

# Kindergarten Choice Motive in China—Case Study at Da Dukou District in Chongqing City, China

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**Abstract**—With the rapid progress of the society and the development of early childhood education and care reform, parents are becoming increasingly value children's education. This paper aim at investigating the most preferred factors chosen by the parents when selecting kindergarten for their children. The research analyzed what motivated parents to take such decision by exploring the strength and weaknesses of these kindergartens by exploring elements and problems faced by parents when deciding to select any institution for their children. This research used a questionnaire survey in Da Dukou District, Chongqing City, China to determine the factors that affecting the parents' choice, and based on the research result, the author has provided reasonable suggestions for parents.

**Index Terms**—educational environment; factor analysis; kindergarten choice

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is very common for the parents to provide the best possible educational environment for their children. Decisions about where your child goes to kindergarten are very personal (subjective) and can be extremely difficult. It's normal for parents to feel anxious about making this decision right. As parents' role, in kindergarten district, parents may have a choice of which school children will attend. In addition to public kindergartens, there may also be private or parochial schools to which you might decide to send their youngster at extra expense. It is important for parents to familiarize themselves with the schools from which they are choosing. Once parents understand the differences among the kindergartens, parents will be better able to make an informed decision. No kindergarten is a perfect fit for each child. Educators are also becoming increasingly acknowledge that pre- and early children (ages 3 to 6) have particular educational needs. These youngsters can benefit from more autonomy and an increased ability to experiment than is available in most schools, yet they need a safer, more structured, and more overtly supportive environment [1].

The Chinese education system has a great reputation, but it is also considered as one of the most challenging and competitive ones in the world. Not every child thrives in this environment, though. The Chinese education system is divided into three years of kindergarten, six years of primary school, and three to six years of secondary education, often followed by several years of higher education. In China, children often attend pre-school or kindergarten for about one to three years. The type of education children receive there can range from nursery classes and seasonal kindergartens in poorer areas of the country to top-notch pre-primary education. Moreover, extra-curricular activities and education groups, as well as activity centers and game groups, complement their pre-primary education. The related policies on Early Childhood Education and Care, such as "Kindergarten Work Rules" (1996), "Kindergarten Education Guidelines" (2001), "The State Council on the development of current pre-school education" (2010), "3-6-year-old Preschool Children's Development Guide" (2012), which not only placed Preschool Education in an unprecedented important position, but also promoted the development of domestic Preschool Education. With the development of domestic Preschool Education and the introduction of foreign advanced preschool education concept, Chinese parents increasingly paid more attention to Preschool Education reflects in the education input is their choice of kindergarten.

This paper aim at investigating the most preferred factors chosen by the parents when selecting kindergarten as an educational institution for their children. The research analyzed what motivated parents to take such decision by exploring the strength and weaknesses of these kindergartens by exploring elements and problems faced by parents when deciding to select any institution for their children.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a questionnaire survey in 5 Street Administration Areas and 3 Townships of Da Dukou District, Chongqing City, China [2] to determine the factors that affect parents' choice of a kindergarten. This research is aimed at (1) Analyzing factors affecting parents' choice of kindergartens; (2)Discussing how

various factors at play influence parents' choice of schools; (3) Providing a reference for school leaders based on the research's outcomes and conclusions.

### III. QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire stemmed from master in China Normal University, Chen Shuhua's paper, which including nine dimensions, thirty-six subjects [3]: convenience, tuition, educational environment and facilities etc. It's also adopted in Lian Yue's, Xiao Can's, Wei Yiping's and Wang Shunmei's papers [4]-[7]. According to the actual situation of parents' choice of kindergarten, the object should score ranging from 1 (really not important) to 5 (really important). This part is not only the focus of this research, but also can be the theoretical basis to provide suggestions for parents. Giving the difference among Shanghai, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Lanzhou, Chongqing, expert review and Cronbach  $\alpha$  were adopted to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire: the result showed that the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was 0.716, the Cronbach's alpha of 9 items in the questionnaire was 0.827, so the content reliability and validity of the questionnaire was good.

