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# The Construction of "One-Center and Three-Level" Kindergarten Environment Creation Curriculum Group

FENG Fang[a],*

[a]Nanchang Normal University, Jiangxi, China.
*Corresponding author.

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## Abstract

The construction of a "one-center and three-level" kindergarten environment creation curriculum group is theoretically built on Dewey's idea of 'learning by doing' and the concept of the whole practice, and it is intended for solving problems such isolation between courses in a curriculum, the disjunction between art courses and the actual situation of kindergartens, lack of inquisitiveness among students and their poor ability to learn through collaboration. The researcher follows the curriculum construction philosophy of "focusing on exploration, strengthening practice and developing progressively", takes the "kindergarten environment creation" course as the core, sets up a "one-system, one-group, one-whole" curriculum management mechanism, and implements intramural-extramural and online-offline dual teaching model. Through course integration, the researcher perfects the cognitive structure of students, develops comprehensive environment creation capability of students; builds a community of practical teaching, reinforces the connection between courses and actual work of kindergartens, develops the ability of students to achieve mastery through a comprehensive study; conducts online-offline mixed teaching, advance deep learning of students, and enhances the ability of teachers to conduct information-based teaching.

**Key words:** Kindergarten environment creation; Curriculum construction

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers* points out that 'environment creation and utilization ability' are important professional skills that kindergarten teachers must possess, and five specialized pre-school education courses, 'basics of art', 'handicraft', 'toy and teaching aid making', 'kindergarten environment creation', and 'kindergarten organization and management', are closely bound up with these skills. However, teachers of these courses belong to different teaching and research offices, 'teach in their own ways' and rarely communicate with one another. Moreover, teachers of art courses lack the professional background of pre-school education, and the contents of teaching are separate from one another and are divorced from the realities of kindergartens, making it hard for students to use what they have learned. In addition, in the process of course teaching, teachers make poor use of information technology. To solve the abovementioned problems, to break the barriers between each course, to strengthen the connection between different courses, to integrate all the courses and to realize the goals of pre-education personnel training, the researcher takes Dewey's idea of 'learning by doing' and the concept of whole practice as the theoretical basis, follow the curriculum construction philosophy of "focusing on exploration, strengthening practice and developing progressively", and construct "one-center and three-level" kindergarten environment creation curriculum.

## 2. FRAMEWORK OF CURRICULUM GROUP

The 'one center' in the 'one-center and three-level' kindergarten environment creation curriculum group means each course in this curriculum is optimized and integrated for developing kindergarten environmental planning and creation capabilities and environmental literacy of students. Specifically, this curriculum group revolves around environment creation and planning

capabilities, highlights the cultivation of five key skills, namely aesthetic judgment, innovation capability, skills of making teaching aids, physical and psychological environment creation, and cultural environment construction capability. Educatio revolving around environmental literacy focuses on four aspects, namely environmental knowledge, environmental value, environmental attitude and environmental behavior. The details are shown in Fig.1 below:

