

The Current Situation of Preschool Education Development in Ethnic Areas and Its Improvement Strategies: Take W County, S Province as an Example

WANG Yulu^{[a],*}

^[a]M.D., lecturer. College of Teachers, Chengdu University, Chengdu, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

With the increasing emphasis of the state on preschool education, pre-school education in ethnic minority areas has developed rapidly in terms of hardware conditions, teachers and curriculum construction. However, due to the constraints of geographical distribution and social and economic development level, the development of preschool education in ethnic areas still faces many difficulties and needs to be further improved. This study selected W County, S Province as the object, and used the interview method to investigate the development status of preschool education in this county, and put forward relevant development strategies based on this. The results show that in recent years, preschool education in W County has greatly improved in the construction of kindergartens, the number of teachers and the admission rate, but it still needs to be further strengthened in the layout of preschool resources, the construction of teachers, parents' education concepts and the penetration of local culture.

Key words: Ethnic regions; Preschool education; Development status; Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the beginning of basic education, preschool education

is in a basic position in the whole education. In recent years, the state has actively promoted the development of pre-school education, formulated a long-term plan and a practical and feasible plan for the development of pre-school education, and taken various positive measures to improve the enrollment rate and inclusive rate of children. The goal of preschool education development has shifted from extensive basic popularization to connotative high-quality development (Huang Jin & Xiong Cancan, 2021). However, the implementation of preschool education in rural areas in China is not sufficient and in-depth, especially in ethnic minority areas (Lu Mai et al., 2020). In ethnic areas, there are still difficulties in such aspects as ideas, funds, teachers, courses and evaluation. The high-quality development of preschool education in ethnic minority areas is an important starting point to realize the modernization of education in ethnic minority areas, and also an important starting point to stimulate the internal driving force of social and economic development in ethnic minority areas. It is of great significance to understand the basic status quo of the development of preschool education in ethnic areas, and to explore the basic strategies for high-quality development of preschool education in ethnic areas on this basis. This study takes W County, S Province as an example, through in-depth field investigation and interviews, with a view to putting forward practical and effective suggestions and strategies on the basis of sketching the development of preschool education in this county.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a combination of convenient sampling and random sampling. W County in S Province was selected as the sample county for this study, and 10 kindergartens and primary school principals and 15 teachers were randomly selected from 7 townships in the county. 26 parents of 3-6 year old children from the

above 7 villages and towns were selected as parents' representatives, of which 10 parents' children did not attend kindergarten. At the same time, One preschool education cadre from W County and six (township) and village cadres were selected. See Table 1 for details..

Table 1
Composition of Interviewees

Interviewee	Type	Number
School administrator	principle of kindergarden Primary school principal	4 6
Teacher		15
Parents	Parents of children who have entered the kindergarden	20
	Parents of children not enter in the kindergarden	6
Preschool education cadres		1
Rural cadre	Township cadres	2
	Village cadres	4

Data were collected through literature review and interview. Part of preschool education data of W County Education Bureau were collected by literature method. The interview outline of the kindergarden head and teachers mainly focuses on the kindergarden teachers, kindergarden construction, curriculum, education content, purpose, etc. The outline of parents' interview mainly includes parents' needs, pre-school education concepts, difficulties faced by entering the kindergarden, etc. The interview outline of preschool education cadres and village and town cadres mainly focuses on the basic status quo, difficulties and solutions of preschool education. In order to reassure the interviewees, a confidentiality agreement on the interview content was signed before the interview. The interview was conducted one-on-one in the kindergarden or village meeting room, and the whole process was recorded based on the consent of the interviewees.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Basic Situation of Preschool Education Development in W County

From the perspective of preschool education popularization, by 2022, there will be 3040 preschool children aged 3-6 in W County, and the enrollment rate in the three preschool years will be 93.93%, 5.83 and 2.23 percentage points higher than the national enrollment rate in the three preschool years (88.1%) and S Province (91.7%) respectively. From the perspective of kindergarden construction, W County has 22 pre-school education institutions, and more than 310 full-time pre-school teachers. Vertically, in the past decade, the three-year enrollment rate of the county has increased from about 42% to 93.93%, the number of kindergartens has increased from 5 to 22, and the number of full-time teachers has increased from more than 90 to more than 310. It can be seen that the development of preschool

education in the county is in a positive and rapid good trend.

