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## Advances in the Application of Drama-Based Teaching in Nursing Education Abroad

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### Abstract

This article reviews script selection, actor qualification requirements and training, and instructor selection for drama-based teaching, discusses the current application status and effectiveness of drama-based teaching in nursing, identifies references and implications for its implementation based on the current situation in our country, and aims to provide references for implementing drama-based teaching in our country, a basis for nursing education administrators to formulate relevant policies, and new ideas for innovating nursing education models.

### Full Text

## Progress in the Application of Drama Performance Teaching in Foreign Nursing Education

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### Abstract

This paper reviews the selection of scripts for drama performance teaching, the qualification requirements and training of actors, and the selection of instructors for drama performance teaching. It discusses the current status and effectiveness of drama performance teaching applications in nursing, identifies references and revelations for developing drama performance teaching based on China's current situation, and aims to provide guidance for implementing drama performance teaching in China, offer a basis for nursing education administrators to formulate relevant policies, and present new ideas for innovating nursing education models.

**Keywords:** Theater Nursing; Theater Performance; Nursing Education

## Introduction

Drama performance teaching is a pedagogical method derived from the theatrical arts that integrates language, movement, dance, and role-playing to achieve educational objectives [1]. Research has shown that applying drama performance teaching in nursing education can enhance nursing students' competencies and qualities across multiple domains, including emotional intelligence, humanistic cultivation, communication, empathy, interprofessional teamwork, and professionalism [2, 3]. Currently, this approach has been implemented in nursing education abroad. In 2022, China's education department incorporated drama into educational standards for arts curricula for the first time. Therefore, this paper reviews the sources of drama scripts, the venues for drama performance teaching, the qualification requirements and training for actors, and the selection of instructors for drama performance teaching. It discusses the current status and effectiveness of drama performance teaching applications in nursing, identifies references and revelations for developing drama performance teaching based on China's current situation, and aims to provide guidance for implementing drama performance teaching in China, offer a basis for nursing education administrators to formulate relevant policies, and present new ideas for innovating nursing education models.

### 1.1 Sources of Drama Scripts

The sources of drama scripts for nursing education primarily fall into four categories. The first involves scripts written and directed by professors from theater and film departments [1]. The second category consists of scripts prepared based on literature [4]. The third comprises scripts written and prepared by students themselves. The fourth involves collaborative creation, editing, rehearsal, performance, direction, production, and discussion among nursing students, nurses, nursing scholars, patients, and public representatives. However, the thematic content of scripts remains relatively monotonous, with current literature only identifying scripts focused on post-mortem care and end-of-life care for nursing staff, as well as headache scenarios [4, 5]. Consequently, drama scripts for nursing education abroad are still relatively limited. Future efforts should expand the thematic scope of nursing drama scripts through specialized lectures and practical performance guidance from experts, as well as multi-faceted script interpretation and innovation.

### 1.2 Venues for Drama Performance Teaching

The selection of venues for drama performance teaching in nursing practice follows the principles of being randomized, controllable, and safe. Implementation locations can span broad geographical areas and may include various on-campus sites such as regular classrooms, skills laboratories, and nursing resource centers [6]. Other venues have included banquet halls, small theaters, designated large-scale evacuation shelters [6], and technical laboratories consisting of three rooms and ten beds [7]. Lunden et al. [8] conducted drama performance teaching in

classrooms without desks. However, foreign drama teaching environments have not emphasized classroom interior decoration, such as color schemes and tonal coordination, despite evidence that different colors produce varying psychological and physiological effects [9].

### **1.3 Actor Qualification Requirements and Training**

Currently, there are no established qualification requirements or training programs for actors in drama performance teaching abroad. However, some scholars have proposed using nursing students or students majoring in drama and performance as actors [1]. Jacobs et al. [10] noted that employing drama students as standardized patients in drama performance teaching can help ensure performance standardization. Actors in drama performance teaching require extensive skills in voice, gesture, and posture, must be able to develop relationships between characters, and should be capable of observing their counterparts while participating and performing [11]. Nevertheless, foreign countries have yet to develop corresponding training curriculum systems, including training in observation and specific awareness. Future efforts should enable students to acquire scriptwriting and performance capabilities through diverse course offerings.