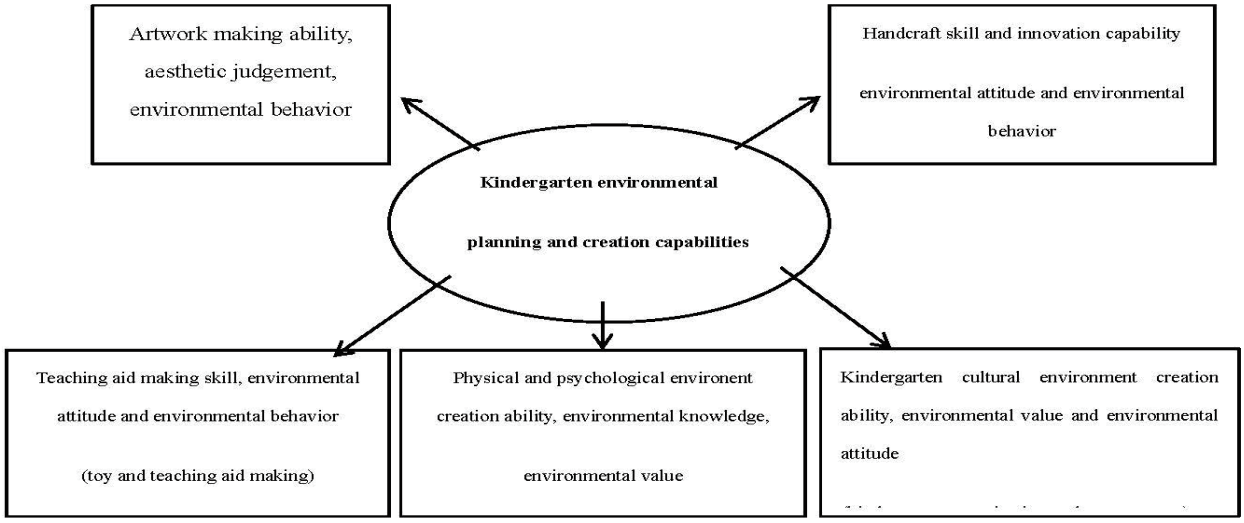


**Figure 1**
**The curriculum group centering on the development of "environment creation capability and environmental literacy"**

'Three-level' refers to the hierarchical relationships between each course of a curriculum group. According to different educational objectives of each course in a curriculum group, the curriculum group is divided into three levels—basic courses, advanced courses and comprehensive courses. The relationships between these three levels are shown in Fig.2 below:

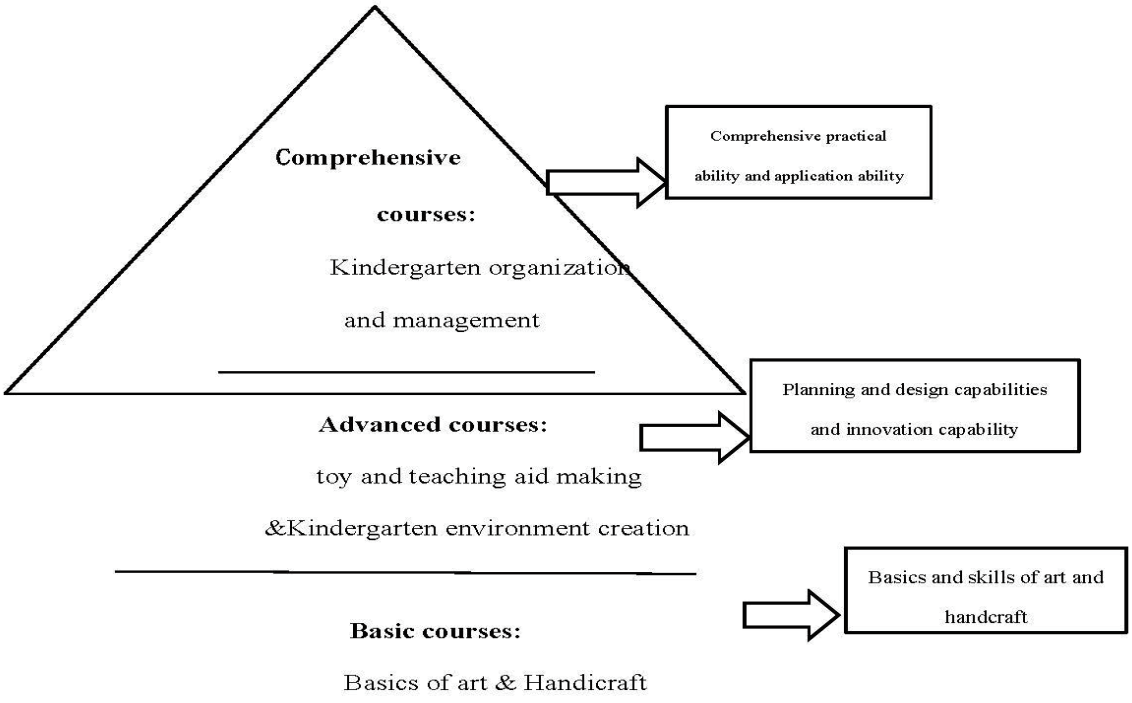


**Figure 2**
**The hierarchical structure of kindergarten environment creation curriculum**

Each course in a curriculum group has different positioning. 'Basics of art' and 'handicraft' are basic courses, and are the foundation for cultivating the environment creation capability of students; 'kindergarten environment creation' and 'toy and teaching aid making' are advanced courses which cultivate kindergarten planning, environment design and teaching aid making abilities of students on the basis of their mastery of basic art and handcraft skills; 'kindergarten organization and management' is a comprehensive course, which concentrates on cultivating students' comprehensive planning ability and ability to design kindergarten environment from the perspective of a kindergarten manager on the basis of the courses of the former two levels. The courses of these three levels formulate a syllabus as a whole, teaching objectives support one another, and knowledge and capability training is progressive, enabling students to digest every course and draw inferences.

