The Preparation of Early Childhood Teachers in Taiwan

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Abstract

This paper explores early childhood teacher preparation in Taiwan, especially focuses on the preparation of kindergarten teachers. It first reviews the history of early childhood teacher preparation in China and in Taiwan, then presents its current status and identifies some of the pressing problems in teacher preparation programs. Finally, suggestions for improving the preparation of early childhood teachers is presented.

Keywords: early childhood education, teacher preparation (training), kindergarten

Introduction

Early childhood education has developed at a rapid pace in recent years in Taiwan, especially during the past decade. The Ministry of Education (1996) notes that there were 570 kindergartens in Taiwan in 1970, compared to 2,581 kindergartens in 1996; 91,984 kindergartners in 1970, compared to 240,368 in 1996; and 7,344 kindergarten teachers in 1970, compared to 16,129 in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996). Thus, the recent growth in kindergarten education in Taiwan has been exponential.

In Taiwan, early childhood education is considered education before elementary school. There are a variety of early childhood programs, including kindergartens, nursery schools, and day care centers. Of these, kindergartens and nursery schools are the most popular. The kindergarten is an educational institution that serves children between the ages of four and six. The nursery school is considered a social welfare institution that serves children from one month of age through age six. According to Early Childhood Education Act (幼稚教育法) (1981) and Child Welfare Act (兒童福利法) (1973, revised in 1993), kindergartens emphasize education, and nursery schools emphasize care. A distinction is also made in Taiwan among early childhood practitioners. Kindergarten practitioners are called "teachers". Those who work in the nursery schools and day care centers are called "caregivers". Before the Regulations and Qualifications of Child Welfare Professionals (兒童福利專業人員資格檢定辦法) is passed in 1995, practitioners who are qualified to teach kindergarten can teach in nursery school and day care centers, right now, it is not true any more.

This paper will focus on the preparation of early childhood teachers, especially in pre-service preparation programs (including nursery school caregivers and kindergarten teachers). It will first briefly review the history of early childhood teacher preparation.

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1. In this paper, teacher preparation and teacher training are interchangeable
preparation in China and in Taiwan, then present its current status, identifying some of the pressing problems in teacher preparation program. Finally, suggestions for improving the preparation of early childhood teachers will be discussed.

A Brief History

Early childhood teacher preparation in Taiwan is an outgrowth of early childhood teacher preparation in China before 1949. Tracing its history to the beginning of the twentieth century can help understand the current situation (Lin & Spodek, 1992).

Early childhood teacher preparation in China

The history of early childhood teacher preparation begins about ninety years ago. In 1903, the Imperial Chinese government established "Enlightenment Centers" for children ages three to seven. This was the formal beginning of early childhood education in China. The enlightenment centers, designed to help family education, had a curriculum which included play, nursery songs, stories, and handicraft activities. Because women were not enrolled in schools at that time, the caregivers in these centers learned to teach by reading books about childhood education (Wang, 1977). One enlightenment center was established in 1903 in Beijing along with a caregiver normal school—the earliest early childhood teacher preparation institution. The normal school provided a five-year training program. The original teachers in the enlightenment center were brought from Japan, as were the curriculum, teaching methods and material.

At about this time, a group of Japanese kindergarten teachers were brought to Hubei Province in China to establish kindergartens for 4- to 6-year-old children and to train Chinese kindergarten teachers. Later, caregiver training centers were established in Shanghai, and Wuxi (Yuan, 1948; Chang, 1933). In 1907, Wu Zu-zhe, a Chinese educator who went to Japan to study kindergarten education, returned to establish a caregiver learning center in Shanghai. She offered courses in child psychology and early childhood education to 36 students (Wang, 1980). That same year, the government established guidelines for four-year Girls' Normal Schools, reflecting a new concern for women's education. During this period, Froebelian kindergarten were also established in China by American missionaries.

In 1912, when the Republic of China was founded, the government created a Ministry of Education and established a public education system. According to the Teacher Education Law and Primary School Organization of 1912, girls' normal schools and primary schools should establish enlightenment centers. In addition, girls' normal schools should include caregiver training programs. In 1916, the word "kindergarten" first appeared in the Education Law.

