



The Development of Drama Activities for Education to Promote Self-Confidence of Ethnic Girls in Leibo Qianwanguan School

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Abstract

Background and Aim: This study aims to design drama-based activities to enhance the self-confidence and communication skills of female adolescents in minority regions. Using drama education theories, the activities will focus on stage performance, role-playing, and expressive exercises to improve body awareness, language expression, and self-identity. The Initial Observation and Consultation (IOC) method will be used to evaluate the cultural relevance and effectiveness of the activities, addressing the specific challenges faced by female students in under-resourced areas like Daliangshan. The goal is to create a framework that promotes personal growth and empowerment through innovative, culturally sensitive drama activities.

Materials and Methods: The activity design framework incorporates drama education strategies: (1) warm-ups and adaptation exercises to engage students, (2) role-playing and improvisational tasks to develop emotional expression, body awareness, and communication, and (3) group collaboration and performance activities to apply learning in social contexts. This study used the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) for expert validation, with five experts—drama educators, psychologists, and local education specialists—assessing content validity. The average IOC score was 0.96, with 87.5% of activities receiving a perfect score of 1.0, indicating high overall content validity. Additionally, three experts participated in focus group interviews, providing feedback on the scientific soundness, cultural relevance, and feasibility of the design. Their insights were analyzed through content analysis to identify key improvements.

Results: The majority of activities were fully aligned with the intended learning outcomes, with minor revisions made based on expert feedback. Focus group feedback highlighted the potential of the activities to enhance confidence and communication skills among minority adolescent girls.

Conclusion: This study designed and implemented Drama in Education (DiE)-based activities to enhance the self-confidence and communication skills of ethnic minority girls at Leibo Qianwanguan Middle School. Focus group interviews revealed that the activities effectively promoted self-expression, social interaction, and confidence. These results suggest that a validated and culturally responsive DiE framework can serve as a replicable model for supporting the psychological and educational development of marginalized adolescent girls in minority regions.

Keywords: Drama in Education (DiE); Ethnic Minority Girls; Self-confidence; Communication Skills; Activity Design

Introduction

Globally, marginalized learners—especially girls from ethnic minority or rural backgrounds—remain disproportionately excluded from quality education (UNESCO, 2010), making targeted interventions not only locally urgent but globally relevant. In China, the push for educational equity and rural revitalization has foregrounded the need for innovative pedagogical frameworks to support minority populations. China's vast ethnic and geographic diversity creates significant disparities in educational access and quality. Among these disparities, adolescent girls from the Huayao Yi ethnic group in Leibo County, Daliangshan region of Sichuan Province, face acute challenges, including under-resourced schools, linguistic marginalization, and low self-confidence. These challenges are not just local concerns—they intersect with national priorities. China's recent educational modernization and rural revitalization policies, such as the Educational Modernization Plan (2018–2022) and the Compulsory Education Arts Curriculum Standards (2022 cite in Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2022) emphasize improving the quality of education in ethnic minority areas by promoting student engagement, cultural inclusiveness, and self-development. These policies call for new pedagogical models that go beyond rote learning and instead support the emotional, linguistic, and social needs of underserved students. The present





study aligns with these policy goals by proposing an intervention rooted in culturally responsive drama education.

A growing body of research supports the value of Drama in Education (DiE) in promoting self-expression, identity exploration, and social-emotional growth (Gallagher & Service, 2020; Anderson & Dunn, 2019). DiE offers embodied, interactive learning spaces that may be particularly suited to girls who experience marginalization due to gender and culture. However, while these methods have been widely studied in urban or general school settings, there remains a significant research gap in designing and validating DiE-based activity frameworks for ethnic minority girls in rural China.

This study seeks to address the question. We hypothesize that drama activities—through role-play, body movement, and emotional expression—can offer minority girls a safe and empowering environment to explore identity, build linguistic fluency, and express themselves confidently. The activity design and validation process is informed by expert input, but will be detailed in the methodology section.

Ultimately, this study aims to develop a validated, culturally responsive DiE framework that contributes to educational equity. It supports the psychological and communicative development of minority girls while offering educators a practical tool aligned with national reform priorities.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to design a series of drama activities utilizing Drama in Education (DiE) principles to enhance the self-confidence and communication skills of Huayao Yi minority girls at Leibo Qianwanguan Middle School. The success of the designed activities will be evaluated through expert ratings of content alignment and student reflections on their confidence and communicative growth.

