilitator informed the learners of my function as a researcher and non-participant observer in order to reduce any influence I might have on their teaching and on pupils' engagement in the workshop.

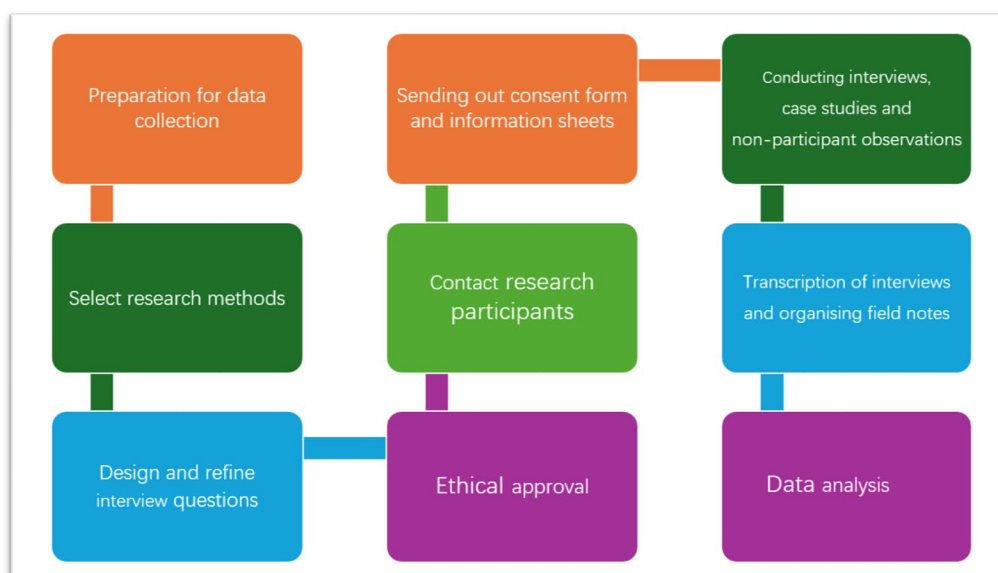


Figure 2-3 The process of the mixed methods employed in this research

The coherence of the methodology lay in its alignment with the aims of the study and the research questions. An in-depth investigation of PCD from a variety of points of view was made possible by the use of the mixed-method approach as described above and

presented in Figure 2-3, which included personal reflection, semi-structured interviews, case studies and non-participant observations. Each method made a distinct contribution to the development of a thorough comprehension of how PCD was perceived, implemented and presented in different educational settings.

For the purpose of providing an internal perspective and embedding the findings in real teaching circumstances, personal reflection was used in this research. Conducting semi-structured interviews with educators and specialists provided a variety of perspectives, enhancing the research by incorporating a wide range of insights into the difficulties, successful outcomes and potential future directions related to PCD.

Research evidence from the case studies and non-participant observations showcased the practical implementation and contribution of PCD in real educational environments. The methodology underpinning this study was carefully designed to provide a logical, rigorous and thorough examination of PCD in educational settings. The research combined theoretical perspectives with practical observations, offering a comprehensive understanding of the possibilities and difficulties associated with incorporating drama into Chinese education. This approach not only fulfilled the specific research objectives but also added to the wider discussion of innovative teaching strategies in the field of drama education in the Chinese context of NCR.

In the following chapter, I shall explore the perspectives of specialists based in the UK on the effectiveness of PCD in educational settings and offer recommendations for addressing the challenges of promoting PCD in diverse cultural and educational contexts.

Chapter 3

Intersecting Process-Centred Drama's past, present and future: insights from UK-based specialists

This chapter offers an investigation of PCD through the perspectives of six specialists based in the UK. It explores the theoretical bases, historical progression and essential features which contribute to PCD as an educational strategy which has the potential to bring about a significant transformation in learning. The chapter further explores existing hurdles for the development of PCD in the UK and outlines the fundamental skills and abilities required from PCD facilitators. The chapter ends by offering a discussion of the challenges, opportunities and recommendations for the implementation of PCD in China.

3.1 The theoretical foundations and historical development of PCD

3.1.1 Key philosophical and pedagogical influences on PCD

The evolution of PCD and its pedagogical underpinnings demonstrate a progressive change in educational philosophy, challenging conventional, authoritative teaching approaches and the passive learner role. The emergence and development of PCD in the UK were influenced by a number of factors, as highlighted by the six specialists interviewed. These factors include progressive education, learner-centred education advocated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, constructivism as expounded by Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner, experiential learning as advocated by John Dewey and David Kolb and high-order thinking skills as developed by Benjamin Bloom, among others. These ideas profoundly influenced PCD, shaping its educational principles and characteristics, such as meaningful learning, discussion-based and collaborative learning, active involvement and enquiry-based learning (O'Neill).

With the influence of these educational ideas, there was a growing recognition of the importance for learners to assume a more proactive role in their education, a concept increasingly discussed in educational circles. Moreover, this shift started to influence drama education, leading to a deeper understanding of learners' engagement. During this period, there was a transition from an idealised perception of child development to a more balanced approach which emphasised both instruction and learning (Fleming).

In addition to the profound impact from philosophical and educational perspectives throughout the development of PCD, the interviews with the specialists emphasised the influence of key figures. Peter Slade's work in the 1950s, as mentioned by Fleming, while not directly quoting Rousseau, echoed these sentiments. Slade's notable contribution was his acknowledgment of children's dramatic play as not only valuable but an art form in its own right (Fleming). This acknowledgment signified a transition towards a pedagogical approach in education which prioritised the needs and interests of learners. The emphasis on self-expression and creativity, though considered as somewhat flawed in hindsight, established the groundwork for subsequent advancements in education.

Davis highlighted that Slade's emphasis on 'doing' over theory had a significant influence on evolving PCD into an approach that was practical, improvised, process-driven and experience-based. This marked a shift from acting out existing plays to creating original dramatic works, significantly influencing the integration of drama into educational curricula in the UK. This shift emphasised the creative process in drama, moving away from the mere staging of playtexts. Additionally, this marked a significant turning point in PCD, prioritising active engagement, meaningful enquiry and critical thinking. The teacher's role evolved from being non-interventionist and possessing knowledge to actively participating as a co-constructor, which significantly transformed the landscape of drama education. This change overall facilitated the adoption of a more holistic, integrated approach to teaching drama, which recognised the importance of both the artistic and educational aspects of the discipline. This endeavour marked a significant evolution in the field of PCD.

The interviews highlighted the collective emphasis placed on the radical change of Heathcote's and Bolton's work by these six professionals. According to the interviewees, Heathcote's and Bolton's influential contributions, encompassing teaching theory, learning theory, motivation and engagement strategies, represented a significant advance. This integration and development also elevated the role of drama by shifting the focus from personal development attributes to the actual learning outcomes for children, employing a multi-faceted pedagogical approach and learning tool. This approach maintains a strong emphasis on the learners' needs and exemplifies the dynamic nature of drama pedagogy (Davis, Wooster, Fleming, O'Neill, Neelands, Fleming, Baldwin).

3.1.2 Historical debate and progression of PCD: transition to a learner-centred

model

The practical implementation of such enriched PCD posed challenges and attracted criticism from conservative trends in both education and theatre. O'Neill also highlighted the challenges from conservative forces in the field of education on PCD's perceived lack of clear educational objectives. Additionally, challenges arose in regular classroom settings due to curriculum constraints on teaching duration. The need for a more structured, accessible and practical approach for school teachers unfamiliar with PCD led to the development of packaged conventions such as hot seating and tableaux. These conventions made it easier for teachers to deliver drama education in school settings, and although they provided structure, there was a risk of them becoming mechanical, losing the subtlety and depth intended by pioneers like Heathcote. As Davis noted, this demand from school teachers spurred significant investment in teacher training for PCD as a new approach, leading to numerous courses across the UK in the 1970s. This period marked a high point in institutional support for innovative drama education, reflecting a recognition of the importance of innovative approaches in drama education (Davis).

The debate between drama and theatre in education also created a divide which, although it was necessary for change, also led to some oversights. The traditional version of theatre, characterised by children being mere automata following instructions, was being rejected. Even so, the division sometimes led to an underestimation of the importance of considering what is appropriate for children at different ages. Critics such as David Hornbrook argued that drama education was diverting attention from the art form itself, igniting debates about the role and impact of drama as a subject or method (Fleming, Neelands). This debate extended to the learning outcomes of drama – whether they should focus more on the development of personal qualities, the teaching of subjects or the content itself. Drama, often seen as a radical force in schools, brought to the fore the question of its role in developing not just artistic skills but also critical thinking, leadership and even political awareness. This characteristic of drama encountered constraints from curricula which were knowledge-based and outcome-oriented with given standardised assessments (Fleming, Baldwin).

Reflecting on the status of drama in schools, both in the recent past and currently, insights from the six specialists revealed a landscape marked by significant challenges and changes, particularly in the UK context. Their reflections touched on the shifts in drama education following major educational reforms, noticeable conservative constraints

within the educational system and broader societal contexts influencing these changes.

Davis noted that in the wake of the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988, there was a narrowing of the curriculum in secondary schools, with a greater focus on theatre arts and a decline in the broader, more experimental aspects of drama education. He observed a considerable reduction in the scope and depth of drama education in secondary schools, indicating a move away from innovative, process-centred approaches. This shift, Davis suggested, limited the opportunities for creative and exploratory drama education. According to Neelands, there has been a significant reduction in arts education in state schools, affecting not only drama but other arts disciplines as well. He attributed this decline to an educational focus shifting towards metrics, measurable results and standardised testing. Neelands also expressed concerns that drama had been marginalised within the curriculum and that this marginalisation had increased over time. They both highlighted a decrease in the availability of training and resources for drama teachers compared with the past, contributing to the decline in the quality of drama education. They criticised the current mode of teacher training, perceiving it as lacking theoretical depth. This deficiency in a strong theoretical foundation could lead to the superficial and mechanical use of PCD strategies in teaching. Furthermore, they observed a noticeable conservative reaction in education, particularly concerning the arts. This shift raised concerns about the diminishing presence and teaching of arts in schools, with drama being a part of this trend. A notable decline was observed in the number of pupils opting for drama at GCSE level, indicating a broader trend of declining interest in the arts. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that the situation is not uniformly bleak. In some schools the arts, including drama, continue to flourish. This disparity in the status of drama education across various educational institutions makes it challenging to generalise about its overall state.

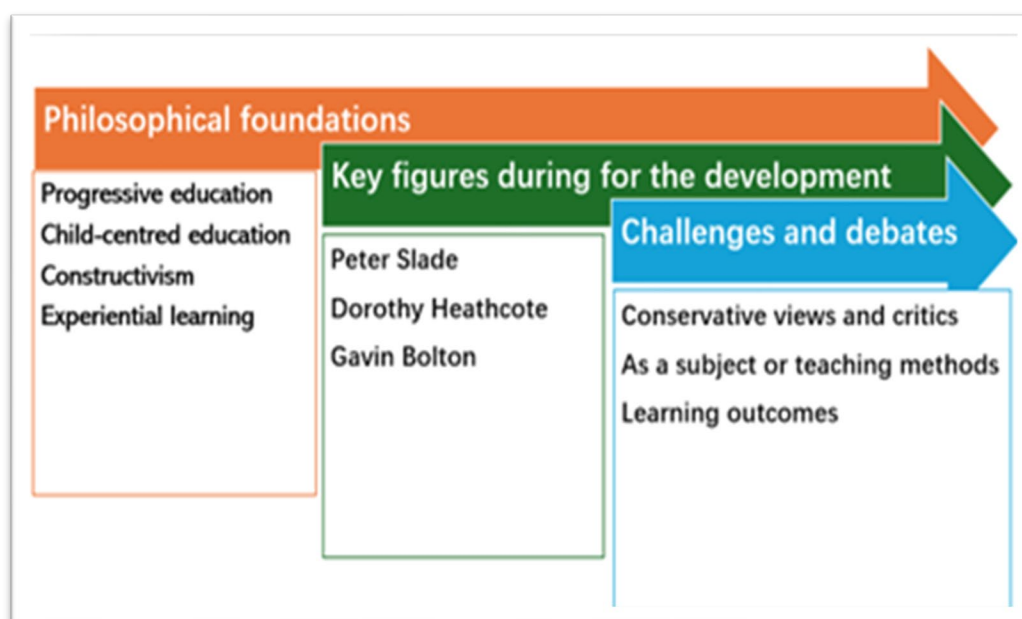


Figure 3-1 The theoretical foundations and historical developments of PCD

In summary, the journey of the use of drama in education settings has been one of continuous evolution and debate, balancing the need for learner-centred autonomy with the necessity for structured guidance and aesthetic depth. The challenges faced in its implementation, the debates surrounding its role and impact and the need for a balanced approach reflect the complexities of integrating drama into the education framework. This evolution underscores the dynamic nature of drama education and its potential to have a deep impact on learning and personal development.

3.2 Characteristics and educational value of PCD

3.2.1 Core components and pedagogical features of PCD

In exploring the essential nature of PCD in discussion with the six specialists, the complex and multi-faceted feature of PCD was revealed which encompasses various interpretations and applications. There is diversity in how process drama is defined and used. Some people use it as a general term for any dramatic activity which involves conventions such as tableaux or improvisation. One significant aspect of this field, as Davis noted, is the diversity of its approaches. This variety suggests that there is not a singular definition of PCD but rather a spectrum of methods, each grounded in its own theoretical and practical framework. This diversity is both a strength and a challenge as it offers a rich array of techniques and perspectives but also complicates the task of

defining the field's core essence (Davis). Fleming held similar views, saying that there is diversity in how PCD is defined and used. Some view it as a broad term encompassing a range of dramatic activities whereas others perceive it as a purer art form centred on the experience of living through experience. This diversity suggests that process-centred drama can be adapted to various educational and artistic needs, making it a versatile tool in teaching and learning (Fleming).

Central to PCD, according to Davis, is the concept of role-play and engagement. Participants in PCD deeply engage in their roles, connecting with personal experiences and emotions. This engagement is not just an act of pretending but involves a profound connection between the individual and the role, often leading to significant personal insights and emotional explorations. Another crucial aspect that Davis highlighted is the concept of metaxis – the state of being in two worlds at once, where individuals navigate between their roles and their real selves. This deep engagement is a defining characteristic of PCD although it is often misunderstood or underappreciated in its complexity (Davis). O'Neill also emphasised the significance of this dual consciousness of being in roles and seeing themselves at the same time. She explained that it fosters a deep awareness of reflection which enables participants to gain insights into their behaviour, emotions and the broader social and cultural contexts of the drama. O'Neill also highlighted immediacy and presence as fundamental aspects of PCD. This characteristic refers to the real-time, spontaneous nature of drama, where participants are fully engaged and responsive to the unfolding narrative and interactions. Such immediacy fosters a heightened sense of presence and engagement, crucial for experiential learning and emotional involvement in the process. O'Neill further placed emphasis on the ownership which is gained through agency and shared responsibility; these aspects empower learners in an active process of decision-making instead of passive experience. More key features were mentioned, including socratic questioning (Wooster), immersive experience (Fleming, Neelands), all-round development (Neelands) and co-construct and contextual learning (Baldwin).



Figure 3-2 Key aspects of the characteristic of PCD

Table 3-2 shows that the essential nature of PCD lies in its ability to engage participants in creative, meaningful, contextual and motivational learning experiences while maintaining a balance between the fictional nature of drama and the emotional engagement which it evokes. This multi-aspect learning and experience are crucial in empowering pupils to co-construct knowledge and take ownership in an active learning process.

3.2.2 Active learning through PCD: strategies and impact

Active learning in PCD, as claimed by the six specialists, is a dynamic and engaging approach that fundamentally transforms the conventional classroom experience. The core of this method is the practical involvement of learners, where mere listening or passive observation is not enough. Instead, learners are actively engaged, on their feet, involved in decision-making and thinking critically about the scenarios which they are part of. This active engagement is not just about physical movement but also involves cognitive and emotional engagement by embodying the knowledge being explored. The concept of embodied cognition plays a significant role here in that learning and cognition are not just cerebral processes but involve the engagement of the whole person, including all senses, feelings and actions. This holistic approach to learning in drama is what makes it distinct and effective. It encourages pupils to connect intellectually and emotionally with the material, making learning more meaningful and memorable (Davis, Fleming).

According to Fleming and O'Neill, the process of unfolding, which includes elements of improvisation and devising, is crucial in PCD. It is about allowing the drama to develop organically without a completely pre-scripted plan. This approach fosters creativity and spontaneity, enabling pupils to contribute to the direction and content of the drama. Improvisation is a part of this process because learners and sometimes facilitators respond in the moment to the developing narrative. Fleming and O'Neill highlighted the subtlety in differentiating between improvisation and devising. Improvisation is often spontaneous whereas devising includes planning and structuring, although not in a rigid sense. This approach to drama reflects a shift from traditional, teacher-led methods to more learner-centred, collaborative practices (Fleming, O'Neill). O'Neill further pointed out that this aligns with the significance of coherent and meaningful structure emphasised by Gavin Bolton (O'Neill). In addition, the importance of relevance to pupils' real-life experiences is one of the key factors in fostering active learning in PCD. Davis explained that this helps to build layers of meaning for participants' emotional and cognitive engagement and provides complexity for learners' perspectives. This reflective practice leads to increased self-awareness and insight, which are critical components of active learning (Davis).

The six interviewed specialists placed strong emphasis on the facilitator's role in guiding and facilitating PCD, which is central to active learning. Facilitators establish a safe and supportive learning environment and adapt the drama to accommodate diverse learning styles. (Davis, O'Neill). In addition, facilitators' ability to navigate the balance between fiction and reality is essential for ensuring that the learning remains relevant and impactful. Furthermore, facilitators need to capture and keep pupils' learning interests while maintaining the educational focus (Baldwin).

In summary, active learning in PCD is characterised by learners' engagement, embodied cognition and the essential role of the teacher in facilitating and guiding the learning process. Techniques such as improvisation and devising play a critical role in this form of drama, encouraging a collaborative and creative learning environment. These methods enable a flexible and dynamic approach to drama education, where the process of learning is as valued as the outcome.

In addition to analysing the importance of PCD as a combination of artistic form and educational purpose, these six specialists also shared insights on maximising the artistic and educational value of PCD. Age-specific and adaptive teaching was highlighted by

some of them (Baldwin, Davis, Wooster). Fleming pointed out the importance of integrating multiple dimensions into learning and emphasised finding a delicate balance between the different elements of both aspects of PCD. To achieve a meaningful, motivational and enjoyable learning experience in PCD sessions, the combination needs to include drama elements such as tension, role-play and dramatic structure while ensuring the educational objectives (Fleming). According to Baldwin, this employment of drama elements and PCD strategies needs a clear purpose to reduce the tendency for superficial understanding and mechanical implementation. She also suggested that the inclusion of PCD should be embedded in the curriculum and not just an extracurricular activity. This integration ensures that drama is accessible to all pupils as an essential component of an holistic education in the regular school day (Baldwin).

The insights from these six specialists highlighted the crucial role of the educators' facilitation skills in enhancing the educational and artistic value of PCD. These skills include deep understanding and skills in employing various components of drama, such as context, pretext, constraints, angles of connection, layers of meaning and symbolism (Davis). Additionally, it is crucial for the PCD facilitator to emphasise establishing connections between learners' existing experiences and the learning materials. This approach aids in adapting to learners' backgrounds and life situations, recognising their needs and responding to their challenges through responsive facilitation (Baldwin, Davis, Fleming, Neelands). Their responses illustrate the multi-faceted approach needed to maximise the value of PCD. It involves a blend of deep understanding of drama techniques, sensitivity to the group, broader teaching skills and the human qualities of the teacher. The success of PCD in education settings relies significantly on the facilitator's ability to create an engaging, meaningful and dynamic learning environment. This approach ensures that PCD remains a powerful educational tool, fostering deep engagement, creativity and learning (Davis).

3.3 Implementing PCD: challenges and evolution

3.3.1 Teacher educational traditions and practical challenges in PCD

The six specialists noted that there are some aspects of learning and development in PCD which are often underestimated. They pointed out that the educational benefits of PCD still have not been fully acknowledged by many people; in particular, some might view it as a merely improvisational and instinctive practice, missing the depth and range of learning which it can facilitate. Wooster pointed out that PCD might not be fully

understood as experiential and reflective learning rather than a direct infusion of factual information. This narrowed view of PCD limits the broader educational impact of PCD for learners, such as all-round development and life-long learning. According to Baldwin, these are challenges posed by educational systems which focus on assessment-driven learning which can constrain the way drama is facilitated and experienced. This limits the teaching time and resources allocated to teachers and teachers face pressure from fulfilling curriculum requirements and providing meaningful drama experiences (Baldwin). Individualised teaching based on learners' circumstances, as stated by Davis, is underestimated in PCD teaching. This involves adapting to the specific needs and abilities of each class or group, ensuring that all learners can benefit from and contribute to the drama process, regardless of their initial skill level (Davis). The six PCD specialists also spoke about further aspects which are not recognised enough, such as social skills, decision-making, empathy and well-being. In summary, the six interviewees' perspectives emphasised the underestimated aspects of personal growth, emotional expression and social participation in PCD classes. These elements are crucial for developing a deeper understanding of oneself and others, fostering a sense of community, and preparing learners to be thoughtful, engaged citizens. The discussion also underlines the need for drama education to be tailored to local contexts and integrated with the humanities, reflecting its unique role in fostering critical thinking and understanding complex social dynamics.

3.3.2 Teacher competencies for PCD

To support pupils' active learning in PCD sessions, drama teachers need a comprehensive set of skills and abilities which extend beyond mere knowledge. The six interviewees emphasised that understanding is key – not merely in terms of understanding the elements of drama but a deeper, more holistic understanding of PCD itself, encompassing its artistic form and educational value. This entails awareness of the history, the philosophical underpinnings and the pedagogical theories of PCD, as well as the key principles and facilitation skills which have shaped it over time. Wooster stressed the importance of guiding without leading and effective small-group facilitation. Teachers should guide learners towards discovery and understanding rather than dictating what they should learn. Wooster further stated that to achieve this experience of co-constructing knowledge, teachers' techniques involve asking probing questions, suggesting alternatives and encouraging learners to explore various viewpoints while avoiding imposing their own ideas (Wooster).

In addition, Davis and O'Neill emphasised background knowledge, self-education, practical experience and adaptive teaching. Primarily, they emphasised that understanding theories of psychology and personal development is crucial for drama teachers. This knowledge enables them to support the holistic development of learners through drama activities. Additionally, incorporating abstract concepts into drama teaching can enrich the learning experience, prompting pupils to think deeply about various aspects of life and art. In addition, O'Neill pointed out that due to the limited teacher training and lack of adequate opportunities to exchange ideas with peers, self-education is needed for facilitators to reflect on their practices and update their understanding throughout the different stages of their teaching. She also emphasised the importance of experimenting with drama techniques and activities for teachers at the beginner level, which can help teachers to build confidence and skill in guiding PCD. Davis and O'Neill also highlighted the complexity and challenges of catering to different learning needs in a classroom. This underscores the need for teachers to manage diverse classroom dynamics effectively and create inclusive and engaging learning environments.

The proficiency of questioning, the ability to capture and sustain learners' attention and the skill of designing structured and flexible participatory sessions were emphasised. According to Neelands, the ability to ask inspiring questions is a crucial aspect for facilitators. Effective questioning facilitates enquiry, deepens thinking and guides learners towards moments of discovery and understanding (Neelands). Baldwin emphasised the attentiveness and responsiveness of drama teachers' competence. She pointed out that drama teachers need to be highly attentive to what children are saying and doing, as well as keeping pupils interested in various learning activities. This acute observation helps in understanding pupils' responses, needs and levels of engagement. She also said that teachers need to be able to adapt their plans based on pupils' responses. This requires teachers to be able to design a structured session with flexibility to adjust based on pupils' engagement and circumstances (Baldwin).

In summary, the skills and abilities required for drama teachers to support active learning in PCD include a deep understanding of key principles and theoretical ideas, practical facilitation skills and the ability to engage learners physically, intellectually and emotionally. These qualities collectively enable drama teachers to create dynamic, responsive and enriching drama experiences which facilitate active and meaningful learning for learners.

3.4 PCD in the global context: focus on mainland China

3.4.1 Adaptation and potential of PCD in China's educational system

Regarding the state of drama education in China, some of the interviewed PCD specialists in the UK gave their views based on their direct experience of delivering PCD sessions in mainland China whilst others shared their observations based on working with UK-based Chinese learners during workshops and supervising UK-based Chinese international learners. Although not directly involved in drama education within China, the specialists were aware of the strong emphasis on testing and high-stakes examinations in the Chinese education system. However, alongside these traditional approaches, they noted a growing appetite for change, particularly in areas promoting creativity and critical thinking. This shift suggests a potential space for PCD to thrive.

Regarding the development of process-centred drama in China, Fleming felt that there might be less of a challenge compared with past experiences in other regions. This optimism is grounded in the belief that there is now a more mature understanding of PCD globally. Fleming suggested that the previous debate between drama and education, which was once a significant barrier, has been largely reconciled, potentially easing the integration of PCD into Chinese education contexts. Even so, Fleming cautioned against expecting a rapid and overwhelming adoption of PCD. Instead, he advocated a gradual and mature growth of PCD in China, acknowledging the complexities and nuances involved in integrating drama effectively. A slow and steady approach to embedding drama in educational practices is advised to avoid disappointment and resistance, which often accompany rapid changes (Fleming).

O'Neill also noticed the increasing global recognition of the potential benefits of PCD in many countries, such as Slovenia and Sweden. She observed, however, that drama might be valued more for its instrumental benefits in language acquisition than for its intrinsic artistic or educational merits. This narrow focus implies a utilitarian approach to PCD, potentially overlooking the broader benefits of personal and social development. These six UK specialists expressed concerns about what educators in different educational contexts perceive as a superficial or formulaic approach to PCD. This concern points to a potential misunderstanding or oversimplification of the PCD approach, where the depth and complexity of effective drama teaching might be underestimated.

Wooster emphasised the need for localising PCD ideas while acknowledging cultural

differences to avoid cultural imperialism. He pointed out that recognising that western approaches to PCD might not be universally applicable or appropriate is crucial. This puts practical requirements on PCD teachers, researchers and translators for bridging PCD theory and practice to local implementation. Individuals who are working with PCD should immerse themselves in and understand both cultural contexts in order to have a comprehensive understanding. In brief, although there are challenges, particularly in shifting traditional perceptions of product-oriented teaching and overcoming the limitations of a test-focused education system, there was a sense of optimism about the future of PCD in China. The key lies in gradual, thoughtful integration and adaptation, considering China's unique educational landscape and cultural context. This approach will likely foster a more robust and sustainable growth of drama education, ultimately enriching the educational experience for learners.

3.4.2 Challenges, opportunities, and suggestions for implementing PCD in China

Other than recognising the increasing interest in PCD from education authorities and educators, the six PCD specialists also pointed out several key challenges that need to be addressed for developing PCD in different contexts and specifically in mainland China. These challenges range from cultural and systemic hurdles to the intricacies of teaching approaches and philosophy, all of which play a crucial role in the successful implementation of PCD. One of the primary challenges which the six specialists identified was navigating cultural and educational systems in contexts where PCD is a new concept. This challenge involves understanding and adapting to the local educational landscape and cultural sensitivities, which is crucial for the effective integration of PCD into existing curricula. Teachers could face curriculum constraints when the objectives of PCD might not align seamlessly with the prescribed educational standards. Wooster further pointed out that due to the vast size of the nation and the huge population in China, the balance between universal educational goals and standards and regional differences based on educational resources needs to be considered during the implementation of PCD. These challenges need support based on resource availability, such as translated publications and relevant guides, support from experienced facilitators, recognition from parents and experience-sharing within the PCD communities (Wooster).

Similarly, Fleming noted that one significant hurdle is the availability of materials and resources in the local language. The need for PCD resources that are linguistically and culturally relevant is crucial for the successful implementation of PCD in non-English-

speaking countries. This requirement extends beyond mere translation; materials must be adapted to resonate with local cultural contexts and educational norms (Fleming). Davis emphasised that a significant challenge lies in the role of the drama teacher. He discussed the difficulty of incorporating drama into educational settings without adequate teacher training to equip them with a comprehensive understanding of drama elements, session design abilities and facilitation skills. This limits drama teachers from shifting their role from knowledge holders to knowledge co-constructors; it also limits educators from making full use of drama elements to connect pupils' experiences to learning materials to increase pupils' engagement (Davis). Neelands also emphasised the significance of empowering local practitioners to address the challenges; he suggested it could develop a strong base for educators to be proficient in facilitation. This promotes a sustainable model for PCD which is grounded in the local cultural and educational context. This further contributes to engagement with educational policy and curriculum development (Neelands). Baldwin suggested that conducting evidence-based practice and research and presenting results on multiple platforms is beneficial for promoting teachers' understanding and practices, as well as popularising the educational value of PCD in the broader educational community.

Promoting PCD in China effectively would involve developing a comprehensive framework focused on building competencies for drama teachers. This approach goes beyond the sporadic nature of one-off workshops and calls for a more structured, continuous educational pathway for educators in the field of drama (Fleming). Davis pointed out that in promoting PCD in China, teachers need to address common misconceptions about drama education, such as its perceived lack of academic rigour or purely recreational nature. Overcoming resource limitations and adapting to the realities of different classroom settings are practical challenges which require innovative solutions (Davis). The emphasis is on creating a systematised approach to training and professional development, ensuring that teachers are equipped not just with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills and a deep understanding of PCD. The implementation of such a framework would necessitate the development of comprehensive training courses, possibly spanning several months or even years, to allow for in-depth exploration of these competencies. Additionally, ongoing professional development opportunities, such as workshops, seminars and peer learning groups, would be crucial for supporting teachers as they apply these competencies in their classrooms (Baldwin, Davis).

In short, the insights from the six interviewed UK specialists shed light on the multi-

faceted challenges of introducing and developing PCD in different educational and cultural settings. Successfully overcoming these challenges requires a combination of deep understanding of the PCD principals, establishing sustainable teacher training, supporting resources and advocacy from educational authorities and policymakers, conducting practical research and presenting results. Teachers play a crucial role in this process, balancing educational objectives with artistic methods and managing systemic and cultural constraints. Their approach needs to be holistic, flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of learners in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. A set of competencies tailored specifically for drama teachers could serve as the foundation for this training. Such a competency framework would detail the knowledge and facilitation skills necessary for effectively teaching PCD. With well-trained educators, PCD can become a more integral and impactful part of the educational landscape in China.

3.4.3 Bridging Confucius's educational philosophies with PCD

The insights from these six specialists in relation to Confucian philosophy, particularly its emphasis on self-cultivation, internalised learning, active learning and all-round development, in the context of PCD, offer a thought-provoking perspective on the convergence of traditional eastern educational values with contemporary western teaching methods. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of how ancient philosophies can be relevant and beneficial in modern educational practices, especially in the field of drama education. The PCD specialists interviewed in the UK noted that Confucius's educational philosophy, which emphasises self-cultivation and the importance of internalising learning through the learner's own efforts, aligns remarkably well with the principles of PCD. This alignment challenges the stereotypical view of Chinese education as being predominantly authoritarian and teacher-centred, with learners seen as passive recipients of knowledge (Fleming). In PCD, the learner's active engagement is crucial. This form of drama education is not about passively receiving information; instead, it involves learners actively exploring, experimenting and engaging with the content.

Some of the interviewees stated that this active involvement is akin to Confucius's idea of self-cultivation in which learning is seen as a personal journey of growth and development, driven by the learner's initiative and effort (Fleming, Neelands, O'Neill, Wooster). Furthermore, O'Neill emphasised that internalising learning is crucial for meaningful learning. She explained Dewey's concept of an 'experience' which has depth

and reality, even if it is fictional. In PCD, experiences within the drama are crafted to be immersive and meaningful, providing depth and facilitating real learning. This depth in the drama experience helps learners to connect more authentically with the material, enhancing their understanding and engagement. She further emphasised another key component in common between Confucius's thinking and CPD: reflective learning leads to action. In PCD, reflection on the drama experience is a crucial step which precedes further action or learning. This reflective practice ensures that learners are not just active participants during the drama but also actively engage in thinking about their experiences and what they have learned from them (O'Neill).

In addition, Davis and Baldwin connected Confucius's self-cultivation with Vygotsky's ideas; he explained that in PCD, these two perspectives – internal effort and external influence – find a harmonious balance. The method requires learners to engage deeply with their roles, promoting introspection and personal growth, aligning with the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation. It simultaneously acknowledges the crucial role of social interaction and external feedback, as posited by Vygotsky, in fostering cognitive development. This interaction not only enriches the learning experience but also mirrors the complex dynamics of real-life social engagements. This exploration shows that learning is a dynamic and multi-layered process, involving not only the internalisation of knowledge and experiences, but also the interaction with and adaptation to external environments and perspectives (Davis, Baldwin).

Furthermore, Fleming placed emphasis on the relevance of Confucius's thought to PCD in its advocacy for an education which develops the all-round individual. He explained that Confucius believed in the importance of moral and ethical education as well as intellectual development. Similarly, PCD provides an holistic educational experience in which learners develop not just cognitive skills but also social, emotional and ethical competencies. This holistic development is crucial for nurturing all-round individuals, which is a key objective in both Confucian philosophy and PCD. Baldwin also appreciated Confucius's idea of all-round development. She stated that Confucius's teachings extend beyond mere academic knowledge, encompassing moral, ethical and social dimensions of development. PCD also supports all-round development. It not only focuses on cognitive skills but also promotes social, emotional and ethical learning, aligning with the holistic approach of Confucian philosophy (Baldwin).

In addition, Wooster noted that Confucius emphasised the role of the facilitator to guide,

inspire and provide opportunities for learners' exploration. Facilitators are not merely imparting knowledge but guiding through questioning so that learners can discover, experiment and learn through their own experiences (Wooster). Wooster also noted Confucius's focus on virtue and character development. He explained that even though PCD does not advocate didactic teaching or impart moral education directly, it needs instead to cultivate learners on moral aspects by exploring themes which promote values such as empathy, respect and integrity. Dramatic activities which involve resolving conflicts, understanding diverse perspectives and exploring ethical dilemmas can contribute to the cultivation of these virtues (Wooster).

In summary, Confucius's educational thoughts on self-cultivation and internalising learning through the learner's own efforts align closely with the principles of PCD. This alignment provides a culturally resonant framework for introducing and developing PCD in contexts influenced by Confucian philosophy, such as China. It suggests that such participatory and reflective educational approaches, despite contrasting with some stereotypes about Chinese education, could be well received and effective due to their compatibility with traditional learning philosophies.

To summarise the insights from the interviews with these six specialists in the UK, their valuable perspectives encompassed the historical developments and pedagogical principles of PCD, the relationship between drama and education, the competence of PCD facilitators and their observations and suggestions on promoting PCD in China. PCD, deeply rooted in progressive educational philosophies, represents a paradigm shift from traditional learning models to a more dynamic, interactive approach. This approach, inspired by thinkers such as Rousseau and Piaget, emphasises active learner participation and autonomy, challenging the conventional, passive models of education. Historically, drama in education has evolved from being product-oriented, focusing primarily on performances, to adopting a process-centred methodology which values the journey of creative exploration as much as the final product.

Central to the effectiveness of PCD is the competency and training of teachers. Effective drama education demands instructors who not only have a thorough understanding of the art form but are also skilled in pedagogical techniques. This requirement extends beyond mere knowledge of drama history and theatrical skills; it encompasses the ability to facilitate drama in a way which is adaptable to various educational settings and responsive to the needs of learners. A competency-based framework for teacher training could

significantly enhance the quality and impact of drama education, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of this dynamic field.

The adaptation of PCD in different cultural contexts, in particular China, presents unique challenges. It requires a sensitive balance between respecting traditional educational practices and introducing innovative, interactive teaching methods. Adapting to prevailing educational attitudes and cultural norms is crucial for the successful implementation of drama education. This adaptation is not straightforward and demands careful consideration of the local educational landscape.

Looking to the future, the potential for drama education to evolve and expand is influenced by a variety of factors, including educational policies, cultural attitudes and a global trend towards inclusivity and openness. With the growing acceptance of diverse learning methodologies and a shift towards more holistic educational experiences, the future of drama education in China seems promising. In particular, its alignment with Confucian educational philosophy emphasises self-cultivation and active learning, as well as multiple demands in the NCR. This suggests that PCD could seamlessly integrate into educational systems influenced by these values, enriching learners' educational experiences.

PCD offers a comprehensive and holistic approach to education. It fosters learners' engagement, encourages creative expression and supports personal development. Its success in educational systems around the world hinges on understanding cultural contexts, effective teacher training and a commitment to balancing traditional educational methods with innovative approaches. As education continues to evolve globally, PCD stands poised to play a pivotal role in shaping future learning experiences and bridging traditional educational values with modern, interactive teaching methods.

In the next chapter, I shall present a data analysis of the responses in the interviews with the ten Chinese educators with varied experiences of the current status of PCD practices in the Chinese educational context. The semi-structured interviews elicited knowledge gained from their teaching experiences, reflecting existing challenges in the field of PCD practices and their envisioned opportunities for the future.

Chapter 4

Implementing PCD in the Chinese educational setting: Chinese drama teachers' perspectives

This chapter presents the outcomes of the data analysis that was carried out on the responses from the interviews undertaken with Chinese drama facilitators. The interviewees were ten Chinese drama facilitators, some of whom had substantial experience in the field of TiE and DiE, spanning periods from one to fifteen years. Some had less experience or were currently working as state schoolteachers but had recognised PCD as a valuable approach by actively engaging with it and applying it in their school subject teaching. The facilitators who were interviewed were based in various cities across China, including Beijing, Fujian, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Changzhou, Jiangxi and Ganjiang. Currently, the Chinese education system does not have full-time positions for drama teachers. Instead, this responsibility is typically fulfilled on a part-time basis by teachers who specialise in subjects such as Chinese or English language and grammar or music. Drama lessons are commonly taught by people who are hired separately as external drama facilitators (Huang, Xu & Chen, 2009; Fu & Yao, 2020). Information about the ten Chinese teachers is:

Teacher 1: Shanghai; a leading figure in China on introducing PCD practice and teacher training.

Teacher 2: Beijing; had extensive experience of PCD teaching, TiE directing and teacher training.

Teacher 3: Fujian; had extensive experience of PCD teaching and teacher training.

Teacher 4: Beijing; an experienced PCD session designer for kindergarten and primary schools.

Teacher 5: Hangzhou; had integrated PCD into psychology education.

Teacher 6: Shanghai; a retired teacher who had used PCD to explore Chinese language and literature teaching.

Teacher 7: Changzhou; a state schoolteacher who had introduced PCD into Chinese subject teaching.

Teacher 8: Beijing; a school drama club administrator and Chinese subject teacher.

Teacher 9: Shanghai; a school drama club administrator with relatively little experience of PCD.

Teacher 10: Ganjiang; had one year experience of using PCD in English teaching.

Three of the ten facilitators were based in Beijing and had extensive experience of collaborating with international institutions and receiving specialists' guidance from theatre professionals. Teacher 2 was translator for one of the most fundamental publications by Davis (2014) entitled *Imagining the Real Towards a New Theory of Drama in Education*. He also edited the *Toolkit for TiE and DiE* (见学教育性戏剧与剧场工具书, *Jianxue Jiaoyuxing Xiju Yu Juchang Gongjushu*) series in Chinese. Teachers 2 and 3 had actively participated in multiple conferences such as those run by the International Drama Education Association (IDEA). They had also demonstrated a strong commitment to organising master classes for participants at different levels in many places around the country, for example, Sichuan Province, Dalian and Qingdao. Teacher 8 worked in a secondary school specialising in drama located in the Haidian district of Beijing, which benefits from sufficient resources and support from education and theatre specialists as well as theatres.

Three of the ten facilitators were based in Shanghai. Teachers 6 and 9 were both employed in state secondary schools and showed a strong interest in using PCD in their teaching. This came from how they had found the benefits of PCD on learners, such as helping them to deepen their understanding of learning materials and making pupils more confident through the engagement of PCD. This encouraged them to find more available resources to improve their practices. Consequently, this experience had motivated them to incorporate PCD into their own pedagogical practice, resulting in positive feedback from both pupils and parents.

Three of the ten facilitators were based in Jiangsu province. Teacher 1, who had previously worked in the Shanghai Theatre Academy, has dedicated her efforts to promoting PCD on a national scale. Her experience included conducting master classes and implementing long-term teacher training programmes in various provinces and cities, for instance, Jiangsu, Yunnan, Jiangxi and Xinjiang. She had established a foundation for a three-year international knowledge exchange between Shanghai Theatre Academy and Bergen University in Norway, which greatly assisted the acquisition of PCD approaches among

numerous undergraduate and research pupils. The three-year collaboration programme additionally contributed to the development of PCD practice in mainland China by conducting demonstration sessions and delivering lectures at various universities and institutions. Teacher 6 had retired as a Chinese language and grammar teacher from a state secondary school. She had participated in teachers 1 and 2's workshops many times. Through the implementation of PCD in her teaching practice, she had witnessed a notable improvement in the pupils' comprehension of ancient Chinese essays and poetry in the textbook. Teacher 9 was an educator specialising in secondary-level English language and grammar as a teacher in a state school in Minhang district, Shanghai. He was primarily in charge of the pupils' drama club and assisted them in adapting stories for improvisation in order to foster their creativity and problem-solving abilities.

