

## Researches on China Preschool Education Teachers' Participatory Training Mode

LIU Yunyan<sup>[a],\*</sup>; CHENG Shaoren<sup>[b]</sup>; YANG Chenchen<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Professor, Pedagogic Sector, Department of Preschool Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

<sup>[b]</sup>Pedagogic Sector, Department of Preschool Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

\*Corresponding author.

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### Abstract

As the concept of participatory training has been disseminated to pedagogy area, traditional preschool teacher training continuously conflicts with such training of modern mode. In China, in the field of preschool education, participatory training for teachers has been established gradually. This mode is centered on group dynamics to form a constant group dynamics system under the interactive checks and balances of three mechanisms of driving force: the driving force, the cohesive force and the binding force. This thesis mainly elaborates the basic key elements of group structure on the basis of the participatory training mode's dynamics structure and operation mechanism, and in detail analyzes the main guarantee conditions for healthy operation of the participatory training mode.

**Key words:** Pre-school education; Participatory training; Dynamic structure; Basic elements

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### 1. THE FORMATION BACKGROUND FOR PARTICIPATORY TRAINING MODE

As a practical philosophy, the concept of "participation" originates in the 1940s, and in the subsequent twenty

years, it gradually evolves into the "participatory approach" with practical significance (Chen, 2003, p.141). From the main concern of community development at first, it has extended to anthropology, sociology, psychology and other disciplines at present. In the education field, since Freire in his famous book "the pedagogy of the oppressed" puts forward "dialogue teaching" and "action related study", the basic concepts of advocating the individual to actively participate in education process, gradually forms and establishes. In recent years, the participatory concept and method gradually combines with teacher training tightly, especially since Chinese Ministry of education, the Ministry of Finance in 2011 September launches the "kindergarten training plan at national level" (referred to as the "national training plan"). Therefore, how to bring the "Participatory" effectively into the training plan has become the key discussion topic of Chinese preschool education.

For a long time, preschool teachers' training is always highly valued by Chinese government. However, problems of participants' weak active learning consciousness, loose class structure, lack of constraint system have long plagued the teachers' training work of preschool education. To investigate its germ, problems of lack of training multi-dimensional interaction, ignoring participants' self needs and desire to learn, are the main causes. With the rapid development of Chinese preschool education in recent years, the participants' subject demand is valued never before, especially since the implementation of "national training plan", situation of preschool teachers training insufficient stamina has been effectively eased, and initial long-term mechanism for sustainable development comes into being, an efficient, scientific, standardized participatory training mode gradually forms, which plays a key role in improving the comprehensive quality of teachers' training. This paper focuses on experience in the implementation process of Chinese "Middle West backbone teachers and

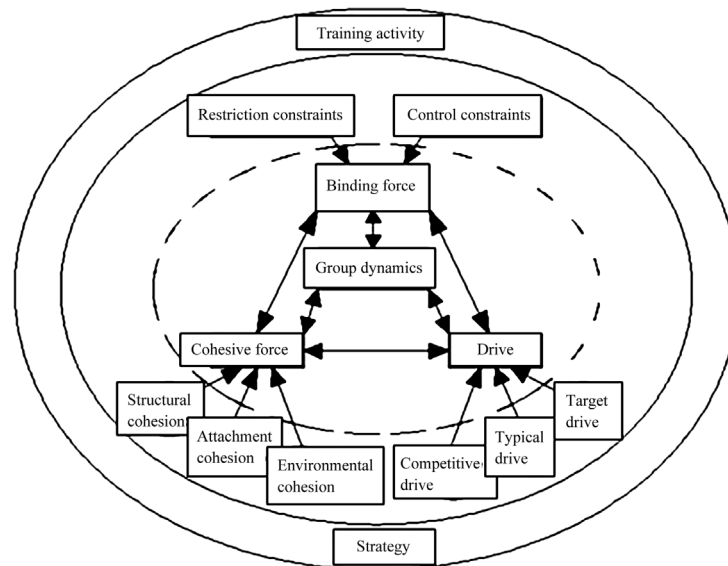
kindergarten teacher training project”<sup>1</sup>, discusses construct and implementation of participatory training mode, in order to provide reference to improve effectiveness for preschool teacher training.

