



The Value Implications, Practical Challenges, and Optimization Strategies for Early Childhood Educators Professional Development in the Context of Integrated Childcare and Education

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Abstract

This study examines the strategic significance and practical pathways for developing early childhood educators professional competencies in the context of integrated childcare and early education. The development of these educators professional capabilities holds multiple dimensions of value: For childrens early development, it serves as a foundational force for cognitive, emotional, social, and physical coordination development, while fostering secure attachment relationships and early learning environments. For improving the quality of childcare and early education, it ensures the coherence of educational philosophies, curriculum design, and teaching strategies, effectively implementing the "integration of care and education" principle during the 0-3 age stage. For teachers career development, it expands professional boundaries, cultivates "all-inclusive" early education teaching characteristics, and enhances career attractiveness and workforce stability. However, current practices face three major challenges: an incomplete professional competency indicator system with lack of targeted evaluation standards; fragmented pre-service training programs and overlapping curricula in teacher preparation, coupled with outdated and monotonous in-service training content; ambiguous regulations in policy documents regarding qualification certification, professional title evaluation, and compensation benefits, creating barriers between childcare institutions and kindergartens in terms of faculty, resources, and management. To address these issues, the study proposes a three-pronged optimization path of "standard development, training innovation, and institutional safeguards": establishing a three-dimensional competency framework encompassing "care skills + educational literacy + developmental support," and promoting higher education institutions to offer "integrated childcare and early education" teacher training programs. Specialized initiatives: Establish a three-tier training network integrating kindergartens, universities, and research institutions; develop modular, progressive courses; promote participatory training models; refine policies on qualification certification, professional advancement, and compensation incentives; deepen collaboration between childcare institutions and kindergartens; establish a professional development fund. This study provides theoretical support and practical pathways for teacher professional development in the context of integrated childcare and early education, demonstrating significant strategic value in enhancing early childhood development quality and promoting educational equity.

Keywords: Integrated childcare and early education, Nursery teachers, Professional development.

1. Introduction

With evolving population policies and shifting family structures, Chinas demand for childcare services for infants aged 0-3 has shown sustained growth. The 2021 "Decision of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Optimizing Birth Policies and Promoting Long-term Balanced Population Development" explicitly proposed "developing inclusive childcare service systems," requiring "research to incorporate childcare expenses for children under 3 into special additional deductions for personal income tax" and "establishing comprehensive policy frameworks to support childcare services and early childhood development." ^[1] Against this backdrop, the integration of childcare and preschool education—serving as a crucial bridge between the two—has become a central focus in educational system reforms. As key implementers of this integrated approach, nursery teachers professional development directly impacts the quality of early childhood development, the standards of childcare services, and the realization of educational equity. ^[1]

^[1] Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & State Council. (2021, July 20). Decision on optimising birth policies to promote long-term and balanced population development. The State Council of the Peoples Republic of China. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-07/20/content_5626190.htm

2. Value implications: Analysis of the Multidimensional Value of Preschool Teachers Professional Development

In the reform of integrated childcare and early education, the professional development of nursery teachers carries a functional positioning that transcends single educational stages, demonstrating multidimensional and systematic value implications. This study analyzes from three dimensions: early childhood development, quality enhancement of childcare and early education, and teacher career development, revealing their strategic significance and practical value.

2.1. The Foundational Value of Early Childhood Development

As primary guides in infants and toddlers development from 0 to 3 years, nursery teachers professional competence directly impacts the critical early development period, holding irreplaceable foundational value. This value is primarily reflected in fostering cognitive, emotional, social, and physical coordination development. According to developmental psychology theory, ages 0-3 represent a sensitive period for rapid neural synapse development, requiring nursery teachers to possess precise observation and scientific intervention capabilities. In cognitive development, educators should understand the characteristics of infants sensorimotor stage and promote neural pathway establishment through appropriate sensory stimulation activities. For emotional development, strategies for emotion recognition and response should be employed to cultivate emotional regulation abilities. Regarding social development, interactive scenarios aligned with infants social referencing capabilities should be designed to foster initial interpersonal awareness. In physical development, safety-conscious activity plans should be designed by integrating gross motor and fine motor development principles.