One of the teachers was based in Jiangxi province in a city classified as tier 4, which indicates that it has a relatively low amount of educational resources and support. She was an English language and grammar teacher in a state primary school. She had used a PCD approach in order to support the development of English language proficiency among pupils, specifically in their oral communication skills.

One facilitator was from Hong Kong but was currently based on the mainland to provide teacher training in several cities, such as Shanghai, Jiangsu and Qingdao. Additionally, he offered teacher training programmes in rural areas, such as some low-income towns in Yunnan province.

The rationale for selecting these ten facilitators for this study was made on the basis of their substantial experience of using PCD in their professional practice. Their experience provided crucial insights into the transformative journey of educators as they shift from a product-oriented teaching approach to embracing PCD within both the school system and extracurricular institutions across various educational levels. Their insightful reflection offered an opportunity to engage in a discussion regarding the evolution of PCD in mainland China, as well as to investigate the prospects for its future.

4.1 Investigating Chinese facilitators' evolving perceptions of PCD

4.1.1 Current levels of experience and engagement with PCD of Chinese drama teachers

In China, relatively few people are familiar with using drama in educational settings; traditionally, drama education has centred on teaching basic acting techniques. Some

practitioners and drama teachers in China are gradually developing a deeper understanding of PCD and contribute to a growing acknowledgement of this unique art form as an interactive educational approach that diverges from the conventional understanding of using drama in education, which still heavily emphasises performing-based skill learning and purely aesthetic components. Practitioners gain a better understanding of PCD after joining PCD workshops. PCD places human actions at the heart of society's activity. It is a feature of theatre, an artform which lies at the nexus of the person and society.

Seven of the ten facilitators who participated in the interviews stated that they had first learned about PCD from a conference workshop or a specialist, which had had a significant impact on how they understood this novel approach to teaching and learning. As Teacher 1 noted:

August Boal's workshop at the second IDEA Conference in Australia in 1994 amazed me, and I realised the enormous potential of PCD in the Chinese exam-oriented education context. Boal's workshop served as a means of engagement rather than a 'finished' product. Boal led the workshop as a writer, director, actor, facilitator and host. Most crucially, he is both a facilitator and a spectator, providing a framework without any specific predetermined notions of direction, yet he must be incredibly flexible and tactful in facilitating. (Teacher 1)²

Teacher 1 was afterwards offered a three-year (1996-1998) systematic summer school study opportunity at Birmingham City University's International Centre for Studies in DiE. Subsequently, Teacher 1 took this new approach of interactive teaching back to mainland China. Five of the teachers (Teachers 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) who were interviewed had been given an introduction to the concept of PCD after participating in either short-term or long-term workshop training conducted by Teacher 1 in various cities, for instance, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing. As Teacher 6 noted:

² In Chinese: 1994 年在澳大利亚举行的第二届 IDEA 大会上, August Boal 的工作坊让我感到惊讶, 我意识到教育戏剧在中国应试教育背景下的巨大潜力。Boal 的工作坊是一种参与的方式, 而不是完成的产品。Boal 以作家、导演、演员、主持人和主持人的身份领导了这个工作坊。最重要的是, 他既是一个促进者, 也是一个旁观者, 提供了一个框架, 没有任何特定的预先确定的方向, 但必须要非常灵活和机智地引导。

The workshop led by Teacher 1 in Shenzhen gave me a sense of drama's infinite potential for pupils' creativity. The session prompted me to think about the importance of reversing the tendency of actor training in the primary education system, which is suitable for elite acting institutions. Every child should have the opportunity to benefit from arts education during the period of compulsory education, with one of its aims being to stimulate children's interest in the arts and to make the learning material more engaging and enjoyable for the pupils. I was motivated to incorporate drama elements into my teaching of Chinese literature after participating in the short-term workshop. Then I investigated using PCD in contextualised teaching. For example, the approach of teacher-in-role and role-play that I employed in teaching the ancient Chinese essay 'The Small Tarn West of the Knoll' (*Xiao Shi Tan Ji*, 小石潭记), is particularly helpful to pupils in comprehending both the substance of the essay and the interior changes occurring within the main characters. (Teacher 6)³

Teacher 8 was a Chinese language and grammar teacher in a Beijing state school located in the Haidian district. This school is known for having one of Beijing's elite specialist drama troupes (*Jinfan Huaju Tuan*, 金帆话剧团), which works in collaboration with Beijing People's Arts Theatre to present an annual production at a theatre. Teacher 8 had attended the seventh IDEA conference, which was held in Hong Kong, where she realised the importance of and the possibility for using PCD in elementary education.

Apart from the seven teachers discussed above, three interviewees (Teachers 2, 3 and 8) stated that they had begun to study and comprehend PCD in their work. Teacher 2 was employed at an extra-curricular institution which is independent from the state sector and after working with Chris Cooper, former artistic director of Big Brum TiE company, was fascinated by the interactive mode of PCD. Teacher 2 observed:

Cooper demonstrated an interactive model in PCD. This model is distinct from the typical understanding of theatre experience, which can be viewed as 'being observed and being responded to'. From the perspective of the participants, PCD

³ In Chinese: 由教师 1 在深圳带领的工作坊让我感受到戏剧对学生创造力的无限潜力。这段对话促使我思考, 扭转小学教育体系中演员培训的趋势有多么重要, 因为小学教育体系适合精英的表演机构。在义务教育期间, 每个孩子都应该有机会受益于艺术教育, 其目的之一是激发孩子们对艺术的兴趣, 使学习的课本对学生更有吸引力和乐趣。在参加了短期工作坊后, 我有了将戏剧元素融入中国文学教学的动力。然后, 我研究了在情境化教学中使用以过程为中心的戏剧。例如, 我在教授中国古代作文《小石潭记》时采用的角色教师和角色扮演的方法, 对学生理解文章的内容和主要人物的内心变化特别有帮助。

causes a shift in how the educational paradigm is used, which ultimately results in transformation of power. (Teacher 2)⁴

Teacher 3 had graduated as an actor in 1999 and began his career as an educator in the following year when he was engaged by the Hong Kong Children's Musical Theatre. He taught English to children aged five and six at summer camp and developed a combination of drama and English teaching. When devising a semester lesson plan using drama to supplement an English course at a secondary school, he gradually began looking for a type of classroom instruction which was engaging and empowering for the learners. Teacher 10, who taught English at a public elementary school, also used drama as a teaching tool for English. She had started to think about the possibility of employing strategies from dramatic storytelling to improve children's comprehension of the essays in their textbooks.

The examples given above describe the initial stages of these drama educators' experience in the field of PCD. Either they had become aware of the educational potential of PCD through observing or participating in workshops, or they had gradually researched the method during the beginning of their careers as drama teachers.

4.1.2 Supports and obstacles for deepening teachers' understanding of PCD

After putting in some time and effort, those interviewees who taught theatre were able to garner support from a variety of sources while also overcoming a large number of challenges. Teacher 1 spoke about the following means of support which helped to foster the development of views and practices of PCD:

- Publishing introductory papers in a variety of academic journals with the purpose of popularising the concept of PCD and illustrating international practices.
- Inviting well-known international specialists to offer demonstration sessions or workshops at Shanghai Theatre Academy, such as David Davis, Stig A. Eriksson and Julie Dunn.
- Establishing the Drama Rainbow Education Centre as a site for drama teacher training, the expansion of existing theoretical frameworks, the translation of

⁴ In Chinese: Chris Cooper 演示了一个以过程为中心的戏剧的互动模式。这种模式不同于对戏剧体验的典型理解，它可以被视为被观察和被回应。从参与者的角度来看，以过程为中心的戏剧导致了如何使用教育范式的转变，最终导致了权力的转变。

international key publications in the field of PCD and the development of potential future teachers of drama.

- Establishing a DiE major at Shanghai Theatre Academy. Working together with universities, primary schools and secondary schools on a training scheme for teachers. For instance, the primary school programme at Minhang primary school included weekly professional development for teachers, which helped them in integrating drama across a variety of subjects and, as a final step, the development of a school textbook for PCD within five years.
- Exchange graduate students with Bergen University in order to cultivate future teachers in Shanghai Theatre Academy's DiE major.

In addition, other interviewees talked about the various types of support which they had received as shown in Figure 4-1, including specialists' guidance, NCR policy recommendations, further training support and financial funding. The significance of receiving guidance from specialists in the field was acknowledged by all ten interviewees. Teachers 2 and 4 both recognised the significant impact that international collaboration had had.

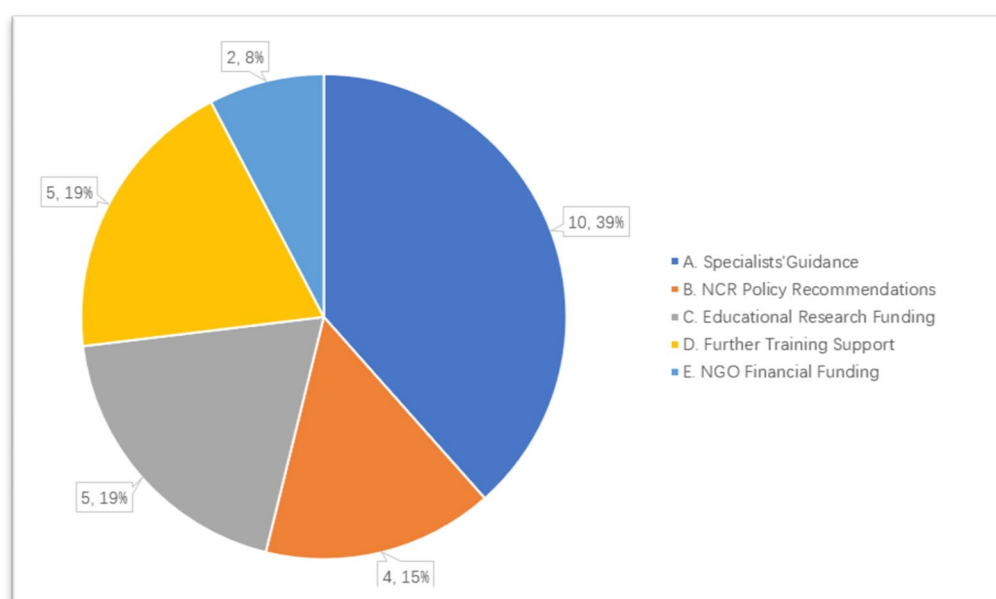


Figure 4-1 The support received by the ten Chinese drama teachers in this study

Teacher 2 described the support which he had received:

Not only did the collaboration with Big Brum TiE company and the specialists from the various countries lay the groundwork for our exploration, but it also had a direct

impact on the practice at the Drama Rainbow Education Centre. (Teacher 2)⁵

Teacher 4 explained the significance of the National Conference on Drama and Education Application which she had been responsible for organising. This conference offers substantial professional support to education practitioners and school leaders across the whole nation through a series of workshops and demonstration sessions.

The remaining teachers (Teachers 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) who were working in public schools had all participated in the Drama Rainbow Education Centre's teacher training programmes. For instance, they had all attended a workshop conducted by Teacher 1. In addition, Teachers 7 and 9 talked about their long-term training courses with Teacher 1 from elementary to advanced level. Teachers 5 and 6 also said that they had participated several times in PCD summer school courses at the Drama Rainbow Education Centre.

Five teachers (Teachers 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9) said that the funding from education authorities had greatly helped them in implementing a new approach to PCD. This financial support included the costs of professional guidance from experts, travel expenses, master-class fees and financial investments in professional theatres and equipment.

Only two of the teachers mentioned the support offered by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Teacher 1 described funding designed to eliminate poverty in education in a variety of disadvantaged regions, such as Qingpu County in Shanghai. Teacher 3 noted that the public service promotion programme assisted teachers in underdeveloped areas to comprehend the new approach to teaching. Teacher 3 was the only interviewee who talked about an adequate teaching team offering considerable support for devising drama sessions for different age groups. In contrast to this expanding financial support and specialists' guidance for PCD from a variety of sources, there were also many challenges and obstacles which had been encountered, as Figure 4-2 shows:

⁵ In Chinese: 与 Big Brum 公司和各国专家的合作不仅为抓马宝贝教育体验中心的探索奠定了基础, 而且对我们的实践产生了直接影响。

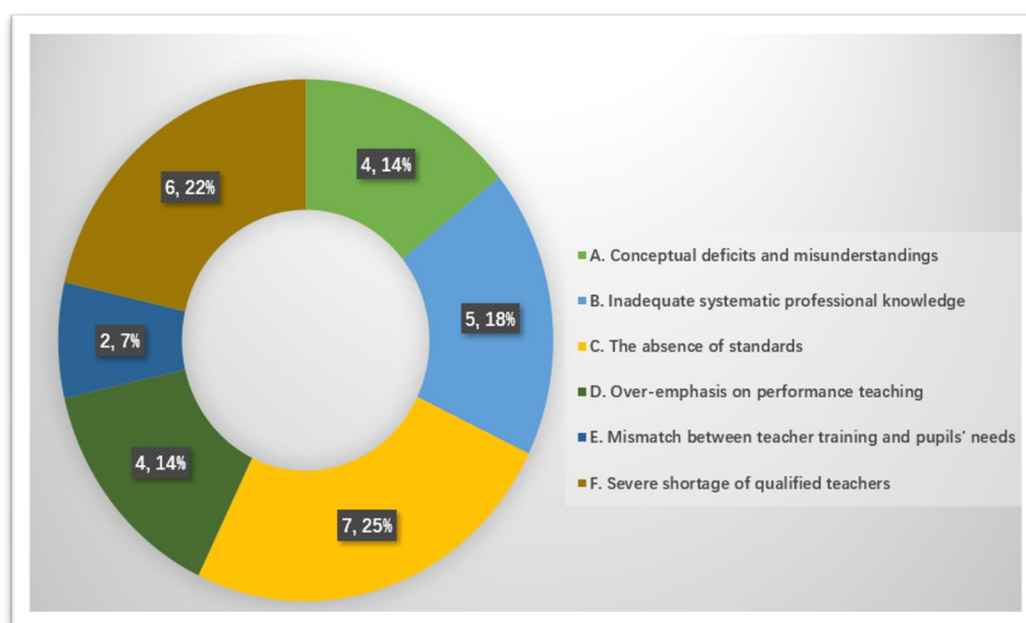


Figure 4-2 The challenges and obstacles for Chinese drama teachers

According to the ten Chinese interviewees, the main obstacles to the development of PCD were conceptual deficiencies and misunderstandings. Four teachers (Teachers 1, 3, 4, and 5) referred directly to the six major challenges in their experience as shown in Table 4-2.

Nevertheless, among the interviewees there existed a range of viewpoints regarding the utilisation and purpose of PCD in the education context as a means of supporting pupils' learning. Even though the Central Theatre Academy and Shanghai Theatre Academy offered a major in drama education, it was notable that neither of these two leading institutions had actively promoted the significance of PCD. In Teacher 1's words:

The conventional theatre academies fail to comprehend and they outrightly reject the PCD framework. Some influential educators from leading Theatre Academies, for instance, disagree with the concept of PCD on the grounds that it is more closely related to education than it is to theatre arts. As a result, one such educator states that PCD should not be taught in a theatre academy. But at the same time, he promotes Drama Etudes, which merely mimic classical theatrical plays which are condensed into a forty-minute mini-performance. These Drama Etudes completely misrecognise the capabilities of pupils and disrespect their imagination and creativity. In addition, the same educator has written a number of papers that are critical of PCD. These publications have had a detrimental impact on the general public's and pupils' understanding of PCD.

Furthermore, he disallowed pupils who were majoring in theatre-in-education to choose topics of relevance to the field for their final four-year BA course projects. (Teacher 1)⁶

As well as this resistance from the professional Academy sector, a further key obstacle with which the Chinese educators had to contend was inadequate systematic professional knowledge. As Teacher 2 noted:

In order for PCD to be well-received in mainland China, it is essential that a set of localised language terms be contextualised into Chinese culture and its educational situation. This should not only comprise the explanation and translation of relevant terminology, but also essential and fundamental knowledge that does not have a structured introduction; rather we can access only fragments of general summaries of their practices or theory that is not structured for a holistic understanding in any particular way. (Teacher 2)⁷

Due to the limited number of Chinese translations of key publications or research papers, there were some interviewees who were open about the fact that when they had first started their careers, they had to repeat what they had learned in master classes or training sessions. Teacher 8 said:

In the realm of PCD, there are relatively few essential publications translated into Chinese, so I am aware that I need to study theory in order to assist pupils in gaining knowledge through this participatory new method. Unfortunately, I do not have access to relevant reading materials, so the only way for me to comprehend the method is by experimenting with what I've learned in workshops led by specialists. This is a process of making mistakes and then discovering teaching techniques that are effective for my pupils. For instance, in my classes on Chinese language and literature, I used PCD methods. The pupils were able

⁶ In Chinese: 传统的戏剧学院未能理解并直接拒绝以过程为中心的戏剧框架。例如，来自主流戏剧学院的一些有影响力的教育家不同意以过程为中心的戏剧概念，理由是它与教育的关系比与戏剧艺术的关系更密切。因此，一位教授指出，戏剧学院不应该教授以过程为中心的戏剧。但与此同时，他推广戏剧示范剧，这只是模仿经典戏剧，浓缩成 40 分钟的迷你表演。这些教育示范剧完全误解了学生的能力，不尊重他们的想象力和创造力。此外，这位专家还写了一些论文，批评以过程为中心的教育戏剧。这些出版物对公众和研究学生对教育戏剧的理解产生了不利影响。有人甚至不允许戏剧教育专业的学生在他们最后四年的文学学士课程项目中选择与该领域相关的主题。

⁷ In Chinese: 为了让教育戏剧在中国大陆受到欢迎，一套符合中国文化和教育环境的本地化语言和术语是至关重要的。这不仅包括对相关术语的解释和翻译，还包括必要的和基本的知识，这些知识没有结构化的介绍，而我们只能参看他们的实践或理论的概述总结的片段，而不是以任何特定的方式进行整体理解。

to read the entire book *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and participated in in-depth discussions on it in a variety of ways. (Teacher 8)⁸

An overwhelming emphasis placed on performance training for children was one of the greatest barriers standing in the way of the development of PCD. Teachers 3 and 5 summed up the trend of training acting skills as a concession to the demands of the education business market and utilitarianism in order to persuade parents to pay more for the service.

The majority of the interviewees (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8) were aware of the urgent demand for entry requirements for qualified drama teachers for different age groups, a reliable national drama curriculum scheme, a drama teachers' association for the training and development of future educators and a textbook for PCD as a subject. Teacher 2 pointed out that the concept of PCD as a discipline or pedagogy had not yet been developed and that the majority of educators, as well as educational policy makers, had not yet recognised the great value of this teaching method. In addition to this view, the use of formative evaluation in China's education system has yet to achieve its full potential. The Chinese MoE needs to establish a department of arts education and a drama teachers' association in order to facilitate the development of PCD on practice and theory in the country. In Teacher 7's words:

Although professional drama institutions might be involved in the field of PCD, they are not familiar with the fundamental educational theories, and the education sector ought to be the one to direct the educational goals of integrating PCD into curricula. The establishment of drama teachers' associations and PCD teaching research groups should result in the preparation of curricula for various age groups, which can then be disseminated to schools. These curricula might then be implemented by individual schools. (Teacher 7)⁹

⁸ In Chinese: 在教育戏剧领域，翻译成中文的重要出版物相对较少；因此，我意识到我需要学习理论，以帮助学生通过这种参与式的新方法获得知识。不幸的是，我没有相关的阅读材料，所以我理解这个方法的唯一方法是用我在专家主持的工作坊上学到的东西进行实验。这是一个不断试错的过程，然后发现对我的学生有效的教学技巧。由于我没有接触到可能有用的阅读材料，我理解这个方法的唯一方法就是通过实验。例如，在我的中国语言文学课上，我使用了教育戏剧的方法。学生们能够完整地阅读《海底两万里》这本书，并以各种方式参与深入的讨论。

⁹ In Chinese: 虽然专业戏剧机构可能会涉足教育戏剧领域，但他们并不熟悉基本的教育理论，教育戏剧课程的教育目标应该由教育部门来引导。应通过成立戏剧教师协会和教育戏剧的教学研究小组，为不同年龄组编制课程，然后向学校推广。这些课程随后可由各学校实施。

Overall, PCD is prospering and expanding, with an increasing number of international experts travelling to China to deliver keynote addresses at conferences, conduct master classes or collaborate with institutions to promote research projects and teacher training programmes. This is a positive sign for the development of PCD. Even so, there is a significant knowledge and context gap between international specialists' workshops and the practical needs of Chinese teachers. On the other hand, the specialists from other countries are not familiar with the Chinese education system and the overall framework of its arts curriculum. Because of this, it is difficult for their extensive and elaborate workshops to directly fulfil the needs of beginning-level teachers in terms of different pupil age groups and the various teaching areas for which they are responsible. Teacher 8 noted:

I took part in a variety of trainings that were offered by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education and the Haidian District Institute of Education Sciences. These trainings covered research-oriented themes, hands-on workshops and lecture-style presentations. They featured things like physical theatre, communication and expression, amongst other things, but the problem was obvious: the issues discussed in the sessions were not systematic nor related to one another. The sessions did not indicate a tendency towards in-service training for topic teaching and education policy, which is an issue in addition to the shortage of professional teachers and the absence of a trend towards in-service training for subject teaching and education policy. All of these problems highlight the fact that the existing, fragmented training does not come close to satisfying the demands of both teachers and pupils to engage with a dramatic text from a number of vantage points. (Teacher 8)¹⁰

The majority of the interviewees (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9) affirmed that the concept of PCD has gradually progressed in terms of conceptual acceptance and was gradually making its way into schools. However, one of the urgent issues was that there is a severe shortage of qualified facilitators in the field. As Teacher 2 noted:

The initial climax period of Drama Rainbow's teacher training was during 2014-

¹⁰ In Chinese: 我参加了北京市教委和海淀区教育科学研究所举办的各种培训。这些培训涵盖了以研究为导向的主题、实践工作坊和讲座。培训内容包括肢体剧、沟通和表达等，但问题显而易见：培训中讨论的问题既不系统，也互不关联。这些会议没有显示出专题教学和教育政策在职培训的趋势，这是除了专业教师短缺和专题教学和教育政策相关培训和继续教育缺乏之外的一个问题。所有这些问题都凸显了一个事实，即现有的零散培训无法满足教师和学生从多个视角参与戏剧文本的要求。

2015, with the majority of the participants consisting of extracurricular educators or independent education organisations' teachers. Then we began teacher training and drama course integration in state schools, and the barriers to working within the educational system became increasingly apparent. To embrace the Double Reduction policy (*Shuang Jian*, 双减) published in July 2021, which requires reducing pupils' excessive burden of homework and extra-curricular education in compulsory education, will inevitably involve the incorporation of more and more extracurricular activities into the school system to assist pupils' learning. As a result, there is an imperative need for qualified teachers of PCD. However, there are currently very few capable facilitators to teach drama in state schools compared to the huge demand of the policy. Then there could be a certification for drama teachers in the future, but who could issue such a certification? In addition, how should the capability of drama teachers be evaluated? (Teacher 2)¹¹

As shown by these ten teachers, there is notable increasing recognition of PCD from educational authorities and from the teachers' community. However, challenges exist at the same time, including non-localised international experience, unstructured teacher training and no standardised PCD professionals.

4.2 Addressing pupils' varied needs through implementing PCD in China

4.2.1 Exploring the integration of PCD into teaching practices to assist learners

The ten interviewees had engaged in the utilisation of PCD in their professional practice. Notably, two of them possessed extensive expertise in international collaboration, having engaged with TiE professionals from various nations and TiE companies for a period of approximately fifteen years. Following his research into the integration of drama with English language and grammar instruction in Hong Kong, Teacher 3 had accumulated almost a decade of experience of teaching PCD in mainland China. The Hong Kong educational authority's six-year strategy on incorporating drama into school curricula (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2017) had provided support for his work when it was first

¹¹ In Chinese: 2014-2015 年是抓马宝贝教师培训的初始高潮期, 大部分学员都是课外教育工作者或独立教育机构的教师。随后, 我们开始了公立学校的师资培训和戏剧课程整合, 在教育体制内开展工作的障碍日益显现。2021 年 7 月公布的“双减”政策要求在义务教育阶段减轻学生过重的家庭作业和课外教育负担, 这势必涉及将越来越多的课外活动纳入学校系统, 以帮助学生。因此, 迫切需要合格的教育戏剧教育工作者。然而, 与该政策的巨大需求相比, 目前有能力在公立学校教授戏剧的引导者却寥寥无几。那么, 将来可以对戏剧教师进行认证, 但谁能颁发这样的证书呢? 此外, 又如何评估戏剧教师的素养?

proposed.

Teacher 4 was dedicated to implementing PCD within the framework of early years education, primarily focusing on the kindergarten and lower primary school levels. In addition, she had organised the National Conference on Drama and Education Application (全国戏剧与教育应用大会, *Quanguo Xiju Yu Jiaoyu Yingyong Dahui*) in 2016. The purpose of that conference was to create a forum for discussion on the application of PCD within the Chinese education setting. Teacher 5 had been actively involved in PCD seminars and workshops held at both the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Drama Rainbow Education Centre in Beijing since 2015. Additionally, Teacher 5 had obtained a master's degree in Applied Theatre at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. At the time of the interview, she was located in Nanjing, where she was integrating PCD with her interest in psychology.

The teachers who had one to five years of experience demonstrated a lower degree of skill and understanding when adopting PCD in comparison with their colleagues who had five to fifteen years of experience. Even so, they all demonstrated a commendable level of enthusiasm and inquisitiveness as they endeavoured to probe more deeply into the concept of PCD and apply it to their classrooms. This demonstrates the benefit of experience, which points to a need for more opportunities for teachers to exchange their experiences and get more feedback, as discussed in the previous section with regard to the obstacles which teachers are facing.

Most of the teachers in the interviews said that they used conventional techniques often in their practice. Notably, some of them said they tried to be alert themselves not to use PCD in a superficial way, and they recommended the need to be adaptable and flexible in regard to learning materials and learners' interest. Figure 4-3 shows a comprehensive representation of the predominant instructional approach employed by the interviewees. As Table 4-3 shows, it is obvious that a considerable majority of the teachers, Teachers 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, showed a notable awareness of avoiding the superficial use of drama conventions which neglect pupils' interest and experience.

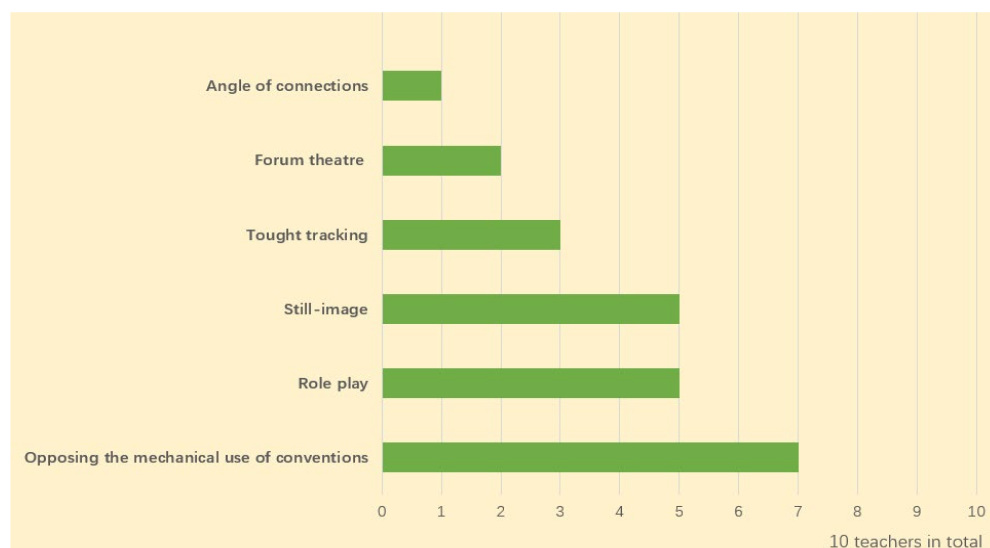


Figure 4-3 The PCD methods which the ten interviewed drama educators frequently used in their practice

Teacher 8 showed a commendable understanding of a range of conventions and effectively showed how the dynamic use of conventions depends on various learning tasks and material. She said:

The most frequently used conventions in my teaching include still-image, conscience alley, chain story, drawing task and devising. However, the impact of group size and learning tasks varies. For instance, use of still-image can be quite beneficial for facilitating collective participation, particularly among large groups or the entire class. Participating in still-image activities has been found to have a positive impact on pupils' ability to move beyond the constraints of a given context and enhance their comprehension of various situations. The utilisation of the concept of a conscience alley proves to be highly advantageous in facilitating a comprehensive exploration of specific narratives or roles inside a given story. Furthermore, the use of a chain story activity fosters the development of collaborative thinking among pupils. Moreover, the process of drawing offers advantages in the analysis of personalities and the development of a comprehensive individual through collaborative efforts within a group. The integration of conventions into instructional materials and learning tasks is essential, as these elements are inherently interrelated. (Teacher 8)¹²

¹² In Chinese: 我采用了各种范式，其中最常用的是定格画面、良心巷、故事链、图画和即兴。不过，小组规模和学习任务的影响各不相同。例如，利用定格画面可以促进集体参与，特别是在大一点的小组或整个班级

A number of significant considerations were prioritised by the majority of the teachers. These considerations included factors such as the target pupils' age group, as emphasised by Teachers 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9. In addition, Teachers 4, 7 and 8 emphasised the significance of specific learning circumstances and Teachers 4, 7, 8 and 9 stressed the importance of learning objectives in diverse disciplines.

Teacher 3 considered these conventions to be valuable in combination rather than relying solely on a few of them. He said:

The objective of encouraging young people to cultivate a mind and voice of autonomy, or we can call it active learning, should be the driving force in the order in which conventions are held. After going through this process, pupils show that they are capable of showing interest in the educational material, and subsequently they establish their ownership of it. After that, the pupils are prompted to take an active role in the discussion. Pupils are given the opportunity to increase their capacity to comprehend and interact with knowledge in a three-dimensional manner by participating in a variety of conventions and activities. These opportunities allow learners to obtain many perspectives on a specific role or story. This is an essential opportunity for developing pupils' engagement in in-depth thinking and reflection on particular areas of the educational process. (Teacher 3)¹³

This also showed that the teachers were well-trained and confident with the toolkit which they could use. Engaging in the learning material will benefit pupils better on active learning in order to establish a sense of ownership, which is lacking in the usual classroom settings and teaching in the Chinese educational context.

Teacher 5 advocated similar ideas:

I make use of a range of conventions, each of which is designed to effectively accomplish a different purpose in the context of a particular task, with the goal

中。参与定格画面活动对学生超越特定情境限制的能力和提高了对各种情境的理解能力有积极影响。事实证明，利用良心巷这一范式，对于全面探索特定故事中的特定叙事或角色非常有利。此外，利用故事链活动还能培养学生的协作思维。此外，图画过程在分析个性和通过小组内的合作培养综合个体方面也具有优势。在教学材料和学习任务中融入常规是至关重要的，因为这些要素本身就相互关联。

¹³ In Chinese: 鼓励青少年培养自主意识和自主发言权的目标，或者我们也可以称之为主动学习，应该是使用范式的驱动力。在经历了这一过程之后，学生们就会显示出他们对教材的兴趣，进而确立他们对知识的主人翁地位。在此之后，学生们会在讨论中发挥积极作用。通过参与各种范式和活动，学生有机会以立体的方式提高理解知识和与知识互动的能力。通过这些机会，学生可以从多个角度了解特定的角色或故事。这是培养学生参与深入思考和反思教育过程中特定方面的关键机会。

of making learners' exploratory experiences smoother. Pupils have a need for support in enquiry, particularly within the framework of the Chinese education system, which makes insufficient use of dialogical questions as a method of instruction. This deficit limits learners' critical thinking abilities and their capacity to respond from several perspectives. The utilisation of dialogical enquiry in education settings encourages children to actively interact with the learning material, resulting in more feedback and heightened engagement. As a consequence, this approach fosters a more dynamic classroom environment characterised by a greater diversity of voices. (Teacher 5)¹⁴

Five interviewees (Teachers 1, 3, 8, 9 and 10) recognised the need for incorporating role-play activity in their teaching practices. Teacher 1 asserted that the use of role-play facilitates a prompt and effective immersion of pupils into a given circumstance. Teacher 10 also believed that the use of role-play can boost learners' motivation throughout the process of learning by enabling them to reflect on a variety of points of view. Participating in activities which involve role-play can also foster the development of learners' resilience. During an observation of Teacher 9's drama session, Teacher 1 provided Teacher 9 with feedback, primarily regarding Teacher 9's excessive use of conventions. Teacher 9 said:

During the previous instruction sessions which I had led, I placed heavy emphasis on conventions without giving sufficient consideration to the intellectual and emotional requirements of my pupils. As a direct consequence of this, I have corrected a misunderstanding that I had concerning the application of conventions. My primary focus now is on creating a variety of dramatic situations that provide pupils with the opportunity to internalise the roles' circumstances and comprehend the means by which they can effectively convey their feelings and thoughts. I avoid putting too much focus on performance when I'm working with my pupils, and instead I prioritise assisting them in enactment, experiencing and expressing complex situations and emotions. Learners are protected in this way by establishing a psychological distance between their

¹⁴ In Chinese: 我使用了一系列的范式, 每种方法都是为了在特定任务的背景下有效实现不同的目的, 最终目的是让学习者更顺利地获得探索体验。学生在探究过程中需要支持, 尤其是在中国的教育体系框架内, 对话式提问作为一种教学方法是使用的不够的。这种不足限制了学习者的批判性思维能力和从多个角度做出反应的能力。在教育环境中使用对话式探究, 可以鼓励儿童积极与学习材料互动, 从而获得更多反馈, 提高参与度。因此, 这种方法营造了一个更有活力的课堂环境, 其特点是内容更加多样化。

personal experiences and the projection of their genuine concerns in the real world. When compared to depending solely on conventional methods, the employment of role-play can be seen as having a number of major advantages. (Teacher 9)¹⁵

Only Teacher 2 placed greater emphasis on the significance of the ‘angle of connection’ rather than discussing any conventions. He adhered to the principles set out by Gavin Bolton and David Davis. These principles underline the necessity of developing the connection between the learning material, the real-life experience of learners and the reality of the world. In his words:

On the one hand, my practice has been influenced by a number of pioneers in the field of Theatre-in-Education. On the other hand, I substantially integrate theatre elements into my work. The selection of material is influenced by two primary factors: the existence of dramatic tension and the extent to which the participants' experiences are connected to their everyday lives. Considerable resources are allocated towards the concept of ‘angle of connection’ which refers to the specific social site that learners are actively engaged in, as well as the topic that drives their desire to explore problems visible in society. This prompted us to consider a particular kind of content that enables participants to recognise this internal connection to society through a specific exercise. This phenomenon is only capable of occurring as a result of the participants actively immersing themselves in the activity. From an alternative perspective, regardless of the manner in which one establishes a connection between the present situation and the material, it is important to acknowledge that the material in question is a work of fiction and thus lends itself to analysis within the realm of drama. This suggests that it is necessary to include dramatic components, features such as tension, constraints and conflict. When you integrate drama and theatre with education, the convention of warm-up games is not the most significant thing since it is essential to maintain the nature of theatre within this context. (Teacher 2)¹⁶

¹⁵ In Chinese: 在以前的教学过程中,我过于强调范式,而没有充分考虑学生在智力和情感方面的要求。因此,我纠正了自己在运用常规方面的误解。现在,我把主要精力放在创造各种戏剧情境上,让学生有机会将角色所处的环境内化,并理解他们可以有效表达自己情感和思想的方式。在与学生合作时,我避免过于注重表演,而是优先帮助他们演绎、体验和表达复杂的情境和情感。通过这种方式,在学生的个人经历和他们在现实世界中的真实关切之间建立起心理距离,从而保护学生。与单纯依赖传统方法相比,采用角色扮演法有以下几大优势。

¹⁶ In Chinese: 一方面,我的实践受到戏剧教育领域许多先驱的影响。另一方面,我在工作中大量融入了戏剧

Maintaining the integrity of drama is a key point not often discussed by teachers and easily ignored by many practitioners; it involves using drama elements such as tension, narrative, roles and conflict together instead of merely using lines or characters. This will be explored in the next section which includes a discussion of competencies for qualified drama teachers.

4.2.2 Benefits of teachers' PCD practices in educational settings

According to the observations discussed above, it is evident that the ten teachers, with experience levels ranging from one to fifteen years, suggested a substantial degree of knowledge of Dorothy Heathcote's 36 conventions. This is the case despite the teachers' different levels of experience. That said, it is important to point out that the majority of the interviewees had also recognised the need to develop the application of these conventions to specific learning contexts, age groups and objectives for learning. This is something which should be taken into consideration, as the comments and responses from the teachers showed. From their own individual viewpoints, all of them recognised the significance of engaging in role-play and employing critical thinking. There was a high degree of agreement about the key benefits of PCD in education as the word-cloud in Table 4-4 shows. Through a process of content analysis using NVivo software, it also includes words from individual contributions:

元素。素材的选择主要受两个因素的影响：戏剧张力的存在和参与者的经历与日常生活的关联程度。我们强调关联的角度这一概念，这一概念指的是学员积极参与的特定社会场所，以及促使他们渴望探索社会中可见问题的主题。这促使我们考虑一种特殊的内容，使学员能够通过特定的练习认识到这种与社会的内在联系。这种现象只有在参与者积极沉浸于活动中时才会出现。从另一个角度来看，无论我们以何种方式建立当下现实与材料之间的联系，重要的是要承认有关材料是一部虚构作品，因此适合在戏剧领域进行分析。这表明有必要加入戏剧成分，如紧张、制约和冲突等特征。



Figure 4-4 The effects of implementing PCD with pupils

Figure 4-4 is a visual representation of the opinions expressed by the ten interviewees regarding the impact of PCD on pupils' active learning and all-round cultivation. The interviewees offered diverse and in-depth responses based on their own professional experiences. Teacher 1 elaborated on the significance of small-group discussion, which is not commonly seen in Chinese classrooms due to their high number of pupils of around 40 individuals. PCD can be used not just as a tool for the acquisition of knowledge but also as a method for the creative process in its own right.

Teacher 2 – the most experienced of the interviewees – talked extensively about two aspects not emphasised by others: first, pupils taking ownership through the use of fiction, and second, pupils' active engagement in a meaning-driven learning process. He commented:

In the current educational system, the acquisition of factual knowledge is given a prominent priority, with very little possibility for imaginative thought, particularly in the earlier years of study. Nevertheless, once pupils reach the primary school level of their education during the phase of basic education, the principal focus of their attention switches to the acquisition and development of knowledge based on factual information. Without a shadow of a doubt, having access to factual knowledge is of the utmost importance. On the other hand, it is

important to point out that the vast amount of fact-based learning can present substantial difficulty for pupils, leading to feelings of being suffocated and overwhelmed. On the other hand, pupils are able to effortlessly gain knowledge based on facts through fiction and are responsible for their own education. In contrast to the more abstract nature of music, the realm of imaginary theatre possesses qualities that are both universal and specific at the same time.

Furthermore, participating in PCD also includes a type of learning which is meaning-based and is characterised by the process of factual knowledge being internalised through the process of making sense of material which is fictitious. In our contemporary education system, meaning-driven learning is not utilised appropriately as much as it should be. However, the use of drama gives pupils the opportunity to actively participate in the process of problem-solving by enabling them to take on different personas and engage in actions which result in predetermined consequences. This approach guarantees that factual information is tied to practical application and situations that actually occur in the real world. Participants actively participate in a sequence of activities targeted at constructing meaning, which facilitates their personal investment in the process of meaning-making. Meaning-driven learning offers an invaluable vehicle for cooperative learning because of the active participation of participants in these activities. Not only does the process of cooperative learning take place between peers, it also takes place between instructors and pupils. (Teacher 2)¹⁷

This highlights that drama which is close to learners' life experiences is an alternative to the predominant fact-based learning in most schools as it enables learners to explore knowledge in an imaginative situation, which captures and maintains their learning

¹⁷ In Chinese: 在现行的教育体制中, 获取事实性知识被放在了首要位置, 很少有可能进行想象性的思考, 尤其是在早年的学习阶段。然而, 一旦学生在基础教育阶段进入小学阶段, 他们的主要注意力就会转向以事实信息为基础的知识的获取和发展。毫无疑问, 获取事实性知识至关重要。另一方面, 必须指出的是, 过多的基于事实的学习会给学生带来很大的困难, 导致他们感到窒息和不知所措。另一方面, 学生可以通过虚构毫不费力地获得基于事实的知识, 并对掌握自己的主动学习。与音乐的抽象性相比, 想象的戏剧领域同时具有普遍性和特殊性。

此外, 参与教育戏剧还包括一种以意义为基础的学习, 其特点是通过理解虚构材料的过程来内化事实知识。在我们当代的教育体系中, 意义驱动型学习并没有得到应有的充分利用。然而, 戏剧的使用使学生有机会积极参与解决问题的过程, 使他们能够扮演不同的角色, 并参与导致预定后果的行动。这种方法保证了事实信息与实际应用和现实世界中实际发生的情况相联系。参与者积极参与一系列旨在建构意义的活动, 这有助于他们在意义建构过程中加强个人参与。由于参与者积极参与这些活动, 意义驱动学习为合作学习提供了宝贵的载体。合作学习的过程不仅发生在同伴之间, 也发生在教师和学生之间。

interest through an engagement in a story and enquiry for meaning-making. This is further discussed in Chapter 6 where I shall present a case study of Big Brum's participatory workshop.

