Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Global Politics and Socio-Humanities
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2024.20417

Comparison of Chinese and Finnish Kindergartens

Jiaqi Yang[1,a,*]

[1]*Department of Computing, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 211100, China*
a. yangjiaqi2025@outlook.com
**corresponding author*

Abstract: In recent years, the Chinese government has promulgated many policies and regulations regarding education, with an increasing focus on kindergartens. Due to the late start of preschool education in our country, there is a significant gap in development compared to developed countries in the West. Finland is a strong power in Northern Europe, especially in the field of preschool education. Therefore, this study will compare and analyze the differences between Chinese and Finnish kindergartens from three aspects: curriculum, class management and teachers. It aims to provide references and development guidelines for the development of Chinese kindergartens. It found that there are many differences between Chinese and Finnish kindergartens due to demographic and educational system issues. There are aspects of Finnish kindergartens that Chinese kindergartens can learn from. Aimed at providing better examples and references for Chinese kindergartens that are still in the exploratory stage, China can change the kindergarten setting model, open small-class kindergartens for teaching, and innovate the curriculum model.

Keywords: China, Finland, Kindergarten.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese government has increasingly emphasized kindergartens and preschool education, and has introduced relevant safeguard measures. Society's attention to kindergartens is gradually increasing, and kindergartens have become a focal point of public concern. Promoting the comprehensive development of children through education in kindergartens has become a hot topic. However, China's early childhood education started late and is relatively backward compared to Western countries. Therefore, early childhood education still has a long way to go.

The focus of early childhood education is on kindergartens, so kindergartens need to be developed and improved. Finland is a strong country in education, and its early childhood education is leading the world. This study analyzes the differences between Chinese and Finnish kindergartens in terms of curriculum facilities, management, and teachers. Through comparative analysis, it seeks to open up new ideas for the better development of Chinese kindergartens and promote their improvement.

2. Curriculum

2.1. China

The *Outline for the Development of Children Aged 3-6* and *Guidelines for the Development of Children Aged 3-6* formulated by the Chinese government serve as the main basis for curriculum

© 2025 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2024.20417

development based on the corresponding child development goals clearly defined in the documents. The curriculum should be closely aligned with the child's level and must not deviate, otherwise the curriculum will be deemed invalid.

The curriculum of Chinese kindergartens mainly focuses on collective teaching activities. The kindergarten curriculum is a collective teaching activity based on daily life and has clear time regulations. Each has clear activity content and requirements. What time do children enter the kindergarten, what time do they exercise in the morning, and what time do they arrive early to start the course teaching? The time for course teaching activities is determined according to the growth and development characteristics of children's age. For example, 3-year-old children participate in group teaching activities for 10-20 minutes, 4-year-old children participate in group teaching activities for 20-25 minutes, and 5-year-old children participate in group teaching activities for 25-30 minutes.

The content of kindergarten education involves five aspects: health, language, society, science, and art. China needs to develop a weekly teaching plan one week in advance, integrating the five aspects into the weekly teaching activities. Teachers set the goals, processes, and outcomes of collective teaching activities based on relevant documents and children's developmental levels. Games are listed as part of collective teaching activities.

Teachers are required to fill out a "teaching plan" when developing the curriculum, which mainly includes: design intention, activity objectives, key and difficult points of the activity, activity preparation (including material and spiritual preparation), activity content (including four aspects and the beginning and end of activity introduction, etc.), activity summary and reflection. In general, teachers should structure the framework theme in advance before setting up the curriculum, and the class content should be closely integrated with the theme and not deviate arbitrarily.

2.2. Finland

Finnish kindergartens do not have a "classroom" session, and outdoor activities are actually the most important content [1].

Finnish kindergartens do not have a clear curriculum system like in China, and they do not follow group activities or even teach children of the same age together. Finnish kindergartens focus on games and advocate that children should learn through games rather than following the rules in the classroom. One teacher can lead up to six children, and children can decide what they want to do today based on their mood and thoughts. They can do the game activities they want to do instead of having to do them within the designated time. Finland does not prioritize the knowledge learned by young children, but instead includes a variety of rich practical activities. Focus on inspiring and guiding young children, allowing them to learn knowledge from games, nature, painting, reading, and language communication, especially social interaction and teamwork skills.

