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A Comparative Study of American and Taiwanese Teachers' Practices for Promoting Prosocial Behavior of Kindergarten Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of how to promote the development of young children's prosocial behavior in kindergarten, as well as to compare the differences in prosocial behavior teaching methods of American and Taiwanese kindergarten teachers. This study uses the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to understand the experiences of two American and one Taiwanese kindergarten teacher in promoting prosocial behavior among young children. Data are collected through protocol writing of the individual teacher, classroom observation and in-depth interviews. The finding indicates that although the three teachers use many identical methods to promote prosocial behavior in young children, each teacher uses some unique methods of reinforcement. The methods used by the three teachers include timing of teaching prosocial behavior, rule making, creating awareness of prosocial behavior, class meeting, conflict resolution, consequences, bonding and ownership, as well as other unique methods. Educational implications regarding the role of the teacher, the role of the environment and teaching methods are explored.

Finally, further research using a larger sample is suggested for a thorough investigation into the effect of individual differences on prosocial behavior teaching.

Keywords : prosocial behavior, phenomenological study, child care

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美國與台灣幼稚園兒童利社會行為教學之比較研究

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摘要

本研究之目的，在於增進對提昇幼稚園兒童利社會行為發展之瞭解，並比較美國與台灣幼稚園教師利社會行為教學方法之差異。本研究運用詮釋現象學之方法，藉以瞭解兩位美國與一位台灣幼稚園教師在促進幼兒利社會行為發展之教學經驗。本研究之資料蒐集，乃採用教師個人書寫的草稿、教室觀察及深度訪談等方法。研究結果顯示，雖然三位教師採用許多共同的方法以增進幼兒之利社會行為，每位教師仍有自己獨特的增強方法。三位教師所採用的方法，包括教學時機的掌握、建立規則、創造利社會行為之意識、班級會議、解決衝突、發展「行為後果」之觀念、情感的結合與所有權、獨特的方法等。本研究並從教師角色、環境角色及教學方法三方面探討其教育涵義。最後並建議未來研究能採用較大樣本，以深入探究個別差異對利社會行為教學之影響。

關鍵字： 利社會行為、現象學研究

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Introduction

Children's aggressive behavior in the classroom and classroom conflicts between students are usually big challenges for the classroom management of many teachers. One of the emerging problems teachers are facing is the increasingly aggressive and violent behavior of children in classrooms (Rutherford, 2000). Conflicts in the classroom with violence and conflicts are also unavoidable in Taiwanese kindergartens (Lin, 2005). Such conflicts are often the result of antisocial behavior among children and will have negative effects on both of the teaching performance by teachers and the learning by students. Failures to deal with classroom conflicts and antisocial behavior among students easily frustrate teachers. In serious cases, it can become the reason for teachers to leave their jobs.

Violence and lack of sense of peace and caring are major issues affecting teaching and learning in schools (Duhon-Haynes et al., 1996). Aggressive behavior and conflicts in the classroom may not only frustrate teachers but also negatively influence the quality and quantity of teaching and learning. Teachers also play very important roles in solving children's conflicts in the classrooms (Lin, 2004). The managing strategies teachers are using commonly bring different results to the classroom. Tsai (2009) indicated that there is a positive relationship between the teachers' positive disciplinary strategies and the students' performance of prosocial behaviors. Also, Lo (2002) proposed that the prosocial learning strategy has both immediate and long term effects on elementary students with serious delinquent behavior. Children's prosocial tendency and behaviors increase after the application of prosocial learning strategies.

The main purpose of this study is to provide suggestions for kindergarten teachers to promote children's prosocial behavior and thereby to promote a classroom community where learning can take place.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to compare two American and one Taiwanese kindergarten teachers' practices for promoting prosocial behavior of young children. To compare different teachers' daily-lived experiences will lead to a better understanding of the nature and importance of teaching prosocial behavior among kindergarten children. Through this study, teachers can reflect on their classroom experiences and develop a deeper understanding of their own teaching.

Research questions

- 1 · What does it mean to promote prosocial behavior in young children?
- 2 · What similarities and differences can be found in the experiences of promoting prosocial behavior among two American and a Taiwanese kindergarten teachers?

Definition of terms

Phenomenological study : A phenomenological study seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience. Typically, phenomenological study asks: "What is the participant's experience like?" The intention is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant. The feature that distinguishes phenomenological study from other qualitative research approaches is that the subjective experience provides the center of the inquiry (Van Manen, 1990).

Prosocial behavior : "Prosocial behavior" refers to "voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p.3). These behaviors include a broad range of activities: sharing, comforting, cooperation, rescuing, helping and so on.

Literature Review

Reviewing the attempts to promote prosocial behavior to young children, we will discuss the following three types of research: experience of socialization, preventing

violence among children, and promoting prosocial behavior among children.

Socialization

Aspects of socialization and prosocial behavior

Socialization is defined as the process in which children and adults learn from others. Eisenberg (1983) described socialization as the development of prosocial behavior and empathy. She discussed methods like induction, preaching, and modeling, direct instruction, punitive and reinforcement as techniques that develop prosocial behavior. She also suggested that the process of socialization should nurture and provide emotional support for children.

One aspect of socialization is personal and social adjustment especially for peers. A report on “Evaluating the National Outcomes: Children” (Children’s Work Group, 2000) showed that for personal and social adjustments there should be care for each other, mutual respect, and appreciation of diversity, empathy, altruism, and prosocial behavior.

