

Differences between Urban and Rural Preschool English Education and countermeasures: A Case study of Xuzhou city

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Abstract

In recent years, with the introduction of the policy of "Vigorously promoting the scientific connection between kindergarten and primary school" by the Ministry of Education, preschool education has aroused the attention of most parents and the whole society. To investigate the relationship between English teachers, English teaching methods, family preschool education concepts and preschool children's English learning results, we select a total of 160 children and their parents from 8 kindergartens to study the differences between urban and rural preschool English education through questionnaire survey and literature analysis. The paper also discusses the feasible measures to narrow the differences.

Keywords

Preschool English education; Urban-rural differences; Faculty; Teaching method; Concept of family preschool education.

1. Research Background

Since the goal of "basic universal preschool education" was proposed in the Outline of National Medium - and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) (hereinafter referred to as the Outline of the Plan) [1], preschool education has been of great significance to children's physical and mental health, habit formation and intellectual development. At the stage of preschool education, "let every child receive fair and quality education" has become the development direction of preschool education in China. However, there are still inescapable differences between urban and rural areas, especially in preschool English education, which has attracted extensive attention from parents and sociologists. Taking the main urban area of Xuzhou city and six counties under the jurisdiction of Xuzhou city as examples, this paper aims to explore the root of the differences between urban and rural preschool English education, and put forward appropriate countermeasures to narrow the gap, hoping to promote the development of local preschool education to some extent.

2. Research Design

2.1. Research Question

This paper aims to study the current situation of urban and rural preschool English education in Xuzhou. Firstly, what are the differences between urban and rural preschool English teachers in Xuzhou? Secondly, what are the differences between urban and rural preschool English teaching facilities and teaching methods in Xuzhou? Thirdly, what are the differences in the concepts of preschool education between urban and rural families in Xuzhou? Fourthly, what feasible suggestions can be put forward to minimize the above differences?

2.2. Research Object

Taking Xuzhou city as an example, this study explores the differences between urban and rural English preschool education. Considering that the average urbanization rate in southern

Jiangsu is 82.6%, higher than the level of developed countries (80%), the urban-rural differences are not obvious. Although Xuzhou is a rapidly developing city in the north of Jiangsu province in recent years, there is a large gap between urban and rural areas in all aspects, so it is representative of research. In this study, kindergartens in the main urban area of Xuzhou city and liuxian county were selected as urban kindergartens. Main and six counties and townships as rural kindergarten kindergarten, according to the number of kindergarten kindergarten, the total number of sampling in each region city kindergarten about selection according to the average every 20 kindergarten 1 (5%), rural kindergarten according to average about every 20 kindergarten to choose 1 (5%) to calculate, using stratified class extraction principle, Eight kindergartens were sampled, and all children in the classes were considered as monitoring samples. 160 children aged 3 to 6 and their parents were selected from 80 urban and rural kindergartens respectively. A total of 160 children aged 3-6 years and their parents were tested in this study, with an effective rate of 152 and an effective rate of 81.28%. See Table 1 for specific information.

Table 1. Basic information of subjects (N=160)

Variable	category	N	Percentage (%)	Variable	category	N	Percentage(%)
Urban parents	Father	11	13.8%	Rural parents	Father	8	10.0%
	Mother	55	68.8%		Mother	52	65.0%
	Grandparents	11	13.8%		Grandparents	16	20.0%
	Others	3	3.8%		Others	4	5.0%
Family monthly income	Less than 3000 yuan	3	3.8%	Family monthly income	Less than 3000 yuan	6	7.5%
	3000-5000yuan	4	5.0%		3000-5000yuan	10	12.5%
	5000-8000yuan	8	10.0%		5000-8000yuan	28	35.0%
	8000-10000yuan	29	36.3%		8000-10000yuan	21	26.3%
	10000-15000 yuan	27	33.8%		10000-15000yuan	11	13.8%
	Above 15000 yuan	9	11.3%		Above 15000 yuan	4	5.0%
Urban parents education	junior high school or below	10	12.5%	Rural parents education	junior high school or below	26	32.5%
	Senior high school	12	15.0%		Senior high school	9	11.3%
	secondary school	7	8.8%		secondary school	31	38.8%
	junior college	25	31.3%		junior college	11	13.8%
	bachelor's degree or above	26	32.5%		bachelor's degree or above	3	3.8%
	Degree of emphasis(1-5) "5"stands for the highest degree; "1"stands for the lowest degree				Degree of emphasis(1-5) "5"stands for the highest degree; "1"stands for the lowest degree		
The importance attach to preschool English teaching in urban areas	5	40	50.0%	The importance attach to preschool English teaching in rural areas	5	18	22.5%
	4	25	31.3%		4	12	15.0%
	3	12	15.0%		3	35	43.8%
	2	8	10.0%		2	15	18.8%
	1	5	6.3%		1	5	6.3%