Similarly, Teacher 7 discussed the constraints associated with incorporating drama as a direct instructional approach into fact-based knowledge teaching, such as in the subjects of mathematics and science, which primarily rely on the delivery of fact-based knowledge. In contrast, she stated that PCD provides a significant benefit to the humanity subjects, especially in the context of storytelling and narrative. In addition, she commented that role-play is a valuable tool for pupils to engage with story-telling subjects and gain a deeper understanding by exploring a variety of perspectives.

Four interviewees, Teachers 3, 4, 6 and 10, offered insights on the impact of PCD on the development of key competences such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration, often known as the '4Cs'. There was general agreement amongst the teachers that people in the twenty-first century require particular abilities in order to function successfully in society. Teacher 3 emphasised the significance of analytical reasoning in the process of cultivating a person's capacity for lifelong learning. In addition, he stated that participating in PCD is an enjoyable educational experience for pupils since it places an emphasis on both teaching and learning with regard to the future. A similar point of view was held by Teacher 4 with regard to the beneficial effects that PCD had on pupils' growth of the 4Cs. According to Teacher 4:

I had a conversation with a professor from the Chinese Academy of Science regarding the distinctive contributions of PCD in comparison to other disciplines within the arts. The key aspect of the process of engaging with drama pupils is the establishment and experience of ethics and values. Through accessing knowledge in a creative and critical way, learners undergo a cognitive transformation. It is widely recognised that drama has the potential to enhance pupils' 4Cs. However, at its core, the process of using theatre in education enables pupils to engage with their humanity and emotions through storytelling. During the instructional process, learners are encouraged to make decisions independently based on a range of scenarios, then observing and analysing the diverse outcomes. The interaction has become engrained in the cognitive processes of children, prompting them to introspect and contemplate their potential responses in the event of comparable circumstances in the future. The

utilisation of PCD enables pupils to enhance their cognitive abilities by actively interacting in diverse narrative scenarios. This intervention facilitates the growth of pupils' character, self-awareness and capacity for accepting others. If the concept of PCD were to encompass a comprehensive cycle of pedagogy, it would represent a more holistic developmental journey, commencing with self-awareness, progressing towards empathy for others, and ultimately culminating in a heightened concern for the environment and society at large. Following the completion of this phase of circle-based instruction, pupils have the opportunity to assume personal responsibility, navigate complicated emotions, and demonstrate empathy and a sense of accountability. As a result, this will significantly impact learners' perspectives on life and their values. (Teacher 4)¹⁸

This shows that PCD provides a distinctive method of education by prioritising morals, values and cognitive development through the creative process. It cultivates the development of the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity) in pupils and encourages empathy and self-awareness. The engagement of learners in PCD is a comprehensive process of development, beginning with self-awareness and advancing towards empathy and an increased concern for society and others. The use of this approach has a substantial influence on learners' view on life and the values they hold, providing them with an effective tool for fostering holistic character development and promoting moral learning in education.

4.3 Reflecting on the gap between NCR policies and PCD practices from Chinese teachers' perspectives

4.3.1 Teachers' responses to the inclusion of PCD in the NCR

The incorporation of PCD into the *Compulsory education curriculum scheme and curriculum standards* (2022) in April 2022, which will be referred to as *Standards* (2022) for brevity in the following discussion, marks a significant achievement which had raised enthusiasm among the interviewees. Figure 3-5 shows the perspectives of the ten Chinese educators regarding the significance of PCD being included in the *Standards* (2022) for

¹⁸ In Chinese: 我曾与中国科学院的一位教授进行过交谈，探讨与艺术领域的其他学科相比，教育戏剧的独特价值。在与戏剧学生接触的过程中，关键的一点是建立和体验道德和价值观。通过以创造性和批判性的方式获取知识，学习者经历了认知转变。人们普遍认为，戏剧具有提高学生 4C 能力（批判性思维、沟通、协作和创造力）的潜力。然而，在教育过程中使用戏剧的核心是让学生通过讲故事接触人性和情感。在教学过程中，鼓励学习者根据一系列情景独立做出决定，然后观察和分析不同的结果。这种互动在儿童的认知过程中根深蒂固，促使他们反省和思考自己在未来遇到类似情况时可能做出的反应。

the first time. Figure 4-5 shows that an overwhelming majority of the participants – nine of the ten teachers – expressed a highly positive view of this substantial transformation. On the other hand, regarding the application of PCD in the context of Chinese education, five interviewees held a view which was more critical than the other five. In addition, the utilitarian leanings of the proposition of PCD were criticised by four participants. Only one of the ten teachers was unaware of the modification to the policy on PCD which had just been implemented. This teacher's focus had mostly been on policy changes related to the English discipline in the NCR.

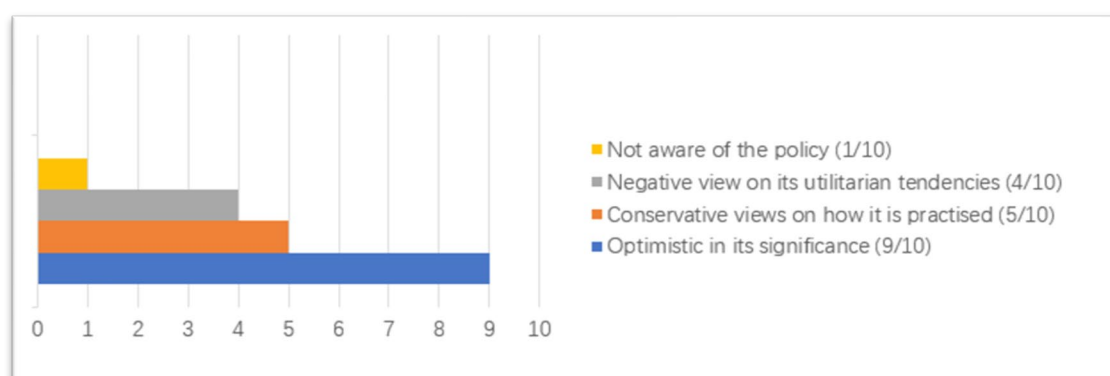


Figure 4-5 The ten Chinese teachers' perspectives on the significance of PCD being included in *Standards* (2022)

The majority of the ten teachers (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) expressed a sense of optimism regarding the significant shift taking place in the NCR. This modification refers to the inclusion of PCD in the *Standards* (2022), marking the early phase of its integration. Teacher 1, being a major influential figure in the promotion of PCD in China, conveyed great satisfaction and enthusiasm on receiving this positive update. Teacher 1 said:

This is a significant advance, as I have been advocating the implementation of PCD for two decades, and it has now gained approval from educational authorities. This acceptance might be equivalent to obtaining a PASS card, although it is imperative to secure national recognition in order to foster the expansion and progress of PCD. (Teacher 1)¹⁹

¹⁹ In Chinese 这已经是向前迈进了一大步，我已经推广教育戏剧 20 年了，现在终于得到了官方的认可，就像拿到了通行证一样，但要发展教育戏剧还需要国家的认可。

Her statement shows that she considered the major change to the NCR policy as a critical turning point in the progress of PCD from the 1990s to the present. This acknowledgment of the value of PCD by educational authorities has the possibility to affect policymakers and educators working with pupils over a wide range of age groups. It is also anticipated that this recognition will contribute to the continued advance of PCD at a speed greater than previous efforts. For instance, the educational authorities at various levels might conduct a series of symposiums to discuss and explore the theoretical framework and practical implementation of PCD throughout the Chinese education system.

Several interviewees shared the same viewpoint regarding the need for acknowledgement of the value of PCD in education settings by education authorities. Teacher 2 said:

The inclusion of PCD in the policy provides methodological assurances for drama teachers instructing eighth and ninth grade pupils. Moreover, it signifies that individuals who are participating in both curricular and extracurricular activities will become aware of this new instructional approach. This policy modification presents an opportunity for educators to enhance their knowledge and implementation of PCD. (Teacher 2)²⁰

When it comes to expanding the development of PCD, one of the most important factors to take into consideration is the perspective of the teacher. In addition, it is essential to create an environment in which PCD can be actively implemented, as doing so could accelerate the development of effective ways of integrating PCD into teaching and learning practices.

Teachers 4, 5 and 6 also emphasised the significance of this policy change from the standpoint of the field of PCD as well as the wider realm of education. A tendency towards a process-centred approach was indicated by the existence of a number of unusual terms within the policy paper, which caused Teacher 5 to express astonishment. Teacher 6 believed that PCD has substantial value in terms of supporting pupils' active learning. The usual teaching style in school, which is primarily dependent on teacher-centred instruction based on textbooks due to extreme low teacher:learner ratios and the exam-oriented evaluation system, is intended to be transformed into an instructional style which is more learner-centred using a PCD approach. According to Teacher 4:

²⁰ In Chinese: 它为八、九年级戏剧教师提供了方法保障,更重要的是,它提到越来越多的课内外人员将注意到新的教学方法,这一政策变化将为教育工作者提供一个学习和更新他们对教育戏剧的理解和实践的机会。

The aforementioned alteration in policy regarding arts education is indicative of a paradigm shift in the educational focus, specifically towards the enhancement of holistic competency. In recent years, there has been a notable change in the approach to examinations, particularly over the past two years. Because of this trend, a higher emphasis has been placed on quality-based evaluation, as opposed to depending exclusively on mechanical memories and marks. The focus has shifted towards cultivating a deeper comprehension of content and developing diverse thought patterns within pupils. (Teacher 4)²¹

The preceding comments show the initial impact of the NCR on the education system, characterised by a tendency towards process-centred education in both teaching and evaluation strategies. There have been welcome developments, but much remains to be done. Especially so since because of the vast population of China, this shift still needs a long time to be perceived and achieved across the nation. In addition, education authorities have acknowledged the value of PCD and it is possible to make efforts to promote the significance of PCD within the Chinese education system.

Teacher 7, an experienced practitioner at a state school, asserted with confidence that the recent policy change signifies the recognition of the significance and worth of PCD by education authorities. She stated:

My work proves that it is compatible with the arts education policy and even ahead of the policy. It is gratifying to note that my efforts are close to the standards outlined in the policy, thereby providing a solid foundation for my practice. (Teacher 7)²²

We can draw the following inference from this teacher's experience: not only has the application of PCD in Chinese language instruction and enquiry into essays in textbooks been successful from the point of view of the pupils' learning, it has also additionally received support from the education authority's policy. The drama curriculum needs to modify and expand its PCD section with a particular emphasis on the importance of the facilitator's role in PCD activities instead of perpetuating the view that it is learner-led activities as mentioned in *Standards* (2022).

²¹ In Chinese: 艺术教育的这一政策变化体现了教育导向的转变, 即综合能力的提高。就像这两年考试的转变, 强调以素质为本的评价, 不是机械的记忆和分数, 而是对事件的深入理解和多元思考。

²² In Chinese: 我的实践是超前于课标的, 可以和课标相互印证的, 可以说很亲近, 我的实践在课标上都找到了依据。

Nine of the ten educators discussed the relation between the policy change and its impact on their methods of instruction. They expressed a favourable perspective on the considerable transition in the *Standards* (2022). In addition, it was noticed by half of the interviewees (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7) that it is essential to take into account how the ways that PCD is practised in the Chinese education system will affect the direction that PCD's development will take in mainland China. According to Teacher 1:

The current situation is characterised by a lack of optimism because there are a large number of unresolved concerns that require additional consideration. Among these concerns are the comprehension of PCD in educational settings. In addition, what procedures are involved in establishing a PCD curriculum which is appropriate for pupils from elementary school through to upper secondary school? The issue at hand is one that practitioners in the field of PCD should take very seriously because of its substantial importance. (Teacher 1)²³

This observation highlights the absence of a consensus on the definition of drama in education and theatre in education within the field of PCD for teachers in mainland China. As a result of this lack of clarity, instructors' comprehension of these approaches and their ability to successfully implement them in their classrooms are limited. As a consequence, it is of the utmost importance to build a common understanding of these principles as this is a core component for future in-service training and development.

Teacher 2 identified a key aspect in the *Standards* (2022):

The instructional content which is provided in the latest document is identical to that which was presented in past versions, and it encompasses the three domains of appreciation, creation and performance. The only entirely novel component of the fourth task is the devising of dramatic activities. However, it should be underlined that there is an inaccuracy in the procedure since PCD activities should be conducted by facilitators instead of by pupils. This aspect needs to be emphasised. (Teacher 2)²⁴

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of policy development regarding drama education

²³ In Chinese: 但是一点都不乐观的是目前还有很多问题,例如如何认识这个教育戏剧和教育剧场。小学到高中这个阶段的这个课程怎么设计?这对我们来说是个非常重要的任务。

²⁴ In Chinese: 其中前三个和以前一样 关于课本戏剧赏析, 戏曲等, 只有第四个目标是新的, 但不, 不应该是学生带领的, 应该是引导者带领。

in mainland China, highlighting the latest revisions in drama education as delineated in the *Standards* (2022). These improvements involve the integration of educational materials which are appropriate for various ages ranges:

- Years 1 and 2: Pupils are expected to engage in imitation and performance.
- Years 3 to 7: The pupils' drama course encompasses textbook-based performance and drama games/activities.
- Years 8 and 9: Pupils participate in a variety of activities, including the presentation of theatrical productions, the composing of scripts and performing story, the reflection on their thoughts after watching a performance and devising dramatic activities.

According to *Standards* (2022), in order for learners to effectively engage in devising dramatic activities, they are required to have a comprehension of the theoretical knowledge related to PCD. It also involves their capacity to devise and organise dramatised learning activities in the classroom, drawing inspiration from sample sessions. Participating in creative activities for courses in language, history or moral education, for instance is encouraged. Additionally, pupils are expected to participate in thematic dramatic practices in particular circumstances. For example, they will be expected to plan and conduct performances and events based on the topic of 'food conservation' within the cafeterias of their respective schools. The learners would not be able to complete these learning tasks independently as they would require guidance from an experienced facilitator well-versed in PCD and capable of integrating it into the curriculum.

Teacher 3 looked at the essential features of arts instruction, highlighting its pivotal role in facilitating all-round development. Achieving this goal requires a thoughtful consideration of the methods employed. Teacher 3 anticipated the introduction and establishment of PCD concepts and approaches to unfold gradually over the next two decades. This observation carries significant weight, particularly as Hong Kong has allocated a timeline of thirty to fifty years for PCD implementation. It is important to note that mainland China, with its vast regions and numerous schools across different levels, raises extra complexities which could potentially prolong the duration of this process. Teacher 7 also stated that there are still enormous strides to be made in the development of PCD in mainland China; in her words:

It would be reasonable to consider the incorporation of PCD into the *Standards* (2022) as a milestone in the development of PCD; nonetheless, there is still a

considerable distance ahead in terms of the practical significance and widespread application of PCD. There is still a demand for coordinated efforts with regard to practitioners. PCD, on the other hand, is only included in the Arts Curriculum at the moment, and it has very little to do with the other disciplines. The primary issues are whether or not art educators understand it, as well as whether or not the educators are able to incorporate the PCD into the teaching and learning that takes place across subject areas. (Teacher 7)²⁵

The ten interviewees prioritised all-round development as their main emphasis while implementing PCD in their practice. In addition, they critically evaluated the practical aspects of the *Standards* (2022) on PCD, identifying aspects which might require modifications in the future. Concerning the implementation of PCD in the NCR framework, the teachers held a critical/negative view. Four of them (Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 9) expressed a negative perspective towards the utilitarian tendencies of particular extracurricular training organisations and companies, particularly in relation to the training of young actors. This tendency has already had negative consequences for a number of teachers, pupils and parents. For instance, Golden Thrush Drama Awards (金画眉奖, *Jin Huamei Jiang*) they that highly focus on performing skills. Teacher 9 noted:

The importance of policymakers' recognition and appreciation of PCD is significant. At the same time, it is imperative to prevent quantitative criteria from misleading the practice of PCD, specifically in relation to examination formats and certification processes. In addition to this, it is essential to remain alert in regard to the practical and adverse consequences. (Teacher 9)²⁶

Teacher 3 also expressed worries about the present state of PCD:

As a result of the lack of a fully functioning PCD system, I have serious worries regarding the orientation of the current practice. The majority of training materials and textbooks on the market for education and training adhere to a business-oriented model, which is lacking in the idea of all-round development.

²⁵ In Chinese: 将教育戏剧纳入《新课标》(2022 年版)可以说是教育戏剧发展进程里程碑式的变化,但就其实际意义和大规模实践而言,真正落地还很漫长,还需要从业人员的共同努力。然而,目前教育戏剧只被列入了艺术课标,与其他学科关系不大。问题的关键在于艺术教师是否理解,会不会将教育戏剧融进跨学科教学。

²⁶ In Chinese: 教育戏剧得到决策者的注意和重视意义重大,但同时必须避免它的量化标准变成急功近利的阻碍,如那些考试和认证形式。还要警惕非常功利和负面的结果。

(Teacher 3)²⁷

Only one of the teachers, Teacher 10, claimed that she had not noticed any remarkable impact of the *Standards* (2022) on the aspect of drama education. This was despite her role as a teacher of English language and grammar, in addition to her participation in a variety of symposiums aimed at English instruction. In addition, she also stated that Ganzhou is a third-tier city in Jiangxi province, which is comparatively less developed than other cities with a more substantial academic and practical basis. Even so, she held an optimistic view of the future of teacher training in PCD.

Following the release of *Standards* (2022), there has been an increase in discussions of articles and relevant introductory events related to the analysis and interpretation of the most recent policy on arts education in Chinese schools. The ten educators who took part in this research were asked to share their thoughts on the implications of the latest policy in the NCR, as well as their own classroom practices. In order to get a sense of the kinds of training network available, I also invited them to discuss the training sessions and symposiums which they had attended in order to improve their comprehension of the policy papers and facilitate critical reflection on how they instruct pupils. I also asked them to talk about their aspirations for engaging in future projects and programmes associated with the application of PCD in the field, in order to gain an understanding of the kinds of need that the education field presents.

The visualisation in Figure 4-6 shows an overview and summary of the findings from the ten interviews, which are structured into a discussion of mutual influences between PCD and NCR, relevant conferences and symposiums to offer training, and a section on further thoughts which capture existing needs and visions for the field.

²⁷ In Chinese: 我很担心目前还没有形成一个成熟的教育戏剧体系，容易走偏出错。比如，培训教育市场上的很多教材或教科书，实际上都是按照商业化的培训模式，缺乏“全面发展”的理念。

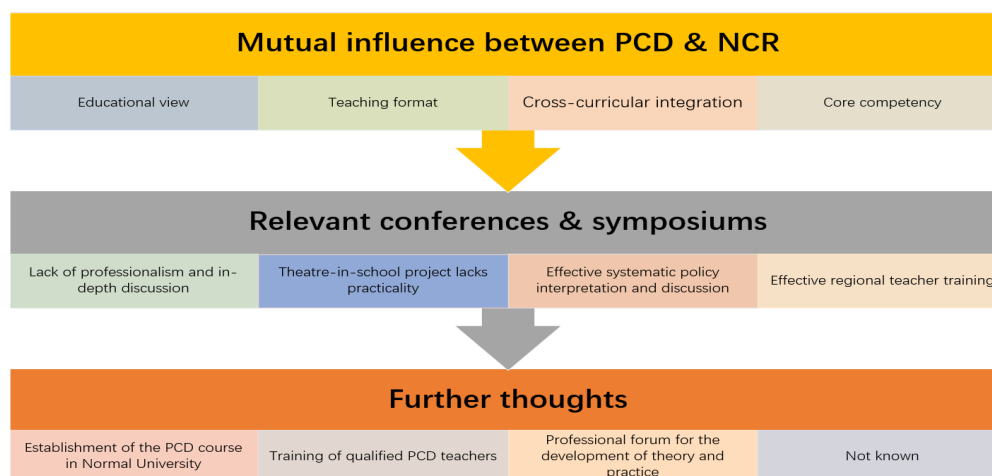


Figure 4-6 Chinese teachers' views on the changes affecting PCD in the NCR and their relevant experience

As Figure 4-6 shows, the majority of the teachers interviewed (nine of the ten) perceived a positive impact of PCD on NCR. Specifically, Teachers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 identified a reciprocal relationship between PCD and NCR, emphasising that the influence is not unidirectional from NCR to PCD practice. The educational view has shifted from being teacher-centred to learner-centred, as observed by Teachers 1 and 6. This change brought the inclusion of alternative teaching formats, as suggested by Teachers 2, 6 and 9, particularly in the areas of assessment systems, teaching methods and the updating of knowledge systems. Additionally, Teachers 3 and 4 emphasised the importance of cross-curricular integration, which serves as a connection point between different subjects. Subsequently, Teachers 4 and 7 highlighted the contribution of these changes to the development of core literacies. According to Teacher 1:

The outdated educational approach in mainland China has consistently failed to prioritise pupils as the central focus of learning. Educators expressed concerns on the potential lack of clarity in instruction and the effective dissemination of knowledge to pupils. However, the implementation of a passive receptive educational approach, along with the emphasis on examinations, leads to a mechanical memorisation process among pupils, resulting in limited opportunities for pupils to engage in their own creative endeavours. The current state of education fails to adequately foster critical thinking and imagination, both of which are crucial skills which should be nurtured from a young age. In this regard, the implementation of a programme such as PCD should be

considered as an effective approach to address this issue. When pupils independently undertake tasks, there is an immediate transformation in the classroom environment, fostering autonomous engagement with educational content through various activities. In my opinion, the implementation of PCD represents a significant and positive contribution to the ongoing efforts in school reform. (Teacher 1)²⁸

Teacher 1 placed an emphasis on the significant role that PCD plays in shifting the educational view by prioritising the learner at the centre of education, a dimension that was absent in the conventional Chinese method of instructing and cultivating pupils. She additionally drew attention to the deficiencies of ongoing conferences and seminars on PCD and NCR, which encompass a shortage of comprehensive professional dialogues and outdated educational principles. Teacher 3 similarly highlighted the importance of incorporating PCD into the *Standards* (2022), recognising that it would contribute to the validity of PCD in light of the fact that it is already included in the most recent policy. However, *Standards* (2022) failed to explicitly state the demand for PCD to serve as an interdisciplinary link, in Teacher 3's view.

Teacher 2 stressed the evolution of the educational objective, which had transitioned from a focus on providing basic education to a focus on providing quality education for all children. Additionally, the concept of all-round education was introduced and incorporated across different levels of education. Furthermore, it is evident that there is increasing diversity in the educational objectives, approaches and orientations in China, which are gradually aligning with global trends and emphasising the development of a robust educational system for the nation. The incorporation of arts education and all-round education is not a novel notion within education policy. However, its official proposal and implementation in the Chinese education system have been hindered in the past by various issues, such as the slow development of the economy, the lack of international experience and educational resources in different regions, and teachers not having sufficient teaching experience. By enhancing these two dimensions within the NCR, it becomes evident that educational standards have undergone positive

²⁸ In Chinese: 说到把学生视为学习的主体，以前的教学方法始终没能把学生真正做成主体。因为老师是生怕讲的不清楚学生没有学会不停地在灌输知识。但是这种被动接受型的教育，再加上考试使得学生机械地背诵，如此而言让学生自己发挥的创造性的部分很少。我们的教育也不提倡批判性思维，想象力，但是这些都是要从小培养的，那么戏剧是最好的承担了这个。孩子自己去做，他就这个课堂马上就翻转了，孩子自己就在里头活动了。所以我觉得教育戏剧是对我们的教育改革，其实是有很大的作用。现在的问题就是我们的真正懂得会去做的教师不够。

developments and the rate of reform is expected to gain momentum in the coming decades. One potential method for addressing urgent issues and facilitating meaningful transformation is through the medium of PCD.

A negative perception towards the PCD and NCR seminars and symposiums was held by half of the Chinese interviewees (Teachers 1, 3, 4, 6 and 10). According to the perspective of Teacher 6, although there were initiatives known as 'drama into schools' (戏剧进校园, *Xiju Jin Xiaoyuan*) which had involved the participation of pupils from Shanghai Theatre Academy to conduct drama sessions, these sessions had mostly emphasised theatrical exercises and practice, rather than effectively incorporating PCD content. Teacher 1 said:

The current issue is a shortage of educators who possess the requisite expertise in this field. Furthermore, there is currently a lack of comprehensive scholarly discourse around PCD. For example, a music and aesthetic education policy interpretation was conducted by Beijing Normal University. This seminar brought attention to several issues, including a deficiency in educational theory, insufficient novelty in conceptualisation and an overemphasis on superficial techniques. Another illustrative instance comes from IDEC, which lacks a comprehensive study of PCD. It would have been advantageous for the conference organisers to include individuals with extensive experience of studying educational theatre overseas and with a deep understanding of the principles of PCD at the fundamental level. The current state of the conference fails to meet my expectations in terms of theoretical rigorousness, as its primary focus appears to be financial profit. (Teacher 1)²⁹

Despite the acknowledgment of these five educators, there remains a notable deficiency of corresponding professional and in-depth discussions to the implementation of PCD within the framework of the NCR. Nevertheless, Teacher 9 provided a systematic and beneficial approach to promoting and advancing PCD in the field of teacher training or continuing education in the future. In Teacher 9's words:

The Minhang District in Shanghai is widely recognised as a major centre for education. Typically, when an innovative concept emerges within the NCR, it

²⁹ In Chinese: 我们现在还没有一个专门的在学术上比较深入的关于教育戏剧的讨论。例如, 北京师范大学他们做了一个音乐美育政策解读, 这个研讨会凸显出很多问题, 缺少对教育理论的认识, 理念也不够新, 在技巧的噱头比较多。另外一个例子是 IDEAC 他们对教育戏剧的学习并不深入。他们起码在机构的核心应该吸收几个在国外学过的教育戏剧的并且真正懂教育戏剧的人, 那个能够把会议改造的好一点。现在这个会议我觉得理论上不够, 他们主要是还是以盈利为主。

invariably entails the coordination of educators within schools in that region to engage in collective learning. Initially, the curriculum developer will conduct research and engage in discussions at the municipal level. Subsequently, the district curriculum developer will convene meetings with core teachers from schools within each district, facilitating a systematic progression of discussions. Finally, the core teachers from each district will guide the basic teachers in discussing the recommended new lessons. In the months of April and May 2023, the inhabitants of Shanghai experienced a period of lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. During this specific time period, the curriculum developers in the districts had the chance to make the most of the opportunity. They regularly conducted online meetings with schoolteachers from various disciplines, mostly focusing on the interpretation of the *Standards* (2022). From my perspective, the subsequent phase of the learning and training programme will indeed be present; nevertheless, the precise manner in which it will be organised remains uncertain. The next step in the learning programme must be there, but the precise way in which it will be arranged is unknown. (Teacher 9)³⁰

A recently established systematised study group has also been implemented in the Haidian district of Beijing, which is known for its abundant educational resources. This study group is called the ‘*Zhimei Xingli*³¹ Arts Education Research Community’ and serves as a unique platform for cultivating and enhancing arts teachers’ skills. It was launched by the Aesthetic Research Centre of the Haidian Academy of Sciences in response to the Double Reduction Policy (双减政策, *Shuangjian Zhengce*) framework. To effectively integrate the principles outlined in *Standards* (2022) with the practical application of core literacy and learner-centred education, the study focused on classroom teaching research as its primary domain. By employing a universal aesthetic dissemination approach through courses and activities, the aim was to establish a high-quality community team dedicated to the dissemination of arts education research. This team will play a crucial role in nurturing learners through arts-based methods and advancing the development of arts education within the school, particularly in terms of cultivating arts teachers and curriculum design. This community comprises arts educators

³⁰ In Chinese: 闵行区是上海的一个教育大区，一般情况下新课改有任何新的概念出来，它一定会组织区域内的骨干教师一起学习。首先由教研员在市级程度调讨论，然后再由各区教研员集合各区的骨干教育一步一步往下讨论，然后再由各区骨干教师引领基础老师讨论新课。比如 2023 年四月和五月上海的居民被封城了两个月。然而在那段特殊的时期，各区教研员就能够有机会抓紧时间，每个星期都在和一线老师开不同学科的线上会议，主要在聊新课标的解读。下一步的学习计划一定是有的，但是具体怎么安排暂时未知。

³¹ 致美行厉, refers to delivering arts and cultivating noble sentiments.

specialising in diverse subjects such as music, fine art, calligraphy, drama, film and television. Its primary objective is to engage in a series of thematic research activities, develop unit session plans and facilitate their implementation. Additionally, the community seeks to preserve Chinese traditional culture and foster the aesthetic and humanistic qualities of pupils. The primary focus of this community encompasses four key areas: research related to curriculum development, research on the PCD, the presentation and exchange of PCD teaching and the enhancement of the arts education thematic resource base.³²

Following a discussion on the mutual influence between PCD and the NCR, along with the relevant conference and symposiums, a significant number of the ten Chinese teachers (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10) expressed a highly positive view of the prospective initiatives for integrating PCD within the NCR. In the view of Teachers 2 and 5, a potential strategy to enhance the effectiveness of PCD for drama teachers in the NCR would involve offering employment opportunities created especially for drama teachers inside the education system. This process aims to address the current issue of incongruity between the subjects studied by teachers and the field of their profession, which is deemed unsuitable. For example, current drama teachers in schools mainly are part-time employees and the majority of them graduated from performance-related schools. They lack the knowledge and training of pedagogy and session design, as discussed in Chapter 1. Teacher 3 claimed that the implementation of direct teacher training and the utilisation of the PCD forum could yield positive outcomes for teachers who include PCD in their instructional practices. Furthermore, this model offers the potential for teachers across different age groups and disciplines to engage in diverse PCD strategies within their teaching practice. Teacher 4 observed a promising indication that various disciplines will collaborate and contribute to the guidance of PCD's development. Teacher 4 also noticed a positive sign that more disciplines will co-construct and co-facilitate the direction of PCD's development. Teacher 1 discussed the potential inclusion of PCD at universities, with a particular focus on its implementation in the Normal University. In her words:

³² This research community is made up of eleven teachers from Beijing Railway Experimental Primary School (北京铁路实验小学), Tsinghua University Primary School (清华大学附属小学), Hongying School (北京市海淀区红英小学), Beijing Institute of Technology Experimental School (北京理工大学附属实验学校), Experimental Primary School of Beijing Normal University (首都师范大学实验小学), Primary School attached to CNU (首都师范大学附属小), Dinghuili Primary School attached to CNU (首都师范大学附属定慧里小学), Taiping Road Primary School (北京市海淀区太平路小学), Cuihu Primary School (北京市海淀区翠湖小学) and Haidian Distract Experimental Primary School Jiuyi Branch School (北京市海淀区实验小学九分校). Available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/thlPgElXIO8Rd_-gVHOa2A, accessed 28 September 2023.

I have high expectations for Normal University in driving the future development of PCD. I express a wish for the establishment of a discipline or course in PCD, for instance, the establishment of the art education discipline at Hangzhou Normal University; however, the current focus of their teaching lies within the realm of fine art. Unfortunately, the International Drama Education Conference established by Beijing Foreign Language University, which received support from educational authorities to facilitate nationwide teacher participation, is increasingly transitioning towards a profit-oriented model, thereby neglecting the necessary focus on theoretical development and the enhancement of teaching practices within the field of PCD. The achievement of empowerment in education remains a crucial and ongoing imperative for the future. (Teacher 1)³³

Based on the findings from the interviews conducted with the ten Chinese teachers, it is evident that PCD plays a significant role in facilitating educational reform in China. This role encompasses several aspects, including the transformation of educational views, the provision of an effective teaching model, the integration of cross-curricular teaching and the promotion of pupils' all-round development. At the moment, there is an absence of scholarly and disciplinary discourse regarding the implementation of PCD within the framework of the NCR. Furthermore, there remains a great deal of space for enhancement across various areas of formal dialogue and substantive recommendations for effective implementation. The prospect for training on NCR's latest ideas and the PCD approach seems positive but needs distinct endeavours in order to achieve success.

4.3.2 Teachers' views on the benefits of PCD for pupils' all-round development

Figure 4-7 shows the numerous ways in which PCD contributes to pupils' varying levels of ability, based on the ten educators' classroom practice. Several of the keywords in Figure 4-7 show overlaps with the focal points emphasised in the NCR policies, such as creativity, problem solving and imagination (Teachers 1, 5, 6 and 10). There are also some less common notions which appeared in the context of Chinese education settings. Teacher 2 commented on the impact of PCD on facilitation in education, stating that its effectiveness is not simply dependent on the artistic aspect, but also on the creation of an

³³ In Chinese: 对于未来的发展, 我寄希望于师范大学, 希望能够普遍的建立教育戏剧专业或课程。例如杭州师范大学, 我觉得挺好, 他们建立了艺术教育, 其实是美术教育。可惜 IDEAC, 得到教育官方的支持使得每次组织会议的时候能够让全国的老师都参与, 却越来越走向商业盈利模式, 没有花精力在发展理论和深化教学时间上。赋权还是很重要的教育权利。

open, participatory, discursive and dialogical classroom environment.³⁴ Teacher 3 considered the employment of PCD as an advantageous approach to deepening pupils' understanding of learning material by expanding the meaning behind it through engaging in PCD activities. He said that the use of PCD helps to foster pupil engagement by presenting knowledge in an enjoyable and interactive narrative format. This approach facilitates comprehension of the learning material, as opposed to relying on repetitious memorisation techniques. He talked about one example of him delivering a workshop for teacher training in Chongqing city and some teachers expressed concern about employing PCD in their subject teaching. He replied to their concern by the illustration of dramatising the learning content and engaging pupils by adding dramatic elements such as characters and conflicts (Teacher 3).



Figure 4-7 Various aspects of pupils' ability contributed by PCD in the ten Chinese educators' observations

Teacher 3 also commented there are many beneficiaries of dramatising the learning content. First, dramatising fact-based learning material into a story for lower-grade pupils

³⁴ In Chinese: 教育戏剧可能对于这些方面的真正的促进作用不完全在艺术本身，还是一个开放的，互动的，辩证的和对话的课堂。

in primary school helps to capture and maintain their learning interest. It also helps to enable them to engage with the learning material in a fun way. Second, it reduces the repetitive tasks during the session and instead reinforces the knowledge by embodying the content from various perspectives, such as cultivating critical thinking by exploring different characters' views and decision-making through specific situations. Third, it is adaptable for different focuses on learning, such as cultural awareness. This effectively demonstrates the potential benefits of using PCD in educational settings. Specifically, it enhances the depth and complexity of teaching content, thereby facilitating greater engagement among learners. Additionally, it offers an alternative instructional approach which encourages learners to participate actively in the learning process through dramatic and enjoyable activities. This process transforms traditional passive and repetitive learning methods into learners' interactive and imaginative experiences. It also serves as a model for integrating cross-curricular activities thereby promoting a more holistic and interconnected approach to education.

The potential to enhance pupils' proficiency in various domains, as shown in Figure 4-8, was made evident. The teachers highlighted concepts such as sympathy (Teacher 1), self-acceptance (Teacher 3), reflectivity, empathy (Teacher 7) and comprehension (Teacher 10). Teacher 2 stressed the potential of PCD to offer an alternative evaluation system that shifts the focus from individual assessment towards a social evaluation framework. This approach enables learners to be assessed based on multiple criteria and by more than one person. Additionally, Teacher 2 emphasised that PCD facilitates the exploration of the fundamental aspects of human existence, such as self-awareness and interpersonal interactions. Teacher 5 placed significant emphasis on the all-round development of individuals in five distinct areas. In her words:

The concept of all-round development, as observed in the context of PCD practice, encompasses various aspects such as self-awareness, communication and collaboration, as well as citizenship and social participation. From a subjective standpoint, learning through PCD incorporates multiple aspects ranging from self-awareness to peer communication and collaboration, ultimately extending to a broader level of social participation. One of my pupils, a first-grade secondary school pupil from Vancouver, undertook a PCD project on the right to refuse vaccination. Her project aimed to demonstrate solidarity with a minority during the COVID-19 pandemic with the intention of advocating for their human rights. In addition to engaging in conventional forms of social

participation, some of my pupils employ Playback Theatre as a means of assisting citizens within various communities and groups. (Teacher 5)³⁵

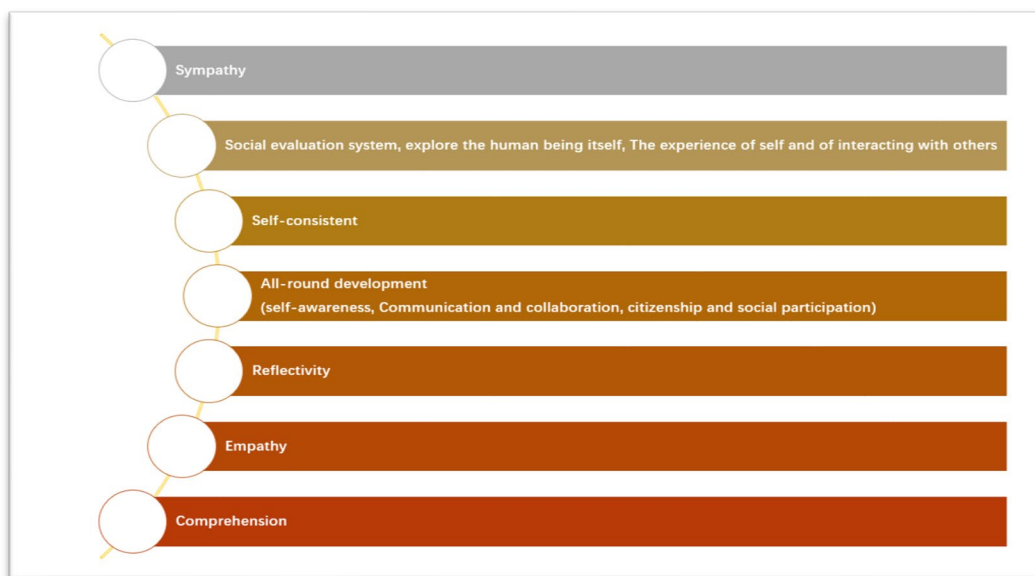


Figure 4-8 Chinese drama teachers identified pupils' other abilities developed through PCD activities

It is noteworthy that three of the Chinese teachers, Teachers 3, 4 and 6, acknowledged the impact of NCR on their approaches to teaching. Teacher 3 discussed the tangible connection between learning materials and its way of teaching, specifically focusing on the session authors and practitioners. These educators dedicated their time to analysing the needs outlined in NCR policies for PCD and subsequently developed session plans tailored to specific age groups, recognising the importance of this connection. Teacher 6 discussed the time constraints associated with the changes in the NCR, noting the abundance of information and the lack of specialised support for teachers, which present challenges to their professional and PCD practices. Teacher 4 also offered her reflective analysis of the most effective approach to fostering PCD within the present Chinese education context, which involved a shift in perspective from the educational authorities. In her words:

In the circumstances of my experience in Funing County, the Local Education Bureau demonstrated a significant level of support for the concept of PCD.

³⁵ In Chinese: 全面发展是我发现学生还能通过 PCD 发展的能力, 其中具体包括自我认知、同伴沟通协作然后到更大层面的社会参与等。比如说我之前的一个温哥华初一的女学生, 对了一个关于不接种疫苗权利的教育戏剧项目, 她做这个是为了在疫情期间声援少数群体, 她想不通的方式为他们发声, 支持他们的人权。除了这种典型的社会参与之外, 我的一些学生还利用一人一故事剧场帮助社区和少数群体中的公民。

Despite being a novel approach for them, they exhibited a strong appreciation of the principles underlying PCD and actively engaged in its promotion. Consequently, the teachers displayed a notable level of commitment towards PCD, investing considerable effort into familiarising themselves with this new approach, even in the cases where they lacked understanding and experience. Their dedication was evident as they diligently sought opportunities to observe and learn from others in order to enhance their understanding and implementation of PCD. Securing endorsement from educational authorities is imperative, as is the dissemination of the notion of PCD by practitioners across diverse schools and educational authorities. However, it is evident that there is still a considerable distance to be covered. (Teacher 4)³⁶

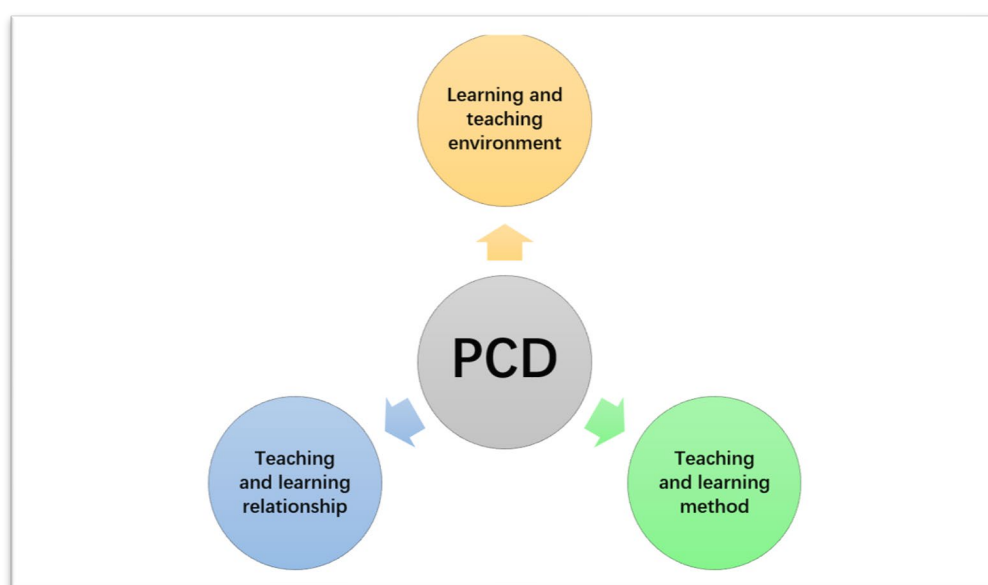


Figure 4-9 PCD's role in activating teaching and learning

The significance of PCD in facilitating learning and instruction varied across different viewpoints as shown in Figure 4-9. PCD contributes to the creation of a dynamic educational setting which is characterised by openness, interactivity and discourse. Furthermore, implementing a novel pedagogical approach which engages with knowledge through a stimulating and interactive narrative is essential. This approach

³⁶ In Chinese: 最好的就是从教育局的角度发生转变。我们在阜宁县的教学实践，教育局非常支持，这也是一种新视角的新试。然后我们跟他们对接的时候就特别顺畅。它也非常认可这个理念，从教育局开始推广，这些教师就会很认真，它就会学起来，即使教室不会，但最后要有成果展现，他也会认真去看。所以，还是教委的支持是比较重要的。也需要我们行业从业人员去跟各个学校、跟教委去做相关的这种宣传科普。那如果能从更大的层面从教育部的层面，那当然是更好的了。对，但这个我想可能也是任重而道远的。

fosters a dialogical classroom dynamic, transforming teachers from mere knowledge holders into facilitators. At the same time, it empowers learners to transition from passive receivers of information to active co-creators.