### **1.4 Selection of Drama Performance Teaching Instructors**

Course instructors for drama performance teaching are typically nursing faculty or invited guest lecturers specializing in drama performance, all of whom have backgrounds in performing arts [12]. Acting as directors, instructors are responsible for guidance on performance, props, and stage design [1], and are sometimes required to serve as discussion facilitators, enabling performers to engage in post-performance discussions. For drama activities, some teachers are required to hold a doctorate degree and complete a 320-hour creative drama teacher certification program alongside participants in the intervention group [7]. Additionally, before performances, teaching instructors discuss strategies to ensure audience engagement with nursing student moderators. This indicates that drama performance teaching faculty abroad are insufficient in number and limited in availability.

## **2.1 Application in End-of-Life and Chronic Disease Care Nursing Education**

Tok et al. [4] examined the impact of drama performance teaching on 40 nursing students' attitudes toward caring for dying patients. The control group of 20 students received traditional didactic nursing education, while the intervention group of 20 students received additional drama performance teaching. Data were evaluated using the Frommelt Attitude Toward Care of the Dying Scale, the Creative Drama Education Personal Feedback Form, and descriptive statistics. Results showed that the intervention group scored higher on attitudes toward end-of-life care, indicating that drama performance teaching can better enable nursing students to understand the psychological and emotional states of

dying patients and to reflect upon and improve their approaches to end-of-life care. PiaC et al.'s study validated the impact of drama performance teaching methods on improving person-centered dementia care. Interview results revealed that drama performance teaching methods help cultivate critical reflection among healthcare professionals and contribute to enhancing dementia care quality and caregiver experiences. Bolmsjo et al. [14] demonstrated that drama performance can improve caregivers' reflective abilities when caring for hospitalized patients with dementia, though the development of reflective capacity requires adjustments to meeting discussion content and methods. When designing larger-scale intervention studies, it is advisable to integrate these meetings with staff support. Suh et al. [1] utilized drama performance in oncology nursing education, and interview results indicated that drama performance teaching helps nursing students understand the lives of patients and their families, provides opportunities to imagine clinical experiences in oncology nursing, assists them in understanding patient perspectives, and encourages reflection on their self-image as future nurses. Evidently, drama performance teaching can enhance nursing students' end-of-life care capabilities and improve the quality of end-of-life care. However, these studies are limited by small sample sizes, and some research processes failed to adequately adjust meeting discussion content and methods or integrate meetings with staff support. Therefore, future research should focus on increasing sample sizes and employing innovative, evidence-based methods to control intermediate research processes.

## 2.2 Application in Maternal-Child Nursing Education

Lawrence et al. [15] investigated the impact of drama performance teaching on nursing students' professional behaviors and values. Qualitative findings revealed that using drama performance in maternal care helps students understand key professional values in nursing. Shaae et al. [3] noted that drama performance aids nursing students in acquiring pediatric nursing knowledge and developing a deeper understanding of complex care situations and ethical issues that may arise in pediatric nursing. Ljunggren et al. [16] applied drama performance teaching to nursing students, and qualitative results demonstrated that it helps cultivate nursing students' professional identity and professional role.

## 2.3 Application in Nursing Psychology Education

Amy et al. [17] examined the effects of drama performance teaching on medical students' empathy. Outcome measures included the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the Consultation and Relational Empathy Scale, and facial expression recognition tasks to assess empathy before and after the intervention. Qualitative results indicated that empathy levels improved in both groups, while drama performance teaching also positively impacted students' interprofessional relationships and independent thinking abilities. Basit et al. [7] conducted a study with 52 second-year nursing students at Necmettin Erbakan University to validate the effects of drama-supported patient role-playing experiences on nursing

students' empathy and altruism levels (identifying emotional states and understanding others' needs). With 26 students in the intervention group and 26 in the control group, data were collected and analyzed four months later using the Jefferson Scale of Empathy for Nursing Students (JSENS), the Altruism Scale, and qualitative research methods. Results showed that altruism increased significantly in the intervention group compared to the control group, and overall, the patient role-playing experience enhanced nursing students' empathy and altruism levels. Arveklev et al. [18] explored the impact of drama performance on nursing students, and qualitative research demonstrated that drama performance teaching improved nursing students' self-awareness. Through self-awareness, nursing students established connections with knowledge and deepened their understanding, thereby facilitating lifelong learning and the ability to reflect on their future professional identity. Evidently, drama is a unique reciprocal art form in which actors and audiences share emotional, intellectual, and cathartic experiences, thereby promoting interpersonal connections, personal growth, and resonance [19].