## 2. THE DYNAMIC STRUCTURE OF THE PARTICIPATORY TRAINING MODE

Process for preschool teachers’ training is a mutual communication, exchange, sharing and collaboration learning group formed by both training sides’ teaching and learning relationship based on the common training task, and also by work sites as the main material media and cultural atmosphere as the carrier of the spirit media. This group under the lead of the common training target forms a relatively stable dynamic structure (Figure 1).

This structure is centered by group dynamics formed in both sides’ training process, and forms the core layer with structural driving force, cohesive force and binding force. The core layer is the most basic part of teacher training, which determines training’s main content, process and form. The driving force aims at promoting group capacity development and role evolution, which plays a key role in

ensuring group’s stability and balance, in the system structure, the attribution role and teaching environment. Binding force by coordinating positive factors inside training field, give full play to dynamic and steady function of the driving force and cohesive force to reduce the negative impact of structure. Middle layer of group structure is the operating layer consisting of driving force, cohesive force, binding force and their sub factors. Operation layer is the main level involved in training process’s specific implementation, which provides training details and practical operation, and is the main part to fully realize training effect. The interaction and influence between each element of the core layer and operation layer, inside the group structure forms three kinds of dynamic mechanism of driving force, cohesive force and binding force, whose mutual checks and balances form powerful behavior field, so as to promote group evolution and development. In the structural outermost layer is protection layer composed of various types of training activities and implementation strategy, which through elements’ integration of dynamic mechanism, completes cognitive and emotional cognitive reconstruction of individual teachers under structural normal operation, and further promotes the systematic stability of the overall structure, and prevents alienation and failure of training activities.



**Figure 1**  
**Diagram of Chinese Preschool Education Teachers’ Participatory Training Mode’s Dynamic Structure**

<sup>1</sup> The three-month project is divided into four stages: the theoretical training, shadow training, back-post practice and summary and reflection. Theoretical training is mainly conducted in accordance with the “Professional Standards of Kindergarten Teacher” and the actual needs of those trainees, who receive a more than 40 days of concentrated study and training in universities; shadow training refers to that participants come to the working site of the kindergarten, choose qualified, frontline nursery teachers, and take part in an on-site learning in the kindergarten for a month; on-job learning refers to that participants return to the kindergarten and put the knowledge they learnt in kindergarten into practices; summary and reflection stage refers to that participants return to college for the sake of reflection and summary.

### 2.1 Drive Level

There is a balance between the human and the environment. When demand caused by the target breaks the original psychological balance, will cause some psychological stress, and thus produce a thrust to promote the groups and individuals’ behavior toward the target. As long as the needs are not met, the thrust has always existed (Maisonneuve, 1996). Teacher training by setting goals, establishing models, introducing competition mechanism to constantly stimulate trainers’ internal psychological

needs, through psychological tension by needs to promote the training group and individual's learning behavior, and then form three main drives of target drive, typical driving and competitive drive.

In the aspect of target drive, setting training aims on the basis of participants' ability and actual demand, and takes actual investigation by questionnaire, telephone, network and other means. Trainers by triggering trainees to diagnose reflect on their own professional development, and make use of each training theme to arouse the trainees' problem consciousness, and according to the demand change timely make feedback and adjustment; in the aspect of typical drive, pay attention to make use of trainers' professional guiding function, and train group leaders' management responsibilities and excellent candidates' model function. On the basis of full respect and acceptance of trainees' obtained learning experience, it shows professional platform for trainees, and combine the excellent students and weak students into helping team to stimulate their learning motivation to improve learning efficiency; in the aspect of competitive drive, it mainly through moderate introduction of external pressure to enhance trainees' learning motivation. Carry out various competitions between cooperative learning groups to create a proper psychological tension for trainees; and through meaningful competition activities, at the same time of stimulating their collective sense of honor and participating enthusiasm, effectively promotes the mutual exchange and communication, constantly arouse the trainees' consciousness of "I want to learn".