4.3.3 Essential facilitation skills and a development framework for PCD in China

All ten Chinese educators provided their perspectives on the requirements necessary for a competent PCD teacher based on their journey into the field of PCD, as shown in Figure 4-10. These educators identified four key categories, with the first category being the transformed view on the roles of both the teacher and the learner (Teachers 2, 3 and 4).

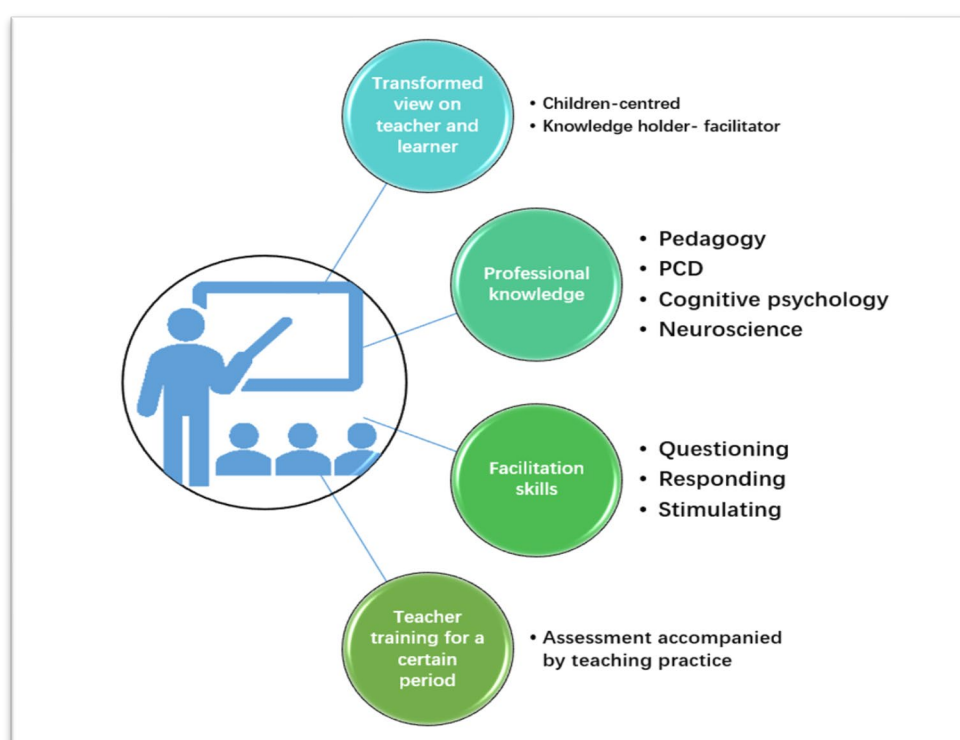


Figure 4-10 The components of a qualified PCD facilitator suggested by the ten Chinese educators

Teacher 2 stressed that a genuine concern for the inner needs of children is the primary value perspective which determines the effectiveness of a qualified PCD teacher, whereas other aspects are considered secondary and can be acquired through gradual learning. In his words:

In my opinion, it is vital to prioritise the genuine consideration of the internal requirements of the learners. This implies that a proficient practitioner in the field of PCD must take into account many factors, such as instructional activities,

session planning, educational objectives and pedagogy, all of which should be based on the learners' viewpoint. Additional skills can be acquired over time through a steady learning process. This can be characterised as an issue concerning fundamental values. (Teacher 2)³⁷

This comment by Teacher 2 could potentially serve as an important turning point in the PCD classroom within the framework of NCR, specifically associated with the implementation of learner-centred education. In particular, as has already been explained, the Chinese education system is characterised by a teacher-centred approach to instruction, which is mostly attributable to the examination-based evaluation system. Teachers put significant emphasis on sticking to the school teaching plan and preparing pupils for exams. As a consequence of this, major hurdles are generated since educators lacked the motivation to transform their teaching strategy to one which is more learner-centred. In spite of the fact that it might take a considerable amount of time to successfully implement learner-centred instruction across all subject areas in school settings, the utilisation of drama as a method of engagement might not only fasten the development of PCD in schools but might also have the potential to help in overcoming this practical challenge in the context of teaching situations. Particularly, the announcement of the drama curriculum for April 2022 made it abundantly possible to employ PCD in school settings, which enables a substantial amount of transformative potential.

Furthermore, Teacher 4 offered insights into the perspective of educators who transition from being mere knowledge holders to assuming the role of facilitators. Half of the Chinese interviewees (Teachers 1, 5, 6, 8 and 9) held the belief that being a competent teacher in the field of PCD necessitates holding expertise in areas such as pedagogy, PCD, cognitive psychology and even a rudimentary understanding of neuroscience. Four interviewees (Teachers 5, 7, 8 and 10) considered the acquisition of facilitation skills to be crucial for a competent PCD teacher. These abilities included posing effective questions, providing appropriate responses and stimulating critical thinking among learners. Three teachers (Teachers 4, 8 and 9) expressed their thoughts on the effectiveness of teacher training over a specific timeframe. They argued that a comprehensive approach which includes both evaluation and teaching practice is more beneficial than relying simply on one-off brief lectures or workshops. This is because

³⁷ In Chinese: 我觉得需要真正关心儿童的内在的需求。这个很重要，它是考量教学活动、教学计划、教学策略、教学目标甚至教育哲学这些所有的这些范畴内的时候，必备的是从孩子的角度出发，其他的都是可以学的。这其实就是一个深刻的价值观的事。

such singular occurrences provide limited support for teachers' conceptual comprehension and practical application.



Figure 4-11 Chinese teachers' reflection on the elements for promoting PCD in China

As shown in Figure 4-11, the ten interviewees engaged in self-reflection and discussed six key elements for fostering professional development in mainland China:

- 1) National governmental support is evident in the form of policy recognition of PCD by several teachers (Teachers 1, 6, 8 and 9). Additionally, financial assistance for teacher training is provided by the officials, as acknowledged by Teachers 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10.
- 2) International specialists provide various forms of guidance, such as conducting master classes or workshops, organising conferences on PCD and facilitating inter-university project collaboration or exchange programmes.
- 3) Five teachers (Teachers 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8) expressed their consideration regarding the entry standards for trained facilitators. Teacher 2 asserted that numerous basic education programmes were provided by professional theatrical institutions. However, it was observed that the majority of these sessions were conducted by theatre actors who have limited understanding of pedagogy, session design, assessment and facilitation skills. Consequently, the pedagogy primarily emphasises the attainment of the intended results on performing. Teacher 2 also highlighted the deficiencies inside universities, specifically the shortage of researchers who have obtained a PhD in PCD from international institutions and possess a comprehensive understanding of PCD methodology.

Introducing a PCD course in both normal universities and comprehensive universities would represent a highly rational approach towards nurturing future teachers within the realm of PCD.

4) In the previous section, I reviewed the concerns expressed by these educators on the excessive commercial inclination evident in organisations, such as IDEC and the Golden Thrush drama awards (金画眉奖, *Jin Huamei Jiang*). However, Teacher 5 presented a view on leading exemplary industrial examples. For instance, the Drama Rainbow Education Centre in Beijing was established in 2009 with the aim of providing quality teacher training in the field of PCD. Additionally, Drama Rainbow is actively involved in developing TiE workshops for different age groups and has translated significant publications related to PCD into the Chinese language.

5) The majority of the ten teachers, Teachers 1, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10, prioritised the use of academic resources as a crucial phase in the development of PCD for teachers in mainland China. These resources comprised essential publications, seminars or discussions targeting different age groups, as well as research on demonstration sessions.

6) Finally, it is worth noting that Teacher 2 was the only interviewee to discuss the safeguarding of independent institutions' freedom to operate schools with autonomy.

Different viewpoints therefore exist regarding the prospective direction of PCD in mainland China as shown in Figure 4-12. A significant majority, Teachers 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10, espoused an optimistic stance on this issue. Teachers 1 and 7 prioritised the promotion of learners' development through the implementation of PCD approaches in order to foster critical thinking skills and ensure equal access for all learners, rather than perpetuating elitist tendencies. The prevailing viewpoint among a majority of the interviewees (Teachers 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10) was that there are positive implications of PCD in terms of enhancing institutional advancements. For instance, Teacher 3 expressed confidence in the integration of PCD within the education system, envisioning the presence of a PCD teacher in every school.

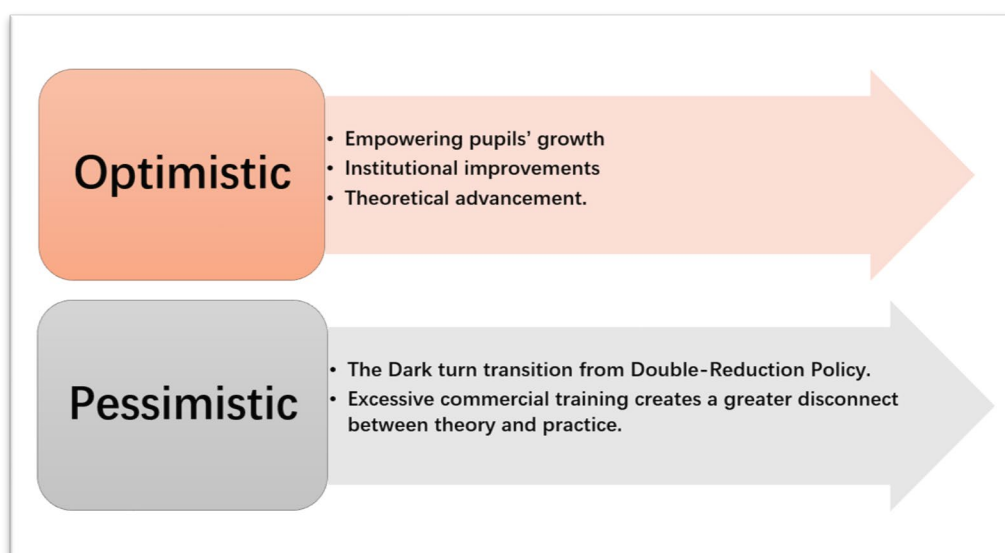


Figure 4-12 Envisioning the future of PCD in mainland China

Additionally, Teacher 3 emphasised the need to facilitate a shift in the attitude of decision makers, enabling them to appreciate and acknowledge the significance of PCD in order to achieve this objective. Teacher 4 believed that the field of drama will continue to evolve into a more formal and acknowledged discipline. Additionally, she expressed a wish for drama to be included in the core curriculum. Teacher 10 suggested an efficient and expedient method for disseminating the concept of PCD from its initial stages to widespread adoption. This approach involved regionally organising teachers' teaching-skill exchange events. She reflected that she and some of her colleagues had benefited considerably from such events. By engaging in such events, teachers can rapidly enhance their understanding of and familiarity with innovative pedagogical approaches. However, three of the interviewees (Teachers 2, 5 and 9) expressed their concern and had a negative perspective towards the future of PCD. Teacher 2, an artistic director in an independent institution significantly affected by the Double-Reduction Policy, believed that the institution might face substantial obstacles to its survival in the foreseeable future. Teachers 5 and 9 expressed apprehension regarding the prevailing trend of extensive commercial training, as it has the potential to exacerbate the growing divide between practical application and theoretical knowledge.

In conclusion, the insights gathered from the experiences of the ten educators illuminate various crucial aspects of integrating PCD into educational settings in China, offering a comprehensive understanding of the implications and opportunities. Their perspectives showed how PCD fosters active learner engagement in a meaningful and collaborative

learning process, cultivating a deep connection with the subject matter and enhancing understanding of oneself, others and society. However, their experiences also highlighted the challenges of implementing PCD within the current education framework in China, including limited resources, insufficient professional training and the need for greater support from education authorities. Their perspectives underscored the importance of government support in endorsing and promoting the adoption of PCD in educational environments. Additionally, the educators' cautious optimism underlined the ongoing need for advocacy and advancement to ensure the effective integration of PCD into curricula and teaching practices.

In the next chapters, I shall present two case studies offering specific real-world examples of cases demonstrating the skills required and the benefits of PCD for pupils' learning in a real-life educational settings in the UK and China.

Chapter 5

Teaching through asking questions to cultivate pupils' active engagement in process-centred drama: a case study of Big Brum TiE company

This chapter provides an overview of the historical development and pedagogical approach of Big Brum TiE company and explores the relationship between PCD and pupils' active learning. It presents an analysis of two interviews which I carried out with Chris Cooper, the former artistic director of Big Brum, and Richard Holmes, the current artistic director. In addition, this chapter offers a discussion of the use of questioning techniques, drawing on a case study of Big Brum's touring programme *Along the Silk Road*, undertaken on 20 October 2022 in a primary school in Birmingham.

This observation allowed me to explore how drama can engage pupils in a participatory and collaborative learning environment, guided by facilitators who function as enablers and co-constructors of knowledge. In addition, it enabled me to investigate the significance of facilitation skills, specifically the advantages of questioning techniques in empowering pupils to engage in creativity, critical thinking and decision-making. The goals of the NCR encompass several crucial elements, such as transitioning from the teaching/learning paradigm to one which is discussion- and enquiry-based, as well as redefining the roles of teachers and learners. Specifically, this involves teachers shifting from being mere knowledge holders to being facilitators, and pupils from being passive recipients to active participants. The emphasis on questioning arises from its status as the most commonly employed method in the classroom. However, Chinese drama teachers have not given it sufficient attention in terms of its capacity for structuring an effective PCD session.

5.1 The art of questioning in PCD: techniques and impacts

There are a range of uses and strategies employed by Big Brum which focus on the use of questions in PCD sessions. This topics discussed include definition and classification, and the purpose and role of questions.

5.1.1 Definitions, classifications and purposes of questioning

The deliberate process of questioning is an often-employed technique by teachers in the classroom. Johnson, Markle and Haley-Olpihant (1987: 29-30) found that around 40% of the instructional time in classrooms is dedicated to a question-response model. In the classroom, questions might arise regarding how learners react to given knowledge. Almeida (2012: 635) discussed the significance of responses in relation to learning materials and classroom activities. Hunkins (year?) suggested that questions could be related to behaviours such as seeking information or engaging in intellectual processes which encourage critical thinking.

Questioning serves as a means of demonstrating a learning orientation, influencing pupils' thinking and providing a framework for teachers to plan their instruction. Costa and Kallick (2015: 68) stated that teachers' acquisition of questioning and posing problem-solving skills is considered crucial for pupils to achieve success in the twenty-first century. This requires teachers to incorporate training on questioning into their teaching practices, consequently prompting them to take into account the design of questions and their strategies for questioning pupils during the instructional process. This approach has the potential to enhance pupils' cognitive abilities and foster critical thinking skills. Taba (1966: 128) stressed the significance of questioning and regarded it as a critical teaching practice due to its substantial impact on pupils' thinking processes and learning results. In a similar vein, other scholars have stressed the major characteristics of questioning, highlighting its potent capacity to stimulate critical thinking, facilitate learning and foster active engagement among pupils (Filippone, 1998: 7-14; Buchanan Hill, 2016: 662-664).

The use of questioning techniques in the classroom, as observed by Ross in 1860, can be categorised into two main purposes: first, it serves to assess the extent of pupils' comprehension of the instructional content that has been provided to them by their teachers. Second, it seeks to determine whether pupils can apply the acquired knowledge in exam settings. Obviously, Ross prioritised the process of remembering and the practice of reciting general knowledge in the classroom. Subsequent studies by Wilen (1991: 8-9), Hyman (1980: 38-40) and Zee and Minstrell (1997: 229-231) concentrated on the purpose of employing questioning approaches to address numerous concerns, including the following:

- (1) to stimulate pupils' engagement;
- (2) to review the materials that have already been studied;

- (3) to foster discussion about a subject, question or problem;
- (4) to encourage learners in creative thinking;
- (5) to determine pupils' ability;
- (6) to evaluate pupils' progress;
- (7) to determine the extent to which the objectives have been achieved;
- (8) to capture pupils' interest;
- (9) to monitor learners' behaviour;
- (10) to personalise the theme; and
- (11) to support pupils' contributions in the classroom.

The function of questioning is widely recognised and encouraged by scholars. Usman (2019: 675-676) and Kiemer et al. (2015: 95) asserted that questioning, as an interactive method, holds significant importance in education as it serves as a stimulant for motivation and facilitates associative mediation. Shedletsky and Zion (2005: 23) said that posing effective questions is highly important for understanding knowledge. Wilen (1991: 7-8) reported that questioning has been shown to enhance pupils' overall thinking abilities and highlighted the significance of questioning for promoting cognitive development, which will be explored in further detail in the following section on the taxonomy of questioning. Schwartz et al. (2016: 206) stated that questioning can serve as a stimulus for learning, leading to heightened levels of curiosity, purpose, attention and the formation of well-connected memories. The effective achievement of these various objectives in pedagogy needs thoughtful planning and enactment of the design and implementation processes. Costa and Kallick (2015: 68) similarly endorsed this assertion and promoted the use of powerful questioning as a means for educators to facilitate the liberation of pupils' thinking and learning.

In his groundbreaking book *How we think* (1933), John Dewey made a clear distinction between different levels of thinking, specifically highlighting critical and reflective thinking as two distinct forms of higher-level cognitive process. Dewey's contribution laid the groundwork for the further development and organisation of these concepts, which was subsequently expanded upon by Benjamin Bloom, a renowned researcher and

theorist, to deepen our comprehension and utilisation of them. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives encompassed a systematic classification system of education objectives within the cognitive domain. He employed an approach which involved the identification of a linear continuum consisting of six skill-related approaches to knowledge. The range of questions encompasses both questions of a lower level and higher level questions with more complex responses. Questions which necessitate factual recollection and demand the retrieval of memorised knowledge are positioned at the concrete terminus of the continuum. The subsequent questions require the ability to draw on comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis. The abstract end of the continuum is defined by questions which require the use of evaluative cognitive skills. According to Bloom (1956), engaging in higher-level thinking necessitates a greater level of cognition in learners in order to respond effectively to questions. The five levels of questions are as follows.

Knowledge

The lowest level of questioning is characterised by knowledge-based questions, which are the ones employed most frequently in education contexts to support the acquisition of information. Through this technique, learners are prompted to recall factual details, information and intentions which is the primary way in which the process of remembering is engaged. Knowledge-based questions typically require learners to identify basic information which requires minimal or no modification when transferred from one context to another. Knowledge is obtained directly from the text or materials used in the educational process. Defining, duplicating, listing, memorising, repeating and stating are some of the main behaviours included in this basic level (Bloom, 1956: 62-88).

Understanding

As educators proceed to the second level of Bloom's taxonomy, they are required to ask questions which are relatively easy to comprehend. It is anticipated that pupils possess a comprehensive understanding of the topics presented in the text and are capable of articulating their understanding by providing a detailed description of the situation as outlined in the instructional materials provided by their teachers. The following examples encompass several cognitive processes aimed at comprehension: the ability to categorise, elucidate, analyse, expound upon, delineate, ascertain, pinpoint, acknowledge, document, choose and interpret (Bloom, 1956: 89-90).

Application

The next category of questions relates to the learners' use of provided information. The role of application questions is to facilitate learners in utilising the knowledge and information obtained from books and applying it to various scenarios, particularly those encountered in real-life contexts, throughout the process of teaching and learning. The purpose of this application is to develop appropriate generalisations based on the provided materials. The following are key terms for application: to encompass, execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule and sketch (Bloom, 1956: 120-124).

Analysis

As an advanced level of the cognitive process which goes beyond understanding and application, analysis entails scrutinising facts supplied in given materials, distinguishing differences, clarifying concepts and collecting evidence to substantiate one's perspective. Establishing a connection between the experiences that learners have undergone in their own lives and the topic of study which is being taught is of great significance. As part of analysis, educators are expected to make use of more sophisticated questioning strategies and need to be careful when formulating questions in order to sustain pupils' engagement and promote active participation in a more sophisticated learning process. There are several activities that can be undertaken in order to enhance cognitive abilities in analysing. These activities encompass a wide range of cognitive processes, such as differentiation, organisation, correlation, comprehension, contrast, distinction, examination, experimentation, questioning and testing (Bloom, 1956: 144-161).

Evaluation

At the highest level, learners are expected to critically evaluate the advantages and drawbacks of specific concepts, as well as challenge their prior knowledge, assumptions and judgements in order to have a conclusion. To assess, argue, defend, judge, agree, select, support, value, critique and weigh up are some of the important abilities that are used in the process of evaluating (Bloom, 1956: 185-187).

5.1.2 The role of questioning techniques in drama classes

Questioning is widely acknowledged and extensively employed in drama instruction and learning. By highlighting the significance of Heathcote's questioning strategy as her most important tool, Wagner, in his fundamental work *Dorothy Heathcote: drama as a*

learning medium (1979), analysed the types of questioning which she employed and gave examples of her teaching. According to Wagner (1979: 60), Heathcote used a wide variety of methods as stimuli in order to foster the engagement, commitment and reflection of learners in a dramatic exploration of significant human experiences. According to Wagner (1979: 60), Heathcote distinguished between a question which restricts the interpretation of meaning and a question which facilitates the exploration of meaning. Wagner (1979: 61-75) outlined seven distinctive kinds of question which were employed by Heathcote during her drama sessions as follows:

- Questions which seek information or assess the level of pupils' interest;
- Questions which supply information;
- Branching questions for further exploration;
- Class-controlling questions;
- Questions to establish mood and feeling;
- Questions to establish belief; and
- Questions to deepen insight.

In *Teaching drama: a mind of many wonders* (1987), Morgan and Saxton emphasised the significance and classification of questioning. They set out the distinguishing features of drama questions in the context of teaching and learning. These features encompassed the demonstration of authentic curiosity, the establishment of connections with learners' personal experiences, the provision of support and clarification for learners' roles and thinking processes and the requirement for deliberate design by teachers, which encompasses elements such as reasoning, focus and curiosity. Morgan and Saxton undertook an extensive exploration of the role of questioning within the context of drama teaching, resulting in the identification and elucidation of up to 25 distinct types of question. Morgan and Saxton later employed Bloom's taxonomy in their examination of questioning classification in *Asking better questions* (2006). In the following section, after an initial introduction to Big Brum TiE, the application and discussion of Morgan and Saxton's classification and Bloom's taxonomy of questioning will be discussed following my observation of participatory workshops held by Big Brum in a primary school in Birmingham on 20 October 2022.

5.2 The background of Big Brum TiE Company

Big Brum TiE Company was established in 1982. The number of children who have

participated in Big Brum's educational seminars consistently exceeds five thousand each year (Big Brum, accessed 20 October 2022). In addition, Big Brum develops programmes which are especially tailored to meet the requirements of a wide range of target learners. These learners include pupils from elementary and secondary schools, as well as young people who have physical disabilities and special needs (Big Brum, accessed 20 October 2022).

5.2.1 Historical origins and evolutionary development of Big Brum TiE Company

Historically, Big Brum's touring model of taking workshops into schools was greatly informed by the progressive education movement. According to Richard Holmes in the interview, in the initial stage, the primary emphasis of Big Brum was on interacting with secondary schools between 1982 and 1992. The second phase of Big Brum's practice evolved "through sort of Stanislavsky and Brechtian theatre" (Holmes).

The subsequent and pivotal era of Big Brum was significantly influenced by Edward Bond, a globally renowned dramatist who collaborated with Big Brum for a span of nineteen years. According to Holmes, this particular period can be characterised as a Bondian drama, where the imagination was employed to pursue logic, in contrast to the conventional approach of using logic to foster imagination (Holmes). Bond and Big Brum worked together on a partnership to produce a total of ten TiE pieces targeted at young people. These works included *At the Inland Sea* (1995), *Eleven Vest* (1997), *Have I None* (2000), *The Balancing Act* (2003), *The Under Room* (2005), *The Tune* (2007), *A Window* (2009), *The Broken Bowl* (2012), *The Edge* (2012) and *The Angry Roads* (2014). Bond's written work and theoretical contributions not only caused a significant shift in the practice of Big Brum, which was on the verge of closure due to the withdrawal of funds by the local council, but they also brought about a unique and innovative development in the field of TiE (Holmes).

According to Jian Xue (20 October 2022), the collaboration of Bond and Big Brum presented a distinct theatrical form which can be considered a novel development in the field of TiE. Furthermore, Chris Cooper underlined the fact that during the period from 1982 to the 1990s, Big Brum's approach was specifically centred on the writing and production of artistic content aimed at young people but also taking into consideration the conceptual themes which were being explored. This process also focused on the endeavour to maintain and enhance "the understanding the more pedagogical approach that emerged in relation to DiE" (Cooper). Cooper further asserted that the development

of Big Brum can be perceived as “a continual attempt to integrate the DiE and TiE and begin to find the new”. Holmes supported similar perspectives, as he regarded Big Brum as the “vanguard of a new practice” (Cooper).

Big Brum played a crucial role in the formation of TiE, a field that combines DiE and TiE to develop interactive forms of programmes. According to Cooper, Big Brum continued to make efforts to establish itself as a leading entity of the field while simultaneously cultivating an original approach to the field. However, this aspiration was hindered by the dearth of “highly qualified and active teachers” (Cooper). Cooper said that the period from 2006 to 2011 marked Big Brum's peak and depended on having the support of “the solidity of the team of three permanent actor-teachers”, all of whom were actively engaged in their craft throughout that time. Cooper considered that period to be the most secure and productive phase for Big Brum due to having enough full-time actor-teachers who could spend enough time to explore the concept and facilitation skills of PCD (Cooper).

Cooper held a highly pessimistic view regarding the present state of TiE in the UK. In his opinion, there is no longer a healthy TiE landscape since current practices are far removed from what he considered to be the “true essence of the tradition”. Some companies moved away from TiE and more into DiE, which was characterised by being “philosophically, artistically and pedagogically rooted in a very pre-Bondian approach”. Cooper acknowledged the value in these children’s theatre companies’ practice but also highlighted its limitation, which heavily constrained what they were able to do (Cooper).

In his key publication *Theatre in Education in Britain: Origins, Development, and Influence*, Wooster showed a comparable level of concern which mirrored the concerns of Cooper and Holmes discussed above. He stated that support for TiE no longer exists, especially since the implementation of the Education Reform Act in 1988. Additionally, changes in education and funding have raised significant obstacles for enterprises in the field of TiE. For instance, Big Brum had to reduce the number of actor-teachers in its touring programme in schools, which can be seen as a substantial limitation on the design of the elements of the programme (Wooster, 2016: 207-242).

Cooper argued that Big Brum was the only entity actively engaged in the development of this model and that the establishment of a relationship with Bond was a natural and consequential progression which had brought about significant changes. Cooper's interview responses further highlighted Big Brum's efforts to promote TiE to a greater

degree by engaging in collaborations with academics and practitioners from numerous countries, including Norway, Hungary and China (Cooper).

5.2.2 The pedagogical philosophy of Big Brum's TiE practice

From a pedagogical standpoint, Big Brum places children at the centre and holds the perspective that the learner is not outcome-oriented (Bolton, 2018). The company also places significant emphasis on the use of the Socratic method wherein art is employed as a means of comprehension rather than as a tool for instruction. In the Socratic theoretical framework, Cooper explained, teachers take on the role of “co-constructors of knowledge”, whose primary responsibility is to facilitate the pupils' capacity to acquire insight into the “integration of imagination, intuition, empirical experience, logic and reason” (Cooper). Holmes further elucidated that this Socratic approach has evolved within the context of PCD and does not only pertain to Big Brum. However, Big Brum can be seen as pioneering in its application of the Socratic method within its practice. Holmes reiterated that Big Brum's approach was based on the Socratic tradition, which involves comprehending the world by means of elucidation and enquiry, thereby ascribing significance (Holmes). Cooper claimed that this approach is characterised by a focus on conceptual-based learning wherein pupils are encouraged to connect their own life experiences to the fictional materials presented, without a strict emphasis on ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ responses. The Socratic approach offers learners the “space and freedom” to engage in the process of constructing meaning, either alone or in cooperation with experienced adults and with their peers (Cooper).

According to Cooper, the process of PCD is considered to be “developmental, that is a process of becoming”, which points to the potential for profound change taking place in a process-centred teaching and learning circumstances. Big Brum's approach is an exploration of new methods of instructing and learning which go beyond the conventional transmission model employed in schools. The conventional method is described as having its primary focus on transferring knowledge based on the achievement of predetermined outcomes, with the ultimate objective of enabling pupils to successfully pass examinations (Bloomsbury, nd).

The profound influence of Lev Vygotsky's thinking on the development of Big Brum's instructional style was highlighted by both Cooper and Holmes during the interviews. Vygotsky (1978: 86) analysed the significance of play in relation to children's acquisition of meaning or concepts. This developmental process, which serves as a means of

cultivating abstract thinking, highlights the function that fictional scenarios play in facilitating pupils' exploration of the real world. Another significant impact of Vygotsky on Big Brum was the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which Vygotsky (1978: 86) described as prospectively functioning for eliciting learners' existing knowledge and experiences which are not yet fully developed, and nurturing them through a process of formation and maturation. Vygotskian thought had a direct impact on the way in which Big Brum's practice interacts with the young individuals they work with (Cooper, Holmes).

This approach involves the actor-teacher and other peers who are more competent to assist pupils' exploration of a fictitious theatrical world, which serves to connect the pupils' existing experiences with their potential for future understanding of their learning and personal experience. The collaborative relationship between learners and practitioners in Big Brum's participatory workshops can be characterised as “active seeker(s) and constructor(s) of knowledge” (Cooper). Furthermore, a primary objective of the workshop is to facilitate the comprehension of young individuals regarding their own encounters (Holmes).

According to Ballian et al. (2021: 37) and Bloomsbury (nd), Heathcote's co-construction method, known as the crucible paradigm, had an enormous impact on the approach which Big Brum employed. According to Allen and Handley (2022: 5) and Sayers (2014: 2), the crucible paradigm serves not only to transform the role of learners from passive recipients of knowledge to active enquirers by engaging them in a dramatic imaginary context, but also alters the function of teachers from mere transmitters of knowledge to collaborative constructors of knowledge. This is accomplished through the engagement of learners in a dramatic imaginative context. Learners actively participate in the process of acquiring new knowledge and exchanging it with their fellow pupils as well as individuals who have a higher degree of competence throughout the co-construction process of the learning experience. Knowledge is co-constructed through collaborative efforts, which is an approach which is promoted through the employment of PCD in educational settings. The use of PCD in educational settings enhances pupils' learning by employing an interactive approach in which knowledge is co-constructed through collaborative efforts, as opposed to a conventional transmission model. Cooper asserted that learners progressively take ownership of the learning content through the process of co-constructing meaning in a classroom setting and further stated that the incorporation of drama in the educational process makes reactivity easier to achieve since it engages

learners both “thinkingly and unthinkingly” on a profound level. Drama elicits emotional and instinctive responses, compelling individuals to have a strong connection with it due to the narrative (Cooper).

Over its four-decade history, Big Brum’s approach hugely influenced progressive education as well as the TiE movement. The integration of TiE and DiE was implemented by Big Brum. This integration involved a combination of various theoretical perspectives, including those of Bond, SCYPT, Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Heathcote, Bolton and Davis. Despite this integration, Big Brum is dedicated to empowering young individuals through the use of participatory PCD workshops.

5.3 Structure and features of Big Brum’s participatory workshops

5.3.1 The structure of Big Brum’s participatory workshops

The structure which Big Brum devised for its TiE programme consists of a number of different components. These are a “pre-performance workshop, an interactive performance, and a participatory workshop that takes place either between or after scenes and episodes” (Cooper, Holmes). Usually, Big Brum offers teachers a resource pack to help them to conduct pre-performance and then post-performance sessions which take place approximately one month after the TiE workshop or at the end of a school term. Cooper explained in the interview that pre-performance sessions serve the purpose of developing the frame for subsequent performances and actively involving learners. The post-performance workshop is conducted through participation. Cooper also pointed out that “there is no fixed model of interaction”, indicating that the central task of the programme is carried out by the actor-teacher, depending on the specific objectives underlying the exploration of the central question within the TiE programme. This structure ensures the implementation of a suitable framework that facilitates the active engagement of learners and meets the diverse needs of pupils across different age groups. Cooper stressed the significance of the workshop structure, central task and the most effective strategies for delving into the centre of the story. Similarly, Holmes emphasised the significance of the TiE programme's structure in “shaping and reshaping the learning experiences” of young individuals. He also pointed out that the pre-performance workshop provides an angle of connection for learners with the story, and the frame for participation requires a balance of both “rigidity and flexibility”. Furthermore, Cooper placed a significant emphasis on the method of questioning, since he believed that various types of enquiry facilitate diverse forms of dialogue and foster something more interactive.

In the interview, Cooper discussed the fundamental essence of PCD, emphasising its capacity to facilitate active exploration by learners as opposed to their passive reception of knowledge. He stressed the need for participants to actively engage in and take ownership of the process. In his words:

Heathcote described it as “men in a mess”. It explores human beings in their crises and begins to try to understanding why these situations arise. And in the doing, this changes our perception of reality. The essential thing of PCD is that there's a problem or crisis, that we are engaged in it, we are moved by it, we are connected to it, and we want to make sense of it. (Cooper)

Another essential aspect of PCD, according to Holmes, is to create “a safe space for pupils to challenge ideology”. In addition, it must be structured for pupils to engage with the “most compact surviving issues” (Holmes). He further asserted that ‘central speech’, which is a term in Bond’s theory to refer to a key sentence or paragraph in a play, has a significant function, and that “every aspect of the whole story is testing, expanding, stretching and developing” (Holmes).

Cooper and Holmes discussed the distinctions between a TiE playwright and a conventional one. They said that TiE playwrights have a tendency towards non-didactic approaches, emphasising the cultivation of critical thinking among participants through creating gaps in the meaning of the dramatic work.

The story has to have clear gaps which pupils need to make an effort to comprehend, and this serves as the fundamental rationale for the “frame, task and actor-teacher working holistically and coherently” to assist pupils’ development inside the crucible paradigm. Cooper further highlighted that Bond's perspective offers another source of inspiration which enables learners to interpret the story themselves rather than relying solely on the playwright, director or facilitator to convey the whole story. Cooper underlined the contemporary nature of this dramatisation approach, highlighting its distinction as a unique form of the TiE approach. Holmes reflected on the way in which the TiE invites participants to immerse themselves “literally, emotionally and metaphorically” in the drama experience. This participatory approach enables learners to assess and evaluate their own experiences within the narrative. Holmes added that he considered this to be the distinguishing characteristic of TiE in comparison with contemporary theatre, which has a propensity to “close meaning down and render the audience in a passive situation” (Holmes).

5.3.2 The foundational principles of Big Brum's practice: a learner-centred approach

Big Brum places a higher priority on the needs of pupils than on the curriculum while nevertheless effectively integrating both aspects throughout their programme. According to Holmes, Big Brum creates educational materials that prioritise the engagement of learners, with a proportion of their work being aligned with the national curriculum in the UK. However, they adopt a perspective which might diverge from the content typically taught within the curriculum. He explained that the way in which the creation occurs alters the perspective of the narrative, enabling an exploration of the 'essence' of humanity and of the underlying motivations behind different characters, as opposed to a mere "constructed conceived image" (Holmes). When elaborating on the link between Big Brum's work and the needs of the curriculum, Cooper took a more subtle approach. In order to improve the understanding of the approach which Big Brum takes, it is necessary to set up an entry point and to engage in discussions and conversations with other teachers (Cooper). For example, Cooper undertook an adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 2011, which served as an opportunity for pupils to dig deeper into the conceptualisation of monsters, the determinants of monstrosity, and the agents responsible for the creation of monsters. Although the well-known literary work *Frankenstein* is included in the UK GCSE syllabus, the objective of Big Brum's interactive workshop is to broaden the work's applicability beyond the constraints of the national curriculum. This example illustrates the need to make minor compromises to facilitate the inclusion of PCD workshops in educational settings with the aim of attaining a mutually beneficial outcome which preserves the artistic value of works at the same time as addressing the needs of the curriculum.

In addition to meeting the demands of the curriculum, Big Brum places an increased emphasis on recognising and meeting the learners' needs. According to Cooper, an effective approach for satisfying the requirements of learners involves recognising how to make a connection between the experiences of the pupils and the overarching topic of the narrative. This is an essential step in the process. It can be described as a structured participatory workshop which facilitates in-depth discussions between pupils and both peers and experienced adults. These discussions are designed to dramatise human experiences which closely relate to the pupils' own lived experiences. The purpose of this process is to assist learners in exploring the given situation, exchanging ideas and expanding their understanding.

Holmes further emphasised the way in which Big Brum's workshop probes into the needs of learners while simultaneously addressing their social needs through the provision of a conducive space for active engagement in listening, thinking, feeling and reflecting upon the story's content. Another crucial aspect to consider is that Big Brum's workshop provides children with the “authority to make decisions”, something which is not frequently bestowed on them in their everyday lives (Holmes). The recognition and maximisation of the needs of learners in imaginary scenarios are crucial aspects of Big Brum's practice. Holmes continued to comment on the way in which PCD facilitates active learning among pupils by stimulating and eliciting their imaginative capabilities in the pursuit of comprehending the world in which they live (Holmes). This is done in order to maximise learner participation and foster meaningful engagement. Holmes told me that Big Brum endeavours to ensure the workshop's relevance to pupils by initially engaging them through the angle of connection. This approach seeks to present the world of the story to pupils in simple ways. He also believed that this is the method by which individuals express their emotions and thoughts. Holmes underscored the significance of ‘flexibility and rigidity’, a concept which pertains to the integration of past experiences into new teaching contexts and the adaptation of instructional approaches to suit different age groups and classrooms.

Holmes also discussed the fundamental elements for maximising the artistic and educational value of PCD projects, which involves the development of theoretical foundations, methodological approaches and philosophical underpinnings, as exemplified by the essential principles of Big Brum. These principles include trusting every child, high teacher/pupil ratios, being free for all audiences, being crystal clear, making art accessible, building safe spaces, no wrong answers, asking big questions and getting lost in the moment (Big Brum, nd). On the other hand, Holmes placed a strong focus on the recognition and continuous implementation of the necessity and significance of evaluation, followed by the examination of the outcomes of prior evaluations in subsequent projects. According to Holmes, it is crucial to engage in the exploration of theory and project evaluation. This is the experience of a TiE company which focuses on the maximisation of the artistic and educational value of PCD through an evaluation of its theoretical foundations and an assessment of its implementation approach.

In TiE, actor-teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learner engagement. In the structure of a TiE programme, one actor-teacher undertakes the role of the overall programme facilitator whereas each individual actor-teacher is responsible for facilitating

specific components of the programme. For instance, when teachers divide a whole class into smaller groups depending on the assigned task, it is necessary for the teacher to function as a facilitator and to possess a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical approach and the art form in order to effectively support pupils' engagement with the material. The process of empowering learners to reconstruct their thinking is a key aspect of PCD, which facilitates active learning instead of relying on conventional transmission-based teaching methods which involve simply delivering knowledge to passive learners. Cooper pointed out that “probably the most radical transformation and most radical impact of good PCD practice can impact on teachers in the most fundamental way”.

Using a wide variety of facilitation skills is the most efficient technique for a facilitator to increase the level of involvement experienced by the learners. According to Cooper:

... questioning techniques, framing tasks, getting investment from the pupils and encouraging them to take ownership and lead their own learning. In a way Heathcote's greatest gift really is recognising the relationship between life and theatre, but also recognising how through a fictional context. (Cooper)

Cooper here underlined the necessary skills that facilitators must be equipped with in order to bring out the best in their practice. These competencies cover not only the capacity to prioritise children's needs and position them at the centre of the facilitation procedure, but also the enhancement of facilitation skills, such as effective questioning tactics, task framing and putting the needs of learners at the centre of the procedure.

