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Chen Suimeng

Scientific Supervisor: Tasha Georg, PhD in Ped. Sciences, Ass. Professor
Francisk Skorina Gomel State University
Gomel, Republic of Belarus

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEVELOPMENT
OF DRAMA EDUCATION RESEARCH**

The article is devoted to the analysis of the evolution of the theoretical foundations and research directions in the field of drama in education as an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of pedagogy and art. It traces the transformation from drama education, focused on skill development, to drama in education, aimed at the holistic emotional, cognitive, and social development of learners. The work systematizes the theoretical origins of the concept, starting from the ideas of Rousseau, and its stages of development, including the formation of G. Bolton's DIE model and integration with constructivist psychology and sociology.

Special attention is paid to contemporary trends: convergence with educational technologies (multimedia, VR), a focus on the formation of key competencies, and the expansion of application areas, including student psychological well-being. The article emphasizes the integrative nature of the theoretical foundation, combining psychoanalysis, constructivism, and situated cognition theory, as well as the practice-oriented nature of the method based on the principles of experiential learning.

Based on the analysis of research publications and data, an exponential growth of scientific interest in the topic is revealed, and the positive impact of drama in education on speech skills, creativity, and cooperation is confirmed. The conclusion is drawn about significant achievements in the field of conceptualization and development of practical models, while existing gaps are identified, such as the need to develop an evaluation system and teacher training. Future development prospects are seen in deepening interdisciplinary research and international cooperation.

Keywords: Drama of education; Performing Students; Mental Health; Cross-cultural Comparison; Dual Circulation Model; Transformation Path.

Чэнь Суймэн

Научный руководитель: Т. Г. Шатюк, канд. пед. наук, доцент
Гомельский государственный университет имени Ф. Скорины
г. Гомель, Республика Беларусь

**ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ И РАЗВИТИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ
В ОБЛАСТИ ДРАМАТИЧЕСКОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ**

Статья посвящена анализу эволюции теоретических основ и исследовательских направлений в области драматического образования как междисциплинарной области на стыке педагогики и искусства. Прослеживается трансформация от драматического образования, ориентированного на развитие навыков, к драматическому образованию, нацеленному на целостное эмоциональное, когнитивное и социальное развитие

обучающихся. В работе систематизируются теоретические истоки концепции, начиная с идей Руссо, и этапы её развития, включая становление модели DIE Г. Болтона и интеграцию с конструкционистской психологией и социологией.

Особое внимание уделяется современным тенденциям: сближению с образовательными технологиями (мультимедиа, VR), фокусу на формировании ключевых компетенций и расширению сфер применения, включая психологическое благополучие студентов. В статье подчёркивается интегративный характер теоретической базы, объединяющей психоанализ, конструктивизм и теорию ситуативного познания, а также практико-ориентированность метода, основанного на принципах экспериментального обучения.

На основе анализа исследовательских публикаций и данных выявляется экспоненциальный рост научного интереса к теме, подтверждается позитивное влияние драматического образования на речевые навыки, креативность и сотрудничество. Делается вывод о значительных достижениях в области концептуализации и разработки практических моделей, одновременно обозначаются существующие пробелы, такие как необходимость развития системы оценки и подготовки педагогов. Перспективы развития видятся в углублении междисциплинарных исследований и международной кооперации.

Ключевые слова: драматическое образование; студенты-актеры; психическое здоровье; кросс-культурное сравнение; модель двойной циркуляции; пути трансформации.

Drama of education, as a cross-disciplinary field that integrates education and art, has undergone a transformation in its theoretical research from drama education to drama of education. In the early days, drama education mainly focused on the cultivation of drama skills, while drama of education placed more emphasis on promoting students' emotional, cognitive, and social development through drama activities. In recent years, the application of drama of education in mental health education has gradually gained attention, and researchers have begun to explore its application effects in different student groups. However, research on drama of education for performing arts students is still in its infancy, and there is a significant gap in the design of specialized programs. As a unique educational method, drama of education integrates drama elements with educational goals and has significant value in cultivating students' comprehensive qualities [2]. This article reviews the origin, development stages, and current trends of drama of education theory, and deeply explores its evolution in the field of education and its future direction. The aim is to provide theoretical references for educators and promote better application and development of drama of education in practice.

