

Effects Of Social Recognition, Intrinsic And Extrinsic Motivation, Migration Policies And Supportive Behavioral Conditions On Preschool Teachers In Guangxi Province, China

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Abstract

This paper investigates the intricate interplay between social recognition, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as the behavioral conditions on the professional development among the preschool teachers in Guangxi Province, China. Recognizing the essential role in shaping the early children's foundation in learning experiences, this study explores how these factors influence the educators' growth and commitment to their profession. Building upon these factors, a conceptual framework aims to highlight the influences between these, emphasizing their combined impact on fostering effective professional growth among preschool teachers. With the specific context and population in Guangxi Province, this study aims to provide valuable into enhancing the professional development strategies for educators in China and potentially globally.

Keywords: *preschool educators, professional growth, motivation, behavioral conditions, Guangxi Province*

Introduction

Preschool education plays a vital role in laying fundamental foundation for a child's cognitive, social¹ and emotional development (Askeland, 2019). These developments in children are equally important to learn from both classroom and at home, social emotional skills that can help shaped the children's growth include problem solving from a young age, taking turns in plays, empathy, decision-making and relationship building with other children (Askeland, 2019). These soft skills are vital to be promoted in the early years of childhood to prevent them from exhibiting challenging behaviors at a later age (Askeland, 2019).

In addition, we understand from the work of past anthropologists, developmental psychologists and neuroscientists that by involving plays in childhood education and learning can significantly contribute to the development of speech, cognitive processing, self-awareness and self-regulation (Parker et al., 2022). With such expectations to build up the future generation in a mindful and healthy environment, teaching practice and modules have been integrated and accommodated to enhance these goals for the young generation, hence as the global standards and outcomes for childhood education to expand into a more holistically view, the preschool educators' roles in shaping children have also become more demanding (Parker et al., 2022).

In most Asia countries such as China, attention has been turned to educators when there is an appeal for improving the education systems and some national governments often view educators as the main resource for education growth (Chen, 2022). Even so, there is no clear instructions or understanding in China's context as of how should the educators reform the academic curriculum and what roles they should or should not have taken in facilitating the curriculum reform (Chen, 2022).

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The well-being of preschool educators is equally vital in providing the crucial development and learning experience for children in a conducive environment. The concept of well-being encompasses “relational, contextual and discursive influences around the everyday work of educators” (Quinones et al., 2021). Research has suggested that the working conditions of early childhood educators around the world can have a significant impact on educators’ commitment and motivation, and in some cases of demanding role, may contribute to staff burnouts and high turnover rates (Quinones et al., 2021), which cause major decrease in children’s developmental growth in return.

Interacting with parents and providing feedbacks to caregivers of the children are part of the crucial role of preschool educators, as this is the most effective method for parents or guardians to understand the children’s progress in learning, however these interactions may take an emotional toll on the educators’ well-being (Quinones et al., 2021). Studies have shown that such interactions result in high workplace stress for educators and this may lead to a decrease in educators’ professional growth (Quinones et al., 2021).

In short, the professional development of preschool educators significantly impacts the quality of early childhood education, regardless of the country. It is pivotal for educators to keep learning and develop their professional growth to optimize educational outcomes, especially in shaping the children’s development. However, certain situations and contributions may still be a causal factor of preschool teachers’ professional growth.

Literature Review

In the discipline of education, professional development is a complex process that includes ongoing education, skill improvement, and personal development. According to Mann and Webb (2022), a good teacher consists of positive characteristics such as eager to learn, always engaged and stay interested as well as being collaborative in a classroom setting. The process of improving oneself as an educator in an effective manner never ceases and if the process became stalled, one might regress into self-dissatisfaction and uninterested in professional improvement (Mann & Webb, 2022).

Social recognition, a fundamental aspect of professional development, encompasses acknowledging and valuing educators’ contributions to the education world. Social recognition enhances the educators’ beliefs in themselves and their commitment to the work, and it also rewards educators for their demanding roles and struggles (Muhammad et al., 2022). Studies have proven that individuals who receive social recognition for their effort tend to show motivation and more passionate in pursuing their role, thus increasing work ethics and dedication (Muhammad et al., 2022), same goes to preschool educators who pour in their lifetime commitment in shaping the young generation for a better future.

A teacher or educator has to be professionally skilled in order for one to achieve the aim and academic objectives of a nation, as education is not only the source of cultural value, it is also a heritage of a nation that involves the saving of civilization, social norms, morality of the citizens and future generation (Muhammad et al., 2022). This is why the educators’ roles are crucial in all nations and teachers are highly respected all over developed countries - in which their responsibilities are being recognized and well aware of (Muhammad et al., 2022).

Intrinsic motivation refers to the undertaking of an activity as a passion without rewards or external incentives, it is also defined as a personal satisfaction achieved through self-initiated achievement (Scott, 2017). Intrinsic motivation for teachers often stems from the educators’ behavior in effectively promoting the children’s motivation in classroom.

The educators' care for students includes showing personal interest in the problems of the students and help them in their work (Bieg et al., 2011). In return, this allows a sense of connectedness and belonging in the children with their educators, which serve as a motivation for the children as well in learning in the classroom (Bieg et al., 2011). Furthermore, the intrinsic motivation of the preschool teachers may predict the children's motivation in a classroom setting. In this sense, the autonomous and intrinsic force reflects the teachers' thoughts and feelings in the motivation to engage in educating preschool children, for instance "why do I choose this topic?" or "what topic would be the most interesting for the children?" (Bieg et al., 2011).