### IV. RESULTS

The survey issued a total of 200 questionnaires, 189 questionnaires were recovered, the recovery rate was 94.5%. 14 unqualified questionnaires, and the effective rate was 92.6%. According to the results, factors that affecting parents' choice of institutions ranked from high to low: curriculum content and methods, convenience, teachers' abilities, environment and facilities, tuition, the properties of kindergarten, the brand of the kindergarten, information source, individual requirements of parents (Table I).

TABLE I. THE RANKING OF FACTORS AFFECTING PARENTS' CHOICE OF KINDERGARTEN

Item	Number	Rate	Ranking
Curriculum Content and Methods	132	75.40%	1
Convenience	127	72.60%	2
Teachers' Abilities	77	44.00%	3
Environment and Facilities	56	32.00%	4
Tuition	50	28.60%	5
the Properties of Kindergarten	40	22.90%	6
the Brand of the Kindergarten	27	15.40%	7
Information Source	13	7.40%	8
Individual Requirements of Parents	3	1.70%	9

### V. ANALYSES

#### A. Curriculum Content and Methods

Based on the collection and analysis of the questionnaire, it can be found that preschool parents attached great importance to the curriculum content and methods of kindergartens. In the kindergarten, there were foreign teachers, a variety of interest-oriented classes, as well as curriculum involving mandarin phonetics, which were prepared for the entry into primary school, whether

it was consistent with the parents' concept did not matter. The above results showed that parents' concept was still influenced by the traditional concept that wisdom is more important than ability, "fearing losing at the starting line".

#### B. Convenience

It's unique for parents to consider the convenience as the second important factor. From the collection and analysis of data, it's acknowledged that parents paid more attention to the distance from kindergarten to home. In addition to the children's young age, easy to take care of, there was another reason that Chongqing is a special city with strange terrain which always has busy traffic. Although compared with the 2017, in the "the ranking of China's city block list" has declined, but for the citizens of Da Dukou District, the perennial traffic jam is Chongqing's "characteristic". By contrast, it was less important that kindergartens equipped with school buses, because according to the interview data, children were nearly picked up by their grandparents.

#### C. Teacher Abilities

The teachers' abilities mainly included six aspects, and the order of parents' attention from high to low was: the teacher's attitude towards children, the teacher's image, the teacher's professional quality, the teacher's fluidity, student-faculty ratios, and the teacher's age. Preschool teachers are the one who have the most frequent contact with children in kindergartens. Parents paid special attention to the relationship between their children and teachers. Due to the children's particularity, teachers should not only have general knowledge of pedagogy and psychology, but also should specialized in Preschool Education: Developmental Psychology of Preschool Children, Psychology of Child Development, Preschool Hygiene etc. Teachers' liquidity, Student-faculty ratios, teachers' age also had influences on the parents' choice. Although younger teachers' experience is shorter, their recognition is consistent with modern education for the children's development [8].

#### D. Environment and Facilities

It's extremely easy for parents to know about the environment and facilities of kindergarten when making choice for children, which includes six aspects: environmental hygiene, safety management, hardware facilities, beautiful environment and surroundings [9]. Based on the collection and analysis of data, compared with hardware facilities, parents tend to care about safety management and environmental hygiene. According to National Bureau of Statistics in China, although in January 2016, "comprehensive two-child" policy has issued, but in fact, the whole fertility in 2017 was lower than the past years [10]. The majority of families still had one child and combined with the improvement of living standards, parents paid more attention to their children's food nutrition and health issues in the kindergarten. In addition, safety management was also important, because of the frequent occurrence of "child abuse" and "child molestation cases reported by the media" in recent years which attracted parents' active attention [11]. Meanwhile,

parents were more likely to concern that whether their children can grow up happily and healthily in the kindergarten. The main problems of "difficult to enter kindergarten", "expensive tuition to enter kindergarten" are very common in China kindergarten. National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee was held in Chongqing on February 26, 2018 relieve the parents' anxiety, and focused on those issues [12].

