

Original Paper

Research on the “Four-stage Progressive” Childcare Talent Cultivation Model of Higher Vocational Colleges under the “1+X” System

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Abstract

The “14th Five-Year Plan” clearly puts forward the implementation of “1+X” certificate system to further promote the long-term development of vocational and technical education. Therefore, in view of the problems such as the lack of targeted professional talent cultivation program, irrational structure of teacher team and lack of teaching resources in the development of infant and child care service and management in higher vocational colleges and universities, higher vocational colleges and universities should formulate the dual-oriented training objectives of talent demand and “1+X” certificate, construct a step-by-step curriculum system with the core of competency enhancement, promote the diversification of teachers’ sources, and expand the resources of school-enterprise cooperation of “medical and education integration”, so as to build a “four-stage gradual” child care talent cultivation mode and cultivate complex technical and skillful child care talents.

Keywords

“1+X” certificate system, Infant Care Service and Management, Models for talents cultivation

1. Introduction

The Guiding Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Promoting the Development of Care Services for Infants and Young Children Under 3 Years of Age (2019), the Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Promoting the Healthy Development of Old-Age Childcare Services (2020), and a series of policy documents such as the “Setting Standards, Management Norms, and Childcare Guidance Syllabus” for childcare institutions mark the beginning of a national integrated. This marks the beginning of national planning and overall promotion of the systematic project of childcare

services and the improvement of the quality of childcare services. According to the statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics in 2021, there are 42 million infants aged 0-3 years old in China, and according to the ratio of 1:7 between childcare personnel and care recipients, there is a talent gap of millions of people in the whole industry, and there is a serious lack of professionals in early childcare for the age of 0-3 years old. Therefore, the cultivation of high-quality infant and toddler caregivers and the provision of professional standards, scientific upbringing, parenting and loving high-quality care services have become a realistic challenge and the requirements of the times, but also the national “14th Five-Year Plan” focus on solving the people’s livelihood projects. In completion of this key livelihood project, the first thing to do is to grasp the construction of childcare professionals, so improving and strengthening the training of talents related to early childhood care in colleges and universities has become an important issue to alleviate the contradiction between the demand for infant and toddler child care in China, and the development of the child care business urgently needs to be looked squarely at.

2. The Main Problems Facing the Cultivation of Childcare Professionals in Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities

The Early Childhood Development and Health Management program will be renamed as Infant and Toddler Care Service and Management program in 2021, and the change of name and belonging to the category will make the faculty resources, talent cultivation programs, practical training places and internship bases change accordingly. However, it is difficult for many institutions to realize this change in a short period, and the existing changes are only reflected in the name of the course, the name of the training room, etc., and the internship concept, and the construction of hardware and software resources, such as faculty, equipment, and training places, is still in the planning stage, which will inevitably affect the quality of childcare personnel training.

2.1 Lack of Relevance of Talent Development Programs

With the continuous improvement of the policy of childcare personnel, the state has continuously put forward new requirements for childcare service personnel and indicated the direction of development. It adjusted from the major category of public service to which the major of early childhood development and health management belongs in 2016 to the major category of medicine and health to which the major of infant and toddler childcare service belongs in 2021. At the same time, due to the short time of the infant and childcare service and management specialty, the difficulties faced by higher vocational colleges and universities as the main force of talent training are even larger. According to the field visit found in the new talent training program development, the construction of childcare professional is easy to confuse with preschool education and early education and other professions, part of the higher vocational colleges and universities directly refer to the preschool education professional talent training program, failing to reflect the core skills training of childcare personnel, Lack of talent development models for childcare, and market demand is out of touch.

2.2 Unreasonable Structure of the Teaching Staff

At present, the full-time teachers in China's higher vocational colleges and universities are generally master and doctoral graduates of undergraduate colleges and universities offering the same or similar majors, and China's undergraduate colleges and universities have not yet opened the specialty of infant and toddler child care service and management, so most of the teachers in higher vocational child care majors come from the majors of preschool education and early education, and a small portion of them come from other majors such as fine arts, music and other majors. Teachers' educational background is not closely related to the childcare specialty, resulting in teachers' weak professional theoretical skills, lack of background support of theoretical knowledge related to infants and young children. In addition, most of the teachers have neither the relevant professional qualifications in the childcare industry, nor the practical experience in the front line of childcare industry enterprises, and even do not understand the operation mode of childcare organizations, the work content, and the responsibilities of the relevant positions, which leads to weaker professional practice skills of teachers regarding the childcare industry. The lack of theoretical literacy and practical skills, results in the lack of higher vocational childcare professionals not only competent in theoretical course teaching but also able to master the practical course teaching "dual-teacher" full-time faculty, making it difficult to accurately match the talents required by the industry to the university, and it is difficult to quickly adapt to the positions of infant and child care personnel trained in colleges and universities. Especially after the change of professional categories, with the adjustment of personnel training objectives, the lack of faculty strength in medicine and health and public service courses has become more prominent, and faculty members are "strong in teaching" and "weak in medicine", and they do not have a comprehensive grasp of the knowledge and skills of combining medicine and education in infant and child care. Their knowledge and skills in the integration of medical and educational aspects of infant and child care are incomplete, and the professional relevance of the students they train is not strong, so their shortcomings are obvious.

