

# Development of Core Qualities of Childcare Teachers in the Context of Childcare Integration

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**Abstract:** *Kindergartens are seizing the opportunity to transform into integrated childcare as the population shows negative growth and the country promotes the development of universal childcare. In order to adapt to the kindergarten's transformation of child care integration, kindergarten teachers have also switched to child care positions and become child care teachers. During the period of work adaptation, childcare teachers face dilemmas in terms of philosophy, knowledge, competence and affectivity.*

**Keywords:** Child care integration, Child care teachers, Teacher professional development.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the development of social economy and the three-child birth policy, the demand for childcare services for infants and toddlers aged 0-3 years old has been increasing, and China's childcare service industry is ushering in the peak period of construction of "increasing quantity and improving quality" and "universal accessibility". April 2019 The Guiding Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Promoting the Development of Care Services for Infants and Toddlers Under 3 Years of Age puts forward the need to build an infant and toddler care service workforce that is of high moral character, caring, dedicated and well-qualified. This points out the direction for the training and development of childcare teachers in China. Since then, the state has also introduced a series of policies to support the construction of a childcare talent team, especially in the Code of Professional Conduct for Childcare Practitioners (for Trial Implementation), which emphasizes the need to improve the professionalism of childcare teachers. Despite the relevant policy support, there is still room for improvement in the professional development of China's childcare teachers. From the current situation, the current construction of China's childcare teacher team has problems such as confusing qualification certificates, tight supply of teachers, and insufficient professional training, which makes China's supply of specialized and high-quality childcare teachers insufficient to meet the needs of society. Therefore, it is necessary to increase attention to the improvement of the professionalism of childcare teachers.

## 2. Realistic Challenges to the Development of Core Literacy for Childcare Teachers

### 2.1 Professional Philosophy: Uncertainty about Changing Professional Roles

Since the development of child care integration is relatively short and the system is not systematic and perfect, some child care teachers lack understanding of their responsibilities after the transformation of child care integration and are subjectively unwilling to over-commit and dedicate themselves to it, so child care teachers suffer from vague and inaccurate role positioning and insufficient sense of belonging after the transformation. For one thing, the role orientation is vague. This leads to the fact that they often feel confused in

their work and are not clear about the scope of their responsibilities and work priorities. In the process of kindergarten promotion of child care integration, the career development planning of early childhood teachers has been impacted, and their original career paths and promotion channels have change

### 2.2 Professional Knowledge: The Development of Professional Knowledge is Trapped

Professional knowledge is the foundation and prerequisite for teachers to carry out teaching activities. However, at present, China's childcare teachers are still unable to grasp the work priorities of childcare integration, and confusion between childcare-related knowledge and preschool education knowledge. First, there are deficiencies in the precise grasp of work priorities. Before changing their jobs, nursery teachers were mainly responsible for the care and education of 3-6 year old, but after changing their jobs, in view of the uniqueness of infants and toddlers before the age of 3, nursery teachers are required to systematically master the knowledge of infants and toddlers' medical care and education. However, some nursery teachers are influenced by stereotypes and continue to carry out educational activities in accordance with the focus and goals of 3-6 year old, making it difficult for them to adapt to the developmental needs of 0-3 year old. Secondly, due to the significant differences between preschool education and childcare in terms of goals, contents and methods, some childcare teachers are unable to integrate the two knowledge systems, making it difficult for them to effectively update and develop their professional knowledge system. The existing knowledge system is difficult to meet the needs of child care integration. Before the transition, many teachers' professional knowledge was focused on the traditional field of early childhood education, and their knowledge of childcare services was limited. Due to the limitations of the existing knowledge system, many teachers were overwhelmed by the new challenges of childcare services, and found it difficult to provide high-quality services.