## 2.2 Cohesive Level

Cohesion is set to all members and the group strength, enhanced by the group members of the appeal and attraction between members to maintain stability state of the internal structure and operation group (Maisonneuve, 1996). Through group cohesion, training activities of both sides can really together, create harmonious relationship and cooperation, to the successful completion of training and perform their respective duties. In the process of the formation of group cohesion, the activities of the structure, emotion, mental environment plays an important role, and the formation of structural cohesion, cohesion and condensation belonging to three kinds of power, promote the sustainable development of the training work

Participatory training is a kind of relationship on the basis of group collaborative learning, through continuously enhancing group cohesive force to promote members interaction. At present Chinese preschool teacher training in general takes about 50 people as a class and 7-8 people as a group. Trainers will organize students in developing "ice breaking training" in the early opening, through relaxing icebreaker game eliminate the feelings of strangeness and dissepiments between members, and guide the students to determine their learning group and

carry out role assignment. The role takes rotation system inside the group to ensure that every member can have access to gain different role experience, in order to more effectively promote the trainees' initiative. In the training process, both training sides through equal and open interaction use case studies, seminars, situation experience and other interactive discussion to establish trainers the role of "leader" and trainees the "learner" (Zhu & Song, 2013). Through role location they can seek emotional attachment in a strange environment, and this attachment cohesion is the main security factor to promote trainees completely melt into the training. The preschool teacher training is an interactive activity taking "module task" as the unit, carries out training by guiding the students do experience sharing, scenario simulation and cosplay, through virtual and realistic work scene builds dialogue platform for trainees and the frontline experts, university professors and other trainees. Through creation of virtual and realistic teaching scene, promote trainees to quickly integrate into the training environment, especially into the psychological environment, let them really feel they are inseparable part of the training group.

## 2.3 Constraint Hierarchy

The sustained and healthy operation for group structure requires binding force's participation, and so is the preschool teacher training. Teacher training needs to maintain consistency and systematicity among groups by developing group norms and implementing evaluation control measures and prevents the dissipation of group structure and alienation of group dynamics. Group norms are behavior standards related to the group and group members generally accepted by group members (Shen, 2005, p.254). Guangzhou: Jinan University press. which play an important role in enhancing group cohesive force and producing new driving force. For example "group learning contract" signed by members inside the study group, includes the members jointly determining in consultation group role, responsibilities and rules etc. This form of "character contract" and "psychological contract", strengthen group members' responsibility to prevent existence of outcast human, so as to produce unambiguous specification of constraints. During training, training institutions are going to take the diverse evaluation methods to monitor in different training stages the task completion status to measure training effect. Through all kinds of feedback, both training sides timely adjust their own tasks, which can promote the students' transferring of consciousness and ability of independent development to their own learning site. The existence of control constraints, can effectively guarantee the consistency and continuity of training activities from beginning to end, and also can efficiently achieve according to the established goal, and even exceed expectations well.

### 3. THE CORE ELEMENTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY TRAINING MODE

Low efficiency of teacher training is one of the main reasons to long plague the teacher professional development not high level, which are inseparable with positioning and poor control of training's core elements. Therefore, making clear the training elements within a structure which play a major influence on the whole is the basic precondition for the effective operation of structure.

#### 3.1 Problem Focus and Clarification

The preschool teacher training process is also a process to constantly put forward and solve problems, each of which is inseparable with teacher's professional development. These problems may be conceptual, behavioral, or having both at the same time. Trainers need to sort out all problems related to training activities with trainees, sort and focus the original disorderly problems to determine the core problem of trainees' development. The core problem is the core requirement of teachers, and whether the core problem is solved directly determines completion of training effect. The traditional training failed to achieve good results, when concerning its reason, is the two sides not agreeing on core issues, causing deviation between supply of training and learning needs. Among the core problems, some problems are dominant, but more are recessive. Therefore, problem focus and clarification is the starting point and end of the whole training process, but also the key to affect the effectiveness of training. On one hand the trainer should answer and explain explicit questions from trainees, and on the other hand, through daily observation, group discussion and practice find hidden problems of trainees themselves and during their learning, or respond in the form of special topic, or cleverly melt problem into the daily discussion and dialogue to achieve gradually dominance, self clarification and correction of the hidden problems, which exists in the whole process of training. It includes trainers containing shadow tutors by theoretical study and practice guides, promote improvement of trainees' ability in problem finding, and can combine knowledge acquired during training process and their actual work effectively together to complete the changing process of education concept localization.

