

A comparative study of Welsh preschool education system (based on foundation learning) and Chinese preschool education system: implications for the development of preschool education in China

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1.Introduction

More and more scholars recognize preschool education as the beginning of lifelong learning, believing it plays a vital role in children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Qi, 2023). Currently, the world's globalization and China's exam-oriented education are influencing China's preschool education system, which is still in its developmental stage. It is reflected in the excessive introduction of other excellent educational achievements, the lack of local preschool education achievements in China, and the premature discipline of education (Zhu, 2024; Gan, 2021).

On November 8, 2024, the 12th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress passed the law of the People's Republic of China on preschool education (moe.gov.cn, 2024). This is the first time in the history of Chinese law that a separate preschool education bill has appeared. This policy clearly defines China's determination to develop the preschool education system.

Chinese kindergartens are constantly exploring ways to address the academic challenges faced by kindergartens and the significant issues related to the transition from kindergarten to primary school (Wang,2024) The preschool education system in Wales, known as "basic learning," establishes a comprehensive curriculum framework

for students aged 3-7. learners. "Games" and "game-based learning" are essential educational tools in Welsh preschool education. "Games" fundamentally underpin children's development and discovery (Wales, government, 2022). This education system promotes the rational transition between kindergarten and primary school and meets China's expectations for comprehensive quality education. (Wales Government 2023). Therefore, understanding the preschool education system in Wales and comparing it with the current preschool education system in China's reform can find more problems in China and find out the corresponding revision direction, which has a good guiding role for the development of China's education system.

Therefore, in this study, the researchers will conduct qualitative research through the methods of literature analysis, observation, interview, and action research to understand and compare the existing preschool education systems in Wales and Guangxi, China, and explore the unique advantages of Wales's foundation learning and try to quote it into the preschool education curriculum in China to explore whether this system can give suggestions to China's preschool education system.

2. Philosophy structure and method

This study will compare the preschool education systems in Wales and China and analyse whether Welsh "foundation learning" can be an inspiration to China's preschool education. Therefore, the study will involve the relationship between educational policy, educational practice, and cultural background. It is necessary to summarise the two different education systems in a single word without abandoning cultural characteristics, and to conduct a comparative analysis to understand their

similarities and differences. Teachers' views play an indispensable role in the construction of the two education systems in this study. In accordance with this requirement, this study will adopt constructivism and hermeneutics as its philosophical framework and employ qualitative research methods for analysis.

2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism holds that learning is a process in which learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with the environment. It emphasizes the personalized characteristics of learning and focuses on how learners understand and apply knowledge in specific situations. Constructivism is a philosophical framework that underscores the active construction of knowledge by learners through their interaction with the environment. Constructivism focuses on the process of learning and believes that education is not a simple transfer of knowledge but a process in which learners construct meaning through practice and reflection in the social and cultural context (Taber, 2024).

The characteristics of constructivism are highly appropriate for the foundation learning teaching in Wales, as it emphasizes that children's learning and development activities are primarily cantered around games. In China, preschool education is changing from subject education to quality education, and the identity of teachers is also changing from "knowledge imparter" to "learning guide." Using the perspective of constructivism to observe children's activities can help researchers better understand how the teaching system of foundation learning supports children's growth.

2.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics focuses on the deep meanings of human behaviour and language. It helps researchers interpret the cultural and social background behind a text, behaviour, or policy. Hermeneutics analyses educators' views and practices in educational research (Carlo, 2024).

Hermeneutics is a philosophical framework that emphasizes understanding social phenomena through subjective perspectives and personal experiences (Lawless, 2014). Hermeneutics posits that individuals, within a specific cultural and historical context, give meaning to social reality, which is not a fixed existence. Hermeneutics focuses on the deep meaning, cultural background, and subjective experience of educators and learners of educational phenomena in educational research (Prentice, 2020).

In this study, the researchers aim to comprehend the current teaching systems in the two regions from various angles and determine if they align with the portrayal in the literature. What are their views on different teaching systems? The perspective of hermeneutics not only includes the individual's cultural and social background but also can explain the causes of the phenomenon through personal understanding. Therefore, the philosophical framework aligns with the research settings used by the researchers.

2.3 The combination of constructivism and hermeneutics

The philosophy of hermeneutics and constructivism defines the education system as a dynamic social structure that consists of policy, curriculum, teaching methods,

teachers' roles, and cultural backgrounds. This structure aims to construct knowledge, transmit values, and cultivate the abilities of social members through the educational process. The education system is not only an institutional existence but also a process defined and constructed by different cultures, social backgrounds, and participants' perspectives.