### 2.3 Professional Competence: Professional Knowledge is Lagging Behind

Childcare teachers should be cognitively oriented, armed with professional knowledge, and continue to improve their teaching skills in practice. Some childcare teachers have problems such as lack of practical operation and insufficient

accumulation of skills and experience. First, the lack of practical operation. In actual teaching activities, these teachers are often difficult to effectively transform theoretical knowledge into practical operation, resulting in poor teaching results. For example, when facing the daily life care of infants and toddlers, they may be in a frenzy due to the lack of practical experience, and are unable to efficiently complete such basic tasks as feeding and changing diapers. In addition, in the design of teaching activities, due to the lack of practical experience, they may ignore the individual differences and needs of infants and toddlers and adopt a one-size-fits-all teaching approach, which fails to meet the individualized development of infants and toddlers. Secondly, the accumulation of skills experience is insufficient. Second, insufficient accumulation of skills and experience. Childcare education is a highly practical task that requires teachers to have rich practical experience. However, some of the childcare teachers lack sufficient practical opportunities in their actual work, resulting in their skills and experience not being effectively accumulated and improved. This not only affects their teaching ability, but also limits their innovation and development in child care services. Due to the lack of experience, they may appear to be at a loss when facing the special needs of infants and toddlers and unexpected situations, and are unable to respond in a timely and effective manner, thus affecting the quality and effectiveness of child care services. Therefore, strengthening the practical exercises and experience of child care teachers is an important way to enhance their professional competence.

## **2.4 Professionalism: Inadequate Teacher Development**

The lack of professional affect is a problem that cannot be ignored in the development of core qualities of integrated childcare teachers. It is specifically manifested in the obvious sense of burnout and the gradual fading of work motivation and passion. In the process of transition, integrated child care teachers need to face many new challenges and pressures, such as the repositioning of job roles, the adjustment of the content of child care and teaching, and the expectations of parents and society. These challenges and pressures are often beyond the scope of their original experience and ability, causing some teachers to feel overwhelmed in the face of the transition, which in turn leads to burnout. They may feel that their work has become monotonous and boring, lacking a sense of achievement and satisfaction, thus gradually losing their enthusiasm and motivation for their work. In addition, some integrated child care teachers may also feel confused and uncertain about their career prospects because of the difficulties and setbacks in the transition process, which further aggravates their sense of burnout. These pressures tend to lead to burnout among teachers, who feel physically and mentally exhausted and lack enthusiasm and motivation for their work. In addition, some of the integrated child care teachers may lack strong professional beliefs and educational sentiments during the transition process. They may feel confused and uncertain about their career development prospects, making it difficult for them to continue to work deeply and contribute to the field of child care. This lack of conviction and sentiment will further affect their professionalism enhancement and career growth.

## **3. Logical Rationale for the Development of Core Qualities of Childcare Teachers**

Child care integration can facilitate the progress of early childhood teachers in their professional growth, including updating their educational concepts, expanding their professional knowledge, upgrading their teaching skills, and fostering their passion for education.

### **3.1 Logical Basis: Professional Conceptualization as a Symbiotic Pursuit of Professional Development for Childcare Teachers**

#### **3.1.1 Children's View**

Lev Tolstoy pointed out, "A teacher is a perfect teacher if he combines love for his career and love for his students in one. Teachers should be child-centered, respect children's interests and teach according to their abilities. In child care work, teachers should focus on cultivating children's autonomy, creativity and social interaction ability, providing them with colorful learning environment and resources, and promoting children's healthy growth.

#### **3.1.2 View of Teaching**

Teachers should hold a comprehensive and flexible view of teaching, understanding that teaching is not just a one-way transfer of knowledge, but a process of teacher-student interaction and joint exploration. In childcare education, teachers should focus on stimulating children's interest and curiosity in learning, encouraging them to explore and discover on their own initiative, and cultivating their practical ability and innovative thinking through games and practical activities. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to the emotional needs of children, provide them with emotional support and psychological care, and create a warm and harmonious learning atmosphere.

#### **3.1.3 View of learning**

Teachers should establish the view of learning for lifelong learning and continuous development, recognizing that learning is a process of continuous accumulation, renewal and deepening. In childcare education, teachers should actively embrace new knowledge and skills, and continuously improve their professionalism and comprehensive ability. At the same time, teachers should also focus on reflection and summarization, and continuously improve their educational philosophy and teaching methods through continuous self-reflection and practical exploration.