Literature review

In recent years, Drama in Education (DiE) has gained increasing attention in global educational contexts for its ability to promote student engagement, emotional growth, and communicative development through embodied learning (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Neelands, 2004). It encourages students to actively participate in meaning-making by assuming roles, simulating real-life scenarios, and practicing dialogue and reflection. DiE has been successfully implemented in challenging settings, such as refugee education (Anderson & Dunn, 2019), post-conflict reconciliation classrooms (Gallagher & Service, 2020), and schools in low-resource communities (Wagner, 1998), demonstrating its adaptability and resilience across cultural and educational divides. Kao and O'Neill (1998) demonstrated how DiE can serve as a scaffolded communicative tool for English language learners, showing its adaptability to contexts where students struggle with self-expression due to cultural or linguistic marginalization.

In the Chinese context, the adaptation of DiE is relatively recent, with most implementations concentrated in urban arts education. There is a notable research gap regarding validated DiE frameworks tailored to ethnic minority girls in underdeveloped rural areas, particularly the Huayao Yi community. This gap persists due to factors such as limited access to expressive arts in rural curricula, a lack of trained drama educators, and insufficient culturally adapted teaching models. Moreover, minority girls often face “compounded challenges” of gender-based expectations and cultural marginalization. These challenges manifest as reduced classroom participation, reluctance to speak Mandarin, and internalized self-doubt, which collectively undermine both self-confidence and communication abilities.

From a sociocultural perspective, marginalized groups experience not only educational inequality but also barriers to identity formation and self-expression (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2010). Vygotsky’s theory of social learning emphasizes that communication skills develop most effectively in meaningful, socially interactive contexts (Vygotsky, 1978), a principle echoed in DiE practice. Furthermore, Gay’s (2010) theory of culturally responsive teaching argues for a pedagogy that validates learners’ heritage and lived experiences—a core feature of drama-based learning.

Educational psychology literature further supports the role of emotionally engaging, reflective learning activities in improving student motivation and psychological well-being (Lee et al., 2015; Mah &





Ford-Jones, 2012). Studies on adolescent learning indicate that creative expression enhances self-efficacy, especially in populations with low social visibility or confidence. This makes DiE particularly appropriate for minority girls whose voices are often underrepresented.

To ensure that educational interventions are valid and effective, researchers often employ expert-based evaluation methods. The present study uses the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) to assess content validity—a method well established in educational design literature (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977; Polit & Beck, 2006). However, the specific application of IOC to drama activity development for ethnic minority students in China remains underexplored.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in three key theoretical and policy frameworks: Drama in Education (DiE), China's Compulsory Education Arts Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022), and Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), alongside the practical application of the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) for content validation.

Drama in Education (DiE) provides the foundational pedagogical approach. Developed by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, DiE emphasizes role-playing, improvisation, embodied communication, and process drama as tools to enhance students' confidence, language use, and social skills. Its strength lies in its ability to simulate social realities and allow students to rehearse roles in a safe environment, particularly useful for marginalized learners. In this study, DiE principles inform the design of each session's learning tasks and performance formats.

China's Compulsory Education Arts Curriculum Standards (2022) emphasize expressive competence, cultural appreciation, and aesthetic development. These standards advocate student-centered, integrated arts education that connects body, emotion, and language. Aligning with these standards ensures the curriculum's feasibility in public middle schools and cultural appropriateness for Yi minority learners.

Bloom's Taxonomy, revised by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), provides a cognitive scaffold from basic recall to higher-order thinking. Drama activities in this study are intentionally sequenced to move through these levels. For example, students begin with "remembering" basic dramatic forms and cultural gestures; then engage in "understanding" roles through discussion; "applying" them via improvisation; "analyzing" interactions in peer feedback; "evaluating" scene dynamics; and ultimately "creating" their own scripts and performances in the final sessions. This scaffolding promotes not only theatrical skill but also reflective and communicative growth.

The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) is used not as a theoretical construct but as a validation tool to ensure the designed curriculum aligns with the above frameworks. While not a conceptual pillar, it functions as a quality assurance mechanism supporting the internal consistency of the design.

Cultural relevance refers to the curriculum's alignment with the students' cultural heritage, language, and lived experiences. This includes using local stories, Yi performance elements, and mother tongue expressions where appropriate.

