

Research on Strategies for Improving the Quality of Talent Cultivation of Preschool Education Majors in Independent Colleges under the Guidance of the “Strong Teachers Plan”

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Abstract

The promulgation of the Strong Teachers Plan for Basic Education in the New Era is highly important for comprehensively improving the overall quality of the teaching force and the quality of education and teaching, and it also helps independent colleges shift from the quantitative cultivation to the qualitative cultivation of preschool education professionals. This paper interprets the new requirements of the Strong Teachers Plan for teacher training, including teacher ethics first, quality first, multiparty cooperation in the region and improvement of the evaluation mode of teacher training colleges. Taking C independent colleges as an example, this study analyses problems in the cultivation of preschool education professionals, such as the disconnection between the curriculum and the actual demand, the flattening of teacher ethics education, the single form of education and teaching organization and the imperfect education evaluation system. On this basis, corresponding enhancement strategies are proposed: optimizing the curriculum system, focusing on the combination of theory and practice; offering stereoscopic teacher ethics education; strengthening practice teaching and deepening school-enterprise cooperation; and establishing an effective talent training quality evaluation system.

Keywords

New Era Basic Education Strong Teachers Plan; preschool education; talent training quality; independent colleges

1. Introduction

On April 6, 2022, the Ministry of Education and other eight departments issued the Strong Teachers Plan for Basic Education in the New Era (hereinafter referred to as the Strong Teachers Plan) to implement the 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 and to issue the Strong Teachers Plan for Basic Education in the New Era (hereinafter referred to as the Strong Teachers Plan) in accordance with the requirements of the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan of the People's Republic of China's National Economy and Social Development and the Visionary Targets Outline of 2035, which is intended to promote the revitalization and development of teacher education, strive to create a new era of high-quality, professional and innovative primary and secondary school (including kindergarten and special education)

teachers, and provide a strong guarantee for teachers to accelerate the modernization of basic education. It is proposed that “by 2035, a high-level teacher education system that is open, synergistic and linked will be constructed, a perfect mechanism for professional development of teachers will be established, an integrated mode of teacher talent creation in enrollment, training, employment and development will be formed, and the quantity and quality of teachers will basically meet the development needs of basic education... Teachers’ ideological and political qualities, teacher moral cultivation, education and teaching ability and information technology application ability construction have been significantly strengthened” (The State Council The People’s Republic of China, 2022).

The major plan for education is teacher oriented. The Strong Teachers Plan is an important initiative implemented to comprehensively improve the overall quality of the teaching force and the quality of education and teaching in the context of China's new era, aiming to cultivate a high-quality and professionalized teaching force by strengthening the construction of the teacher education system and promoting comprehensive reform of teacher education. The Strong Teachers Plan specifies the requirements, measures, and guarantees for the construction of the teaching force, emphasizing the need to improve the ideological and political quality of teachers and their professional ethics as the core, to strengthen preservice and postservice training for teachers, and to promote the high-quality development of teachers.

Teacher team building is fundamental work related to the high-quality development of basic education. In the new journey of building a modern socialist country in an all-round way, improving the competence and quality of teachers is a major issue. In his important speech at the National Education Conference, Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned that “we should implement the educator's spirit of casting the soul of the strong teacher action, strengthen the construction of teacher morality, improve the quality of teacher training and training, and train and create a new era of high-level teacher team” (People's Daily, 2024). Standing on the strategic height of the overall development of the Party and the country, General Secretary Xi Jinping has placed great hopes on building a high-level professional teaching force and put forward clear requirements for strengthening the construction of the teaching force. Preschool education is an important part of basic education, and the quality of its teachers is related to the foundation of the country's future talent training. Improving the quality of preschool education professional training helps cultivate a high-quality teacher team, promote education reform and development, and promote the development of preschool education to meet social demands, provide quality educational resources for families and society, and inject new vitality into China's education. Thus, colleges and universities, as important positions for training teachers, are bound to pay attention to the talent training of teacher trainees majoring in preschool education who become early childhood teachers. As independent colleges cultivate applied and innovative talent in a short amount of time, there are still some hard problems in talent cultivation, so benchmarking the requirements of the Strong Teachers Plan to improve the quality of talent cultivation for preschool education majors is highly important. As a result, this paper comprehensively combs the content of the document “Strong Teachers Plan”, interprets the new requirements of the plan for teacher training, analyses the problems existing in C independent colleges for the cultivation of preschool education professionals, and proposes a strategy to improve the quality of preschool education professional training on the basis of the “Strong Teachers Plan” of independent colleges.