Another aspect for socialization would be to develop empathy in children (Luiselli et al., 2005; Metzler et al., 2001). Cotton (1997) described education and morality for developing empathy among children. She found that the relationship between mothers and children had an impact on the development of the children. Physical punishment, inconsistent care and parental rejection had negative effects on the development of empathy. Cotton suggested for empathy training classroom programs which focus on cooperative learning, cross-age and peer tutoring, and humanistic approaches for the emotionally disturbed.

Developing prosocial behavior among children

According to Piaget (1965), by age eight most children begin to develop a sense of mutual respect, based in part on the more equal give-and take they experience in relationship with their peers. It is not appropriate to measure this in young children who have not yet developed the necessary capability for self-control and taking perspective.

Therefore, the emotional foundations of prosocial behavior lie in early childhood, and children should get opportunities to learn and practice caring, prosocial behavior through various community-based programs, and to experience mutual relationships outside of the family context. This social adjustment is found in a peer relationship.

Certain aspects need to be avoided while developing prosocial behavior among children. Kohn (1986) suggested that competition is never healthy and it creates antisocial behavior. Instead of competition, he suggested intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and the importance of feeling well or security which can help children come together and establish good relationships. He also argued against the system of reward and punishment in schools. Kohn (1991) stated that rewards do not help in developing good values or achievements. Instead they create mutual hatredness among children. Therefore, one should try to cultivate intersocialization of positive values in order to help socialization among children.

To conclude, it can be said that socialization and prosocial behavior are positively related to each other. Socialization leads to personal and social adjustments and thereby to prosocial behavior.

Preventing violence among children

Antisocial behavior

Antisocial behavior is defined as “recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior” (Simcha-Fagenm Langner, Gersten, & Eisenberg, 1975, p.7) (as cited in Mayer, 2001, p.2). Antisocial behavior is also shown in aggressive behavior among children. Kellam (1999) who studies the influence of the first-grade classroom on the development of aggressive behavior, Kellam suggests that the origins of variations in classroom aggressive levels came from the classroom teacher or the mix of students and the teacher. Therefore, it shows the importance of understanding the cause of aggressive behavior and control it at the early stage like the first grade or even

earlier.

A similar finding by the Canadian Youth Foundation (2000) states that aggressive behavior, in psychological and criminological literature, is mainly depicted as an outcome of children's inability to establish positive interactions with their surroundings. Also the nature of the child's family plays a significant role in the potential development of early aggressive behavior. This study also listed factors outside the family like the school environment and peer influence which affected aggressive behavior. The study ends up with the need to focus on the family, school and community to prevent violence among children.

Schwartz (1999b) continued this argument of cultivation of social competence in children by identifying causes of children's violent and aggressive behavior, and ways to prevent it. To develop social competence, there should be formal as well informal antiviolent curriculum in place, and the use of several comprehensive, multidisciplinary approaches to nurture children at home, school, and in the community (Schwartz, 1999b).

In Sum, we can say that many researches have found that violence among students are related to their first schooling experience. Therefore, it is very important to know what violence and aggression which reflect antisocial behavior can be controlled at the beginning of school.

Preventing violent among students

There are several strategies to prevent school violence. Schwartz (1996) stated that prevention strategies include student monitoring, and other security measures. Walker (1995) suggested that students' violent behavior can be alleviated through the development of a caring attitude that includes school culture, programs that teach prosocial behavior and foster self-esteem, and collaboration with social-service agencies. Similarly, Duhon-Haynes and others (1996) described how the educational

system provides an excellent opportunity for adults and children to explore and practice mutuality and reciprocity of respect and caring.

Research on how to control violence is also extensive. Rutherford (2000) suggested two types of intervention to help teachers and school staff to manage aggressive behavior. Schwartz (1999a) also provided strategies beyond the curriculum to control violence and aggression. She recommended a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach nurturing children at home, at school, and in the community.

Research related to preventing antisocial behavior also deals with changing contextual factors. Mayer (1995) found causes of antisocial behavior related to contextual factors like student's involvement, unclear rules, lack of critical social skills, and deficits in discriminating between prosocial and antisocial behavior. He recommended several strategies that help to address individual differences. According to him the most important solution is "the constructive discipline approach". This approach includes contextual factors like charity, support, and individual differences that have a positive rather than a punitive disciplinary approach.

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (1995) carried out a study on preventing antisocial behavior in at-risk students. It examined the risk factors that contribute to the development of antisocial behavior, as well as protective factors that help children become resilient to risk, especially children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities. The document listed risk factors like individual characteristics, academic failure, social failure, emotional impairment, and differential treatment, which lead to antisocial behavior.

According to the Hawkins's model of bonding, three conditions must be present for bonding to occur: an opportunity for bonding to take place, cognitive and social skills to help children to succeed in bonding opportunities, and a consistent system of recognition and reinforcement for accomplishment.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder may need particular attention here. The prevalence of ADHD is estimated at 3 to 5 % of school-age children in the U.S. Current research has shown that ADHD is not characterized by the inability to sustain attention, but rather “by the inability to sustain attention to tasks that are not intrinsically rewarding and/or that require effort” (Kaufmann, Kalbfleisch & Castellanos, 2000, p.11). This disorder may cause problems for the students’ behavior in the classroom, especially related to poor attention, and may have an effect on their prosocial behavior.

