

Exploration of Talent Cultivation Path for Preschool Education Majors under the Background of “Industry-Education Integration”

Chao Xu^{1*}, Yuning Sun¹, Fengxiang Zhou¹

¹ Hengxing University, Qingdao, Shandong, China

Email Address

18661475137@163.com (Chao Xu)

*Correspondence: 18661475137@163.com

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Abstract:

In the backdrop of a rapidly evolving society, “industry-education integration” has emerged as the pivotal phrase in educational reform. This concept not only propels the innovation of educational paradigms but also fosters a close alignment between educational content and industrial demands. Particularly within the domain of early childhood education, as societal recognition of the importance of early education heightens, the significance and role of preschool education are increasingly emphasized. However, confronted with the novel demands of industrial development in the new era, there is an urgent need to refine and innovate the mode of cultivating professional talents in early childhood education. Presently, the cultivation of professional talents in early childhood education faces challenges such as the disconnection between industrial demands and educational cultivation, inadequacy in matching faculty strength with teaching resources, and lack of tight integration between practice and theory. The existence of these issues not only hampers the enhancement of early childhood education quality but also constrains the healthy development of the early childhood education industry. Hence, the exploration of pathways for cultivating professional talents in early childhood education based on the backdrop of “industry-education integration” holds significant theoretical value and practical significance.

Keywords:

Industry-Education Integration, Preschool Education Specialty, Talent Cultivation, Path Analysis

1. Introduction

“The industry-education integration” refers to the deep integration of industrial development and educational cultivation, aimed at better meeting the demands of society and economic development for talents. The emergence of this concept signifies the increasingly blurred boundaries between the education system and the

industrial sector, prompting educational content and methods to evolve towards a direction that is more closely aligned with actual industrial needs. Early childhood education, as the starting point of the education chain, undertakes the important task of cultivating children's social, emotional, cognitive, and other abilities, whose status and role in contemporary society cannot be underestimated. With the gradual recognition of the importance of early childhood education, the demand for its quality is also increasing. Researching the path of training professional talents in early childhood education aims to respond to the call of "industry-education integration", exploring how to cultivate high-quality education talents who not only possess solid theoretical knowledge but also practical abilities, capable of meeting the current and future demands in the field of early childhood education through educational reforms and innovations.

2. Current Status of Preschool Education Development in the Context of "Industry-Education Integration"

2.1. Overview of the Development of Pre-school Education at Home and Abroad

The industry-education integration entails profound collaboration between the industrial sector and the realm of education. Its purpose lies in fostering professionals who align more closely with market demands by tightly combining educational systems with industrial practices. This concept, when applied in the field of early childhood education, not only enhances the professional skills of educators but also elevates the quality of early childhood development and learning.

The developmental overview of early childhood education abroad embodies the advanced principles of industry-education integration. Taking Finland as an example, the nation's education system places great emphasis on early childhood education. It not only considers it a vital component of the national education system but also underscores the professional development and continuous learning of educators. The Finnish government provides abundant in-service training and learning resources for early childhood educators, ensuring they stay abreast of the latest educational philosophies and techniques. According to OECD data, Finland's coverage rate for early childhood education has reached nearly 90%, showcasing not only the importance of high-quality early childhood education for children's development but also the effectiveness of industry-education integration in enhancing educational quality [1].

In the United States, early childhood education similarly receives significant attention. The government encourages collaboration between the private sector and educational institutions, facilitating innovation and development in early childhood education through funding support and resource sharing. For instance, the Head Start program is a federal initiative aimed at providing high-quality early childhood education services to children from low-income families. It focuses not only on children's learning outcomes but also encompasses aspects such as family involvement and socio-emotional development, fully embodying the concept of industry-education integration.

Compared to the situation abroad, China has also made certain progress in industry-education integration in early childhood education. With the issuance of the "Opinions on Deepening Industry-Education Integration," the nation has provided more policy support and resource allocation to industry-education integration in the

field of early childhood education. In specific implementation, many regions have begun exploring partnerships with local enterprises to offer early childhood education courses tailored to local industrial development needs. These courses not only emphasize children's cognitive development but also focus on nurturing emotional, social, and innovative capabilities. For example, in some areas, cooperation with technology companies has led to the incorporation of programming and robotics education into early childhood education curricula, aiming to stimulate children's interests and potentials, thus laying a solid foundation for their future learning and life. It is worth mentioning that the popularity of early childhood education in China is also steadily rising. According to data released by the Ministry of Education, in 2022, the gross enrollment rate for the first three years of preschool reached 85.2% nationwide, significantly improving the accessibility and quality of early childhood education. Behind this achievement lies the continuous efforts and investments of the government in industry-education integration.