Building secure attachment relationships and creating early learning environments are another core value of nursery teachers professional competence. Attachment theory emphasizes that attachment patterns formed during the 0-3 year stage will influence an individuals lifelong social-emotional development. Nursery teachers establish secure attachment relationships through consistent caregiving behaviors, sensitive emotional responses, and sustained interaction quality. This requires teachers to possess the ability to identify attachment types, demonstrate responsive caregiving skills, and create suitable environments. In designing early learning environments, educators should follow the "child-centered" principle to create physical spaces and psychological environments that combine safety, exploratory opportunities, and developmental appropriateness. By reasonably dividing activity areas, configuring child-friendly furniture and equipment, and providing rich sensory stimulation materials, they foster learning spaces that support independent exploration. Through establishing regular caregiving routines, employing non-verbal communication techniques, and maintaining consistent care styles, stable psychological environments are created. These environmental elements collectively form the "developmental ecosystem" for infants early development, directly impacting their cognitive construction speed and the quality of social-emotional development.

2.2. The Supporting Value of Improving the Quality of Preschool Education

The professional development of nursery teachers is the core supporting element for the improvement of the quality of integrated education. Its value is mainly reflected in the realization of the consistency of educational concepts, curriculum design and teaching strategies, as well as the effective implementation of the principle of "combining care and education" in the stage of 0-3 years old.

In terms of conceptual coherence, preschool teachers must demonstrate the ability to integrate educational philosophies across developmental stages. The integration of childcare and early education requires breaking down the traditional separation between these phases, establishing a continuous developmental framework for children aged 0-6. This demands educators to understand and implement the concept of "childhood developmental continuity," seamlessly connecting the "life-oriented care" in early childhood with the "play-based learning" in preschool education. By incorporating cognitive stimulation elements into daily care and embedding social development goals through free play, teachers can create a spiral progression of growth. Educators should master child development theories, identify age-specific characteristics and needs, and ensure their teaching practices are both appropriate and developmentally supportive.

In terms of curriculum design coherence, preschool teachers must possess the ability to develop and implement curricula that align with infant development principles. This includes setting age-appropriate learning objectives, selecting suitable content, designing structured activity sequences, and employing diverse assessment methods. Through a "theme-project" approach, the curriculum integrates developmental goals across five key domains: health, language, social skills, science, and arts. By following a cyclical "observation-planning-execution-reflection" process, teachers can dynamically adjust and optimize the curriculum. This design capability directly impacts the smooth transition between preschool and kindergarten education stages, as well as the achievement of developmental objectives.

In implementing the "integration of care and education" principle, preschool teachers must balance childcare and educational responsibilities to achieve organic integration. This requires educators to possess both professional childcare skills—such as scientific feeding, safety protection, and disease prevention—and mastery of educational guidance methods, including language development, cognitive stimulation, and social skills cultivation. Through the practical wisdom of "embedding education in care and prioritizing care in education," daily routines can be transformed into educational opportunities, making routine care behaviors effective vehicles for childrens development. For instance, mealtime routines foster self-care abilities, nap sessions cultivate emotional regulation, while playtime develops cooperative communication skills. This practical integration of care and education serves as a key indicator for enhancing the quality of preschool education.

2.3. The Endogenous Value of Teachers Professional Development

The professional development of nursery teachers serves not only childrens developmental needs but also carries intrinsic value in advancing their own career growth. This value is primarily reflected in expanding professional boundaries and cultivating "all-round" early education competencies. Within the integrated nursery-

kindergarten framework, educators must transcend traditional childcare frameworks to develop a three-dimensional competency structure encompassing "care skills, educational literacy, and developmental support." This framework requires teachers to master specialized infant care techniques, possess solid educational theory foundations, and demonstrate practical skills to support childrens holistic development. Such multidimensional competencies position nursery teachers as "all-round" professionals in early education, meeting the diversified demands of integrated childcare systems for versatile educators.

