

## **Research on Zhang Xuemen's Ideas on Preschool Teacher Education and Its Practical Significance**

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**Abstract:** The ideas on preschool teacher education proposed by Mr. Zhang Xuemen are based on his own summary of educational experience and continuous research, forming a complete and systematic ideological system. It mainly emphasizes the role of internships, dividing them into four stages: observation, practice teaching, and guidance, and provides timely and feasible methods and detailed operations. Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education have promoted the development of preschool teacher education. It has shifted the focus from theoretical books to practice and organically integrated theory and practice. Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education are of great significance to the development of preschool teacher education in China. This article believes that the core of Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education lies in emphasizing the role of kindergarten practice, pragmatically addressing practical issues in the training of preschool teachers in China, actively recommending the establishment of practice bases, and designing the details of kindergarten practice in a comprehensive manner. Based on Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education, some educational inspirations have been obtained, such as the diversification of educational practice places and their interconnection, the appropriate dispersion of internship time throughout the process, the systematic organization and planning of educational internships, the diversity and depth of educational internship content, the cultivation of professional emotions, and the sense of responsibility among trainees through educational internships.

**Keywords:** Zhang Xuemen; Ideas On Preschool Teacher Education; Practice

### **Stage; Educational Inspirations**

#### **1. Introduction**

Mr. Zhang Xuemen is a renowned early childhood educator in China, often referred to as "Zhang in the North, Chen in the South" along with Mr. Chen Heqin. In the context of the time, Mr. Zhang Xuemen observed the foreign influence on early childhood education in China and began exploring ways to localize it. He realized that focusing solely on kindergarten education and neglecting preschool teacher education would not bring fundamental changes to early childhood education. Therefore, Mr. Zhang Xuemen proposed the concept of behavior curriculum, which connects activities in kindergarten with daily life, and emphasized the integration of teaching and learning, influenced by the ideas of Mr. Tao Xingzhi. He also put forward his ideas on preschool teacher education, with the most important aspect being the emphasis on practical experience and the division of practice into four stages. Based on a series of educational observations and practices, Mr. Zhang Xuemen developed a systematic and organized approach to internship in preschool teacher education.

Over time, the systematic organization and independence of Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education have become increasingly apparent. It goes beyond the confines of theoretical knowledge in textbooks and encourages students to engage in internships and practical experiences. It has profound implications and inspirations for both the historical context of preschool teacher education and the current training of early childhood education majors in various universities.

#### **2. The Conceptual Framework of Zhang Xuemen's Ideas on Preschool Teacher Education**

Mr. Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education revolve around the core concept of "the rider should learn from the horse." He proposed the idea of practical internships for preschool teachers, emphasizing the practicality of their teaching. In his book "Three Years of Internship," Mr. Zhang Xuemen proposed a systematic and organized approach to internships, highlighting the importance of their systematic and organized nature.[1] Based on this, Mr. Zhang Xuemen divided internships into four stages: observation, practice teaching, and guidance. The four stages of Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education represent a progressive process from easy to difficult. This can be seen not only from the content of the internship process for teacher trainees but also from the level of guidance provided by teachers. Initially, teachers provide more guidance, then offer suggestions, and finally only provide advice when necessary. Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education have significant implications for in-service early childhood educators, as well as for preschool teacher education at that time and in the future.

### **3. The Practical Application of Zhang Xuemen's Ideas on Preschool Teacher Education**

Based on the previous discussion of Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education, it is easy to connect them with the practical experience of today's teacher trainees. In current teacher education programs for early childhood education majors, although there are differences among universities, there are also clear similarities. Most programs include educational observation, experiencing activities in kindergartens, assisting in organizing activities, and managing children. The timing of internships is usually in the second semester of the first year or the first semester of the second year, lasting for about two weeks. The first internship is typically conducted in the central kindergarten or affiliated kindergartens of the university, with the main focus on observing kindergartens, detailed observations of classroom environments, and interactions with children, as well as making teaching aids and helping to set up the classroom environment. The main purpose is to gain a basic understanding of kindergartens, apply theoretical knowledge to practice, strengthen

