Problems and Suggestions on Preschool Education in China

Zheng-Fan YAO\textsuperscript{1} and Yi LIU\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Internet Information Office, National Internet Emergency Center, Beijing, China
\textsuperscript{2}Fashion Accessory Art and Engineering College, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, Beijing, China

Keywords: Preschool, Teacher, Problems, Education

Abstract. This essay makes effort to find the problems and treatment methods of preschool education in China.

1. Introduction

From the second half of the 2017, specially in 2018, the news about children abused by kindergarten teachers and food hygiene in kindergartens frequently occurred. Topics related to preschool education, such as difficulties in entering the public kindergartens and training problem of teachers or teaching staff, continue to spark public opinion. Preschool education has received increasing attention from the society. However, because of long-term points, weak foundations and low debts, Preschool Education is a weakness point in China’s education system. To solve the problem, we have to handle with unclear legislation, lax of supervision, insufficient resources, uneven development, etc.

2. Five Major Problems in Preschool Education in China

First, lack of preschool education law is not conducive to the effective implementation of preschool education in accordance with the law. At present, in China the only two laws or regulations which regulating preschool education are the "Regulations on the Management of Kindergartens" which was issued in 1986, and the "Procedures for the Work of Kindergartens" which was issued in 1996. These regulations were issued more than 10 years ago, and can not adapt to the needs of preschool education development. Pang Lijuan, chairman of the China Committee of the World Preschool Education Organization, said that absent of preschool education law is the fundamental reason for the lack of resources for preschool education development, and makes it impossible to clearly define the deep-seated problems and key institutional mechanisms in the reform and development of preschool education. Wang Jingbo, the vice president of the Supreme People's Court of the People's Court, has called for preschool education legislation for several years. He said that preschool education is a national issue and it is difficult to solve it by provincial legislation. At the national level, unified legislation can solve numerous dilemmas in the development of preschool education.

Next, Insufficient financial investment in China's preschool education is also a source of problems. At present, there is no single item listed in the fiscal education budget of all levels of government in China. For the absence of government responsibility, private kindergartens, in terms of quantity, have become the mainstay of kindergartens, and the market-based operation has led to high preschool education costs. The 2017 China Kindergarten Industry Research Report showed that China's fiscal education expenditures in 2016 accounted for 4.22% of GDP, lower than the world average of 7%. Preschool education, which does not belong to the compulsory education stage, costs 280.2 billion yuan of fund, which accounts for only 7.2% of the total national education, and 0.3% of the total GDP. Compared with the proportion of 17.3% of the total number of children, the proportion of funds is obviously too low. Pang Lijuan, chairman of the China Committee of the World Preschool Education Organization, said that the lack of resources, especially the insufficiency of inclusive resources, has become a prominent contradiction in the development of preschool
education in China. Many local kindergartens have been unable to operate because of the lack of funds.

Next, the supervision system is not perfect, so it is difficult to make sure the private kindergarten education can afford qualified service. Zhou Hongyu, deputy director of the Standing Committee of Hubei Provincial People's Congress and professor of the Education Institute of Huazhong Normal University, found that it is difficult for the basic education department to perform management functions because of its multiple roles. In the entire country, the majority of numerous private education enterprises, institutions and private libraries have not been included in the management of the education administrative department. This results in a lack of supervision on the number and teaching quality of private education agencies. These private agencies afford at least half of the preschool education population. There are widespread "small, scattered, chaotic" problems in private kindergartens. There are still many undocumented private kindergartens. Most private kindergartens do not meet the basic standards of a school, which including standards of teaching staff, the floor space of the teaching area, etc. At the same time, most kindergartens rent private house and located in the residential area, you can not find them without guidance, so they cannot get implement supervision. At present, education department in our government is only responsible for issuing certificates for some qualified teaching agencies, but management of office behavior is insufficient.

Then, unbalanced geographical development makes low long-term admission rate in the western and poor areas. The development of preschool education is still uneven. The problem of "difficulty in entering the public kindergarten" is still prominent in urban and rural areas. According to statistics, at the end of 2016, the gross enrollment rate of preschool in China was 77.4%, which means that nearly one-fourth of children could not receive preschool education. Especially in the vast central and western regions and poor mountainous areas, the problem of inadequate preschool education agency is more prominent. According to the survey, in the contiguous areas of the central and western regions, the rate of gross enrollment in the kids between 3 to 6 years old is generally below 50%, and in many poverty-stricken counties are only 30%-40%. In contrast, in 2016, the admission rate of children aged 3-6 in Shanghai was over 98%. The urban-rural gap in preschool education infrastructure investment is also evident. Zheng Jun, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and vice president of the Yangtze River University, said that in the poor rural areas of China, due to the scattered population, the relatively weak resource base of preschool education, and limited local financial resources, there are no institutional establishments in kindergartens, and there is a shortage of preschool teachers, the average level of teaching quality is relatively low.