2.3. Research Tools

2.3.1. Questionnaire Survey Adopted in This Study

The content of the questionnaire involves teachers, basic information of English teaching and family's concept of preschool education. The questionnaire is designed with selective questions and open questions, which are first distributed in a small range and then collected and further modified and optimized. Finally, the questionnaire questions are determined with high validity and CronbachAlph coefficient of 0.79, which has high reliability.

2.3.2. English learning Effect Measurement Scale

The children's English learning effect is measured by the Learning and Development Guide for Children aged 3-6, which is jointly compiled by the research group and UNICEF in the Field of Learning Quality[2]. Researchers observe children's performance in three cognitive activities in detail through individual measurement, and record and score them on the observation record sheet according to the scoring criteria (Table 2). The score is divided into five grades, with the lowest score being 0 and the highest score being 4.

Table 2. English learning effect and corresponding Activities

English learning effect Of three dimensions	Curiosity and Interest	Initiative	Output of English content
corresponding Activity	Test question	Test question	Test question

2.3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

345 questionnaires were distributed in this study, and 337 valid questionnaires were collected. In addition to issuing questionnaires, team members also carried out surveys in other forms, such as attending classes in some urban and rural kindergartens, communicating with teachers face-to-face or via email, and interviewing parents. The collected data were mainly processed in the following ways: data proportion analysis and SPSS regression linear analysis statistics.

3. Analysis of Survey Results

3.1. English Teachers and Children's English Learning

Table 3. Differences of age and teaching seniority

Urban schools						Rural schools					
Age (year)	Num ber	Percen tage	Teaching seniority (year)	Num ber	percen tage	Age (year)	Num ber	Percen tage	Teaching seniority (year)	Num ber	Percen tage
20-29	16	32	1-3	8	16	20-29	18	32.8	1-3	8	14.5
30-39	17	34	4-10	12	24	30-39	21	38.2	4-10	25	45.5
40-49	13	26	11-15	19	38	40-49	11	20	11-15	15	27.3
50-59	4	8	above 15	11	22	50-59	5	9	above15	7	12.7
Valid questionnaires	50	100	Valid questionnaires	50	100	Valid questionnaires	55	100	Valid questionnaires	55	100

The following part analyzes the investigation results of preschool English teachers, teaching content, teaching methods, parents' educational concepts and other aspects in urban and rural areas. First of all, there is a significant difference in the age and teaching experience of urban and rural teachers. The number of teachers who have been teaching for more than 10 years in rural kindergartens is 23, accounting for 41.8% of the effective value, while the number of teachers who have been teaching for more than 10 years in urban kindergartens is 30, accounting for 60% of the effective value. In addition, compared with cities, preschool teachers under the age of 28 account for 32%, and teachers with less than three years of teaching

experience account for 14.5% of the total in rural areas. The proportion of young teachers is too large, which will make it difficult to guarantee high quality of teaching.

Secondly, there is a significant difference between urban and rural preschool English teachers in terms of academic qualifications. In the rural schools, the proportion of teachers with the first degree as secondary teachers or junior college is larger, reaching 40%. The proportion of urban preschool teachers with a bachelor's degree or above was much higher than that of rural teachers (62% in urban areas and 49.8% in rural areas). The proportion of urban preschool English teachers as postgraduate is significantly higher than that of rural preschool English teachers (10% in urban areas and 5.5% in rural areas).