Most experts feel that a comprehensive support system is needed to prevent antisocial behavior among children. Carter (1994) explained how violence in schools is rising and why this is still be ignored. She suggested that schools have to take the responsibility for early intervention with strategies like childcare programs, classroom discipline, conflict mediation, cooperative classrooms in early childhood, violence prevention, full service schools, gang prevention, home-school partnerships, mentoring programs, and peer helping peers programs. In conclusion, we can say that controlling violence and aggression in schools is an important concern among school researchers.

How to promote prosocial behavior among children

The role of parents, teachers, and schools

Parental influence is important in promoting young children’s prosocial behavior. Schools should educate parents to educate their children. He focused on a model of induction, authoritative parenting, demandingness, modeling, and a democratic family process. To do this, he suggested a parent training program as a solution that is also propagated by Zhou et al. (2002).

Soloman, Schaps, Watson, and Battistich (1992) made a step further and suggested to develop a caring school and classroom community for all students. They claimed that belonging to a supportive social group is one of the basic needs of children. As a consequence they suggested for a child development project to help teachers to promote

children's prosocial development and their internalized commitment to learning, such as their kindness and consideration, concern for others, interpersonal awareness and understanding, and ability and inclination to balance considerations of their own needs with those of others, as well as their intrinsic motivation and attainment of higher-level academic skills. They suggested for a school-wide child development program in which there are assemblies, involving the whole school staff, promotion of interpersonal connection, community helping activities, and helping activities beyond the school. They also outlined the role of administrators in such a project.

The classroom is itself a social experience. Therefore, schools can promote prosocial behavior by creating a good social moral atmosphere that will influence children's development positively (Osher et al., 2004). Such a classroom can be called a constructivist classroom. DeVries and Zan (1995) explored group time, decision making, and conflict resolution as they occur in constructivist classrooms with respect to teachers and students. An example of this constructivist classroom and its effect on prosocial behavior is found in the way of formulating rules. Castle & Rogers (1994) showed how student participation in rule making encourages active involvement, reflection, meaningful connections, respect for rules, a sense of community, problem solving through negotiation, cooperation, inductive thinking, and a sense of ownership.

If we look at the explanations given above, the main outcome of this research is how to support students and teachers in developing prosocial behavior among young children. This makes the role of teachers extremely important. The teacher's role in promoting prosocial behavior can be studied in issues like cultivating discipline, managing their own behavior, and teaching social skills.

Similar studies were done by Porro (1996) and Prosis (1996). Prosis (1996) found that a teacher's interpersonal skills helped a lot in developing students' behavior. The teacher's role in helping children to develop their own constructive strategies to

control aggression and encourage cooperation is studied by Jewett (1992). Richardson (1996) found out that programs developed to teach social and emotional competence for special-needs-students could be applied to a regular classroom setting with the help of competent teachers.

Skills of teaching prosocial behavior to children

One of the principles of teaching prosocial behavior is to minimize misbehavior by positive guidance and discipline (Solomon et al. 2000). Barakat and Clark (2001) suggested several proactive strategies like setting clear and consistent rules, making the environment safe and worry-free, and showing interest in the children's activities. They suggested a method of including positive discipline by techniques such as natural consequences, logical consequences, fix-up, timeout, and redirection.

Barakat and Clark (2001) emphasized the importance of knowing what to expect from a child at a particular age. They claimed that from two to six, children learn many social skills. Parents as first teachers in a child's life should know about their children, develop with them, nurture them, and achieve self-discipline for the children. Another important concern of teachers should be behavior management.

Malm (1992) presented a system of proactive classroom management for use in elementary schools. It included planning to prevent rather than to react to behavioral problems and dealing with the entire class rather than with individual students' behavior. Similarly, Satchel (1992) showed how one can increase prosocial behavior of elementary students in grades K-6 through a conflict resolution management program. The program was implemented and the data used to evaluate the practical interventions indicated a positive effect of behavior modification. Behavior change might touch areas like socialization, sharing, empathy, and caring.

Another kind of research is dealing with skills that are streaming in early childhood (Barry & Wentzel, 2006). McGinnis and Goldstein (1990) showed how

teaching prosocial behavior alternative at an early age may enhance a child's personality and help to prevent serious difficulties in later childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. The authors suggested that the skills-streaming method systematically teach behavior necessary for effective social interactions.

There is some research done on how teachers can evaluate their children's prosocial behavior. Beaty (1998) provided a teacher prosocial guidance checklist that allowed teachers to evaluate themselves and their children to implement a prosocial guidance plan. His research promoted eight prosocial behaviors: self-esteem, empathy, friendliness, generosity, helpfulness, self-control, cooperation, and respect.

Schaps (1996) stated that teachers should systematically develop relationships with students, involve them in planning and problem solving, assist them to learn classmates' strengths and interests, lower down play competition, and involve all children in classroom chores.

Kohn (1991) stated that bribing through rewards is not a good method for development of prosocial behavior. He claimed to encourage children to develop individual values and help them to create a personal and social commitment to those values.

Prosocial behavior in Taiwanese and American kindergartens

Prosocial behavior in Taiwanese kindergarten

Li (1986) investigated kindergarten children's prosocial behavior during a seven week observation in a kindergarten in Taipei. The results show that: 1) children's prosocial behavior can be categorized into helping, sharing, giving, and taking care for others; 2) the prosocial relationship usually takes place between children of the same gender; and 3) prosocial behavior included active and passive, verbal and non-verbal terms.

