

A Study on the Curriculum Construction of Preschool Education Majors in Vocational Undergraduate Colleges in the Context of High-quality Development

Zhang Ting

[**Abstract**] Curriculum is the main channel to achieve the goal of talent cultivation, and the reasonable setting of preschool education curriculum in vocational undergraduate colleges is the key to cultivate high-quality early childhood teachers and to achieve the goal of “excellent education for young children” in the society and people’s livelihood. The main basis for the curriculum construction of preschool education majors includes policies and standards on majors issued by the country, changes in job requirements at different times, characteristics of the discipline itself, and intrinsic needs of students’ development. In the context of high-quality development, the curriculum of preschool education in vocational undergraduate colleges is still not rich in types reflecting the development of students’ personalities. The phenomenon of emphasizing on education but not on conservation in the core curriculum exists, the practicality of the educational practice courses is not enough, and the all-round vertical and horizontal articulation system of the curriculum has not yet been established. In the context of high-quality development, the curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges should focus on the needs of students’ personality development, the combination of childcare and education, practice orientation, and the all-round articulation of the curriculum system.

[**Key words**] vocational undergraduate colleges; curriculum of preschool education majors

[**About the author**] Zhang Ting, from Zhenxiong, Yunnan, China, master student in College of Educational Sciences, Chongqing Normal University.

[**Fund**] This paper is the research result of “Research and Exploration on the Target Orientation of Early Childhood Education Teacher Training in Undergraduate Vocational Colleges in Chongqing” (No. YKC23018), which is subject to Chongqing Normal University Graduate Student Research Innovation Program 2023.

[**DOI**] <https://doi.org/10.62662/kxwxy0106006>

[**Website**] www.oacj.net

In the new era, cultivating high-quality early childhood teachers is the key to alleviate current difficulties of the overall quality of childcare services in China, and to achieve the development goal of preschool education, which is “excellent education for young children”. Curriculum, as the main channel to achieve the goal of talent cultivation, is of great significance to the cultivation of high-quality early childhood teachers. In 2018, “Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Construction in the New Era” explicitly put forward that “we should optimize the curriculum system for early childhood teacher training and emphasize the principle of integrating childcare and education”. However, at present, the construction quality of the pre-vocational training curriculum system of China’s new pilot vocational undergraduate preschool education majors is not high, and the principle of integrating childcare and education in the curriculum is not obvious, which is not conducive to the development goal “excellent for young children and education” of China’s preschool education. In the new era, it is worthwhile to discuss how to scientifically implement the principle of integrating childcare and education in the kindergarten teacher training curriculum in “Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Construction in the New Era”, so as to cultivate a high-quality

team of kindergarten teachers. In view of this, in the context of high-quality development, based on the current problems, we put forward specific initiatives to optimize the curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges, with a view to providing experience for improving the quality of talent cultivation.

1 Basis of curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges

Factors affecting the curriculum setting are multifaceted, which comprehensively include the internal theoretical basis, external objective factors, traditional cultural background, real social conditions and many other aspects. Among them, policies and standards on majors issued by the country, real needs of social development, characteristics of the discipline itself, and development needs of students are the important basis.

1.1 Relevant policies and standards issued by the country

Standard documents issued by the country are the policy basis for the curriculum of preschool education in vocational undergraduate colleges. Since the 21st century, in order to improve the training quality and professional development of early childhood teachers, China has issued a series of documents such as Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers (Trial), Standards for Teacher Education Curriculum (Trial), and Standards for Professional Ability of Teachers of Preschool Education Majors (Trial), which provide professional standards for early childhood teachers, pre-service training curriculum, and standards for students' professional competence. Generally speaking, relevant policies and standards issued by the country focus on making regulations on the pre-service training and post-service development of the early childhood teaching force at the macro level, which are the policy indexes and bases for promoting the professional development of the early childhood teaching force. Accordingly, the curriculum construction and setting of preschool education in vocational undergraduate colleges should focus on the national professional standard documents, which reflect the scientific nature of the curriculum construction and setting of preschool education.