### **3.2 Logical Thread: Growth of Professional Knowledge as an Endogenous Driving Force for the Professional Development of Childcare Teachers**

1) Updating and expanding children's ontological knowledge  
Childcare teachers should update and expand their knowledge of children's ontology, including child psychology, child development and child pedagogy. Through in-depth understanding of children's physical and mental development,

2) cognitive characteristics and learning styles, teachers can better understand and respect young children and provide them with a more appropriate educational environment and support. In addition, teachers should pay attention to children's individual differences and tailor their teaching to meet the learning needs and development potential of different children. In the process of updating and expanding children's ontological knowledge, teachers should keep an open mind, actively study and learn from advanced educational concepts and practical experiences at home and abroad, and continuously improve their professionalism and educational ability. 2) Absorbing and enriching local knowledge While updating and expanding children's ontological knowledge, childcare teachers should also actively absorb and enrich local knowledge. Vernacular knowledge is rich in regional cultural characteristics and life wisdom, and is an indispensable part of the growing environment for young children. By incorporating vernacular knowledge, teachers can help children better recognize and understand their hometowns, and cultivate their sense of cultural identity and belonging. At the same time, the practical experience and common sense of life in vernacular knowledge can also provide children with richer learning resources and practical opportunities to promote their overall development. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to exploring and utilizing the resources of vernacular knowledge, combining them with children's ontological knowledge to provide more diversified and comprehensive educational support for young children. 3) Expanding and deepening knowledge in the field of pedagogy. For childcare teachers, it is not enough for them to master children's ontological knowledge and vernacular knowledge, but they also need to expand and deepen their knowledge in the field of pedagogy. Knowledge in the field of pedagogy covers all aspects of education, from the principles of education, educational psychology to curriculum and pedagogy, all of which are important for childcare teachers to master. By expanding and deepening their knowledge in the field of pedagogy, teachers can better understand the nature and purpose of education, master scientific educational methods and strategies, and improve the relevance and effectiveness of education. At the same time, new concepts and ideas in the field of pedagogy can also provide teachers with new perspectives and ways of thinking, stimulate their spirit of innovation and creativity, and promote the continuous development of educational practice. Therefore, nursery teachers should actively study the frontier knowledge in the field of pedagogy and constantly update their educational concepts and methods to meet the needs of the times.

### **3.3 Logical Endpoint: Professional Competence Advancement as a Goal of Professional Development for Childcare Teachers**

Professional competence is the ability of teachers to co-ordinate, implement, manage and evaluate teaching and learning, and is the engine of professional development. It covers teachers' comprehensive control of teaching activities, from curriculum design to teaching implementation, to monitoring and feedback of teaching effects, each of which requires teachers to possess a high degree of professionalism and comprehensive competence. Therefore, the advancement of professional competence is not only an inherent

requirement for the professional development of childcare teachers, but also the key to the realization of educational goals and the enhancement of educational quality. In the context of child care integration, the professional ability progression of child care teachers is particularly important. With the continuous updating of educational concepts and the rapid development of educational technology, teachers need to continuously learn and master new teaching methods and means to meet the educational needs of the new era. This requires that childcare teachers not only have solid professional knowledge, but also have the ability to be flexible and innovative, to be able to explore and innovate in practice, and to form their own unique teaching style and educational philosophy. This style and philosophy is a reflection of the teacher's personal charisma and a sign of his/her professional maturity. It makes teachers more confident in teaching practice, able to flexibly cope with various teaching situations and provide students with more personalized and high-quality educational services. At the same time, a unique teaching style and educational philosophy can also stimulate teachers' innovative spirit, promote their continuous exploration and practice in their professional fields, and contribute to the sustainable development of childcare education.

