

# Research on the Dilemma and Countermeasures of Preschool Teachers' Authority

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**Abstract:** In fact, the authority of preschool teachers participates in all aspects of preschool teachers' work and should be paid attention to. However, the research on the authority of preschool teachers is still on the edge of public attention. At the same time, the authority of preschool teachers is challenged by both traditional and modern concepts, as well as multiple contradictions from the external environment and the professional interior. The current research aims to analyze the current situation, combine the new educational development situation, and promote the society, kindergartens, parents and preschool teacher groups and other levels to correctly grasp the scope and dilemma of preschool teacher authority. Through the theoretical analysis of existing research results, this paper explores effective strategies to solve the above problems, and puts forward the idea of building a new type of teacher authority.

**Keywords:** Preschool Teacher, Teacher Authority, Preschool Education

## 1. Introduction

Teacher authority is the concentrated expression of educational authority, which is an important guarantee for the standardized and orderly conduct of educational activities. In the process of education, because children's morality and reason are not mature enough, with the characteristics of "incomplete", education must exert influence on them<sup>[1]</sup>. Teachers can rely on their own rich moral, emotional experience, profound professional knowledge and superb teaching art to establish authority and win the trust of children, so that children are more likely to accept the guidance and suggestions of teachers. It can be said that the successful establishment and correct use of teacher authority is a very important way to realize the guiding and directional function of education.

On the whole, Chinese researchers have noticed some key issues of teacher authority, such as the dissolution of teacher authority, the transformation of teacher authority, the connotation of latest teacher authority, etc., but the breadth and depth of research are still relatively limited, and many problems in the field of teacher authority have not been paid attention to<sup>[2]</sup>. From the perspective of research content, many researchers study the connotation of teacher authority and the transformation of teacher authority from the perspective of teacher-student relationship, and the quality of such studies is also high. However, they mostly discuss teacher authority from the individual level, while there are few literatures on authority from the perspective of the relationship between society and teachers<sup>[3]</sup>. From the perspective of research, the most research is carried out from the perspective of pedagogy, followed by sociology, psychology, law, culture, political science and economics<sup>[4]</sup>. From the perspective of research population samples, most studies are aimed at the teacher authority of teachers in primary and secondary schools and universities, and there are very limited studies on the authority of preschool teachers in the field of preschool education<sup>[5]</sup>.

## 2. The Dilemma of Preschool Teachers' Authority

### 2.1 Lack of Theoretical Research on Preschool Teachers' Authority

"One of the most detailed and least studied questions in education is the question of the authority of man over man, the authority of the elderly over the young<sup>[6]</sup>." Up to now, the research on teacher authority in the field of education theory is still insufficient. Moreover, most of the existing research focuses on teachers' authority in primary and secondary schools and universities. As an indispensable part of the

teacher group, the authority of preschool teachers is not only a field lacking in research, but also a very complicated problem<sup>[7]</sup>. As the educator Suhomlinsky said, "Of all the educational means possessed by the teacher, the authority over the child is the most important, the most universal, the all-encompassing, and at the same time the most sharp and insecure. It is a scalpel that can be used to perform the most delicate, imperceptible operations, but it may also sting wounds. This is an unsafe, but at the same time indispensable knife<sup>[8]</sup>." Therefore, it is necessary and valuable to study the authority of preschool teachers.

### **2.2 Dilemma in the Practice of Preschool Teachers' Authority**

In terms of the actual situation of pre-school education in the whole education system, preschool teachers are undoubtedly in a vulnerable position compared with teachers in other educational institutions such as primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities in terms of social status, salary and relevant legal support<sup>[9]</sup>. All the unfavorable factors mentioned above are also the major factors that must be considered in the study of the dilemma faced by the authority of preschool teachers. Thus, it can be seen that preschool teachers are suffering from the embarrassment of their own authority being compressed and limited. At the same time, the demand for high-quality preschool education in China has remained high in recent years<sup>[10]</sup>. In the new era, society and parents also conform to the political, economic, cultural and other aspects of the development and change, and constantly put forward new requirements for preschool teachers, and placed more and more expectations on them. All these promote the kindergarten teachers must consciously change the old concept of teacher authority in the past and adapt to the development of The Times and society. The above complex contradictions between the new and the old, supply and demand, strong and weak are the challenges that modern preschool education cannot avoid and must face. However, preschool teachers are still muddled in their definition and understanding of their own educational authority, so how can they use their own initiative to actively change the unfavorable predicament of their preschool teachers' authority? Moreover, this is not only a task that can be completed independently by preschool teachers, but also requires the concerted efforts of the government, preschool education institutions, parents and other parties.

### **3. The Causes of Dilemma and Solutions**

The traditional concept of teacher authority is incompatible with the current social and educational development and even deviates from each other<sup>[11]</sup>. This brings us enlightenment, because it may be precisely this reason that leads to the public's resistance to the authority of teachers, and brings obstacles to the benign development of the authority of preschool teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the problem of preschool teachers' authority and explore how to get out of the predicament.