#### 3.2 Awaking and Realization of Subject Awareness

In the initial period of teacher training activities, out of purely finishing unit's training task and other utilitarian reasons, trainees are basically in a passive state, many of whom lack even have no learning's subject consciousness, which results in conversation with the same discourse level impossible between trainers and trainees. In view of this situation, the trainers use various methods to gradually awake trainees' role consciousness as training subjects. In the theoretical research stage, from the initial

"ice breaking activities" let trainees obtain the basic structural cohesion and emotional attachment; and then through problem focus as the carrier, find common words with trainees, resonate through putting forward and solving problems, let trainees obtain the initial success experience to motivate them more actively participate in discussing and resolving the problems; in the shadow research stage, trainees according to their own training plan, through on-site observation, teaching try, research participation and other forms find problems, clarify problems, solve problems; in the practice stage after return, trainees according to experience construct in their learning process, combine with the actual situation of their own kindergarten to reflect and practice, and gradually form their own experience; in the reflection and summary stage, participants around experience construct in these three stages, communicate and report in various forms in the training class, promote subject consciousness of "I want to promote development", "I can develop", "how to develop" in a team atmosphere once again strengthened, also make participants produce the greater sense of contribution. Awaking and realization of participants' subject awareness, breaks information's one-way communication model in the traditional training mode, not only focuses on the participants' active participation consciousness, also stresses trainers' guide and assist role in the whole training activities. Both training sides from the original role fragmentation began to partially and fully realize their respective roles. The role realization fully promotes during training both training sides' equal participation and mutual interaction, and constructs a new partnership in the role attachment.

#### 3.3 Multidimensional Interaction and Extension

Multidimensional interaction during training is the basic media to connect trainers with trainees. Participatory training is not centered in "participation", but in promoting their own learning enthusiasm and potential through trainees' active and deep participation, bringing both closely together, and creating conditions for realization of their own role and function. The form of participatory training is different traditional training unidirectional interaction; it emphasizes multidimensional interaction greatly between the two training sides, trainees, the human and the environment, and to the greatest degree promotes the optimization of multidimensional interaction. Through cosplay, thematic salon, experts' answer, teaching try, model teaching and study, it promotes the improvement of practical operation ability on the basis of the theoretical study. As for the trainees' teaching try, both sides can continually carry out problem research form aiming at teaching content from the planning, activities design and implementation, activities reflection and modification, once again implementing activities. The subject consciousness and team consciousness based on resonance caused by both sides' common situation will stimulate

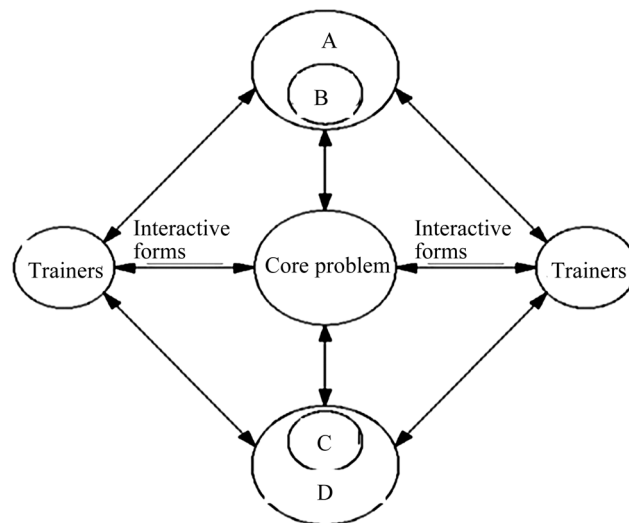
trainees' learning enthusiasm and potential to continually form the learning environment of support and share. While trainers' timely and appropriate demand and lead in the work site, on the one hand, organically combines professional theory with practice, and on the other hand, multi-dimensional dialogues between individuals and groups of trainers and trainees constantly awake and clarify the team's professional spirit. The "real reference", "common discourse system" provided by thematic salon, observation activities, teaching try and then shadow training contribute to formation of multidimensional interaction. This multi-dimensional interaction, is not only the learners' learning ability, is also a kind of training culture. With the training process deeply carrying out this kind of interaction is extended and strengthened at different stages, and becomes an important learning quality for trainees.