Psychological development in this context means the strengthening of self-confidence, emotional articulation, and social participation—outcomes linked to developmental psychology theories and DiE practice.



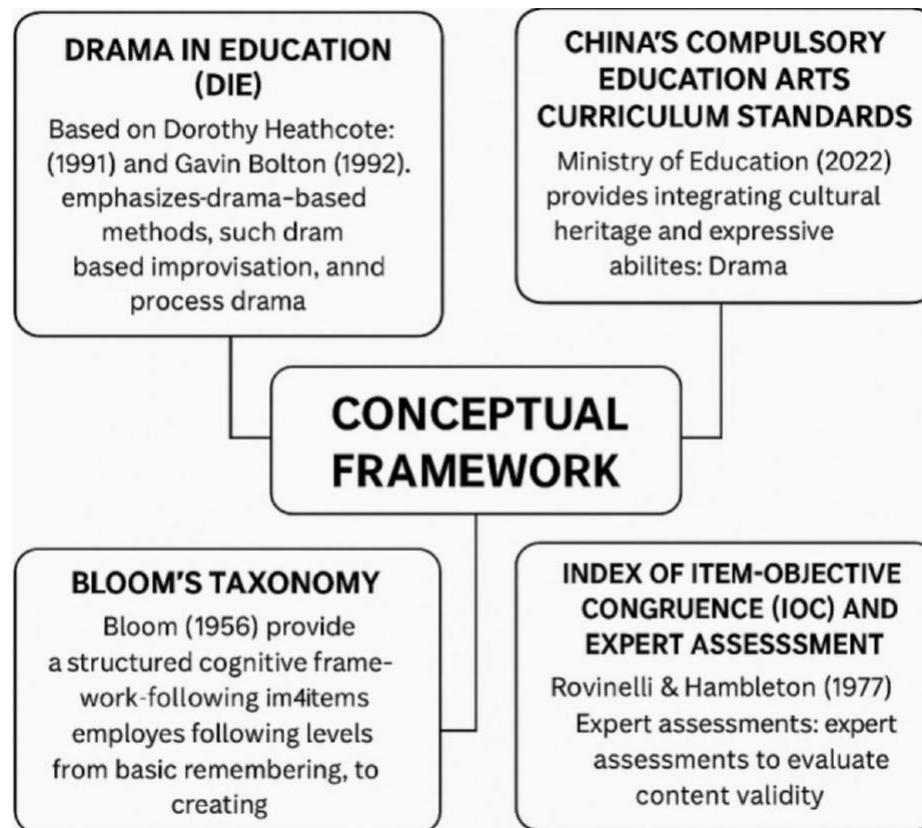


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Drama-in-Education Activity Design

Methodology

This study employed a developmental curriculum research approach, focusing on the design and expert validation of a 16-session drama education curriculum for Huayao Yi minority girls. The curriculum structure was grounded in DiE theory, national curriculum guidelines, Bloom's Taxonomy, and the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. Sessions emphasized self-expression, body confidence, language skills, and group collaboration.

To assess content validity and cultural relevance, five experts were invited to evaluate the curriculum. These experts were selected to ensure both disciplinary and cultural diversity: two Thai experts (one in human behavior and one in drama education), and three Chinese experts (including an associate professor in educational psychology, a cross-cultural arts educator, and a Yi cultural researcher). This combination provided a robust lens for evaluating both the scientific soundness and cultural sensitivity of the drama activities.

The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method was used to assess alignment between each activity's stated learning objective and its content—an approach widely recognized for its effectiveness in evaluating content validity in psychological and educational assessments (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995). Each expert reviewed the activity modules using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) scoring method: +1 (fully aligned), 0 (partially aligned), and -1 (not aligned). Components scoring below 0.75 were revised and refined. In addition to numerical IOC scores, qualitative feedback from experts—such as concerns about script accessibility or suggestions for improving emotional scaffolding—was coded and thematically analyzed. These insights directly informed modifications to session structure, pacing, and cultural content.

The statement "The curriculum content was reviewed by cultural experts" refers to experts already on the panel, particularly the Yi cultural specialist and the cross-cultural arts educator, whose roles



specifically focused on validating the local narrative, symbols, and dialect usage in the activities. No separate cultural review was conducted outside this expert group.