## 2. MAIN PROBLEMS SOLVED BY CURRICULUM GROUP

### 2.1 It Solved the Problems That Each Course in the Curriculum Group Are Separate From One Another and Handicraft Courses Are Divorced From the Realities of Kindergartens

Before the curriculum group is constructed, the contents of each course were disconnected and isolated from one another, and handcraft courses simply taught handcraft skills and were not to meet the actual needs of the kindergarten environment. Consequently, the students were unable to digest what they have learned from each course, and kindergartens were not able to use what they have learned.

### 2.2 It Solved the Problems That Students Lack Inquisitiveness and Have Poor Ability to Learn Through Collaboration

Students get used to the teaching model which centers on lecturing as passive learners. Moreover, they rarely think or explore with consideration to the actual situation of kindergartens when they have problems and rarely communicate or cooperate with classmates. As a result, most students are still at the stage of shallow learning and their ability to solve practical problems in kindergartens is poor.

### 2.3 It Solved the Problems That Teachers Have Inadequate Capability of Information-Based Teaching, Teaching Researches Are Not in-Depth Enough, and the Outcomes Are Not Significant

The use of information technology by teachers in the process of course teaching is still at the initial stage, and the role of information technology in improving the quality of teaching is not fully exploited. In addition, teaching researches conducted by curriculum group teachers remain superficial, and the improvement of the actual teaching outcome through teaching research is not significant.

The construction of the curriculum group is to solve the abovementioned teaching problems step by step and to significantly enhance environmental planning and creation capabilities and environmental literacy of students. Meanwhile, it is for improving independent learning, reflection and innovation capabilities of students and boosting their core competitiveness.

## 3. THOUGHTS AND APPROACHES OF CURRICULUM GROUP CONSTRUCTION

### 3.1 The Curriculum Construction Philosophy of 'Focusing on Exploration, Strengthening Practice and Developing Progressively' Is Proposed

The construction of curriculum group overcomes the predicament where teachers of each course work alone and are divorced from kindergarten practice on the front line. Courses are progressive, with basic courses as the guide, advanced courses as the focus, and comprehensive courses as the extension. Besides, these courses are students-centered, make students reflect and explore as involved with problems and cases as the guide, reinforce practice, take "kindergarten and simulation training room" as "second classrooms" for students, and lead students to complete each environment creation and handcraft task through group work, thus achieving the integration of theory and practice as well as individuality and concertedness and exploring new approaches for curriculum group construction.

### 3.2 It Establishes a 'One-System, One-Group and One-Whole' Curriculum Group Management Mechanism

To make curriculum group construction planned, methodical and effective, a "one-system, one-group and one-community" curriculum management mechanism is set up, namely establishing the system of post responsibility for persons in charge of curriculum, setting up a curriculum teaching and research group and building an online-offline teaching and research community. Persons in charge of the curriculum group should be responsible for planning, management and construction of each course in the curriculum group. The curriculum teaching and research group conducts collective lesson preparation and collective research activities on a regular basis, and regularly organize online learning activities. Such a mechanism integrates various resources, exploits the strengths and advantages of teachers with different subject backgrounds, forms synergy and resource advantages, and fully works up enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of teachers.

### 3.3 It Achieves Intramural-Extramural and Online-Offline Dual Teaching Model

Each course of the curriculum group is taught in a dual teaching model, namely adopting a "four-step" practical teaching model and performing an online-offline mixed learning model when teaching. It integrates the intramural and extramural and the online and offline, expands and creates a personalized learning space for students. The implementation of the practical teaching model provides students with places to practice on campus—handcraft and simulation training room, and offers them practice bases—kindergarten outside the campus. These places inside and outside campus become a 'second classroom' for students to learn. Besides, through the development of online curriculum resources, it carries out mixed teaching, builds an inquiry-based learning community, achieves seamless connection between the online and the offline, creates an effective mixed learning environment, supports students in systematic inquiry activities through critical reflection, discussion and group task, and gradually develops kindergarten environmental planning and creation capabilities of students.

## 4. SPECIFIC PATH TO CONSTRUCT CURRICULUM GROUP

### 4.1 Through course integration, it improves the cognitive structure of students and improves their comprehensive environment creation capability.