5.4 Teaching through asking questions: a workshop observation

5.4.1 Workshop observation overview

This observation covered two workshops conducted in a primary school located in Birmingham, one held in the morning and the other in the afternoon with two different classes on 20 October 2022. The participants were pupils from year 5, with an age range of nine and ten years. The workshop provided by Big Brum was led by a facilitator, the company's artistic director Richard Holmes, who was responsible for introducing the programme to the pupils and coordinating the pre-performance and post-performance workshops and tasks during the interactive performance. The performance section in the TiE workshop included the involvement of four actor-teachers who played different roles. Additionally, they facilitated discussions in groups among the pupils, guiding them through various tasks throughout the interactive sections between sections of the

performance.

As researcher, I adopted the role of non-participating observer and took field notes describing the frame and procedure of the workshops, as well as the reactions shown by the pupils in response to various drama activities, aiming to evaluate how different types of facilitation skills captured and maintained pupils' interest and increased their engagement. I also looked for how the educators worked as knowledge co-constructors and empowered the learners as active participants in a contextualised setting. These observations were made during each of the two-hour workshop sessions. Regarding ethical considerations, I was initially introduced to the whole class at the beginning of each workshop by the facilitator in order to minimise potential disruptions to the participants. In addition, I had previously obtained permission from the school gatekeepers for taking notes, recording the sessions and taking photographs without showing the children's faces. I also provided them with a copy of my DBS check before I visited the school. During the introduction, the facilitator explained the aims of my observation, and reassured the children that I would not be grading their behaviour in the session. Furthermore, I assiduously avoided engaging in any interaction with either the actor-teachers or the participants during the two-hour observation periods in order to enable me to track the learning and teaching in a natural setting. I therefore placed myself at the back of the classroom solely for the purpose of observing and recording my field notes.

The play text used in the TiE programme was called *Along the Silk Road* (Big Brum, 2022), written by Chris Cooper and presenting a dramatization of an historical encounter which took place between the east and the west along the well-known ancient trading route. This programme further engaged pupils to explore the ways in which culture represents a variety of values and viewpoints on the world. It also provided them with the opportunity to engage in critical thinking by encouraging them to consider the relationship between self and others, as well as the identities of and differences between the characters.

5.4.2 Workshop structure and questions

Pre-performance workshop

The stage was divided into two parts, each featuring a distinct design as shown in Figure 5-1. On the left-hand side, the floor was covered with a dust-yellow colour and the

background depicted a room decorated with traditional patterns and drawings on the walls. These artistic elements were inspired by the traditional culture of the southwestern region of China. The set comprised a conventional wooden chair and desk on which were a porcelain cup, a pan brush and a coin. Additionally, there was a small stool on which were a wooden bowl and a knife. The right-hand side of the stage was decorated as a contemporary room including a floor and background in shades of grey. On one of the walls there was a white board displaying the question: 'What to do about migrants?' The set comprised a white desk featuring a steel filing cabinet positioned on the right-hand side, accompanied by three British flags displayed on the left-hand side and complemented by two red seats.



Figure 5-1 Set design of *Along the Silk Road* (researcher's photograph)

The facilitator put a simple question to the pupils with the intention of stimulating their observation of the details of the stage. The question and the subsequent replies given by pupils were as follows:

Excerpt 1

Q: When you look at the stage what do you see?

Pupils responded as follows:

- A tunnel.
- The painting on the wall.
- A man on the mountain.
- A small stool with a bowl.
- Two different parts, one side is modern age, another is ancient time.

- Written text on the wall.
- A workplace for discussion
- Table and pen.

Following the pupils' observation of the stage, the facilitator proceeded to provide an explanation regarding several of the objects while also expanding on the pupils' responses. As an example, he explained that the hole on the left-hand side of the stage served as a place of concealment for significant manuscripts. Additionally, he provided the class with information regarding the time difference between the two dramatic sections, one being ancient China and the other modern England.

Actor-teacher 1 continued to demonstrate the sculptures of Xuan Zang to the class and provided an historical introduction to this figure, also offering details of his expedition to obtain manuscripts from ancient India. Additionally, the actor-teacher explained the Chinese characters found on the manuscripts to the pupils. Subsequently, the whole class was divided into four groups in order to engage in discussions centred around quotations extracted from the manuscripts. These quotations encompassed the concepts of 'giving without attachment to self' (无相布施), 'living without attachment' (无住生活), 'cultivating without attainment' (无得而修) and 'liberating beings without notions of other' (无我度生). The questions posed by the four actor-teachers in each of the groups as well as the responses from the learners are listed below:

Excerpt 2

Q: What is the meaning of 'living without attachment to self' (无住生活)?

Pupils answered as follows:

- Living without things you love.
- Living without food and resources.
- Existing without things you love or need.
- Living a normal day and having fun.
- Surviving and existing.
- Attached to things to do with feelings

Excerpt 3

Q: What is attachment?

Pupils answered as follows:

- Something we cannot live without.

Excerpt 4

Q: What kinds of things are we attached to?

Pupils answered as follows:

- Friends, love, habits, cats and dogs, electricity, pillow, teddy bear.
- The servants attached to the dreams.

Excerpt 5

Q: What does 'self' mean?

Pupils answered as follows:

- Your personality.
- The way you behave.
- Your identity.
- You being you.

Excerpt 6

Q: What is the meaning of 'giving attachment to self' (无相布施)?

Pupils answered as follows:

- Sharing is caring.
- Being kind to people.
- Charity.
- To give without being selfish.
- Always thinking about other people.
- Buying something valuable, but not getting attached to it.
- Giving someone something without thinking about it.

Excerpt 7

Q: What is the meaning of 'liberating beings without notions of others' (无我度生)?

Pupils answered as follows:

- To free human beings without being judgemental.

Excerpt 8

Q: What is the meaning of 'cultivating without attainment (无得而修)'?

Pupils answered as follows:

- Helping without thinking about what you get back.

- Helping parents because you want to.
- Not everyone does it today, some people help others because of money.
- Doing something without getting anything back.
- Not for money.

The workshop commenced by emphasising the need for placing learners at the core of the learning process, in line with PCD aspects of learner-centred and process-oriented approaches. This was achieved by allowing them to observe and comprehend the symbolic meanings used in theatrical objects, and then helping them make connections between these abstract concepts and their own prior experiences, exemplifying PCD methods of bridging the gap between learning content and personal life. This pre-performance workshop not only equipped the learners with sophisticated comprehension tools for the interactive performance, but also connected crucial ancient Chinese concepts with the pupils' contemporary life, illustrating the PCD focus on making learning personally meaningful and culturally relevant. During this learning process, learners engaged in activities such as defining, listing, and stating essential facts, aligned with the PCD practice of facilitating structured yet exploratory tasks to scaffold learning. The facilitator's knowledge-based questions aimed to prepare the learners for subsequent tasks that included integrating abstract concepts into drama narratives, demonstrating the PCD approach of guiding learners through progressively complex tasks by building foundational understanding of learning content.

(1) Interactive performance: scene one

Following that series of questions and the pupils' various responses, the facilitator moved on to presenting an ancient coin to the pupils. He gave them an explanation of the coin's history, dating back two thousand years. Within the narrative, the characters engaged in a discussion of possibilities of action, deliberating between retaining possession of the ancient coin and traditional collections or returning it to China. Subsequently, the facilitator asked a question as an invitation to the imaginative journey, as shown below:

Excerpt 9:

Q: Can I share a story about this coin? A story across time and space, as well as a coin related to living and surviving.

Subsequently, the performance of the first scene began. It took place in Gansu province in China in the year 750CE. A servant, a young boy, is peeling vegetables while

contemplating, constantly asking for information from his master regarding the traders who travelled the Silk Road. His keen interest in them derives from his longing to gain insights into the writings of Xuan Zang. The servant also expressed his wish to acquire literacy abilities to the master, engaging subsequently in a conversation about the value of the coin.

Excerpt 10:

Q: Did you see the moment you talked about earlier?

- They have attachment.
- The servant is always thinking about his dream.

Excerpt 11:

Q: Did you see attachment in this scene?

- The servant is attached to the coin.
- The servant is attached to his thoughts and dreams.

Excerpt 12:

Q: Did 'living without attainment' happen in this scene?

- The master told the servants about getting more coins.

Excerpt 13:

Q: What does the servant value? What does he not value?

- He does not care about his job.
- He does not care about his clothes and how he presents himself.

Excerpt 14

Q: What does the servant want to learn?

- He wants to be free from the kitchen/ house.

In this part, the tenets of PCD are prominently foregrounded, with pupils actively engaged in the enhancement of their cognitive capacities through the medium of dramatic artistry. The activities of categorisation, clarification, analysis and interpretation are inherently consonant with the essential aspects of PCD, which underscore the cultivation of critical thinking and profound comprehension. A key principle of PCD is the advocacy of participatory learning, a notion that is distinctly manifest in the PCD' s pedagogical methodology. As participants respond to the queries posed by the facilitator, they are not

merely ingesting information but are also playing an active role in shaping their educational journey. This strategy, as delineated on pages 52-55, highlights the primacy of engagement and underscores the significance of educational kinship founded upon the collaborative construction of multiple competencies.

Furthermore, the principle of drama as an instrument for fostering empathy and the adoption of multiple perspectives is pivotal in this context. The necessity for learners to comprehend and subsequently represent the narrative content through contextually grounded and imaginative tableaux, performed by the actor-teacher, resonates with the principle that drama provides a medium for participants to investigate and articulate intricate concepts and affective responses within a secure and nurturing setting. This process facilitates:

- Embodiment: Pupils internalise the roles and scenarios, thereby facilitating a more profound appreciation and understanding of the subject matter.
- Reflection: The process of interpreting and representing engenders introspection concerning the pupils' own cognitive and affective responses, as well as those of their peers.
- Communication: The dramatic environment offers a forum for the articulation of understanding, allowing for creative and expressive modalities of communication.
- Collaboration: The co-construction of knowledge via dramatic engagement cultivates a spirit of collective endeavour and communal learning within the educational milieu.

By integrating these principles into the fabric of the PCD process, participants are not only acquiring knowledge but are also developing vital life competencies such as critical thought, empathy, and effective communication, which are indispensable for their holistic and societal progression.

Following the first scene of the performance, the facilitator prompted the pupils to consider the meaning of the question: 'how can I ever earn the coin' posed by the servant, as well as the response from the master: 'there is more to value than profit'. The facilitator additionally asked about what had been taught by the master to the servant and then asked about the educational aspirations of the servant. The responses of the pupils are presented below:

Excerpt 15:

Q: Why does the servant keep the coin instead of selling it to others?

- There are many things more important than money.
- He might want to help more people.

Excerpt 16:

Q: What is the master trying to teach the servant?

- Different values other than profit.
- The master is trying to teach the servant to value family and friendship.
- If you want to own something you need to return something good.

The actor-teacher integrated the responses given by the pupils and enriched them with a narrative in which the master expressed the wish for the servant to benefit from the inherent value. Actor-teacher 3 presented a range of values, including history, family and protection.

(2) Interactive performance: scene two

Scene two was set in Whitehall, a government building in London, in 2022. A civil servant engages in a conversation with an archivist from the British Museum over the potential return of numerous artefacts, specifically manuscripts and sacred objects, to China. Following the end of the performance, the actor-teachers started to facilitate a discussion regarding specific moments within the scene with the class.

Excerpt 17:

Q: What do the civil servant and the archivist value?

- The archivist wanted to send the collections back to where they belong.
- The archivist values her job as an archivist.
- The civil servants value money.

(3) Interactive performance: scene three

Scene three took place in the province of Gansu China, in the year 1905CE, approximately 1200 years after the first scene set in the same location. A British expedition will soon begin a quest to uncover ancient artefacts of historical significance, such as coins, manuscripts and statues of Buddha. Huang Tianshi, a practitioner of Daoism, intends to engage in the exchange of these valuable artefacts in order to gather

funds for the purpose of restoring the antiquated temple and preserving the sacred scriptures. Huang Tianshi perceives this as his own duty but his nephew has doubts about people from other countries. After the end of scene three, the facilitator moved forward to pose a series of questions to the learners. These questions were directly related to the themes and subjects depicted in the scene, as illustrated below:

Excerpt 18:

Q: What were they saying?

- Huang took out a coin, statue, gold and scrolls and wanted to sell them to the British expedition.

Excerpt 19:

Q: Why did Huang Tianshi want to sell those old findings?

- To rebuild the temple.
- To keep the old findings for history.
- To protect his family and the temple.

Excerpt 20:

Q: What is Huang Tianshi selling?

- History.
- Religion.
- Stories of ancestors.
- He is selling a coin, gold, history and ancestors.
- He is selling everything that is valuable for his family.
- He is selling himself and his nephew to protect the temple.

Excerpt 21:

Q: What did Huang Tianshi value the most?

- The temple.

(4) Interactive performance: scenes four to seven

Scene four also takes place in Whitehall in London, three weeks after scene two. The process of returning the collection to China has been delayed because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The discussion continues between the white civil servant, the archivist from the minority group and the historian of Chinese heritage, who have a debate

about the return of the collections to China. As the conversation progresses, the focus progressively shifts towards an exploration of their individual identities. A question asked by the facilitator about scene four after the end of the performance is shown below:

Excerpt 22:

Q: What were people saying and what were people not saying in this scene?

- When he asked 'are you British' did he like or dislike British people?

Scene five takes place in the same region as scene three, but in 1914, eleven years after the events of scene three. In this scene, a British artefact collector named Bentley, who states his affiliation with Xuan Zang, meets Huang Tianshi with the intention of acquiring all the icons and antique artefacts. Bentley has made a commitment to return all early Buddhist artefacts to their country of origin, India, ensuring their preservation and proper respect.

Scene six takes place in the same chamber as scene four, located in Whitehall in London in 2022. The historian discusses the Diamond Sutra (*Jingang Jing*, 金刚经), a significant Buddhist text. Master Xing Yun (星云法师), an influential Buddhist philosopher, summarises the ideas in the Diamond Sutra into four fundamental perspectives: 'giving without attachment to self' (无相布施) 'living without attachment' (无住生活) 'cultivating without attainment' (无得而修) 'liberating beings without notions of other' (无我度生). Additionally, there is a debate among them regarding the decision not to return the objects to China, as well as concerns related to racial identity issues.

The final scene includes both narratives in Gansu and London. The Chinese part takes place in Gansu province in 1914 when the British expedition team were given access to the entirety of the treasure concealed within the secret location by Huang Tianshi's nephew. The secretary of the British expedition team assured the teenager that the collection will be preserved properly, and that history will hold a sense of gratitude for their efforts. He conveyed to them that coming generations will come to understand the wisdom contained within the collections.

On the other side of the stage, occurring a few minutes after the preceding scene, we encounter a new scene set in Whitehall in 2022. An historian collects the remaining document sheets and puts them into rubbish bags. The scene comes to a open-ended conclusion for the participants to engage in it.

Through the use of application questions and analytical questions, these interactive performances effectively enhance pupils' learning interest and engagement, in line with PCD's focus on active enquiry and exploration. At the same time, these activities also develop pupils' competencies in demonstration, differentiation, correlation, comparison, questioning and experimentation, as discussed on page 53, exemplifying the essential PCD methodologies that promote critical reflection and reflective learning.

This process facilitated learners' acquisition of self-awareness, empathy towards others, and a comprehension of the world through involvement in in-depth discussion about real-life issues within a constructed fictional environment. Such an approach is in line with PCD's key focus on establishing an environment of creativity, as discussed on page 54, wherein learners are encouraged to explore and ruminate upon the complexities of real-world challenges.

In this manner, this workshop not only cultivated cognitive abilities but also advanced emotional and social maturation, in alignment with PCD's holistic philosophy of learner involvement. The integration of PCD principles within this framework underscores the transformative potential of dramatic pedagogy to engage the intellect, emotions, and social consciousness of the participants, thereby enriching the educational experience and fostering all-round development.

(5) Post-performance Reflection

The facilitator told the class of the collector's intention to put the manuscripts, coin and Buddha statues into a wooden chest, accompanied by a letter placed at its top. What could the contents of the letter be? The four actor-teachers were responsible for facilitating four pupil groups, enabling them to engage in discussions and document their views. These reflections were intended for individuals who might open the box of treasures in the future.

Excerpt 23:

Q: What could the content of the letter be? How can we make people know the value of it? What advice would you give on how to use it?

- Group A:

To anyone,

The coin went through history. It has a lot of value in friendship, love and religion. People fought and died over it. It has been stolen, people have become greedy.

Keep it. Do not sell it or people could die. There could be wars over it. It could cause tragedy. Keeping this valuable coin will save the world.

If you are from the UK, give it back to China. It's probably the safest thing to do.

WARNING: NEVER SELL OR STEAL!

- Group B:

Dear whoever opens this crate,

Please keep the things and the COIN safe, take good care of them. Do not sell them. Because they are special, they have been passed down from the old days. They have meaning apart from money. Pass them down if you can. Pass them to someone who understands their values, someone who does not sell them to get more money.

From Year 5

- Group C

Whoever finds this box,

There are valuables inside here that were special to people along the years. Whatever you do, try not to sell it because its value is worth more than profit.

From Year 5

- Group D

Dear China,

The coin in this box is not worth money ... Do not sell it. If you do, its value will disappear, because it is about protection, history, religion and culture.

Try to pass it on to your children so they can learn the value of this coin.

From Year 5

After the letters created by the four groups were shared, the facilitator and the learners formed a circle, depositing the letters into a container. The evaluation questions in this section fostered learners' abilities to assess, argue, agree, critique and evaluate, in line with PCD's emphasis on critical reflection and collaborative meaning-making.

Throughout each phase of the participatory workshop, participants extended their ability to identify issues, establish connections between their personal experiences and a fictional world, analyse the challenges faced by different characters, and assess and propose solutions to the story. This reflects one key PCD approach, where the focus is on the exploration of themes and ideas rather than performance, encouraging learners to engage

deeply with the content.

This exemplifies the necessity, procedure and relevance of giving priority to the process of acquiring knowledge, as advocated, over the demonstration of performance skills when integrating drama into an educational setting. By prioritising the learning journey, PCD ensures that learners develop not only cognitive skills but also emotional and social awareness. In short, these exercises underscore the PCD principles that prioritise the development of a holistic learning experience, where the journey of discovery is valued above the mere acquisition of acting proficiency, fostering a more nuanced and multi-dimensional educational outcome.

5.4.3 Questioning techniques applied in Big Brum's workshop

As previously stated, the workshop conducted by Big Brum of *Along the Silk Road* effectively incorporated conceptual questions, focusing on a higher level of cognitive thinking, a pedagogical approach which is not commonly employed in conventional teacher-centred and content-based educational settings. Remembering and understanding questions is commonly employed in conventional knowledge-based education because the primary purpose of these two categories of questioning is to facilitate recall, illustration and the elucidation of fundamental information included within instructional materials presented by educators. These didactic features have been commonly noticed in the Chinese education system for a long time, seemingly hindering the NCR initiatives which encourage a participatory approach to teaching to stimulate learners' interest and response. The analysis of Big Brum's workshop with a focus on teaching through questions might provide a possibility of shifting from teacher-centred instruction to learner-centred, discussion-based and enquiry-based learning.

The following is a list of twenty-three different questioning strategies which were employed during Big Brum's interactive two-hour workshops. The subsequent examination of these questioning strategies is conducted from the perspective of Bloom's taxonomy, as well as the frameworks proposed by Heathcote, Morgan and Saxton.

Table 5-1 Questioning techniques applied during Big Brum’s interactive workshop

	Examples	Questioning category	Bloom’s taxonomy
1	When you look on the stage, what do you see?	Seeking information Assessing pupils’ interest	Remembering (Recalling)
2	What is the meaning of ‘living without attachment to self’?	Revealing experience making connections	Understanding
3	What is attachment?	Revealing experience making connections	Understanding
4	What kinds of things are we attached to?	Broadening	Applying
5	What does ‘self’ mean?	Revealing experience making connection	Understanding
6	What is the meaning of ‘giving attachment to self’?	Revealing experience making connection	Understanding
7	What is the meaning of ‘liberating beings without notions of others’?	Revealing experience making connection	Understanding
8	What is the meaning of ‘cultivating without attainment’?	Revealing experience making connection	Understanding
9	Can I share a story about this coin?	Unifying the class	Evaluating
10	Did you see the moment you talked about earlier?	Seeking information	Remembering
11	Did you see attachment in this scene?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
12	Did ‘living without attainment’ happen in this scene?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
13	What does the servant value? What does he not value?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
14	What does the servant want to learn?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
15	Why does the servant keep the coin instead of selling it to others?	Probing	Analysing
16	What is the master trying to teach the servant?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
17	What do the civil servant and the archivist value?	Inferring and interpreting	Analysing

Table 5-1 Questioning techniques applied during Big Brum’s interactive workshop (Continued)

	Examples	Questioning category	Bloom’s taxonomy
18	What were they saying?	Questions that focus on meaning behind textual content	Analysing
19	Why does Huang Tianshi want to sell those old findings?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
20	What is Huang Tianshi selling?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
21	What did Huang Tianshi value the most?	Inferring and interpreting	Applying
22	What are people saying and what are people not saying in this scene?	Questions that focus on meaning behind textual content	Analysing
23	What could the content of the letter be?	Reflection Questions that focus on future action or projection	Evaluating Creating
24	How can we make people know the value of it?	Reflection Questions that focus on future action or projection	Evaluating Creating
25	What advice would you give on how to use it?	Reflection Questions that focus on future action or projection	Evaluating Creating

(1) Questions for seeking information and assessing pupils’ interest

The facilitator at the pre-performance workshop exclusively employed a single question, denoted as Q1, which corresponds to the category of a remembering question in Bloom's taxonomy. This question was used to collect information and evaluate the level of engagement among the pupils. In a similar vein, prior to the commencement of the first scene in the performance, the facilitator posed an additional basic question, labelled as Q15, with the intention of fostering a sense of unity among the learners and facilitating their transition to the following part of the programme. This particular question can be interpreted as an invitation to engage in a new task, one which can be pursued further with the commitment of learners. This emphasis on pupils’ commitment was highly valued by Heathcote in her teaching approach. These two enquiry approaches are commonly employed at the beginning of a drama session and when introducing a new assignment inside a learning procedure.

(2) Questions for revealing experience and making connections

Following the simple factual questioning, the facilitator quickly transitioned to learning resources which emphasise conceptual understanding, necessitating a heightened level of focus and involvement from the pupils. The six questions Q2, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q7 and Q8 are examples of questions which have the purpose of eliciting personal experiences and establishing connections with the learning content. These questions played a crucial role in fostering pupils' comprehension of the learning material and facilitating the integration of their existing life experiences with the topic matter. These six questions related to the domain of understanding questions in Bloom's taxonomy. They were intended to measure the level of learners' comprehension of specific concepts and the overarching theme of the story. In order to address comprehension questions, the pupils were expected to convert the content to convey the intended point of view, analyse the information presented in the learning text, and deduce potential implications from the learning material. After understanding the questions, the pupils started a cognitive process of generating meaning within the realm of communication.

(3) Broadening questions

Between the questions revealing experiences and making connections there was a broadening question, Q4, which encouraged the pupils to incorporate additional factual information in an easily digestible way during their discussions and analyses. The broadening question is categorised as applying the question according to Bloom's taxonomy. Learners are encouraged to apply the knowledge they have gained in a variety of scenarios which are similar to one another. Throughout the facilitation, the actor-teachers prompted the learners to establish connections between previous discussions and their personal experiences. Not only does this form of learning prove to be useful in cultivating critical thinking abilities among the learners, it also motivates them to participate in deeper thinking throughout the remaining parts of the workshop.

(4) Questions for recalling facts

After the performance of the first scene of *Along the Silk Road*, the facilitator posed a series of questions which required the participants to recall facts. These questions were Q10, Q11 and Q12, and their purpose was to establish a strong foundation for later analysis and exploration. This type of questioning is related to the remembering questions of Bloom's taxonomy. More specifically, remembering questions focus on the capacity to

identify and maintain information acquired from prior educational activities.

(5) Inference and interpretation questions

Inference and interpretation questions, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q17, Q19, Q20, Q21 and Q23, formed an important proportion of the overall interactive performance. Several of the questions in this series, Q13, Q14, Q16, Q19, Q20 and Q21 correspond with the application level of Bloom's taxonomy, which means that they require the utilisation of previously acquired knowledge in a novel situation. The other two inference and interpretation questions, Q15 and Q17, were intended to facilitate analysis and create connections between ideas in Bloom's taxonomy.

(6) Questions that focus on meaning behind textual content

Questions 18 and 22 probed the underlying meaning of the textual content. The function of this type of questioning is to discover the significance which is crucial for comprehending the learning content. These questions pertain to the process of analysis as outlined in Bloom's taxonomy.

(7) Reflecting questions and questions that focus on future action or projection

The final three questions, which prompted the pupils to compose a letter addressed to any potential discoverer of the collections, encompassed reflective and prospective-oriented questions. These types of question facilitate the analysis of the consequences of activities through the formulation of hypotheses. They belong within the realm of assessing and creating questions in Bloom's taxonomy, demanding the highest level of cognitive engagement from learners.

Big Brum therefore employed a variety of questioning techniques in the interactive workshop. These questioning strategies, known as Socratic questioning, are aimed at stimulating critical thinking skills and encouraging learners to probe, analyse and reflect on the facts, concepts and reasons throughout various parts of the performance. The workshop encompassed a range of questioning techniques, spanning from basic recalling information, which represents the lowest degree of cognitive engagement, to the more advanced level of task of reflecting on concepts and articulating personal experiences in an organised way, which represents the highest level of cognitive engagement. The arrangement of the questions which Big Brum employed adheres to Bloom's taxonomy of learning, assisting educators in developing a proficient teaching and learning technique.

The categorisation of questioning approaches proposed by Morgan and Saxton encompassed three principal categories: eliciting information, shaping understanding and pressing for reflection. The majority of the questions used in Big Brum's workshop pertained to inference and interpretation. These types of question require active participation from learners as they are required to thoroughly analyse, substantiate and elucidate statements, situations or conclusions.

A compelling demonstration of the significance of actively structuring the learning of learners inside a framework which is contextual, imaginative and intellectual is shown by the example of Big Brum's questioning techniques. In addition, employing a questioning strategy can work in conjunction with educational theory in order to improve and promote the active participation of pupils in the process of dramatisation. In my observations, the pupils sustained almost the same level of curiosity throughout the two-hour workshop. This helped me to think about using different types of question to keep the teaching approach dynamic and to be adaptive to the functions of different questions. In addition, I observed that this active engagement took place in a contextualised learning experience, which was highly emphasised by the UK-based specialists interviewed in Chapter 4. Moreover, it was a vivid illustration of exploring conceptual learning and taking ownership of knowledge. Pupils in the workshop were not familiar with these ancient Chinese phrases and stories of the Silk Road, but this unfamiliar content was explored through a combination of participatory workshops which had lots of gaps for learners to fill with their imagination. This process of filling the gaps in the story was accomplished by the facilitators' questioning strategies, which enabled the learners to recall their existing experiences and enlarge their knowledge.

This teaching through questions could be very practical for Chinese educators who are facing difficulties in fulfilling the requirements in the NCR to update their teaching into a participatory, discussion-based and enquiry-based learning approach, as well as connecting learning materials with learners' experiences.

5.5 PCD teachers: facilitation skills and training

Big Brum has undertaken a cooperation with the Drama Rainbow Education Centre for almost fifteen years, working closely together on programme development, session design and guidance on facilitation skills. Drama Rainbow, an independent institution, offers comprehensive teacher training programmes, including short-term, long-term (week, month and annual) programmes, as well as PCD sessions for various age groups.

Chris Cooper held a ten-day masterclass in Beijing, called *Imagination, self and society: contemporary theatre-in-education (TiE) practice* at Drama Rainbow in August 2023. I worked as an interpreter for this workshop. The workshop consisted of twenty-three participants who came from different regions of mainland China. The majority of them were drama teachers for various age groups and four were international school teachers in international schools in China. A few participants were university students. In addition, the majority of the participants had previously taken part in Drama Rainbow's beginner level, medium level or annual PCD training curriculum. Cooper's session covered a wide range of areas designed to help participants to effectively plan a TiE project and sessions for pupils. According to Cooper (2023, August), the content included an introduction to the history and key concepts of TiE, such as site, centre, image, dramatic action, objects and levels of meaning. It also emphasised the significance of using age-appropriate materials for storytelling and framing various tasks for participants. Additionally, it highlighted facilitation skills such as role-play and questioning techniques. The session also provided crucial principles for structuring a TiE programme.

It is important to note that the content of this workshop was not conveyed through lectures or speeches, but rather through a process of enacting the story in small groups and embodying their comprehension of the theoretical components by exploring four TiE scripts which targeted different age groups. The four plays were *Back and Beyond the Sofa*, *Minotaur*, *Along the Silk Road* and *The Clearing*.

Back and Beyond the Sofa, targeted at 3-6 year olds, explores the way in which infants and pupils understand their relationships with others and potential issues within their family through imagining a story of a little girl's conversation with a doll. The workshop commenced with the devising of a depiction of a little girl holding a doll and secretly observing another room through a doorway. Subsequently, the participants were invited to form smaller groups with the purpose of expanding the depiction by incorporating other roles and a phrase which would elucidate what is happening in this family and the underlying reason behind the little girl's hidden observation of another room. The groups developed plenty of phrases, such as 'Don't leave me', 'Enough', 'Daddy and Mummy love you' and 'Bear with it'. The devising of the rest of the narrative then followed after an introduction of key concepts in TiE, including image, action, object, line, sound and resonance. Cooper highlighted the importance of resonating with reality in TiE projects and he placed emphasis on the awareness of the diverse age-groups' experiences and learning capabilities. This play reflects real-life scenarios which occur in 3-6 year-old

infants' and pupils' life experiences, and it allows participants to fill in the gaps with their own background. It became apparent that one of the most useful steps at the beginning of a session is to assess participants' learning circumstances, such as cultural background and life experience. Additionally, the use of open-ended questions is vital for guiding participants to enhance their learning interest and focus on tasks.

One day after the workshop, the participants engaged in a TiE interactive performance entitled *You and Me*, which was an adaptation from *Back and Beyond the Sofa* referencing the Chinese context of the change in the one-child policy. Following this TiE performance, the class had a Q&A at the beginning of the morning session. Cooper explained that the adaptation of the story had taken into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' lives, particularly the loss of connection with their classmates and friends.

I believe that incorporating an interactive TiE performance during the masterclass is highly advantageous for the participants. It allows them to comprehend through personal experience how this distinct art form places emphasis on active involvement by the participants. It also aids in understanding the essential concepts presented by the facilitator in the workshop and enables direct communication between the participants and the playwright and facilitator regarding the artistic and educational value of the performance. Finally, it provides a practical demonstration of how to connect learners' personal experiences with TiE practices.

Minotaur, suitable for 8-11 year-olds, is an example of using an ancient story to mirror contemporary society's issues. The participants collaborated in groups to explore the issues in a story which resonates with our current society and to produce interpretations of these reality issues in each scene. They also engaged in discussions to identify instances in the script where these essential concepts were illustrated. Based on my observation, this could be a major barrier in their learning process, as the majority of the participants had little knowledge of these concepts. Following a group-based devising process and subsequent discussion, the participants' response to some key concepts in the story had both similarities and differences, which again reinforces the importance of allowing diverse engagement from learners in educational settings for different tasks. A further important notion of "layers of meaning" (Davis, 2014: 67-68), was introduced. Cooper explained to the participants that this is a valuable instrument which can be applied in various instructional contexts and with different materials, such as exploration during role-play and character analysis in a story. Cooper took an example from the story to

elucidate this concept as follows:

- Action: The Queen mother slaps her daughter.
- Motivation: Because of her daughter's impertinence towards her.
- Investment: A Queen or mother must be respected.
- Model: Because I have learned from my mother regarding the consequences that daughters face when they disobey the Queen and mother.
- Stance: There exists a natural order in which superiors must be obeyed at all times. That is the basis of civilisation, law and order and loyalty to your country.

From my perspective, the use of this concept during a PCD session avoids the tendency to make broad generalisations about an individual's action and circumstances. Instead, it seeks to assist learners in comprehending the story by relating it to their own personal, societal and other relevant events related to the characters' context. Participants responded favourably, but it might need some practice to instil a proficient comprehension and awareness of this concept.

This notion was further explored by the participants in the next workshops, which took place over a few days. *Along the Silk Road*, targeted 11-14 year-old pupils, delving into value and authenticity through the context of the Silk Road in the past and now, as well its connections between western and eastern regions. According to Cooper (2023) this story explores and examines the themes of cultural commodification, imperialism and the consequences of British colonial history in this story (unpublished workshop material).

This is also an example of using history as a source to engage pupils' learning. The concept of 'levels of meaning' was employed in the group exploration of actions, images and objects. I noticed that the participants were more capable of analysing these abstract ideas which they had not previously encountered in one-off training experiences. The participants' gradual comprehension grew through the facilitator's guidance and support focused on the key principles of PCD which align with constructivist theory which emphasises scaffolding and co-constructing rather than didactic teaching and passive learning. In particular, the majority of the tasks were completed in small groups, which allowed a progressive development of understanding and knowledge and encouraged collaborative problem-solving among the participants. Although the few participants who worked in international schools showed more proficiency with this discussion-based learning and teaching style, the majority of the participants needed additional time to adapt to this interactive approach.

The concepts of enactment and embodiment were again emphasised in the learning of *The Clearing*, designed for 14+ year-olds, which explores the topics of climate change and ecological breakdown in a future setting. I noticed that several participants expressed strong enjoyment of the process of enacting. They found it beneficial for exploring the story in depth and attempting to try out various possibilities suggested during group discussions. They also realised that enacting is necessary for specific details in the narrative to emerge, as opposed to simply reading a script.

During the last few days in the workshop, the facilitator provided a comprehensive explanation of the process involved in designing the structure and facilitating the TiE interactive workshop for learners. In order to gain a quick and comprehensive understanding of the workshop framework of a TiE workshop example based on *Monitor*, I condensed the 27 intricate activities into six distinct sections as follows:

- 1) Introducing the upcoming session to the targeted age-group learners. This introduction not only provides basic information about the session, the facilitator and actor-teacher, it also emphasises the protection of pupils.
- 2) Beginning by recognising the significance of the objects in the scene as this assists pupils in making connections to the main ideas of the story.
- 3) Guiding learners into the fictitious world of the story. Then the facilitator performed as a middle-ranking character and guided learners to undertake tasks. This step facilitated the pupils' immersion at a safe distance and the task was distributed in a form of a letter asking them to create an exhibition, which is an important sign demonstrating the contract and pupils' agreement to engage. Heathcote put emphasis on the importance of obtaining pupils' agreement at the start of an exploration in a session, as it serves as a protection from emotional distress and a sign of enhancing pupils' learning interest (Wagner, 1980: 60-61).
- 4) Involving pupils in small-group activities, and the framing for the whole session had been accomplished up to this point.
- 5) Deepening learners' participation by exploring and enacting some key moments of different scenes in the narrative which are connected to the key concepts. Cooper listed nine participation tasks which they had completed the previous day on *Monitor*. As stated in Chapter 5, various forms of participation were commonly applied in the implementation of the TiE project. Between different participation events there was a performance embedded in the actual TiE project, as discussed in Chapter 5.

- 6) The performance of the facilitator as the person who distributes the task of designing an exhibition. The participants were then requested to share their thoughts on the exhibition.

During my observation, I noticed that when the facilitator took on the role, he wore a lanyard with the character's name and company logo. He emphasised the importance of using objects to differentiate between the characters and the facilitator. This object signing different roles further ensures the protection of the participants and prevents any confusion between different tasks. Cooper showed the structure and facilitation strategies of a participatory workshop for learners, which consists of a pre-performance workshop, an interactive performance and an after-performance workshop. Cooper also highlighted the importance of questioning techniques in maintaining pupils' involvement during the interactive workshop.

Furthermore, during the ten-day workshop, Drama Rainbow held an evening event entitled *Beyond the Horizon: Summer School Community Events* on 10 August 2023. This event was designed to develop a community of PCD teachers through a workshop which encouraged discussion and experiential exchange between the participants. Approximately one hundred individuals from various locations in mainland China participated in Drama Rainbow's summer school workshops, which were categorised into beginner, middle and advanced levels. The purpose of the community establishment event was to review existing PCD practices, explore opportunities for extensive cooperation in forming clusters in the field of PCD and propose potential resources in various regions for integration. Based on my observation, the attendees displayed enthusiasm towards this networking opportunity, with a significant number of them engaging in further discussions and exchanging ideas even after the session concluded. From my perspective, this analysis and projection of the progress of PCD in mainland China proved beneficial for PCD instructors by enabling them to familiarise themselves with each other's practices and engage in problem-solving discussions.

As discussed in Chapter 4 on the interviews with the UK-based PCD specialists, the importance of effective teacher training was noted in order to maximise the artistic and educational value of PCD. Effective teacher training is beneficial in equipping drama teachers with a comprehensive set of skills and capabilities. These encompass the incorporation of knowledge of the principles of PCD and pedagogy; the ability to adapt and be flexible in meeting the varied needs of pupils; the role of the teacher as a facilitator;

the capacity to select materials and design appropriate sessions for different age groups; the empowerment of learners to take ownership of their learning process; and proficiency in facilitation skills and assessment. In addition, the majority of them recognised the advantages of sustained international collaboration as opposed to isolated one-off workshops, as stated in Chapter 3 in the discussion of the Chinese teachers' interviews. The recommendations made by the UK specialists and the Chinese teachers often focused on engagement in participatory learning processes and learning through workshops, as previously noted. This included a strong emphasis on active participation and applying what has been learned in everyday tasks. This vividly demonstrates a discussion-based, learner-centred and experiential approach to learning which has often been lacking in most teachers' previous personal learning and teaching experiences.

The role of the facilitator was focused on guiding and supporting the learners' learning experiences, rather than adopting a didactic teaching style. The combination of a thorough introduction to the history and essential principles of PCD through an exploration of four plays designed for different age groups helped participants to develop a relatively comprehensive understanding of several dimensions. In particular, participating in a proper TiE interactive performance deepened their understanding. One month after the summer school, a total of nine participants of the 23, including me, gathered for an online meeting to reflect and share our learning experiences. During the meeting, we discussed the ways in which the ten-day programme had enhanced our comprehension and application of PCD in our teaching practices. This included various aspects such as the transformation of the teacher's role into that of a facilitator, the use of the concept of angle of connection to connect pupils' experiences with learning materials, the creation of sessions and breaking down stories to align with learners' existing experiences, interests and abilities, the philosophy and pedagogical comprehension of PCD, the significance of incorporating drama elements to enhance learning materials and empower pupils' problem-solving and decision-making skills, and the recognition of diverse teaching approaches to actively involve pupils in their engagement with learning materials and small group discussions.

In the next chapter, I shall present a case study of Freshwater TiE company demonstrating how PCD can activate learners' all-round development using role-play as a key strategy.

Chapter 6

Activating pupils' all-round development through role-play strategy in PCD: a case study of Freshwater TiE Company

This chapter explores the use of role-play methods in PCD to enrich pupils' learning experiences and cultivate learners' all-round development through workshop observations and semi-structured interviews with members of the Freshwater TiE company. The chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of the definition, classification and function of role-play. It provides three workshop examples of history and geography learning content to illustrate how role-play is employed by facilitators to empower learners to take ownership of the learning experience. Finally, it presents facilitators' reflections and practices on the relationship between drama and education through semi-structured interviews.

6.1 Theoretical underpinnings of role-play

Dorothy Heathcote's use of role-play in learning was one of her most influential approaches. It was argued by Wagner (1979: 128-129) that the use of roles not only amplifies and intensifies emotions, it also protects the participants by providing the objectivity needed for reflection. According to Heathcote, the term 'role-taking' refers to a broad concept of educational drama which can be used to comprehend social situations or engage in imaginative experience by identifying with social situations. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the use of role-playing since it helps them to foster their ability in decision-making as well as promote heightened awareness and comprehension. Heathcote highlighted the versatility of role-playing in terms of accommodating a wide range of personalities and instructional scenarios (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984: 49-52). O'Neill and Lambert (1990: 138-141) classified the category of role within Heathcote's method into three levels of status. The high status role comprises individuals who hold positions of authority in the story, such as captains, gang bosses and leaders. Low status comprises individuals in humble positions, such as apprentices and new arrivals. Medium status refers to individuals who belong between these two rank positions, such as go-betweens and seconds-in-command. In their fundamental book *So you want to use role play? A new approach in how to plan*, Bolton and Heathcote (1999: 58) elaborated on discussions regarding role-play. They explained that the way in which pupils learn knowledge in a drama class is not by passive reception but rather through the process of creating

knowledge collectively.

Bolton and Heathcote (1999: 58) outlined three dimensions which affect role-play: the perception of the information that is to be learned, the perception of the class, and the working environment. These dimensions are relevant to the type of role-play that will be appropriate, as well as the necessary preparation and exercises for reflective activities to enhance learning. They pointed out that prior to engaging in the role-play, an evaluation has to be conducted based on the aspects of accessibility (subject), investment (class) and facilities (space and time) which are available. They argued that the content must be both accessible and captivating for the learners; it cannot be either too closely related or too far removed from their areas of interest and experience. In short, the topic encompasses both intellectual and emotional issues which require the use of suitable stimuli to engage learners. In order to ensure the accessibility of the content, it is important to examine the children's perspective and attitude as these factors greatly influence their views. In many cases, it might be challenging to arrange the necessary facilities and allocate sufficient time, which requires the facilitators to possess the skill to adjust the material accordingly (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999: 59- 62).