Table 4. Educational background differences

	Urban schools						Rural schools					
	First degree	Number	Percentage	Highest degree	Number	Percentage	First degree	Number	Percentage	Highest degree	Number	Percentage
Technical secondary school	6	12	Technical secondary school	6	12	Technical secondary school	8	14.5	Technical secondary school	8	14.5	
Junior college	10	20	Junior college	10	20	Junior college	14	25.5	Junior college	14	25.5	
Undergraduate	31	62	Undergraduate	29	58	Undergraduate	27	49.8	Undergraduate	26	47.3	
Master degree	3	6	Master degree	3	10	Master degree	3	10.2	Master degree	3	5.5	
Valid questionnaire	50	100	Valid questionnaire	50	100	Valid questionnaire	55	100	Valid questionnaire	55	100	

3.2. Family Concepts of Preschool Education and Children's English Learning

Parents are the first teachers of children, and the family learning environment is the earliest learning environment for children in their early growth, which plays an important role in the development of children's learning quality. Family socioeconomic status has two commonly used international indicators including parents' education level and per capita disposable income, and is an important structural indicator affecting children's learning and development [3]. According to the family investment theory, families with high socioeconomic status can establish a beneficial learning environment, which helps to cultivate children's learning interest and participation, and prepare them for adapting to the classroom environment [4].

This questionnaire investigates the relationship between parents' English level (parents' educational background), family income, parents' attitude towards children's English learning, parents' requirements for kindergarten facilities and teachers and children's English learning effect. Under the economic system of dual opposition, the gap between urban and rural infant development has become the focus of researchers [5]. Studies have found that rural children are inferior to urban children in terms of cognition, language, sociality and other aspects of development. For details, see Table 5.

1. The fitting degree of this linear regression model is good, $R^2=0.695>0.6$, which means that the results of this survey can very truly and reliably reflect the influence of parents' educational background, family income, early English education and frequency of communicating with children in English at home on learning effect.

2. VIF is all less than 5 so there is no multicollinearity between the four independent variables.

3. The regression equation is significant, $F=146.583$, $P<0.001$, which means that at least one of the four independent variables can significantly affect the dependent variable---English learning effect

4. Parents' educational background, early English education and communicating with children in English at home has significantly positive effects on English learning effect ($P < 0.05$). However, family income has no significant effect on English learning effect ($P > 0.05$).

Table 5. Regression linear analysis -1

project	Regression coefficient	t	P (significant)	VIF
Learning effect	2.12	2.579	0.010*	
Parents education	0.402	5.464	0.000*	1.16
Family monthly income	0.024	0.402	0.305	1.02
Family concepts of Early English Education	0.337	4.934	0.000*	1.22
Frequency of communicating with your children in English at home	0.265	6.454	0.000*	1.26
Sample size	160			
R ²	0.695			
F	146.583			
P	P < 0.001			

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

3.3. Comparative Analysis of the Contents and Methods of English Teaching in Kindergartens in Urban and Rural Areas

Teachers' factors have a guiding effect on children's Interest in English learning, mainly including teaching philosophy, teaching ability, teaching wit, teaching passion and role awareness. In this study, we compare Chinese and English teaching modes (Chinese and English mixed or all English), teaching materials (self-written or reference materials), modern teaching methods and teaching contents (English nursery rhymes or songs or simple sentences) in different kindergartens.

This survey is about the relationship between English teachers' teaching methods, teaching modes, teaching means and kindergarten's teaching facilities and students' English learning effect. See Table 6 for specific information.

Table 6. Regression linear analysis -2

Project	Regression coefficient	t	P (significant)	VIF
Learning effect	2.12	2.579	0.020*	
Teaching facilities	0.201	0.402	0.038	1.26
teaching methods	0.024	2.313	0.005*	1.32
teaching mode	0.337	3.934	0.001*	1.02
teaching means	0.265	5.644	0.000*	1.15
sample size	105			
R ²	0.563			
F	126.543			
P	P < 0.001			

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

1. The fitting degree of this linear regression model is good, $R^2 = 0.563 > 0.5$, which means that the results of this survey can very truly and reliably reflect the impact of teaching facilities, teaching methods, teaching modes and teaching means on the learning effect.