Lee (2000) conducted a study to explore the preschoolers' social life and how four-year-old children interact with their peers in Taiwan. Children were asked to share their prosocial behavior to their peers through interview and observation. The results showed that young children were able to exhibit sympathy, sharing, comforting, turn-taking, and affection to their peers. This study also suggests early childhood teachers to observe positive peer interactions as essential for children's social development, and guide young children to learn prosocial values in the daily actions.

Wu (2005) studied the relationship between children's prosocial behavior and their background, peer relationship, and prosocial reasoning skills. She interviewed and observed 23 kindergarten children of an elementary affiliated kindergarten in Kaoshiung county. The study lasted for 12 weeks. The results show: there is a significant difference between young children's behavior and their gender. Girls demonstrate more prosocial behavior than boys and there is no significant difference between children's ages and the times and types of their prosocial behavior.

Prosocial behavior in American kindergarten

According to the US National Center for Education Statistics (February 2009) on America's Kindergartners, parents and teachers see a high incidence of prosocial behaviors and a low incidence of problem behaviors in American kindergartens. The report shows in particular:

1、 Reports of children's problem behaviors vary by race/ ethnicity. The pattern of these differences and their magnitude depends on who is rating the children's behavior. When teachers rate the children in their classrooms, black children are more likely than white and Asian children to be seen as exhibiting higher levels of problem behaviors (arguing with others, fighting with others, getting angry easily). When parents rate their children, we see fewer differences between black and white children. Instead, we see more differences between Asian children and white, black and Hispanic children. Asian

children are less likely than children in these other groups to be seen as arguing or fighting often to very often by their parents.

2、Kindergarten teachers rate children with some characteristics of risk for school difficulty less likely than children whose mothers have at least high school diploma, who come from two-parent families and whose families have never utilized public assistance to accept peer ideas and form friendships.

Methodology

Qualitative research is an approach that accepts a complex social world and describes and interprets situations. Therefore, it becomes a useful method to investigate more complicated human social behavior. The present study provides a qualitative example that focuses on the meaning of daily-lived experiences.

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach is a qualitative research approach used here. A hermeneutic phenomenological study is a study that can help us to understand better the nature or meaning of our daily-lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). This approach allows us to study the nature of a phenomenon and to investigate the meaning of the daily-lived experience. When doing hermeneutic phenomenological research, language is a necessary tool to describe and express the live experience in a deeper and fuller way. Van Manen (1990) also indicated that description is a powerful way to reawaken our basic experience of a phenomenon and through description we can understand more foundations of the experience.

Therefore, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is appropriate to explore the research questions of this study. The method includes the following procedures:

- 1、Selection of participants
- 2、Data collection through protocol writing, observation, and interviewing
- 3、Analysis of data to identify themes
- 4、Deriving conclusions based on the findings

Selection of participants

Selection of participants followed the method called “purposive sampling.” Gay (2000) stated that purposive sampling is referred to as judgment sampling, where a researcher selects a sample based on his or her experiences or knowledge of the group to be sampled. Within the domain of purposive sampling are a number of specific approaches that are useful in qualitative research. For the purpose of this study, we used snowball sampling: selecting a few people who can identify still other people who might be good participants. This approach is more useful when a study is carried out in a setting in where possible participants are scattered or not found in clusters. In this study, all the participants had experiences in promoting young children in their own kindergarten classrooms.

In this study, two American kindergarten teachers and a teacher from Taiwan were the participants in this study. Since the Taiwanese teacher in this study is also the researcher of this study, she asked a professor who is an early childhood education experts to provide references of another two American teachers who have experiences in their classrooms. Both American teachers in this study teach in public school kindergarten in a mid-western rural community at Oklahoma State. The Taiwanese teacher is the research of this study. She taught in a private kindergarten in Taichung city, Taiwan.

Background of the Three Teachers

It is important to first know about the background of these three teachers. These teachers have contributed their opinions and experiences for this study. Each teacher comes from a different background and has different experiences. The backgrounds of these three teachers are described below.

Teacher A

Teacher A is a kindergarten teacher who teaches in an average sized urban

elementary school consisting of five hundred and twenty students in Midwestern community in Oklahoma State, USA. There are about seventy kindergarten students in the school (Interview teacher A). Most students in this school come from families who have a comparatively higher socio-economic level in the society. She has been a kindergarten teacher for nineteen years. She got her bachelor's degree in home economics education. She continued her master's study in early childhood development. She has taught in both private and public kindergartens.

Teacher B

Teacher B is a kindergarten teacher who teaches in a similar sized urban elementary school located in a mid-western community in Oklahoma State, USA. Most students in this school belong to families who have a comparatively lower socio-economic level in the society (Interview, teacher B). She has taught in this school for eight years. She got her college degree in general education. She got frustrated during her early years teaching in the second grade because of the lack of support and resources from other teachers. She finally decided to be a kindergarten teacher because she likes young children. Teaching young children is her passion, love, and profession.

Teacher C

Teacher C is the researcher of this study from Taiwan. She got her bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She taught kindergarten for two years before she went to study in the US. Her early experience with kindergarten teaching was not very happy, and almost quitted her teaching job because of the problem in handling children's problems in the classroom. However, her perspective changed and became very positive towards kindergarten teaching after the two years of teaching in kindergartens of Taiwan.