2.2. Impact of the Policy of “Industry-Education Integration” on the Field of Pre-school Education

The concept of “industry-education integration” aims to foster a profound collaboration between education and industry, fostering resource sharing and complementary advantages, thereby enhancing the quality of education and meeting the needs of economic and social development. In the field of early childhood education, the implementation of this policy has brought about significant transformations. Primarily, industry-education integration has facilitated the close integration of early childhood education with local economic and cultural contexts. Through collaboration with local businesses and cultural institutions, early childhood education institutions can better integrate into the community, reflecting and serving the distinctive features and demands of the locality. For instance, in some regions, early childhood education institutions collaborate with local artistic groups, incorporating local cultural elements into curriculum design. This not only enriches children's learning experiences but also provides a new avenue for the inheritance of local culture. Secondly, this policy enhances the innovation capacity of education quality and services by promoting collaboration between early childhood education institutions and the industrial sector. Some early childhood education institutions collaborate with enterprises in the development of educational toys and teaching methods suitable for children's growth, broadening educational resources and driving innovation in educational methodologies. Industry-education integration also promotes the construction and professional development of early childhood education faculty. Some regional early childhood education institutions cooperate with higher education institutions, regularly organizing teacher training and professional development courses, enhancing teachers' professional skills and educational philosophies. This model elevates the educational standards of teachers and provides them with a platform for continuous learning and development.

2.3. Analysis of the Current Situation of Preschool Education Professionals

Early childhood education, as a vital branch of pedagogy, focuses on providing crucial educational and developmental support for children in their early years of life. It aims to lay a robust foundation for learning through early interventions in learning and development, fostering their social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Globally, the training and development of professionals in early childhood education exhibit

diverse trends, directly correlated with each country's emphasis on and investment in early education.

From an international perspective, many developed nations have acknowledged early childhood education as an indispensable component of their national educational systems. For instance, Nordic countries, particularly Finland, boast one of the most advanced early childhood education systems globally. Finland's government's substantial investment in education and its emphasis on the professional growth of educators have cultivated a highly qualified cadre of early childhood education professionals. Statistics indicate that nearly 90% of early childhood educators in Finland hold university degrees, with the vast majority receiving specialized training in early childhood education. This not only enhances educational quality but also provides robust assurance for children's holistic development.

Turning to the domestic front, China has made significant strides in the training of early childhood education professionals in recent years. With sustained national investment in the education sector and the enactment of the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Preschool Education," preschool education has witnessed unprecedented development. Data reveals that in recent years, China has amassed over two million preschool educators. However, this figure still falls short in comparison to the escalating demand for education. To address this challenge, China has not only increased investment in early childhood education but has also implemented a series of measures in teacher training and professional development. Significant efforts have been made, particularly in enhancing teachers' professional competence and ethical standards, to ensure the provision of high-quality early childhood education. Despite advancements in both the quantity and quality of early childhood education professionals in China, there remains a gap compared to the international standards. For instance, opportunities for professional development for teachers are relatively limited, and there are issues of regional disparities in the allocation of early childhood education resources. Nevertheless, with continual policy refinements and an increased societal recognition of the importance of early childhood education, the professional development of early childhood education in China is poised for a broader spectrum of prospects.

3. Challenges to the Training of Pre-school Education Professionals in the Context of "Industry-Education Integration"

3.1. Disconnect between Industry Needs and Education and Training

Early childhood education, as a profession, often lacks mechanisms for synchronous updates with industry changes in both theory and practical training programs. This results in a disparity between teaching content and market demands. Specifically, there is a shifting demand within the industry for early childhood education talents. Presently, besides traditional pedagogical skills, there is a growing need for diversified skills in educators such as psychological well-being management and information technology applications. However, many educational institutions still adhere to conventional educational philosophies and methods in their curriculum design, failing to effectively incorporate these emerging requirements. The disconnect between education and the actual work environment is also a significant issue. Students in early childhood education programs often lack sufficient practical opportunities during their academic tenure, making it challenging for them to adapt swiftly to the real work environment upon graduation. This disjunction between

theory and practice not only impacts students' employability but also indirectly results in an overall inadequacy of talent in the early childhood education industry to meet societal development needs. Over the long term, this disconnection may hinder the industry's innovation capacity and its ability to adapt to rapid societal and technological advancements. The quality of early childhood education directly influences the growth of the next generation. Therefore, the longstanding existence of this issue may have profound implications for the sustainable development of society [2].