Additionally, Bolton and Heathcote stated that the second dimension regarding the selection of role-play is primarily determined by the teacher's expectations of the class and pupils' engagement with the fiction, specifically in terms of the level of responsibility they are willing to accept. The degree to which learners are interested in the content which is being conveyed to them, and more especially the way in which they are connected to the events described in the narrative, is the most important aspect that must be taken into consideration. The learners need to participate in framed situations and roles, including as historians, commentators, guides, investigators, recorders, critics, witnesses and so on. Both the participants' level of authority and their amount of alienation from the event are conveyed through the frame. Moreover, the selection of a particular position dictates the appropriate language, vocabulary, accent, body language and behaviour to be employed. Consequently, specific roles involve specific degrees of responsibility, which has an impact on the learning qualities of pupils (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999: 63-65).

Another essential component in the selection of role-play activities is time, which serves as a representation of the frame. The following list notes several types of time which were described as elements in role-play by Bolton and Heathcote (1999: 66-70):

- a. The past recalled as narrative;

- b. Present actions mixed with asides in the past tense;
- c. Employing the present tense in a narrative that accompanies virtual actions;
- d. Current time;
- e. Present moment with indicated illustration; and
- f. Actual time.

The third component of role-play is ‘follow-up’, which involves reflection to enable participants to realise and reassess what has been learned in the content.

Bolton and Heathcote evaluated the significance of role-play in learners' learning, listing advantages which cannot be achieved by other learning approaches. They highlighted that role-play facilitates an alteration in viewpoint or provides a basis for the advancement of a necessary and subsequent stage of constructive reflection beyond the role-play. They also emphasised that role-play achieves significant influence because of three key factors: (1) its capacity to offer a shared learning experience; (2) its effectiveness in stimulating participants' perspectives; and (3) self-observation within a group (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999: 178). They further gave an explanation of the six learning outcomes which stem from role play: behavioural practice, information acquisition, moving beyond information acquisition to understanding implications, training in inquiry skills, attention to detail, and role-play for changing values and attitudes. They also discussed training in how to use role-play effectively (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999: 179-185).

Acting skills are not a required ability for facilitators, as Bolton and Heathcote (1999: 176) stated, but they did acknowledge the importance of effective communication through signing and asking questions. Heathcote highlighted the importance of skillful questioning for drama teachers. She explained that questioning serves several functions in drama, including setting the context, generating interest, challenging superficial thinking, guiding the direction of the drama, establishing the participants' status, managing pupils' behaviour, and reflecting on and evaluating the learning experience (Wagner, 1979: 60-66; O'Neill & Lambert, 1990: 141-142). They also highlighted signing as another essential method for role-play (O'Neill, 2015:70-78; Bolton & Heathcote, 1999: 89-111).

These points were embedded in the sessions observed by the researcher and brought lived

experience to the texts.

6.2 Workshop examples of implementing role-play for enhancing pupils' learning experience

6.2.1 Using PCD to encourage pupils' engagement in history

Session Title: Great Fire of London

Date and school: 16 September 2022, Smallberry Green Primary School, London.

Capacity: 23 pupils

Theme: Experience London in 1666

Subject: History

Age group: 6-7 years (Y2)

Learning areas: Residents' life in 1666; rebuilding London after the Great Fire; Samuel Pepys's diary of this event.

The workshop encompassed three primary areas of study: the daily existence of inhabitants in 1666, the subsequent reconstruction efforts carried out in London following the devastating Great Fire, and the invaluable insights provided by Samuel Pepys's diary, which documented this significant historical event.

Twenty-three pupils from Key Stage 1 participated in the workshop collaboratively. Each pupil in the class participated in the representation of a variety of characters during the session. These characters included fleas, rodents and individuals who were suffering from fear during the plague. The application of body gestures, physical movement and facial expressions functioned as an approach to recreating the historical context, thereby facilitating the children's knowledge of the period to which they collectively 'journeyed'.

The facilitator-in-role became a witness to the Great Fire of London and gave an invitation to the entire class to embark on a voyage that would take them back in time to the year 1666. One of the responses that the participants provided in replying to the request was a popular rhyme that went as follows: 'In sixteen hundred and sixty-six, London was burned like little sticks'. While acting out their roles as residents who lived in Pudding Lane, the street where the Great Fire started, the learners acted out their roles

collectively. Following the establishment of an agreement, the facilitator and the pupils participated in a simulated scenario which indicated the children's readiness to set aside their suspicions and accept the fictitious roles and circumstances that were presented to them. It therefore laid a solid foundation for further dramatic endeavours to be undertaken. Learners were actively involved in the process of creating the setting, which was systematically constructed by the facilitator through a series of activities, including adding details of the street where the fire started.

In order to create a representation of the historical street, the facilitator lined up the pupils in two rows in a face-to-face configuration. Employing open-ended questions, the facilitator encouraged the pupils to participate in a cognitive activity in which they were encouraged to imagine and describe the visual qualities of Pudding Lane. In their descriptions, the pupils used words like 'wooden,' 'narrow' and 'smelly.' Subsequently, the entire class was divided into six groups, each of which represented residents of Pudding Lane. These included people who worked in a wide variety of occupations, such as greengrocers, butchers, labourers and bakers. In order to convey the idea that the market is prospering and alive with activity, every group loudly declared their sales slogans: the expressions 'Juicy apples!' and 'Ripe pears!' 'Fresh baked bread!' were used. Through the simulation of the narrow street in an historical era, these activities served as a reflection of the local way of life.

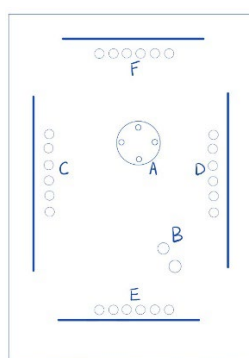
In the initial phases of the PCD session, the pupils' interests were heightened through interactivity and fun. The presence of smiles and laughter from the start of the session demonstrates the liveliness that PCD sessions can offer in bringing learning materials to life and thus enriching the learning process. This aligns with PCD's emphasis on learner engagement through active participation and enjoyment, which ensures a more immersive and meaningful educational experience as discussed on page 52. Through the integration of other characters, including objects and animals, the pupils' awareness of the narrative's context, features and details is strengthened. This reflects the PCD approach of using imaginative play and multiple perspectives to deepen understanding and create connections with the subject material, thereby further reinforcing the educational benefits of prioritising the learning process over performance outcomes.

In an effort to represent the very start of the Great Fire, the pupils who were a part of a bakery group acted out the roles of workers, an oven and fire. After that, the facilitator proceeded to hand out red ribbons to the other pupils and then continued the narrative by

describing a servant who had neglected to properly secure the door to the oven. As a result of this carelessness, a wooden object that was lying on the floor caught fire and a group of learners swung their red ribbons in a manner that progressed from slow to fast, demonstrating how the fire was growing in scale. During the time that more groups were gradually entering the area; the facilitator presented a detailed account of the fire's growing size and rate of progress. Everyone contributed to this enactment in-role as a flame to suggest the fire spreading out to all of the corners of the neighbourhood. After that, the pupils fell slowly to the ground, which was a depiction of the prolonged duration of the Great Fire and the tremendous impact it had on a number of structures.



Pupils depicting the narrow street



The whole class in role as greengrocers, butchers, workers and baker who lived in Pudding Lane.



Group F create a depiction of how the accident started in a bakery, and two pupils act out the door of the oven.

Figure 6-1 Collective role-play activities in the workshop of the Great Fire of London

A series of open-ended questions were asked by the facilitator in order to elicit descriptions of the street in the months following the Great Fire. The pupils offered their ideas concerning probable courses of action and ways to get away from the current scenario. Following the re-enactment of the events that occurred before and after the incident, the pupils took on the collective role of residents of Pudding Lane. They were able to maintain a level of detachment due to the collective character of the exercise, which made it possible for them to easily access the historical event. In my view, the sequence of collective role-play contributed significantly to establishing a supportive environment to capture pupils' learning interests. This sequence started with a whole-class depiction of the scenario of Pudding Lane, followed by low-status roles in small groups, and then focused on illustrating the reason for the Great Fire. The sequence highly protected the learners by framing them as residents in the story, which gradually allowed them to proceed to the centre of the story. This also successfully laid a foundation for subsequent activities for further exploration. This role was reinforced by the facilitator

through the use of appropriate costumes and props during the various exercises. This helped to maintain the engagement of the participants and encouraged a more in-depth study of the task, which followed later in the session. The subsequent statements represented the participants' responses to the open-ended questions. As a result of the massive fire, Pudding Lane might be described as 'heavy smoke', 'scary', 'hot' and 'noisy'. London after the fire was described by the participants as 'crowded', 'people running', 'buildings collapsing'. As we make our way 'out of London, anywhere safe,' we have to ensure that we have 'food, water, and pets with us wherever we go'; 'I am surprised, shocked and sad'.

Afterwards, the pupils, in-role collectively as London citizens who had escaped from the catastrophic conflagration, were distributed into four distinct cohorts tasked with the responsibilities of making a fire, establishing shelter and preparing food. The facilitator encouraged the pupils to take on the role of the Mayor of London and gave the volunteer a formal hat that was appropriate for the occasion. As a result of the mayor's perceived lack of seriousness over the fire event, the residents were guided by the facilitator in conveying their dissatisfaction with the mayor. The facilitator led the pupils to express their anger loudly, and she noticed some of them saying key sentences linked to the previous section, and she signed to them as an acknowledgement and invited them to continue. Then the facilitator went back to the mayor and reminded him to share the suggestions regarding the following actions. Then, when the inhabitants found that the mayor would be announcing some good news regarding the reconstruction of the city, they expressed their support and enthusiasm for the mayor. The volunteer was always supported by the facilitator step by step, the tasks were allocated one by one and this reduced pupils' anxiety about remembering all of the texts and tasks. Then the facilitator encouraged the volunteer mayor to make an announcement about the rebuilding of the city under the guidance of an architect-designer named Christopher Wren. Then the facilitator asked questions about how to rebuild the city, what materials were needed for maintaining it and what plan could be considered realistic to achieve the makeover. Then the facilitator acted in-role as Wren and following a small group discussion, the class came to the conclusion that stone would be the principal material for the re-construction on the grounds that it is inflammable. In addition, pupils took the facilitators' suggestion that the widths of the streets be increased.

During these learning exercises, pupils embodied the characteristics associated with the specific time and location of where the great fire occurred by establishing the street and

market through dramatic activities. This immersive and embodied learning is a hallmark of PCD, where learners actively participate in constructing meaning through role-play and imaginative engagement. The experience incorporated various sensory modalities, including visual perception (imagining the aged wooden building), auditory perception (listening to the market sellers' slogans), olfactory perception (detecting the unpleasant smell of the crowded and dirty streets) and vestibular perception (the sensation of movement as the fire spreads). These multi-sensory, experiential activities exemplify PCD's emphasis on holistic learning, encouraging learners to engage fully with their environment to enhance both cognitive and emotional understanding. By utilising these experiential techniques, the activities promoted pupils' cognitive and social learning in an entertaining and informative way, illustrating PCD's approach to making learning engaging, participatory, and personally meaningful.

The learners then used their imaginative hats and knots to embark on a voyage across time to the year 2022 by chanting the rhythmic incantation 'Here we come. We've learned a lot and had such fun', while simultaneously the facilitator guided the whole class to shake their bodies and move their hands to imitate sitting in a functioning time machine. For the purpose of determining whether or not the pupils had a sufficient understanding of the historical event's background and particulars, the instructor asked closed questions about the Great Fire of London.

These physical games involve wearing imaginative hats, pressing the time machine buttons and jumping in a circle at the start and end of the session. Such activities align with PCD principles by serving as essential steps for both in-role and out-of-role experiences, particularly beneficial for early years learners, where imaginative play fosters engagement and emotional safety. These activities function as essential steps for both in-role and out-of-role experiences, particularly for participants in early years. Additionally, these activities can also be viewed as a collective commitment to the process of experiential learning, which is central to PCD's focus on learning through experience and active participation rather than performance alone. At the same time, they provided a structured frame for learners to actively engage in cognitive processes while securely exploring and experiencing emotions through virtual and creative exercises, emphasising PCD's role in providing a safe, imaginative space for personal and social development.

For the purpose of carrying out a re-enactment of Samuel Pepys' eyewitness narrative of

what took place, which was recorded in his journal, the participants were separated into eight groups according to their respective roles. At the end of the lesson, the pupils were asked to participate in a discussion about the Great Fire of London, which focused on important elements related to the event. After that, the children took part in a musical activity together, during which they sang the round-based song ‘London’s Burning’.

According to Freshwater (accessed 20 October 2022), this workshop is one of their most successful ones for activating pupils’ learning of history topics. According to (first name?) Tagg, the founder of Freshwater, the workshops usually take place at different phases of pupils’ learning about the topic for several purposes. Some teachers use this workshop as an introduction to pupils’ actual learning; some place the workshop between learning periods in order to deepen pupils’ understanding of an embodied learning experience; and others use the workshop after their learning to evaluate pupils’ comprehension of the learning content. One teacher who invited Freshwater to deliver The Great Fire of London session in her school happily reported how learners in the class had benefited from the workshop. She stated that the children were completely captivated during the entire workshop. They all greatly enjoyed their experience as time travellers, journeying back to 1666. The teacher pointed out that the session had provided an excellent introduction to the work for the beginning of the pupils’ exploration of this topic.

In this workshop, the facilitator took on the roles of a witness to the Fire, the architect Sir Christopher Wren and the diarist Samuel Pepys. The pupils acted as time travellers, residents of Pudding Lane, market traders, bakery workers, citizens who escaped the disastrous fire and the Mayor of London. The structure of the workshop provided a vivid depiction of the times, different street scenarios, people’s everyday lives, the cause and consequences of the great fire and the key figures who contributed to renewing the city. The pupils were engaged in the history topic in an enjoyable and informative way that minimised any stress caused by having to perform in front of others and were able to collaborate in a range of different group activities. I observed that the facilitator kept evaluating pupils’ understanding of the essential details by asking questions and reinforcing different modes of activity, especially encouraging them to discuss reasons and provide suggestions. Compared to conventional methods of instruction and learning which mostly focus on reading and writing, the interactive learning in PCD activities such as this incorporates a wider range of perspectives, enhancing the discussion and promoting a deeper understanding which encompasses intellectual, physical, emotional and visual aspects. This reinforces Fleming’s claim that integrating drama into the

classroom can extend and deepen the learning topics and materials (2017: 42). PCD supports this by emphasising the importance of experiential learning, where learners actively engage with content rather than passively absorbing it. Furthermore, this form of interactive session strikes a harmonious balance between structured teaching and flexible improvisation, one of the core principles of PCD, which values both guided frameworks and the freedom for learners to explore and create within those structures. By blending structured teaching with the flexibility of improvisation, PCD encourages deeper engagement with learning materials, allowing learners to explore topics from multiple perspectives and extend their understanding beyond conventional methods.

PCD sessions can also form effective strategies for addressing gaps in historical records and focusing on those missing from the stories of past times. In the next case, this involved the significant role of women in history whose contributions have often been overlooked in the past.

6.2.2 Using role-play to cultivate pupils' understanding of significant women in history

Session Title: Inspiring Women

Date and school: 18 July 2022, Holy Trinity CofE First School Effra Road, London.

Capacity: 60 pupils

Theme: To know great women in different areas and occupations

Subject: History

Age group: 6-7 years (Y2)

Learning areas: Enhancing pupils' knowledge and comprehension of the lives and experiences of notable women who dedicated themselves to the advancement of scientific, medical and other academic disciplines, as well as their contributions to various aspects of society, including politics and adventure.

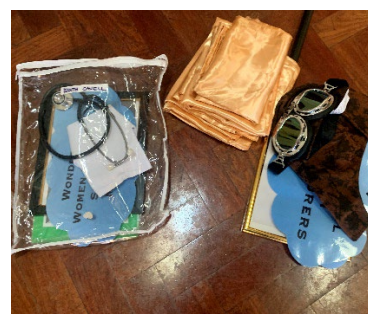
Activity 1: Preparatory Tasks

The workshop was scheduled to last for a total of 60 minutes and was attended by 60 children. It took place at a primary school located in South Wimbledon, London. Prior to the commencement of the workshop, the facilitator arranged five boxes in a large circular formation within the central area of the school hall. These boxes contained a diverse assortment of props intended for each of the characters involved in the forthcoming workshop. The boxes were completely hidden under shiny golden cloths. The participants

entered the school hall in orderly formations while the facilitator played ancient Greek music. The facilitator proceeded to lead the learners on a stroll around the five boxes and divided the class into five groups, each assigned to sit next to one of the boxes. A warm-up activity was then conducted to assess the level of engagement among the pupils, establish guidelines for discipline and prepare the learners in both mind and body for an immersive fictional experience.

Activity 2: Establishing the Dramatic Context: Commemorating the Achievements of Prominent Women from Historical and Contemporary Eras

Once the pupils had entered and been assigned to the five different groups, the facilitator, dressed in an ancient Greek costume complete with a Greek goddess wig and holding a peacock feather, assumed the role of the goddess Hera. The instructor conveyed a warm welcome to the class as they arrived at Mount Olympus, the revered dwelling place of the ancient Greek goddesses. Hera, in a strong and assertive tone, read out a letter pertaining to a noteworthy occasion in the twenty-first century which commemorates the accomplishments of women. Following this, she posed a question to the pupils, enquiring about their aspirations and ambitions for the decades to come. The learners expressed interest in pursuing various professions, such as zookeepers, farmers, teachers, musicians and astronauts. The facilitator proceeded to explain to the pupils about the several eras throughout history when women had limited opportunities and lacked equal rights compared with men in contemporary society. The historical challenges faced by women had rendered their accomplishments more significant and deserving of celebration. The facilitator then offered an invitation to the children to prepare themselves for a collective parade commemorating accomplished women throughout history, symbolised by the ‘wonderful woman gateways’ located on Mount Olympus. These gateways consisted of a prominent circular formation comprising the five boxes. The participants joined the facilitator in engaging in a celebratory chant in which the words ‘Wonderful woman, speak to us’ were repeated many times.



The arrangement of ‘wonderful woman gateway’.	The boxes with great women in various field	The portrait and props for different characters
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Figure 6-2 The arrangement and props used in the workshop of inspiring women

Activity 3: Engaging in a role-play exercise embodying influential female figures in the field of arts

The class continued the chant to commemorate the occasion as the facilitator proceeded towards the first container. She took from it a selection of photographs and the accompanying names of notable women, providing a concise introduction to esteemed women within the realm of the arts. Among the figures were Mary Anne Evans, a renowned writer who adopted the male pseudonym George Eliot in order to secure due recognition for her literary contributions, Gertrude Stein, an influential intellectual, and Josephine Baker, a highly acclaimed singer. She then removed her costume representing Hera and put on a floral headpiece, while simultaneously transitioning to narratives originating from South America, assuming the persona of Frida Kahlo.

The facilitator in-role as Kahlo gave a personal introduction to the pupils, sharing her experience of changing from a medical student to an artist as a result of a car accident. Following a comprehensive explanation of the concept of self-portraiture to the pupils, the instructor proceeded to actively include the learners in the creation of an artwork incorporating particular elements. She made reference to a parrot, a monkey, a deer, a jungle and a Chihuahua dog. Various groups were then tasked with constructing a static depiction of these elements. The facilitator then presented an image showing Kahlo’s famous artistic creations which prominently featured plants and animals. She then motivated the learners to draw inspiration from Kahlo’s resilience in the face of adversity and to maintain a sense of ambition and creativity in their own lives.

Activity 4: Role-play as female figures in Medicine

The pupils collectively recited the rhyme again as a means of transitioning to the next topic, which addressed notable female figures in the domains of mathematics, science and medicine. Examples of such women were Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Maria Montessori and Katherine Johnson. After a brief overview of these notable women who dedicated their entire lives to their respective fields, the facilitator displayed a nurse's bonnet and a stethoscope. The facilitator in-role enacted Edith Cavell, a nurse who served during the First World War, portraying her with a Norfolk accent.

She then selected a pupil to participate in a role-playing exercise in which she carefully constructed a highly tense and dangerous atmosphere reminiscent of a wartime setting. The objective of this exercise was to simulate Cavell's experience of helping a British soldier who had been captured by the German army to successfully escape and find refuge in a secure location. During the role-play scenario, Cavell, the nurse, sought information by posing the questions: 'What's your name?' 'Where are you from?' 'Where have you been fighting?' 'When did you last sleep?' The facilitator then engaged in direct communication with the children from one of the groups, who promptly assumed the roles of soldiers in a warfare scenario. The facilitator posed relevant questions and the pupils, appearing to embody the behaviour of a battle-hardened soldier, responded with careful details, accompanied by serious facial expressions. The facilitator, still in-role as Cavell, became aware of an injured soldier and proceeded to provide assistance by treating his wounds and offering sustenance in the form of bread. The pupils then participated in the distribution of bread with an intensity reminiscent of individuals who have endured prolonged periods of hunger, displaying a profound appreciation for the sustenance provided.

The facilitator, still in-role as Cavell, asked about the distressing events witnessed and endured by those who participated throughout the war, as well as the unfortunate circumstance of losing a loved one due to the conflict. She then spotted a guide from a group and asked for his help in ensuring a safe journey home to their respective residences. The individuals secretively traversed the circumference of the circle, simulating nocturnal conditions as if engaged in an act of escape. They then waved each other farewell, allowing the participants to remove themselves from their assigned roles as soldiers and return to their own groups. The facilitator continued to explain to the participants the end of Cavell's story, expressing gratitude to the class for attentively listening to her experience. She told them about a commemorative statue of Edith Cavell in the centre of London. The facilitator approached the box and proceeded to replace the props. She transitioned back into the role of Hera and then presented a photograph of Cavell and expressed her thoughts on the significance of providing assistance to people in times of need.

This activity enabled pupils to embody a historical event. The participants were actively engaged both physically and emotionally in depicting the experience of escaping from a warzone. Their emotional engagement was relevant to the topic and contributed to the maintenance of tension. Afterwards, they came out-of-role by waving their hands to the

soldiers and then were guided by the facilitator to the following task.

Activity 5: Role-play as inspiring women in Politics

The participants collectively recited the rhyme again as a way of advancing to the next box within the 'wonderful woman gateway'. Hera presented notable female figures who made significant contributions to the field of politics, such as Jane Addams, Sojourner Truth and Rachel Carson. Following a brief introduction highlighting the significant achievements of these women across society, the facilitator started to put on a pair of glasses and a hat, assuming the persona of Rosa Parks. Parks brought attention to the prevailing racial inequity of her day, as African Americans were systematically denied access to numerous public facilities and were compelled to endure segregation from their white counterparts. The facilitator enacted a scenario wherein she was subjected to unequal treatment when she was told to give up her seat on a bus and give it to a white person. In response, she engaged in a discourse to advocate for her rights, which ultimately led to her arrest by the authorities. She wholeheartedly immersed herself in the Civil Rights movement, actively combating segregation and advocating equal rights for black people. Under the guidance of the facilitator in the role of Parks, the entire class actively participated in a march and shouted slogans against racism: 'BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER', 'WE DEMAND VOTING RIGHTS NOW' and 'SEGREGATION IS MORALLY WRONG'. The pupils collectively assumed a collaborative role and exhibited increasing levels of interest.

The facilitator as Parks told everyone that their collective efforts ultimately led to the abolition of legislation which segregated black people in 1964. After that, the entire class demonstrated the meaning of this decisive moment with a clear expression of pride on their faces. Next, the facilitator switched back to the role of Hera once more, briefly acknowledging the importance of the movement and expressing her admiration for Parks. She took a photo of Parks from the box labelled women in politics and showed it to the class and explained her experience.

Activity 6: Role-play as inspiring women in adventures

Following Hera's next speech, the facilitator showed a selection of visual representations depicting notable female figures who are remembered as inspiring women in the area of adventurous pursuits. Among these were Nellie Bly, Valentina Tereshkova and Junko Tabei. Hera told the pupils that they were women who had travelled on a solitary round

the world trip within a span of 72 days, the pioneering Russian astronaut who was the first woman to go into outer space, and the first woman to climb Mount Everest. She asked two pupils to pick up a map from the container and carefully unfold it, while she dressed herself in a flying cap and goggles. She smoothly transformed from her historical Greek character into a twentieth century American setting and introduced herself with a confident voice and gesture. The woman was Amelia Earhart, who clearly indicated locations on a map while describing her experiences as the first female pilot to successfully traverse the whole of America by air. Additionally, she achieved the distinction of being the first woman to undertake a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, from the United States to Ireland. Earhart provided an extensive description of a risky expedition, highlighting the essential attributes possessed by an outstanding adventurer. The pupils took up some key terms, such as 'brave' and 'fearless'. The instructor gave them other words, including 'brilliant', 'heroic', 'imaginative', 'strong' and 'daring'. The class was then prompted to use body language to convey the significance of these words. The participants participated in a visual representation in which the facilitator verbalised the actions while the pupils generated corresponding sounds and physical movements. Following that, a perilous moment was described in Earhart's series of adventures, and the instructor presented the image of Earhart to the pupils.

After that, Hera issued an invitation to the children to embark on an effort to discover noteworthy women in the twenty-first century. This time, she did not present any physical artefacts or photographs from the box, choosing instead simply to open a letter. Hera read the contents of the letter to the entire class, which was a source of inspiration for the learners. This encouragement was especially relevant as the pupils had just explored the concept of the 'wonderful woman gateway' and had become familiar with numerous remarkable women from both historical and contemporary contexts. The letter emphasised the importance of the participants, regardless of gender, being able to openly express themselves in a new environment. This freedom enabled them to pursue their aspirations, embrace individual accountability and ultimately appreciate their own accomplishments in the future.

This workshop immersed pupils in experiential learning in exploring the significant achievements of women. In line with PCD principles, the workshop's immersive, interactive approach encouraged active participation, enabling learners to engage deeply with the subject matter. The structure of the workshop facilitated pupils' knowledge and comprehension of these women across various domains, exemplifying PCD's focus on

creating meaningful connections between learners and the content through role-play. The learners' facial expression constantly shifted between expectation to enjoyment. This type of learning embodies the PCD approach, which prioritises dynamic, participatory learning that is both informative and enjoyable, allowing learners to explore complex ideas in a way that resonates with them personally.

6.2.3 Embodying geography learning through PCD strategies

Session Title: Let's Locate ... Continents

Date and school: 31 October 2022, Dulwich Colleague Junior School, London.

Capacity: 18 pupils

Theme: Increase pupils' cognitive acquisition and comprehension of the continents.

Subject: Geography

Age group: 7-8 years (Y3)

Learning areas: Locational knowledge, including the ability to accurately identify and precisely locate countries and cities, as well as recognise and understand the significance of topographical features and local individuality within a given geographical context.

The facilitator, in-role as a global explorer, is situated in an 'explorer's base camp' surrounded by a variety of equipment bags and cartographic representations. The facilitator asked closed questions in order to evaluate the pupils' comprehension regarding continents. For example, her questions concerned the definition as well as the characteristics which a continent has: 'What is the total number of continents and what are their specific names?' 'Please identify the largest and smallest among the options'. The pupils were in agreement that it was necessary to have several basic pieces of equipment, such as goggles, binoculars, a compass and an emergency kit, in order to adequately prepare for an expedition.

The facilitator informed the pupils of their participation in a distinctive assembly in Brussels, requesting fundamental details regarding the city and the journey. For example: 'In which country is Brussels situated?' followed by: 'What are the methods that can be employed to reach that destination?'

After asking for essential details regarding the city and the voyage, the facilitator informed the learners that they would be meeting in Brussels. Consider, for instance, the questions 'In which nation is Brussels located?' 'In what way can people travel to Brussels' In response, one pupil mentioned that Eurostar, a high-speed train service that

connects a number of cities in Europe, would be an option to consider. The facilitator asked one pupil to take the role of a Eurostar driver while the other pupils in the class formed a queue behind the driver. All of the pupils then started to engage in a coordinated circular arm movement to imitate the movement of a train. After the completion of two or three cycles, the facilitator assembled the entire class into a large circular arrangement on the floor. Each child was given a flag the size of an A4 sheet which represented a European nation. On the reverse side of the flag were printed key facts and information about the respective country, including the name of the nation's capital, the language which is officially spoken and the typical manner in which people greet one another in that country. Following the distribution of the flags, the facilitator gave a brief introduction to the fundamental information about a number of European countries.



Pupils are simulating the moving Eurostar train.



Representatives are attending UN gathering.



The knowledge is being shared within each small group.

Figure 6-3 Pupils engaged in geography learning through PCD

In order to promote the exchange of key details on the countries located in Europe, the facilitator divided the entire class into pairs which would be working together. Each pair then shared their knowledge of their partner's country with the entire class. They imparted facts about the place where the other person was from and extended greetings in the language considered to be the official language of that country. Through the use of the same regional language, the other pupils in the class demonstrated a collective reaction to the question. Questions designed to elicit clarifications from the pupils were posed by the facilitator, such as 'Is it accurate to state that Luxembourg is the name of both the country and its capital?' Through an analysis of the distinctive features displayed on the A4 cards, the learners participated in a comparison of a number of different European countries. For instance, the inclusion of a snowflake symbol on a flag denoted that the relevant country had at least one glacier within its borders, and the appearance of a crown symbol on a flag was indicative of the existence of a monarchy within the political framework of the nation. Additionally, flags which were decorated with a symbol of

sunshine represented the five European countries that have the highest average temperatures.



Figure 6-4 An overview of the essential characteristics of various countries

After that, the twenty learners in the class were divided into four groups. The task of representing a particular nation in either North or South America was delegated to each of the groups. This activity was done in small groups with the objective of collaborating on the creation and delivery of a presentation with the primary objective of persuading individuals to travel to their particular nations. The process of planning, discussing and practising the sequence of speeches, as well as the welcome gesture and dance of their own group, was something that the pupils participated in.



Group discussion on their welcome speech



Presentation of their improvisation

Figure 6-5 Small group discussion of introducing their country to the world

The session concluded with the use of closed questions to evaluate the extent of knowledge acquisition, followed by a collective farewell among the participants, who took on the roles of explorers during the journey. The facilitator, in an effort to foster ongoing exploration, encouraged the learners to continue their intellectual pursuits both within the context of future learning experiences and in everyday situations. in an effort to stimulate continued exploration by the learners.

This workshop facilitated the integration of pupils' prior knowledge and life experiences with the learning material through embodied learning activities. The collective

participation of the pupils not only enhanced their understanding but also stimulated their interest in further exploring geography concepts, which was to be continued in their subsequent geography session later that week.

6.3 Reflection by facilitators on the use of PCD as a tool for all-round development

Following my observation of the workshop which the Freshwater company delivered in a number of primary and secondary schools, interviews were carried out with the four facilitators who had conducted these workshops. The objective of the interviews was to have a detailed conversation and reflection on the use of role-play and various aspects of their practice of PCD. The interviews were conducted online on the Zoom platform, and NVivo software was employed to transcribe and analyse the material obtained from the interviews.

The interviews with the experienced facilitators from Freshwater included points which are key to this research project and the inclusion of PCD in Chinese educational contexts. They spoke about how active learning take place in PCD activities, how to empower learners to take ownership of the learning experience, what difficulties and supports they experience in their different phases of teaching, and what recommendations they would make for beginner teachers who wish to apply PCD in their practices. They had similar entry points to Chinese drama teachers in the field of PCD. Their experience and reflections will be valuable to the Chinese context which has been seeing an increased interest in incorporating PCD in educational settings, following the NCR's emphasis on shifting didactic instruction to a participatory style and contextualising learning material with pupils' experiences. Due to a severe shortage of drama teachers, the development of PCD in China has been very slow. These interviews were intended to provide direct evidence to support the effectiveness of PCD for stimulating pupils' active learning in a fun, relaxed and supportive atmosphere. The interviewees' reflections further help to establish a dialogue between UK-based specialists and Chinese drama teachers which can deepen the discussion on the relationship between drama and learning.

The journey of each facilitator in the field of PCD was characterised by varied motivations and pathways and additionally reflected a distinct combination of personal interest and professional development. According to Facilitator 1, PCD is seen as an effective means of making knowledge more engaging and accessible to comprehend, especially for pupils who have difficulty with traditional learning methods such as reading, writing and memorisation. Facilitator 2 emphasised the importance of the kinaesthetic

component of drama as a tool for boosting pupils' self-assurance and understanding. Facilitator 3 highlighted the significance of using drama as a means to enhance the learning process. Facilitator 4 identified a prevailing prejudice in theatre industry against TiE and DiE, suggesting potential challenges to acceptance in the professional arts sector. This variation exemplified the multi-faceted nature of PCD, resonating with the complex landscape of the Chinese context discussed in Chapter 3, which referred to the acceptance and evolving understanding of PCD by Chinese drama teachers of parallel entry points and motivations for using PCD in their practice.

Evidence from the facilitators' interviews demonstrated that support for various aspects is essential for implementing PCD and developing expertise. Facilitator 1 emphasised the importance of using well-structured materials, such as a teaching outline, scripts and information about the target participants, to ensure successful implementation. Facilitators 2 and 4 prioritised the importance of collegial support in sharing teaching experiences and offering suggestions for addressing teaching problems. The facilitators suggested a lack of or limited access to expert guidance, placing greater emphasis on self-driven learning and experiential knowledge (Facilitators 1, 2, 3 and 4). Conversely, the facilitators had encountered numerous challenges while teaching, particularly in the areas of behavioural management and adjusting to constantly shifting educational settings (Facilitators 2 and 3). The notable diversity and variation in the facilitators' training and expertise indicates the need for standardised and diverse training to address management-related challenges which arise in teaching. This is crucial for guaranteeing a high level of participants' focus and involvement in the workshop.

Similarly, the Chinese drama teachers had encountered the same obstacles at various stages of their careers, as discussed in Chapter 3. This discrepancy highlights the need for well-organised vocational development in PCD, particularly in the changing environment of Chinese education. For example, a combination of well-organised support and resources, training in professional development for classroom management and PCD approaches, and opportunities for exchanging experiences and sharing within the PCD community.

The facilitators used multiple approaches in their PCD practice, following Freshwater's well-organised framework which can be adapted to different subjects. Facilitator 1 explained that this framework consists of five or six sections, including warm-up, physical activity, tableaux, role-play and improvisation which are incorporated into each

workshop. The use of role-play and improvisation was described by Facilitators 3 and 4 and these methods, which are diverse but centred on engagement and creativity, are especially applicable in the Chinese education context within the NCR. There is a growing demand for diverse and innovative teaching approaches to meet the varying learning needs of pupils and to address educational reforms aimed at fostering creativity and critical thinking. This could be particularly effective in the Chinese school setting, where conventional approaches frequently prioritise teacher-centred education, didactic teaching and memorisation.

Each facilitator emphasised different components of PCD which correspond with educational concepts, notably those that promote creativity, ownership, embodiment and experiential learning. Facilitator 1 highlighted the importance of drama as a means of facilitating learning. Specifically, it enables learners who have different learning styles and capacities to acquire content in an enjoyable and playful way. This underscored the advantages of PCD as an informative and captivating tool in education environments, hence stimulating and sustaining pupils' enthusiasm for learning. She said:

They're learning through physicalising things, which I think doesn't often happen in school. Learning through play, which is how we learn when we're three or four – they're learning without realising they're learning, which is great. And they're developing so many skills – communication skills, listening skills and teamwork skills. It's everything that you need as you get on in life. You're learning in that particular framework. It's really important because drama should be fun and expressive, but it should also be a tool. So it should be a way of learning, and in this process, pupils are inspired, engaged and enthusiastic.

(Facilitator 1)

Facilitator 2 advocated PCD as a means of enabling individuals to achieve “self-led exploration” and “creative freedom”. From her perspective, using PCD is crucial for fostering a sense of ownership and agency in pupils' learning processes. She emphasised the significance of “submerging themselves into a world they create collectively”, which gave priority to engaging and empowering learners through holistic learning (Facilitator 2). Facilitator 3 said that this not only increases engagement but also fosters self-efficacy in learners. She also placed an emphasis on establishing a connection between the use of PCD and the practical investigation of bridging the gap between “subject matter and imaginative exploration”. The focus on imagination, in addition to their physical presence

through body and voice, enhances for pupils the relevance and tangibility of learning experiences. Facilitator 3 also explained that this illustrates how PCD can facilitate the comprehensive understanding of complex subjects through practical implementation. She emphasised the significance of role-play in creating new scenarios within the context of learning and prompting pupils to apply their prior knowledge to problem-solving:

Pupils think logically of their role or the practical situation, then they respond differently. (Facilitator 3)

Facilitator 4 highlighted the significance of using theatrical elements to captivate and develop the imaginations of learners. She also emphasised the significance of experiential learning, particularly for younger children, in which pupils acquire knowledge by immersing themselves in a context created through storytelling and role-playing:

Re-enacting something or creating something is essential for activating their learning, we create the whole thing physically. They do find a lot of creative ways of bringing a character or a topic to life. They respond with their ideas to the questions being asked. (Facilitator 4)

The four facilitators emphasised the importance of PCD as an efficient instrument for fostering pupils' engagement, hence enhancing their learning. Additionally, they acknowledged that establishing a non-judgmental, safe environment is an essential initial measure for nurturing trust between pupils and performers and fostering a relaxed atmosphere conducive to collaboration and creativity (Facilitators 1, 2, 3 and 4). In addition, the four facilitators collectively emphasised the significance of sustaining pupils' attention during entire sessions. Facilitator 1 commented that it is difficult to recapture learners' attention once it has been lost, which substantially reduces their learning experience and outcomes. Additionally, she explained that facilitators need to have expertise in using physical activities to engage and maintain the focus of learners, especially those who are younger and have limited attention spans. Facilitator 2 also discussed the challenges of redirecting pupils' attention to the task at hand. One practical method to maintain focus is by actively engaging and reminding the group while they are in their role. For instance, during the session on The Great Fire of London, learners often become highly enthusiastic about devising activities of the street in the story, and classroom management is typically conducted in the style of a game (Facilitator 1). This exemplified the crucial factor in establishing engaging environments for learning throughout the session in order to maintain the group's concentration.

The facilitators' reflections suggested that PCD, as a pedagogical tool, not only improves learners' comprehensive understanding of the target subject but also fosters creativity, autonomy and an experiential engagement with learning. This diversity of focus in using PCD showed the need for a balanced approach as an essential component in modern education practices, especially in the Chinese context of NCR, which advocates a more holistic, inclusive and learner-centred approach to teaching and learning.

Their experience additionally suggested that the successful implementation of PCD within the NCR framework needs a good comprehension of different classroom dynamics, an adaptable teaching approach and the establishment of supportive learning environments. This requires specific and targeted professional development for educators, which should concentrate on classroom management, teaching methodologies tailored to different age groups, and essential PCD facilitation skills.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the ten Chinese drama teachers who were interviewed had a common experience and reflection on applying PCD with these four facilitators in the UK. First, they shared common starting points and motivations, acknowledging the advantageous impact of PCD on multiple aspects of the learning experience for learners. Then the majority of their knowledge acquisition about PCD and their professional development were derived from direct teaching experience and self-driven study, such as participating in relevant master classes and conducting detailed searches for teaching resources. In terms of pedagogy, they lacked sufficient structured support, including classroom management techniques and knowledge of the learning capabilities of various age groups. As a result, they often relied on observing their peers' instructional practices and interacting and exchanging ideas with them to find answers. The insights provided by the facilitators in China and the UK suggested that integrating PCD into the Chinese education system, specifically within the context of NCR, offers a promising opportunity to move away from the previous excessive focus on exams and towards more comprehensive, learner-centred and experiential learning methods. The issue identified in their comments implied the need for systematic support, such as specialised teacher training in classroom management, pedagogy and drama, to prepare future drama teachers who can effectively foster a generation of creative, adaptive, and critically engaged learners.

Facilitator 1 stated that it is crucial to take learners' feedback on various activities into account while planning and organising classroom activities. Facilitator 1 also observed

notable age-related differences in how pupils respond to PCD activities. She said that younger participants have an obvious preference for feeling secure and receiving guidance throughout the entire session. This suggests that structured guidance is crucial for them, which is consistent with developmental theories which highlight the importance of supportive learning environments for younger learners. However, she stressed that pupils in key stage 2 and beyond have a tendency for autonomy and collaborative tasks which emphasise communication, problem-solving and creativity. Facilitator 2 noted that learners commonly react favourably to humour and games during PCD activities. She explained this with the example of the session on the Great Fire of London, in which various types of game and humour were incorporated into the activities. Even so, she emphasised the need to maintain focus when the facilitator incorporates games at different phases of the session. She added that failure to do this can significantly diminish the impact of learning experiences. Facilitator 3 highlighted the importance of using questioning techniques as well as concise frameworks in PCD activities. She emphasised that structured interactions can greatly enhance pupil engagement. Facilitator 4 highlighted a discrepancy in her experiences, observing that whilst larger activities such as enacting scenarios and engaging in role-playing are often beneficial, smaller group tasks tend to be less impactful. Their analysis of the different ways in which pupils respond to PCD activities highlighted numerous factors which facilitators and session authors need to take into account. These factors included teaching strategies which are appropriate for the learners' age, the number of participants involved and the characteristics of the learning objectives. The number of components involved in learning must be flexible and adaptable to varied circumstances. It is not possible to use a single set of rules for all participants in different schools, age groups and classroom settings.