Finally, the preschool education teacher force is not satisfying. The "National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan" issued by the Ministry of Education pointed out that the current number of kindergarten teachers in China is insufficient, the average teacher-to-child ratio is 1:22, It is lower in rural area. The number of teachers with preschool teaching qualifications is only about 50%, and undocumented teachers still account for about 30%. Sun Zhongmin, deputy director of the Jilin Provincial People's University Education, Science, Culture and Health Committee, found that nearly 60% of the existing kindergarten teachers in Jilin Province were prepared for primary schools. And due to the low salary, the loss of preschool teachers is serious. As early as 2013, the faculty and staff of kindergartens in China formed a “national standard” of wages, but in reality, the policy was not fulfilled. The phenomenon of “one or two teachers managing a large class” in kindergartens is still common. Ma Dexiu, deputy director of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said that the qualifications for pre-primary education teachers in many areas of China are not up to standard. Some teachers only get short-term training, it is easy to cause public opinion to question the quality of kindergarten teachers.

3. **Suggestions on Solving the Problems in Preschool Education**

To solve the problems in China’s preschool education, our government, society, and parents need to work together.
First method is to accelerate the legislative process of preschool education and introduce preschool education law. Li Lihua, deputy of the National People's Congress and deputy director of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Cangzhou City, Hebei Province, believes that it is necessary to accelerate the promotion of preschool education legislation, to clarify the nature and status of preschool education, to increase the public welfare of preschool education, and to integrate preschool education into China's basic public service system. China must include education funds in the budget, legal provisions should make it lawful for more social forces to participate in pre-school education, multi-channel financing for preschool education is also quite important. Yan Wu, deputy mayor of the National People's Congress and deputy mayor of Zhuhai, suggested that the nature and status of preschool education should be clarified as soon as possible, and the same for the public welfare issues of preschool education. In addition, the development system of preschool education, the supervision system of the early education market, and the guarantee mechanism should be clarified.

Second, China should clarify the inclusiveness of preschool education and encourage, then standardize the development of private kindergartens. "China Education News" quoted Shen Jian, former director of the Education Department of Jiangsu Province, saying that it is necessary to encourage and standardize the development of private kindergartens. The concept of inclusive private kindergartens and their management methods should be further clarified at the national level. They should enjoy the same rights as public kindergartens in terms of construction planning, land supply, tax and fee reduction, bid approval, qualification recognition, teacher training, and commendation awards. Yang Shanzhen, deputy of the National People's Congress and director of the Office of the Education Supervision Committee of the Anhui Provincial Government, suggested that the public welfare, inclusiveness of preschool education, and the construction of kindergartens in urban communities should be put into practice and efforts should be made to promote and implement them. Jiang Liping, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, suggested actively exploring the ways and means of using social forces to develop universal children's education services, such as industrial funds, joint education, and entrusted management, to guide social capital and educational resources to carry out inclusive preschool education service.

Next, China should raise the preschool education management chassis and establishing a long-term financial investment mechanism. The China Education Daily quoted experts as saying that in order to achieve the goal of universally popularizing preschool education by 2020, it is necessary to clearly establish a provincial-level, county-based management system, and clearly define the development of preschool education in the province by provincial governments. Balanced development with the region while ensuring financial input. Yang Shanzhen, deputy of the National People's Congress and director of the Office of the Education Supervision Committee of the Anhui Provincial Government, suggested to establish a sound and stable central financial investment mechanism, and lean toward the central and western regions to improve local level of preschool education. The China Economic Times recommended that the central government set up special funds for the development of preschool education in rural areas, ethnic minority areas and frontier areas in the central and western regions. According to the level of economic and social development, the level of financial co-ordination is determined by local conditions.

Finally, China should construct a qualified teachers team, implement teacher qualification assessment and protect their rights and interests. Pang Lijuan, chairman of the China Committee of the World Preschool Education Organization, suggested that the basic salary of teachers should be raised to the provincial level and even to the central government level. The private kindergarten teachers should be paid equally with those of the public kindergartens. The same social security and subsidies level will help expand the number of teachers and improve their incomes. Preschool teachers should enjoy the same political status, economic status, professional status and social status with primary and secondary school teachers. The government should guarantee basic wages, social security and other treatment and professional rights of preschool teachers. Our government should also improve the qualifications, admissions and recruitment system for preschool teachers, establish
an assessment and evaluation mechanism that is consistent with the professional characteristics of preschool teachers; establish standards for predecessor teachers; and clearly protect the rights of preschool teachers in training and professional development. It should be included in the basic education teacher training system of all levels of government. Ma Dexiu, deputy director of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, recommended that the government continue to increase the financial investment in pre-school education, and take a larger proportion to improve the treatment of teachers. At the same time, encourage local governments to purchase services, award training substitutes, and special subsidies. So the gap in the treatment of teachers at public and private kindergartens will be narrowed.

Acknowledgment

This research was financially supported by Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology College of Special Plan Young Top-notch Talent Project (BIFTBJ201803), Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology Teaching Reform and Innovation Key Program (ZDJG-1709) and Fang Zhi Zhi Guang China National Textile and Apparel Council Higher Education Teaching Reform and Innovation Program (2017-08).

References