The theoretical roots of drama of education can be traced back to the two educational concepts proposed by French thinker Rousseau in the 18th century: "learning through practice" and "learning through theatrical practice". By the 1980s, British drama educator Bolton first systematically proposed the DIE model in "Towards the Theory of Drama of education", emphasizing that drama should serve as a medium for interdisciplinary learning rather than being the sole. Drama of education began to gain attention in European and American countries and gradually formed a relatively systematic theoretical framework. The Drama in Education movement emerged in the UK, and scholars emphasized the unique role of drama in education, believing that drama activities could stimulate students' imagination and creativity, and promote their understanding and transfer of knowledge. During this period, drama of education was mainly applied in language teaching, literature education, etc., through improvisation, script adaptation, etc., allowing students to enhance their language expression and literary appreciation skills in theatrical practice. At the same time, educators began to pay attention to the impact of drama of education on students' emotions, attitudes, and social values, exploring how to guide students to think about social issues and moral dilemmas through drama, and cultivating students' critical thinking and responsibility.

From the late 20th century to the early 21st century, drama of education theory was further enriched and expanded. On one hand, the trend of interdisciplinary integration became increasingly evident. Drama of education was no longer confined to the field of language and literature but widely permeated in various subject teaching such as history, science, mathematics, etc. For example, in history teaching, students could play historical figures and reenact historical events to intuitively experience historical contexts and deepen their memory and understanding of historical knowledge; in science classes, drama performances were used to explain scientific principles and experimental processes, making abstract scientific concepts more vivid and interesting. On the other hand, the introduction of theories from multiple disciplines such as psychology and sociology provided a more solid theoretical foundation for drama of education. The constructivist learning theory in psychology emphasizes the active construction process of learners, and drama of education precisely offers students an autonomous exploration and knowledge construction situation; the interaction theory in sociology focuses on interpersonal communication and group cooperation, and the group cooperation performances and role interactions in drama of education help cultivate students' social skills and teamwork spirit.

In recent years, with the rapid development of information technology, drama of education has deeply integrated with modern educational technology, showing new vitality. Multimedia, virtual reality, etc. have been widely applied in the teaching practice of drama of education, creating more realistic, rich and diverse theatrical scenes and experiences for students. At the same time, drama of education has paid more attention to the close combination with curriculum standards and core competencies, aiming to cultivate students' comprehensive literacy, covering multiple dimensions such as knowledge and skills, processes and methods, emotions, attitudes and values. Moreover, international exchanges and cooperation have promoted the dissemination and sharing of drama of education theory, with drama of education researchers and practitioners in various countries learning from and drawing on each other, promoting the development and innovation of drama of education worldwide [7].

Drama of education, as a unique educational approach, has gained significant attention in the field of education in recent years. It integrates theatrical elements into the educational process, providing students with an immersive and experiential learning environment that promotes their all-round development. However, the systematic review of drama of education theory research is still relatively lacking. This article aims to fill this academic gap and deeply explore the characteristics and achievements of drama of education theory research.

Firstly, there is the integration of multiple theoretical bases. The theoretical foundation of drama of education encompasses various disciplinary fields, presenting a feature of diverse integration. Psychological theories provide significant support for drama of education. For instance, psychoanalytic theory suggests that through role-playing and scenario simulation, students can better understand their inner world, enhance self-awareness and expression abilities [3]. In drama of education activities, students assume different roles and deeply experience the emotions and psychological states of the roles, thereby achieving self-exploration and growth. Constructivist theory also plays a crucial role in drama of education. This theory emphasizes that learning is a process in which learners construct meaning through certain contexts. Drama of education creates rich scenarios, allowing students to actively construct knowledge in interaction and collaboration, promoting students' understanding and application of knowledge. For example, in drama of education activities in the history discipline, students play historical figures and reenact historical events, which enables them to more profoundly understand the historical background and the thoughts and behaviors of the characters. Additionally, the situational cognition theory advocates that learning should occur in real contexts. Through interaction and communication, students can acquire richer and more meaningful knowledge. Drama of education precisely simulates real contexts, allowing students to apply the knowledge

they have learned to solve problems and enhance practical abilities. For instance, in business courses' drama of education, students simulate business negotiation scenarios to exercise communication skills and decision-making abilities.