The professional development of nursery teachers holds practical value in enhancing career attractiveness and professional identity. Through systematic competency cultivation and professional support, nursery teachers can achieve greater career fulfillment and professional autonomy. By participating in curriculum development, educational research, and policy-making processes, teachers can strengthen their professional voice and decision-making involvement. Establishing a rational promotion system, compensation incentive mechanisms, and career development pathways further enhances career appeal and workforce stability. This endogenous development mechanism fosters a virtuous cycle of "professional growth → career identity → service quality," ultimately achieving high-quality and sustainable development of the teaching workforce.

Furthermore, the professional development of nursery teachers carries strategic value in advancing educational equity and social justice. By enhancing childcare service quality—particularly through providing high-quality early education support for disadvantaged children—this initiative helps bridge developmental gaps and promotes social fairness. By offering professional care and educational support to children from low-income families, migrant children, and those with special needs, we elevate their early development starting points and lay the foundation for lifelong growth. This social value further underscores the profound significance of nurturing nursery teachers professional competencies.

The value of kindergarten teachers professional development is characterized by multidimensionality, systematicity, and strategic significance. It not only directly impacts the quality of early childhood development and supports the improvement of preschool education standards, but also achieves strategic goals of educational equity and social justice by promoting teachers career growth. This multidimensional value system requires us to prioritize kindergarten teachers professional development in the integrated preschool education reform, establish systematic support systems and safeguard mechanisms, ultimately achieving win-win development for children, educators, and society.

3. Realistic Difficulties: Analysis of the Constraints on the Professional Development of Nursery Teachers

In the process of early childhood education integration reform, preschool teachers face multiple structural contradictions and institutional barriers in professional development. These intertwined constraints create complex challenges that hinder the improvement of teachers professional capabilities. This study conducts a systematic analysis from three dimensions: the structural contradictions between current teaching competencies and competency standards, the fragmented challenges in training systems, and the lagging institutional safeguards and resource support. The research aims to reveal the underlying issues in current practices.

3.1. The Structural Contradiction Between the Current Teaching Ability and the Ability Standard

One of the core challenges in the professional development of nursery teachers is the structural gap between competency standards and actual teaching practices. This gap primarily manifests in two aspects: an incomplete professional competency framework and a lack of evaluation criteria. While policy documents like the "Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers (Trial)" and "Standards for Nursery Institution Establishment (Trial)" outline general requirements for early childhood educators, specific competency standards for nursery teachers (0-3 years old) remain underdeveloped. This gap creates a practical evaluation framework deficiency. Current standards predominantly focus on the "integration of care and education" skills for 3-6 year old preschoolers, while neglecting critical competencies for infants and toddlers such as specialized caregiving techniques, developmental observation, and responsive care. This disconnect between evaluation standards and actual teaching needs highlights the need for more tailored professional development initiatives.^[2]

This structural imbalance has become increasingly evident in the composition of childcare professionals. Research data reveals that over 60% of caregivers in early childhood education institutions are either "reassigned teachers" or "part-time instructors," most lacking systematic training in infant care for children aged 0-3. Reassigned teachers, typically from early childhood education or nursing backgrounds, often have knowledge systems that dont align with the specific competencies required for childcare roles. Part-time instructors, meanwhile, struggle to build stable professional expertise due to high turnover and limited training opportunities. More critically, the absence of specialized training prevents educators from mastering scientific principles of infant development and professional care techniques. Many still rely on traditional "nursing-style" care approaches, lacking the ability to identify sensitive developmental phases and implement targeted interventions. This gap makes it difficult to meet the integrated childcare and early education systems demand for "developmentally supportive" care practices.