### 3.4 Experience and Symbiosis of the Work Site

In recent years, teacher education reform in China is the same with many countries, which not only pays attention to the knowledge and skills of teachers, but also pays more attention to their education wit and wisdom in the work site. The work site is the most suitable place for teachers to grow; experience gained in the work site is regarded as the most important core part of teacher education (Jiang, Yan, & Xu, 2012). As the key link for Chinese preschool teacher training, shadow training is an important way to embody work site's value in teacher professional development. Trainees through entering into preschool institutions rich in experience of running a school, and form partnerships with qualified shadow mentors, transfer theoretical concepts and methods in learning to the work site to experience practical application of professional knowledge. Through research, multi-dimensional dialogue and personal experience of the teaching behavior of qualified shadow teacher, trainees complete reconstruction of the original cognitive system, and promote the fast improvement of professional ability. At the same time, they can feel more real cultural atmosphere in the work site than learning theory. This cultural atmosphere is different the traditional training's mental environment of no dialogue, no emotion projection (Zhu, 2010), at each stage of the shadow training, with views, teaching, research and other activities, trainees need not only to enhance their professional ability to obtain professional spirit from the shadow garden and mentors, and the more important is to generate as "preschool" the sense of responsibility and the pursuit of common value.

From the relationship between various elements of participatory training mode, it can be attributed to three interaction relationships of people, environment and forms. The problem lies in the core position of the entire system, under the influence of work site as the main material environment and culture atmosphere as the main spiritual environment, through the form of

multidimensional interaction combine the independent trainers and trainees are together. The various elements by attraction of the core problems, eventually forms the mutually influencing and interacting dynamic circulation system. (Figure 2)



**Figure 2**  
**Map of Core Elements Relationship of Chinese Preschool Education Teachers' Participatory Training Mode**  
 A: material environment; B: work sites; C: spiritual environment; D: cultural atmosphere

## 4. OPERATION GUARANTEE FOR THE PARTICIPATORY TRAINING MODE

On the whole, teachers training mode of Chinese preschool education is group dynamic mode of Chinese preschool education is group dynamic structure system consisting of multi factors. System's good running is not simple permutation and combination of all factors, but needs a scientific, standardized and efficient operation mechanism. In the dynamic structure system taking group dynamics as the center, it keeps their effectiveness of driving force, cohesive force and binding force, needing sufficient guarantee.

### 4.1 Optimization of the System of Multiple Factors' Dynamic Development

In order to guarantee the elements in the structural operation to maximize efficiency, reflect the participants' equal participation in the training process, Chinese preschool teacher training emphasizes the balance and optimization of the elements in the structural system. On the one hand, through improving development of factors' quality, it promotes the continuous upgrading of the training quality. As for the core problem, through continuously focusing on trainees' most urgent problems needing to solve, from simple to complex problems, from single to multiple problems, it realizes problems' quality improvement, in order to achieve the overall training quality to the higher level. In the aspect of trainees, with

training activities going deeply and trainees' continual coordination, feedback, they start to become gradually independent, confident, open from the original passive learning; on the other hand, through coordinating the relationship between the various elements, it strengthens the specification and stability of the whole dynamic structure. The development of anything is result of gradually elimination of the old conflicts and the gradual generation of new conflicts in the internal structure. Therefore, to maintain the teacher training activities' sustainable development must balance the conflict relationship between the various elements, such as between training sides, trainee and training environment. From the training relations between the two sides, they create the partnership from completely unfamiliar, the middle of which is a gradually understanding and running process. Trainers need a certain communication skills, and the trainees are more needed to actively participate in establishing this relationship. Coordination of the relation between elements is the foundation to guarantee the smooth launching of training activities. Fail treatment of any pair's conflict relationship may lead to alienation, even collapse of whole structure.