1.2 New changes in job requirements at different times

Changes in job requirements at different times are the real basis influencing the curriculum setting of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges. On the one hand, the information age has accelerated the process of "education + artificial intelligence", and the implementation of intelligent education has posed new challenges to the information literacy of future teachers. In the construction of the curriculum, we should pay attention to the rational arrangement of teacher education information courses to adapt to the new requirements of the information age on the quality of preschool education professionals. On the other hand, it is necessary to rationally set up professional courses for preschool education majors in combination with the changes in job requirements for early childhood teachers in the society and market at present. For example, at present, China is gradually stepping into the aging society with fewer children, and the social demand for jobs related to childcare services for infants and young children aged 0-3 years old has increased, which inevitably highlights the demand for high-quality 0-6 years old integrated with early childhood teachers. Specifically to the curriculum construction of preschool education majors, the background of the aging society requires that the curriculum should reasonably increase the number of nursery courses related to the development of infants and young children aged 0-3 years old, reflecting the principle of equal emphasis on the childcare and education in the curriculum.

1.3 Characteristics of the discipline itself

Characteristics of the discipline itself are the theoretical basis influencing the curriculum setting of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges. Different majors have different professional characteristics, and different professional characteristics determine different disciplinary logic. Preschool education majors are comprehensive and practical, so their curriculum should accordingly pay more attention to comprehensive courses, integrated courses, cross-curricular courses, experiential courses, etc., pay attention to the connection between

disciplines, and reflect the comprehensive, selective and practical nature of the curriculum. On the one hand, the curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges should highlight the cross-disciplinary, practical and scientific nature of preschool education majors, and pay attention to the cross-fertilization of courses of similar majors and different disciplines in preschool education. On the other hand, preschool education majors are mainly for infants and toddlers in the age group of 0–6 years old. However, there are great differences in the development of infants and toddlers in different age groups. Differences in the personalized characteristics, developmental level, and learning styles of different infants and toddlers are also the factors influencing the curriculum setting of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges. This requires that curriculum construction should focus on the overall principle of integrating childcare and education.

1.4 Intrinsic needs of students' development

Intrinsic needs of students' development are the intrinsic basis influencing the curriculum of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges. The core qualities of preschool students' development, overall development and personalized development are all important factors influencing the curriculum. Based on this, the curriculum of preschool education in vocational undergraduate colleges should focus on promoting the overall development of students and also on meeting the individual development needs of students. The curriculum should reasonably arrange the types and proportions of compulsory courses and elective courses, and enrich the types of public course modules and personalized development course modules, so as to meet the needs of students' overall and individual development. For example, it is necessary to combine students' career development tendency to meet the requirements of sustainable development on students' lifelong learning, so as to cultivate "multi-specialty type" preschool education professionals, and realize Marx's basic viewpoints on the all-round development of human beings and the development of individuality. At the same time, the characteristics of the type of vocational undergraduate colleges are also an important basis influencing curriculum setting and construction, which requires the curriculum construction to highlight the characteristics of the type of vocational undergraduate colleges, as well as the characteristics of the level.

2 Current situation of curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges

The core of high-quality education is talent cultivation, and the core of talent cultivation is curriculum. Curriculum construction has a profound impact on the development and direction of education quality. In the context of high-quality development, the curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges is not rich in types reflecting the development of students' personalities, not obvious in the principle of integrating childcare and education, not prominent in the practical orientation, and not established in the integration and articulation system.

2.1 Not rich in types reflecting the development of students' personalities

Courses on personalized development are important course modules reflecting the autonomy of the curriculum setting, which are of great value in meeting the needs of students' personalized development. On the one hand, the proportion of hours and credits of compulsory courses in the curriculum of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges is large, while the proportion of hours and credits of elective courses is low. At the same time, elective courses in vocational undergraduate colleges are mainly divided into two categories: limited and optional courses, with a relatively small number of courses offered in each category. On the other hand, there are even fewer types of independent elective courses set up according to students' interests and personal career inclinations. For example, most vocational undergraduate colleges offer fewer courses on infant and toddler care for 0–3 year olds in the training programs for preschool education majors. The analysis found that most vocational undergraduate colleges are not rich enough in the types of courses in the personnel training program for preschool education majors. Among the types of courses for preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges,

there are fewer in personalized development courses set up according to students' career inclination and personality characteristics. At the same time, there are fewer types of personalized development courses and course modules to be enriched in preschool education majors of vocational undergraduate colleges. For example, in the elective course modules of preschool education majors in most vocational undergraduate colleges, the course modules of early education for 0-3 years old, internationalization, and early childhood literature need to be enriched.