2.3 Lack of Teaching Resources

As an emerging specialty, the lack of teaching resources is an accompanying problem for the specialty of infant and child care service and management. Previous teaching materials are no longer applicable to the emerging specialty, and most of the teaching materials used by students are still located in the age group of 3-6 years old, while the number of teaching materials mainly for the age group of 0-3 years old is small in number and the quality is not the same. Moreover, there is a lack of relevant resources on smart vocational education and other related online platforms, which fails to meet the teaching needs of "Internet Plus". In addition, the on-campus training room of infant and toddler care service and management is still relying on the relevant training room of preschool education, although there is overlap, the infant and toddler care service and management specialty still needs to build several relevant training rooms focusing on health care and life care. At the same time, based on the needs of internship practice, higher vocational colleges and universities should establish a community of early childhood care with child care institutions, early childhood education institutions, children's health management

institutions, community health service centers and other enterprises and institutions to share common resources and form positive interaction. However, 2019 is the first year of the development of childcare institutions, the construction of childcare institutions themselves is still to be perfected, most of the teachers of the institutions are from higher vocational colleges, and there are still fewer highly educated and experienced practitioners. Therefore, when higher vocational colleges and universities cooperate with such organizations, they can only carry out shallow cooperation. And most of the students see the internship base as still mainly kindergarten, cannot contact with the actual care scene, cannot feel the actual problems and fun in the infant and child care jobs, and cannot maximize the help of student practice.

3. Construction of the “Four-stage Progressive” Nursery Training Model for Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities under the “1+X” System

“The 14th Five-Year Plan proposes “improving the national standards for vocational and technical education and implementing the ‘1+X’ certificate system”, which points out a new direction for the development of vocational and technical education. The important feature of the current pilot implementation of the “1+X” certificate system in higher vocational colleges and universities is the “integration of enrollment and recruitment” under the cooperation between schools and enterprises, and the internships of students in the real post scenarios of enterprises, realizing the “integration of science and reality”, and the training objectives are directly directed to the vocational and technical education of students. The important feature of the “1+X” certificate system is the “integration of enrollment and recruitment” under the cooperation between schools and enterprises, students’ internship in the real post situation of enterprises, realizing “integration of science and practice”, and the cultivation target is directly referring to the demand of enterprises’ posts. Based on this, the “1+X” certificate system provides a more specific and operable way and development direction for the construction of infant and toddler care services and management specialties in higher vocational schools. In the process of integration, the school and enterprise jointly formulate the X certificate standard, according to the latest technology application, skill specification and development information of the child care industry enterprises, provide content standards for the professional construction of infant and childcare service and management, which to a certain extent avoids the problem of focusing on theory rather than practice and education rather than feedback in the construction of the curriculum of the profession. At the same time, through the role of the “1+X” certificate carrier, the teaching of professional knowledge and skills becomes more targeted and oriented to improve the effectiveness of the professional curriculum construction.

3.1 Talent Demand and “1+X” Certificate Dual-oriented Training Objectives

Talent cultivation objectives stipulate the direction and quality of talent cultivation. Therefore, to optimize the professional talent cultivation mode of infant and childcare service and management, the first step is to solve the problem of cultivation goal orientation. The childcare industry has gone ahead of

the professional development, in the case of professional standards, vocational standards have not yet been introduced, and talent training objectives should be structured according to the relevant national policy documents and market demand, etc., to cultivate childcare personnel to adapt to the needs of the new industry, the new mode. Combined with the market research and analysis of childcare and the requirements for academic certificates of the profession, it is proposed to cultivate “medical and childcare” complex technical skills in health service personnel, i.e., caregivers of infants and young children’s healthy growth and development. Specifically, to cultivate people with strong ideals and beliefs, all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor, respect for children, a certain level of scientific and cultural literacy, good humanistic qualities, professional ethics and a sense of innovation, to master the basic knowledge of infant and toddler health care, developmental guidance, and education, and be able to flexibly and efficiently use the skills and strategies to engage in childcare in a complex child care environment, and be able to perform competent childcare duties in units such as child care centers, kindergarten nursery classes, and early childhood institutions. The students will be able to work as nursery teachers, early childhood education program teachers, babysitters, caregivers, and family trainers for 0-3 years old, and will be able to use their skills and strategies flexibly in complex childcare environments. At the same time, according to the teaching standards issued by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, the typical jobs are analyzed, and the vocational level certificates are selected, corresponded and refined.