#### **2.4 Application in Interprofessional Collaboration Nursing Education**

Lunden et al. [8] investigated the use of drama performance teaching as a learning medium to promote teamwork between radiology and nursing fields. The study enrolled nine radiographers, eleven professional nurses, and two nurse anesthetists, and customized qualitative research results indicated that drama performance teaching facilitates teamwork between radiology and nursing. Kyle et al. [20] examined the impact of nursing student-led drama on attitudes toward interprofessional work. Four hundred undergraduate nursing students participated in a 15-week drama performance teaching program focusing on health and social care integration and interprofessional work. Outcome measures were assessed using the Attitudes Towards Healthcare Teams Scale (ATHCTS) and the Protective Nursing Advocacy Scale (PNAS). Results demonstrated that nursing student-led drama education significantly improved attitudes toward interprofessional work. Coleman et al. [21] found through qualitative research that drama performance teaching helps drama department students and nursing students learn professional knowledge from other disciplines, gain new perspectives and insights, and develop collaborative work skills.

#### **2.5 Application in Interpersonal Communication Education**

Scott et al. [11] validated the impact of drama performance teaching on nursing students' professional qualities and interpersonal skills. Qualitative research results indicated that drama performance teaching can help nursing students improve their interpersonal skills and self-awareness, enabling them to better address challenges in healthcare environments. Susan et al. [22] described the effects of drama performance teaching on nursing students' communication in an observational study. Outcome measures were assessed using a self-designed simple communication checklist. Findings revealed that using drama performance

teaching in nursing education enables nursing students to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes good communication and how to distinguish between effective and ineffective communication.

### 3.1 Rigorous Research Design for Drama Performance Teaching

Drama performance teaching has been implemented earlier abroad than in China. However, due to variations in evaluation effectiveness and research timing, the benefits of drama performance teaching in nursing education differ across studies. In response, foreign research [23] suggests that evaluating the role of drama performance teaching requires further determination of whether it produces lasting effects on students' learning processes and whether it continues to address nursing students' intrinsic needs. Evidently, foreign researchers have recognized that cross-sectional surveys are insufficient for providing information, particularly regarding their limitations in capturing continuous changes and discontinuities in important events. Future research would benefit from combining cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses, and foreign scholars have already considered investigating the long-term effects of drama performance teaching. Based on this, China should also increase the use of longitudinal surveys to explore the long-term effects of drama performance teaching in the future, while overcoming the drawbacks of longitudinal research such as delayed outcomes and cumulative attrition, to enable more cautious interpretation of the application effects and persistence of influence of drama performance teaching across various aspects. Furthermore, research purposes, subjects, content, and methods differ between domestic and international studies. Foreign research on drama performance teaching suffers from small sample sizes and the use of either qualitative or quantitative evaluation alone, lacking systematic randomized controlled studies. Additionally, due to differences in socioeconomic environments, educational systems, curriculum structures, cultural contexts, and social values between China and foreign countries, successful educational models from abroad cannot be directly adopted in China. In summary, China should draw upon the successful experiences and models of foreign drama performance teaching in enhancing nursing students' competencies, and on the basis of carefully summarizing China's current situation, employ more rigorous randomized controlled trials, utilize both quantitative evaluation and interview methods, develop comprehensive and scientific evaluation indicator systems, and construct evaluation frameworks to guide high-quality drama performance teaching, conducting research on drama performance teaching from perspectives of sustainable development and innovation.