According to this definition, the education system is neither fixed nor universal. It is the product of social and cultural influence and evolves with the change of time, background, and participants. The education system is multi-level, encompassing the design of policies and systems, the interaction between teachers and students, and the actual operation in classroom activities. Research from the perspective of these two philosophical frameworks can provide a deeper and multi-level understanding of the education systems in the two regions.

2.4 Selection of research methods

The philosophical framework of hermeneutics and constructivism requires the author to comprehend the real views and actual behaviours of educational participants during the research process, and to analyse the reasons behind these cultural and behavioural patterns. Furthermore, it's important to acknowledge that the author is unable to examine all kindergartens in Wales and Guilin, Guangxi, China. The most suitable research object can only be found under the guidance of the "gatekeeper." This reality dictates that the sample size is limited, making it impossible for the study to conduct extensive and large-scale regional research. Therefore, focusing on depth can better demonstrate the value of the study. In order to achieve this goal, the author

ruled out quantitative research and made the next choice between mixed research methods and qualitative research methods.

Questionnaire surveys, as a research tool, not only provide a preliminary understanding of respondents' perspectives but also enable a certain level of data analysis. However, selecting this research tool necessitates conducting a certain number of questionnaires first. The analysis of the actual situation reveals that the number of teachers in a kindergarten is extremely limited, resulting in a scarcity of questionnaire samples. The limited sample size limits the significance of using these tools. Furthermore, describing the education systems in Wales and China to education-related personnel in different regions in simple terms is not feasible. Researchers must communicate this information using their own research tools, which also highlights the challenge of conducting questionnaire surveys effectively.

We will conduct the study using qualitative research methods to study complex phenomena and analyse people's behaviours and views. Through literature analysis, classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, action research, and other research tools, we can provide support for the research from different angles. We can conduct in-depth research in a limited number of samples and obtain certain research results.

3. Sample Selection

This study examines the preschool education systems in Wales and Guangxi, conducting a comparative analysis of educational practices and ideas in both regions to determine the feasibility of implementing the Welsh concept of "basic learning" in Chinese kindergartens. Therefore, this study plans to select samples in Wales and

Guangxi, China.

The first step involves selecting a sample from Wales. Due to the teacher qualification certificate and other reasons, the researcher currently does not have the basic certificate of British local nurse teachers. Therefore, it is impossible to enter the nursery school for an internship to obtain information. Only after the gatekeeper's introduction can we explore the possibility of visiting local kindergartens. In terms of selection, the sample size in Wales is relatively small. To address this shortcoming, we need to engage more effectively with the gatekeeper and actively seek out local nurseries that align with the principles of "foundation learning." By looking for students and teachers majoring in preschool education at Trinity St. David's School in Wales, we conducted interviews to understand their views on the preschool education system there.

To complete the research, we need to select Welsh samples from at least one local kindergarten that adheres to the "foundation learning" curriculum system, along with 3-5 nursery teachers and more than 5 students or teachers specializing in preschool education.

In contrast, the author's hometown is located in Guangxi Province, China, where he has gained some internship experience. There are more than 10 kindergarten teachers who are familiar with him in Guangxi Province. Therefore, the author can get better research opportunities in Guangxi and ensure the validity and reliability of the research materials through his own interpersonal relationships.

At present, China's kindergartens encompass a variety of business forms,

including private kindergartens, government-established kindergartens, and international kindergartens. The kindergartens established by the government are those that have the clearest requirements for adhering to the government's laws and policies, as well as the most suitable implementation methods. Observing and understanding government kindergartens can better help us understand the current views of the Chinese government on the development direction of preschool education (Ke, 2024). Therefore, the selection of Chinese kindergarten samples in this study will choose government kindergartens.

Guangxi has two research objectives: examining the characteristics of China's preschool education system and determining whether the Welsh foundation learning education system can serve as a reference for China's preschool education. Therefore, the author must not only enhance the image and data of China's preschool education through realistic materials, but also collaborate with more experienced teachers to better understand the Welsh play-based teaching method. This will enable them to implement the curriculum and gain valuable insights into their profound and detailed views on foundation learning through their curriculum feedback. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the parents' perspectives on school activities in the research, and they must provide timely feedback.

To accomplish the goal, the author will select a kindergarten established by the Guangxi government and intern there. Obtain the most authentic materials through participatory observation. In Guangxi, we are seeking the cooperation of 5-10 front-line kindergarten teachers who are willing to experiment with different children in

different grades to implement the curriculum, with the consent of the kindergarten and parents. In the research process, we need to find 10 parents who are willing to participate in the research and conduct semi-structured interviews with them to understand their views on China's preschool education system and the trial of foundation learning.

4. Ethical considerations

As kindergarten children are involved, ethical considerations are crucial in this study. To prevent adverse effects on young children, researchers should pay attention to the rights and interests of participants, their data privacy, and their behaviour.