The contents of the courses are reorganized into problem-oriented courses which aim to meet the actual needs of kindergartens with the idea of "learning by doing" as the guideline. Next, the logical relationships between the five courses are sorted out. Revolving around the objectives of preschool education professional training, a progressive curriculum consisting of basic courses, advanced courses and comprehensive courses is constructed, to develop handcraft skills of students as the basis and then concentrate on improving kindergarten environmental planning and design capabilities of students, enabling students to acquire comprehensive practical ability and capabilities of application and innovation needed by environment creation for a kindergarten teacher. Meanwhile, great importance is attached to the development of environmental literacy of students in this process.

### 4.2 It builds a community of practical teaching, reinforces the connection between courses and actual work of kindergartens, and develops students' ability to chieve mastery through a comprehensive study

The concept of "whole practice" stresses that practice is the precondition, medium and purpose for students to internalize and reconstruct knowledge. According to this concept, by "inviting in and going out", intramural and extramural practical training are combined, and the teachers of the team, frontline kindergarten teachers and students constitute a community of practical teaching to help one another. On the one hand, the teachers lead the students to learn by inspecting kindergartens, and through 'four-step' practical teaching model of observation and learning—attending lectures on site—practice and drill—sharing and evaluation, the teachers and students probe into kindergartens together to learn about the actual situation of kindergarten environment creation and to allow the students to obtain practical experience in kindergarten environment creation; on the other hand, kindergarten teachers on the frontline are invited to participate in the practical teaching of kindergarten environment creation curriculum group and to direct students' handcraft and environment creation learning at the school. The students conduct a variety of practical activities intended for developing environment creation capability under the guidance of 'dual-tutor' inside and outside the school, which enables the students to link theory with practice and apply the knowledge and skills of environment creation that they have learned to actual kindergarten environment by learning by analogy.

### 4.3 It conducts online-offline mixed teaching, promotes deep learning of students, and improves the capability of information-based teaching of teachers.

Relying on provincial-level and school-level quality projects, the teachers of the curriculum group conduct the reform of mixed teaching and construct a feasible 'online-offline' mixed teaching model in the process of teaching with the use of Xueyinonline.com, Chaoxing, WeChat group and other online learning platforms.

First, the contents of each course in the curriculum group are reconstructed and organized in the form of a special subject and attach equal importance to theory and practice, constructing complete online learning sources. Second, the syllabus of each course is replanned, and students are led to be prepared for mixed learning. Third, the teachers divide the learning activities of students into three parts—before-class online learning, in-class face-to-face learning and after-class online learning, and carefully design each part to make them closely interlinked and integrated and to create an efficient mixed learning environment for the students. Fourth, the offline class comes to be student-centered and solution-oriented, classroom teaching revolves around the process of raising a problem—probing into the problem—solving the problem, and the teachers provoke thoughts of the students with cases and videos related to this knowledge and organize the students to conduct reflective group discussions over the problem. In the process of discussing

among students, the teachers follow and direct the course of the discussion, maintain the vitality of discussion, give students timely feedback, and create dynamic, vigorous offline face-to-face real communities. Fifth, mixed learning combines online evaluation and offline evaluation. The advantages of online platforms are exploited to quantify the online learning process of students, and data and statistics provided by these platforms help teachers monitor the learning process of students; teachers release online tests on the platforms to learn about the mastery of courses of their students.

Teachers of the team have constructed three Xueyin online courses *Kindergarten Environment Creation*, *Handicraft*, and *Kindergarten Organization and Management*. Under the guidance of Garrison's community of inquiry theoretical framework, these courses exploit the advantages of online and offline learning, build a learning community of inquiry for sustainable mixed learning, greatly increase the learning efficiency of students, and improve information-based teaching of these teachers.

### 4.4 A community of Teaching and Research Is Built, and Teaching Research Ability and Teaching Efficiency Are Enhanced

First, a curriculum group teaching and research group is formed, and they conduct offline teaching and research activities on a monthly basis, including collective class preparation and expert guidance. With regards to collective class preparation, the team leader assists the teachers in make clear the logical relationships between the courses they teach and other courses, and condense and reorganize overlapping course contents to make these courses pass on, permeate and complementary to one another; experts in educational reform are invited to discuss over the curriculum group construction on a regular basis and put forward pertinent advice for it.

Second, WeChat learning groups are created, various forms of online teaching and research activities are organized, such as online live-streaming lectures, online reading exchange and online discussion over problems, which mostly focus on course teaching design, teaching methods, confusions and problems in the teaching of each course. Teachers can learn and exchange ideas about teaching anytime and anywhere.

