

# Comparison of the Development Process of Preschool Education Law in China in Recent Five Years——Based on the Preschool Education Policies in 2018 and 2023

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**Abstract:** *In recent years, with the continuous improvement of society's awareness and demand for the importance of preschool education, China is committed to the reform of preschool education, and has issued a series of "preschool education" as the theme of related opinions and bill. This paper is based on the "Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Deepening the Reform and Standardized Development of Preschool Education" (2018 and 2023) and the "Preschool Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Draft)", and analyzes the development status of preschool education in China over the past five years. The aim is to explore the progress of the Preschool Education Law (Draft) through comparative analysis, and to study its guiding significance for preschool education practice.*

**Keywords:** *Preschool Education law, Policy Analysis, the Scientific Concept of Universality, Inclusive Preschool Education, Kindergarten Teacher*

## 1. Introduction

The General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued and implemented *the Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Deepening the Reform and Standardized Development of Preschool Education* in November 2018. The opinions emphasize the leading role of the government, and ensure the steady development of preschool education through the implementation of responsibilities in planning, investment, teacher team construction and supervision. We should pay attention to reform and innovation, remove institutional barriers, stimulate the vitality of kindergartens, and encourage private forces to run them. The opinions put forward to emphasize standardized management, follow the law of children's physical and mental development, implement scientific care and education, improve laws and regulations, and promote children's healthy and happy growth of children. In terms of optimizing resource allocation, it is required to plan the allocation of preschool education resources scientifically, and to formulate development plans and layout plans. In order to establish a guarantee mechanism for inclusive preschool education, we will vigorously develop public kindergartens, increase the proportion of funds, and support private kindergartens to provide inclusive services. At the same time, we will improve the popularization of preschool education in rural areas, increase investment, and expand the supply of resources.

In June 2023, *the Preschool Education Law* (draft) was discussed and adopted in principle at an executive meeting presided over by the State Council<sup>[1]</sup>. The draft includes target basis, applicable scope, nature, system, policy objectives, education rights, development principle, government responsibilities, family responsibility, social participation, management system, encourage research, commendation and reward, etc, in emphasis on safeguard the rights and interests of preschool children, promote the fairness and popularization of preschool education at the same time, also pay attention to standardize preschool education activities, to ensure the quality and safety of preschool education.

## 2. Policy comparison

From the central committee of the communist party of China under the State Council on deepening

the reform of the development of preschool education in 2018, to *the Preschool Education Law of the People's Republic of China* (draft) in 2023, it not only reflects the important role of preschool education in the national education system, but also provides a solid legal guarantee for the development of preschool education in the direction of universal, safe and high-quality.

Although the *Preschool Education Law of the People's Republic of China* (draft) originates from the Opinions, the contents and requirements of the draft are more detailed and accurate. The differences between them are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

### **2.1. Build a higher-quality public service system for preschool education**

The main goal of the 2018 Opinions has clearly pointed out that "by 2035, the three-year preschool education will be fully universal, a public service system for preschool education covering urban and rural areas with a reasonable layout will be established, and a sound preschool education management system, kindergarten management system and policy guarantee system will be formed to provide more abundant, more inclusive and more high-quality preschool education for children<sup>[1]</sup>." It can be seen that at that time, when constructing the public service system of preschool education, more attention was paid to considering the differences in different regions and layouts, and only mentioned to provide better and inclusive preschool education for children. In the 23rd Draft, Article 7 of the General Provisions clearly states that "the state shall popularize preschool education and build a preschool education public service system that covers urban and rural areas, has a reasonable layout, and is beneficial to the public welfare<sup>[2]</sup>." The emergence of the term "public welfare inclusive" indicates that in recent years, China is committed to building a public welfare inclusive preschool education public service system, and promoting the development of preschool education in the direction of public welfare and inclusive.

### **2.2. Focus on narrowing the gap in preschool education development between rural and urban areas and among regions**