The following figure summarizes the curriculum development and evaluation process:

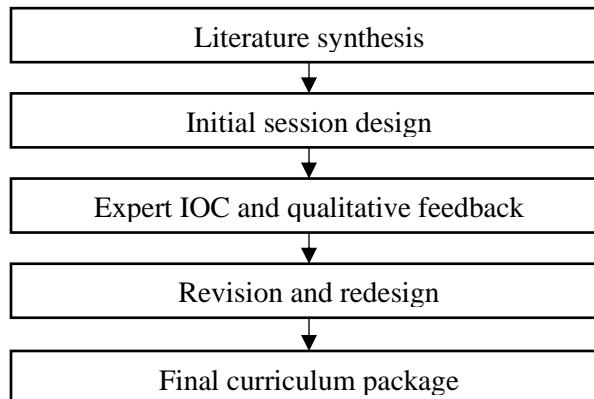


Figure 2 Curriculum Design and Validation Workflow

Ethical considerations were carefully observed. Since this study focused on curriculum development and not classroom intervention, no direct interaction with minors occurred. All experts provided informed consent, and cultural content was approved for educational appropriateness. While student voices were not directly included due to ethical constraints, future implementation could incorporate student reflection journals or classroom observations to enhance authenticity.

Results

This section shows the results of the project-goal Consistency Index (IOC) evaluation, which is used to measure the content validity and fit of the designed drama educational activity curriculum with the theoretical framework and educational goals. The content includes the symbols used in data analysis, the order of the results, and the detailed evaluation results. Symbols Used in Data Analysis. The IOC scoring criteria used in this study were as follows:

+1 = Fully aligned with learning objectives

0 = Partially aligned, requires revision

-1 = Not aligned with learning objectives

The IOC score was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{IOC} = \frac{\sum \text{Expert Ratings}}{\text{Total Number of Experts}}$$

The course is evaluated by five experts in the fields of drama education, developmental psychology, applied linguistics, and cross-cultural education. Their professional background includes adolescent psychological intervention, ethnic minority education research, multilingual drama teaching methods, and DiE curriculum development. Experts evaluate the curriculum from the four dimensions of activity goal fit, cultural adaptability, teaching feasibility, and psychological development, focusing on targeted design of language barriers and the fit of the self-confidence development theory. The potential of group collaboration intervention, Integration of national cultural elements.



Table 1 IOC Expert Evaluation Form 1– Updated Activity Design Evaluation

No.	Activity Name	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert	IOC	Explanation
		1	2	3	4	5	Score	
1	Introduction to Drama & Role Assignment (1)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
2	Introduction to Drama & Role Assignment (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
3	Voice & Language Training (1)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
4	Voice & Language Training (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
5	Role Exploration & Improvisation (1)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
6	Role Exploration & Improvisation (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
7	Blocking & Scene Work (1)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
8	Blocking & Scene Work (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
9	Full Script Rehearsal (1)	0	+1	0	+1	+1	0.80	Some inconsistency; generally appropriate
10	Full Script Rehearsal (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
11	Rehearsing Key Scenes (1)	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	0.80	Minor doubts; peer feedback needs guidance
12	Rehearsing Key Scenes (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
13	Dress Rehearsal (1)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
14	Dress Rehearsal (2)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
15	Final Performance	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned
16	Final Reflection	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	1.00	Fully aligned

The evaluation results revealed that the IOC scores for the 16 drama activities ranged from 0.80 to 1.0, indicating a high level of consistency between the activity designs and the intended learning outcomes.

Most activities, such as voice training, improvisation, scene work, costume rehearsal, and final performance, received a full score of 1.0, reflecting full alignment with the research goals of developing self-confidence and communication skills among students. A few items, such as Full Script Rehearsal (1) and Rehearsing Key Scenes (1), received a score of 0.80, suggesting partial alignment and a need for minor refinements in peer interaction and pronunciation support.

Based on expert feedback, the instructional design was revised to reinforce emotional delivery techniques, scaffold script reading for students with language challenges, and provide more structured guidance in peer feedback sessions. The final version of the curriculum maintained its theoretical coherence and educational practicality, offering a developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive program. Through this structured drama education process, students were able to enhance their expressive abilities, boost body confidence, and improve verbal and non-verbal communication in both Mandarin and local dialect contexts.