2. The New Requirements for the Cultivation of Preschool Education Professionals Under the Guidance of the “Strong Teachers Plan”

2.1 Adhering to the Teacher's Morality as the First Priority, Enhancing the Ideological and Political Quality of Teacher Trainees and Teacher's Morality Level

The “Strong Teachers Plan” first emphasizes the basic principle of “adhering to teacher ethics first”, puts forward “putting teachers’ ideological and political and teacher ethics construction in the first place, focusing on the implementation of the fundamental task of establishing morality, comprehensively strengthening primary and middle school teachers’ ideological and political constructions, improving teachers' political awareness and political ability, and strictly implementing the first standard of teacher ethics. Strictly implement the first standard of teacher ethics, highlighting the full range of the whole process of teacher moral development, and promote teachers to teach with morality and to establish themselves with morality”. Specifically, it is proposed that “the majority of teacher trainees and teachers should be guided to establish and adhere to a correct view of the country, history, ethnicity, culture and religion. The ideological and political

examination of teacher training graduates should be strengthened, standards and procedures should be improved, the first goal should be to normalize the promotion of teacher ethics cultivation, the norms of various types of teacher ethics into the preservice training of new teachers and the mandatory content of in-service teacher training. Innovative ways of teacher ethics education, through role models, experience, practical education, teacher–student interaction and other forms, stimulate teachers to cultivate the endogenous motivation of teacher ethics. The construction of teacher ethics is carried out throughout the whole process of teacher management, and the first standard of teacher ethics is strictly implemented in qualification recognition, teacher recruitment, title evaluation, postemployment, annual assessment, promotion and evaluation of excellence, and commendation and reward.”

This requires that the training of preschool education professionals be based on the integration of ideological and political education and teacher ethics education into the whole process of talent training, which is the core content of the training of preschool education professionals, and that it be integrated into the curriculum system of preschool education to ensure that the students, while studying professionally, are able to deeply understand and master the national education policies and guidelines, establish the students' sense of professional ethics firmly, and take it as an important basis for the students' important basis for evaluation and graduation.

2.2 Insisting on Quality as the Top Priority and Improving the Quality of Talent Training in Colleges and Universities

The Strong Teachers Plan emphasizes “adhering to quality as the top priority”, stating that it “serves the requirements of high-quality development of education”, strengthens the construction of high-quality teacher teams, promotes the in-depth participation of local governments, schools and society in teacher education, strengthens the main position of teacher training colleges and universities in the teacher education system, and pushes forward the integration of preservice training and postservice training, as well as the innovation of teacher education. Integrate preservice training and postservice training, innovate the mechanism and mode of teacher education practice and professional development of teachers, and improve the quality of teacher training and training.” Among the specific measures, “implement a program to cultivate high-quality teacher talent” is mentioned. Adapting to the reform and development of basic education, following the law of teacher growth, reforming the curriculum and teaching content of teacher training colleges and universities, improving teaching methods and means, strengthening the educational practice link, and improving the quality of training for teacher trainees.”

Thus, the cultivation of preschool education professionals should focus on improving the professional competence and educational teaching level of teacher trainees to meet the demand for high-quality development of education. Colleges and universities need to strengthen the linkage and cooperation with kindergarten frontline education units to realize the organic unity of theoretical and practical learning for teacher trainees. New modes of educational practice should be explored, such as increasing the number of practical teaching sessions and strengthening educational practice sessions, to improve the quality of teacher training. The content and methods of course teaching should be reformed, course content should be updated in a timely manner, and more modern and diversified teaching methods should be adopted to meet the trend of education reform.

2.3 Multiparty Cooperation in the Region to Establish a Collaborative Model of Nurturing Teachers

Article 5 of the Stronger Teachers Plan, under specific measures, states, “Establish a collaborative innovation platform for teacher education. High-level teacher training colleges and universities should be encouraged and supported to establish collaborative innovation platforms for teacher education, promote the sharing of high-quality curricular resources, the sharing of experience in discipline construction, and the joint study of educational research topics to improve the overall level of teacher education in China. Support relevant institutions in the region to cooperate in the fields of educational scientific research, teacher education faculty development, teacher training and basic education services.”