In the study on the authority dilemma of preschool teachers, some previous scholars analyzed the performance and causes of the weakening of teacher authority, and put forward ways to solve the problem. For example, some results suggest that mass media accelerates the weakening of teachers' authority to a certain extent<sup>[12]</sup>. This is mainly because with the mass media entering the ranks of disseminating information and culture to students, mass media has weakened the authoritative position of teachers as "social spokespersons" to a certain extent, and mass media also has advantages in transmitting social culture<sup>[13]</sup>. Secondly, some studies have explored the loss of teachers' authority from the perspective of the change of inter-generational relations. They believe that with the implementation of China's reform and opening up policy in the 1980s and the rapid development of the information industry since the 1990s, people's way of thinking and values have also undergone great changes<sup>[14]</sup>. The change of "mutual symbolic culture" to "pre-symbolic culture" and the transition of inter-generational relations to the young role models have led to the continuous loss of teachers' authority<sup>[15]</sup>. Additionally, other studies have explored the weakening of teachers' authority from the background of cultural change. They believe that modern social culture takes exploring the future as its mission, and is characterized by advocating freedom, democracy, equality and individuality<sup>[16]</sup>. Under this cultural background, teachers' institutional authority, intellectual authority and moral authority have all been weakened. And other studies have dialectically discussed the deconstruction of teachers' authority by postmodernism from the perspective of postmodernism<sup>[17]</sup>. They believe that postmodernism adheres to the viewpoints of equal dialogue, de-authority and irrationality, recognizes things from multiple perspectives and insists on the uncertainty of knowledge. As a result, the traditional authority of teachers as inheritors of "knowledge" and the position power given by society, as well as the knowledge authority are gradually fading and even disappearing<sup>[18]</sup>.

Overall, the authority of preschool teachers should realize the modernization transformation from "external dependence" to "internal generation", which not only needs to change the simple and rigid

educational management system in the past, but also "unbind" the development of teachers. Meanwhile, it is also necessary to urge preschool teachers to learn to arm themselves with the educational concept of democracy and equality, and strive to make themselves an "example" and "model" for children in the aspects of "morality, talent, learning and knowledge"<sup>[19]</sup>. Preschool teachers also need to position and reshape teachers' authority from the perspective of society, in the process of education, especially in the aspects of teachers' own professional ability. In the end, external factors such as the enforcement of laws and norms of conduct, the supervision of public opinion and mass media environment, and internal factors such as teachers' self-examination of knowledge and teaching and the cultivation of professional conduct are combined to reconstruct teachers' authority in a multi-pronged manner, so as to proactively deal with and break the weakened authority of preschool teachers.

#### 4. Discussion

Initially, more attention should be paid to theoretical and applied research. The research of preschool education in China started late, and most of the theories used at present are still from the reference of western preschool education<sup>[20]</sup>. Previous researchers lacked in-depth discussion on the authority existing in the field of education, and failed to effectively distinguish teacher authority from authority in other fields, so they could not touch the origin of teacher authority. This paper suggests that the authority of preschool teachers is related to the field of preschool education, and it has its own certain particularity. Previous results have paid much attention to the phenomenon of authority abuse of preschool teachers, and teacher authority abuse is only one of the explicit manifestations of unreasonable teacher authority. In fact, there are still some hidden forms of unreasonable teacher authority, which have more hidden negative effects on children's growth and educational activities, such as the absence of benign authority<sup>[21]</sup>, so it needs more attention. Hence, in the future, only by paying more attention to the theory and application of preschool teachers' authority can we effectively improve some problems in the field of preschool education at this stage.

Additionally, we should make proper use of the "humanistic" perspective to look at the research of preschool teachers' authority as well. Most of the research on teacher authority takes Weber's authority theory and R. Clifton and L. Roberts' theory as the foundation and starting point<sup>[22]</sup>. People seem to agree that teachers' authority comes from four aspects: social tradition, laws and regulations, teachers' professional knowledge and personality charm. The knowledge authority and inspirational authority formed by teachers' personal factors are especially emphasized. The ultimate result of this kind of research is that when people study the authority of teachers, they only consider the factors of teachers themselves, requiring their professional knowledge, professional ability, ideological quality and personality charm to be constantly improved. This kind of research logic equates the research of teacher authority with the research of teacher quality, and the research of teacher quality is almost equivalent to the research of ideal teacher. The lack of humanistic care of teachers ignores the significance and needs of teachers as individuals of life, and does not treat teachers from the sense of "human". Western studies on authority mostly focus on the field of organizational management, from the perspective of organizational leadership or management efficiency to explore the issue of authority. In these studies, authority is mostly discussed in the context of the leader and the led, the manager and the managed, and such authority is often task-oriented, which is essentially different from the teacher authority between teachers and students in the field of education. Therefore, future research should note that education is a special activity between people, and its essence is "humanistic".

#### 5. Conclusions

The dimension of future research needs to be considered more comprehensively. From the cross-sectional point of view, the content of the research should be more complete: In the existing research, the research on the authority of preschool teachers is basically selected in the category of meso level, and there are more studies from the perspective of education or kindergarten development, while the macro and micro level research is relatively insufficient. Future studies may focus on the relationship between preschool teachers' authority and political, economic and social development in the context of society or educational activities, and discuss the legal positioning, social status and labor characteristics of preschool teachers from the view of authority. From the longitudinal point of view, the depth of the research should be more detailed: the crux of the problem of the realistic dilemma in practice should be traced to the source and in-depth analysis. In terms of dimensions, future research can consider presenting multi-dimensional research: the observation perspective of research can be transformed from a single

perspective to a multi-perspective, and the disciplinary background of research can also be transformed from a single discipline to an interdisciplinary one. The theoretical basis of the research is also transferred from a single theory to a comprehensive theory.

To sum up, it is necessary to support a good social environment conducive to the operation of the authority of preschool teachers, establish and improve relevant rules and regulations, promote the professional development process of preschool teachers, give full play to the positive role of the authority of preschool teachers, and make preschool teachers' authority out of the current predicament through multi-party efforts.

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