As well as the learners' response to PCD activities, the expectations of schoolteachers and administrators also play a part when considering the learning outcomes of PCD sessions for facilitators and session planners. These expectations include a combination of curriculum-based learning and social and personal development. Facilitator 1 emphasised that acquiring factual knowledge during PCD sessions is a key focus, often closely aligned with curriculum-based learning. She said:

They hope that's a new way of remembering, perhaps through the physical activities that we've done. And this is often reinforced later on in the classroom. It's also about learning about how to engage, how to communicate, how to use their creativity to be brave, make big choices, stand up in front of their peers and

talk or perform. In summary, the emphasis is on curriculum-based learning, social interaction and personal social development. (Facilitator 1)

Facilitator 1 observed that the physical activities conducted throughout the workshop are typically regarded as a method of enhancing classroom learning, making it more captivating and memorable. In addition to the subject matter, the facilitator emphasised that educators greatly value the cultivation of soft skills, including engagement, effective communication, creative thinking and self-assurance. She considered these skills crucial for learners to effectively express themselves to others throughout their educational journey and personal growth. She also highlighted the versatility of drama workshops in addressing specific topics which schools might want to cover, demonstrating how drama can effectively accommodate a wide range of educational requirements.

Facilitator 2 acknowledged that achieving the curriculum is obligatory but emphasised that most educators prioritise the all-round educational experience offered by PCD sessions. PCD can be viewed as a supplementary approach to learning, providing additional knowledge and skills which might not be acquired through conventional instructional sessions. She said that it enables children to receive insights which are not often obtained in school. In addition, she commented that the holistic approach of PCD is advantageous for acquiring social skills and personal growth, aspects which are not often prioritised in conventional classroom environments. She further pointed out that the secure and conducive atmosphere fostered by PCD activities significantly contributes to enhancing learners' self-assurance and interpersonal engagement. Facilitator 3 highlighted that expectations differ among schools, with some prioritising the acquisition of knowledge and others emphasising the consolidation of existing knowledge. She emphasised the holistic experiential aspect of PCD sessions which allows learners to actively connect with and fully immerse themselves in the learning topic, with a particular focus on the enjoyment and engagement of the participants. Facilitator 4 noted that schoolteachers' expectations are influenced by the timing of PCD sessions within the broader curriculum. She said that PCD sessions are used as introductions, mid-course enhancements or even as assessment tools:

It can depend on where they are and what they want from it, but definitely get some curriculum content. Some teachers get sessions at the beginning of the topic and it is just an introduction, so they know the kids are not going to have a lot of information and they're not going to take in everything, but it gets their

brains fired up and that's what they want from it. Sometimes there are mid-terms, when the group knows some things, and after the session they have learned a bit more. Sometimes it's at the end (of term) and teachers almost always use PCD session as an assessment tool. It can help them gauge what their children have learned about the topic. (Facilitator 4)

This observation made by Facilitator 4 demonstrates the adaptability of PCD in integrating with various phases of the learning process in the curriculum.

The facilitators' expertise and introspection regarding school requirements indicated that although curriculum-based learning is a crucial component of PCD's implementation in educational settings, there were broader expectations that encompass social interaction, personal growth and fostering all-round development, particularly in terms of confidence, communication, creativity and social interaction. These comments offered essential insights as well as guidance for effectively incorporating PCD into the classroom. This integration could have an enormous effect on learners, fostering both personal growth and social development, in line with broader educational reforms. The facilitators' views specifically demonstrated practical expertise tailored to the Chinese setting in the NCR, which significantly emphasises the development of various soft skills, such as creativity, problem-solving abilities and confidence. The responsive and adaptable teaching strategy highlighted by these four facilitators exemplifies an efficient approach for implementing PCD in different education environments. It showed how PCD is used to connect knowledge with learners' experiences.

PCD, as a combination of artistic expression and instructional tool, places some demands on facilitators to enhance its artistic and educational value. These demands include responding to the needs of learners and meeting the expectations of schoolteachers. The responses from each facilitator provided different noteworthy and unique viewpoints but they all underscored the significance of facilitation skills, active learning, alignment with education goals and the effective utilisation of dramatic approaches.

Furthermore, Facilitator 1 stressed the significance of PCD session planning which guarantees an in-depth understanding of both educational and artistic elements. She emphasised the importance of the recruiting process, specifically the selection of facilitators based on their practical facilitation skills. She explained that this guaranteed that facilitators will possess the ability to integrate instructional content from the curriculum with an artistic format. Facilitator 2 underlined the importance of gaining

experience and reflecting on the practice of drama facilitation. She highlighted that some PCD approaches or classroom management techniques which are successful for others may not necessarily be effective for oneself. This implied that individuals should try out various ideas and teaching approaches in different education environments and then gain insights from their experiences. In my view, this adaptive method enables facilitators to enhance and shape their facilitation abilities, guaranteeing that they proficiently convey both instructional content and artistic aspects in their PCD sessions. Facilitator 3 highlighted the significance of employing the available facilities and resources to enhance the artistic and educational value of PCD. Additionally, she perceived drama as both an artistic medium and an effective tool for learning. She believed that engaging in drama might potentially lead to the acquisition of new skills or the improvement of existing skills in a different setting. According to Facilitator 4, the use of drama in education settings is a “mixture of function”, which is mostly used for “revising and aiding memory”. She went on to highlight that the main objective is to emphasise the educational benefit of drama. In my view, in order to maximise the artistic and educational value of PCD in educational settings, it is important to focus on session planning, recruiting facilitators, facilitating experiential learning and balancing learning goals. There is a growing emphasis on incorporating these approaches within the education system. The balance between artistic and educational approaches in curriculum instruction is crucial in the context of China’s NCR. The reflections provided by the facilitators strongly align with the observations made by the Chinese drama teachers in Chapter 3. All of them acknowledged the need to highlight practical facilitation skills during the recruitment process and training. They also took into account both the educational content and artistic value, ensuring that learners had a pleasurable and informative experience.

Furthermore, the facilitators offered a sophisticated comprehension of the competencies required for effective PCD facilitation. Primarily, they all prioritised adaptability and flexibility, which are essential for diverse teaching situations, and to adapt to age-appropriate learning capacity. Facilitator 1 asserted that the flexibility and adaptability of facilitators not only enable authentic learning engagement from learners but also create an engaging, animated and energised learning atmosphere which stimulates pupils' improvisation. They pointed out that establishing a secure and supportive atmosphere is another fundamental aspect of successful PCD facilitation. Facilitators 2 and 3 stated that this entails creating an environment in which learners feel safe to express themselves freely, make choices and explore their creative ideas without being judged. Facilitator 2

said that these secure and enjoyable settings not only promote “creative freedom” but also stimulate “self-led investigation”. The facilitators further underscored the importance of the ability to think on your feet (Facilitators 1, 3 and 4). According to Facilitator 3, it is crucial to respond to the questions asked by participants. She explained that this allowed participants to actively participate in the impactful process of “experiencing and playing”. In addition, Facilitator 2 highlighted that a thorough comprehension of pedagogy is essential. She stated that customising PCD sessions to align with a particular age group and capabilities of the learners guarantees that the activities and teaching methods are appropriately achievable and challenging. This flexibility, adaptability and customisation of learning to a learner links with the topics discussed in Chapter 4 regarding Heathcote's Crucible Paradigm and Vygotsky's ZPD notion. This comprehension facilitates maintaining a dynamic teaching rhythm in PCD sessions while also guaranteeing that pupils engage in a variety of learning experiences.

The facilitators additionally discussed the changing status of drama in schools, comparing the recent past to the present circumstances. These insights highlighted the difficulties encountered by PCD, including insufficient acknowledgment from education authorities and inadequate support from policy aspects. According to Facilitators 1, 3 and 4, drama has been perceived as supplementary, somewhat neglected and more focused on practical training than academic study. Notwithstanding the general undervaluation of PCD, Facilitator 1 observed a growing recognition of drama as a potent “communication and learning tool”. Nevertheless, she recognised that the reduction in funding for schools has had a notably negative effect on the advancement of PCD across a wider range, particularly during the Covid-19 lockdown, when several schools opted to discontinue drama sessions and instead prioritised core subjects in elementary and secondary school. Facilitator 2 emphasised the importance of employing PCD for multiple-intelligence learners, such as including activities that can effectively engage visual or auditory learners. Nevertheless, she also showed apprehension regarding the government's failure to acknowledge and provide support for drama at the policy level. Facilitator 3 asserted that the significance of drama in promoting many areas of growth and learning capacities is undervalued and receives limited acknowledgement. Facilitator 4 stated that there is a lack of comprehension and recognition of the usefulness of PCD as a learning method, as well as the advantageous characteristics of this teaching style. In addition, she highlighted that the significance attributed to the PCD has declined in comparison with previous periods.

Regarding possible future growth and changes for PCD in school settings, the facilitators held varying perspectives. Some expressed anticipation about the expanding importance of PCD and its numerous benefits whereas others had concerns about the undervaluation of PCD owing to financial restrictions. Facilitator 1 foresaw a future in which drama is used more extensively as an effective means of engagement, a child-centred approach, a teaching tool and a way to develop transferable skills. On the other hand, Facilitators 2 and 4 expressed apprehension regarding the future of PCD, perceiving it as diminishing and under-appreciated due to the difficulties presented by financial issues. There was concern that PCD might not be adequately acknowledged in relation to its potential and worth in the education context. Conversely, Facilitator 3 explored the possibility of incorporating drama into the concept of well-being. She acknowledged the significant importance of PCD in cultivating learners' ability to think in a distinctive way and actively participate in conventionally taught subjects. In short, the future of PCD seems to be at a crossroads.

From one viewpoint, there was a general acknowledgment of PCD's potential relevance as a tool for engagement and learning. Drama can serve as an alternative method for comprehending and digesting curriculum-based or abstract ideas through engaging involvement while also satisfying various requirements from multiple perspectives, including the NCR focus on all-round development. However, there are still significant impediments to its progress, such as financial constraints and a lack of adequate support on a broader scale.

In summary, these workshops employed role-play to assist learners in an exploration into the lived experiences of historical figures and events, making learning tangible and relatable. The use of role-play enabled pupils to step into the shoes of others, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of different perspectives. This approach aligns with educational paradigms which emphasise experiential learning and active engagement, which are required in order to modernise Chinese education and make it fit for the challenges of the future. The workshop observations and semi-structured interviews with the facilitators from Freshwater compellingly demonstrate the effectiveness of PCD in stimulating active, engaged learning in a fun, relaxed and supportive atmosphere. In the next chapter, I shall discuss these points and offer recommendations for embedding PCD into China's education system.

So far, the thesis has captured the views of UK and Chinese practitioners, the perspectives

of UK PCD specialists and facilitation skills including questioning and role-play in two case studies. I shall now turn to the key findings and recommendations.

Chapter 7

Discussion, key findings and recommendations

This chapter begins with a summary of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews with Chinese educators, UK-based specialists, artistic directors and experienced facilitators from Big Brum and Freshwater. These findings are illustrated by the researcher's personal experiences of working in the field. This is followed by a discussion about those who might be interested in this research, including drama teachers; researchers in the west and east interested in drama education, education in general and education policy; practitioners and teachers. I shall then offer recommendations for practices and policies. Finally, this chapter notes the limitations of the research and suggests areas for future research.

7.1 Key findings derived from the interpretation of the results and the researcher's perspective, experiences and reflections on past experiences

7.1.1 Interview data from interviewing educators in China

The first set of participants were ten Chinese teachers with a range of one to fifteen years' experience of incorporating PCD in their teaching. They were based in different cities in mainland China. Their starting point in the field of PCD closely resembled mine, as can be seen in Figure 7-1. This involved teaching drama sessions as a student-selected option, using a performance-oriented teaching approach in schools, and gradually, through participating in conferences and masterclasses, ultimately introducing PCD strategies in their professional work. As discussed in Chapter 3, a few individuals honestly admitted to me that they had initially learned this new method by imitating the style of demonstration sessions or masterclasses. This was because they lacked professional guidance and suffered from the limited availability of significant translated publications in the field. Their understanding of PCD eventually deepened through self-driven practice and the reading of books or online materials. The endeavour to actively embrace a new teaching technique, outlined in Figure 7-1, is particularly arduous due to the dearth of financial and academic assistance during the initial phases of one's professional journey. The interviews also revealed that drama teachers are typically employed on a part-time basis in schools, which makes it challenging for them to acquire all the necessary resources, such as access to research projects and financial support for teacher training. This is corroborated by my personal experience which, in the past, involved self-financed

attendance at several conferences and workshops annually to enhance my teaching abilities. The interviewees noted that the effectiveness of their journeys as drama instructors would have been greatly enhanced by the provision of opportunities for exchanging experiences and participating in study groups to facilitate reflection on teaching and learning based on major publications.

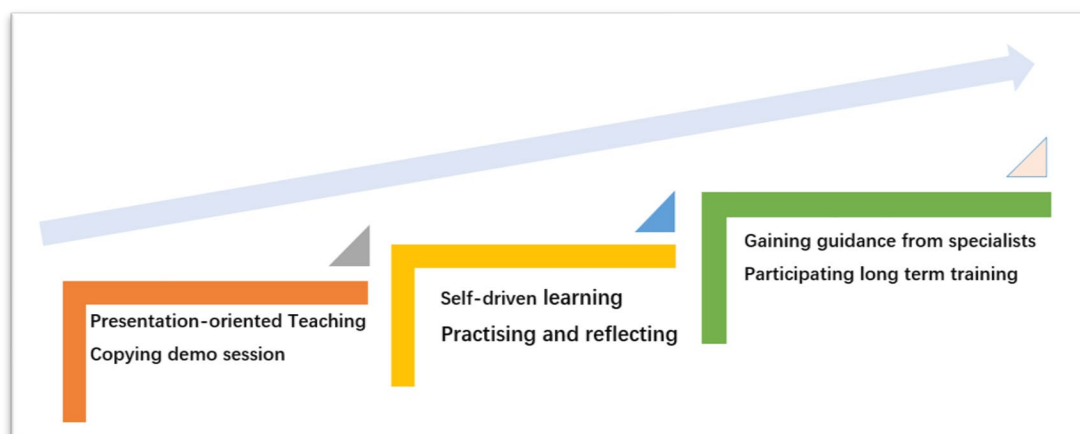


Figure 7-1 The journey of Chinese teachers in exploring PCD

Although the interviewees noted that there is an increasing awareness of drama education in mainland China and a greater number of conferences and workshops are being held in various cities, the consideration of local circumstances appeared to be insufficient for the diverse contexts. For example, many conferences, such as the IDEC 2016 conference, extended invitations to experts from other nations, but as I have also experienced, some attendees felt unable to implement what they observed in Neelands's session due to significant disparities in the cultural context, educational system, curriculum and learners' experiences. These perspectives informed my reflection that teachers from different teaching backgrounds and disciplines would greatly benefit from engaging in mutual exchange and the sharing of knowledge on many aspects of using drama in education settings. Additionally, it seems clear that long-term international collaboration is an effective approach to learning from the experiences of other countries, but there is a need to adapt the learning to the needs of Chinese learners, curriculum, and culture. Figure 7-2 presents the growing endorsement of teachers' perceptions of PCD from multiple perspectives.

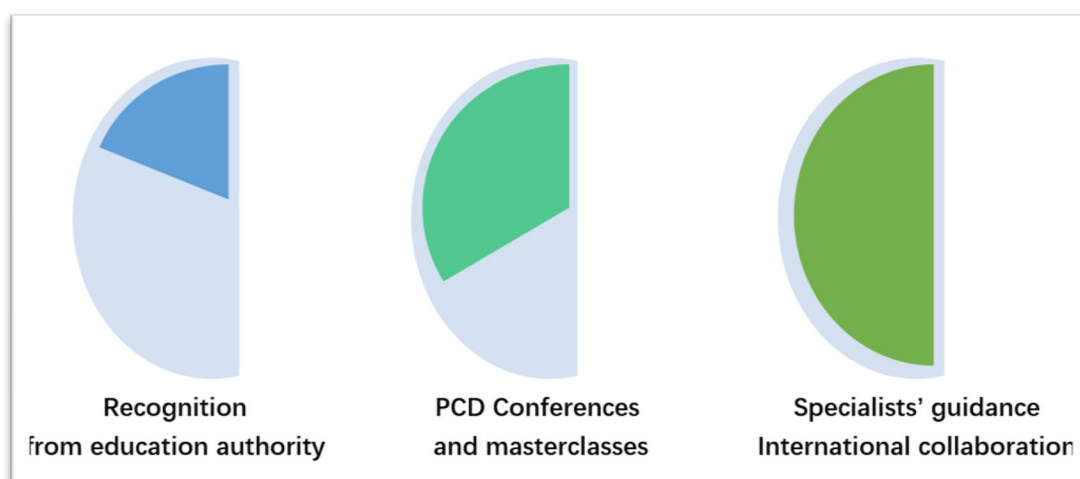


Figure 7-2 Support to improve teachers' PCD learning and practice

As discussed in Chapter 3, two examples of international collaboration were provided by Teachers 1 and 2, noting the support which they gained. These examples demonstrated the significance of international collaboration in shaping the perception and practice of local teachers. Teacher 1 had facilitated a three-year international collaborative TiE/DiE project between Shanghai Theatre Academy and Bergen University in Norway. This collaboration involved experts providing guidance on curriculum and session design, providing learning exchange opportunities for BA and MA students, and conducting workshops for educators in basic education.

Another example can be seen in the Drama Rainbow Education Centre, which, since it was founded, has derived advantages from international collaboration. For instance, they extended an invitation to Edward Bond to compose a TiE play centred on a Chinese context and invited David Davis to conduct TiE sessions and lectures. Additionally, they formed a partnership with the Big Brum TiE company to collaborate on TiE projects, provide training for actor-teachers, and engaging in research pertaining to their pedagogical approach. In my experience, international collaboration has numerous advantages, such as the sharing of resources, including session and TiE project recordings for beginner-level teachers to have a direct understanding of this new approach, as well as evaluation reports on each TiE project to help teachers understand how to evaluate pupils' participation and TiE projects at different phases. In addition, they provide opportunities for direct observation and participation in different contexts, immediate reflection and feedback from peers and specialists following workshops and TiE projects. As well as regular group meetings and discussions on session design, they help teachers to develop effective teaching in PCD sessions. However, these occurrences are infrequently encountered in conventional Chinese education environments, which often

offer only one-off international exchange events. When I initially participated in an online Big Brum teachers' hub discussion, I noticed that many of the topics discussed were unfamiliar to Chinese participants, including me, based on my teacher education and prior teaching experience. Such topics included 'authentic teacher' and 'professional intimacy' which are commonly experienced by drama teachers but seldom discussed in China with peer colleagues and others.

In China, teachers face numerous challenges which hinder their professional development, including an excessive focus on performance skill acquisition, conceptual limitations and misunderstandings, a severe shortage of qualified drama teachers and insufficient systematic professional knowledge and training to enhance teachers' competencies. Although presentations are commonly acknowledged to enhance pupils' confidence, it is crucial to provide a framework that safeguards their emotions, expressions and participation.

The optional drama course in the majority of schools remains predominantly teacher-centred and performance-focused, with even some city-level students' arts festivals lacking guidance and feedback, consequently diminishing learners' overall experience. In common with the interviewees' experiences, I have also encountered such issues. During my teaching at a secondary school in Dongcheng district in Beijing, I observed that learners displayed significant enthusiasm for the drama course for the first semester. This was primarily due to the opportunity to showcase their creative abilities on a professional theatre stage. However, they expressed several concerns after participating in the district-level and city-level student arts festivals. These included the absence of clear criteria and guidance, delays in receiving assessment results, and a lack of feedback from judges. Consequently, these issues negatively impacted their motivation to participate in the subsequent year's festivals.

After receiving pupils' feedback, I looked for an approach that would catch their interest, increase their level of focus on different tasks and deepen their understanding of stories while ensuring they had a meaningful experience of making drama. I modified my teaching after reading the Chinese translation of David Davis's significant book, *Imagining the real: towards a theory of drama in education*. I then realised the limitations of the one-off sessions, which frequently introduce PCD and offer a model to be copied. What I found in this book resonated with the deeper challenges which I was facing at that time, offered insights into the ways drama works in classrooms and emphasised the

essential features of PCD as a vehicle for meaning-making, making it a highly skilled art form. From then on, I attempted to explore some very unfamiliar terminology in my practice, such as ‘angle of connections’, ‘living through experience’, ‘frame distance’ and ‘protection into role’. This exploration was very challenging for me with the very limited time of 40 minutes of weekly teaching. Luckily, the school leader was very supportive of the drama course because the productions which I directed won city-level and district-level prizes every year. Then she kindly gave permission to extend the duration of the drama session to 90 minutes, which represents huge support in a state school.

In the following years, I conducted a number of experimental sessions to explore and apply the concepts which I had learned from Davis’s book. As a result, I transformed my approach to the process hugely, emphasising both the participatory focus by dividing pupils into different size groups and tasks as well as inquiry-based learning to enable them to ask as many questions as possible that arose from the story and supporting them to seek answers through making drama. I witnessed numerous instances of exceptional inventiveness and creative potential in the process of storytelling and the embodiment of ideas. I reached a balance between the process and the product by implementing PCD strategies. This involved exploring the materials (novels, news, lines and paintings) and then adapting them by linking the materials to the pupils’ experiences. Then the production for the competition-centred student arts festival was mainly devised from pupils’ engagement with the materials in a dramatic and fictional world. This process greatly enhanced my facilitation abilities, including engaging pupils in further exploration of the content and enabling a fruitful discussion of numerous issues.

To meet the needs from schools regarding presenting their dynamic school culture and soft competency, the need of pupils to share their learning experiences and gaining confidence by presenting at one of China's leading theatres, I adapted and wrote productions to participate in a special event entitled *Tribute and Inheritance: Mass Drama Performance* (致敬与传承- 群众戏剧展演, *Zhijing yu Chuancheng: Qunzhong Xiju Zhanyan*) hosted by the Beijing People’s Art Theatre. Over several years, the pupils and I presented work, including *The man showing off on the train* (火车上的威风, *Huocheshang de Weifeng*), *Tea House* (茶馆, *Cha Guan*), *This Life of Mine* (我这一辈子, *Wo Zhe Yibei zi*) and *Street traders' Hawking* (叫卖 *Jiao Mai*). These processes of creating and exploring were distinct from previous repetitive rehearsals focused on engaging with the stories. Throughout the course of this experiment, I observed a noticeable rise in the learners' enthusiasm for a captivating narrative, as seen by their heightened engagement,

probing inquiries and collaborative problem-solving in small groups. As someone with first-hand experience, I strongly identified with the experiences of the Chinese interviewees and I offer my experiences here to illustrate the points which they have made. The process of learning, doing and reflecting has served as a strong motivator for me to investigate many aspects of pedagogy in my teaching and research.

The limitations of understanding drama education just as training in performing skills should be acknowledged on a broader scale. Instead, it should evolve a more diversified, inclusive and enjoyable approach that accommodates learners with multiple intelligences. This can be achieved by incorporating creative experiences and educational objectives into the learning process. In 2001, the MoE released the *Compendium of curriculum reform for basic education* (trial), which noted the prior teaching model that placed a strong focus on teacher-centred instruction and exam-oriented learning. This was discussed in the field review in Chapter 1 and Figure 7-3 illustrates the mainstream teaching model in the majority of schools:

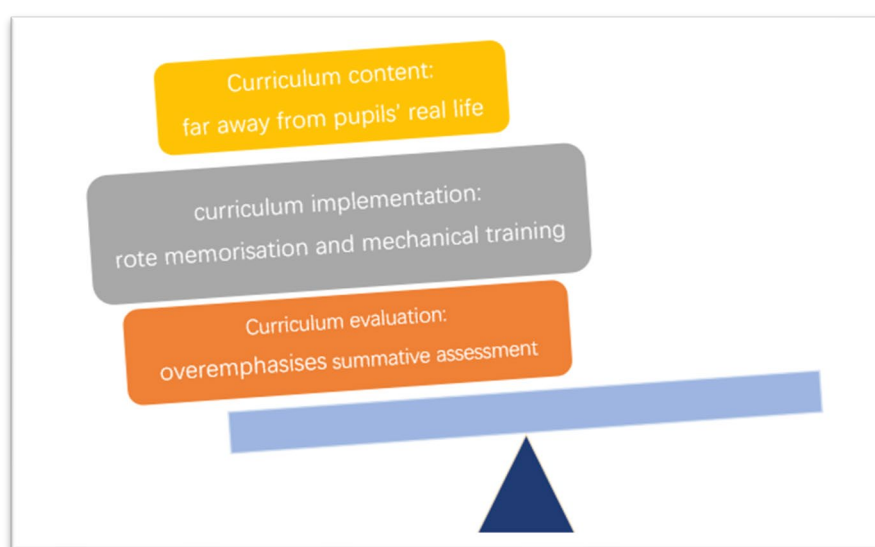


Figure 7-3 Predominant teaching model in the Chinese education system

The *Compendium* (2001) also outlined the characteristics of the new teaching model to be implemented:

- Course content should be strongly relevant to the learner's life, learning interests and experience.
- The teaching method should be participatory, with the active involvement of pupils, inquiry-based and task-based to cultivate pupils' multiple abilities, for

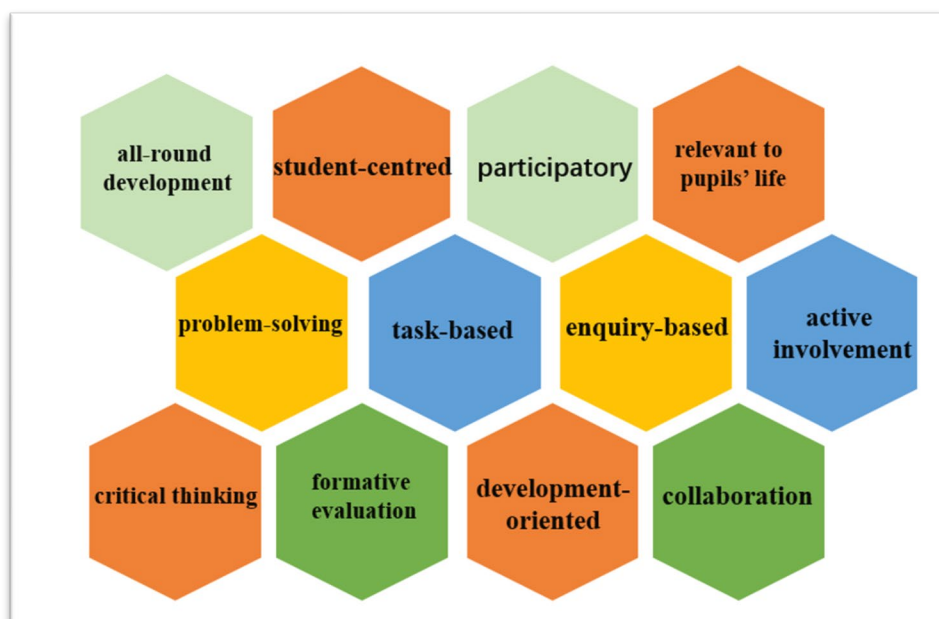
instance problem-solving, communication and collaboration.

- Formative evaluation should be the primary means of promoting pupils' development and the creation of a learner-centred and development-oriented curriculum.
- The course's learning activities should be based on comprehension, experience, reflection, exploration and creation. Teachers and learners are not simply executors of the curriculum but rather its creators.

In the same year, the MoE issued the *Tenth five-year (2001-2005) national plan for education*, which reiterated the intention to modify teachers' pedagogical approaches, teaching ideas and concepts, with an emphasis on placing learners at the core of the teaching and learning process. The main characteristics of this plan are as follows:

- Changing the instructional function to cultivate all-round developed learners to build a high-quality labour force of the future;
- Shifting teacher-centred, mechanical training and exam-focused education styles to a diverse learning approach, for example, through participation, critical thinking and cooperative enquiry;
- Learner-centred learning replaces a curriculum-centred framework and encourages cross-curricular integrated teaching; and
- The evaluation should focus on pupils' learning processes to promote their all-round development.

The set of documents typically includes the key terms shown in Figure 7-4:



The explanation of the Chinese context above is fundamental to this research and now the views of the UK specialists will provide further insights into the ways in which PCD can benefit Chinese education.

7.1.2 Key findings from the interviews with specialists in the UK

Chapter 4 provided details of the interviews with a second group of participants consisting of six UK specialists who had devoted their time to exploring, debating and advancing the practice and theory of the field of PCD. These specialists had authored several key texts which would be a transformational resource for the Chinese context if they could be available in Chinese. The specialist authors were Cecily O'Neill, a student of Gavin Bolton, who published *Drama Worlds A Framework for Process Drama* in 1995, and edited *Dorothy Heathcote on Education and Drama: Essential writings* in 2015; David Davis, also a student of Gavin Bolton, who published *Imagining the real: towards a new theory of drama in education* in 2014; Mike Fleming, who authored *The Art of Drama Teaching* and *Starting Drama Teaching* in 2017; Jonothan Neelands, who published *Drama as creative learning* in 2011 and *Art makes children powerful: art for the many not the few* in 2014; Patrice Baldwin, who published *The Primary Drama Handbook* in 2008 and others; and Roger Wooster, who published *Contemporary Theatre in Education* in 2013 and *Theatre in Education in Britain: Origins, Development, and Influence* in 2016. This clearly shows the status of the UK experts who were interviewed and whose comprehensive knowledge included a wide range of topics, including tracking the development of PCD back to its historical origins, insights into the ways in which drama can be beneficial for pupils' active learning and how to meet the challenges and opportunities associated with developing PCD in a different cultural context with different educational circumstances.

Noting the enormous influence of philosophical ideas, these specialists commonly referenced progressive educationalists such as John Dewey, Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky, whose ideas were deeply rooted in active engagement, inquiry-based learning, collaborative dialogue, knowledge exchange and the pursuit of meaningful learning experiences. Collectively, these ideas contribute to the development of a learning environment which is learner-centred and interactive. A key objective of this supportive

learning environment is to cultivate not only cognitive capacities but also emotional intelligence and a full comprehension of the world in which pupils live. In addition, knowledge is not merely transmitted but rather co-constructed through the process of drama. PCD has evolved from a focus on simple creative play, self-expression and minimal teacher intervention to a more balanced approach in which the content and the process of learning are given equal importance. In this approach, the teacher plays a more active role, moving from a didactic teaching style to guide and facilitate pupils' engagement in the drama learning experience. This mutual process of active learning and empowering between educators and learners was emphasised by Nic (2015: 332-334). This shift parallels broader trends in education towards holistic and experiential learning, as highlighted in China's NCR developments.

The specialists discussed longstanding and ongoing debates in the field of PCD regarding the incorporation of drama and education. These debates encompassed arguments regarding distinguishing drama and theatre, the role of drama as a subject or method, the place of drama in the curriculum, the tension between valuing process versus product and the growing focus on measurable outcomes in PCD teaching. These debates are relevant today and are being repeated regarding the current status of PCD in mainland China, which has a growing interest in integrating drama into education despite the fact that it is facing various challenges. As discussed in Chapter 3, these challenges and the many obstacles need to be overcome in order to fully develop PCD in mainland China. As noted in Chapter 3, these obstacles include a severe shortage of teachers who have sufficient PCD knowledge and facilitation skills, conceptual deficiencies and misunderstandings regarding PCD, and the absence of standards and structured professional development. As a result of the limitations imposed by both these theoretical and practical aspects, the growth of PCD in mainland China is constrained and very gradual.

During the course of my research, it became clear that these debates are not confined to China or the UK but are also taking place in other countries. For instance, during the 2022 IDEA conference at the University of Iceland, some European scholars were discussing similar issues, and the interviews with the UK specialists raised the concern that for a long time there has been an absence of new significant discussions in the field of PCD. Although my research focused on developments in the UK and China, it was interesting to note that many countries appear to be experiencing a gradual increase in interest in PCD while facing similar challenges regarding the use of drama in schools. Busby et al. (2022: 1-4) commented that TiE is often underestimated in a number of countries and is

commonly perceived as having lower value, lower quality, less artistic and greater emphasis on instrument. This indicates that a broader international mutual exchange and collaboration on practice and curriculum construction would be beneficial for not only the Chinese context but also for other countries, especially for researchers, practitioners, curriculum developers and policymakers. Hopefully, more diverse research will stimulate the evolution of innovative practices in response to these dynamic factors.

Based on the explanations provided by the UK specialists during the interviews, the fundamental characteristics of PCD encompass a wide range of elements, including immersive experience (living through), embodiment, meaning-making and ownership. With the combination of all of these components, the result will be a learning environment which is not only immersive but also reflective and supportive. It is important to note that this inclusive atmosphere is distinct from teacher-centred methods; instead it provides an holistic approach to education settings for cultivating both personal and social growth.

In addition, the specialists demonstrated a nuanced view of the intricacies and variability of integrating drama with education, which is significantly impacted by education regulations, specialists' guidance, teachers' motivation and systemic advocacy. This matches O'Neill's view (see Chapter 4) regarding the importance of striking a balance between product-oriented and PCD education. She also emphasised the difficulties associated with assessing the value of drama in educational settings and underlined the need to be conscious of the drawbacks of an excessively instrumental tendency when applying PCD. Some of the specialists in the interviews underscored the need for maintaining the artistic value of PCD while simultaneously appreciating its potential as an educational tool. In my observation, PCD, as a new approach which is capturing more teachers' attention, is already subjected to a tendency to simplify the strategies, neglecting its complexity as a combination of artistic form and educational tool. For instance, the Beijing Institute of Education held the first drama education presentation on 23 September 2023. At this event, some teachers led demonstration sessions about using drama in their teaching practice. However, most of their presentations merely used a few drama activities to teach English vocabulary and moral education topics. As discussed in Chapter 4, the six specialists expressed concern regarding utilitarianism by those who integrate drama into cross-curricular teaching without a comprehensive understanding of its educational power for all-round development. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of additional research in order to effectively evidence the multiple beneficial aspects of PCD, which have not yet been identified to a sufficient degree. The specialists'

observations of the existing situation and their vision for the future of PCD indicate that despite facing a variety of challenges, there is a viable path forward. Their ideas suggested that there is a need for continuing the development of both the PCD approach and research methods to ensure its future relevance and impact on the evolving teaching and learning environment.

Another common theme expressed by the UK specialists concerned the diminishing role of PCD in schools in the UK, which is being overshadowed by an increasing focus on product-oriented drama education driven by an exam-centric educational system. In particular, GCSE and A-Level drama examinations are primarily focused on the acquisition of skills. This approach is diametrically opposed to the PCD approach and consequently there are implications for training teachers, curriculum development and preparation for the future. This was something that I observed while I was working as an intern at the *Drama Teacher Conference* hosted by the National Theatre in February 2020. This conference was attended by around 120 drama teachers from across the UK. The majority of the workshops at the conference were focused on theatre making, including stage management, directing, costume design, puppetry, set building and sound design. From my perspective, teachers' participation in these workshops, characterised by their advanced expertise and skills, might have been limited by time constraints. Due to the limited two-hour duration of each workshop, as well as the lack of consideration and delineation of the varying age groups and learning abilities in the work, there were difficulties in adequately addressing and supporting the educators' diverse and complex teaching needs. According to the discussion in Chapter 3, addressing this intricate equilibrium between product and process requires not only rethinking pedagogical approaches and assessment methods in the context of using drama in schools but also advocating for a more comprehensive understanding of the value of drama in the development of all-round individuals in the future, rather than merely aiming to train those individuals who will become theatre makers in the future. This raises questions about how to maximise the artistic and educational benefits of PCD, which will be addressed in Section 7.3 of this chapter. Here, however, briefly, for the purpose of maximising the artistic and educational value of PCD, it is necessary to combine a number of factors, including effective teacher training, the utilisation of educational resources, the efficient management of time, the integration of multiple dimensions of learning and adaptation to the diverse needs of learners.

In addition, the specialists stressed the importance of engagement, empowerment,

ownership and learner-centredness as crucial components which are emphasised in PCD, demonstrating a more holistic perspective towards the implementation of drama in education settings. The inclusivity inherent in PCD ensures that all pupils can participate meaningfully, physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially in a learning experience which combines an artistic and an educational purpose. In addition, they noted that the active learning that occurs in PCD is facilitated through a combination of task-oriented, structured yet flexible design, the teacher's role as facilitator, establishing a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment and the empowerment of pupils to take ownership of the learning process. The specialists saw PCD as a learner-centred approach that not only encourages pupils' active engagement but also cultivates a range of overall development competencies, such as creativity and critical thinking, making it an effective educational tool. Furthermore, as discussed previously, this aligns with what the NCR is looking for in terms of teaching approaches and learning concepts which are innovative, active and experiential. This raises questions about the skills, capabilities and knowledge required by drama teachers in order to achieve the aims of the NCR, and this will be discussed in the recommendations in Section 7.3.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the six UK specialists also emphasised the support required to achieve the all-round development value of PCD, noting that it is necessary for facilitators to be equipped with a comprehensive set of skills and capabilities. They explained that the competencies required for future Chinese drama teachers include adaptability and flexibility, facilitation skills, session design capabilities, empathy, effective communication, assessment skills and a commitment to continual professional development. If the drama teachers are able to become proficient in these competencies, it is possible that they will be able to evolve their role as facilitators to guide, support and create a responsive, engaging and meaningful learning experience.

The UK specialists also shared a nuanced perspective on the current state of PCD, particularly in mainland China, as well as more broadly in the context of the worldwide community. Even though some of them had noticed the increasing interest in incorporating drama into educational settings in mainland China, they expressed concerns about the possibility and risk of a superficial or generalised comprehension of PCD. Despite the challenges, they recognised the potential for the development of PCD in mainland China, especially given the NCR's advocacy of participatory and enquiry-based pedagogies. They noted that success in this endeavour will depend on a nuanced understanding of the local cultural and educational contexts, effective and systematic

teacher training, policy support, advocacy at different levels, community-building among educators, the adoption of a gradual, well-considered approach to implementation and growth, and the presentation of research into PCD at conferences and forums. Moreover, establishing partnerships with both local and international drama specialists and practitioners could facilitate a diversified exchange of knowledge and experiences, which could be beneficial for the development of innovative approaches tailored to Chinese contexts. They noted that by carefully navigating these aspects, the development of PCD includes the potential to become a valuable component of the broader educational landscape, contributing to the activation of pupils' engagement in learning and the shift of teaching and learning relationships into co-constructing knowledge together. This will be discussed further in Section 7.3, as it is a clear demonstration of how PCD can contribute to the deepening of the NCR policy initiatives.

7.1.3 Key findings and personal reflections on the workshop observations

As discussed throughout Chapters 5 and 6, the workshop demonstrations provided an effective means of developing a detailed understanding of the practices and processes of PCD. After observing the workshop conducted by Big Brum at a primary school in Birmingham on 20 October 2022 and workshops delivered by Freshwater at three schools in London on 18 July, 16 September and 31 October 2022, I discovered that the implementation of PCD in education environments has advantageous effects on the learning process as well as on the dynamic between learners and educators, particularly as the vast majority of the activities which took place during the workshops were carried out collectively or in small groups. This significantly reduced learners' stress about presenting themselves in front of others, effectively establishing and maintaining a secure learning atmosphere. For the purpose of laying the groundwork for PCD facilitation, the beginning phase is of utmost importance, as highlighted by the UK-based specialists and practitioners. From my perspective, it is crucial for Chinese teachers to incorporate this component into their classroom practice in order to create a punishment-free and supportive learning environment. Furthermore, the learners' collaborative role and small-group tasks provided extra protection in actively engaging with learning materials.

Due to the fact that they lack appropriate personal learning experience and have inadequate teacher training, Chinese educators face practical barriers when it comes to implementing participatory approaches in their classrooms. I propose that this could be linked to the extremely high learner/teacher ratio which is often found in conventional

educational institutions, which normally averages out to be one teacher for every forty pupils. This is not the best possible circumstance for actively immersing learners in a variety of activities for the purpose of achieving beneficial, inquiry- and discussion-based learning within a teaching frame of forty-five minutes. The workshop that was provided by Big Brum lasted for approximately 120 minutes and the ones presented by Freshwater lasted for approximately 60 minutes. There was a high ratio of pupils to instructors in both of the workshops. Not only does a suitable period of instruction and the ratio of learners to teachers ensure that the classroom environment remains lively, it also ensures that there are in-depth discussions and a variety of activities linked to the subject matter, which effectively engage learners from a variety of perspectives.

The relationship between facilitators and learners in the workshops demonstrated that engaging in PCD activities involved a transformation of their relationship from that of knowledge-holders and passive recipients to one of co-constructors and active participants in the process of engaging in, reflecting on and discussing a variety of PCD activities. This process, which was discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, is an approach that empowers learners to take ownership of learning through exploration in PCD. It accomplishes this by providing learners with a framework that enables them to engage in learning. As highlighted by the specialists in Chapter 4, this is one of the most compelling features of using drama strategies which contextualise learning inquiries within fictional settings. The findings of this research indicate that within the context of the dramatic circumstance, the application of situational learning experiences not only helps learners to bridge the gap between the content they are learning and the experiences which they have had in their personal lives, it also enriches their learning process in several dimensions simultaneously. As was discussed in Chapter 4, this is a process that involves placing learners in a zone of proximal development and a process which involves scaffolding by more experienced adults and peers in order to construct knowledge together. In my observation, this is yet another practical difficulty that must be overcome in order to develop and implement the PCD approach inside the Chinese school system, which places a strong emphasis on examinations and presentations. However, it is clear that the NCR policy requires the educational authorities to embrace a new approach to teacher training and to encourage teachers to take ownership of engaging in co-constructing knowledge and to contribute to further policy development.

