

# *The Dilemma and Countermeasures of Improving Montessori Curriculum for Applied Undergraduate Preschool Education Major*

Zhang Zhe<sup>1,a,\*</sup>, Zhou Jingyu<sup>2,b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Humanities and Education, Yanching Institute of Technology, Langfang, Hebei, China

<sup>2</sup>Social Work, Jilin Provincial Party School of the Communist Party of China, Changchun, China

<sup>a</sup>870957047@qq.com, <sup>b</sup>whale0208@126.com

\*Corresponding author

**Keywords:** Applied undergraduate; Preschool education major; Montessori course

**Abstract:** Applied undergraduate education refers to a program that focuses on cultivating students' practical abilities and emphasizes the combination of theory and practice in teaching. The Montessori education curriculum is a "practice based" teaching curriculum. The Montessori curriculum for applied undergraduate preschool education majors requires not only solid professional knowledge and skills, but also corresponding educational concepts. This study mainly from the professional teachers' team construction, teaching methods, practice resources, teaching evaluation of several aspects, and put forward the corresponding countermeasures, applied undergraduate preschool education major needs to strengthen the construction of professional teaching staff, improve teaching methods, enhance educational practical abilities, and improve the evaluation system.

In terms of professional settings, application-oriented undergraduate colleges should base themselves on the needs of regional economic and social development and industrial structure adjustment, with the goal of serving local regional economic and social development, and optimize the professional structure; Guided by national strategic needs, optimize professional layout, and highlight the characteristics of application oriented and skill oriented; Focusing on enhancing students' employment and entrepreneurship abilities, we will promote a positive interaction between professional construction and economic and social development. Based on this judgment, the goal of cultivating applied undergraduate preschool education professionals should be to cultivate high-quality applied talents that meet the needs of the development of preschool education. Most applied undergraduate and preschool education majors in China are aimed at cultivating talents in enterprises and institutions such as kindergartens or kindergartens, early childhood education centers, early childhood education institutions, and parent-child kindergartens. With the development of social economy and the improvement of people's living standards, parents of young children have higher requirements for early childhood education<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **1. The necessity of developing Montessori curriculum for applied undergraduate preschool education major**

### **1.1 It helps to enhance the students' understanding of the preschool education major**

In the study of Montessori education course, it can help students understand that preschool education major is a comprehensive and practical major, and by opening this course helps students to enhance their understanding of preschool education major. For example, the Montessori education curriculum includes "young children have an absorptive mind", "how to create a prepared environment" and other aspects. Montessori curriculum is a subject based on the in-depth study of children's physiological, psychological, cognitive and social development laws. Through learning Montessori curriculum, children can better understand their growth process and learning needs and improve their professional quality. When learning Montessori education courses, students can deepen their understanding of preschool education major, and enhance their love for preschool education work and teaching profession, so as to better engage in kindergarten education work.

### **1.2 It is helpful to cultivate students' ability to use theoretical knowledge in practical operation**

In school, students majoring in preschool education need to learn a lot of professional theoretical knowledge and professional skills, which are the basis for students to engage in preschool education work in the future. In this process, students should not only master a solid theoretical knowledge, but also have a strong practical operation ability, so as to better apply the theoretical knowledge learned to practical work. For example, when conducting Montessori course, teachers should explain to students how to carry out Montessori teaching activities in practical teaching; how to organize students to conduct Montessori teaching activities; how to observe and record students' performance in Montessori educational activities. In addition, teachers should also guide students to observe and record students' performance in Montessori educational activities, and evaluate them. In this way, students can not only have a deep understanding of the theoretical knowledge and practical operation methods of Montessori education, but also let them flexibly use the theoretical knowledge learned to analyze and solve problems.

## **2. The dilemma of developing Montessori curriculum in applied undergraduate preschool education majors**

In view of the current situation of Montessori courses in applied undergraduate preschool education majors, the following problems are found:

### **2.1 Insufficient construction of professional teachers**

For applied undergraduate preschool education majors, we need to have solid professional knowledge and skills, and also need the corresponding educational concepts. However, developing the Montessori course in the application-oriented undergraduate preschool education major is faced with the problem of insufficient construction of professional teachers. Most applied undergraduate preschool education majors lack teachers with Montessori education teaching ability. Students trained in preschool education majors in colleges and universities should not only master solid professional knowledge and skills of preschool education, but also have strong practical ability and innovation ability. Due to the uneven faculty of application-oriented undergraduate preschool education, on the one hand, many high-level talents are not front-line teachers and lack practical

teaching experience; on the other hand, the academic research of some high-level talents often focuses on theoretical research and lack practical experience. In the recruitment of college teachers, many colleges and universities do not specify what kind of experience conditions that teachers need to have. However, the training plan of application-oriented undergraduate preschool education major does not specify what qualifications teachers should have, what educational theories and skills they should master, and what qualities and abilities they should have. As a result, many preschool education teachers in universities only select candidates through interviews. This leads to the lack of career development planning for application-oriented undergraduate preschool education professional teachers, which leads to the lack of faculty construction required for application-oriented undergraduate preschool education majors to carry out Montessori courses.