4.1 Right to know and autonomy

The first principle is the right to knowledge and autonomy. The right to know is an important principle of research ethics. It ensures that participants voluntarily participate in the research after understanding the content, reserve their rights, reject any content they do not want to participate in, and have the right to withdraw at any time.

Since the research focuses on kindergartens, school administrators, teachers, parents, and children are among the relevant personnel involved in the study. First of all, in both regions, entering kindergartens for research needs to comply with local laws and policies, communicate with the managers of kindergartens, indicate the research plan, and obtain the opportunity to enter kindergartens for research. Secondly, in this study, it is necessary to explain the research object, express the purpose, methods, and possible risks of the research through simple and

understandable language. Indicate what researchers care about in the research process and explain privacy and research object withdrawal rights. The researcher will provide written instructions, confirm participants' understanding of the content through oral communication, and obtain written or electronic evidence of consent to participate.

In the process of research, the importance of children as one of the main observation objects is self-evident. However, due to their age, children often overlook their autonomous rights (Su, 2015). Once the researcher has communicated with the child's guardian, it is crucial to articulate the researcher's purpose and potential impact in a manner that is acceptable to the child, while also understanding the child's perspective on their participation. In addition to the researcher's own inquiry, guardians and teachers need to re-ask questions to confirm the authenticity of their opinions. We should ensure that the research process does not disrupt their daily learning and life, and promptly monitor their situation and willingness to avoid overlooking the possibility that children may be unwilling to participate.

4.2 Privacy protection

Privacy has always been the focus of participants' attention. This study will collect data through interviews and observations. The method of data collection may involve the use of electronic equipment for video recording, photographing, recording, and other related tasks. Such data can easily be exploited to violate the portrait rights of participants. In order to ensure that this right is not infringed, the researcher needs to explain it to the relevant participants, inform them of the purpose

of the shooting, obtain their consent, and ensure that the data is fuzzed and the identity of the child cannot be recognized.

Additionally, sensitive information includes the personal information of participants, as well as the views of parents and teachers. Researchers need to anonymize the data, avoid participants' personal information, and use codes or numbers instead. The research results necessitate the fuzzing of content that could potentially reveal participant identities.

Additionally, the researcher must store these data in an encrypted device with limited access rights, allowing only the researcher to view them. If the data are paper materials, they need to be properly kept, scanned, and stored in the study and uploaded to the encrypted device; the rest of the paper materials need to be destroyed as planned after the study.

If participants decide to withdraw from the study during its duration, they should communicate with the existing research materials and inquire about the possibility of retaining them. If the participants indicate that they need to be destroyed, they will operate according to their opinions to ensure that no information about the quitters is used in the research results.

Researchers need to follow the general data protection regulations of Wales and the personal information protection law of China to protect the data rights and interests of participants.

4.3 Researcher's behaviour

Researchers' behaviour determines the ethics of research. In research,

researchers need to respect all participants fairly and objectively.

It is necessary to listen to the opinions of parents and teachers with an open attitude in the research process. We cannot use inductive questions in the interview, nor can we subjectively evaluate the answers. Minimize intervention during course observation to maintain the integrity of the research environment and ensure the data accurately reflects the real situation.

In the process of participation, ensure the transparency of the research process. Researchers need to truly record the research process when designing, collecting, and analysing data. If relevant institutions or participants raise questions about the study, the researcher must provide an objective and clear explanation.

5. Research tools

Research tools are the key to achieving the purpose of research. This study will use the methods of literature analysis, observation, semi-structured interviews, and action research. These tools will provide multi-angle data support for research.

5.1 Literature analysis

Literature analysis is the process of systematically collecting, analysing, and evaluating existing literature. It aims to extract valuable information from published literature for synthesis and summary (Flick, 2018). This involves utilizing the existing published literature to gather the necessary data and subsequently interpreting, classifying, and summarizing the method.

The disparities in education systems between China and Wales confront researchers. Researchers search online materials, books, and policy documents issued

by the government and use different documents to supplement the materials, so as to build a more perfect textual summary.

The research tool first identifies relevant policies from government documents, understands their purpose and vision, and then specifies the education system in both regions. The second step is to find real-time articles and books in the existing professional literature, understand the current situation analysed by existing scholars, and summarize. After completing the above two steps, we analyse the policy and current situation and extract the existing real education system of preschool education institutions in the two regions.

5.2 Observation

This study will employ both participatory observation and natural observation methods. The observation method is a research method that collects and analyses data by directly observing objects or phenomena.

The natural observation method involves the observer entering a specific natural environment, observing, and recording data. It requires the observer to strictly maintain the existing natural environment and not interfere with the observed conditions and phenomena, thereby ensuring its purity (Creswell, 2023).

