

# Problems and Solutions of China's Preschool Education Curriculum System Based on the Characteristics of Children

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## **Abstract:**

Preschool education in China has made great progress during the past few decades, and more and more people are aware of its great importance for the development of children. However, there are still deficiencies in China's education curriculum system, many kindergartens are unsure of what kind of curriculum should be used to nurture children. This paper analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the current preschool education curriculum system in China and the physical, cognitive, and other characteristics of preschool children, it is believed that there is a problem of incompatibility between systematization and specialization in the system. Based on the analysis, this paper gives the following suggestions: The preschool education curriculum system can combine the national curriculum, the local curriculum, and the site-based curriculum. More natural education and local characteristic culture could be added to the curriculum system. The preschool education curriculum system should also increase the main role of students and improve the curriculum evaluation system.

**Keywords:** Preschool education; curriculum system; site-based curriculum

## **1. Introduction**

Preschool education is the earliest systematic education for children, which has a significant impact on their future development. With the development of the times, more and more people have begun to notice its importance. China's preschool education curriculum system has gradually improved during the past few years. To promote the quality of preschool education, the Chinese government has issued a guid-

ance document to improve the level of preschool education and promote its modernization. The document points out that the preschool education curriculum should pay attention to education and differentiation. Curriculum in kindergartens should help children lay the foundation for individualized development and lifelong development. The document objectively promotes the development and progress of the preschool education industry in China.

Although China's preschool education curriculum

system in the new era has made great progress compared with the past, there are still some problems. The traditional Chinese preschool education curriculum system emphasizes the protection of children, even if nowadays it emphasizes the “combination of protection and education”, it will still be overprotective in practice. The curriculum systems such as the Reggio Emilia approach and Montessori method in the West emphasize allowing children to explore freely, but it will cause distrust among some practitioners and parents. At present, there is no clear content and organization for China’s preschool education curriculum system, and it is difficult for kindergartens to choose between the traditional curriculum system and the Western curriculum systems. It is important to develop a preschool curriculum system that is not only based on the characteristics of children’s development and learning but also China’s national conditions. A curriculum like this has a great positive effect on the all-round development of Chinese children.

Based on the development characteristics of preschool children in the new era in China, this paper will try to analyze the existing problems of China’s preschool education curriculum system and give some suggestions for improvement based on the traditional Chinese preschool education theory and Western preschool education theory.

## 2. Current China’s Preschool Education Curriculum System

China does not have a traditional national education curriculum system for kindergartens right now, most of the provinces and municipalities are developing their curriculum based on “Kindergarten Education Guidelines” and “3~6 years old children’s development guidelines”. However, with the gradual development of national education, China’s preschool education curriculum system is constantly developing towards standardization and rationalization, many kindergartens combine the classical curriculum theory with the actual situations of kindergartens. Under the guidance of relevant institutions, kindergartens are carrying out the arrangement of preschool education courses which is suitable for the local needs. To better classify, this paper will divide China’s preschool curriculum system into national curriculum, local curriculum, and site-based curriculum based on the management body of the curriculum, and analyze the preschool education curriculum system that is widely used in the Chinese mainland in the 21st century.

### 2.1 National Curriculum

The statutory national curriculum is based on guidance

documents issued by the Ministry of Education in 1979 and 1981. The documents emphasize “class” and “play” as the main means of the kindergarten curriculum. The national curriculum emphasizes the need to promote the penetration and integration of all fields of children, it also takes play as the basic activity of kindergartens and it strives to reduce the trend of elementary school in kindergartens as much as possible [1].

The national curriculum generally sets out guiding requirements and clarifies the major curriculum reforms [2]. During the preschool education stage, the national curriculum requires the kindergarten activities to be carried out more acceptably for children such as games, to promote the healthy physical and mental development of children. The national curriculum is developing in practice, standardizing the care and education of kindergartens, and promoting the formation of scientific concepts of education in kindergartens. Overall, the national curriculum can help clarify the content of teaching and ensure that students can receive an age-appropriate education, this lays a solid foundation for further learning. At the same time, due to its systematization, it is also well connected with children’s future basic education, which can reduce the gap caused by different stages of education.

However, there are still some problems with China’s national curriculum of preschool education. The biggest problem is its incompleteness, due to China’s vast territory, there are many ethnic minorities, with a variety of cultures, and a unified national curriculum can not meet the needs of society in many regions, the obstacles to pushing national curriculum are huge. Moreover, the curriculum system of preschool education is difficult to standardize with textbooks or clear teaching systems, it is difficult to implement it accurately in many kindergartens. In addition, the national curriculum can be evaluated by standardized examinations at the primary and secondary levels, but there is a lack of appropriate evaluation methods in kindergartens. In general, the national curriculum at the preschool level is modified at the time of entering kindergarten.