In the Finnish kindergarten curriculum, there is great emphasis on aspects related to children's integrity, which is also inseparable from the social values of the Finnish people. This is particularly prominent in the curriculum standards. In the field of "language and interaction", "encourage and guide children to gradually become active narrators and listeners in daily communication and learning environments, so that children are accustomed to telling and discussing their feelings, hopes, opinions, and ideas". This is beneficial for the language and social development of young children [2].

The Finnish kindergarten curriculum places great emphasis on the aspects of environment and nature. Finland specifically discusses "exploration of environment and nature" in the "Core Curriculum". Finnish kindergarten curriculum that 'let children consider biodiversity and environmental beauty in their actions'. This reflects the cultivation of children's environmental awareness in Finnish kindergartens, while Chinese kindergartens mention less in this regard. The Finnish kindergarten curriculum places great emphasis on the role of young children in the curriculum,

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2024.20417

following the concept of "child centeredness". Unlike the "teacher centeredness" concept in Chinese kindergartens, the curriculum in Finnish kindergartens is more flexible and diverse, without fixed teaching content or collective teaching activities. The curriculum is more flexible and dispersed, with young children as the main body.

3. Class Management

3.1. China

Chinese kindergarten class management divides children of the same age into a class based on age, with a typical class size of 20-30 children. The class is divided into functional areas, with teachers divided into different types of zones. For example, there is an art area where children can play painting games and handmade crafts, a living area where children can engage in role-playing and a series of activities, a reading area where children can read books, a puzzle area where children can play puzzle games, and a construction area where children can play cooperative games such as building blocks and piecing together. Each region has its responsibilities and represents different roles for children to choose independently.

In Chinese kindergarten class management, teachers are the main body of class management, while children are the main body of learning and game activities [3]. The role of teachers in class management is crucial, as they promptly intervene in conflicts among children during activities, observe the state of each child during activities, and promptly inquire if any issues arise.

3.2. Finland

Finland does not have clear regulations in kindergarten class management, except for some safety and hygiene aspects such as teachers being the main theme. Finnish kindergartens mainly adopt classes, where children of different ages are placed in the same class. Learning and communicating with each other among children of different ages is beneficial for the development of their peer communication skills. There is no clear division of areas within Finnish kindergarten classes, only indoor and outdoor areas for children to choose where they want to go. There are no clear restrictions on indoor game activities, and children can choose game content according to their own ideas. Kindergartens are not only places for children to receive enlightenment education, but also responsible for serving disadvantaged families and children. From the perspective of social public demand, develop a set of early childhood education concepts that emphasize both education and childcare [4]. Early childhood education in Finland is roughly divided into two stages: childcare and education, and preschool education. Early childhood care and education provide education for children aged 0-6. Finnish babies can be sent to kindergarten by their parents at 9 months old and participate in activities with children of different ages. Although Finland advocates education, it does not mean that children of all ages should be active together. Teachers will also divide children aged 0-6 into two groups, 0-3 years old and 3-6 years old, as needed. An open and inclusive material environment supports education. In Finnish kindergartens, a variety of space designs and item placements facilitate the smooth implementation of education from various aspects. For example, the spacious activity area allows children to move freely, the open book storage rack is convenient for children and teachers to access, the adjustable chairs are suitable for children of different ages, and the chairs under the children's toilet make it possible for young children to use the toilet. The most eye-catching among them is the wooden chair shown in the picture. The seat board and pedals on the chair can be removed and reinstalled according to actual needs. These small details make the entire kindergarten welcome all children with an open attitude [5].

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2024.20417

4. Teacher

4.1. China

The arrangement of kindergarten teachers in China includes one homeroom teacher, one teaching assistant, and one preschool teacher per class. The homeroom teacher is responsible for all aspects of class management, while the teaching assistant assists the homeroom teacher. These two teachers are responsible for the daily lives and curriculum teaching of the children, as well as creating a classroom environment. Preschool care teachers are responsible for disinfecting children's cups and towels, taking breakfast from the cafeteria, maintaining class hygiene, and carrying out disinfection work. Three teachers manage the entire class of children. In addition to teaching activities, teachers also need to fill out the class observation record form for young children and follow-up visits from parents of young children. It is also necessary to fill in the theme month and weekly schedule of curriculum activities in the kindergarten from Monday to Friday. In addition, preschool teachers should adopt a combination of childcare and education, and not only have rich knowledge of childcare, but also professional skills. Teachers are also responsible for creating the classroom environment and theme walls. They need to handcraft corresponding activity props and handicrafts based on this month's theme, and decorate the classroom with these decorations. In Chinese kindergartens, classrooms can be seen to be made and decorated with many handmade classroom works. In addition, teachers also need to participate in relevant activities and training, as well as professional learning, and there will be evaluations such as open classes and themed courses.