#### *E. Tuition*

Tuition too expensive is another issue more parents concern about. It can be clearly seen from the survey data that compared with tuition, parents paid more attention to whether the fee was clear and reasonable. According to the interview data, parents were particularly concerned about the clear and reasonable fee. Although some kindergartens had low tuition, the kindergarten often charged in various "name", and the parents were not clear about the payment and did not know what the fee was for. High tuition was another aspect that parents attached to. The main reason was that the expenses of raising children were too expensive, various training classes and summer camps made parents scrimp and scrimp in children's education.

#### *F. The Property of Kindergarten*

"Difficult to Enter Kindergarten" is another problem derived from the property of kindergarten. In Chongqing, no matter in other main urban areas or Da Dukou district, to some extent, there was a problem of "difficult entry". The property of the kindergarten could be embodied in the following aspects: Whether it is a public kindergarten, level of kindergarten and whether it is a particular kindergarten. It's not hard to see parents attached great importance to the property of the kindergarten, such as public kindergarten, model kindergarten, high-level kindergarten, their scale, concept and quality were generally better than some private kindergartens etc. Additionally, parents thought that studying in a public park or model kindergarten, not only be useful for the development of their children, but also could enter in the corresponding primary school, such as Yu Cai Elementary School affiliated kindergarten, if children study in this kindergarten, they can directly study in Yu Cai Elementary School in the future.

#### *G. The Brand of the Kindergarten*

In terms of the brand of the kindergarten, parents mainly focus on the reputation of the kindergarten. Parents can learn about the kindergarten via the Internet, communication with other parents and some another convenient and fast ways. Paying attention to the reputation of kindergartens was an opportunity for new kindergartens.

#### *H. Information Source*

As for information source, parents cared about that whether kindergartens be reported by newspapers, TV, magazines or other media. These parents contended that the kindergartens that can be reported by media were not too bad, and tend to choose such kinds of kindergartens.

#### *I. Individual Requirements*

The ranking of individual requirements among the nine factors was enough to show that parents paid less attention to their children and their own needs. Although parents would consider the children's interest in learning and preference when choosing the kindergarten, compared to the other eight factors, such as the property of the kindergarten, convenience, parents may ignore the children's needs and interests making choices that they thought "good" for their children, and consist that other parents' social background and economic status inconsistent with theirs didn't matter. Because of the fast pace of life, let them almost have no spare time to communicate with other parents except work and children.

### **VI. CONCLUSION**

Conclusions can be drawn from the above survey data and analysis: for one thing, parents would consider various factors when choosing institution, but the most concerned aspects were curriculum content and teaching methods, convenience and teachers' abilities, while the less concerned aspects were property of kindergarten, information source and individual needs. For another, the emphasis on each factor was different: in the curriculum content and teaching methods, some parents paid more attention to the teaching of mandarin phonetics and arithmetic, while others attached to whether the content could be prepared for the primary school; In terms of convenience, parents paid more attention to the distance between the kindergarten and home, rather than whether the kindergarten had a school bus; On the teachers' abilities, parents paid more attention to teachers' attitude towards children, teachers' image and teachers' professional quality; In environment and facilities, parents paid more attention to safety management and environmental hygiene of the kindergarten, followed by the activity site, hardware equipment, beautiful environment and surroundings; On the issue of tuition, parents paid more attention to the clear and reasonable fees in kindergartens, and then whether the tuition was low or high. As for property of kindergarten, parents paid more attention to public, demonstration or first-level kindergartens, and tend to choose such kinds of kindergartens, and then were private ones. About the kindergarten's image, the reputation of the kindergarten was considered primarily; In terms of information source, they cared about whether the kindergarten has been reported by: TV, magazines, newspapers and others. In terms of individual needs, parents paid more attention to their children's needs. But generally speaking, individual needs were not valued by parents in all nine factors.