2.2 Core curriculum is not obvious in the principle of integrating childcare and education

Trough analysis, it can be found that the core curriculum of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges in general emphasizes education while neglecting childcare. Also, the trend of integrating education and childcare is not obvious in the curriculum. Taking professional core curriculum as an example, the core curriculum of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges mainly focuses on the types of courses such as teacher education courses for the development of young children aged 3-6, courses on the five major areas of preschool children, and courses on artistic skills and techniques (see Table 1). There is almost no professional core curriculum on childcare such as healthcare, hygiene, and maintenance related to the development of infants and toddlers aged 0-3. In addition, in practice courses, student internship courses mainly take kindergartens as the main internship units. There are fewer vocational undergraduate colleges that have diversified internship units, such as early childhood education institutions, childcare service centers, and various types of community centers, as internship resources. On the whole, preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges generally focus on the cultivation of early childhood teachers' education and teaching abilities, while neglect the development of early childhood teachers' childcare abilities. The trend of integrating childcare and education is not obvious in the curriculum.

Table 1. List of core (main) curriculum for preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges

College A	College B	College C	College D	College E
Principles of Education Psychology of Preschool Children Five Areas of Early Childhood (5 courses) Early Childhood Hygiene and Healthcare Science Education for Preschool Children Mathematics Education for Preschool Children English Education for Preschool Children	Development Science for Preschool Children Care Science for Preschool Child Psychology of Preschool Children Development History of Chinese and Foreign Preschool Education Policies and Regulations of Preschool Education Teacher Ethics and Education Etiquette College English Early Childhood Five Areas (5 courses) Professional Skills Courses (5 courses) Preschool Children's Games Kindergarten Environment Creation	Educational Activity Design and Implementation in Kindergarten Preschool Education Preschool Nursing Preschool Psychology Early Childhood Environment Creation and Guidance Early Childhood Game Instruction Piano Basics Dance Basics	Preschool Education Preschool Psychology Hygiene and Healthcare for Preschool Children Kindergarten Curriculum and Teaching Kindergarten Game Design and Instruction Kindergarten Environment Creation and Utilization Early Childhood Five Areas (5 courses) Early Childhood Dance Creation Early Childhood Behavior Observation and Guidance	Early Childhood Five Areas (5 courses) Kindergarten Environment Creation and Teaching Aid Making Behavioral Observation and Evaluation of Preschool Children Kindergarten Play Teaching Guidance Family Education for Preschool Children Kindergarten Guidance on Teaching and Research Activities Psychological Education for Preschool Children with Special Needs Practical Training Sessions

Source: compiled from talent training programs of preschool education majors in various colleges.

2.3 Whole practicality of educational practice courses needs to be improved

“Standards for Teacher Education Curriculum (Trial)” issued in 2012 explicitly mentions that early childhood teacher should strengthen the sense of practice in courses. The practice course is an important bridge to promote students’ theory-to-practice connection, and the extracurricular intensive internship is an important form of the practice course. However, there is an overall problem, i. e. the curriculum of vocational undergraduate colleges emphasizes on theory courses rather than practice courses. First, the structure of practice courses is not reasonably proportioned. For example, among the credit ratios accounted for by the three types of course modules, specialized courses account for the highest proportion, public courses account for the second, and practice courses account for the lowest proportion of both hours and credits (Table 2). Second, internships in practice courses are mostly semester-intensive internships, with fewer thematic apprenticeships targeting at specific practical problems. Third, the internship units of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges are mainly based on kindergartens. There are fewer internship units for early childhood education institutions such as various early childhood education centers and daycare centers for students under the age of three. In short, the overall quality of China’s preschool education is not high. In particular, the specifically in the time of the whole process, the space of the full range of expansion, the content of the full integration, the concept of mutual penetration, the comprehensive unity of the curriculum system and other aspects need to be improved.

Table 2. List of curriculum structure for preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges

Colleges	Public courses		Specialized courses		Practice courses		Total credit
	Credit	Percentage%	Credit	Percentage%	Credit	Percentage%	
A	51	29.91	86	50.44	33.5	19.65	170.5
B	57	25.43	90	50.35	47	24.22	194
C	51	29.14	77	44	47	26.86	175
D	39	30.23	70	54.26	20	15.51	129
E	65	38.46	69	40.83	35	20.71	169
F	72	38.71	82	44.09	32	17.20	186
G	14	17.28	50	61.73	17	20.99	81

Source: compiled from talent training programs of preschool education majors in above colleges.