3.2. Matching of Faculty and Teaching Resources

In the current process of cultivating professionals in early childhood education, the incongruity between faculty capabilities and teaching resources has emerged as an undeniable quandary. The genesis of this predicament can be traced back to the disproportionate allocation of educational resources and the lag in the development of the teaching workforce. On one hand, educational resources, especially those of high caliber, are distributed disparately among regions. Disparities are starkly evident between economically advanced and less developed areas, even between urban and rural settings. High-quality teaching resources tend to concentrate within a select few schools, leaving the majority of early childhood education institutions grappling with a dearth of top-notch instructional materials. On the other hand, the development of faculty capabilities has failed to align with the demands of teaching resources. The teaching workforce suffers from deficiencies both in quantity and quality, particularly in terms of professional knowledge and pedagogical experience. Many educators in early childhood education institutions have not undergone systematic training in pedagogy, psychology, and other relevant disciplines, thereby struggling to meet the diverse developmental needs of young children. This incongruity between faculty and resources not only compromises educational quality and hampers the cultivation of professionals in early childhood education but also exacerbates educational inequities. The scarcity and uneven distribution of educational resources deprive disadvantaged students of equal access to quality education, thereby impeding their personal development and future employment prospects.

3.3. Problems of Combining Practical and Theoretical Teaching

In the process of cultivating talents in early childhood education, the integration of practical and theoretical teaching has always been a contentious focus in the field of education. Theoretical teaching, as the cornerstone of knowledge impartation, ensures that students can systematically grasp the basic theories and knowledge framework of early childhood education. However, when these theoretical knowledge lacks effective integration with practical environments, students often find it difficult to apply what they have learned to actual work, leading to an increasingly prominent issue of theoretical-practical disconnect. The root of this problem lies in the insufficient emphasis placed on practical teaching in the current education system. Many educational institutions, due to resource constraints, struggle to provide sufficient internship opportunities or simulated teaching environments, depriving students of the chance to experience and apply their knowledge in real settings. Furthermore, some educational curriculum designs overly emphasize the impartation of theoretical knowledge, neglecting the importance of cultivating students' practical operational abilities. This educational model not only affects students' deep

understanding of the early childhood education profession but also limits their potential for future development in the workplace.

The harm of this issue is evident. On one hand, students may be at a disadvantage in job hunting due to a lack of practical experience, making it difficult for them to meet employers' expectations for practical abilities. On the other hand, the disconnect between theoretical and practical knowledge may also lead to difficulties for students in quickly and effectively finding solutions when encountering problems at work, affecting educational quality and work efficiency. More importantly, this disconnect may weaken students' professional confidence, negatively impacting their long-term development.

4. Exploration of Talent Cultivation Path for Preschool Education Majors under the Background of “ Industry-Education Integration”

4.1. Strengthening Models of Cooperation between Businesses and Educational Institutions

In the contemporary milieu of rapid flux, the synergy between academia and industry, encapsulated by the term “integration of production and education”, has emerged as a pivotal force propelling both educational paradigms and industrial advancement. Particularly within the domain of early childhood education, fostering a symbiotic relationship between enterprises and educational institutions not only affords students with more pragmatic and grounded learning opportunities but also ensures that educational entities remain abreast of industry evolution, thus nurturing professionals attuned to market demands.

One of the pathways toward realizing this objective lies in the collaborative model of university-enterprise partnership in education and talent cultivation. Through this framework, educational institutions and enterprises coalesce in the design of curricula, the development of practical coursework, and the formulation of assessment standards. Enterprises not only provide internships but also engage in curriculum design to ensure that imparted knowledge and skills align closely with current industry requisites. Such collaborations not only furnish students with authentic work experience and a deeper understanding of industry imperatives but also aid educational institutions in optimizing their curricular offerings, thereby enhancing the quality of education. Another pivotal avenue is the fusion of theory and practice in talent cultivation, emphasizing the intimate nexus between theoretical constructs and practical application. Students, while acquiring theoretical knowledge, are afforded the opportunity to partake in actual corporate endeavors, thereby deepening their comprehension and application of knowledge through tackling real-world challenges. This model not only bolsters students' practical acumen but also facilitates early clarification of their career trajectories, thus smoothing their transition into the professional realm [3].

Through these collaborative modalities, students in early childhood education are endowed with a profound insight into the exigencies and challenges of their prospective vocations, enabling them to chart a more targeted course for their learning and development. Concurrently, the close partnership between educational institutions and enterprises fosters seamless alignment between educational content and

vocational realities, furnishing students with a robust foundation for successful employment.

4.2. Innovation in Curriculum and Teaching Methods

In the current context of “industry-education integration,” the significance of curriculum frameworks and pedagogical approaches is self-evident, as they serve as the linchpin for cultivating students’ comprehensive abilities and meeting societal demands. An innovative curriculum framework can furnish students with a comprehensive and diverse knowledge structure, while the revolutionized pedagogical approaches can effectively enhance students’ learning enthusiasm and practical capabilities.