The ambiguity in early childhood education competency standards and the unprofessionalized structure of teaching staff directly result in unclear development directions and inconsistent quality in preschool teachers professional growth. The lack of clear competency development pathways and evaluation criteria makes it difficult for educators to establish clear career goals. Meanwhile, the unprofessionalized teaching workforce exacerbates the fragmentation of skill development, creating a vicious cycle of "competency gaps → training deficiencies → difficulty in skill enhancement".

^[2] Ministry of Education of the Peoples Republic of China. (2012). Professional standards for kindergarten teachers (Trial). Ministry of Education of the Peoples Republic of China. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s6991/201209/t20120913_145603.html

3.2. The Dilemma of Fragmentation in the Training System

The fragmented nature of preschool teacher training systems poses another critical challenge to professional development. This fragmentation manifests primarily through compartmentalized curricula and overlapping content during pre-service education. In China's higher education framework, programs like "Preschool Education" and "Infant and Toddler Care Services and Management" exhibit significant disciplinary silos. While the former focuses on 3-6 year old education, the latter, though covering 0-3 year care, lacks systematic and scientific curriculum design. More critically, these programs share substantial overlap in foundational courses like child development theory and educational psychology, yet lack coherence in core pedagogical training. Preschool education majors typically emphasize "Kindergarten Activity Design," whereas childcare programs prioritize "Infant Health Care." This disconnect in integrated care-education skill development leaves graduates ill-equipped to meet the "all-stage" teaching requirements demanded by the integrated childcare and early education system.

The in-service training system for preschool teachers also faces challenges of outdated content and monotonous formats. Current training programs primarily focus on policy interpretation and childcare skill development, lacking systematic cultivation of core competencies such as integrated early childhood education concepts, curriculum alignment strategies, and developmental observation and assessment. Training formats predominantly rely on lecture-style instruction, lacking participatory and experiential practical training, which makes it difficult for teachers to translate theoretical knowledge into practical teaching abilities. More critically, there is a significant disconnect between training content and the practical needs of integrated early childhood education. While training emphasizes enhancing "caregiving skills," it neglects the cultivation of "educational guidance" capabilities. Training often prioritizes standardizing "care processes" while lacking strategic guidance for "developmental support," resulting in a "one-sided" phenomenon in teachers' competency development.

The fragmented nature of early childhood education teacher training systems directly results in structural imbalances in professional development. The compartmentalized approach to pre-service training prevents teachers from building cross-stage competency frameworks, while the limited scope of in-service training fails to provide sustained professional support. These dual challenges create a developmental gap in the "pre-service training-in-service training-practical application" cycle, severely hindering the systematic enhancement of preschool teachers' professional capabilities.

3.3. Lagging Institutional Guarantee and Resource Support

The delayed institutional safeguards and resource support remain a fundamental constraint on the professional development of nursery teachers. This systemic lag is primarily reflected in the ambiguity and lack of operational guidelines in policy documents. While policy documents such as the "Guidelines on Promoting the Development of Infant Care Services for Children Under 3" emphasize "strengthening the cultivation of childcare service professionals," they fail to provide clear regulations regarding specific issues like qualification certification, professional title evaluation, and compensation packages for nursery teachers. [9] Professional title evaluations for nursery teachers predominantly follow kindergarten standards, yet the unique competency requirements specific to the 0-3 age group are inadequately addressed. Furthermore, due to the absence of specialized policy support, nursery teachers' compensation packages generally remain lower than those of kindergarten teachers, significantly diminishing the profession's attractiveness. [9]

The institutional barriers between childcare centers and kindergartens in terms of staffing, facility allocation, and management mechanisms have further exacerbated systemic deficiencies. Currently, childcare centers are primarily overseen by civil affairs or health departments, while kindergartens fall under education authorities. Significant disparities exist between the two in staffing standards, resource allocation, and management systems. Childcare centers generally face chronic shortages of qualified staff and limited facilities, whereas kindergartens, due to differing management structures, struggle to establish effective teacher exchanges and resource sharing with childcare centers. This "sectoral fragmentation" in administrative management creates challenges for seamless integration of care and education in early childhood programs, while also restricting resource support for teachers' professional development.