2.4 All-round articulation and integration system of courses has not been established yet

In the new era, establishing a system of integration of courses, competitions and certificates based on specialized groups is an important way to cultivate high-quality kindergarten teachers for preschool education majors of vocational undergraduate colleges. The mechanism of “job-course-competition-certification” integration not only reflects the occupational characteristics of typical tasks of kindergarten teachers, but also adheres to the cultural connotation of teacher education majors. On the one hand, “job-course-competition-certification” integration is not sound, and the curriculum content of vocational education is not obvious in characteristics. The analysis found that only a few schools such as Hainan University of Science and Technology have reconstructed the three-phase curriculum system based on the talent cultivation characteristics of vocational undergraduate education of “job position—engineering process—action—learning—new technology development—certificate”. Most of vocational undergraduate colleges have converged with applied undergraduate colleges and junior colleges in terms

of the curricula. On the other hand, the curriculum integration system of similar specialized groups of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges has not yet been established. For example, specialized and curriculum groups of preschool education majors such as preschool education, early education, infant and toddler care service and management in vocational undergraduate colleges have not yet been established, which is not conducive to the construction of a modularized curriculum system based on the requirements of job competence in vocational undergraduate colleges.

3 Optimization strategies of curriculum setting of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges

The curriculum setting of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges should focus on enriching the types of courses reflecting students' personalized development, reasonably arranging the credit ratio of nursery courses, emphasizing the practical orientation of the curriculum, and establishing an all-round vertical and horizontal articulation system of the curriculum, so as to reflect the scientific and rational nature of the curriculum.

3.1 Enrich course types and increase the number of modules reflecting students' personalized development

The curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges should focus on increasing the course modules that reflect the individual development needs of students and the richness and diversity of course types. First, the curriculum should emphasize the combination of students' vocational tendency and social development needs to add corresponding course modules. For example, the curriculum can be based on the current social demand for high-quality childcare services, and increase early education course modules for 0-3-year-olds, so as to improve their vocational ability in early education positions. Second, the curriculum should focus on the latest features of the times to set up the course with characteristics of the times. For example, based on the demand for students' information literacy in the era of informationization, additional modules of informationization courses are set up to improve students' information literacy, so as to improve the comprehensive information literacy ability of preschool education majors. Third, the curriculum of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges should pay attention to the reasonable and rational allocation of the ratio of credit hours and credits between compulsory courses and elective courses. At the same time, types of elective courses should be enriched. For example, the curriculum should focus on increasing the types of specialized elective courses and public elective courses according to students' interests. In general, the curriculum of vocational undergraduate colleges should focus on reflecting the characteristics of students' personalized development, and increase the personalized development courses for students according to their interests and vocational tendencies.

3.2 Focus on the integration of childcare and education, and reasonably arrange the proportion of childcare and education course structures

Preschool education majors in colleges should pay attention to "0-6 year-old children's growth and connectivity" and focus on the integration of "care-education-nurture" based on the continuity of human development and stage characteristics of the curriculum system. Besides, the structure of various types of courses in childcare and education courses should be reasonably arranged to cultivate integrated preschool education professionals for 0-6 year-olds. First, in the general education courses, increase the proportion of natural science courses related to brain science, hygiene and healthcare of infants and children aged 0-3. Second, in the professional main courses, focus on training courses of integrated early childhood education teacher for 0-6 year-olds, in terms of both professional teaching ability and comprehensive care ability. Finally, in the education

practice courses, the proportion of credits and hours in education and childcare is comprehensively arranged, and various internship resources such as family, community, kindergarten and enterprise are integrated. For example, on the internship platform, we have established a diverse community platform of family, community, kindergarten, early childhood education institutions and childcare centers. During the internship time, we have emphasized the integration of the time arrangement in sections, so as to implement the concept of “all-around” practice.

