

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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Introduction

Historically, the evolution of preschool education in China spans approximately 100 years. Nevertheless, the swift progress of contemporary society has been significantly influenced by globalization and China's domestic examination-oriented education system. Currently, there are limited authoritative papers on preschool education in China, comprising only two significant texts: “Guidelines for Kindergarten Education” and “Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6,” while the preschool education bill remains in the trial phase. China's preschool education urgently requires quality enhancement.

In recent years, the discourse surrounding quality education in China has been persistent, and the reform of preschool education has garnered significant attention. The curriculum reform of Chinese kindergartens aims to achieve three primary objectives: to shift from a focus on "subject" to "experience" or "activity," to transition teachers from knowledge disseminators to facilitators of child-initiated experiences or activities, and to prohibit the early instruction of Chinese reading and writing skills and assessments (Li, 2011). This reform is not responsive to the existing feedback from students' parents and teachers. Parents' gatherings exert pressure on kindergartens to prepare pupils for primary school enrolment (Lv, 2022). These

inconsistencies further complicate the endeavor of reforming preschool education in China.

In the Welsh education system, foundational learning constitutes a student-center, comprehensive curriculum framework for learners aged 3–16. The preschool education system was formerly known as the Foundation Phase, targeting children aged 3 to 7 (Gov.2023). The establishment of this system guarantees that students' education in Wales is cohesive and enduring, equipping them for lifelong learning. Early Childhood Play, Learning, and Care (ECPLC), which encompasses curriculum development for children aged 0-5, establishes that play is a fundamental right of all children within the preschool education framework in Wales. It facilitates infants and young children in exploring their physical, cognitive, and social capabilities, enabling them to develop tenacity and problem-solving skills (Gov). The examination of the aforementioned literature concludes that "play", and "play-based learning" are essential educational instruments in Welsh preschool education, with children's development and discovery fundamentally rooted in "play". This educational system facilitates a seamless transition between nursery and primary school while fulfilling the expectations for comprehensive quality education in China.

In his comparative analysis of various preschool education systems, Smith (2009) noted that the implementation of Welsh educational philosophy in non-Western nations may encounter cultural and policy obstacles. Consequently, it remains uncertain if China can get insights from this educational system and comprehend the concept of reform through a comparative analysis with Wales.

This study aims to analyze the preschool education system in Wales, compare it with the local preschool education system in China, identify their similarities and differences, and investigate the potential for adaptive integration of this teaching method into the kindergarten curriculum in China. Insights for enhancement were derived from interviews and discussions with Chinese kindergarten educators. This study enhances the literature on intercultural education transplanting and offers empirical evidence and policy recommendations for the advancement of China's preschool education system.

Research purpose

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the distinctions between two-semester educational systems across various locations and to investigate the relevance of foundational learning in China. This study primarily focuses on three major topics, doing an in-depth analysis of the preschool education systems in the two regions to identify their distinct educational traits and differences. Subsequently, using action research, it examines the motivations behind the implementation of foundational learning education systems by preschool instructors in China and offers recommendations for local educational reform.

1. How is the Foundation learning structured and implemented in Welsh early childhood education?

The primary objective of this study is to understand and establish play-based learning as a framework for preschool education in Wales. Literature investigation, observation, and interviews were utilized to achieve a thorough grasp of the system

from many angles and to refine and develop a picture of the system. The structure of lessons for different age groups, the goals, and the unique teaching methodologies of the teachers require analysis and enhancement. This research will yield a thorough comprehension of the operation and execution of preschool education in the region.

2. What are the main characteristics and challenges of kindergarten education in public kindergartens in Guangxi, China, particularly regarding curriculum and teaching approaches?

This study's second question will concentrate on government kindergartens in Guangxi, owing to constraints in research resources and gatekeepers. The results may not be indicative of other kindergartens in China, yet they possess some reference value for places with comparable developmental levels.

