

Original Paper

Research on the Current Situation and Strategies of Teacher's Guidance in Outdoor Independent Games for K2 Children

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Received: August 22, 2025 Accepted: November 11, 2025 Online Published: November 27, 2025

doi:10.22158/wjer.v12n6p90

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v12n6p90>

Abstract

Outdoor independent games in kindergartens emphasize children's dominant role in the process of playing and they have been widely applied in recent years. As teachers explore the educational value of outdoor independent games, they have gradually become an important part of children's daily lives. In this study, the practical situation and strategies of teacher's guidance in kindergarten outdoor independent games are discussed, the characteristics of the games are briefly introduced, and the current state of teacher's guidance is briefly summarized. Furthermore, several feasible educational suggestions have been worked out based on current educational issues, aiming to enhance the quality of outdoor independent games in kindergartens and provide a reference for preschool teachers.

Keywords

Kindergarten, Outdoor Independent Games, Teacher's Guidance

1. The Value of Teacher's Guidance in Outdoor Independent Games for K2 Children

1.1 Creating a Safe Atmosphere and Influencing Children's Play Attitudes

In kindergarten outdoor independent games, teachers ensure sufficient playtime and space, provide expansive playgrounds and a variety of play materials, so as to guarantee the physical foundation for play. Before the game begins, teachers will introduce the rules and draw the experiences from games of the last time. When children are playing, teachers carefully observe and record their activities, offering support and guidance if needed. After play, in the sharing session, teachers find out the highlights and shortcomings of the play together with children, encouraging them to record these through playing games in the form of stories. This cyclical process, in which teachers participate as supporters in both tangible and intangible ways, creates a safe and comfortable atmosphere for children. In this way, when meeting problems, dangers, or having exciting moments, children will know that their teachers have

always been with them and supported them, thus psychologically influencing their play attitudes. What's more, this process conveys a non-verbal message to children that the games they are playing are valuable and worth exploring. Teachers' emphasis on play also has an impact on children's participation, thereby influencing their attitudes, interests, duration, and quality of play.

1.2 Inspiring Children's Autonomy and Enhancing Play Quality

In outdoor independent games, under the premise of fully respecting children's subjectivity, teachers always support and guide children's play. Only by recognizing children as the main participants in play and fully unleashing their autonomy can teachers effectively drive the play process and further enhance its quality. Independently playing games does not mean complete laissez-faire; instead, teachers should provide appropriate support while ensuring children's relative subjectivity and guiding them to explore by themselves. Specifically, when children appear idle or lose interest in games, teachers should first observe them carefully, ask them for reasons, offer suggestions, or even participate in their games. When children resume playing, teachers should get out at the right moment, thus driving the play process forward while inspiring children's autonomy and boosting their confidence. When children encounter difficulties that are hard for me to fix, teachers should not provide solutions for them in a prompt way but guide them to communicate with others. Through cooperation with peers, children exercise their ability to solve problems by themselves, realizing that they are the main roles of their own games, thus embodying their subjectivity. In the play-sharing session, teachers guide children to reflect on the difficulties encountered in the game and review and organize their play experiences. To answer teachers' questions, children will continuously try different solutions, which will enhance their autonomy. After solving problems repeatedly, children will play outdoor games with their own way of thinking, thereby further improving the quality of play.

1.3 Improving Teachers' Ability in Guidance and Promoting Professional Development

In outdoor independent games, teachers' ability in observation and guidance reflect their professional level. To enhance the quality of children's play and promote their all-around development through playing games, teachers' ability in guidance is especially important. Guiding K2 children in outdoor independent games can promote teachers' professional development in multiple ways. Firstly, it can improve teachers' observation level. In outdoor independent games, teachers need to observe children's behaviors, emotions, and play content to adjust guidance strategies promptly. This improvement in observation abilities is significant for teachers to better understand children's needs and characteristics in daily education. Secondly, it can enhance teacher's organizational and coordination abilities. Outdoor independent games require teachers to organize and coordinate play activities in a reasonable manner, so as to ensure their smooth progress. This enhancement in organizational and coordination abilities enables teachers to better manage classroom order and motivate children in daily teaching. Thirdly, it improves the adaptability of teachers. In outdoor independent games, teachers need to make quick judgments and adjustments based on children's reactions and problems that arise during play. This improvement in adaptability helps teachers better cope with various unexpected situations.