The delayed institutional safeguards and resource support directly hinder the sustainable development of preschool teachers' professional competencies. Ambiguous policy documents make it difficult for educators to obtain clear career development pathways, while insufficient resource support prevents them from accessing continuous professional growth opportunities. These two factors collectively create a vicious cycle of "policy gaps → resource scarcity → competency development challenges," severely constraining the systematic improvement and sustainable development of preschool teachers' professional capabilities.

Early childhood educators face multiple challenges in professional development, including gaps in competency standards, fragmented training programs, and inadequate institutional support. These interconnected issues create a complex network that hinders teacher growth. To address these challenges, it is essential to establish a comprehensive support system for professional development that aligns with the integrated childcare and early education framework.

4. Optimization Strategy: Innovation of the Path of Professional Development of Nursery Teachers

In the context of early childhood education integration reform, the professional development of nursery teachers requires breaking through current institutional constraints and establishing a systematic, collaborative, and institutionalized support framework. This study proposes optimization strategies through three dimensions: restructuring standardized training systems, innovating on-the-job training ecosystems, and improving policy-institutional-resource coordination mechanisms. These efforts form a closed-loop development path of "standard

[9] Guo Rong. (2021). China's New Era Infant Care Service System and Its Implications: An Analysis of Relevant Policy Documents in the Context of Providing Early Childhood Education. *Early Childhood Education*, (27),23-27.

guidance, training support, and institutional safeguards," driving structural improvements in nursery teachers professional competencies.

4.1. Build a Standardized Training System Based on Ability

The professional development of nursery teachers should be grounded in scientific competency standards, establishing a competency-based standardized training system. At its core, this framework requires creating actionable competency benchmarks that define a three-dimensional structure encompassing childcare skills, educational literacy, and developmental support. Furthermore, it advocates for higher education institutions and vocational colleges to implement specialized teacher training programs integrating early childhood education, with a focus on strengthening practical teaching modules.

The development of competency standards frameworks should be grounded in interdisciplinary theories including child development science, educational psychology, and childcare pedagogy, while addressing the practical needs of integrated childcare and early education practices. This framework requires detailed specifications for competency elements and evaluation dimensions. For childcare skills, it must clearly define specific indicators such as daily care for infants, safety protocols, and health management. In educational literacy, it should establish requirements for observing child development, designing developmental support strategies, and creating educational environments. Regarding developmental support, it should emphasize collaborative efforts among families, institutions, and communities, as well as interventions for children with special needs. This standards framework should serve as a unified benchmark for teacher pre-service training, in-service development, and competency assessment, addressing current issues of missing competency standards and ambiguous evaluation criteria.

Higher education institutions and vocational colleges should reform traditional preschool education programs based on competency framework standards, establishing specialized teacher training initiatives for "integrated childcare and early education" programs. Curriculum design must break down professional barriers between "childcare" and "early childhood education," creating a cross-stage, integrated curriculum system. Universities should introduce core courses such as "Theories and Practices of 0-6 Year Old Development," "Strategies for Transitioning Care and Education in Childcare Institutions," and "Observation and Assessment of Infant Development" to achieve seamless knowledge integration between childcare and early education phases. Practical teaching modules should strengthen collaborative training mechanisms between childcare institutions and kindergartens, enhancing teachers practical skills through methods like "dual-mentorship systems," "on-the-job practice," and "on-the-job internships." Preschool education programs should arrange rotational internships for students in childcare facilities and kindergartens, enabling them to master educational characteristics and caregiving skills across different developmental stages, thereby developing comprehensive teaching capabilities.