Currently, there exist a variety of kindergarten formats in China. Public kindergartens, being directly governed by the state, ensure a level of oversight and instructor quality assurance. From the standpoint of the educational framework, they will align more closely with national policies. This sort of kindergarten exemplifies those found in the city.

Through a review of the literature and an examination of the public kindergartens in this region, we identified the pedagogical attributes and issues faced by these institutions.

3: To what extent can Foundation learning principles be adapted to Chinese kindergarten settings, and what factors might influence their effectiveness?

The third objective of this study is to examine the flexibility and influencing

elements of foundational learning within China's preschool education context. Chinese traditional preschool education is predominantly conducted through instruction. In recent years, the pedagogical approach in this region has shifted towards activity-based learning (Li, 2013; Zhou, 2006). Engaging in extensive activities enables youngsters to develop holistically. However, this reform also encounters the rigidity of parents' and instructors' mindsets. Consequently, the adaptability of foundational learning should not solely assess whether children achieve exercise and development through this educational approach but also involve semi-structured interviews with pertinent individuals to elicit their attitudes and perspectives regarding this teaching system.

Research Methodology

There are several constraints on the selection of nurseries in Wales and kindergartens in China. Preschool education facilities require the oversight of a gatekeeper, and the samples are minimally selective. Consequently, the research findings lack representativeness and prevalence. Consequently, comprehensive research can enhance individuals' comprehension and illustrate the significance of the study. This study will be grounded in the philosophical frameworks of hermeneutics and constructivism. The subsequent methodologies employed in the study and their corresponding application instructions are as follows:

1. Literary Analysis

Literature analysis is a research methodology that synthesizes existing literature (Snyder, 2019). This technique summarizes the preschool education systems in the

two regions and offers theoretical support and research context for future studies.

In this study, the author will gather pertinent literature, reports, and policies from the two regions. The textual content is utilized to construct the structure of the two educational systems.

2. Semi-structured interview method

The semi-structured interview style involves conducting focused interviews based on overarching themes (Rubin, 1995). This method possesses a degree of autonomy and will also guarantee the efficacy of the interview topic.

This study employs interviews with pertinent individuals, including educators, administrators, and parents, to ascertain their perspectives on the education systems under question. Moreover, it can amend and refine the literary material to a degree, assisting scholars in further developing the pertinent educational framework.

Furthermore, we can disseminate the various teaching systems developed by the author to respondents in different regions via interviews, subsequently obtaining their comments, comprehending their attitudes and perceptions of this teaching system, and gathering recommendations from frontline educators.

3. Observational Method

Utilize various recording instruments to document and examine how educators implement diverse pedagogical approaches to fulfil curriculum standards in the classroom (Cohen, 2018). If the literature study offers a theoretical foundation, then the observational technique supplies empirical proof. The integration of these two methodologies can enhance researchers' comprehension of various educational

systems, identify discrepancies between practice and ethics, and assess the efficacy of foundational learning across diverse cultural contexts through direct observation.

Researchers must be directed by the gatekeeper. Identify the preschool schools that comply with the two distinct consultation procedures and engage in the monitoring and documentation of teaching activities and curriculum development with authorization. Examine the methods by which educators implement the foundational learning paradigm. Document children's responses and engagement. Simple enquiries can elucidate children's adaptation to this pedagogical approach.

4. Action Research Method.

The implementation of "play" as the central pedagogical approach in foundational education within government kindergartens in Guangxi documented the obstacles and circumstances faced by educators during the practice. This research method emphasizes participant reflection and feedback, yielding authentic data for analysis.

Utilize the previously established foundational learning education system to design and conduct educational activities centred around this system, in collaboration with frontline educators. The acts of educators and students will be documented from many viewpoints. Post-course, feedback and analysis are conducted to gather recommendations for enhancement. Numerous practical endeavors are undertaken through essential modifications. The system's flexibility is examined and analyzed.

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