After World War I, John Dewey and Bertrand Russell lectured in China and had a significant influence on Chinese's educational reform. In 1922, the Ministry of Education promulgated a "New Educational System". The enlightenment centers were renamed "kindergartens." In 1923, the first public early childhood education departments were established in Nanjing Girls' Normal School and Den- jing Girls' Normal Schools. In 1926, the Teacher Education Law proclaimed that every normal school should create a two-year early childhood education program. From that time, early childhood education programs, rather than caregiver training programs, became the primary form of early childhood teacher preparation. The caregiver training that remained was delegated to in-service activities in nursery schools and child care centers (Wang, 1977).

Within a few years, many normal schools established early childhood education department. Four universities--Yangjing University, Jinling Women's University, Qifu University and Huaxi University-- created early childhood education courses in their home economic and sociology department in 1930. This was the first time that universities offered early childhood education courses. A standard teacher training curriculum was established by the Ministry of Education in 1935 (Ko, 1974).

In 1940, Chen He-qin, a progressive educator,
who had studied in the United States from 1914-
1919, had established five experimental schools and
kindergartens in Nanjing. He also founded an Ex-
perimental Early Childhood Education Normal
School in Jingxi. This became a national early
childhood normal school in 1943 (Hwang, 1976). In
1945, the Jiangxi school was merged with the Nan-
chang Women's Normal School and was moved to
Shanghai (Chung, 1979, 1981). During this period,
Chang Hsueh-men, another famous early childhood
educator, was principal of the Beijing Preschool
Education Normal School. That school stressed the
relation of theory to practice, the importance of
teaching skills, independent thinking for kinder-
garten teachers, and their involvement in the social
life of the community.

Early childhood teacher preparation in
Taiwan

The first early childhood education depart-
ment in Taiwan which trained kindergarten teach-
ers was founded in Taipei Girls' Normal School in
1946. This department enrolled junior high school
graduates and provided a three-year training pro-
gram (Hwang, 1976). Tainan Provincial Normal
School and Kaohsiung Girls' Normal School fol-
lowed that example. After the Kuomintang gov-
ernment moved to Taiwan in 1950, the Taipei Day
Care Center established an apprenticeship program.
This type of apprenticeship teacher training contin-
ued until 1961. Although the Ministry of Education
revised the standard teacher training curriculum in
1952, the preparation of early childhood teachers
was not given much attention during this period.

In 1955, the Department of Education of the
Taiwan Provincial Government ordered the Tainan
Provincial Normal School to close down the early
childhood education department in order to train
more elementary school teachers. Kaohsiung Girls'
Normal School followed this example in the next
year. In 1960, owing to the change from normal
schools to normal junior colleges and the im-
provement of elementary education, the govern-
ment proclaimed that the normal junior colleges do
away with early childhood education departments.
By 1965, early childhood education departments no
longer existed in Taiwan (Ko, 1974). From then un-
til 1983, early childhood teachers were prepared
through in-service education, offered in evening
and summer classes for kindergarten teachers who
lacked certification. (During this period, elementary
school teachers are qualified to become kinder-
garten teachers, though the reverse was not true).
The quality of early childhood education declined
during these years because of the absence of pro-
fessional preparation and commitment in kinder-
garten teachers.

Owing to the high proportion of working
women and changes in social and family life in
Taiwan, the need for early childhood education in-
sstitutions increased. With the increase in kinder-
gartens and nursery schools, the Government found
it necessary to again establish programs to prepare
kindergarten teachers. In 1983, the Ministry of Ed-
ucation approved two-year early childhood educa-
tion programs (二年制幼稚教育師資科) in four
normal junior colleges—Taipei Municipal Normal
Junior College, Taipei Provincial Normal Junior
College, Taichung Provincial Normal Junior Col-
lege and Chia-I Provincial Normal Junior College.
High school or vocational school graduates were
recruited for this program. Two years later, the
other five normal junior colleges in Taiwan also es-
ablished two-year early childhood education de-
partments. Since then, the preparation of early
childhood teachers has formally been a part of the
teacher education system and pre-service education
has been emphasized.