professional emotions, and solidify the passion for early childhood education. It also prepares trainees for the next internship. The second internship usually takes place in the second semester of the senior year and lasts for about three months, equivalent to one semester. The main content includes teaching observation, assisting kindergarten teachers in activities, assisting in designing lesson plans, conducting independent activities, and preparing lesson plans in advance. Compared to the first internship, the second internship is more in-depth and emphasizes the trainees' autonomy and independence. The main purpose is to deepen the experience gained from the first internship and the knowledge accumulated over the three years, and to apply them to actual work. It plays an important role in the rapid growth and development of teacher trainees who are about to graduate.

The early childhood education major is a practical and applied discipline, which requires graduates to immediately assume the role of a teacher and be able to adapt quickly to their work. Zhang Xuemen's emphasis on the internship aspect in teacher education breaks away from the previous education model that solely focused on theoretical knowledge from textbooks. It emphasizes the importance of both theoretical understanding and practical experience. Zhang Xuemen's ideas on internships have important guiding implications for current teacher education programs and contribute to the development of preschool teacher education, promoting the growth of early childhood education.

### **4. Practical Application Based on Zhang Xuemen's Ideas on Preschool Teacher Education**

#### **4.1. Diversification and Close Connection of Educational Internship Sites**

Zhang Xuemen emphasized the diversification of educational internship sites, which varied in each stage of the four internship periods. This provides us with insights. Central kindergartens are ideal for providing good opportunities for teacher trainees to gain practical experience. Rural kindergartens allow trainees to understand how to organize activities with limited resources and also provide opportunities for administrative internships. Nursery schools provide opportunities to

integrate early childhood education and enhance trainees' knowledge of early childhood health care. Preparation for entering primary schools can be enhanced by connecting kindergartens with primary schools.

Currently, internships for early childhood education majors in China mainly focus on central kindergartens and private kindergartens, with limited options for other types of sites. Most of these kindergartens are located in urban areas, with a few in rural areas. There are almost no rural kindergartens. Urban public or large private kindergartens have sufficient educational resources, providing good opportunities for internships. However, if trainees go to rural or town kindergartens, they can gain more educational experience and understand the lives and experiences of preschool children in different environments. They may face challenges in organizing activities and guiding children due to limited resources and lower levels of knowledge.

Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher education provide us with important insights. The internship sites for early childhood education majors should be diversified and closely connected. Trainees should have the opportunity to choose based on their existing experience and career aspirations, in order to enhance their professional competence and strengthen their professional emotional attachment. The diversification and close connection of internship sites suggest that we should not only choose well-known public kindergartens and reputable private kindergartens for internships but also expand the scope and increase the number of our internship sites. We can consider internships in primary schools, nursery schools, early childhood education institutions, and well-functioning community kindergartens, among others. This will allow trainees to accumulate experience in different settings, encounter various challenges, and develop a comprehensive understanding of their future roles as early childhood teachers.

#### **4.2. Appropriately Dispersing Internship Time and Integrating it Throughout the Program**

Zhang Xuemen believed that the internship process is an important component of preschool teacher education. His ideas on internships span the entire program, with the observation

stage lasting for one semester in the first year, the practice teaching stage lasting for one semester in the second year, the trial teaching stage lasting for one year in the third year, and the guidance stage also lasting for one year in the fourth year. The total internship duration is three years, covering the entire university program. Based on Zhang Xuemen's ideas on internships, we can gain insights into the importance of appropriately dispersing internship time and integrating it throughout the program.

Currently, internships for early childhood education majors in China usually last for about two to three weeks in the first semester of the first year or the first semester of the second year, and for one semester in the second semester of the senior year. However, with the development of early childhood education in China and the increasing emphasis on the field, more universities are offering early childhood education programs and the number of students in this field is growing. It is rare for universities to provide internships throughout the entire program.