The online and offline are integrated to jointly construct a community of teaching and research for teachers, which increases the frequency of communication between teachers, gives them the opportunity to share and discuss the experience of course redesign and motivates teachers to carry out the educational reform, improving teachers' teaching research ability and teaching efficiency.

## 5. THE EFFECTS OF THE CURRICULUM GROUP CONSTRUCTION

### 5.1 The Process of Popularization and Application

The results of the curriculum group construction are popularized and applied through student handiwork exhibitions, national kindergarten environment creation and teaching aid making competitions, academic forums, exchanges and communications with foreigners, collaborative projects with kindergartens and other means. First, to display the environment creation and handcraft skills of the students, the school has held several student handiwork exhibitions and invited principals of kindergartens from different cities to view and communicate on the site. Second, our school vigorously organized students to compete in national environment creation and teaching aid making competitions, and the students all yielded good results in these competitions. The teachers of the team have attended the "Jiangxi 1st Preschool Education Summit" for three consecutive years, sharing their experience about kindergarten environment creation. The team collaborated with these kindergartens to popularize the results of the curriculum construction by giving lectures and participating in kindergarten teaching and research activities on a regular basis, and many kindergartens take provincial-level high-quality online courses in the curriculum group as online training courses for their teachers, to help kindergarten teachers improve the quality of kindergarten environment creation.

### 5.2 The Effects of Popularization and Application

#### 5.2.1 A batch of Undergraduates Adept in Kindergarten Environmental Planning and Creation Are Trained

Since the curriculum group was constructed seven years ago, the kindergarten environmental planning and creation capabilities of undergraduates majoring in preschool education have been generally recognized by kindergartens. The core competitiveness of undergraduates is boosted markedly, and they possess some research capabilities that a number of them took part in the compilation of textbooks *Handicraft Tutorial* and *Kindergarten Toy and Teaching Aid Making and Activity Instructions* as authors. Numerous excellent environment creation works and handcrafts of the students were also recorded by the textbooks related to the curriculum by the teachers. Over the last three years, the graduates had an outstanding performance in municipal-level and provincial-level kindergarten teacher skills competitions and won nearly 20 provincial-level and municipal-level honors.

**5.2.2 Teaching Skills and Research Level of Young Teachers of the Team Are Enhanced Significantly**

First, the teaching level of young teachers is improved significantly. Among the teachers of the team, one won a prize in a national-level teaching competition, and two won prizes in a provincial-level teaching competition; three were elected as young backbone teachers of the school's backbone training class, and two earned the title of school-level "star teacher". Next, the scientific research level of the team is also enhanced remarkably, the teachers presided over seven projects related to teaching results, two of which are provincial-level key educational reform research projects. The teachers published eight related textbooks and eight related research papers, and they directed three provincial-level high-quality resource sharing courses, and one provincial-level college course educational sharing project. Teachers of the team as third and fourth participants won first prize and second prize in provincial-level teaching achievements.

**5.2.3 Feedback and Prospect of Popularization and Application**

Our graduates are universally praised by employers and provincial leaders. The internship sites and employers gave feedback that undergraduates majoring in preschool education of our school kindergarten are adept in environmental planning and creation and are highly professional. Since 2015, multiple provincial leaders have visited our school to see 'The Inheritance of Traditional Culture: Handicrafts Exhibition" of our students majoring in preschool education, which was reported by media like *Jiangxia Daily*. Environment creation and handcraft skills of our students were highly appraised by provincial leaders who saw the exhibition.

The regional influence has been improved markedly. First, the achievements made by curriculum group construction are recognized by kindergartens and other sister universities through sharing and exchange on academic forums, and *Kindergarten Environment Creation* and *Handicraft Tutorial* published are purchased and used by many universities nationwide with a sales volume of over 50,000 copies. Next, it serves kindergartens and drives the growth of regional pre-education. Teachers of the team have given lectures about environment creation and handcraft skill training at kindergartens many times, and popularized teaching results through these lectures; took part in environmental planning and construction for Jiangxi Province Military District Kindergarten and Nanchang City North Kindergarten, helping the former create a cultural environment and helping the latter create an ecological and childlike environment, which led to a significant increase in its professional influence in the field of kindergarten environment creation. In addition, the fruits of curriculum group construction are popularized and applied to other universities. Three main courses of the curriculum group are selected and learned by students at different universities as online courses on Xueyinonline.com, which helps students from other universites improve their kindergarten environment creation capability and environmental literacy.

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