Fourthly, it helps teachers develop innovative thinking. Outdoor independent games provide teachers with a space for free expression, allowing them to design creative play activities based on children's interests and needs. The development of innovative thinking makes teachers better stimulate children's learning interest and enthusiasm. To sum up, teachers' participation in outdoor independent games for K2 children is of significant value to improve their ability in guidance. Through employing this approach, teachers can keep enhancing their educational and teaching levels in practice and promote their professional development.

2. The Current Situation of Teacher Guidance in Outdoor Autonomous Play in Kindergartens

2.1 Poor Quality of Teacher Guidance Intervention

Teacher guidance and intervention are of great value during outdoor autonomous play in kindergartens. Effective guidance from teachers can enable children to gain more learning experience and ensure the smooth progress of the game. However, at present, the quality of guidance and intervention by some teachers is poor. They cannot accurately identify the timing and methods of intervention, and the phenomenon of "teacher-centered" still exists (Hu, 2022). For instance, when children encounter activity problems, teachers mainly observe and lack the awareness to guide them; When intervening in games, teachers lack the educational awareness of inspiration and guidance. They often take direct experience as the basic form of intervention and do not provide children with space for independent thinking and research, resulting in unsatisfactory participation in games for children.

2.2 There Is a Phenomenon of Forced Guidance by Teachers

The basic purpose of teachers' guidance is to ensure that children's outdoor play activities are carried out in an orderly manner, such as giving some guiding opinions on children's play problems; Mediate when conflicts arise, etc. But in the current guidance work, some teachers still have the problem of "forced guidance", such as being worried that the child cannot complete a certain activity task and actively guiding the child; Children's activity behavior deviates from the teacher's expected direction, and children's play behavior is forcibly corrected, which leads to the deprivation of children's "autonomy" in autonomous play, ignores children's actual needs in play, and affects the overall quality of the activity.

2.3 Teachers' Guidance Neglects Evaluation and Communication

Effective communication and interaction can enable children to learn to sort out the game process and game ideas, which can promote the improvement of the quality of outdoor autonomous games in kindergartens. Evaluation communication is an important way for children to summarize activities and accumulate experience. Children can be fully aware of their shortcomings in the activity and formulate appropriate improvement strategies through self-narration. But in current teacher guidance work, teachers often neglect this part, and most teachers do not realize the educational value of this part. The entire activity lacks both teacher guidance and evaluation, as well as a stage for children to reflect on themselves, resulting in insufficient depth of the game activity, which in turn has a negative impact on

children's ability development.

3. The Problems of Teachers' Guidance in Outdoor Autonomous Games of Children in the Senior Class

3.1 Some Teachers Watch Children Playing Games

In outdoor self-directed play, teachers play a crucial role. Due to their age limitations, young children lack relevant experience and require teachers to intervene at appropriate moments to help advance the game. Teachers should provide guidance based on observing children's play. However, observations reveal that some teachers merely watch from the sidelines without offering any guidance throughout the game. Among 189 self-directed play observation events, teachers most frequently acted as observers, followed by participants. While teachers should offer guidance based on observation, they often misunderstand the observer role, assuming it means completely stepping back from the game. At W Kindergarten, we observed teachers recording videos with phones or being busy with other tasks outside the game, only responding when children proactively seek help. When children encounter problems or challenges during play, teachers fail to provide timely guidance, leaving children to solve issues independently, which ultimately diminishes their interest in the game.

Case 1 (Excerpt):

Background: Class 12, Water and Sand Game, 10:15 AM, May 16, 2023

Halfway through digging the canal, Xiao Yue noticed the water stopped flowing in the middle no matter how hard he dug. He shouted anxiously, "Don't you dare block the water!" "No one's trying to stop it!" Xiao Kui replied. Xiao Hua stared at the canal and said, "The water must be too narrow, so it can't flow." He walked over to the faucet and turned it to the maximum. But even at full blast, the water still wasn't enough. The teacher stood by, recording the scene on his phone without offering any help. The children, having no idea how to fix it, went off to play other games.

The case study reveals that during the water channel digging game, the children repeatedly attempted solutions but failed to resolve the issue. The teacher remained passive bystander without intervention, leaving the children's play challenged. In a random interview, the teacher explained: "After the game, I encourage them to reflect and share their solutions. By minimizing direct involvement during play, I help develop their problem-solving skills."

Interview materials:

Researcher: If children encounter difficulties during outdoor independent play, do you think teachers should take the initiative to guide them or wait for the children to seek help?

Teacher 1: In all our outdoor self-directed games, we have established clear rules beforehand. While we do address minor injuries like hand scratches or similar incidents when children report them, we emphasize that any difficulties should be reported to the teacher immediately. The teacher will promptly arrange for medical assistance. All issues will be resolved during the sharing session.