Following Zhang Xuemen's ideas, it is important to appropriately disperse internship time and integrate it throughout the program to achieve better internship outcomes. For example, in the first year, trainees can have one week of observation internship, mainly focused on observing kindergarten activities and understanding childcare work. In the second year, trainees can have a four to five-day practice internship at the end of the semester, mainly focused on teaching observation, making teaching aids, and assisting in teaching activities. In the senior year, trainees can have a one-semester internship, integrating applied courses such as kindergarten activity design and guidance, and summarizing and discussing previous internship experiences. Appropriately dispersing internship time and integrating it throughout the program allows trainees to gradually deepen their understanding of early childhood education, promote their rapid growth, and prepare them for independent work as early childhood teachers.

#### **4.3. Systematic Organization and Planning of Educational Internships**

Zhang Xuemen emphasized the systematic and organized nature of internships in his ideas on preschool teacher education. He divided the

internship process into four stages: observation, practice teaching, trial teaching, and guidance. Zhang Xuemen not only attached great importance to the macro-level organization of the four stages but also emphasized the details and specific methods of organizing and planning educational internships[2].

Currently, educational internships for early childhood education majors are mainly divided into two categories: childcare/observation internships and educational/trial teaching internships. The former lasts for about two weeks and mainly focuses on observing kindergarten activities and understanding childcare work, with limited opportunities for direct interaction with children and parents. The latter lasts for one semester and mainly involves assisting in educational activities, designing lesson plans, and conducting trial teaching. However, administrative aspects and learning experiences outside of kindergartens are often neglected. Zhang Xuemen's emphasis on the systematic organization and planning of internship content provides us with important insights. We should strengthen the administrative aspects of internships, as well as incorporate learning experiences outside of kindergartens. This includes developing skills in kindergarten management at the macro level, classroom management at the meso level, and individual child management and guidance at the micro level. In addition, trainees can gain experience in areas such as family education, social education, and research and innovation in education.

#### **4.4. Diversification and Depth of Educational Internship Content**

Zhang Xuemen believed that the content of educational internships should be diverse and profound. Trainees should participate in activities such as teaching observation, making teaching aids, and assisting in teaching activities. However, current internships for early childhood education majors mainly focus on childcare and education, with limited opportunities for administrative internships and learning experiences outside of kindergartens. Zhang Xuemen's emphasis on the diversification and depth of internship content provides important insights for our current education. Administrative internships cover important aspects of kindergarten management, including macro-level management of the

entire kindergarten, meso-level management of a specific class, and micro-level management and guidance of individual children. Learning experiences outside of kindergartens can include family education, social education, and research and innovation in education, which require strong professional and innovative abilities.

#### **4.5. Cultivating Professional Emotions and a Sense of Responsibility Among Teacher Trainees Through Educational Internships**

Zhang Xuemen attached great importance to the cultivation of professional emotions and a sense of responsibility among teacher trainees. He believed that the love for children and the profession can only be cultivated and experienced through practical actions. The professional qualities can only be developed and enhanced through internships. Professional emotions and a sense of responsibility are formed through trainees' personal experiences, reflection, and knowledge acquisition from society, ultimately serving the country and society.

Currently, there is more emphasis on cultivating the professional competence of teacher trainees through practical internships, but insufficient attention is given to the development of professional emotions and a sense of responsibility. Zhang Xuemen's emphasis on the cultivation of professional emotions and a sense of responsibility among teacher trainees provides us with a different perspective. It is important to pay attention to the cultivation of these aspects during internships, strengthen their integration into the internship process, and provide opportunities for trainees to experience professional satisfaction and love through practical actions. Although internships can be busy and demanding, they can also provide opportunities for trainees to gain the affection of children and develop a sense of responsibility in guiding them. When given due attention, internships can help early childhood teachers strengthen their professional emotions. Professional emotions and a sense of responsibility are essential qualities for early childhood educators, and internships are the best way to cultivate them[3].

#### **5. Conclusion**

Zhang Xuemen's ideas on preschool teacher

education have significant implications. Therefore, in the current training of preschool teachers, it is necessary to introduce Zhang Xuemen's ideas into internships, making appropriate adjustments to the duration, sites, and content of internships, and guiding the practical experience of early childhood education majors to facilitate their rapid growth. This will promote the continued progress and development of early childhood education.

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