Secondly, drama of education emphasizes experiential learning. Unlike traditional teaching methods that mainly rely on textbooks and lectures, drama of education provides students with hands-on learning opportunities. Through active participation and practical experience, students can deeply understand and internalize knowledge. This experiential learning approach not only enhances students' learning interest and motivation but also cultivates their problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills. For example, in language learning classes, drama of education can simulate real-life communication scenarios, enabling students to practice language skills in a natural and relaxed environment, thereby improving their language proficiency and communication abilities .

As drama of education research progresses, its research perspectives continue to expand. Early research mainly focused on the teaching methods and practical applications of drama of education, exploring how to effectively integrate theatrical elements into classroom teaching. For example, studies explored how to use theatrical means such as role-playing and storytelling to enhance students' learning interest and participation [5]. In recent years, the research perspective has gradually expanded to multiple dimensions. On one hand, attention has begun to be paid to the impact of drama of education on students' comprehensive development. Research has found that drama of education not only helps improve students' language expression skills, communication skills, and teamwork abilities, but also cultivates students' innovative thinking, critical thinking, and aesthetic abilities . For example, in the process of creating scripts and performing, students need to exercise innovative thinking to conceive and design the plot; when analyzing characters and plots, they can also develop critical thinking. On the other hand, the integration of drama of education in different subject areas has also received increasing attention. Researchers explore how drama of education can be combined with subjects such as language, mathematics, and science to achieve the effective transmission of subject knowledge and the improvement of students' comprehensive literacy. For example, in language teaching, through theatrical performances, students can deeply understand the characters and emotional connotations in literary works; in mathematics teaching, using drama scenarios helps students understand abstract mathematical concepts. At the same time, research on the application of drama of education in special education and mental health education has also made certain progress. Research shows that drama of education can provide a unique learning method for special education students, helping them overcome difficulties in learning and life and promoting their physical and mental development. In mental health education, drama of education can serve as an effective psychological counseling method, helping students relieve stress, release emotions, and enhance self-confidence [5].

After years of research and discussion, the concept and connotation of drama of education have gradually become clear. The academic community generally believes that drama of education is an educational form that aims at education and applies theatrical methods and elements to teaching or social cultural activities. It emphasizes students' participation and experience. Through theatrical practical activities, students can understand the connotations of knowledge through feelings and discover possibilities and create new meanings in mutual communication. There is also a clear understanding of the differences between drama of education, drama education, English drama, etc. Drama of education focuses on using theatrical means for educational teaching and pays attention to the all-round development of students; while drama education mainly aims to cultivate professional drama talents or popularize professional drama appreciation knowledge. English drama uses English as a learning tool and cultivates students' comprehensive qualities in the process of drama learning, with the focus on the combination of language learning and drama activities.

With the promotion of theoretical research, the practical models of drama of education are constantly explored and innovated. In terms of teaching content, in addition to traditional story adaptations and original stories, it has begun to create based on subject knowledge, social hotspots, etc., making the content of drama of education more diverse and richer. For example, creating drama of education with the theme of environmental protection, allowing students to understand environmental protection knowledge and enhance environmental protection awareness. In terms of teaching methods, a series of teaching methods suitable for drama of education have been formed, such as cooperative learning method, discussion method, question-and-answer method, reflection and improvement method, etc. These methods emphasize the students' dominant position and encourage students to actively participate and explore independently. For example, in cooperative learning, students are divided into groups to create scripts and perform, jointly completing learning tasks, and cultivating teamwork spirit and communication skills. In terms of teaching approaches, in addition to teaching infiltration, club cultivation and school-based courses, new approaches such as cooperation with external institutions and conducting community drama of education activities have emerged. Through cooperation with external institutions, schools can obtain more professional drama resources and guidance; conducting community drama of education activities can expand the influence of drama of education and benefit more people.