3.2 Bottleneck of Preschool Education Development in W County

3.2.1 High Quality Preschool Education Resources are Still Scarce

In recent years, with the continuous development of social economy in W County and the acceleration of urbanization, more and more rural people have entered the county. However, the construction of kindergartens lags behind the growth rate of urban population, which brings about the problem that it is difficult for school-age children to enter the kindergartens. Taking the town where the county seat is located as an example, there are two public kindergartens in the county seat, only one of which is a provincial demonstration park, and the number of newly enrolled children is only about 120 each year. As there are few high-quality preschool education resources in the county, many families who did not belong to the county seat will also strive to attend the kindergarten. As a result, the number of applicants reaches more than 400 every year, which is difficult to meet the demand of the county for quality education. In the interview with 16 parents of children, 12 people clearly expressed their hope that their children could receive better preschool education. However, due to geographical and family economic reasons, most parents are forced to choose kindergarden classes attached to primary schools, and some parents even choose to come to the county from remote villages to accompany their children.

3.2.2 Preschool Education Resource Layout Needs to be Optimized

W County is located at the edge of Sichuan Basin, more than 1300 meters above sea level. There are many mountains around the county, towns and villages in the county are widely distributed, and the population density is small. Due to the geographical environment, most pre-school education institutions (primary school affiliated preschool classes) can only be located in villages and towns. Only 2 of the 22 pre-school education institutions in the county are located in villages. Taking one village as an example, it takes about 3-4 hours to walk from the village to the kindergarden attached to the township primary school, and it takes more than 40 minutes to use motorbikes and other means of transportation. When asking some parents of children in the village, they were also very helpless. They believed that too long a journey and too young led to too high cost of time and labor. Some township and village cadres also believe that the distribution of pre-school education resources in Wenchuan really needs to be optimized, but due to the problems of teachers and funds, it is impossible to achieve one park per village. Moreover, the number of children in each village is limited. If we want to take care of every pre-school child, it will inevitably lead to waste of resources.

3.2.3 The Construction of Teaching Staff Still Needs to be Strengthened

Due to the low salary, high work pressure, few training opportunities and low quality of preschool teachers in W County, the loss of preschool teachers in this area is relatively obvious. The teacher-student ratio in W County is obviously higher than the national standard, which causes teachers to lack the time and energy to study the characteristics of children and the laws of education. Secondly, it has become the consensus of preschool education to “interpret and support children”, that is, to give children supportive strategies on the premise of understanding their needs (Ye & Zhang, 2021). However, in the interview with some preschool teachers in W County, the researcher found that the view of “teaching” children to learn is still popular. The kindergarten, especially the primary school affiliated preschool class, has a serious tendency to teach, and the level of teacher care needs to be improved. In the interview with the head of kindergarten and teachers, the researcher investigated the purpose of preschool education, the familiarity of preschool education guidelines, and how to carry out educational activities. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Teachers’ educational concept

Interview content	Viewpoints	Number	Proportion
Purposes of preschool education	Child care	3	12%
	Reading and writing	6	24%
	Prepare for primary school	6	24%
	Interest cultivation and habit formation	10	40%
Familiarity with preschool guidance documents	Very familiar and understanding	2	8%
	Quite familiar and basic understanding	11	44%
	Not familiar, not heard	12	48%
Contents of education activities	Copying book content	19	76%
	Partially generated or designed	6	24%
Forms of educational activities	Traditional classroom teaching form	17	68%
	Some activities or play	8	32%