Participatory observation involves the observer, acting as a participant, delving deeply into the social situation being studied. This process transforms the observer from an "outsider" to an "insider," integrates them into the observed work, and studies the development process of things, the relationship between people and events, and the mode of event development from the perspective of an "insider." Through the

daily situation, we can carefully understand the environment of the research object and the impact of the environment on their attitude and behaviour. Using this method not only helps us better understand the causes of the research object's behaviour, but it also facilitates the collection of some phenomena that are difficult to notice in daily life. We can also directly obtain the analysis data required for the research design through what the observer sees, hears, and does. (Cai, 2015; Ran, 2020; Yuan, 2019).

We will use these two different observation methods to observe kindergartens in Wales and China.

Because they have limited knowledge about Welsh nurseries, researchers aim to maintain a pure observation environment and prevent any influence from the observation. The observer will simply record and summarize the realities of nurseries in Wales. After comparing the literature, we can identify and analyse the shortcomings in the research and the differences in the situation. This will enable researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the actual educational situation within the Welsh preschool education system.

Researchers will conduct observation activities in Chinese kindergartens using the natural observation method over a period of time to gain a deeper understanding of their current situation. During the transplantation process, the researcher will employ the participatory observation method to prevent cooperative teachers from misinterpreting the Welsh education system and adopting incorrect coping styles.

5.3 The action research method

Action research is a research method that aims to solve specific problems,

improve practice, and produce changes through the actual actions of participants. It stresses cooperation between researchers and participants, promotes knowledge generation, and solves practical problems through repeated circular processes (including planning, action, observation, reflection, etc.). (sun, 2022).

In the process of research, the action research method helps researchers verify the practical effect of the concept of "basic learning" in Chinese classrooms. The researcher cooperates with Guangxi kindergarten teachers to design game-based teaching activities, practice the curriculum with the cooperative teachers, and invite other teachers in the kindergarten to observe and reflect on the curriculum. At the end of the course, summarize the impact of teaching activities and the evaluation of teachers. Understand whether children can complete the curriculum objectives and whether teaching activities are applicable in the teaching process.

5.4 Semi-structured interview

"The semi-structured interview method is a research method by which interviewers collect data related to the other party through face-to-face communication with the interviewees according to the purpose and requirements of the survey and the interview outline" (Li, 2020). Zhou Dongming holds the belief that the interview method involves conducting a prepared research conversation with the interviewees, tailored to the interviewers' needs and ideological logic, in order to gather a variety of objective and valuable data (Zhou, 2012). Simultaneously, while the interview process outlines the method, it allows for flexible adjustments based on the actual situation. The interviewers themselves should not dictate or infer the

content of the answer. During the interview process, it is essential to engage in a deeper conversation about the important questions. The main task is to deeply understand the respondents' views (Liu, 2011).

In other words, the semi-structured interview method is a purposeful and flexible interview form. Compared with the unstructured interview method, it has more focused questions. It is more flexible than the structured interview method. You can adjust the interview's content based on the interviewee's situation and trust level to gain deeper perspectives. This study aims to comprehend the regional preschool education system by means of interviews, while also addressing the gaps in existing literature and observation tools. Additionally, following the implementation of the action research method, we should conduct a semi-structured interview with the participants, tailoring it to the specific course activities, to gain insight into their perspectives on the course.

6. Data analysis method

In this qualitative study, we will choose coding analysis as the data research method.

Coding analysis is a qualitative data analysis method. Its core is to systematize and classify a large number of texts, observation records, or other unstructured data and extract patterns, themes, or core concepts related to the research topic (Ye, 2024).

In short, coding analysis is the process of transforming complex original data into understandable and analysable forms. Qualitative research commonly uses this analysis method to process data like interviews, observation records, policy texts, and

more.

We will use inductive coding analysis to record the actual situation of the preschool education system in Wales and China. Specifically, researchers first understand the basic situation of preschool education systems in different regions from a large number of text materials, extract the core modes and characteristics of teaching activities from observation records, and gradually summarize them, finally forming an analytical framework for cross-cultural comparison.

In addition, the content of semi-structured interviews also needs to be coded and analyzed. The researcher will record the interview content using an electronic product recording system and then transcribe it into text. Through the analysis of the text, we can gain insight into the perspectives and feedback of the research object regarding the educational systems in both regions. Mark, record, and summarize the different contents.

7.Conclusion

In this study, researchers attempt to conduct qualitative research through literature analysis, observation, action research, and semi-structured interviews. Under the philosophical framework of hermeneutics and constructivism, we have a deep understanding of the preschool education system in the two regions and compare it to the education system under different cultural backgrounds. Through the process of curriculum transplantation, we investigate the possibility of China adopting the "play-based learning" curriculum. We aim to inspire Chinese kindergarten teachers through this approach, and we also explore the potential development and suggestions for

quality-oriented preschool education in China in the future.

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