## **2.2 Teaching methods need to be improved**

In the Montessori course, teachers can master the relevant theoretical knowledge and skills by rationally arranging the course content and using the appropriate teaching methods. However, there are some shortcomings in the current teaching method of the Montessori curriculum. First of all, in class, teachers will directly instill professional knowledge and skills into students, so that students can learn relevant theoretical knowledge. However, it is only a brief introduction of Montessori theoretical knowledge, and no relevant practical teaching for these theoretical knowledge. Secondly, in the classroom, teachers mainly explain, and rarely organize students to discuss or interact. Although some teachers will encourage students to participate in classroom discussion or interaction, more often it is the teacher unilaterally leading the classroom discussion or interaction, and students are not really involved in the teaching process. Finally, in the teaching process, teachers simply explain some relevant theoretical knowledge and skills, and seldom feedback and evaluate students' learning effect. Such a teaching method cannot stimulate students' interest in learning and improve students' learning ability and practical ability.

## **2.3 Practical teaching resources are limited**

The goal of talent cultivation in the field of applied undergraduate preschool education is to cultivate applied talents with certain theoretical knowledge and practical abilities, as well as innovative awareness, for kindergartens. Therefore, practical teaching is an important part of talent cultivation in this field. Therefore, practical teaching is an important part of the talent training in this major. At present, some schools lack sufficient practical teaching resources for preschool education majors, such as a lack of appropriate Montessori teaching aids, teaching venues, and corresponding Montessori teaching resources. Some schools offer Montessori courses in the form of large classes, resulting in insufficient teaching aids and insufficient understanding of teaching aids among students. In addition, because the applied preschool education major does not have the Montessori education practice base, students only pay attention to theoretical learning but ignore the training of practical skills in the learning process. Moreover, because the learning content of the preschool education major cannot be effectively connected with the actual work of the kindergarten, it is difficult for the students to adapt to the job requirements of the kindergarten teachers when they are employed.

## **2.4 The assessment and evaluation method is single**

Application-oriented undergraduate preschool education major offers Montessori courses, and the evaluation method is simple, mainly manifested in the final examination, usual performance, mid-term examination, etc. This assessment method is mainly for the evaluation of students'

learning results, paying more attention to the result evaluation, but ignoring the process evaluation, so that the comprehensive evaluation of students cannot. This assessment method is not conducive to the comprehensive evaluation of students. In order to develop preschool education students in an all-round way, they need not only solid theoretical foundation and skills, but also have certain practical ability and innovative spirit. However, the current applied undergraduate preschool education major Montessori has insufficient practical courses in the training program. At the same time, many schools do not pay enough attention to the Montessori curriculum, and teachers do not pay much attention to the opening of practical courses. In this case, students cannot combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills in the learning process, which leads to a good grasp of theoretical knowledge but cannot use the knowledge to solve problems in practical work.

### **3. Strategies for Developing Montessori Courses in Applied Undergraduate Preschool Education Major**

Application-oriented undergraduate preschool education should follow the requirements of national policy requirements and social development, and carry out the teaching reform of Montessori curriculum.

#### **3.1 Strengthen teacher training and build a diversified and professional teaching staff**

In order to improve the level of preschool education professional teachers, the following ways can be adopted: First, to strengthen the training of practical ability. Teachers majoring in preschool education should pay attention to the cultivation of practical ability, and make students have strong practical ability and good professional quality through post internship, participation in kindergarten internship and kindergarten volunteer teaching, so as to understand how to carry out Montessori education in kindergartens. Second, we will improve the construction of teachers. Through the introduction of talents, internal training and other ways, and continue to expand the teaching staff. At the same time, the teacher training should be strengthened to improve the teachers' Montessori education knowledge level and professional quality. Third, the introduction of Montessori teachers. Montessori teachers can be introduced through examination, talent recruitment and targeted training. Teachers can also be supplemented by purchasing social services and hiring part-time teachers outside. Front-line teachers can also be invited to give regular lectures to tell students' practical knowledge more intuitively. Through the supplement and training of teachers, it provides intellectual support and talent guarantee for the teaching of Montessori courses in preschool education<sup>[2]</sup>.