### **3.4 Logical Destination: Professional Affective Nourishment as the Nurturing Purpose of Professional Development of Childcare Teachers**

Affective literacy is an intrinsic driving force for educational activities. Education is a process of intellectual and emotional interaction with the target group in the form of mutual personality infection and mutual inspiration. Every child has an intrinsic learning need and potential, and is a unique developmental individual. Therefore, the humanistic emotional quality is a necessary quality for early childhood teachers in the multicultural context, which includes: First, early childhood teachers should have a great love for all mankind, which is not only embodied in their meticulous care for children, but also in their full commitment to the cause of education. They should regard each child as a unique individual, respect his or her personality and dignity, and treat each child with equality and fairness. At the same time, early childhood teachers also need to have an international perspective, pay attention to global children's education and development issues, and endeavor to contribute to the building of a more equitable and inclusive educational environment. Secondly, early childhood teachers should have a sense of responsibility to care for the country, society and young children. This sense of responsibility is reflected in the meticulousness of their daily care for young children, but also in their deep understanding of and positive response to the national education policy, the social and educational environment, and the needs of young children's development. They should regard the national education policy as a guide for action, actively participate in social education activities, and contribute to improving the quality of national education. At the same time, early childhood teachers need to pay attention to the physical and mental health of young children at all times, provide them with a favorable growth environment and educational resources, and promote their all-round development. The cultivation of this sense of responsibility requires early childhood teachers to

continuously improve their own professionalism and morality in order to better fulfill their educational responsibilities.

#### **4. Implementation Path for the Development of Core Qualities of Childcare Teachers**

In the context of childcare integration, childcare teachers need to have the ability to care for, educate and manage the health of infants and toddlers aged 0-6. The following four systematic development pathways, combining policy requirements and practical experience, will help teachers improve their core competencies.

##### **4.1 Basic Kinetic Energy: Building a Lifelong Learning System that Integrates “Health Care, Education and Health Care”**

The integration of healthcare, childcare and education refers to the organic integration of healthcare, childcare and early education, with the aim of providing all-round support for the growth of infants and young children between the ages of 0 and 3, and promoting their all-round development. This system aims to comprehensively improve the overall quality of childcare teachers and ensure that they are able to meet the high demands for infant and child care, education and health management in the context of childcare integration. Specifically, to build a lifelong learning system that integrates “medical care and education”, we need to start from the following aspects: First, strengthen medical knowledge training. Nursery teachers need to master basic knowledge of infant and child physiology and hygiene, disease prevention and first aid, so that they can identify and deal with children’s health problems in a timely manner during the care process. Through cooperation with medical institutions, regular professional training and practical exercises are conducted to enhance teachers’ medical literacy. Second, focus on education on nutrient and health management. Childcare teachers should understand the nutritional needs of infants and toddlers, and master scientific feeding methods, as well as how to improve the health of young children through dietary modifications. In addition, they need to pay attention to the mental health of young children, learn effective emotional management and psychological counseling skills, and provide all-round support for the healthy growth of young children. Finally, integration of educational concepts and practices. In the context of “health care and education” integration, childcare teachers not only need to have solid professional knowledge, but also need to integrate educational concepts into their daily care and teaching. By participating in educational research activities and sharing and exchanging teaching experiences, they can continuously update their educational concepts and improve their teaching abilities, so as to lay a solid foundation for the comprehensive development of infants and toddlers.

##### **4.2 Enduring Performance: Deepening Practical Capacity Development Through Industry-education Integration**

Relying on school-enterprise cooperation and real-life scenarios to strengthen teachers’ ability to “learn by doing”: firstly, the construction of practical training platforms: building childcare centers, healthcare training rooms and virtual simulation training rooms (such as VR care scenarios)

on campus, and docking with integrated kindergartens of children and early childhood education stations in the community outside the school, to provide opportunities for practice on a rotational basis. Secondly, project-based teaching: a series of project tasks, such as infant and toddler health record management, nutritional meal design, etc., are designed with the actual needs of the childcare industry, so that teachers can closely combine theoretical knowledge with practical operation during the implementation of the project and enhance their ability to solve practical problems. Third, dual-mentorship training: a mentoring team is formed by university teachers and backbone of childcare institutions to enhance clinical decision-making ability through case studies and video retrospective analysis (e.g., using the TTBCS Teacher Behavioral Coding System). Fourth, project-based practice: Teachers are organized to participate in tasks such as childcare curriculum design and the development of manuals for home and family co-education, for example, designing a “three-stage communication template” to enhance home and family co-operation skills. Through project-based practice, teachers not only gain a deeper understanding of the actual needs of the childcare industry, but also realize self-growth through continuous reflection and improvement in practice. The design of the “three-stage communication template” aims to clarify the communication process and improve the efficiency of collaboration between home and family, so as to ensure that infants and toddlers can receive consistent and high-quality care and education between home and childcare center.