Course Adjustments and Final Version

Based on the IOC evaluation results, several areas for improvement were identified. Minor adjustments were made to enhance the curriculum's alignment with the development of self-confidence and communication skills. The final structured drama activity program is as follows:

Table 2 Design of Drama Education Activities

No.	Activity Name	Activity Objective	Teaching Method & Explanation	Assessment Tool	Week	Time	No.
1	Introduction to Drama & Role Assignment (1)	Build basic stage confidence through expression and presence.	Mirror imitation & group script reading to promote self-awareness and participation.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 1	45 min	1
2	Introduction to Drama & Role Assignment (2)	Promote self-expression through character understanding.	Role selection, character analysis discussion to boost empathy and identity expression.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 1	45 min	2
3	Voice & Language Training (1)	Improve pronunciation and emotional expression.	Emotion-sound reading, partner dialogue practice to support verbal clarity.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 2	45 min	3
4	Voice & Language Training (2)	Enhance voice projection and tone control.	Speed and volume drills to improve vocal control and public expression.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 2	45 min	4



No.	Activity Name	Activity Objective	Teaching Method & Explanation	Assessment Tool	Week	Time	No.
5	Role Exploration & Improvisation (1)	Build fluency and reduce communication anxiety.	Improvised scene acting to promote risk-taking and quick thinking.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 3	45 min	5
6	Role Exploration & Improvisation (2)	Strengthen adaptability in communication.	Emotion sculpture and role-swapping exercises to build body language confidence.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 3	45 min	6
7	Blocking & Scene Work (1)	Develop body awareness and stage confidence.	Frozen moment activity with walking lines to improve movement control.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 4	45 min	7
8	Blocking & Scene Work (2)	Improve body expression and non-verbal communication.	Silent communication and gesture flow activities.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 4	45 min	8
9	Full Script Rehearsal (1)	Promote verbal fluency and emotional flow.	Full script reading with character-based feedback.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 5	45 min	9
10	Full Script Rehearsal (2)	Improve consistency in emotional delivery.	Line relay with increasing emotional intensity.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 5	45 min	10
11	Rehearsing Key Scenes (1)	Build cohesion and communication rhythm.	Scene breakdown and structured peer feedback.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 6	45 min	11
12	Rehearsing Key Scenes (2)	Refine emotional control in speech.	Volume-shift training for emotional modulation.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 6	45 min	12
13	Dress Rehearsal (1)	Build confidence	Full-costume rehearsal with	Student Self-Assessment	Week 7	45 min	13





No.	Activity Name	Activity Objective	Teaching Method & Explanation	Assessment Tool	Week	Time	No.
		through full performance preparation.	timing and staging checks.	Assessment + Teacher Evaluation			
14	Dress Rehearsal (2)	Strengthen public speaking confidence.	Perform for a rotating peer audience and receive feedback.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 7	45 min	14
15	Final Performance	Demonstrate communication and confidence growth.	Formal performance and character-based Q&A session.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 8	45 min	15
16	Final Reflection	Encourage internal reflection and skill integration.	Group discussion: "How have I changed?" and a written personal reflection.	Student Self-Assessment + Teacher Evaluation	Week 8	45 min	16

The revised curriculum retains its scientific rigor and logical structure, ensuring that students progress systematically from self-awareness to confident communication. Adjustments were made to

Enhance self-confidence development by incorporating more body expression exercises and self-introduction role-plays that allow students to explore and present their identities.

Improve communication skills through increased improvisational activities, dialogue practice, and student-led performances that encourage spontaneous verbal expression and adaptability.

Strengthen collaborative problem-solving by integrating more group-based role-playing tasks and situational dramas, promoting teamwork, empathy, and mutual understanding among peers.

Discussion

This study aimed to design a series of drama activities based on Drama in Education (DiE) principles to enhance the self-confidence and communication skills of minority girls at Leibo Qianwanguan Middle School. The findings revealed high alignment between the activity goals and intended developmental outcomes, as reflected by IOC scores ranging from 0.80 to 1.00. Several components—such as role-play, body movement, and improvisation—were consistently validated as effective tools for promoting confidence and communication, consistent with prior research (Gallagher & Service, 2020; Lee et al., 2015).

However, these limitations highlight broader tensions in applying standardized pedagogies to culturally specific environments. In early sessions, attempts to integrate Yi cultural identity through costume references and folk tales faced challenges due to linguistic barriers and differing regional interpretations of symbolic content. The experts pointed out that local meanings were occasionally simplified or decontextualized, suggesting that "cultural contextualization" requires not just surface representation, but deep alignment with students' lived experiences—a view supported by Gay's (2010) culturally responsive pedagogy.