The Department of Social Welfare of the Tai-
wan Provincial Government began to offered short-
term training programs to prepare caregivers in
nursery school in 1955. Then, some high schools
and vocational schools established programs to
prepare caregivers in nursery school, but their
graduates can not teach in kindergarten. Right now,
there are some universities or colleges prepare
caregivers of nursery schools such as the Depart-
ment of Applied Sciences in Fu-Jang University
and Shu-Chein University; the Departments of
Youth and Children Welfare in the Chinese Cul-
ture University, and in Jing-Yi University and so on.
There are also more than thirty-five vocational
schools and senior high schools with child care de-
partments in Taiwan which offer three-year training
programs. Graduates of these programs are quali-
fied to become caregivers in nursery school, but are
not qualified to become kindergarten teachers.

In 1981, the government passed the *Early Childhood Education Act* (Ministry of Education, 1981), the most important law for early childhood education in Taiwan. For the first time early childhood education was given a legitimate place in the educational system. Two years after the passage of that law, the *Guidelines for the Selection and Certification of Early Childhood Teachers and Directors* (Ministry of Education, 1983) were issued. As a way to upgrade the quality of early childhood teachers, the government established criteria for qualified kindergarten teachers. It also did away with the role of assistant teachers in kindergartens. Evening and summer session in-service teacher training programs gradually ceased between 1985-1987. The normal junior colleges became teachers colleges in 1987, and recruited senior high school graduates. Prior to this time, they had recruited junior high school graduates and provided five-year teacher training programs. The graduates of these programs now are provided four-year training programs and now earn bachelor’s degree. They can become elementary school or early childhood teachers. By now, early childhood education departments however, only offered two-year training programs. These programs consist of at least 90 credits of study. Students who were graduated from these departments were qualified only as kindergarten or nursery school teachers. In order to improve the quality of early childhood teachers, the government established four-year early childhood teachers training programs (the department of early childhood education 四年制幼兒教育學系) in 1990.

Taipei Municipal Teachers College was the first college to establish such program. Two years later, other teachers colleges follow these example. In 1994, the government passed the *Teacher Education Act* (師資培育法) (Ministry of Education, 1994), teacher preparation programs becomes multiple. According to the Act, any universities or colleges that plan to establish educational programs in different levels (secondary school education, elementary school education, early childhood education, or special education) can submit their applications to the Ministry of Education. The Council of Teacher Education in the Ministry of Education will examine the application. Having been approved by the Council, the universities and colleges can start preparing their teacher training programs and recruit students who plan to be (high school, elementary school, or kindergarten) teachers to take extra teacher education program courses. According to the Act, it is required to take more than 26 credits to become prospective qualified early childhood teachers (see Table 1, 26 Credits of Pre-school Teacher Training Program 幼稚園教師教育學程 ). In addition, from 1994, the graduates of universities or colleges need to have a one-year internship. After having completed this internship, they can finally become teachers.

In summary, during the past 50 years, early childhood teachers in Taiwan were originally prepared in pre-service training programs. This preparation changed as only in-service programs became available. More recently, pre-service training program has again been established. Originally, pre-service teacher preparation was limited to three-year training programs in normal schools. Later, kindergarten teachers were prepared in two-year programs in normal junior colleges and teachers colleges. Then, four-year programs (the department of early childhood education) in teachers colleges are established. Now, early childhood teachers can be prepared not only in nine teachers colleges but also in other colleges or universities that having provided 26 credits of pre-school teacher training program.

While these changes have occurred to meet the current need for kindergarten teachers and to improve their preparation, there are still problems in these training programs. In the following section, the current status and pressing problems in the preparation of early childhood teachers in Taiwan will be discussed.
Table 1  26 Credits of Pre-school Teacher Training Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Required credits in this field</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic professional courses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s literature</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s play and physical activities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s nutrition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4~6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s natural science and mathematics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s sociology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s arts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s music</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foundations of Teacher Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s development and care</td>
<td>2~3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Special children’s education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2~4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The professional ethics of early childhood</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>practitioners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Methods and Curriculum</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The introduction of early childhood education</td>
<td>2~3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood education curriculum design</td>
<td>2~3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of children’s behavior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten’s administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4~6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching environmental design for young children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Application and design of teaching materials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidance of children’s behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching materials and methods</td>
<td>4~6</td>
<td>6~8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teaching</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elective courses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Current Scene of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation

Children between the ages of four and six are educated in kindergartens in Taiwan today. These kindergartens are primarily private establishments, although increasingly kindergartens are being established as part of county or city elementary schools. According to the Bureau of Statistics of the Ministry of Education (1996), three times as many children are enrolled in private kindergartens and preschools as in public school kindergartens. Nearly ninety percent of the private kindergartens are independent of any elementary school affiliation, while 97% of the public school kindergartens are affiliated with public elementary schools.