Extrinsic motivation is defined as a behavior that is driven by external incentives or rewards, which may include praise or money or promotion (Scott, 2017). These external factors that drive the motivation in teaching were hypothesized in some studies as they suggested that educators engage in their passion wholly due to extrinsic factors as the educators want to be praised and respected in their profession (Scott, 2017). In general, preschool educators are not getting paid high enough to trigger extrinsic motivation, however if they are to be rewarded according to their roles and responsibilities, the motivation would increase (Scott, 2017).

The public education setting can take a huge toll on the educators' well-being as they tend to deal with a variety of challenging children. Hence, a supportive behavioral condition which is specially designed rules, routines and physical arrangements may be implemented to effectively decrease the problematic behaviors in a classroom (Scott et al., 2007). A supportive behavioral condition, including a conducive working environment, mentorship, and professional collaboration, can significantly impact preschool teachers' development and job satisfaction.

Besides, with a proper and conducive learning environment, it will increase the academic performance among the children. Research has shown that a need-supportive learning environment can be formed when preschool teachers provide a structural, autonomy support and active involvement, thus supporting the children's psychological needs for competence, autonomy and connectedness (Haakma et al., 2017). This kind of learning environment does not only motivate the preschool educators in their tasks, it also enhances the learning motivation for the children, resulting in a better academic performance and brain development.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework has been set out to demonstrate how professional growth, motivations, and social recognition are intertwined in influencing the advancement of preschool teachers in Guangxi Province, China. It derives from concepts and literature currently in existence in these subjects.

First and foremost, motivations were emphasized in most studies when it comes to the education of preschool children. The two motivations mentioned in this paper include intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The basic motivation model illustrates the factors and path of motivated behavior, which was established initially to organize constructs from various similar theories into a cognitive model of motivation (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). This model theory distinguished between four different expectations associated with four distinct stages of a series of occurrences and aided in organizing the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational values of a task, in which can be described as follow (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023):

- **Predecisional phase** - the individual set an expectation based on their desire or needs.
- **Postdecisional phase** - a period of planning and preparation for achieving the objective.
- **Action phase** - the actual period in implementing the action.

- **Postactional phase** - this is when one evaluates the outcome of the action and its consequences.

In addition, it is essential for the education system in China to include a unifying framework that includes not only a half or full day program for the children, but also for children with special needs and disabilities (NAEYC, 1993). The diversity of educational service for preschool children reflects the heritage in both social welfare and education, and even so, the professional requirements of preschool educators were sometimes lacking and minimal. As a result, many professional educators stepped into the work force without prior professional knowledge and preparation, but gained the experience and skills on the job (NAEYC, 1993).

In order for preschool educators to have a sense of recognition and enhancement on their roles, all early childhood professionals should have a prior professional preparation and skills before getting into the early childhood academic industry, which can be acquired through qualifications and professional training.

Discussion

Effective professional development programs in Guangxi Province, China, must be implemented with a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the intricate connection between the early childhood educators' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, recognition, and supportive settings. To address these factors and create an environment that supports preschool teachers' professional development and well-being while also acknowledging their contributions, educational policymakers, institutions, and stakeholders must work together.

According to Adlerstein and Cortázar (2022), the first principle of quality learning environment for preschool children in an academic setting is overall safety, which emphasizes on the basic and minimum protective conditions that must be observed before any educational provision can begin. The next principle in this factor involves the pedagogical organization that highlights the thoughtful planning and intention to motivate specific learning motivations for the preschool children (Adlerstein & Cortázar, 2022). Furthermore, spatial flexibility is included as well in the principle of quality learning setting, which encourages the "open spaces with various learning centers and adaptable zones for children's exploration and collaborate group learning" (Adlerstein & Cortázar, 2022).

The fourth principle, empowerment and authorship, emphasizes the importance in offering kids, educators, and families an opportunity to customize early learning environments at every stage of the teaching-learning process (Adlerstein & Cortázar, 2022). The child-centered design of learning environments, which includes child-adult ratios, child group sizes, child accessibility, and access to learning opportunities, is the topic of the fifth and final principle (Adlerstein & Cortázar, 2022). These five principles work together to create the framework for excellent preschool learning environments.

Conclusion

In summary, understanding and utilizing these elements are imperative in formulating all-encompassing approaches intended to augment the growth of educators and, ultimately, elevate the results of early childhood education. A more caring and supportive atmosphere that fosters the development and dedication of preschool educators can be established by those involved in education by acknowledging the importance of these components and how they connect.

The Guangxi Province in China contextual analysis brought to light the urgent necessity for an all-encompassing strategy in the creation of successful tactics for preschool teachers' professional development. Taking into account the intricate relationships that exist between motivation, social recognition, and supportive conditions, a comprehensive strategy is necessary. In addition to valuing and recognizing educators, educational authorities, institutions, and partners need to work together to establish an atmosphere that supports their inherent drive to teach, encourages a culture of lifelong learning, and provides sufficient resources.

Advocates can create specialized procedures, programs, and policies targeted at developing a flourishing ecosystem for preschool educators by recognizing these components and their interconnection. This strategy can greatly improve the quality of early childhood education, which will ultimately help young learners' holistic development and contribute to a more vibrant educational environment in Guangxi Province and beyond.

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