3.2 A Laddered Curriculum System Centered on Competency Enhancement

The “1+X” certificate cultivates complex technical and skilled talents with “professional composite, quality composite and ability composite”. Combined with the cultivation objectives of early childhood care service and management, the course structure should be combined, hierarchical and gradient, and finally form a “course integration and ability progression” type course structure. The course structure should be combined, hierarchical and gradient, and finally form a “course integration, ability progression” type of course structure. Talent cultivation is divided into four stages, the first stage is the first academic year, in addition to the study of basic cultural courses such as Introduction to Mao and English, mainly to provide students with a preliminary understanding of the profession of the concept of strong professional courses, such as the physiological basis of infants and toddlers, infants and toddlers, early childhood education and other courses. The content of the courses in this academic year is more basic and involves a wider range of professional knowledge so that students can understand the childcare industry from the conceptual level and enhance their understanding of the profession. In addition, we offer interesting elective courses for students to choose from, to stimulate students’ curiosity about the childcare profession, and to guide students’ learning by their interests to achieve better training results. Into the second academic year, students have already had an understanding of the child care service and management profession, and even some outstanding students have already had an in-depth understanding of this, so this semester to carry out more professional and practical professional core courses, such as infant and toddler behavioral observation and guidance, infant and toddler health care, etc., and formally

enter the professional core skills learning stage. At the same time, students are arranged to participate in simple off-campus practice during holidays to realize the first step from theory to practice. After entering the 5th semester, students will mainly practice for the “X” certificates such as infant and child care worker and mother and child care worker, so that they can devote their energy to learning the courses related to the certificate assessment and give full play to their subjective initiative. Finally, the students will bring their professional interests into the terminal internship to cultivate their professional practice ability, and finally acquire comprehensive vocational ability, realizing the effect of progressive cultivation of ability.

3.3 Promoting the Diversification of Teachers’ Sources

Infant and toddler care services require a combination of preservation and education, more preservation than teaching, and more stringent requirements for students’ practical skills. Therefore, there are also higher requirements for the professional structure of teachers. On the one hand, the scope of specialization involves such areas as child health management, childcare, early education, child psychology, child nutrition, and music, dance and art; on the other hand, teachers need to understand the childcare industry and the physical and mental characteristics of infants and toddlers, and they need to take into account the cross-fertilization and integration of disciplines. Given the preschool education background and insufficient medical care of the existing teaching staff, it is necessary to strengthen the school-enterprise cooperation with children’s hospitals, childcare centers, model child care institutions, etc., and set up enterprise training bases for teachers, so that they can follow the development of the industry and constantly strengthen their professional qualities, comprehensive qualities and skill levels through on-the-job training and practice, which will also contribute to the structure of the dual-teacher teachers. It also contributes to the formation of a “dual-teacher” teacher structure. To better enhance teachers’ practical skills, schools with this specialty can try to sign cooperation agreements with children’s hospitals, so that teachers can receive professional guidance in infant and childcare, child nutrition, child psychology and other areas. At the same time, the introduction of full-time teachers with medical and nursing backgrounds, increasing the proportion of part-time teachers from outstanding enterprises and institutions during the transition period of professional transformation, and hiring medical and health professionals such as pediatricians, pediatric nurses and other health professionals as part-time teachers to make full use of their valuable practical experience to improve the students’ practical skills can solve the problem of insufficient teaching staff in a short period.

3.4 Expanding Resources for School-enterprise Cooperation in “Medical Education Integration”

School-enterprise cooperation is one of the effective ways to increase the proportion of “dual-teacher” teachers. Combined with the professional characteristics of foster care services, we make use of the professional platforms of excellent enterprises and undertakings to, on the one hand, strengthen the practical ability of full-time teachers through teachers’ enterprise training, and on the other hand, make up for the insufficiency of the professional faculty by hiring excellent clinical or part-time teachers in day-care. As a non-medical school, there is a lack of medical internship training resources. In addition to

professional childcare institutions, pediatric healthcare centers, child nutrition, child psychology and other related qualified medical units or departments are also very important training bases for professional development. Therefore, we promote teacher training with childcare institutions, and provide students with different forms of childcare services such as mosaic childcare in medical institutions, family childcare, community childcare and kindergarten childcare classes to complete off-campus internships and practical training, so as to realize zero docking between schools and enterprises. We also make full use of the on-campus training rooms, including smart classrooms, infant and toddler care, early childhood health care and nutrition, health assessment, sensory training and art skills, etc., and formulate the “Theory-Practice-Theory-Top-Location Internship” program, which is a “work-learning alternation”. We have developed a “sandwich” teaching mode of alternating work and study to realize the integration of schools and enterprises and to promote a virtuous cycle of synergistic development among children’s health care, childcare institutions and talent training.

4. Epilogue

In order to guarantee the implementation of infant and childcare services and management professional talent training programs in vocational colleges and universities, it is necessary to follow the pace of national development, comprehensively grasp the integration between market demand and talent training, so that the professional curriculum is closely linked to the certificate skills, and the relevant skills are integrated into the professional learning. Therefore, the construction of a targeted talent training model can effectively improve the professional quality of talents in the childcare industry, integrate vocational skills training into the infant and childcare service and management of professional academic education, and cultivate composite technical skills child care personnel.

Project

2022 school-level project of Chongqing Tourism Vocational College: research on “four-stage progressive” nursery education talent cultivation mode in higher vocational colleges under “1+X” certificate system (Project No.: xj2205)

Chongqing Vocational Education Teaching Reform Research Project: Research on Optimization of Quality Assurance System for Cultivating Pre-school Education Talents Based on Professional Certification (Project No. GZ223211)

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