Data Collection and Recording

There are four methods of data collection involved in the present research process:

protocol writing of the individual teacher, observation notes of the classroom, and transcriptions of the interviews.

1 · Protocol writing

Van Manen (1990) stated that asking selected participants to write their experiences down would be the most straightforward way to go about the research and to investigate the nature of a certain experience. So, during the first individual meetings with the participants, the researcher asked the participants to write a protocol about occasions when they were successful in promoting prosocial behavior. They chose their own experiences, and hence provided a basis for discussion during the interview session. The protocols were also helpful in focusing the interview or experiences on prosocial behavior. It also prepared the participants for the interview. Teacher A and Teacher B were asked to do the protocol writing about their experiences in promoting prosocial behavior among young children. Teacher A completed her writing in September 2001 while Teacher B finished her writing in August 2001.

2 · Classroom observations

Although I had not planned to conduct observations of the classes, both Teacher A and Teacher B invited me to observe their classes. I got an opportunity to observe one class several times, and observed the other class one time. Both the observations were of two different kindergartens. I had a participant observation in a class while I did non-participant observation in the other class. The classroom observations provided different perspectives for this study. The main direction of the research was students' classroom behavior and the teacher's attempts to prevent conflicts. All the classroom observations were conducted during August to October, 2001. As a result of the observations, we obtained a better understanding of the protocols that were provided. It also made the interview more meaningful.

3 · Interviewing

The interview was conducted over a period of two weeks. During the first week, each of the participants discussed the purpose of the research in a one-hour session, and got information about protocol writing. During the second week, each participant was interviewed for about one hour. Teacher A was interviewed on September 25, 2001 while Teacher B was interviewed on August 21, 2001. The following questions were asked:

- (1) In what ways did you maintain a positive classroom atmosphere?
- (2) Have you ever had an experience with young children's social interaction that made you frustrated in your teaching? For example?
- (3) How did you react?
- (4) In what ways do you promote young children's prosocial behavior?

Open-ended questions were used to generate plasticity of the responses. The interviews took place in the kindergarten classrooms of the participants. Each interview lasted about one hour long. All the interviews were audio taped, and notes were taken during each session.

4 · My teaching narratives

As a Taiwanese teacher, I engaged in memory work where I recalled my experience as a kindergarten teacher in Taiwan. I recalled incidents from my teaching and incidents in which children demonstrated or failed to demonstrate prosocial behavior and what I did as their teacher. Then, I wrote a narrative about my experiences promoting prosocial behavior in my kindergarten teaching. I told my own story of what it means to help young children develop prosocial behavior. I also write these memories in a teaching narrative.

There were four methods of data collection in this research process: protocol writing of the individual teachers, observation notes of the classrooms, transcriptions of

the interviews, and my own teaching narratives.

Data analysis

For the analysis, the dedication of theme in qualitative research of Van Manen (1990) was used. He defined “theme” as the process of insightful inventions, discovery, and disclosure. The theme is a tool for getting at the meaning of the experience.

Van Manen (1990) stated that grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but an act of “seeing” meaning. This study aims to compare two American kindergarten teachers’ experiences for promoting prosocial behavior to another kindergarten teacher’s perspective in Taiwan. In order to have a better understanding of the meaning of promoting prosocial behavior, we used a theme analysis to identify emerging themes.

In order to arrive at a theme, there are several approaches: the holistic or sententious approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the detailed or line-by-line approach (Van Manen, 1990). In the selective or highlighting approach, the researcher locates process phrases that stand out and help in exploring the theme. In the detailed or line-by-line approach, every line of the data is analyzed. In this comparative study of prosocial behavior teaching, the participants agreed on most points. They tended to be repetitive. In this situation, the selective approach or the line-by-line approach would be exhaustive, but would not lead to any additional findings. Therefore, the researcher decided to use the holistic or sententious approach.

In the holistic or sententious approach, the text is concerned as a single unit and analyzed as a whole. This approach presupposes that the researcher has a kind of judgment call and reads the text with an ability to see the patterns developing.

For this study using the holistic approach, all data were studied entirely and compared to arrive at the relevant themes as follows:

1. Every interview was transcribed.

- 2 · The protocols were collected.
- 3 · The classroom observations were recorded as classroom notes.
- 4 · For each teacher, the transcripts of the interview were read by the researcher, and the researcher marked those sections which contained important ideas, such as those dealing with methods of teaching prosocial behavior.
- 5 · The protocol for each teacher was also read in the same way.
- 6 · After reading through all the interviews, protocols and classroom notes, the researcher identified common ideas and tried to organize them into broader themes.
- 7 · After the themes were identified, the interviews and protocols were read to identify the common elements and differences among the participants.
- 8 · Finally, the number of themes was reduced to a minimum of four broad categories and all other themes followed under these categories.

Research Findings

While going through the data, it was observed that one theme led to another, and we ended up with about fifteen themes that could be analyzed. Each theme was considered comparatively and individual interpretations were provided. The main categories of themes for this research were the role of the teacher, the role of the environment, and teaching methods. Subthemes were recorded under each of the three categories. Each category was further broken down into sub- themes as follows:

A. The role of the teacher:

1. Awareness of the problem
2. Teacher anxiety and confidence
3. Learning by experience
4. Controlling emotions

B. The role of the environment:

1. Factors inside the classroom
2. Factors outside the classroom

C. Teaching methods:

1. Timing of teaching prosocial behavior
2. Rule making as a technique of teaching prosocial behavior
3. Creating awareness of prosocial behavior among children
4. Holding classroom meeting
5. Conflict resolution
6. Consequences
7. Bonding and ownership
8. Unique methods

A. The role of the teacher

For the first major theme, i.e., the role of the teacher, there are four sub-themes: awareness of the conflicts in the classroom, controlling emotions, teachers' anxiety and confidence, and learning by experience.