3.3 Emphasize practice orientation and strengthen the integration of theoretical and practical courses

The curriculum setting of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges should be based on practice orientation and strengthen the integration of theoretical and practical courses. Overseas curriculum especially focuses on cross – arrangement of theoretical and practical courses, strengthening the integration of theoretical and practical courses by enriching the form of internship, integrating internship resources and arranging internship time in sections. For example, the pre-service training courses for early childhood teachers in the United Kingdom are divided into two categories, namely, bachelor degree courses and certificate courses in education, and practical courses are cross-arranged with theoretical studies. In addition, foreign countries also focus on cross-border integration of curriculum resources to realize collaborative parenting between families, schools and communities. For example, the United States focuses on practical courses based on home – school – society cooperative programs to enhance teachers’ multicultural experience. Drawing on foreign experience, the curriculum of preschool education in vocational undergraduate colleges should be based on practice orientation, increase the proportion of hours and credits of practice courses, enrich the content and form of internship courses, and pay attention to the cross-border integration of a variety of curricular resources in order to cultivate a practice-oriented teaching force for kindergarten education.

3.4 Reflect the concept of articulation and establish an all – round vertical and horizontal articulation system for the curriculum

Building an effective curriculum articulation system is the key to improving the quality of talent training for preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges and broadening students’ employment channels. First, the curriculum should focus on the articulation of the professional curriculum system at the vertical and horizontal levels of preschool education majors. For example, vocational undergraduate colleges strengthen the integration of preschool education majors at the vertical level of master degree articulation, playing the overall comprehensive education function of the curriculum. Second, the horizontal articulation of the curriculum system of similar specialized groups in preschool education majors is emphasized to realize the synergistic use of curriculum resources. For example, by strengthening the articulation of the undergraduate degree of vocational education in preschool education, the specialized degree, early childhood care, early education, infant and toddler custodial service and management, art education and other similar specialized groups of courses, preschool education professionals with the ability of integrating childcare and education can be cultivated. Third, the coherence of the articulation of pre – service and post – service teacher training courses is strengthened, and the diversity, advancement and internationalization of curriculum resources for teachers’ continuing education are promoted through the setting of curriculum-based modules. In terms of teacher education curriculum, foreign countries pay attention to the pre-service and post-service articulation of early childhood teacher training courses, such as the United States, which emphasizes the setting of teacher training courses based on the standards for early childhood teachers at different stages of pre-service, in-service and post-service.

The effectiveness of the curriculum construction of preschool education majors in vocational undergraduate colleges profoundly affects the overall quality of the training of early childhood teachers. In the new period, vocational undergraduate colleges should be based on the background of high-quality curriculum development of preschool education majors, be committed to improving the overall quality of curriculum construction, and pay attention to the scientific and reasonable curriculum of preschool education majors, so as to cultivate a team of high-quality early childhood education teacher.

References:

- [1] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Construction in the New Era[EB/OL]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/moe_1946/fj_2018/201801/t20180131_326148.html.
- [2] Lei Chengyong. Exploration of the Basis and Principles of University Curriculum[J]. China Power Education, 2008(7): 75-76.
- [3] Wang Ping, Zhang Fan, Wang Weinan. A Comparative Study of Undergraduate Curriculum of Preschool Education in Foreign Countries[J]. Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition), 2023(2): 64-73.
- [4] Jin Yule, Zhao Ruixue. Several Issues in the Construction of High-quality Curriculum System in the New Era[J]. Curriculum-Teaching Materials-Teaching Methods, 2021, 41(6): 13-20.
- [5] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Standards for Teacher Education Curriculum[EB/OL]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s6991/201110/t20111008_145604.html.
- [6] Li Huizhuan. Orientation of Talent Cultivation of Preschool Education Majors and the Construction of Multi-dimensional Practice Teaching System[J]. Heilongjiang Higher Education Research, 2019(6): 152-156.
- [7] Gao Runqing. Implementation Path of "Job - Course - Competition - Certificate" Integration of Higher Vocational Preschool Education Majors[J]. China Higher Education, 2022(9): 59-61.
- [8] Yang Xingguo, Li Dan. Analysis of the Training Path of Applied Preschool Education Talents Based on "Dual-certificate Integration"—Taking the Integration of Nursery Teacher-credential Certificate as an Example[J]. Education Theory and Practice, 2023, 43(9): 22-25.
- [9] Sun Xiaohong, Du Jiaoyang, Li Qiong. Cooperative Co-education and Cross-border Integration: Teacher Education Concepts and Practices of Collaborative Parenting in U. S. Homeschools and Communities[J]. Foreign Education Research, 2023, 50(2): 21-36.
- [10] Wu Fengmin. Practice and Thinking of the Integrated Construction of Teacher Education Program[J]. Curriculum-Materials-Pedagogy, 2013, 33(1): 101-105.