Teacher 2: I prefer to stay on the sidelines unless conflicts arise. Sometimes they argue over something

and the argument escalates into a heated fight. That's when I step in. If the situation gets too serious, I'm afraid it might turn into a physical altercation, so I intervene.

Interviews with teachers reveal that many rarely take the initiative to guide children during playtime. Teachers only step in to help when children get injured or involved in conflicts, typically addressing issues during post-game discussions. This often leads to teachers merely observing play sessions, turning children's playtime into their own downtime.

3.2 The Main Target Group Consists of Individual Children

Guidance targets are categorized into individual children, small group children, and all children. Teachers determine guidance approaches for the entire group, small groups, or individual children based on actual outdoor autonomous play situations. Selecting guidance for all children allows attention to each child individually, while individual guidance proves more efficient and targeted. As shown in Table 1, the survey revealed that teachers primarily guide individual children (50.26%) rather than the entire group (14.29%), indicating that teachers focus on individual children during guidance, making it challenging to attend to all. Interview data further revealed that outdoor autonomous play guidance predominantly involves individual and small group interactions, with group guidance being less common. Group guidance typically occurs during game preparation and conclusion phases. Teachers particularly emphasize children who demonstrate strong skill mastery, show outstanding performance, or exhibit rule-violating behaviors that may lead to dangerous actions. The first category of children, being more capable, often assume leadership roles and can effectively assist peers, while the second category tends to encounter more issues during play, requiring increased attention. Other children with fewer behavioral problems are often overlooked, such as quiet, shy, or timid children who follow rules and rarely pose safety risks. Given the large number of children, only two teachers observe play sessions, making it impossible for them to monitor every child simultaneously. Only teachers with thorough observation of children can provide appropriate guidance.

Table 1. Distribution of Guide Objects in the Game

	Individual children	A small group of children	All children	Total
Quantity	95	67	27	189
Percentage	50.26%	35.45%	14.29%	100%

3.3 Teachers Find It Difficult to Grasp the Best Time to Guide Students

Effective intervention outcomes depend on optimal timing. However, teachers often struggle to identify the right moment for guidance. As shown in Table 2, kindergarten teachers in W Kindergarten predominantly provide guidance when children exhibit obvious safety risks or engage in disruptive play behaviors. In contrast, guidance during repeated unsuccessful attempts and simple repetitive play activities is relatively rare, accounting for only 12.70% and 7.94% respectively. This indicates that

teachers prioritize safety over behavioral guidance during play sessions.

Table 2. Timing of Teacher Guidance in Outdoor Autonomous Games

	Outside the game	The game is simple and repetitive.	A clear security risk	Seriously interfere with the game	Multiple at tempts failed	Social interaction difficulties	Total
Quantity	28	15	51	39	24	32	189
Percentage	14.81%	7.94%	26.98%	20.63%	12.70%	16.93%	100%

The following interview with teachers addresses the question: "When would you intervene in children's play to provide guidance?" Teacher 3: First, when safety concerns arise, and second, when they can no longer resolve issues independently. We ask them, "Do you need help? What's the problem?" Sometimes, we guide them through heuristic thinking. If they can solve the problem themselves, they'll participate in the post-game discussion to share and collaboratively address it. Teacher 4: I always focus on children's conflicts. When disputes occur, I first observe quietly. If unresolved, I intervene appropriately. I also monitor their activity levels—especially in summer outdoors, I watch for signs of sweating, ensure they drink water, and take breaks when needed.

As the teacher mentioned in the interview, when safety issues or conflicts arise among young children, teachers tend to intervene excessively. While safety remains the top priority in kindergarten operations, the development of children's abilities through play is equally crucial. Teachers often overlook the unique developmental value of outdoor independent play while overemphasizing safety measures, which hinders the growth of children's overall capabilities. Furthermore, teachers' guidance may be either premature or delayed. For instance, in an outdoor doodling game scenario, when two children argued over drawing positions, the teacher immediately intervened by instructing them not to scribble on others' artwork – a case of premature guidance. By failing to understand the situation, the teacher deprived children of the opportunity to resolve issues independently. Similarly, senior kindergarten teachers sometimes provide delayed guidance. During outdoor construction games, when children lose interest due to outdated materials, leading to repetitive and monotonous play, teachers often fail to intervene promptly.

3.4 The Sharing Activity Mode Is too Rigid and Monotonous

The current framework outlines three core components for the game-end sharing session: teachers' post-game evaluations, children's illustrated storytelling, and their subsequent verbal presentations. Researchers observed that teachers' initial focus on sharing established rigid cognitive frameworks. When peers raised alternative ideas or playstyles, those with preconceived notions often preemptively adopted them, which hindered children's ability to authentically document their own creative interpretations of the game.