Right now, there are nine teachers colleges and five universities (colleges) that prepare kindergarten teachers in Taiwan. The typical four-year normal teachers college program (the department of early childhood education) consists of at least 148 credits. This is divided into 52 credits of general education, including history, language, philosophy, science; and 96 credits of professional courses. The professional courses include 26 credits of educational foundations, 18 credits of curriculum and methods, 10 credits of practice, and 42 credits of elective courses. The total hours of this four-year programs is 196 (Table 2). Before the Teacher Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1994) was passed in 1994, nine teachers colleges are the only institutions to prepare early childhood teachers.

According to the Standards for Establishing Teacher Preparation Programs in the Universities (大專校院教育學科師資及設立標準) (Ministry of Education, 1995), 26 credits in pre-school teacher training program are required. Until now, there are five universities and colleges have formally established this program. This professional program is divided into 20 credits of compulsory (required) courses and 6 credits of elective course. The former consists of 4-6 credits of general education, 2-4 credits of basic educational foundation courses, 4-6 credits of curriculum and methods, and 6-8 credits of practice. The universities and colleges can independently design their 6 credits of elective courses.

According to the Early Childhood Act (1981) and the Guidelines for the Selection and Certification of Early Childhood Teachers and Directors (1983), graduates of early childhood education programs in teacher colleges, of programs related to early childhood education in other colleges or universities, of senior high schools who have taken twenty credits of early childhood education courses in government-designated school, or persons who had a kindergarten certificate prior to the Early Childhood Education Act can all be kindergarten teachers. According to the Act (1981) and Guidelines (1983) above, although several universities and colleges have programs related to early childhood education, such as home economics, social work, or child welfare, their graduates were not allowed to become kindergarten teachers. The Ministry of Education (1983) stated that "those departments which are related to the early childhood education in colleges and universities" noted in the guidelines refers to other programs in normal teachers college and in education departments in normal universities, rather than in department with programs related to early childhood education in other institutions of higher education. Thus, graduates of general colleges or universities could not become kindergarten teachers at that time. The situation has changed however. According to the Teacher Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1994) and Guidelines for Qualification and Interns of Kindergarten, Elementary School and Secondary School Teachers (高級中等以下學校及幼稚園教師資格檢定及教育實習辦法) (Ministry of Education, 1995), graduates of general colleges or universities who have taken 26 credits in a pre-school teacher training program can become kindergarten teachers.

In order to upgrade the quality of early childhood education and to solve the problem of a kindergarten teachers shortage, there is one other way to prepare early childhood teachers right now. Nine teachers colleges provide one-year post-baccalaureate pre-school teacher preparation (學士後幼教學分班) (it's evening program) to graduates of general colleges and universities who are willing to become kindergarten teachers. They need to take at least 26 credits of early childhood education courses. After completing this program, as
### Table 2  Four-year Early Childhood Education Program in Teachers Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Required credits 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundations of Teacher Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>required courses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational psychology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational philosophy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods and materials of children's language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods and materials of children's social sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>required credits 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods and materials of children's play and physical education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>elective credits 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods and materials of children's health hygiene</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching methods and materials of children's arts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practices (including field experience and student teaching)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>electives courses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional courses</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>required courses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's development and care</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood education curriculum design</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Observation of children's behavior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten's administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>required credits 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>History of early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Children's nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction of special education</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>elective courses:</td>
<td></td>
<td>elective credits 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's literature</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Children's play and physical activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's natural science and mathematics</td>
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<td>Children's sociology</td>
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<td>Children's arts</td>
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<td>Children's music</td>
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<tr>
<td>The professional ethics of early childhood practitioner</td>
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<td>Guidance of children's behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's welfare</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>elective credits 32</td>
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<tr>
<td>The classics on early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio-visual education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex education in early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursery rhymes</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparative early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten's accreditation</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Children's folks</td>
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<td>Case study</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer education in kindergarten</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom management in kindergarten</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's drama</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Play therapy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Art therapy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent study</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulations of early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervision on early childhood education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
same as graduates in teachers colleges and in general universities or colleges, they still need to have a one-year internship in order to receive teacher certificate.