This requires that the training of preschool education professionals needs to overcome institutional barriers and, through the cooperation of institutions in the region, cooperation in the fields of educational scientific

research, teacher education faculty building, teacher training, the sharing of high-quality resources and basic education services, etc., to promote exchanges and cooperation between different institutions and to jointly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of talent training. In addition, closer ties can be established with basic education institutions to understand the actual needs of basic education and to enhance the practical ability and employment competitiveness of teacher educators.

2.4 Improving the Evaluation Mode of Teacher Training Colleges and Establishing a Sound Multievaluation Mechanism

Article 9 of the Stronger Teachers Plan proposes to “promote the professional accreditation of teacher training colleges, clarify the basic requirements for the evaluation of education and teaching in teacher training colleges and the evaluation of related disciplines, and explore the establishment of an evaluation mechanism for the construction of ‘double first-class’ teacher training colleges in conformity with the laws of teacher education. teacher education as their first responsibility, take the training of qualified teachers as their main assessment index, and promote the development of teacher education specialties and the pursuit of excellence.”

This requires colleges and universities, when evaluating the education and teaching of teacher training colleges, to take the quality standards for teacher training promulgated by the state as the basis, to take the cultivation of morality as the fundamental task, to take the talent cultivation objectives of the specialty as the basis, and to carry out education and teaching evaluations in terms of the orientation of the specialty, the talent cultivation program, the curriculum and teaching, the practice teaching, the construction of the teacher team, and the development of the students, among other aspects. Moreover, with respect to the cultivation goal of teacher training students, colleges and universities should carry out hierarchical management of students, classify teacher training students into different levels and categories, and construct scientific and reasonable talent cultivation programs. At the same time, it is also necessary to evaluate students' practical ability and innovation ability, and in the evaluation process, we should pay attention to the combination of process evaluation and formative evaluation, not only to examine the students' learning situation and ability development level but also to examine the students' innovative spirit and practical ability in practice.

3. Independent College Preschool Education Professional Personnel Training in Existing Problems

This paper takes C independent colleges as an example, analyses the college's preschool education professional talent training program, curriculum planning program, teaching evaluation and other information, and conducts interviews and surveys for preschool education graduates and students to identify the main problems in the training of preschool education professionals in independent colleges.

3.1 Disconnection Between Curriculum and Actual Demand

On the basis of the analysis of the talent training program of preschool education majors in College C and the interviews with graduates and students, it is understood that there is a certain degree of disconnection between the professional curriculum and the actual demand. On the one hand, the curriculum favours theory, lacks practicality, and fails to fully reflect the characteristics of the preschool education major. The students who enter the education unit for internships often report that the knowledge and ability required in kindergarten practice cannot be matched with the theory learned in school; the graduates who have already worked and the managers of the education unit also report that the teacher trainees lack skills such as comprehensive parenting, classroom management, and communication between home and family. On the other hand, the curriculum fails to address the needs of individual development. The curriculum of preschool education majors in College C is usually fixed, and there is a lack of courses based on the needs of students' development. In addition to the required professional courses, although there are restricted and nonrestricted courses, they have to be offered in combination with the school's faculty, equipment, venues, and other factors, and there is almost no room for the students to make their own choices.

3.2 Flattening of Teacher Ethics Education

Teacher ethics is the moral sense and moral pursuit embodied in the professional orientation of teachers, as well as the normative sum of dealing with various relationships, which is directional, pioneering and fundamental. On the basis of the requirements of the Strong Plan, teacher ethics education should become the core content of talent cultivation for preschool education majors and should be carried out throughout the curriculum system and teaching practice. The ethics education of preschool education majors in College C has only been studied in a single course of Teacher Ethics and Education Regulations, which lack depth and breadth; the methods and approaches of education are relatively singular, mainly relying on course lectures, which tend to neglect emotions, and the methods and approaches to education are relatively homogeneous, relying mainly on course lectures and often neglecting the cultivation of emotions and behaviors, which lacks interactivity and practicability and has not been integrated into daily education. This flat teaching mode fails to integrate teacher ethics education into the whole process of talent training, which easily leads to students' understanding of teacher ethics on the surface and cannot be internalized into their own professional code of conduct.