### 3.2 Enhancing Student Interest and Participation

Foreign research [18] indicates that students feeling negative or shy reduces their voluntary interest in participating in drama performance. This risk may be avoided when students are informed that drama performance teaching is an opportunity for self-expression, that they can voice opinions about their learn-

ing, and that both positive and negative outcomes can serve personal growth functions. This study [18] also demonstrates that active and full participation in drama performance teaching is a prerequisite for optimizing the learning experience. If participants do not fully engage in workshops for any reason, their attitudes may become barriers to experiential learning for both individuals and the entire team. Therefore, to promote active participation among nursing students in China, we should enhance their self-awareness, deepen their understanding of drama performance, actively create a vibrant classroom atmosphere during each drama performance teaching session, encourage better engagement in various teaching activities, and provide nursing students with opportunities for discussion and interaction. Nursing educators must carefully design and strengthen drama performance teaching from multiple aspects, including curriculum arrangement, instructional design, dialogue and communication discussions, reflective thinking, and summarization, while fully considering nursing students' characteristics and needs, teaching drama performance effectively and clearly, and adequately listening to nursing students' evaluations. Simultaneously, medical students' communication and storytelling skills, as well as their ability to incorporate patient case narratives, should be enhanced to increase learning enjoyment and prevent burnout [24].

### 3.3 Expanding Application Scenarios for Drama Teaching

Foreign research [18] demonstrates that drama performance teaching is not limited to nursing education and can provide important guidance for other broader healthcare education fields and any educational methods aimed at supporting students' professional learning. However, the vigorous development and application of drama performance teaching have been constrained by limited application fields and instructor availability, difficulties in scheduling time for student education [4], and the high cost of most drama performance props. Therefore, when implementing drama performance teaching in China in the future, we should create a positive educational environment, grant nursing schools full autonomy to conduct drama performance teaching, further expand the scale and scope of drama performance teaching by nursing faculty, increase the time allocated for students to receive drama education, and support the development of drama props toward more economical and practical directions.

### 3.4 Promoting Integration of Drama Performance with the Internet

With the continuous development and enrichment of information-based teaching methods, classroom instruction is undergoing innovation, and the traditional teaching approach of blackboards, chalk, and charts has been replaced by modern multimedia teaching in many contexts. Foreign research [1] mentions that in the future, if drama performance-integrated courses expand to include various other fields and are recorded in videos for convenient repeated viewing, students will have opportunities for deeper reflection and insight. Based on this, China should learn from foreign online teaching experiences and strengthen on-

line teaching methods in the future. When implementing drama performance teaching, high-quality drama performance courses should be recorded to enhance video practicality and convenience, breaking through and eliminating the temporal and spatial limitations of traditional teaching methods, allowing students to learn according to their own habits and pace. Simultaneously, we should promote the integration of drama performance teaching with the internet and foster international cooperation in drama performance teaching, ultimately benefiting more nursing students.

## Conclusion

Drama performance teaching is an innovative, effective, and excellent interactive teaching method that overcomes the limitations of traditional clinical teaching, such as limited contact between nursing students and patient populations, lack of clinical practice, and concerns about patient safety. It enables nursing students to employ cognitive, social, and psychobehavioral skills to achieve multidimensional transformation. As times evolve and healthcare professionals deepen their understanding of this approach, drama performance teaching will gain increasing popularity among the broader community. Currently, under the national strategy of revitalizing the country through science, technology, and education, and strengthening the nation with talented personnel, the demand for innovative teaching strategies in higher education is growing. Nursing education in medical schools and related healthcare institutions should now stand at the forefront of educational development, promptly transform perspectives, deepen learning, and maintain a sense of meaning and purpose for many students studying drama performance teaching. Through concerted action to change existing teaching and learning practices, we should accelerate the development of drama performance teaching domestically, distill its professional spirit, explore practical processes for implementing drama techniques in nursing education programs, trace the developmental trajectory of drama performance teaching concepts in nursing education, enhance field education management skills, and build bridges between drama performance teaching theory and practice. By imbuing drama performance teaching with new vitality, we can ensure that more students gain access to high-quality learning experiences more quickly, revitalize teaching, and ultimately promote ideal outcomes in nursing education.

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