### 2.2 Local Curriculum

The local curriculum mainly refers to the curriculum arranged according to the situation in the province or designed by the local education management department according to the national curriculum standards. This curriculum is under the guidance of classic educational ideas, and in line with local characteristics and needs [3].

The local curriculum creates curriculum content and teaching methods with local characteristics, which is conducive to linking national policies with local charac-

teristics. At the same time, compared with the national curriculum, the local curriculum can make corresponding adjustments more quickly and effectively to complete the optimization of education. Compared with the site-based curriculum, it is more systematic and complete and can provide more scientific curriculum content for kindergartens.

However, there are some defects in China's local curriculum at present. In the preschool education stage, most regions do not have their own complete local curriculum system, and even if there is a local curriculum, the content of it is always rigid and has not been updated for a long time. In addition, during the preschool education stage, the curriculum content of the local curriculum is not closely integrated with practical experience, it is far from reality [3]. It is difficult to control the scale of adjustment in the management of the local curriculum and grasp the scope of self-management of kindergartens as well.

### 2.3 Site-Based Curriculum

The site-based curriculum is an educational practice that combines nationally recognized teaching methods and content with the transformation of the kindergarten. It combines the local characteristics with the characteristics of the children in the kindergarten. The site-based curriculum focuses on the combination of educational research and practice, and this curriculum can constantly adjust during the teaching process so that it is more suitable for children in kindergarten. The site-based curriculum gives kindergartens and teachers more opportunities to participate in and change teaching activities, so that they can carry out teaching activities according to the actual situation, teaching conditions, and student characteristics. The site-based curriculum makes the teaching process no longer an activity detached from reality, which is conducive to improving kindergarten management and teaching quality [4].

However, the site-based curriculum has the problem of incompleteness and disconnection, it has not formed a complete systematic curriculum. Site-based curriculum in China appears in each kindergarten in divided modules. The site-based curriculum of some kindergartens shows a phenomenon that is detached from local needs, it is just a copy of the successful cases of other kindergartens and is not combined with the local culture and the situation in kindergarten. This makes the curriculum does not achieve the expected results. Moreover, due to the imperfection of the evaluation system, many kindergartens and teachers regard site-based curriculum as a quantitative task, regard it as a specific and fixed teaching content [5]. They only study and change it from the surface, which makes the

curriculum lack authenticity. In the process of building a site-based curriculum, there is still a lack of professional teachers in many kindergartens or a lack of sufficient equipment and theoretical foundation. There is also a lack of complete evaluation and supervision systems, which makes the problem of being unconnected with basic education [6]. These problems make the development of site-based curriculum not meet the expected state, and make it widely questioned by society.

## 3. Characteristics of Preschool Children's Development and Learning in China in the Context of the New Era

### 3.1 Physical Function and Motor Development

3-6 years old is the peak period of children's physical function and motor development. During this period, the physical quality and motor performance of children will be greatly improved. With China's economic development, the material conditions for children's growth are rising quickly, and more attention has been paid to children's development by young parents and society. The physical quality of Chinese children has been greatly improved compared with the past, and their physical function and movement level have developed rapidly.

In general, the motor level of preschool children in China shows a good development trend, and the level of fine movements is great [7]. In the background of the new era, Chinese parents of infants pay more and more attention to early childhood all-round development. Parents also pay attention to outdoor sports and exercise, thus children have more chances to get closer to nature and explore freely. These factors promote the development of children's physical quality. Moreover, under the guidance of the government, the kindergartens have gradually added physical education to daily activities and attach more importance to exercise activities, this promotes the physical fitness and motor development of children. Characteristic sports lessons have also been carried out in many kindergartens nowadays in China, which promotes the development of children's athletic ability and performance.

However, while the overall physical quality of children is improving, some aspects should also attract the attention of teachers and parents. Children in China have a trend of slow or even declining development in some aspects of physical fitness. During the past few decades, the physical fitness and motor skills of children in China have shown an imbalanced development trend, and there has been a certain degree of decline in coordination, flexibility, and lower limb strength [8].

### 3.2 Inquiry and Cognitive Skills

The brain of children aged 3-6 years develops rapidly, and the basic brain network of cognitive ability develops rapidly at this stage [9]. Children at this age always show great curiosity about the world around them, and they have a strong desire to explore and understand the world around them. In China, cultivating preschool children's spirit of inquiry has become an important part of preschool education, and the national documents emphasize the need to cultivate children's spirit and ability of scientific inquiry, and the need to support and encourage children's exploration [10].

With a further understanding of parents, kindergartens, and society on preschool children's exploration and cognitive ability, in general, Chinese preschool children in the new era have better opportunities and conditions for exploring. However, preschool education curricula in China nowadays still don't have enough content about developing children's independent exploration ability. Most of the courses are based on the teacher's leading role, which only requires students to achieve the predicted outcomes and does not pay attention to children's independent thinking in the process of teaching. Although a lot of national documents require children to have more space for self-exploration and experimentation, there is still a lack of specific methods in the actual curriculum implementation, which limits the development of children's exploration habits and cognitive abilities.