Most public kindergartens in Taiwan are currently affiliated with elementary schools. The teachers in these public school kindergartens receive higher salaries, higher employment benefits, and better working conditions than do teachers in private kindergartens. Most early childhood teachers in Taiwan are women. Although the government allowed men to enter early childhood education programs in 1985, until now only a few men have enrolled. Unfortunately, few of them became kindergarten teachers upon graduation.

Current Issues of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation

Currently there are a number of issues related to the preparation of early childhood teachers in Taiwan that need to be resolved. Among the most pressing are the following:

**Insufficient good-quality early childhood institutions for prospective teachers to intern**

Before Teacher Education Act (1994) has been passed, the graduates of early childhood education departments in teachers colleges could certainly become kindergarten teachers. They would receive teacher certificate and would teach in kindergartens, not in nursery schools. This is not true any more.

According to the Teacher Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1994) and Guidelines for Qualification and Interns of Kindergarten, Elementary School and Secondary School Teachers (Ministry of Education, 1995), the graduates of early childhood education department in nine teachers colleges, of pre-school teacher training program in general colleges and universities, and of one-year post-baccalaureate pre-school teacher preparation in teachers colleges may not immediately become kindergarten teachers, they still need a one-year internship in kindergarten. After having successfully completing their internship, they can formally become kindergarten teachers. Giving prospective teachers one more year to experience actual classroom practice is a good idea to fully prepare more competent kindergarten teachers, but presently, the mentor system is not well established in Taiwan. According to the survey, half of kindergarten teachers are not qualified and only a few kindergartens are considered to be good-quality institutions (Lin, 1994). This one-year internship is assumed to allow prospective teachers to learn more about teaching, to construct their knowledge, skills and personal professional theories and understandings about teaching and learning. They still need help in this critical period, so having competent, experienced kindergarten teachers to help them is very important. But in fact there are not enough qualified mentors in kindergartens to help these prospective teachers in their internship. This issue needs to be resolved immediately, because there will be almost one thousand graduates of early childhood education programs next year (1998) who will need internships in order to qualify for the kindergarten teacher certificate.

The other issue is that all graduates of early childhood teacher preparation programs have their intern only in kindergarten. However, not all the graduates of these programs teach in kindergarten; some work in nursery schools or day care centers; and some work in related fields such as children's book stores, or children's libraries. Providing diverse internship settings would allow the prospective teachers to know more about different early childhood education institution, so they can make an appropriate career choice for their future.

**Difference in standard for kindergarten teachers and nursery school caregivers**

Kindergartens and nursery schools are both popular in Taiwan. The former serves children from ages four to six, while the latter serves children from on month to six years of age. The two programs are regulated by different agencies--kindergarten by the local educational authority, nursery schools by a social welfare agency--and their staff requirements are different. Before 1997, a caregiver must have a high school or vocational school diploma with at least three months of child
care training, but according to the Training Programs and Regulations, Certifications of Child Welfare Professionals (兒童福利專業人員資格要點暨訓練實施方案) (Ministry of Interior, 1997) the graduates of child care programs or programs related to child care in high school or vocational schools can only become assistant caregivers. The graduates of child welfare programs in universities or colleges, of programs related to child welfare in colleges or universities, of colleges or universities with at least 350 hours child care courses in government-designed school, or persons who passed National Examination for Professional and Technicians and received child care professional training can all be caregivers.

As noted above, we can understand that the preparation of caregivers in nursery schools and teachers in kindergarten is different. Before 1997, individuals who qualified to teach in kindergarten were also qualified to teach in nursery schools, the reverse was not true, but this has changed. Right now, these two programs follow different regulations and use different standards to recruit staff. Whether nursery schools and kindergartens, which both serve children from age 4 to six, should be supervised by the same agency or should have the same requirements is an issue that needs to be debated.

The shortage of kindergarten teachers

There are a number of factors which contribute to the current shortage of early childhood teachers in Taiwan. Many early childhood teachers do not remain in teaching. High teacher turnover and short tenure are characteristics of the early childhood field. Low salaries, few employment benefits, poor working conditions, heavy workloads, and no opportunity for career enhancement are some of the reasons for this high turnover. According to one survey, of the 20,549 qualified kindergarten teachers in Taiwan, only about 8,700 are currently teaching. The annual turnover rate is 57.7% (Tsai, 1989).