#### **3.2 Innovate teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning**

In conducting Montessori courses in application-oriented undergraduate preschool education majors, teachers should innovate teaching methods according to the professional characteristics and students' needs, stimulate students' interest in learning, and improve students' ability to understand and apply knowledge. First of all, teachers should carefully design classroom activities, so that students can acquire knowledge and skills from participating in the activities<sup>[3]</sup>. For example, in the game "I will twist this action", the teacher can ask: "Please recall what places in your life to use twist this action?" This question can help students to better understand their own mastery of knowledge and application ability. Secondly, teachers should be good at using situational teaching method and case teaching method to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. For example, school-enterprise linkage is used to present real-time pictures of kindergarten Montessori education in class, and heuristic questions are used to intuitively analyze the problems with the role

of observer. Finally, to cultivate students' higher-order thinking abilities such as "analysis, evaluation, and creation", a Montessori curriculum system based on thematic or ability demand architecture is established. Through the innovation and arrangement of teaching content and forms, knowledge with "innovation" and "challenge" is achieved. The ability and quality are to solve complex problems. PBL teaching method is adopted, with project-based teaching as the main body, and students are led to carry out group activities, Extending Montessori education beyond basic teaching aids operations. For example, the Montessori course sub-project teaching group unit "Montessori teaching aids self-made activity" and "Montessori theme activity design".

### **3.3 Strengthen school-enterprise cooperation and enrich practical teaching resources**

Practical teaching is an important link in the training of application-oriented undergraduate preschool education professionals. In Montessori curriculum teaching, practical teaching mainly includes content such as environmental creation, use of teaching aids, and children's observation. Therefore, strengthening school-enterprise cooperation and enriching practical teaching resources are the necessary guarantee for carrying out Montessori curriculum. First, strengthen the cooperation between schools and kindergartens, and establish a stable practice teaching base<sup>[4]</sup>. To offer Montessori courses in preschool education majors, schools need to provide a certain number of Montessori curriculum practice bases for school-enterprise linkage. At the same time, schools should pay attention to the cooperation with kindergartens, communities and other units, and strive to establish a stable practice teaching base in a relatively short time. Second, pay attention to the connection between Montessori curriculum and kindergarten curriculum. Teachers of preschool education should change their educational concepts and realize that the Montessori curriculum and kindergarten curriculum are not a zero-sum game relationship, but a complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship. Teachers should take the initiative to participate in kindergarten education activities, and guide students to design and implement Montessori teaching activities. At the same time, teachers should also adjust the teaching content appropriately according to the needs of kindergartens and students' conditions, so as to better adapt to the kindergarten education environment. Third, encourage students to practice in kindergartens. In the recruitment of preschool teachers, the requirement of practical ability should be highlighted and the graduates with practical experience should be given priority; in practice, students should be strictly assessed and supervised to ensure the quality of practice effectively; and Montessori teaching method should be emphasized in teacher training and included in the content of teacher continuing education.

### **3.4 Improve the assessment system and evaluation system**

Assessment is an important means to test teaching quality, a test and feedback of teaching results, and an effective way to promote teachers to improve their teaching level and improve their teaching methods. Montessori course assessment should focus on process evaluation, and guide teachers to conduct self-evaluation and reflection in the teaching process through establishing a scientific-and reasonable assessment system. We need to improve the assessment system. Firstly, the theory examination, practice examination and operation examination should be combined to fully reflect the idea of student-oriented; secondly, the assessment content should cover the basic knowledge and skills involved in the Montessori course; again, the assessment methods should be diversified, and can be assessed by classroom questioning, group discussion, case analysis and other forms; finally, the enthusiasm of the teachers and students should be fully played in the assessment. A number of assessments throughout the course, from the theory to the skills to the practical effect of a comprehensive and fair evaluation of students' learning effect<sup>[5]</sup>.

## 4. Conclusion

The construction of preschool education professional courses is the key to cultivating high-quality application-oriented preschool education talents. As an important part of the construction of preschool education professional curriculum, Montessori education curriculum has a strong practicality. Therefore, application-oriented undergraduate universities should pay attention to grasping their core content and core competence when setting up preschool education major Montessori education courses. The ideas and methods of Montessori education should be integrated into the curriculum system, and students' interest in learning should be stimulated through diversified teaching means, so that students can learn in happiness and grow in learning. In practice, we should constantly explore the meeting point between Montessori education and preschool education professional course teaching, and grasp the balance between theory and practice.

In Maria Montessori's teaching, the teaching goal is changed from "Theory type" to "Application Type", and the teaching content is changed from "Discipline" to "Discipline + theme". The teaching method is changed from "Knowledge teaching method" to "Situational teaching method" change. The cultivation of practical ability runs through the whole curriculum system, to lay a good foundation for students to engage in preschool education industry in the future.

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