The development of preschool education in different regions is affected by many factors such as economy, policies, urbanization level, etc. In view of the differences in the development of preschool education in different regions, the state's support for preschool education in different regions is also different. In the Opinions of 18 years, it was proposed that "different regions and different types of cities should solve the problems of preschool education development, and large and super-large cities should take the lead in achieving development goals<sup>[1]</sup>." This reflects that at that time, the state adopted a classified solution, taking the strong with the weak, and did not pay much attention to the development of preschool education in disadvantaged areas. The 23 draft states that "the state shall take measures to give preferential support to the development of pre-school education in rural areas, old revolutionary base areas, ethnic minority areas, border areas and less developed areas, and ensure that school-age children, orphans and disabled children from poor families receive inclusive pre-school education<sup>[2]</sup>." Professor Pang Lijuan of Beijing Normal University once proposed to establish a mechanism and system that prioritizes preschool education for rural and vulnerable groups and guarantees educational equity, and to provide various forms of subsidies such as reduction, exemption and compensation to disadvantaged groups such as poor rural areas and ethnic minorities, as well as urban and rural children with financial difficulties, orphans and disabled children<sup>[3]</sup>. It can be seen that China is paying more and more attention to narrow the gap in regional and ethnic aspects of preschool education, which is also the performance of the continuous improvement of preschool education legislation in China.

### **2.3. Highlight the leading role of the government in the development of preschool education**

In recent years, phenomena such as "sky-high kindergartens" have appeared from time to time, and the masses have reacted strongly, expecting to strengthen supervision and curb excessive profit-seeking<sup>[4]</sup>. The healthy and sustainable development of preschool education at present and in the medium and long term urgently needs to further clarify and strengthen the leading responsibility of central and local governments at all levels to develop preschool education and provide preschool education public services<sup>[3]</sup>. In 2018, although it was mentioned that it was necessary to adhere to the government's leadership and implement the responsibilities of governments at all levels in the planning, investment, construction of teachers, supervision and other aspects of preschool education, it did not provide feasible suggestions for the government, nor did it mention how the government should manage private

kindergartens and promote the development of private kindergartens in the direction of universal benefit. In contrast, the content of the draft in 2023 is more comprehensive. It not only proposes that people's governments at all levels should guide and regulate social forces to run private kindergartens according to law, and actively support private kindergartens to provide inclusive pre-school education services, but also points out that the government can purchase inclusive pre-school education services from private kindergartens according to law<sup>[2]</sup>. In addition, the draft emphasizes the prohibition of using financial funds and state-owned assets to organize for-profit private parks. It is forbidden for social capital to control public parks and non-profit private parks through mergers and acquisitions, agreement control, etc. Kindergartens may not be listed directly or indirectly as enterprise assets<sup>[4]</sup>. All these emphasize that the responsibility of the government to lead the development of preschool education is very important.

#### ***2.4. Further clarify the status, status, treatment and training title of preschool teachers***

For a long time, the status of preschool teachers has not been paid attention to. In terms of social status, many people regard preschool teachers as babysitters and think that their job is to take care of children. On the one hand, they ignore the professional work of preschool teachers. On the other hand, they also ignore that the value of preschool education is lagging and implicit. In terms of salary, because some kindergartens can not get enough financial input from the government, the salary of some teachers is generally low. For some non-staff teachers, the source of their pay is more volatile. In terms of professional training, many kindergartens ignore the professional development of teachers and do not give them appropriate skills training, resulting in some novice kindergarten teachers being "buried" within a few years after entering the kindergarten.

As a result, relevant policy documents were issued in 2018 and 2023. However, the "Opinions" in 2018 only explained that private kindergartens were equipped with sufficient staff in accordance with the staffing standards, and all types of kindergartens were equipped with health care personnel in accordance with relevant state regulations, without clarifying the specific tasks of different preschool workers. The "draft" in 2023 further strengthened the management of the teacher team, clarified the qualifications and training requirements of different teachers, and paid more attention to cultivating kindergarten teachers who love early childhood education and care for children.

#### ***2.5. Pay more attention to the role of the whole society on preschool children***

At present, kindergarten teachers and parents play a more prominent role in early childhood education. In contrast, the society's attention to early childhood education still needs to be strengthened. For a long time, the ideas and methods of preschool education in China have been misunderstood by the society, and even some people think that kindergartens should teach the knowledge of primary schools. These ideas will undoubtedly affect the atmosphere of early childhood education in China.

In addition, in recent years, the number of public cultural service institutions in China (libraries, museums, cultural centers, art galleries, science and technology museums, memorial halls, sports venues, youth palaces, children's activity centers) has shown an upward trend, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the 2022 Statistical Communique on Cultural and Tourism development shows that by the end of 2022, there were 3,303 public libraries in the country, which was 88 more than the end of the previous year. According to the communique, by the end of 2022, there were 718 art museums in China, which was 36 more than that at the end of the previous year. In 2021, there were 1,677 science and technology museums nationwide, with 152 more than that in 2020, and the exhibition area was increased by 13.03%. However, venues for preschool education for young children show a concentrated distribution and uneven status quo. Picture book libraries are very popular in large and medium-sized cities across the country, and there are also influential online picture book libraries. In Beijing, for example, within a radius of 3 kilometers, there are 5 or more picture book libraries. However, the distribution of picture book libraries in small cities or towns is not optimistic, and some small cities or towns have few picture book libraries or even no picture book libraries. This uneven distribution reflects that the society has not yet formed a general direction of early childhood education atmosphere.