3.3 Single Form of Education and Teaching Organization

According to the survey, the teaching of preschool education majors in College C is generally based on classroom lectures supplemented by case studies, student reports or presentations. In talent training programs, most courses involve practical teaching hours, but owing to the lack of space and funding for practical training bases, the implementation rate is less than half, and practical hours are mostly used for theoretical lectures. Students generally believe that the organization of teaching lacks interaction and that it is difficult to stimulate interest. student A said, "The size of our classes is usually two classes together or four classes together, and only for pure skill classes such as piano and dance will we have a separate class. In large classes, it is also difficult for the teacher to carry out collective interaction, usually we listen to the teacher, and even if the practical part of the course is carried out, it is carried out by more than 60 people at the same time, and the teacher is unable to give individualized guidance to the students." This lecture-based, less interactive teaching model often leads to a lack of active thinking and participation by students in the classroom. Students are also in a passive position in previewing, listening and notetaking, which limits the cultivation of critical thinking and innovation. In addition, the implementation of most practical teaching methods also lacks docking with the real working environment, making it difficult for students to obtain full practical experience, which affects their in-depth understanding and application of knowledge.

3.4 Incomplete Education Evaluation System

College C's preschool education program is mostly based on students' classroom evaluation in terms of the educational evaluation system. Owing to the large number of students and the fact that the school has not yet formulated clear and detailed evaluation rules, a comprehensive process and stage evaluation of students by teachers is lacking, and an evaluation system of applied talent aimed at cultivating vocational ability has not yet been established. This means that schools have failed to provide continuous monitoring and feedback on students' learning and growth processes, resulting in students' problems and needs in the learning process not being solved and satisfied in a timely manner. On the other hand, the main body of evaluation is often too singular, mainly based on teachers' self-assessments and internal evaluations of the school, lacking the participation of students, parents and social employers, so the evaluation results may not fully reflect the actual performance of students and social needs. In addition, the application of evaluation results is insufficient. Even the results of pure teaching evaluation are not effectively fed back into the improvement of teaching and the adjustment of talent cultivation programs, resulting in the evaluation becoming a form rather than a substantive means to improve the quality of education.

4. The "Strong Teachers Plan"-Oriented Independent College Preschool Education Professional Talent Training Quality Improvement Strategy

4.1 Optimizing the Curriculum System and Focusing on the Combination of Theory and Practice

Independent colleges should firmly grasp the orientation of application-oriented talent training and, according to the requirements of the “Strong Teachers Plan,” perform a comprehensive review and adjustment of the curriculum of preschool education majors, focusing on improving the comprehensive quality of students and cultivating their application ability, appropriately reducing the proportion of basic courses, and increasing the proportion of practical courses to a certain extent. The content of the courses should pay more attention to the combination of practical and theoretical, and the relationship between theoretical knowledge learning and practical skills training should be fully considered in the curriculum to build a practical teaching system in line with the cultivation objectives of the specialty. Strictly implementing the requirements of the relevant curriculum standards effectively implements practical teaching tasks in professional courses and strengthens students' practical ability and professional skills training while emphasizing the learning of basic theoretical knowledge. In addition, diverse curriculum modules can be constructed, covering education theory, professional skills, childcare and teaching ability, comprehensive literacy, information technology and other aspects, to provide students with personalized learning needs.

4.2 Three-dimensional Teacher Ethics Education

Constructing a three-dimensional teacher ethics education system is the only way to make students' teacher ethics education more in-depth and comprehensive and cultivate preschool education professionals with good teacher ethics to improve the quality of education and students' professionalism. First, teacher ethics education should be taken as the common basis of all courses in talent cultivation programs to realize the in-depth integration of teacher ethics education and professional education. Second, various teaching methods, such as case studies, role play and group discussions, are adopted to increase students' participation and experience and to strengthen the cultivation of emotions and behaviors by simulating real situations. Third, practical teaching is strengthened to allow students to apply the norms of teacher ethics in real environments and enhance their practical abilities through activities such as internships, practical training and volunteer services. Teacher ethics education is integrated into the daily education and management of students, and through the daily code of conduct and the construction of campus culture, students are constantly exposed to and practice the norms of teacher ethics in their daily lives. Finally, the evaluation mechanism of teacher ethics education is established, and the performance of teacher ethics is regarded as an important basis for students' evaluation and graduation to motivate students to continuously improve the cultivation of teacher ethics.