### **VII. SUGGESTIONS**

#### *A. Choose Kindergarten Based on Children's Interests*

Paying attention to children's interests is the primary factor that parents should consider when choosing a kindergarten for their children. Children's interest and needs are the important source and intrinsic motivation of

their learning behavior [13]. If parents can combine their children's interests and needs in the course of choosing kindergartens, they can stimulate their children's intrinsic learning motivation [14], so as to produce corresponding learning and exploration behavior. This requires parents to pay more attention to their children and communicate with their children in daily, such as observing what the child likes to do, ask the children's expectations of kindergartens and other comprehensive factors when making decision.

#### B. Choose Kindergarten Based on the Children's Development

Piaget, who is a famous cognitive developmental psychologist, pointed out that learning depends on the children's development [15]. However, under the influence of traditional concepts, parents hoped that their children cannot lose at the starting line and can learn the curriculum contents such as mandarin phonetics and arithmetic in the kindergarten to lay a foundation for further study. In fact, these contents did not conform to children's physical and mental development. Additionally, special kindergartens and interest classes have formed an upsurge in China. For example, famous Montessori kindergartens and bilingual teaching have spread to China. Whether various kindergartens and interest classes were appropriate for the children's development should be seriously considered by parents. Therefore, when parents choose kindergartens, they should also take children's current development into account and cannot choose kindergartens according to adults' expectation and thoughts.

#### C. Actively Participate in Parental Education and Family Education Guidance

Parental education is equivalent to parent education, aiming to improve parents' or prospective parents' education quality and education ability [16]. In recent years, the development of parental education and family education guidance was relatively considerable in China and the government has issued relevant policies and documents to promote the establishment of family education guidance service system, such as the National Women's Federation and other nine departments issued the "Guidance on the promotion of family education five years Plan (2016-2020)". It clearly put forward that family education guidance service system will be basically built in 2020 which can meet the needs of urban and rural development, meet the parents and the children's needs [17]. Furthermore, based on the analysis of the relevant literature, it can be found that setting up parent schools in kindergartens or primary schools have become the main form of family education guidance or parental education [18]. According to the survey results, some parents were still inclined to the curriculum content including mandarin phonetics, arithmetic, which were inconsistent with the modern preschool education concept. Therefore, parents should make good use of resources provided by the society, actively participate in parental education or family education instruction to

improve education quality, change education concept, and make more reasonable choices for their children.

#### D. To Know the Abilities and the Development of Teachers in Various Channels

Education, teacher first. Preschool teacher was an important factor influencing Preschool Education reform and development, children's physical and mental health [19], and preschool education teaching quality [20]. As mentioned before, the kindergarten teacher was the one who has the most frequent contact with children except their parents. Therefore, in addition to considering children's interests and current development situation, the teacher abilities of kindergarten should also be regarded as another important factor when parents choose a kindergarten. Teachers' abilities involved in six aspects, in which teachers' liquidity, student-faculty ratios, teachers' age can be get directly through the way that consulting principals, but the teacher's attitude towards children, teachers' professional quality and teachers' image were not able to know directly by consulting principals, and parents need long-term or repeated observation and communication to know more in detail. Although teachers' abilities was paid more attention among the factors influencing parents' choice of kindergarten, parents did not pay much attention to the teachers' professional quality, which was a very important aspect that parents were not easy to find. Therefore, parents can learn about the teachers' professional quality through various channels, even the teachers' image and teachers' attitude towards children, such as joining in teachers' teaching activities, observing the interaction between teacher and children; communicating with teachers. What's more, the preschool teachers' professional quality may also be related to the in-service training of kindergarten teachers, such as whether to organize teachers to attend academic seminars and in-service training etc. Parents can obtain relevant information through interviews with teachers and principals.

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