Third, although most preschool teachers have obtained professional qualifications through self-study, correspondence and other forms, their professional knowledge is not systematic and solid enough, their post job training lags behind, and their overall quality needs to be improved. The teaching research and scientific research in kindergartens, especially in township kindergartens, are almost at a standstill, and the space for teachers to grow is narrow. In the interview, the researchers conducted interviews around training and further education (such as training opportunities, training forms, training content) and kindergarten teaching and research. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Teacher Training and Scientific Research

Interview content	Option	Number	Proportion
Training opportunities	NEVER	5	20%
	Once	12	52%
	More than twice	8	32%
Training form	Academic Conference	3	15%
	National training, provincial training, etc	15	75%
	Further study	2	10%
Training content	Environment and materials	9	45%
	Activity organization and design	6	30%
	Play organization	4	20%
	Child observation	1	5%
Kindergarten based training	Once a semester	17	68%
	Once a month	6	24%
	Once a week	2	8%
	Participated in 2 or more topics	1	4%
Research activities	Participate in 1 project	5	20%
	NEVER	19	76%

3.2.4 Parents’ Education Concept Needs to be Improved

Among the parents interviewed, the purpose of sending children to the kindergarten can be broadly divided into the following situations. (1) See other children go to kindergarten, so your own children should also go; (2) There is no adult care at home, but there are teachers at school; (3) It is hoped that children can learn to read and write. Among the 26 parents interviewed, 59% of them believed that pre-school education was “reading”, and children entered kindergarten to learn writing and mathematics; 24% of parents think it doesn’t matter to children whether they receive pre-school education or not. In the interview, the researcher also found that the concept of parents close to towns and counties is far better than that of parents in remote villages, which is directly related to faster and better access to external information

3.2.5 Local Culture Education and Inheritance Should be Paid More Attention

Influenced by history, geography and other factors, the construction of curriculum system in ethnic areas is not perfect enough, and the development of ethnic curriculum resources is not enough (Zhang, et al., 2022). In the interview, the researcher found that only 3 of the 22 kindergartens reflected their own national culture and characteristics in the construction of hardware facilities. In terms of curriculum design, teaching activity design and environment creation, only two of the 22 kindergartens have some links partially reflected, such as the use of national costumes and handicrafts in environmental creation. In education and teaching activities, elements such as national dance and music are only carried out in large-scale activities, while they are rarely introduced into daily classroom teaching. Among all the interviewees,

only 2 preschool teachers and parents can use their own national language, master national handicrafts and understand national culture, while few parents and teachers can consciously carry out national culture education at the preschool stage. Preschool education is the beginning of basic education. How to organically integrate national culture with preschool education is one of the problems to be solved.

4. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN W COUNTY

4.1 Raise Funds Through Multiple Channels and Vigorously Develop Inclusive Education

Establish special funds for preschool education, mainly to encourage and guide inclusive preschool education and support preschool education in remote areas. It is suggested that the government should set up special funds for preschool education according to the actual needs of preschool education development for the training of kindergarten head teachers in remote areas and the supporting facilities in kindergartens. The second is to establish a multi-channel mechanism to raise funds for preschool education. Formulate relevant policies and gradually establish a funding guarantee mechanism for preschool education that is mainly government funded and funded through multiple channels. It should be formulated according to the actual situation of ethnic minority areas and the construction standards of kindergartens in this area, so as to realize the formula of funding and promote the balanced financial investment in preschool education (Zhao & Lu, 2015). The third is to introduce excellent preschool education groups in the province to lead and pair up, and gradually promote the high-quality development of W preschool education by means of famous teachers' guidance, pairing, demonstration courses and distance teaching.