2. VIF is all less than 5, and there is no multicollinearity between the four independent variables.
3. The regression equation is significant, $F=126.543$, $P<0.001$, which means that at least one of the four independent variables can significantly affect the English learning effect of the dependent variable.
4. Teaching methods, teaching modes and teaching methods can significantly positively influence the learning effect of English ($P<0.05$). However, teaching facilities has no significant effect on English learning effect ($P>0.05$).

4. Solutions

4.1. Strengthen the Construction of Teaching Staff

English learning, which plays a crucial role in the growth of children, is the enlightenment stage in the whole education process[6]. Therefore, the quality of preschool English teachers is very important. Rural schools should improve the entry requirements for preschool English teachers and strictly implement the teacher qualification system. Meanwhile, the school need to broaden the source of preschool English teachers appropriately, by improving the treatment of rural preschool English teachers to attract more English teachers to work in the countryside. In this process, the financial support from government and social organizations is indispensable. Apart from increasing investment in rural education, the government should also raise the salary level of preschool English teachers and set up hardship allowances to attract more talented people to teach in rural areas. What's more, the school ought to organize job training for new teachers actively and improve their professional quality constantly. Finally, schools with advanced equipment can make full use of online learning platforms to learn excellent teaching methods, so as to narrow the differences between urban and rural preschool English education [2].

4.2. Adopt Scientific Teaching Methods

Language teaching is strongly practical, which requires preschool English teachers to adopt modern teaching methods to organize classroom activities effectively and ensure every student can participate in the classroom actively. Secondly, seize the children's curiosity and characteristics. Teachers can combine difficult knowledge points with actual situation of students, then design a variety of forms of activities, so that children are able to achieve the purpose of combining learning with use.

4.3. Create A Good Family Learning Environment

Rich family learning environment for children provide the opportunities of positive learning quality development. Studies have shown that the cultivation of children's learning quality is realized in various participative activities, and adults play an important role in the cultivation of children's learning quality [7]. According to the results of this study, the support of family preschool concept can promote the development of children's English language initiative and interest. Therefore, parents should pay attention to the influence of family support on children's English learning and further improve the concept of family preschool education. On the one hand, children can be exposed to more contact and understanding of English, such as listening to English children's songs, watching cartoons appropriately, and telling English stories to children, but do not instill together. It is important to cultivate children's interest. On the other hand, parents can tutor their children to read aloud, or play pure audio and video, and if conditions permit, they can also teach their children to read and slowly let them read independently. On the English learning of children, they can adhere to the scientific education concept, protect children's subjectivity, and encourage children's language learning by means of praise.

4.4. Take Active Responsibility

The government, as a leader in promoting the development of education, should strengthen its own responsibility and realize that the unbalanced development of social and economic development in various regions of China leads to the unbalanced development of teaching teachers [8]. Local governments should attach importance to rural preschool English education, actively provide policy support for rural preschool English education, appropriately increase economic investment in rural preschool English education, improve backward hardware facilities and infrastructure, and create a good English learning environment for students. At the same time, improve the salary standard of rural teachers, try to retain rural teachers to consolidate the existing education level. The education department should also pay more attention to preschool English education, establish a variety of effective forms such as voluntary teaching in schools in economically developed areas, and gradually improve the teaching quality of preschool English teachers in underdeveloped areas.

The government, as a leader in promoting the development of education, need to take its responsibility and realize that the lopsided development of society and economy will lead to the unbalanced development of teaching teachers [8]. Local governments should attach importance to rural preschool English education, according to providing policy support and increase economic investment for rural preschool English education. For example, improve backward hardware infrastructure to create a good English learning atmosphere for students. At the same time, improve the salary standard of rural teachers to retain rural teachers, consolidating the existing education level.

The Education Department ought to put forward a amount of effective measures, such as voluntary teaching in economically developed areas, and gradually improve the teaching quality of preschool English teachers in underdeveloped areas.

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