1. Awareness of the conflicts

First of all, the three teachers pointed out that teachers should be very much aware of any conflicts in their classrooms. This begins with realizing the importance of a safe classroom atmosphere. Teacher A (Protocol, Sep. 2001, p.3) felt that the teacher should put their students in a safe learning environment, so teachers should try their best to make the classroom a safe place. She also helped her students to learn how to protect themselves in the classroom. She taught students how to distinguish between "bothering" and "hurting". Teacher B (Interview, August 2001, p.26) also agreed that teachers should be very observant in their classroom. To keep conflicts from getting worse, she preferred to prevent them. Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.15) thought

that the classroom should be a stress free place for learning, and if there are some conflicts or problems, it may influence not only learning but also teaching. Therefore, it is evident that the role of the teacher is very important (Lin, 2005).

2 · Controlling emotion

Secondly, all the three teachers thought that teachers should control their emotions. Teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.16-17) felt that when teachers show their anger to students, the classroom is no longer a safe place for children. Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.30) felt that showing teachers' anger will bring fear to children, and children get distracted from their attention to the teachers' emotions rather than their own behavior. Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.15) also had a strong feeling that showing anger to children does not work to promote good behavior among children. In her own experience, she found that the children listen to you because they respect you and not because they are afraid of you.

3 · Teacher expectations of confidence and personality

Thirdly, teachers' confidence in teaching and personality also play an important role in teaching children's prosocial behavior. Both teacher A and Teacher B encountered difficulties while dealing with children's social problems during their early teaching years. However, teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.4) said that she is someone who likes to solve problems. Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.1) has learned to prepare and adjust herself before her teaching every day. She felt that frustrations are a natural part of teaching and she has confidence to overcome them. Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.15) also had difficulties during her early years of teaching because of children's conflicts, and she almost quit teaching during her first year. However, she felt that now she is no longer frustrated after some experiences. Therefore, we can say that frustration of dealing with students' social behavior is common for every new teacher, and it can be improved after they have more and more

experience.

4 · Learning by experience

All the three teachers agreed that teachers learn by experience (Teacher A, Interview, September 25, p.6 ; Teacher B, Interview, August 21, 2001, p.29 ; Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, P.15). New situations and experiences help teachers to get more and more confidence and techniques in their teaching. Experiences also help teachers to teach in a more relaxed way. Regardless of their age and experience, teachers are learning everyday from situations. In comparison, although Teacher C is from a different country and comparatively young and has less teaching experience, there are many more similarities than differences among her experiences compared to the American teachers' experiences.

B. The role of the environment

Under the role of the environment, we can divide the themes into two groups: factors inside the classroom and factors beyond the classroom. Themes under the first group are learning environment and the number of students in class. Themes belonging to the second group are the administrators, staff, and parents.

1 · Factors inside the classroom

The first factor in the classroom that influences teaching prosocial behavior is the learning environment (Osher et al., 2004). All the three teachers pointed out that it is significant to provide children a positive and safe learning environment to support their learning. Teacher A (Interview, September 25, 2001, p.9) and B (Protocol, August 2001, p.10) provided children with learning materials, activities, and space that allow the children to make choices, to cooperate, and match their diversity, and to learn the consequences. However, Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.8) found another interesting point that some children are more prosocial than others. Therefore, the question is whether the prosocial behavior is innate or acquired from the environment?

Another factor in the classroom is the number of students in the class. Both Teacher A and Teacher C failed to promote children's prosocial behavior because of large classes. Teacher A said a lot of time was required to give personal attention to each student in a class. When there are too many children in a class, and the teacher has to deal with some children, there may be another issue happening at the same time. When a teacher has so many students in a class, it is hard for her to be successful.

One finding critical in this research is the relationship between the number of students in the classroom and the effectiveness of the teacher in teaching prosocial behavior. Thus, it can be concluded that factors inside the classroom are important among participants in creating a positive atmosphere in teaching prosocial behavior.

2 · Factors beyond the classroom

Parents also play an extremely important role in promoting prosocial behavior among children. Usually promoting prosocial behavior needs time and consistency. Therefore, parents can help teachers to reinforce their prosocial behavior at home to support teachers' teaching. These three teachers all have close relationships with children's parents. They (Teacher A, Protocol, September 2001, p.7 ; Teacher B, Interview, August 21, 2001, p.21 ; Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, p.13) use parental education, parents' meeting, and parents' involvement when their children have behavior problem.

In addition, Teachers B has a very strong feeling of the importance of the support from the school administrators and staff. From her own experience, during her first teaching year in the second grade she was so frustrated when she could not find other teachers to help her. After she taught in a small preschool, the teachers there realized the importance of children's social skills, and they spent a lot of time working on children's social behavior. They also helped each other, and worked as a model of each other. She said it was really a rewarding experience to her, and it was also a basis for her further

teaching in public school.

C. Teaching methods

The methods that the three teachers use to promote young children's prosocial behavior are: timing of teaching prosocial behavior, rule making, creating awareness of prosocial behavior, class meeting, conflict resolution, consequences, bonding and ownership, as well as unique methods.