### 3.3 Other Developmental and Learning Characteristics

With China's economic development and the change of parents' educational concepts in the new era, in general, more attention has been paid to the all-round development and personalized learning of young children.

At present, Chinese kindergartens try to add five aspects of morality, intelligence, physical quality, art, and labor to the teaching process. Compared with the previous education model that only focused on conclusions and intellectual education, teachers now pay more attention to observing children. They also pay attention to children's intellectual, emotional, and physical all-round development in the teaching process [11]. But, in the teaching process, the curriculum content for the comprehensive and balanced development of children is still very lacking, most kindergartens lack moral education content that meets the characteristics of children's age. Other aspects of preschool education content are also rigid, and it is difficult to combine with children's characteristics of curiosity, activity, and desire to imitate, which is hard to keep pace with times.

Children's learning is becoming more and more individualized nowadays, and they want to get more space for self-learning and thinking from teachers and parents. However, in the current Chinese preschool education curriculum system, collective learning and collective activities are emphasized while there is a lack of differentiated teaching for individuals. Moreover, because of children's concrete visual thinking, they want direct perception and feeling, and they hope to obtain learning content and learning methods that can be operated and experienced [12]. But in fact, the appropriate teaching materials and tools provided by China's preschool education curriculum system are insufficient.

At the same time, Chinese preschool children also show strong teamwork ability and awareness. Preschool children in China will form the idea of teamwork when encountering difficulties and cooperate with others to promote the completion of tasks. However, there are still questions about how to balance cooperative play and differentiation. It is really important to give children a suitable environment and materials to promote the development of cooperative thinking and skills. A lot of teachers and kindergartens are working to make the group work activities meet the differentiated needs of young children.

## 4. Suggestions for China's Preschool Education Curriculum System

### 4.1 Structure Preschool Education Curriculum System

From the aspect of structure, China's preschool education curriculum system can combine the national curriculum, local curriculum, and site-based curriculum. In the process of education, kindergartens can integrate the content of site-based curriculum into the systematic structure of the national curriculum. Meanwhile, kindergartens can decompose the overall national curriculum and local curriculum into multiple modules, and add the site-based curriculum that meets their actual situation to the appropriate modules. The national curriculum can be used as a framework to supplement the kindergartens' insufficient curriculum content.

### 4.2 Content of Preschool Education Curriculum System

From the aspect of content, China's preschool education curriculum can be developed in a more practical and process-oriented direction. It is hard to prescribe teaching materials and methods in the preschool stage, but more courses close to nature can be added so that children can

explore and learn independently in real nature. Teachers and parents should also pay more attention to promoting the improvement of children's physical quality and cognitive ability. Painting and other creations of children can show the thoughts of kids, teachers can analyze these things to know about the kids better and cooperate with parents to help children explore [13]. Through these ways, teachers can know about the children's interests and the next stage of the curriculum content should be created based on children's interests. In addition, more local culture can be added to the curriculum of kindergartens to match the local culture. Teachers should also allow children to participate in the curriculum design and work together with them to create a truly child-oriented curriculum, children should have the opportunity to give their own opinions and ideas during the process of learning [14].

### 4.3 Specification of Preschool Education Curriculum System

From the specification of the preschool education curriculum system. The state can plan some basic kindergarten teaching equipment and methods to ensure that the teaching materials and environment are suitable for the children's development in this age group [15]. On this basis, the corresponding course content such as group activities and cooperative learning can be better developed. The state can evaluate and select relevant courses and issue corresponding curriculum evaluation standards to monitor the implementation of preschool education. By these methods, kindergartens can better understand their shortcomings.

### 4.4 Practice of Preschool Education Curriculum System

During the process of teaching, teachers can give children more opportunities to express themselves. Teachers can carry out differentiated curriculum teaching according to children's ideas and interests, teachers should adjust the way of teaching in a timely and effective manner and provide the children with appropriate guidance based on assessing the learning situation [16]. Meanwhile, more space and freedom should be given to the children to help them develop their ability to explore and think. In kindergartens, teaching materials should be straightforward for children to operate to cultivate the development of children's thinking. In teaching practice, teachers can also share the feedback of students and their own to improve.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper finds that there are still some deficiencies in the

field of China's preschool education curriculum system. The curriculum can be improved according to the development and learning characteristics of children. Based on this, a more standardized curriculum structure, more localized curriculum content, more suitable teaching materials, a better teaching environment, and a more liberal course model should be applied in kindergartens to promote the all-round development of children's individualization, physical quality, and cognitive ability.

Based on the analysis of the current preschool education curriculum system and the development level and learning characteristics of preschool children in China, this paper makes some suggestions for the curriculum system of preschool education in China, hoping to provide some references for the curriculum design of kindergartens and teachers. However, further in-depth research and thinking are needed on the differences in specific regions and the curriculum content of special children.

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