Similarly, integrating “modern educational methodologies” like critical thinking and student-led inquiry was initially underdeveloped. In traditional rural classrooms, teacher-centered methods dominate, and students may lack prior exposure to interpretive or reflective tasks. The revised curriculum thus introduced guided discussion scaffolds, role-swapping exercises, and collaborative scripting to promote gradual ownership, aligning with Vygotsky’s theory that higher psychological functions emerge through structured social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Compared to international studies, the results here mirror findings in other multilingual or postcolonial contexts, where drama has been used to empower marginalized youth. For instance, Anderson & Dunn (2019) documented similar challenges in refugee education, where cultural authenticity and emotional safety had to be carefully balanced. These global parallels suggest that while DiE is flexible, its effectiveness depends on localized adaptation and inclusive design.

The curriculum also addressed initial concerns about limited student agency. Revised activities emphasized narrative ownership, such as allowing students to co-create scripts based on local themes. This aligns with Freire’s (1970) argument that learning is most effective when learners are producers, not passive recipients, of content. Student improvisation and self-reflection journals supported the psychological goal of identity development, reinforcing the link between communication practice and self-concept. The curriculum demonstrates how drama-based strategies can support both affective and cognitive development through guided improvisation, peer interaction, and reflective tasks. This aligns with the broader principles of the learning sciences, which emphasize the role of creativity, embodied cognition, and social interaction in constructing meaningful knowledge (Sawyer, 2014).

Theoretical comparison reveals strong alignment with DiE core principles (Heathcote & Bolton), which advocate embodied learning, safe role-play, and emotional growth. Moreover, this study operationalized Bloom’s taxonomy through task layering—from recall to creation—demonstrating how cognitive and affective development can progress in tandem through drama.

Future research should move beyond expert validation by incorporating direct feedback from students and teachers. Possible metrics include: Pre/post self-confidence scales; Language output frequency; Peer collaboration ratings; Creative fluency scores.

By applying these quantitative indicators, the broader impact of culturally responsive DiE frameworks in minority settings can be rigorously tested.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the application and future development of the drama-based curriculum designed to improve self-confidence and communication skills among minority girls at Leibo Qianwanguan Middle School.

The results of this study indicate that the designed drama activities effectively enhanced students' self-confidence and communication skills and aligned well with the intended educational objectives. However, it is important to note that the current research primarily relied on qualitative methods. To provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of these activities, it is highly recommended that future studies incorporate experimental designs. Conducting experimental research with both an experimental group and a control group would allow for a more rigorous assessment of the impact of drama activities on students' self-confidence and communication skills, with clear pre- and post-test measurements. This approach would provide more reliable data to determine causality and the lasting effects of these interventions.

Additionally, school administrators and curriculum developers should consider integrating these drama activities into middle school curricula, particularly in ethnic minority areas, to support the development of self-esteem and communication skills in students. Teachers implementing these activities should receive appropriate training in both the principles of Drama in Education (DiE) and the specific instructional strategies used in the activities to ensure their effectiveness. Regular evaluation and feedback from students and teachers should also be conducted during the implementation of the curriculum to refine and improve its content and teaching methodologies.





To further improve the impact and sustainability of drama-based education, several future research directions are recommended. First, experimental studies should be conducted with larger and more diverse student samples to examine the generalizability and long-term effects of drama activities. Second, longitudinal studies are encouraged to investigate the sustained impact of these activities on students' self-confidence and communication skills over time. Third, future research could explore the use of digital tools, such as online drama platforms and interactive multimedia, to enhance student engagement and create more immersive learning experiences. Fourth, it is recommended to develop standardized teaching materials and activity guides based on these drama exercises to ensure consistency and facilitate broader dissemination. Fifth, future studies should employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, including classroom observations, student interviews, and performance assessments, to provide comprehensive feedback on the implementation and effectiveness of the curriculum. Finally, research should focus on the development of teacher training programs specific to drama education for minority students, ensuring that educators possess both pedagogical skills and cultural competence to effectively deliver the curriculum.

By addressing these recommendations, future research can contribute to the sustained development of self-confidence and communication skills among minority students through innovative, engaging, and culturally relevant drama education practices.

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