##### **4.3 Continuing to be Effective; Establishing a Professional Development Mechanism for Research and Teaching that Promotes Each Other**

Promote the transformation of teachers from empirical to research-oriented, and promote the two-way transformation of theory and practice: First, subject leadership: encourage teachers to participate in research projects on the development of infants and toddlers aged 0-3 years old (e.g., norms of motor development, standards for evaluating the quality of childcare), and transform the results into school-based teaching materials or high-quality curricula; second, construction of an academic community: through interactions and collaborations within the community, teachers can learn from each other and work together to solve the difficult problems of childcare education, to A good academic atmosphere is formed. Third, reflective journal writing: Teachers are encouraged to record their observations, thoughts and feelings in their daily teaching practice, and to promote self-reflection and professional growth through writing reflective journals. This habit can help teachers distill wisdom from experience, transform the epiphanies in practice into shareable and applicable knowledge, and further promote the deep integration of theory and practice. Secondly, reflective practice: reflection is a form of thinking, which is the repeated, serious and continuous deep thinking of the subject on a certain issue or certain things, with a view to improving the practice behavior. Teachers are encouraged to engage in reflective practice, i.e., to take the problems in teaching practice as the starting point of research, and to explore and solve the actual problems of education through a systematic reflection process. This kind of practice not only requires teachers to conduct in-depth self-examination of their

daily teaching activities, but also to apply the results of reflection to the subsequent design and implementation of teaching, forming a virtuous cycle of “practice-reflection-practice again”.

#### 4.4 Integration of Competencies: Creation of a Four-dimensional Model of Empowerment Through “Post-course Competition and Certification”

With job requirements as the guide, we have integrated curriculum, competition and certification resources: first, curriculum reconstruction: we have integrated the standards of vocational skills competitions (e.g., infant and child care competitions) and the assessment points of industry certificates into the curriculum modules, and we have developed new teaching materials in the form of “microcourses + flipped classroom”. Secondly, job docking: Strengthen in-depth cooperation with childcare institutions, establish off-campus training bases, and allow students to conduct internships and practical training in actual working environments, so as to realize the seamless docking of learning and jobs. Through job docking, students can experience the real scene of childcare work, apply the theoretical knowledge learned in practice, and enhance the ability to solve practical problems. Thirdly, to promote competence through competition: teachers are organized to participate in teaching ability competitions and childcare skills competitions (e.g. infant and child care, first aid treatment), so as to polish their competence in care design and environment optimization through preparation for the competitions. Enhance quality with certificates: Encourage teachers to obtain relevant professional qualification certificates, such as baby-sitter certificates and caregiver certificates, etc., and closely combine the content of the certificate assessment with teaching practice to enhance teachers’ professionalism and vocational skills. Through the implementation of the four-dimensional empowerment model of “post-course-competition-certificate”, teachers’ practical ability, innovation ability, teamwork ability and so on have been comprehensively improved, which provides a strong support for the overall quality of the childcare teacher team. Fourth, diversified evaluation: Combining job task completion, parent satisfaction, skill certificate acquisition rate and other indicators, the training program is dynamically adjusted. Through the establishment of the multiple evaluation system, students’ learning effectiveness and professionalism can be reflected comprehensively and objectively. The degree of job task completion can visually reflect students’ practical ability and problem solving ability; parents’ satisfaction reflects students’ service attitude and communication ability; the rate of acquiring skill certificates is an important proof of students’ mastery of professional skills. Based on the feedback of these evaluation indicators, the school can make timely adjustments to the curriculum, teaching methods and practical training arrangements to ensure that the training program is always close to the needs of the industry, and to cultivate more nursery talents that meet the expectations of the society.

#### 5. Concluding Remarks

The rise of childcare integration provides a more in-depth learning ecology for the professional development of

preschool teachers. Requirements are made in terms of teachers’ professional philosophy, professional knowledge, professional competence, and professional sentiments. It is expected that this study on the development of core literacy of childcare teachers will provide new perspectives on the intellectual growth and professional development of childcare.

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