1 • Timing of teaching prosocial behavior

All three teachers (Teacher A, Protocol, September 2001, p.9 ; Teacher B, Protocol, August 2001, p.9 ; Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, p.16) think that to teach children prosocial behavior on the very beginning day is very important. From the first day a teacher needs to start to introduce a routine and model their prosocial behavior in school. In addition, they try to treat each situation as an individual situation and use different techniques toward different students. Also, they usually give students time to think and review their problem behavior, and to make choices again.

2 • Rule making

Rule making is common in these three different classrooms of the study (Teacher A, Protocol, September 2001, p.4-5 ; Teacher B, Interview, August 21, 2001, p.27 ; Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, p.17). Teacher A put a lot of effort and was very experienced about rule making in the classroom. At the beginning of the observation, she showed all the paper work of the whole process of rule making in her classroom. Each paper revealed the children's ideas and how the teacher helped them to finish the whole process. Teacher B did not show any paper work of rule making in her classroom. However, she used class meeting to discuss the problems and tell the children the standards and expectations in the classroom and school. She reminded and modeled for the children very often because she thought young children were difficult, as obviously some of them could not write. However, she encouraged children to draw the rules

making which provided children with the opportunity to develop their own rules, and the children were more willing to follow their own rules.

All these findings agreed with Castle and Rogers (1994) who showed how students' participation in rule making encourages active involvement, inductive thinking, and a sense of ownership. Rule making is critical in the teaching of prosocial behavior, as this can create a constructive classroom as suggested by DeVries and Zan (1995), when there is mutual respect between the teacher and students.

3 · Creating awareness of prosocial behavior among children

Teacher A (Interview, September 25, p.13) preferred students to know that the rules are important and they are part of their lives. In this matter, she felt that students should realize that rules are beneficial to them and therefore should be inculcated. Similarly, Teacher B (Protocol, August 2001, p.9) understood that when there is a behavior problem with a student, he/she should be isolated and allowed to observe other students playing or working together without any negative behavior. Through this, he/she should understand the significance of positive behavior that brings out awareness in the student. Although Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.13) was inexperienced, she also strongly felt that creating awareness of prosocial behavior among children is important.

This aspect of finding again agrees with Hamilton's (1964) biological theory, which shows that belonging to a group is important to the maintenance and protection of its members. For children, prosocial behavior is not only a psychological necessity but also a physical need (Cotton (1997).

4 · Holding classroom meeting

From the data collected, it becomes very clear that all the three teachers (Teacher A, Interview, September 25, 2001, p.11 ; Teacher B, Interview, August 21, 2001, p.26 ;

Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, p.17) thought the classroom meeting is very important for solving problems among children. In the class meeting, each teacher helped students identify the problems, and think of different ways to solve these problems. Therefore, the students were very responsible, autonomous, and self-governing.

5 • Conflict resolution

All three teachers (Teacher A, Interview, September 25, p.4 ; Teacher B, Protocol, August 2001, p.9 ; Protocol, August 2001, p.17) felt that conflicts should be resolved by students themselves under the guidance of the teacher. In the data collected, each teacher provided opportunities for children to solve their problems through negotiation and sharing their different perspectives. The teachers stepped in when conflicts could not be solved by the children. Since young children are very egocentric, conflict resolution gives them opportunities to overcome their egocentricism and to become problem solvers. The idea of a constructivist classroom as suggested by (Wheeler, 1994 ; DeVries and Zan , 1995) can be also supported here.

6 • Consequences

All the three teachers (Teacher A, Protocol, September 2001, p.7 ; Teacher B, Interview, August 21, 2001, p.34 ; Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, p.18) would like to teach students the concept of “consequence” rather than using rewards and punishment to mold children’s behavior. Accordingly, Teacher A, B, and C felt that if children can learn how to be responsible for their own action or choices, it would be much better than using rewards and punishment. The main idea here is to inculcate the concept of consequence among children.

According to the teachers’ interviews and literature review, recently there has been a pedagogical shift from the behaviorist model to the constructivist model. This is because most recent researchers have opposed the idea of rewards and punishments. As Kohn (1991) said, competition is never healthy, and it creates antisocial behavior.

Punishment creates hatred, and does not develop any good value. The teachers' opinions show that rewards and punishments are just short-term measures. As Kohn (1991) suggested, the focus has to be to cultivate inter- socialization of positive values in order to develop socialization among children.

7 · Bonding and ownership

Young children are egocentric, and the idea of "I" or "me" is paramount among them. In order to help them de-center and realize a sense of belongingness to a group, Teacher A, B, and C (Teacher A, Protocol, September 2001, p.5 ; Teacher B, Interview, August 21, 2001, p.24 ; Teacher C, Protocol, August 2001, p.13) promoted community learning in the classroom. This led young children to interact and socialize with other children more positively.

This study does support Haskin's model of bonding (as cited in Gregg, 1995). According to Haskin's model, three conditions must be present for bonding to occur: an opportunity for bonding to take place, cognitive and social skills to help children succeed in bonding opportunities, and a consistent system of recognition and reinforcement for accomplishment.

8 · Unique methods

Although these three teachers used many identical methods to promote prosocial behavior among young children, each teacher used some unique methods to reinforce the prosocial behavior in children. Teacher A (Protocol, September 2001, p.5) used the stories from literature, and the rationale for using this method is to connect the story (Swimmy) to the classroom rules (Hung, 2000).