4.2 Improve the Quality of Preschool Teachers

Teachers are the basic guarantee to promote the high-quality development of preschool education. Retaining and cultivating people is a question that must be answered in the development of preschool education in W County in the future. First of all, with the support of the employment policy, some kindergartens and teachers have been increased. According to the establishment standard of kindergartens issued by the provincial labor and personnel departments, the number of kindergartens in W County shall be appropriately increased according to the size of kindergartens and the number of children. Second, the government should strictly implement the qualification access system. For on duty preschool teachers, they must obtain the kindergarten teacher qualification within a time limit before continuing to engage in preschool education. The personnel who cannot

obtain the qualification of kindergarten teacher within the time limit shall be adjusted. At the same time, teachers are encouraged to improve their educational level and professional knowledge. Third, establish a reward and punishment system for township preschool teachers. The employer shall regularly assess their political ideology, professional level, work attitude and work achievements. The fourth is to formulate the minimum wage standard and social insurance system for non-public preschool teachers in villages and towns, so as to solve the worries of teachers who are willing to engage in pre-school education in remote areas. Fifth, the education department should strengthen teaching research and teacher training to improve the professional level of preschool teachers. Some qualified public kindergartens can set up early childhood education and training institutions, carry out teaching observation and research activities, and help other township kindergartens and private kindergartens to improve the quality of teachers while improving the level of their own teachers. Sixth, under the leadership of the government, it has established close contact with the pre-school education teacher training institutions in the province to achieve a new mode and channel of pre service and post service teacher training.

4.3 Develop Diversified Forms of Preschool Education and Optimize the Layout of Preschool Education Resources

Through carrying out various forms of pre-school education, such as "pre-school education caravan", and regularly organizing excellent pre-school teachers to enter villages in the form of mobile kindergartens to carry out pre-school education activities and publicity. Secondly, encourage people with a certain degree of education in the village to participate in pre-school education professional training and issue qualification certificates. Encourage them to set up "children's homes" in villages and carry out pre-school education and teaching activities. Third, adopt the system of "job rotation teaching". Preschool education teachers in counties, towns and villages should adopt the form of post replacement system, and excellent teachers and rural teachers can exchange their posts one month a year. Fourth, we should make full use of the social practice and internship opportunities of college student volunteers to improve the preschool education teachers and professional level in remote areas.

4.4 Change Parents' Ideas and Establish a Scientific Outlook on Children and Education

The change of parents' concept will directly affect the basic understanding and attitude towards preschool education. Parents and children activities similar to home cooperation are often held to enable more parents to participate in preschool education. Actively establish diversified communication methods to promote the cooperative development of the home. (Feng, 2022) First of all, kindergartens should regularly hold pre-school

education parent training meetings to change parents' outdated educational concepts. That is, from "reading, writing and recognizing" to cultivating children's interest in things and good learning habits; Secondly, some parents were organized to participate in half day activities in the kindergarten. Let parents understand their children's performance in the kindergarten as a whole, as well as the educational content and methods of the kindergarten; Third, some parents were organized to give small lectures in remote areas to popularize preschool education knowledge.

4.5 Strengthen the Development of Local Cultural Resources and Educational Practice

As a beginning, preschool education should attach importance to the inheritance, development and innovation of local culture. First of all, teachers play a key role in the development of local cultural education activities. Therefore, it is an important channel to improve teachers' ability to carry out job rotation training for preschool education teachers in W County and focus on learning local culture. The training should focus on the basic situation of pre education in ethnic minority areas, and appropriately increase the courses with local characteristics, so as to form a training system that can meet the professional growth needs of teachers in ethnic minority areas (Li & Huang, 2019). Secondly, the construction of the kindergarten and the creation of the environment should incorporate local elements as much as possible, so that children will be affected imperceptibly. Third, collect and sort out local games, music, handicrafts and other materials around local culture. Through the development of kindergarten based curriculum with local culture, gradually promote the development of education activities with local resources. Such as "I love my hometown", "I am proud of my hometown" and

other theme activities. Fourth, with the help of large-scale activities, such as sports games, local culture will run through the activities to expand the influence of local culture on children.

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