4.3 Strengthening Practical Teaching and Deepening School-enterprise Cooperation

The traditional single teaching mode should be adopted, practical teaching should be strengthened, and students' active learning ability and practical skills should be improved to cultivate preschool education professionals who are more adaptable to the needs of the industry. The status of practical teaching should be emphasized and incorporated into the overall planning of talent training to form an educational model that combines theory and practice. Teaching encourages teachers to adopt diverse teaching methods, such as project-based learning and case study teaching, to reduce the time spent on traditional classroom lectures and increase opportunities for students' interaction and participation. Second, teachers should make full use of on-campus training bases and utilize simulation classrooms and virtual simulation simulation laboratory classrooms to provide students with more practical operation space and experience. At the same time, for courses with strong practicality, small-class teaching is maintained to ensure that teachers can give students individualized guidance, whereas for large classes, group teaching is attempted with the assistance of student teaching assistants to achieve more effective interaction and guidance. In addition, colleges and universities need to actively establish cooperative relationships with kindergartens, early childhood education centers, childcare centers and other educational and teaching institutions. In addition to cooperation on internships and practical training, they can also work together to formulate talent cultivation programs, combining the actual needs of enterprises with the school's teaching content, implement a dual-mentor system in which on-campus teachers are instructed by experts from the industry, and introduce actual teaching cases into the classroom to increase the practicability of teaching. Finally, a reflection and feedback mechanism for students should be established, students should be encouraged to reflect after practice, the lessons learned should be summarized,

suggestions for improvement should be provided, and teachers should adjust the teaching content and methods according to students' feedback to achieve continuous improvement in teaching.

4.4 Establishing an Effective Quality Evaluation System for Talent Cultivation

Benchmarking industry standards and establishing an effective talent training quality evaluation system can provide solid evaluation support for the cultivation of preschool education professionals. First, a student-centered evaluation concept should be established to construct a multidimensional evaluation system, which should cover multiple aspects of students' classroom performance, practical ability, innovative spirit and vocational literacy to realize comprehensive, process and stage evaluation of students. This system aims to continuously monitor and feedback the learning and growth process of students and ensure that their problems and needs are solved in a timely manner. Second, the evaluation subjects are expanded by introducing students' self-assessments, parents' evaluations and feedback from social employers to provide a more comprehensive perspective and ensure that the evaluation results reflect students' actual performance and social needs. Furthermore, the application of evaluation results is strengthened, and evaluation results are effectively used in the improvement of teaching and the adjustment of talent cultivation programs through the establishment of a feedback loop mechanism so that evaluation becomes a substantive means of improving the quality of education. At the same time, clear evaluation rules have been formulated to provide teachers with guidance and standards for evaluating students and ensuring the fairness and effectiveness of evaluation. Teachers are trained in evaluation methods and tools to improve their evaluation ability so that they can better understand and utilize diverse evaluation methods and enhance the professionalism of evaluation.

5. Conclusion

Improving the quality of preschool education professional training helps improve the quality of kindergarten education and lays the foundation for the development of China's early childhood education. The introduction of the Strong Teachers Plan provides strong policy support and directional guidance for the cultivation of preschool education professionals. Under the guidance of the "Strong Teachers Plan", improvements in the quality of preschool education professional talent training in independent colleges need to be reformed and innovated at multiple levels. Through optimizing the curriculum system and stereoscopic teacher ethics education, strengthening practical teaching, and establishing an effective quality evaluation system for talent training and other strategies, we can increase the quality of preschool education professionals from quantitative training to qualitative improvement and deliver more high-quality professionals for the development of preschool education in China. In the future, colleges and universities also need to pay attention to how the training of preschool education professionals in colleges and universities should cope with new challenges against the background of childlessness and education informatization to gradually realize the development of individualization and characteristics and to cultivate excellent teachers with comprehensive abilities and international competitiveness to meet the diverse needs of society.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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