For instance, in the case of the field game sharing activity, the teacher first asks during the children's feedback session: 'What issues did you encounter during today's game?' Ouyang: "Xiao Lai is too heavy to carry—we couldn't lift him all by ourselves." Enze: "Someone from Team Blue was hit but kept going down for a long time." Teacher: "Exactly. We noticed this issue from the very first game. Some kids still repeat the same mistakes, and we reviewed the previous game's problems before today's session." Xiao Zhan: "Let the boys be the nurses." Teacher's response: "I think Xiao Zhan's suggestion works. Now, let's draw the game story: the left side shows today's problems, and the right side shows your solutions." The game stories created by young children, as shown in Figure 1, primarily reflect the issues and solutions discussed between teachers and children during evaluations, with few alternative ideas. Additionally, the outdoor autonomous play area at W Kindergarten rotates monthly, and after each session, children engage in painting activities, resulting in similar artwork in the same zone. Moreover, when some children finish creating their game stories, lunchtime arrives, depriving them of the opportunity to share with teachers. Furthermore, teachers predominantly rely on painting as the primary means of representation, neglecting other experiential methods like crafts or building blocks to recreate scenarios. This approach hinders the development of children's diverse abilities and interests, leading to repetitive daily sharing activities with the same routine.



Figure 1. Works of Children's Sharing Session

4. Practical Strategies for Teacher Guidance in Outdoor Autonomous Play in Kindergartens

In kindergarten outdoor autonomous play, teachers' effective guidance can not only improve the quality of play, but also promote children's abilities to the next level. Based on the questions raised above, the author will combine years of educational experience and educational examples to put forward several feasible educational suggestions to give full play to the educational value of teacher guidance and further improve the quality of early childhood education.

(1) Clarify the direction of guidance and enhance the awareness and level of intervention

Teachers providing effective guidance on children's play process and choosing the right time to

intervene in the play can ensure the smooth progress of the play and also enhance the depth and breadth of outdoor autonomous play in kindergartens. Children are the main subjects of learning activities in kindergarten outdoor autonomous play, but their abilities are limited. Under the guidance of teachers, children can take the initiative to identify problems and solve them independently, which can improve the quality of education. Based on this, when conducting guidance work, teachers should enhance their own awareness of intervention and guidance level. They should consider both the timing and methods of intervention, as well as the way of thinking of children, and choose the correct guidance strategy to promote outdoor self-activity in kindergartens. The main play should develop in a better direction.

First, before intervening in children's play, teachers can focus on observation, pay attention to every move of the children in the activity, analyze their behavioral motives, make a comprehensive evaluation of the children's activity behavior, and formulate a scientific and reasonable education plan based on the children's play process to ensure the effectiveness of the teacher's guidance (He, 2021). For example, by observing the children's play activities, the teacher found that a child participating in the construction area game chose materials from the area to build a "forest house". The child used short branches as the main activity material, strung the scattered branches together with hemp ropes in the area, and placed them on the original foundation as the roof of the house. After observing this behavior of the child, the teacher can provide educational guidance around the child's work, such as "Your little house is so beautiful, but the teacher found that there are many gaps in the roof. What if the house leaks on rainy days?" . Teachers posing inquiry questions based on children's existing experience can enable children to develop the play activities at a deeper level. Teachers can encourage children to look for other available materials in the natural environment as waterproofing layers, thereby helping children improve their game works.

Second, the teacher should observe the entire activity process of the children and provide effective intervention and guidance for the game problems. For example, during an outdoor activity, children played the "Forest Food Workshop" game, playing different roles such as chef, vegetable cutter, and waiter. At the beginning of the game, the teacher observed that the children were very enthusiastic about participating in the game, and each role was busy with their own work in an orderly manner. As the game went on, there were more problems with the children's play, such as the "waiter" often served the wrong dishes, the children cutting vegetables wanted to try the role of the chef, the kitchen was in a mess, and the game became chaotic. Noticing these problems, the teacher intervened directly in the game and gave instructions: "The order in the food court is too chaotic now. The chef stir-fries and cuts dishes one moment; The waiters often serve the wrong dishes and the customers are not satisfied. Let's think of solutions!" The teacher intervened directly and guided the children to reflect. Eventually, the children worked out a plan: Everyone took turns to play different roles and asked the teacher to time and remind everyone; The waiter checks the menu with the customer when serving the dishes; Everyone must finish their own work before helping others. It is evident that the teacher's intervention and guidance can facilitate the orderly development of children's play, thereby enabling children to

have a more positive play experience.