#### **4.2 Individual's Dynamic Role in the Training Process**

Trainees are the most active element in the group structure, and are the basic unit for the strengthening and formation of group dynamics. Participatory training is not purely the imparting of knowledge and skills, but pays more attention to the nurture of trainees' learning quality and trainers' professional spirit. Study quality is psychological quality to determine the tendency and uniqueness of learning behavior, is the performance of the ideological quality, non intellectual factors in the learning activities (Zheng, 1996), and is a tendency, attitude, habit, style and personality related to learning, whose basic contents are nurturing curiosity, initiative, persistence, creativity and reflection ability. In the learning process, the ability to access and use learning skills and methods, is far more important than learning itself, because it can not only stimulate the trainees to successfully complete a training mission, but lay ability basis as well as maintain active participation habits for the subsequently possible training activities, and even the future learning. For trainers, outstanding teachers are not merely in scores, performance and other visible aspects. In the face of all sorts of teaching adversities, teachers not only rely on the professional knowledge to solve the problem, but also teachers' inner spiritual strength (Zhang & Zhu, 2013), which can be presented through specific beliefs and moral quality. Trainers' professional spirit to be seriously dedicated and active and responsible has a strong spiritual force on trainees. If the learning quality provides internal long-term dynamics to independent study trainees, trainers' professional spirit

provides a favorable external stimulation for trainees' dynamic role.

#### **4.3 Natural Formation of Training Mode and Procedure**

Participatory training model encourages trainees to mobilize their own existing experience to generate new experience in cooperation and communication with trainers, which can say, participatory training methods have no rules, and its procedure has no standard. In the training process, although both sides can predict the overall direction of the training content, they cannot estimate specific links. The training mode and content generation on one hand relies on trainees' changing needs, on the other hand is determined by set up of good interaction between both sides. Participatory training emphasizes on expression of trainees' true ideas, if the training is task oriented, they can not truly promote their professional ability, and their degree of participation will be weakened. Trainers should timely access the information from the trainees in training, and make timely feedback so as to establish a good interactive relationship. The establishment of this interactive relationship puts forward higher requirements to the trainer; they not only need to have excellent professional skills, but also flexible and abundant guiding strategy. Trainers need to have a solid professional knowledge and practical experience to answer the various questions that are different from the university classroom, and give trainees satisfactory reply, and also the satisfaction degree to this reply is related quality of training dialogue relationship. Dialogue relationship means the possibility for both training sides to communicate in equal position; development of training needs trainers to have higher communication quality.

#### **4.4 Application of Means and Methods for the External Evaluation**

In the group structure of participatory training, with normative constraints and control constraints, trainees are prevented from alienation of individual behavior. However, for normal operation of group structure, merely relying on the internal assessment is far from enough; to establish evaluation system outside the structure is essential, is also necessary. In recent years, for preschool teachers, Chinese government promulgates a series of policies and texts to ensure the overall quality of training activities through the whole. In the aspect of confirmation of training institutions' quality, the education Ministry takes dynamic modification to qualified institutions through the evaluation of training institutions' qualification among training project and training and according to the training performance and project need. In the implementation process, on the basis of good research on previous requirements, strengthen the supervision in the training process by the training institutions and teachers' team, and incorporate the daily management and the monitoring

results into the post performance evaluation. In the content performance appraisal, student satisfaction degree and the evaluation of training effect occupies the main proportion, and feedback these evaluation of the training effect to bearing agencies of training tasks, as the main basis for quality adjustment and task allocation.

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