Similarly, Teacher B (Interview, August 21, 2001, p.27) used her own method of modeling sign language to set a good example to her students because "Seeing is learning." And by sharing, she maintained that we could have students imitate the positive behavior.

Teacher C (Protocol, August 2001, p.8), on the other hand, made her own rules based on her own experience. According to her, if a teacher sets a rule, she should not break it, because if she does this, she will be confusing students. Therefore, the teacher should be consistent and help students to follow the rules without breaking them.

Therefore, it becomes very clear that each teacher has a unique method to teach prosocial behavior and to deal with unexpected situations or problems among young children.

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

According to the findings of this study, a major implication is that the kindergarten teachers should look at the classroom as a community as suggested by DeVries and Zan (1995). In a classroom community, the teacher and the students are equal in status and contribution to the classroom activities. There has to be mutual respect between the teacher and the students, as well as among the students, in order to facilitate prosocial behavior.

The researcher intended to compare the cultural differences between American and Taiwanese teachers' practices of promoting prosocial behavior in young children. However, this study found that there were many more similarities than differences in the Taiwanese teacher's experiences compared to those of the two American teachers. One reason might explain the result. Since the Taiwanese teacher in this study had taught in a kindergarten with a more constructivist learning environment and conduct a more constructive way of teaching similar to these two American teachers in this study. That could explain why there were many more similarities than differences in the Taiwanese teacher's experiences compared to those of the two American teachers.

Educational Implications

This research is a study on teaching to promote prosocial behavior in American

and Taiwanese kindergarten children.

In this study, it is evident that prosocial behavior can be taught to kindergarten students, and that the approaches and the strategies used by the teachers are much more similar than different. According to the findings, we propose the implications under three main categories: the role of the teacher, the role of the environment, and the techniques of teaching prosocial behavior.

Role of the teacher

1、It's normal for a teacher to have some negative experiences at the beginning. However, the teachers' anxiety can have a negative effect on both the teacher and the students. Since the teacher is a role model, the students should experience a teacher who is confident and has a more positive personality. Therefore, a new teacher should start teaching with an experienced teacher first. Also experience need not necessarily be directed, it could be shared with another teacher.

2、Anxiety leads to emotional problems. However, the classroom is a place of performance for both the teacher and the students. Since teachers are constantly watched by the students, it is important for them to control their emotions.

3、Experience is the best teacher. Every classroom conflict is a unique situation. The more the teacher tries to analyze the situation, the more understanding and maturity he/she will have in overcoming problems among students. A teacher should learn from experiences.

Role of the environment

Environment plays an extremely important role in determining prosocial behavior. The factors both inside and outside the classroom have to be considered for teaching positive social behavior.

Internal factors can be discriminated from external factors. Internal factors consist of both humans and objects. The character and personality of the teacher, the character

and the personality of the students, and the size of the classroom all have an effect on teaching/learning experiences. Other non-human factors like space, accessories and classroom activities all have a positive or negative effect in classroom. The teacher and the students both can contribute to effective teaching/learning of prosocial behavior by having this interaction.

External factors consist of school administrators, staff and parents. Each of these can indirectly affect the teaching of prosocial behavior in the classroom. Therefore, it is very important for the people outside the classroom to provide support for prosocial behavior teaching inside the classroom.

Teaching method

There is not just one method to teach prosocial behavior. Teachers have to evolve their own ways of teaching prosocial behavior. In teaching prosocial behavior among kindergarten children, the main methods are timing, awareness of the children, and a feeling of classroom community.

When we discuss the timing of teaching prosocial behavior, we need to distinguish the behavior between bothering and hurting. In the case of hurting, the teacher has to intervene as early as possible. In a bothering situation, the teacher can give students time to review and realize their own behavior. Nevertheless, the importance of prosocial behavior has to keep in mind right from the beginning.

Creating awareness among young children is also an important aspect. It would be better to involve students in making their own rules for regulating their behavior in the classroom since students would accept their own rules more easily. Moreover, since the students create the rule, they should be willing to abide by the rules voluntarily.

Every conflict or problem in the classroom should be sorted out by a classroom meeting in which both the affecters and the affected get an opportunity to discuss and express their opinions freely. The teachers' role in the meeting should be a facilitator,

not a dictator.

Conflicts have to be resolved by the students themselves. Solutions to problems should be from the students, not by the teacher. Conflict resolution can also be used to promote children's perspective-taking ability. Another point, the students should also realize that the same problem should not arise again.

Rewards and punishment, being external factors, do not have a positive effect on the students' prosocial behavior. The teacher should try to cultivate intrinsic rewards of consequences for the students. Students should have good social behavior not to please someone or to get something, but for their own personal satisfaction. The interviews of this study suggest that teachers should grow and nurture self-discipline within children. It supports Barakat and Clark's (2001) research which suggested a method of inculcating positive discipline by techniques such as natural consequences, fix-up, timeout, and redirection.

The classroom is like a micro community. The teacher should try to create a sense of bonding and belonging in the students for the classroom. When the classroom becomes an identifying factor for the students, they will show a better social behavior.

Finally, some unique methods of teaching prosocial behavior are also helpful, including: (1) Teaching diversity by making students realize the likes and dislikes of each individual. (2) Teaching the importance of individual responsibility by stories like Swimmy. (3) Giving the students the responsibility of helping each other out. (4) Consistency in following rules and regulations.

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