Regarding the innovation of curriculum frameworks, the emphasis lies in constructing a framework that encompasses not only core traditional preschool education courses but also integrates emerging interdisciplinary knowledge. Such a design aims to broaden students’ horizons and foster their comprehensive development. For instance, incorporating courses such as psychology and child development can assist students majoring in preschool education to better comprehend children's growth needs and psychological changes. Additionally, the introduction of courses in information technology and foreign languages is aimed at addressing the demands of internationalized education and bolstering students’ competitiveness. The innovation of pedagogical approaches, on the other hand, focuses more on enhancing students’ practical operational capabilities and innovative thinking. Employing methods like project-based learning and case teaching enables students to delve into theoretical knowledge while solving real-world problems, thus enhancing their problem-solving abilities. The cultivation of practical capabilities also includes regular internship arrangements and community services, through which students can apply theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom to practical work, enhancing their vocational adaptability and societal service capabilities. The design of interdisciplinary courses is based on the current societal demand for versatile talents. By implementing interdisciplinary projects, students can engage in learning and exploration across multiple fields, thereby cultivating their comprehensive qualities and innovative abilities. For example, the STEAM education model, integrating art and technology, can inspire students’ creativity and practical skills, laying a solid foundation for their future careers.

4.3. Faculty Development and Professional Development

In the cultivation of talents in early childhood education, the establishment of faculty and professional development undeniably occupies a pivotal position. The significance of both lies not only in their direct utility for enhancing educational quality and meeting societal developmental needs but also as crucial elements in fostering innovative and practical educators. At the heart of educational quality resides the faculty, and the advancement of an educational system hinges on the support for professional development.

To effectively enhance faculty establishment and professional development, measures undertaken by universities should encompass, but not be limited to, bolstering the practical abilities of faculty, strengthening continuing education, and delineating clear pathways for professional growth. Enhancing the practical abilities of faculty primarily involves closely integrating them with real-world work environments, such as through collaborations with industry, internship guidance,

among other means, enabling educators to learn through practice and practice through learning, thus continually honing their professional skills. Continuing education, on the other hand, is achieved through periodic training sessions, seminars, and academic exchanges, refreshing educators' educational philosophies, teaching methodologies, and professional knowledge. As for professional development pathways, universities should furnish faculty with a trajectory from initiation to mastery, culminating in leadership roles, encompassing not only a clear route to title promotion but also the continual deepening of professional skills and educational philosophies [4].

In China, in a certain region of Zhejiang Province, recent years have witnessed vigorous advancements in the establishment and professional development of early childhood education faculty through the implementation of the "Leading Educators Program." This initiative initially identifies teachers with abundant educational experience and high teaching standards as "leading educators," who then, through mentoring apprentices, conducting open classes, organizing teaching research activities, among other methods, elevate the overall standard of faculty within the educational region. Additionally, the region collaborates with multiple educational institutions and higher learning establishments to regularly provide professional training and learning opportunities for educators, ensuring their continuous knowledge renewal and the enhancement of their educational and teaching capabilities. Over the years, this program has not only significantly improved the professional skills and teaching quality of educators but has also greatly stimulated their educational enthusiasm and innovative consciousness, effectively propelling the cultivation of talents in early childhood education and earning widespread recognition and acclaim from various sectors of society.

5. Conclusions

In the backdrop of the imperative of "industry-education integration", this article propounds a series of innovative suggestions for the cultivation of talents in early childhood education. By fortifying collaboration between enterprises and educational institutions, implementing models of collaborative education between schools and enterprises, as well as integrating academia with industry, it is plausible to intricately align educational content with industrial demands. Furthermore, through innovative curriculum frameworks and pedagogical approaches, particularly by bolstering practical skill cultivation and designing interdisciplinary courses, it aids in fostering comprehensive development among students majoring in early childhood education. Emphasis on the construction of teaching staff and professional development pathways, notably in enhancing teachers' practical capabilities and facilitating continuous education, emerges as pivotal in ensuring educational quality. In practice, there is also a requisite for the refinement of policy support and incentive mechanisms, alongside ensuring the flexibility and openness of training programs, thereby ensuring the sustained progress of educational reforms and innovations. Through the implementation of these measures, universities can enhance the quality of talent cultivation in the field of early childhood education, thereby furnishing robust personnel support for the development of the early childhood education industry, and consequently nurturing a greater number of high-quality education practitioners endowed with a sense of responsibility, innovative aptitude, and practical skills for the society.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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