The draft points out that we should pay more attention to the role of the whole society for preschool children, pay attention to the strength of society for preschool education, and pay attention to preschool children from many aspects such as infrastructure construction, educational concepts, and ideological concepts, so as to give preschool children a social atmosphere for healthy growth.

### ***2.6. The state encourages and supports scientific research in preschool education, and attaches importance to the publicity of scientific concepts and methods of preschool education***

For a long time, there are many problems in the development of preschool education: the administration of preschool education is seriously insufficient, and the leadership and management of preschool education have lost effective guarantee, the preschool education fund is seriously short of the basic fund guarantee for the development of the cause, the kindergarten management system and investment system have undergone fundamental changes, and it is urgent to build a new preschool education system in the process of building a social public service system, the status of teachers is not implemented, the treatment is not guaranteed, the team is unstable, and the conditions, powers and behaviors of various social forces in running gardens lack due norms and guarantees.<sup>[2]</sup> The reasons for these problems are mainly due to the lack of appropriate funding and attention, and the lack of understanding of social concepts, resulting in the lack of talents in preschool education, child development and related scientific research. The lack of talent guidance and relevant scientific research result in the lack of development and forward strength in preschool education, so if we want to make preschool education to get better development, the relevant theoretical guidance is essential. At the same time, due to the lack of attention from the state, the society has wrong ideas about preschool education, although in recent years the society has become more and more aware of the importance of preschool education, but there are still some ideas, that preschool education is useless, that preschool education is to take care of children, or want to carry out "elementary school" education in kindergarten. The draft states that the state encourages and supports scientific research in preschool education and child development, and attaches importance to the publicity of scientific concepts and methods of preschool education. The draft encourages scientific research on preschool education and children's development, and promotes the development of preschool education in China under the guidance of theoretical research. At the same time, the state attaches importance to the promotion of scientific preschool education concepts and methods, and establishes scientific preschool education concepts and methods for experts, scholars, teachers, and society, so as to carry out more scientific education for children and promote the improvement of the quality of early childhood education in our country.

### ***2.7. Pay more attention to the guidance of children's family education***

When carrying out relevant education courses in kindergartens, home cooperation and home co-education are important concepts. Early childhood education is not only the responsibility of kindergartens, but also needs the cooperation of parents. Home co-parenting promotes communication between families and schools, so that parents can better understand the kindergarten's education philosophy, education methods, teaching management, etc., at the same time, kindergartens can also better understand the family situation of children, family education, etc., so as to better educate children. Promote personalized development of children, through home-school cooperation, parents and teachers can have a more comprehensive understanding of the child's situation, so as to guide and help children more targeted. Home-school cooperation is of great significance to the healthy growth of students, the improvement of parents' education level and the optimization of school education environment. However, in the current kindergartens, more kindergartens are dominated by education, lack of parental participation, or the form of parental participation is floating on the surface, and there is no real formation of home co-parenting for children. According to the draft, kindergartens should actively communicate with parents or other guardians about the physical and mental development of preschool children and guide families to raise children scientifically. Parents or other guardians shall actively cooperate with and support kindergartens in carrying out care and education. It emphasizes the responsibility of both kindergartens and families to cooperate with each other to carry out more scientific education for children.

## **3. Conclusions**

In recent years, although China's preschool education has made leapfrog development and historic achievements, on the whole, China's preschool education is still a weak link in the national education system, and there is still a certain gap with the expectations of the people [4]. In order to respond to the voice of the masses, promote the universal, inclusive, safe and high-quality development of preschool education, and further clarify the public welfare nature of preschool education, the draft under the background of the new era came into being.

Under the background of the new era, the draft pays more attention to building a high-quality public

welfare and inclusive preschool education public service system, narrowing the development gap of preschool education between urban and rural areas and between regions, enhancing the leading role of the government in promoting the development of public welfare and inclusive preschool education, clarifying the responsibilities of teachers and improving their treatment. In summary, it can be seen that the draft can better reflect the people's call for the development of high-quality preschool education and meet the development needs of The Times.

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