The Chinese government is currently vigorously promoting preschool teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree, but there are still many private kindergartens and some preschool teachers who do not have a bachelor's degree.

4.2. Finland

There are only two types of teachers in Finland, one responsible for accompanying young children and the other for maintaining a hygienic environment. The focus of teachers is entirely on young children, without involving in environmental setup or other tasks.

Kindergarten teachers trained in Finland are also known for their high academic qualifications and are qualified to engage in preschool education

Kindergarten teachers must have received at least an undergraduate education and obtained a bachelor's degree [6]. Teachers will receive systematic vocational training before joining, and their main and primary job is to accompany young children.

5. Inspiration

5.1. China’s Kindergarten Classes

Adapt to China's national conditions, popularize education, combine education with Chinese kindergartens, and create kindergartens that are suitable for the actual situation of Chinese kindergartens [7]. Due to the large population base in China before, it is not practical to carry out small-class kindergartens in China. However, with the sharp decline in the number of newborns in China and the trend of kindergarten closures, China can transform the kindergarten setting mode and open small-class kindergartens for teaching. Compared with the collective teaching mode, mixed-age kindergartens have the potential to promote the development of children's language, society, and other aspects, as well as enhance their ability to interact and cooperate with peers [8].

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2024.20417

5.2. China

Chinese kindergartens should innovate their curriculum models. Games should not serve the curriculum, but rather promote the comprehensive development of young children. China should change its evaluation criteria for young children, not only focusing on the amount of knowledge they acquire, but also on their comprehensive development [9]. China should pay attention to the individual differences of young children. China explicitly states in the *Guidelines for Preschool Education (Trial)* that "individual differences of young children should be recognized and paid attention to, and uniform standards should be avoided to evaluate different children". Horizontal comparisons should be used with caution in front of young children [10].

6. Conclusions

By comparing and analyzing the differences between China and Finland in terms of kindergartens, people can see two completely different curriculum systems and kindergarten settings. Through comparison, people can find many areas for improvement in Chinese kindergartens. By learning from the strengths of Finnish kindergartens and combining their own specific realities, Chinese kindergartens can make improvements to promote the development of early childhood education in China, allowing children to develop comprehensively in a healthy sound manner in kindergartens.

References

[1] *Wang, Y. (2012). Why Finnish kindergartens don't have "classes". Basic Education (29), 60.*
[2] *Zhu, J. Y., & Zhu, W. P. (2016). The background characteristics, and inspiration of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Preschool Education. Education and Teaching Research (07), 124-128.*
[3] *National Board Education. National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2010) [EB/OL]. http://www.oph.fi/english/education-system/earlyhood-education, 2014-04-15.*
[4] *Zhang, C. Y. (2024). On the routine management of kindergarten classes. Children and Health (09), 52-54.*
[5] *Wen, D. (2018). Early education: A balance between teaching and care. Shanghai Education (08), 62-65.*
[6] *Zhou, Y. N.2020). Mixed-age education in Finnish kindergartens. Early Education (02), 20-21*
[7] *Liu Xiaohong. (2020). Characteristics and Implications of the Ecological Environment of Finnish Early Education. Henan Education (Early Childhood Education) (06), 9-12.*
[8] *Zhang Yanyan. (2024). Strategies and Practice of Daily Life Management for Young Children. Study Abroad (14), 72.*
[9] *Fang Hai. (2000). Educational Space Design: Jokiniemi Kindergarten in Helsinki, Finland. Interior Design and Decoration (08) 68-71.*
[10] *Du, X. (2020). Reflections on Visiting Finnish Kindergartens. Teachers' Horizons, (26),68-70.*