The construction of standardized training system will fundamentally solve the problems of professional division and curriculum overlap in the pre-service training stage, and form a closed loop of "standard guidance-curriculum support-practice reinforcement" to lay a solid foundation for the professional ability development of nursery teachers.

4.2. Building an "Collaborative Education" in-Service Training Ecosystem

The continuous improvement of preschool teachers professional competence requires a dynamic and open in-service training ecosystem. This system should establish a three-tier training network connecting kindergartens, universities, and research institutions, develop modular and progressive training courses, and promote participatory training models to enhance training effectiveness.

The construction of a three-tier training network requires clear functional positioning of each entity. As frontline practice bases, kindergartens should undertake foundational and practical training tasks such as childcare skill drills and class management experience sharing. Universities, as hubs for theoretical innovation and talent cultivation, should focus on theoretical advancement, curriculum development, and research guidance. Research institutions, serving as think tanks for professional leadership and policy consultation, need to disseminate cutting-edge theories, address practical issues, and propose policy recommendations. These three entities must establish collaborative mechanisms to create a virtuous cycle of "practice-theory-research." By regularly hosting "Integrated Early Childhood Education" forums and seminars, we can bridge practical challenges with theoretical research. Through joint development of training courses and compilation of instructional materials, resource sharing and complementary strengths can be achieved.

The development of modular and progressive training programs should be based on the competency development needs of nursery teachers, with tiered and categorized training modules designed. Basic modules may include "Infant Care Fundamentals" and "Safety Protocols"; intermediate modules could cover "Child Development Observation and Assessment" and "Educational Continuity Strategies"; advanced modules might focus on "Curriculum Design and Development" and "Educational Research Methods". The progressive design should align with teachers career stages, establishing distinct training pathways and objectives to create a competency development sequence of "Foundation-Enhancement-Mastery".

The promotion of participatory training models requires moving beyond traditional lecture-based formats to incorporate interactive and experiential approaches like mentorship programs, workshops, and case-based teaching. Mentorship programs enable experienced teachers to pass on knowledge and skills, enhancing new teachers practical abilities. Workshops facilitate in-depth discussions and hands-on practice, encouraging active teacher participation. Case-based teaching helps analyze real-world educational challenges, improving teachers problem-solving capabilities. These models significantly boost training effectiveness, helping educators transform theoretical knowledge into practical skills. □ A collaborative training ecosystem will overcome the limitations of outdated content and monotonous formats in traditional in-service training, establishing a dynamic, open, and interactive mechanism that provides continuous support for nursery teachers professional development.^[4]

^[4] Zhang Xuewei. (2014). Implementing New Objectives: Innovating Training Management Models for Secondary School Teachers. Journal of Jilin Provincial Institute of Education (Lower Half), 30(11),110-111. <https://doi.org/10.16083/j.cnki.22-1296/g4.2014.11.050>.

4.3. Improve the Three-in-One Guarantee Mechanism of "Policy, System and Resources"

The sustainable advancement of preschool teachers professional development requires a comprehensive policy-institution-resource support mechanism. This framework should include specialized policy documents covering teacher certification, career advancement, and compensation incentives. It should facilitate deep integration between childcare institutions and kindergartens in faculty allocation, resource sharing, and curriculum co-development. Additionally, increased fiscal investment through establishing a dedicated preschool teacher development fund will strengthen the teaching workforce.

The introduction of specialized policy documents must clarify specific issues such as qualification standards, professional title evaluation criteria, and compensation benefits for nursery class teachers. Regarding qualification certification, independent standards should be established, using "caregiving skills + educational literacy + developmental support" as the three-dimensional competency framework. For professional title evaluation, a dedicated assessment system should be created, incorporating the unique competency elements of nursery teachers into evaluation criteria. In terms of compensation, targeted policies should be formulated to enhance teachers salary levels and boost career attractiveness. These policy documents will provide clear institutional safeguards for the professional development of nursery class teachers.