Facilitation skills, for example questioning strategies and role-play, were seen to be vital for effectively engaging learners during the workshop observations. Facilitation

capacities are essential competencies for qualified drama teachers, as underlined by the specialists in Chapter 4. Through the proficient application of facilitation skills, it is possible to ensure that learners and facilitators interact with one another in a meaningful way. This also makes it possible for facilitators to adopt a responsive teaching style which lets them listen to and observe the interactions of learners throughout the PCD session. This kind of teaching approach, which is both flexible and adaptive, helps to strike a balance between the structured framework and the particular learning situations. For instance, the facilitator in the process of integrating PCD with geography instruction described in Chapter 6 altered the sequence of some activities and extended the group discussion task. This was done because she discovered that the learners in the class already possessed some fundamental knowledge about the continents. She therefore adjusted the levels of difficulty in order to encourage the pupils' in-depth comprehension of more complex material. This indicated that it is necessary for drama teachers at the beginner level to experiment with their ideas and session plans in order to enhance their instructional techniques so that they can meet the varied educational requirements of learners and adapt to a variety of teaching situations. There are many other types of question arising from the stories that can be asked, relating to evaluating, speculating, clarifying, reinforcing and probing information. One of the most successful methods for keeping learners focused and enabling them to make the most of their learning experience is to ask questions that have a clear purpose.

These are the areas putting learners at the centre of learning, connecting pupils' experiences with learning and empowering them with creativity, confidence and active agency which this study has shown to be notably lacking in the existing education settings in China, as noted during the workshop observations. This is reflected in my own teaching experience, when thematic workshops provided examples of how PCD prioritises learners' needs, learning skills and interests from the design to the facilitation of the sessions. Furthermore, Big Brum's participatory workshop offered a vivid example of a session tailored to strike a balance between artistic and educational value rather than using a didactic approach to directly transmit moral teaching without taking into account the dramatic elements. In addition, the cross-curricular workshops which Freshwater offered demonstrated the potential for learners to participate in a learning process which is contextualised.

7.2 Beneficiaries

7.2.1 The researcher's dual role as drama teacher and scholar

A key beneficiary of this research is the researcher, because I occupy a position as both a drama teacher and a scholar. This dual role enables a comprehensive understanding of PCD, combining practical classroom experience with academic rigour. As a drama teacher, I gained first-hand insight into current PCD practices through the workshop observations at Big Brum and Freshwater in the UK. Due to PCD's focus on participatory learning, it is difficult to grasp the actual interaction between facilitators and learners simply through desk work. The observations offered sufficient direct data for understanding the underlying structure of a PCD workshop and the key principles of facilitation. The interviews with artistic directors and facilitators from these two TiE companies also revealed the dynamic features of PCD classrooms. This content obtained from the workshop observations and the interviews helped me to deepen my understanding and provided me with an opportunity to develop some essential facilitation skills and to reflect on the field of PCD and its potential for Chinese education.

The interviews with the Chinese educators helped me to reflect on the current status of drama education in mainland China and to consider the process-emphasis in the NCR. This discussion enabled me to draw a picture of existing PCD practices, reflect on the challenges and opportunities and suggest possible solutions based on the responses from the ten Chinese educators and the data collected in the UK. The interviews with the six UK-based specialists benefited me by giving me an insight into the development of PCD and the debates which arose throughout its evolution. This enabled the identification of similar current topics in the present field of PCD. The discussion with these specialists also deepened my understanding of their thoughts set out in their books, which helped me to clarify some essential aspects of PCD.

In brief, the semi-structured interviews and case studies provided a lens through which I and others can reflect on the current challenges and opportunities of implementing PCD in a real-world setting. As a scholar, I can examine, theorise and contextualise these insights within the broader framework of educational research. This dual perspective ensures that the research is grounded in practical realities while contributing to theoretical advancements in the field.

7.2.2 Practitioners and teachers

Practitioners and teachers in the field of drama education are also direct beneficiaries of

this research. They can apply the findings to enhance their teaching methods, session design and learner-engagement strategies. The research provides evidence-based practices that can be adapted to various educational settings, empowering teachers with new tools and approaches to facilitate learning. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of teacher training and professional development in PCD, leading to potential improvements in teacher education programmes. The research also presents an example of encouraging educators to take part in educational reform as active participants through a mixed-method approach which provides diverse information for the field of PCD.

7.2.3 Researchers in the west and east on drama education, education research, and education policy

This research contributes to both western and eastern contexts regarding education policy, education research and the field of drama education. For researchers in drama education, it provides valuable insights into how PCD can be adapted and implemented in a different context, offering a comparative perspective that enriches the global understanding of integrating drama into educational settings. It also presents the challenges facing mainland China, which are also encountered in other countries which are increasingly realising the value of drama in schools. This research also demonstrates the relationship between PCD and NCR, which provides an example for broader educational communities wishing to combine drama with education to assist learners' active learning. Additionally, it contributes to the broader field of education research by demonstrating how cultural and educational systems influence pedagogical approaches. It also contributes to the construction of arts education curriculum, especially drama education, through the facilitators' reflection and direct data from workshop observations to illustrate how PCD activates the learning environment, learning relationships and learning process. Policymakers and educational leaders in both east and west can draw on the findings to inform drama education policy and practice, ensuring that education strategies are effective for future generations in all aspects of all-round development. The research can contribute to the next modification of the Chinese drama curriculum in 2027 by providing evidence on the potential of PCD in the classroom.

In summary, this research on the use of PCD in education settings in China benefits a diverse group of stakeholders. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing valuable insights for educators, researchers and policymakers. The unique perspectives derived from this research contribute to a deeper understanding of drama education, its

implementation in diverse cultural contexts and its impact on educational policies and practices. Through this research, the field of drama education is enriched, informed and better equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of a global educational landscape.

7.3 Recommendations for practice and policy

In Chapter 1, the conventional method of instruction in the Chinese education system was reviewed. This traditional excessive focus on exam-oriented and teacher-centred education was noted by the MoE (2015), which expressed the need to shift away from this approach as part of the NCR. In the *Drama Curriculum Standard* (2022), it was made clear that drama education, as part of arts education, also has the expected function of cultivating personal development, and PCD was included for the first time as a new learning strategy. It is worth noting that one of the key contributors, Professor Wenqi Ma, to the drafting of this drama curriculum, later reflected on it and talked about practical issues in implementing drama in education settings. In order to achieve the goal of cultivating people and pupils' all-round development in arts education, I suggest that it will be beneficial to establish a long-term, sustainable and structured framework for relating policy initiatives to practices. This framework would further enhance the implementation of the NCR initiative at the city, regional and national levels throughout mainland China.

7.3.1 Recommendation on practice: the role of teachers

According to Luo (2023: 11) and Zhang, Tan and Adler (2023: 4) teachers play a crucial role in implementing the NCR policy efforts, necessitating a series of supports and guidance in order to transition drama teachers from being passive recipients of arts education policies in the NCR to actively contributing to the future modifications of the drama curriculum in 2027.

Another significant development for teachers was noted in Chapter 4: the importance of effective teacher training in order to maximise the artistic and educational value of PCD. Effective teacher training is beneficial for equipping drama teachers with a comprehensive set of skills and capabilities. These encompass the incorporation of knowledge of the principles of PCD and pedagogy; the ability to adapt and be flexible in meeting the varied needs of learners; the role of the teacher as a facilitator; the capacity to select materials and to design appropriate sessions for different age groups; the empowerment of learners to take ownership of their learning process; and proficiency in

facilitation skills and assessment. The role of the facilitator is focused on guiding and supporting the learners' learning experiences, rather than adopting a didactic teaching style.

The combination of a thorough introduction to the history and essential principles of PCD through demonstration sessions or examples designed for different age groups is beneficial to teachers because it helps them to develop a relatively comprehensive understanding of multiple dimensions. In particular, participating in a proper interactive PCD workshop instead of a didactic lecture or speech helps to deepen their understanding.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the teacher participants reflected on how they benefited from the ten-day workshop. They shared their view that the programme had enhanced their comprehension and application of PCD in their practices in many ways, including the transformation of the teacher's role into that of a facilitator; the utilisation of the concept of angle of connection to connect pupils' experiences with learning materials; the creation of sessions and breaking down stories to align with learners' existing experiences, interests, and abilities; the philosophy and pedagogical comprehension of PCD; the significance of incorporating drama elements to enhance learning materials and empower learners' problem-solving and decision-making skills; and the recognition of diverse teaching approaches to actively involve learners in their engagement with learning materials and small-group discussions.

This is supported by the comments made by the Chinese teachers in the interviews reported in Chapter 3 as the majority of them recognised the advantages of acquiring such skills and understanding through sustained international collaboration as opposed to isolated one-off workshops. As the UK-based specialists suggested in Chapter 4, such collaborations require localising international ideas within Chinese cultural and educational contexts. An additional supporting structure would be the formation of a drama teachers' association or community. This would enhance drama teachers' knowledge and experience through exchange, resource sharing and teacher reflections. In a broader sense, this association could further benefit educational communities by popularising the multiple aspects of PCD.

Gaps inhibiting the development of PCD identified by both the UK specialists and the Chinese teachers focused on the need for support for innovative research into teaching with published results. This included engagement in participatory learning processes and learning through workshops, as previously noted in Chapter 4, as well as a strong

emphasis on active participation and the application of what has been learned to everyday tasks. This vividly demonstrates a discussion-based, learner-centred and experiential approach to learning that has often been lacking in most teachers' previous personal learning and teaching experiences. The role of the facilitator is focused on guiding and supporting the learners' learning experiences, rather than adopting a didactic teaching style. As discussed in Chapter 5, the combination of a thorough introduction to the history and essential principles of PCD through an exploration of four plays designed for different age groups helped participants to develop a relatively comprehensive understanding of multiple dimensions. In particular, participating in a proper interactive TiE performance also discussed in Chapter 5 deepened their understanding. This participatory style of teacher training benefits existing teachers by updating their teaching approach and gathering evidence in an unconventional way to support their exploration of using PCD in their practices and such sessions should also be included in initial teacher training. Such engagements, documented and discussed within a research framework, would enrich the Chinese education field and provide an evidence base for policy development.

A final recommendation for promoting the development of PCD is the translation into Chinese of key publications and articles which would benefit not only the field of PCD but also teachers who are applying PCD in cross-curricular teaching. The translation of key publications needs additional Chinese-focused introductions to contextualise knowledge and experience in order to equip future teachers in China with an understanding of the range of historical and pedagogical aspects of PCD.

In summary, to effectively support and achieve the goal of cultivating all-round learners in drama education and to align with the NCR initiatives seeking to move away from a teacher-centred and exam-focused approach towards a teaching emphasis on participation, critical thinking and inquiry-based learning, it is crucial to provide effective teacher training. This needs to be introduced for current teachers as continuing professional development (CPD) and embedded within initial teacher training. Additionally, dialogue with international specialists and international collaborations are beneficial in enhancing drama teachers' understanding of PCD, developing their facilitation abilities and promoting the practice of PCD in mainland China. Furthermore, the formation of associations or communities for drama teachers would enhance their teaching abilities by offering opportunities for professional knowledge exchange and regular PCD community events. Additionally, it would deepen their comprehension of PCD by promoting reading and study groups, as there is a limited availability of Chinese-language versions of

important publications in this field.

7.3.2 Recommendations on policy

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Profess Ma, the primary author of the drama curriculum, reflected on the issues of insufficient experimentation prior to the launch of the curriculum in 2022. This lack of consideration resulted in an inconsistency between the drama teachers' instructions and the drama curriculum. He recommended that the conference attendees, specifically the teachers present, engage in educational research and share their findings through the publication of articles and presentations at conferences. This will contribute to the future revision of the drama curriculum in 2027. However, the input of teachers' participation into policy development requires comprehensive contributions and support from a range of stakeholders in order to address the challenges of integrating drama into educational environments. This includes support for research into classroom teaching, which is strongly recommended for developing effective policy.

The second recommendation on policy is the inclusion of experienced PCD advisors in the education system. The China Theatre Industry Development Research Group produces an annual research report including its recent *Chinese Drama Education Development Yearly Report 2021-2022* (2023: 508-520). Past reports identified several issues in the current state of drama education. These include a substantial lack of teachers with expertise in drama and pedagogy, a lack of professional teacher training, the need to improve the competency and skills of drama teachers in state schools, the absence of content related to pedagogy, curriculum and didactics in relevant teacher training programmes, and insufficient funding. Agencies such as Drama Rainbow could assist in addressing these issues. Their experience of collaborating with international specialists and leading TiE companies, delivering long-term teacher training and conducting evidence-based research could be included in a teacher training programme enhanced by presentations at conferences. Including experienced PCD advisors also contributes to the adaptation of international ideas for the Chinese policy context.

Third, recommendations on policy include conducting PCD action research in sample schools. This gap has been identified by the MoE which recently issued the *Comprehensive implementation of the school arts education infiltration Action* (referred to as *Action 2023*) on 22 December 2023. This initiative is intended to reinforce arts education and enhance its role in fostering pupils' all-round development in schools. It

highlights multiple plans for developing and enhancing the arts curriculum, such as creating an engaging and diverse classroom environment to stimulate learners' enthusiasm and participation, selecting appropriate textbooks and providing reading recommendations, promoting teaching research, providing effective teacher training to enhance teacher motivation, and using diverse assessment methods which prioritise pupil development. These aspects encourage conducting practical evidence research in sample schools that will demonstrate the strengths and effectiveness of implementing PCD. Furthermore, the process of conducting research and exploring practice will ensure teachers' active role in policy development.

In the future, if all the recommendations set out above on practice and policy are implemented, the landscape in the field of PCD and the broader educational system in mainland China will be more dynamic and diverse. Drama teachers will be equipped with a comprehensive set of skills and capabilities to effectively engage learners in the new teaching approach, which is characterised by being participatory, enquiry-based and discussion-based. There will be sufficient and diverse innovative and evidence-based research by teachers who successfully shift their role as active participants in policy initiatives, eventually taking ownership of the NCR policy development as well as contributing to the 2027 revision of the drama curriculum framework. The drama teachers' association will be beneficial for facilitators in various events, such as study groups on key publications and research groups on diverse topics, as well as networking and experience exchange. The translation of key publications will be beneficial in generating deep discussion and research on different aspects of PCD.

Such a future, based on the policy recommendations, support for research funding and the inclusion of experienced PCD advisors, will ensure the localisation and development of PCD in the Chinese cultural and educational context. The action research in sample schools and teachers' role as active participants in NCR will contribute concrete data to inform a well-structured and evidence-supported drama curriculum modification in 2027.

7.4 Research limitations and implications for future research

7.4.1 Research limitations

Despite the valuable insights obtained from this research, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, education authorities and schoolteachers generally recognise the educational significance of drama in the curriculum, such as including

educational drama in the *Standards* (2022) as a major milestone for the development of PCD within the context of NCR and the crucial role that teachers play in the effective implementation of NCR ideas and standards. Nevertheless, Luo (2023: 6) and Zhang Tan and Adler (2023: 4-6) identified some persisting challenges for NCR initiatives, such as resistance from conservative forces, despite the presence of numerous constructive discussions regarding theories and practices. As discussed in the field review on the current state of drama education in mainland China (Chapter 1) as well as in the insights gained from interviewing ten Chinese drama teachers (Chapter 4), there are many different viewpoints regarding the use of drama in education settings. Some individuals in mainland China who advocate a focus on performance-oriented drama education are acknowledged in the thesis but not privileged or prioritised in this study as their approach does not appear to progress the aims of the NCR as fully as PCD as they neglect the participatory, enquiry-based approach and the requirement to make links to learners' real-life experiences.

In addition, according to the OECD (2016: 9), China is not only a vastly diversified country but also has the largest education system globally. During the compulsory education phase, there are a total of 201,600 schools within the country, accommodating 159 million pupils and employing 10.6 million full-time instructors (MoE: 2023a). Furthermore, the Xinhua News Agency (2022) reported that there are currently 830,000 arts teachers in compulsory education nationwide, which represents a 52.3% increase compared with the previous decade. Over 5,000 arts teachers from across the country participated in an online meeting on the interpretation of the *Standards* (2022) in arts education. Although changes regarding drama education are taking place in the education system, it is important to note that change is challenging due to the rapidly evolving national context and the huge population. Nevertheless, the majority of the alterations which I noticed in the series of document papers mostly focused on advancing the concepts associated with process-centred education. In this study, I took into account regional factors affecting drama teaching despite time constraints – for example the interviews conducted with the ten Chinese drama teachers featured different provinces and municipalities, including Jiangsu Province, Jiangxi Province, the Greater Bay Area, and the municipalities of Beijing and Shanghai. Their teaching experience, which spanned between one and fifteen years, also generated a variety of responses to the interview questions regarding their application of PCD in their teaching as well as their reflection on how PCD benefits pupils' active learning.

Third, my status as an inside researcher who is active in the field of PCD might be seen to be a potential limitation, but I have tried to maintain an objective perspective and to bring objectivity into my work. During the interview data collection process, I explained to the three groups of interviewees the terminology of process-centred drama to distinguish it from performance-oriented drama education. I also gained insights from the specialists in regard to the exploration of PCD; they first acknowledged my view and then offered their experience of using drama in education settings. This explanation not only avoided unstated assumptions and misunderstandings between me and the participants in this research from the beginning but also helped to keep me informed about my objectivity. I also asked interviewees to explain key phases and their experiences in detail rather than jump to the next question quickly. This helped me to maintain objectivity when discussing the different educational contexts of the UK and China. Following each workshop observation, I clarified unfamiliar terminology with the facilitators to ensure that I understood the British context and curriculum. Their responses were beneficial for me to reduce misinterpretation of the workshop observation. I also had a meeting in person with one administrator after all the workshop observations involving Freshwater, which further helped me to add some background information to my observation notes.

7.4.2 Implications for future research

Luo (2023: 6) argued that the NCR has evolved into a “profound curriculum specialisation movement”, indicating the need for a programme of teacher training and NCR policy initiative interpretations so that a wider range of teachers can participate and deepen their understanding of the requirements and standards in the relevant policy papers. Teachers play a fundamental role in understanding as well as practising the policy and their future feedback will be required to further develop policies, frameworks and outlines.

Several issues for further research were identified at a three-day symposium, the 4th Symposium on Theatrical Pedagogy in China’s Primary and Middle Schools, which was held in the Central Academy of Drama. These include the ownership by teachers of the *Standards* (2022); they not only need to understand the key principles but also need to participate in teaching research to address consistency across teaching, learning and assessment; the improvement of current guidance; and ensuring the practicality and effectiveness of policy. According to Zhang, Tan and Alder (2023: 15), collaborative action research could be a beneficial means to reinforce teachers’ instructional strategies as well as to contribute to their engagement with the NCR. Fu (2020: 417-418) pointed

out that one of the biggest obstacles to achieving educational reform is teachers' perception of their role as receivers and implementers rather than agents within the context of NCR. Therefore, research into teachers' agency and reflective practice might be one of the best ways to fill huge gaps between current practices and the ideal teaching and learning model advocated by NCR. This determines the role of teachers as curriculum makers, which is necessary for curriculum development. As Allan et al. (2018: 6-8) argued, the importance of action research in educational settings is that it adequately suits specific circumstances and contexts which enable regional adaptation and variation.

The discussion above calls for future research in several areas:

- (1) Action research, which focuses on the application of PCD in different age groups and scenarios. Gather evidence from pupils' participation and teachers' feedback to meet the requirements of the NCR, in particular how to achieve consistency across teaching, learning and assessment.
- (2) Disseminating research from key publications in the field of PCD and encouraging debate by presenting it on a range of platforms, for instance, educational drama conferences and online forums, as well as organising online or in-person teachers' experiences exchange workshops for establishing a drama teachers' community. These will also ensure a diverse dialogue supporting an operational and practical future in the field of PCD in mainland China.
- (3) Longitudinal research regarding a variety of themes in the application of PCD in China, for instance, investigating the benefits of *Ren* (仁): citizenship education, moral education and life-long learning in China.

In conclusion, the primary evidence collected through the semi-structured interviews and workshop observations offered experience, reflection and insights from Chinese educators, UK-based specialists and experienced facilitators. These valuable insights underscore the transformative potential of PCD for enhancing pupils' all-round development, which aligns with the NCR's emphasis on learner-centred and experiential learning. The key findings revealed the growing awareness and implementation challenges of PCD in China. Chinese drama teachers, despite their enthusiasm and progressive approaches, often face obstacles such as limited professional guidance and resource scarcity. They highlighted the need for comprehensive teacher training, sustained international collaboration, and the translation of key PCD publications into Chinese to facilitate deeper understanding and the effective practice of PCD in the

Chinese educational context.

In addition, the UK-based specialists, artistic directors and experienced facilitators emphasised the importance of maintaining the balance between the artistic and the educational value of PCD in schools. Their insights and the workshop observations suggested that PCD can significantly contribute to active learning, pupils' engagement and the development of critical thinking and creativity. However, they also pointed out the danger of a superficial understanding of PCD and the risk of utilitarianism in integrating drama into cross-curricular teaching.

Furthermore, recommendations from the key findings for practice included effective teacher training which equips educators with a comprehensive set of skills and capabilities essential for PCD. Emphasis was placed on the need for sustained international collaboration, the formation of drama teacher associations, and the promotion of innovative research to support PCD implementation. Policy recommendations focused on supporting research funding, involving experienced PCD advisors, and conducting action research in sample schools to gather concrete data for future drama curriculum modifications.

These recommendations taken together would make a substantial contribution to the achievement of the NCR's aims and would represent a transformation of the Chinese education system. This is clearly an ambitious project, but it is important for the future of China that this initiative succeeds as will be discussed in the Conclusion that follows.

Conclusion

Review of the study

This study embarked on an in-depth exploration of integrating PCD into the educational system of mainland China. Anchored within the framework of the NCR, the study scrutinised both the potential and the challenges of embedding PCD into Chinese education practices. The primary aim was to assess how PCD, as a dynamic and interactive pedagogical approach, aligns with and enhances the objectives of the NCR, particularly in fostering holistic, participatory and enquiry-based learning experiences for learners.

The research methodology combined a mix of qualitative approaches, including reflection, interviews with Chinese drama teachers, UK-based specialists and UK-based practitioners and observations of PCD workshops led by Big Brum and Freshwater TiE companies. This multi-faceted approach provided a rich tapestry of insights into the practicalities, nuances and implications of implementing PCD in the distinct cultural and educational setting of China.

Central to this study was the exploration of how PCD could be adapted and integrated into Chinese schools. This involved examining the similarities between the PCD approach and the NCR's ideal teaching model, which advocates a shift from traditional rote learning to a more learner-centred, explorative and interactive form of education. The study also delved into the challenges and complexities inherent in this integration, ranging from cultural adaptations, teacher training needs and resource constraints to broader policy implications. In addition, the research revealed how PCD, with its emphasis on creativity, critical thinking and collaborative learning, resonates with the overarching goals of the NCR. It highlighted PCD's potential for facilitating not just academic learning but also for developing learners' social, emotional and moral competencies, aspects which are increasingly vital in today's global and rapidly changing society.

Furthermore, this study served as a conduit for a cross-cultural exchange of educational ideas and practices. It underscored the potential of global pedagogical approaches, like PCD, to be contextualised and effectively implemented in non-western educational settings. This aspect of the study is particularly pertinent in an era when education systems worldwide are seeking innovative ways to enrich learning experiences and outcomes.

In sum, the thesis presents a comprehensive exploration of the integration of PCD into Chinese education, contributing to the discourse on educational reform, cross-cultural pedagogical adaptations and the evolving dynamics of teaching and learning in the twenty-first century.

Restating the key findings

The core findings of this study presented and discussed in this thesis revolve around the successful integration of PCD into the Chinese education system, particularly within the context of the NCR. This integration was found to significantly align with the NCR's goals of fostering a more holistic, learner-centred approach to learning. The key contributions in this context include the adaptation of PCD to the Chinese cultural context. The study revealed the importance of cultural sensitivity in adapting PCD methodologies to the Chinese classroom. It emphasised that although PCD's founding principles are universally applicable, their implementation requires careful consideration of local cultural nuances and educational norms.

The interviews with ten Chinese teachers showed that although drama education awareness in China is growing, conferences and workshops often lack diverse perspectives. Their experiences pointed out the existing challenges for Chinese educators; an excessive focus on performance skills, conceptual gaps, a shortage of qualified drama teachers, and limited professional development opportunities. To overcome these challenges, they suggested that international collaboration is essential for bridging the gap between the PCD approach and China's education needs and shifting the education paradigms to a learner-centred, participatory model close to learners' experiences. In short, the key findings highlight the challenges and opportunities of implementing PCD in China. International collaboration, resource sharing and learner-centred approaches emerged as crucial solutions, offering a promising future for drama education in China.

The interviews with six UK-based specialists pointed out the current challenges of balancing the artistic and educational values of PCD in school settings, facing conservative views of exam-oriented evaluation and lacking comprehensive teacher training to develop the approach and academic dialogue. They also explained that the fundamental characteristics of pupils' engagement in PCD is a process of learning through immersive experience, embodiment, meaning-making, agency and fiction. These elements create an immersive, reflective and supportive learning environment, distinct from teacher-centred methods. They expressed a nuanced view of PCD implementation,

which should stress the importance of engagement, empowerment and ownership in PCD. Despite the challenges, the specialists recognised the potential for PCD in mainland China, especially given the alignment with the NCR principles. They suggested that success depends on nuanced understanding, teacher training, policy support, community building and partnerships with local and international specialists. They highlighted the fact that drama teachers need a comprehensive set of skills and capabilities to facilitate effective PCD. For instance, adaptability and flexibility, questioning strategy, session design capabilities and empathy. In short, PCD offers a learner-centred, holistic approach to education, aligning with progressive philosophies and NCR advocacy. Although challenges exist, PCD's potential in mainland China and globally suggests opportunities for collaborative development and innovation in education.

The two case studies of Big Brum and Freshwater unveiled the advantageous impact of PCD on the learning process and the dynamic between educators and learners. Most activities in the PCD workshops were carried out collectively or in small groups, creating a secure and stress-free learning environment. This emphasis on the initial phase aligns with the importance highlighted by the UK-based specialists: establishing a punishment-free and supportive atmosphere in Chinese classrooms is essential. However, Chinese educators face practical challenges due to low learner/teacher ratios, limiting the scope for conducting enquiry-based and discussion-based learning within a short class duration. Workshops led by Big Brum and Freshwater with high pupil/teacher ratios demonstrated the vibrancy and depth of discussions and activities, engaging learners from various perspectives.

In addition, the workshops transformed the relationship between facilitators and learners. Learners became co-constructors and active participants in the learning process. However, this shift challenges the traditional teacher-centred approach prevalent in China, where exams and presentations often take precedence. Furthermore, facilitation skills, including questioning strategies and role-play, emerged as vital for engaging learners during workshop observations. Proficient facilitation enabled meaningful interactions and adaptive teaching styles. In particular, purposeful questioning was identified as a powerful tool to maintain learner focus and enhance the learning experience.

These observations shed light on areas lacking in China's current education settings. PCD's emphasis on learner needs, skills and interests, as exemplified in the thematic workshops, stands out. The workshops illustrated a balanced approach which integrates

artistic and educational values in contrast to didactic methods which transmit moral teachings without considering dramatic elements. Additionally, the cross-curricular workshops led by Freshwater highlighted the potential for contextualised learning experiences.

In conclusion, the interviews with the Chinese educators, the UK-based specialists and the workshop observations emphasised the transformative potential of PCD in Chinese education settings. However, addressing challenges related to teacher training, learner/teacher ratios and shifting education paradigms is essential for its successful integration into the Chinese education system. These insights offer valuable guidance for the future development and implementation of PCD, aligning with the evolving educational landscape and the goals of the NCR.

There is another aspect of the alignment between the NCR in China and the fundamental principles of PCD which should be noted as it offers a profound perspective on the intersection of traditional eastern educational values with contemporary western pedagogical methods. This convergence offers insights into the harmonisation of traditional eastern educational values, particularly those rooted in Confucian philosophy, with contemporary western pedagogical methods encapsulated in PCD. This synergy is embedded in the NCR, which references China's ancient Confucian educational philosophies as well as modern teaching techniques, particularly in arts and drama education. The synthesis of the NCR's educational ideals and the foundational theories of PCD underscores the potential for transformative shifts in education paradigms.

Confucius, as discussed in Chapter 4, is revered as one of the most influential philosophers in Chinese history, and he espoused an holistic approach to education which resonates with the principles of PCD. His ideas place a strong emphasis on all-round development, self-cultivation, internalised learning, reflective learning and enjoying learning. This philosophy resonates remarkably with the essential aspects of PCD, challenging prevailing stereotypes about Chinese education. In a conventional Chinese educational context, the focus has often been on rote memorisation, examination-oriented learning and a teacher-centred approach. One of the fundamental aspects of Confucius's philosophy is the idea of self-cultivation. Confucius believed that education should not be a passive process but a personal journey of growth and development. This notion aligns seamlessly with the principles of PCD, in which learners are active participants in their own educational journey. In PCD, education is not a one-way transmission of knowledge

from teacher to learner. Instead, it involves learners actively engaging with the content, exploring, experimenting and immersing themselves in the subject matter.

Furthermore, the emphasis on internalised learning in Confucius's philosophy also finds resonance in PCD. Learners in PCD are encouraged to internalise their experiences within a dramatic context. These experiences are crafted to be immersive and meaningful, providing depth and facilitating genuine learning. Learners connect authentically with the material, fostering a deeper understanding and a heightened level of engagement. In addition, reflective learning, a cornerstone of Confucius's thought, is also a pivotal component of PCD. In PCD, learners engage in reflection after the dramatic experience, a critical step that precedes further action or deeper learning. This reflective practice ensures that learners actively think about their experiences, analyse them and extract valuable lessons. This echoes Confucius's belief in the transformative power of self-reflection.

Importantly, the synthesis of Confucius's philosophy with PCD extends to social interaction and external influence. PCD acknowledges the significance of both internal effort and external interaction. Learners in PCD engage deeply with their roles, fostering introspection and personal growth, in line with the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation. At the same time, PCD recognises the vital role of social interaction and external feedback in cognitive development, mirroring the principles of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. This interplay enriches the learning experience, reflecting the complexities of real-life social engagements.

Both Confucius's holistic approach to education, encompassing moral, ethical and intellectual dimensions, and the comprehensive educational experience offered by PCD emphasise the development of cognitive skills along with social, emotional and ethical competencies. This holistic development is instrumental in nurturing well-rounded individuals, a shared objective in both Confucian philosophy and PCD. In addition, Confucius believed that an educator's job is to provide knowledge and answer questions. In PCD, facilitators guide, inspire and provide opportunities for learners to explore, experiment and learn through their own experiences. Facilitators in PCD do not merely impart knowledge but guide learners through questioning, fostering discovery and independent learning. Furthermore, Confucius's focus on virtue and character development parallels the ethos of PCD. Although PCD might not explicitly impart moral education, it cultivates virtues such as empathy, respect and integrity through activities

which involve resolving conflicts, understanding diverse perspectives and exploring ethical dilemmas.

In summation, the congruence between Confucius's educational philosophy and the principles of PCD provides a culturally resonant framework for the introduction and development of PCD in contexts influenced by Confucian thinking, such as China. This alignment suggests that participatory and reflective educational approaches, despite diverging from some of the stereotypes about Chinese education, could be well-received and efficacious due to their compatibility with traditional learning philosophies. The interplay between NCR's education ideals and the founding theories of PCD exemplifies the potential for cross-cultural synergy in pedagogical practices, paving the way for transformative educational experiences.

To achieve this, knowledge dissemination is of paramount importance to unlocking the potential of PCD within the Chinese education context. This necessitates the propagation of core tenets, best practices and successful case studies of PCD through a multitude of avenues, including literature publication, empirical research and knowledge dissemination, to bring about the full potential of PCD in Chinese schools. For instance, conferences and training sessions are taking place globally in the domain of PCD. The Dorothy Heathcote Now Conference (Mantle of the expert: 2022) in the UK provided a series of online sessions on evaluation and session planning, as well as in-person workshops conducted by Cecily O'Neill and other experts. These workshops aimed to discuss and explore fundamental themes related to Heathcote's practices and theories. The IDEA conference in Iceland in 2022 presented multiple discussions from different perspectives, such as peace, gender and teacher education. The American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) annually hosts conferences and facilitates network meetings for theatre practitioners, academics, early education instructors, state schoolteachers and playwrights. Drama Rainbow also organised online sharing and knowledge exchange during Covid-19 to empower Chinese PCD facilitators in multiple aspects, such as role play exercises, protection into role, recent research in the field of PCD and online PCD sessions. Conferences and workshops that facilitate the sharing of practices are necessary for the growth of PCD in China. These events allow for in-depth discussion of the value of PCD in Chinese contexts, as well as the exchange on practice and presentation of research findings from multiple perspectives. Further discussions are needed to enhance teachers' understanding of integrating PCD into their practices, adapting international experiences into the Chinese setting and embracing AI into

teaching from session design to evaluation. For instance, AI-powered virtual assistants can support pupils during role-play by offering prompts, guiding dialogue, or even acting as interactive characters within the drama scenario. On the other hand, AI can be used to evaluate students' participation and learning performance in PCD activities by analysing qualitative data, such as verbal interactions and emotional engagement. Additionally, AI tools can offer more personalised feedback, helping educators measure soft skills like empathy, cooperation, and critical thinking, which are central to PCD.

Furthermore, knowledge dissemination needs heightened international collaboration to align PCD principles and strategies with the Chinese cultural and educational milieu. This entails collaboration with international experts and organisations to harmonise the ideals and methodologies of PCD with the specificities of the Chinese educational landscape. This collaborative endeavour not only bridges cross-cultural disparities but also provides invaluable experiences and resources for the practice of PCD in China.

For instance, the Drama Rainbow Education Centre, the first company to conduct systematic PCD research and practice in mainland China, has been in operation for fifteen years and has maintained a long-term collaboration with Big Brum and other experts in the field of PCD. They make various contributions to the field of PCD including translating key publications, conducting masterclasses, offering extensive teacher training programmes and presenting youth theatre projects. Their practices and studies not only bridge the PCD approach into the Chinese context, but also present an example of PCD practice specifically situated in the Chinese context. Since 2013, Drama Rainbow has been using youth theatre as a means of project-based learning. The emphasis is placed on the process of deep exploration rather than merely on the final presentation. The youth theatre project has developed a total of twenty productions since 2009 that specifically address the problems and difficulties faced by young people in China. These productions include *Outside Over There* (2014), *Me and You* (2015), *Five Two Four* (2015), *Stuck* (2016), *Shapes and Shadows* (2016), *Invisible Me* (2017), *The Examination* (2018), *Holes* (2019), *The Journey* (2019), *The Field of Stones* (2020), *Us* (2020), *The Soil* (2021), *Shaped* (2021), *Bag Lady* (2022), *Macbeth* (2022), *Shadows* (2023), *San Bao* (2023), *Rise and Shine* (2023), and *Eye of the Storm* (2024). The latest production *Eye of the Storm* adapted by Chris Cooper from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, explores the decision-making process in confronting the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and socio-cultural transformations. Additionally, it explores the relationship of technology and humanity, as well as the struggle between love and control, within the context of modern Chinese child-

parent relationships.

Finally, promoting the development of PCD requires advocacy at the policy level in China. This encompasses fostering recognition of PCD within education policy frameworks and allocating financial support to PCD practice and research. Policy makers must be cognisant of the potential of PCD and incorporate relevant measures within educational policies to propel its development.

In summary, this research has highlighted the critical importance of promoting and recognising PCD within the Chinese education context. It emphasised that knowledge dissemination, international collaboration and policy support are essential pillars in the endeavour to fully realise the transformative potential of PCD in Chinese education. Through these comprehensive efforts, we can envision a future in which PCD plays a central role in shaping an education paradigm characterised by participatory, inquiry-driven and discussion-centric pedagogical models.

Concluding remarks

I shall conclude the thesis by repeating several key findings. First, PCD emerges as a learner-centred approach, aligning effectively with the goals of the NCR in China by cultivating pupils' all-round development. Second, maintaining a balance between artistic and educational values in PCD is essential for its success in education settings. Third, teacher empowerment and comprehensive training are crucial to ensuring the effective implementation of PCD in classrooms. Additionally, robust policy support and advocacy for PCD within drama education are necessary for the successful integration of this approach in the context of the NCR. Finally, the findings of the study have pointed to future research directions, emphasising the need for translating key publications, conducting action research and longitudinal studies to further understand the long-term impact and adaptability of PCD. In summary, this research enriches the discourse on PCD, providing valuable insights and practical recommendations for educators, policy makers and researchers, and contributing to the evolving landscape of China's education reform and the role of the creative arts within it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 New Curriculum reform policy and recommendations after the 2000s

Policy document	Issued by	Date
Decision on the reform and development of basic Education «关于基础教育改革与发展的决定»	State Council	29 th May 2001
Compendium of curriculum reform for basic education (trial) 《基础教育课程改革纲要》（试行）	MoE	8 th Jun 2001
The tenth five-year (2001-2005) national plan for education 《全国教育事业第十个五年计划》	MoE	26 th Jul 2001
National development plan for arts education in schools (2001-2010) «全国学校艺术教育发展规划(2001-2010年)»	MoE	13 th May 2002
Working regulation for arts education in school «学校艺术教育工作规程»	MoE	25 th Jul 2002
Senior secondary school arts curriculum standards (trial). 《普通高中艺术课程标准》	MoE	31 st Mar 2003
The eleventh five-year national plan (2006–2010) for education «国家教育事业发展“十一五”规划纲要»	MoE	18 th May 2007
Views on strengthening and improving arts education activities in primary and secondary schools «关于加强和改进中小学艺术教育活动的意见»	MoE	30 th May 2007
Views on further strengthening arts education in primary and Secondary Schools «关于进一步加强中小学艺术教育的意见»	MoE	8 th Sep 2008
Outlines of the national mid- and long-term plan for educational reform and development (2010-2020) «国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 (2010-2020)»	State Council	29 th Jul 2010
National curriculum scheme and standard for arts education in the compulsory education 《义务教育课程方案和课程标准》	MoE	28 th Dec 2011
National standard for arts education in the compulsory education 《义务教育艺术课程标准》	MoE	28 th Dec 2011
The twelfth five-year national plan (2011–2015) for education 《国家教育事业第十二个五年规划》	MoE	14 th Jun 2012

Policy document	Issued by	Date
The guidelines of comprehensively deepening the reform of Education 《中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定》	MoE	26 th Jan 2013
Opinions on promoting the development of arts education in schools 《关于推进学校艺术教育发展的若干意见》	MoE	14 th Jan 2014
Opinions on comprehensively strengthening and Improving the comprehensive quality evaluation of general senior high school students 《关于加强和改进普通高中学生综合素质评价的意见》	MoE	10 th Dec 2014
Opinions on comprehensively strengthening and improving arts education in schools 《关于全面加强和改进学校美育工作的意见》	State Council	15 th Sep 2015
Assessment methods on arts quality of primary and secondary school students 《中小学生艺术素质测评办法》	MoE	26 th May 2015
The thirteenth five-year (2016-2020) national education development plan 《国家教育事业发展规划“十三五”规划》	State Council	10 th Jan 2017
Administrative measures for part-time teachers of school physical education and arts education 《学校体育美育兼职教师管理办法》	MoE	10 th Oct 2017
Guidance on promoting the reform of high school education in the new era 《关于新时代推进普通高中育人方式改革的指导意见》	State Council	11 th Jun 2019
Opinions on comprehensively strengthening and improving school arts education in the new era 《关于全面加强和改进新时代学校美育工作的意见》	State Council	15 th Oct 2020
National curriculum scheme and standard for arts education in the compulsory education 《义务教育课程方案和课程标准》	MoE	25 th Mar 2022
National standard for arts education in the compulsory education 《义务教育艺术课程标准》	MoE	25 th Mar 2022
Comprehensive implementation of the school arts education infiltration action 《关于全面实施学校美育浸润行动的通知》	MoE	22 th Dec 2022

Appendix 2 List of the interviewees

Set 1: Interviews with Chinese teachers			
	Name/ code	Date	Online/ in person
1	Teacher 1	2022/08/11	Online
2	Teacher 2	2022/08/15, 2022/10/08	Online
3	Teacher 3	2022/08/12, 2022/08/13	Online
4	Teacher 4	2022/08/12	Online
5	Teacher 5	2022/08/16	Online
6	Teacher 6	2022/08/11	Online
7	Teacher 7	2022/08/15	Online
8	Teacher 8	2022/08/16	Online
9	Teacher 9	2022/08/12	Online
10	Teacher 10	2022/08/11	Online
Set 2: interviews with UK-based specialists			
11	Cecily O'Neill	20221130	Online
12	David Davis	20220910, 20220919, 20220926	Online & in person
13	Jonothan Neelands	2022/09/20, 2022/11/23	Online & in person
14	Mike Fleming	20221116	Online
15	Patrice Baldwin	20220916, 20220922	Online
16	Roger Wooster	2022/09/07	In person
Set 3: Interviews with artistic directors and facilitators from Big Brum and Freshwater			
17	Chris Cooper	2022/08/31	In person
18	Richard Holmes	20220909, 20220915	Online
19	Carol Tagg	2022/09/22	Online & in person
20	Facilitator 1	2022/09/09	Online
21	Facilitator 2	2022/09/27	Online
22	Facilitator 3	2022/10/03	Online
23	Facilitator 4	2022/09/13	Online