(2) Pay attention to the characteristics of children and guide them scientifically based on their features
In outdoor autonomous play in kindergartens, teachers' guidance should be tailored to the individual characteristics of each child to ensure the quality of educational work and the improvement of children's abilities (Sun, 2024). There are significant differences among children aged 3 to 6 due to factors such as individual ability, personality traits, and ways of thinking. For the same game activity, young children will come up with multiple game results. Based on this, teachers should pay more attention to the individual characteristics of children, provide targeted scientific guidance, and give full play to the value of teacher guidance.

For example, in team competitive outdoor autonomous games, some game groups did not achieve satisfactory results during the activity and experienced a strong sense of "frustration" after the game ended. Teachers can provide emotional guidance to the children in the group, starting from the essence and connotation of the game activity, allowing the children to review the entire game process and realize that "what is more important than winning or losing is the joint efforts and mutual assistance of everyone in the activity." The teacher's guidance can help children gradually get out of negative emotions and think from the level of "collective honor", thereby enabling children to establish a correct view of competition and values.

For example, teachers should adopt different guidance strategies based on the personality traits of different children. For children who are more introverted and reluctant to socialize, teachers can take the initiative to interact with them, such as asking, "What game are you playing? Could you tell the teacher about it?" "Your game looks fun. Can the teacher join in?" Etc. Affirm the child's play behavior and adopt appropriate means to intervene in the game, guide the child in the form of communication, and gradually develop the child's communication and cooperation skills. For children who have strong learning abilities but are careless, teachers can focus on observation. After noticing problems with the child's play activities, the teacher may remain silent for the time being

"Voice", after the child's activity fails, then proceed with educational guidance: "The teacher found that your game failed. Let's find out together where the problem lies!" Then the teacher can lead the child to analyze the reasons for the failure of the game, guide the child to be aware of the problems in the game and explore solutions. And so on, when dealing with other children, the teacher should first start from the actual situation of the children and adopt effective guidance strategies in combination with their personality traits to give full play to the role of teacher guidance.

(3) Pay attention to information feedback, and evaluate and summarize after the game

Teachers should not overlook the evaluation and summary session after children's outdoor autonomous play. Teachers should give correct guidance on children's play activities and allow sufficient time for children to talk about their play experiences and feelings. Teachers provide scientific guidance and evaluation based on what the children say, thereby further enhancing the effectiveness of their guidance (Qin & Wang, 2024). Teachers can divide the evaluation summary into three parts: child summary,

child peer evaluation, and teacher guidance, in order to achieve the goal of helping children accumulate experience and optimize the quality of outdoor autonomous play in kindergartens.

First, after the children 'outdoor autonomous play, the teacher should allow sufficient time for the children to express their feelings, experiences and gains from the activity. This part should be based on the children' autonomous narration, allowing the children to review their performance in the game and analyze their strengths and weaknesses in the activity during the summary.

Secondly, teachers can guide children to conduct mutual evaluations, asking them to talk about what tasks their peers have completed and what new knowledge they have mastered. By listening to others' comments, children get a more comprehensive view of their own situation in the game activities. Then the teacher can ask the child to think about the problems found and, through guidance, allow the child to make adjustments to the outdoor autonomous play activities independently and make up for the deficiencies in each link to improve and optimize the future play activities.

Thirdly, teachers can carry out teacher guidance and evaluation based on the content of children's narratives. Teachers can evaluate each child or different play groups with affirmation, support and encouragement, and point out the strengths of the children in the play activities, such as "The ×× group cooperated very well in the game. Everyone completed the entire game task in a harmonious manner. Other children should learn from them." In addition, the teacher should also provide guidance on the game questions raised by the children, and propose feasible strategies for the game activities based on the current situation of the children, such as "The work of the children in the ×× area is very beautiful, but a different game material will have a better effect. The teacher looks forward to your next work!" . Teacher guidance can broaden children's play thinking and enable them to have a more positive play experience.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this paper explores the current situation and strategies of teacher guidance in outdoor autonomous play in kindergartens. Effective guidance from teachers can enable children to gain more learning experience within a limited time. Early childhood teachers should be fully aware of the educational value of outdoor autonomous play in kindergartens, uphold the "child-centered" educational ideology, respect children's play thinking, and put the guidance work into practice according to children's development needs, fully improve the quality of children's play activities, and enable children to accumulate more effective experience and skills in happy play.

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