The deep integration of childcare institutions and kindergartens requires breaking down barriers in the current management system and establishing collaborative mechanisms for teacher allocation, resource sharing, and curriculum co-development. In terms of teacher allocation, a "kindergarten-childcare institution" mobility mechanism could be established to share outstanding educators. For resource sharing, joint procurement and facility-sharing mechanisms should be implemented to reduce costs. Regarding curriculum co-development, collaborative development of "integrated early childhood education" programs can ensure content continuity and complementarity. This integration will effectively address the fragmentation of resources, personnel, and curricula between childcare institutions and kindergartens, promoting substantive advancement of integrated early childhood education.

To enhance fiscal investment, a dedicated fund for early childhood education teachers professional development should be established to support teacher training, professional development, and research initiatives. This fund could: 1) fund universities to develop specialized teacher training programs for "integrated childcare and early education" to improve pre-service quality; 2) support the creation and implementation of in-service training programs to boost practical effectiveness; 3) fund educational research projects to drive theoretical innovation and practical improvements. Such a dedicated fund would provide stable resources for advancing the professional capabilities of early childhood educators.

This "policy-institution-resource" trinity guarantee mechanism will provide comprehensive and continuous support for the professional development of nursery teachers from the three dimensions of system, resources and policies, solve the problems of lagging institutional guarantee and insufficient resource support, and promote the sustainable and high-quality development of nursery teachers professional ability.

In conclusion, optimizing strategies for preschool teachers professional development should be systematically advanced through three dimensions: restructuring standardized training systems, innovating in-service training ecosystems, and improving policy-institutional-resource support mechanisms. By establishing a competency-focused training framework, cultivating collaborative professional development ecosystems, and refining a three-pronged support system, we can create a comprehensive closed-loop mechanism that drives structural improvements in teachers professional capabilities within the integrated preschool-early childhood education framework. This approach ultimately achieves a win-win outcome in three key areas: enhancing child development quality, elevating educational service standards, and promoting teachers career growth. This innovative pathway not only holds theoretical significance but also practical implications, providing robust faculty support and institutional safeguards for Chinas integrated preschool-early childhood education reform.

5. Conclusion

The professional development of preschool teachers carries multifaceted significance: it lays the foundation for childrens early development, supports the quality enhancement of early childhood education, and promotes teachers career advancement, serving as the core pillar of the integrated preschool-early childhood education reform. Current practices face structural challenges including the absence of competency standards, fragmented training programs, and lagging institutional safeguards, which hinder systematic improvement of teachers professional capabilities. By establishing a competency-based standardized training system, creating a collaborative in-service training ecosystem, and refining the tripartite support mechanism of policies, systems, and resources, we can forge a closed-loop development path that drives structural optimization of teachers professional competencies.

Reaffirming the pivotal role of kindergarten teachers in professional development. In the integrated childcare and early education system, these educators serve as primary guides for children aged 0-3 and key drivers of service quality. Their professional growth directly impacts early childhood development outcomes, educational equity, and social justice. Only by strategically prioritizing teacher development—through establishing scientific competency standards, systematic training programs, and robust institutional safeguards—can we achieve the core mission of this integrated system: building a continuous, high-quality, and equitable early education framework for children aged 0-6.

Looking ahead, we need to further deepen empirical research on the competency framework of nursery teachers. Through large-scale surveys and longitudinal studies, we should validate and refine the scientific validity and practical applicability of the "care skills-educational literacy-development support" tripartite competency structure. It is essential to explore differentiated competency development needs and support strategies for teachers across various regions and types of childcare institutions, enhancing the adaptability of optimization pathways. Additionally, strengthening international comparative studies by drawing on advanced countries experiences in integrated early childhood education teacher training, professional development, and institutional safeguards will help improve Chinas theoretical system for nursery teacher professional development.

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