The theoretical research on drama of education has the characteristics of diverse integration of theoretical bases and continuous expansion of research perspectives. It has achieved remarkable achievements in concept definition, exploration of practical models and promotion of educational reform. However, current research still has some shortcomings, such as the need for further strengthening research in the evaluation system of drama of education, teacher training, etc. In the future, we should continue to deeply explore the theoretical connotations and practical value of drama of education, strengthen interdisciplinary research and international exchanges and cooperation, and continuously improve the theoretical system and practical models of drama of education, making greater contributions to the development of education [6] (Table 1).

Table 1 – Summary of Research Data on Drama Education

Research Contents	Details of The Data	Source
1	2	3
Number of documents and trend	Between 2000 and 2019, 366 articles related to drama of education were identified. Before 2010, the average number of publications per year was less than 10. However, starting in 2013, the number of articles saw an exponential increase, peaking at 77 in 2019. A search for early childhood/preschool drama yielded 42 relevant articles, accounting for 11.47 % of the total. From 2017 to 2019, the number of publications related to preschool drama significantly increased	A review of domestic drama of education research literature

End of table 1

1	2	3
Sources and quality levels of literature	Among the 366 related documents in drama of education research, 88 are masters theses, accounting for 24.04 %, 2 are doctoral theses, accounting for 0.55 %, 9 are national-level educational research projects, 11 are provincial-level, and 1 is funded by a foreign foundation, totaling 5.7 %. Of the 42 related documents on preschool drama, 11 are masters theses, accounting for 26.19 %, and about 42 % are national-level educational research projects	A review of domestic drama of education research literature
The impact of drama of education on students' ability	In 2007, a study report on 56 kindergartens and primary schools in Hong Kong showed that drama of education made a significant contribution to students' creativity, language, cooperation, expression and other aspects of the report	Related research reports
The influence of drama of education on students' language expression	A quasi-experimental study was conducted on 46 third-grade students. The experimental group used creative drama method for language teaching, while the control group used traditional teaching method. After 6 weeks of intervention, the language expression ability of the experimental group was significantly better than that of the control group	"Impact of Creative Drama Method on Students' Speaking Skills"

Thus, theoretical research in this field has undergone a significant transformation – from drama education, which primarily focused on developing performance skills, to educational drama, where drama is viewed first and foremost as a pedagogical tool for the holistic emotional, cognitive, and social development of learners. The modern theory of educational drama integrates concepts from psychology (psychoanalysis, constructivism, situated cognition theory) and sociology (interaction theory). This integration provides a solid foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which drama methods influence personal development, self-knowledge, socialization, and the construction of knowledge. Educational drama has moved beyond the teaching of language and literature. It is actively being implemented in the teaching of history, natural sciences, mathematics, and other disciplines, demonstrating its potential for conveying complex and abstract concepts. The research focus has shifted from teaching methods to studying the contribution of educational drama to the comprehensive development of key competencies: creative and critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. Particular attention in recent years has been paid to the application of educational drama in psychological counseling and mental health. Its effectiveness has been proven as a method to help reduce stress, express emotions, and increase self-esteem. However, despite the growing volume of research (as evidenced by the exponential growth in publications after 2013), a significant gap remains in the development of specialized programs for vulnerable groups, in particular for performing arts students, who face increased psychological risks and low receptiveness to traditional forms of support. The further development of the theory and practice of educational drama is associated with overcoming a number of challenges. These include: the need to improve the

system for assessing its effectiveness, and the development of professional training programs for teachers capable of deeply integrating dramatic methods into the educational process. Promising directions include further strengthening interdisciplinary connections, active use of digital technologies (VR, multimedia) [4], and expanding international cooperation to share best practices [1].

Thus, educational drama has established itself as an independent and dynamically developing pedagogical field with powerful developmental and therapeutic potential. Subsequent research should be aimed at operationalizing this potential through the creation of targeted, scientifically grounded programs addressed to the specific needs of various categories of learners.

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