A second factor contributing to the shortage of kindergarten teachers is the rapid increase in the number of programs for young children. The number of early childhood programs, including kindergarten, nursery school, day care center for young children doubles every year in Taiwan (Provincial Taipei Teachers College, 1989). However, only about 500 qualified, prospective kindergarten teachers are graduated each year. With the establishment of new children's programs, the need for professionally trained teachers increases.

The number of early childhood teachers prepared each year is not sufficient to staff these expanding programs. As a result, the need for kindergarten teachers is outstripping the supply. The issue of how to provide qualified kindergarten teachers for the existing and evolving programs remained unresolved.

Discussion and Suggestions

The problems that are found in the field are not unlike those found in other developed nations. The preparation of early childhood and elementary teachers in the United States moved from normal schools to normal colleges to multipurpose colleges and universities some time ago. England, Australia and Israel have more recently moved the preparation of early childhood and primary school teachers to universities. All such developments involve some degree of dislocation that will probably be experienced as teacher preparation in Taiwan continues the process.

In the United States and in other countries a
similar distinction is made in the standards established for nursery schools and kindergartens, especially when kindergartens are part of the public school system. Higher salaries, greater benefits and better working conditions for teachers in the public school systems as compared with teachers in private schools also seem to exist in other countries. These differences parallel differences in the preparation of teachers in these types of institutions and in the requirements for their employment. The problems of early childhood teacher preparation in Taiwan can be better understood when seen in the context of international developments in the field. Out of the experience of early childhood teacher education, and understanding of current condition, a number of suggestions can be made for improving the preparation of early childhood teacher in Taiwan.

There are some clear-cut signs that such improvement will be forthcoming. During the past ten years, the Ministry of Education has begun to pay increasing attention to the preparation of the early childhood teachers. For example, four-year early childhood education programs (師院幼兒教育學科), pre-school teacher training programs (各大學幼稚園教師教育學程), and post-baccalaureate pre-school teacher preparation programs (師院學士後幼稚教育學分班) have been established for kindergarten teachers, and there is increasing recruitment for these programs. In order to improve the quality of kindergarten teachers quickly, other reforms are necessary. These reforms should include the following:

**Establishing a suitable mentor system**

According to the *Teacher Education Act* (1994), the graduates of early childhood department in teachers colleges, of pre-school teacher training program in general colleges and universities, and of one-year evening post-baccalaureate pre-school teacher preparation program in teachers colleges can not certainly become certified kindergarten teachers. If they expect to be kindergarten teachers, they still need to have a one-year internship in kindergarten in order to receive kindergarten teacher certificate. The prospective teachers need to teach in one certified kindergarten with experienced mentor's guidance. Unfortunately, right now, in Taiwan the mentor system is not well established in other educational institutions, not to mention in early childhood education. According to research (Bullough, 1989; Chiang, 1995), the first-year teacher would encounter a lot of problems, such as human relationship, teaching skills, classroom management and parent education. They do need help from experienced teachers or from university professors. This one-year interns is assumed to provide prospective teachers to learn more about teaching in the actual teaching setting. It is really a critical period for the prospective teachers to know about teaching, so providing them competent, experienced mentors is greatly important.

In order to upgrade the quality of kindergarten education, the Ministry of Education needs to emphasize the early childhood education accreditation, and recruits more responsible early childhood specialists in educational bureaus to supervise kindergarten and help kindergarten teachers modify and improve their practice. If there have enough competent kindergarten teachers in kindergarten, the prospective teachers will receive help in their teaching practice, and finally become formal, competent teachers after their internship. The local educational bureaus can also provide in-service training programs to kindergarten teachers, and encourage good-quality kindergartens to provide opportunities for the prospective teachers. The government can also sign a long-term cooperative contract with good kindergartens. In order for that to be the case, providing economic support, and providing guidance training programs for these kindergarten teachers is necessary too.

**Establishing a flexible certification system**

At present, not only graduates of early childhood education department in normal teachers colleges in Taiwan are qualified to teach kindergarten, but also graduates of general universities or colleges can qualify as kindergarten teacher if they have taken 26 credits in pre-school teacher training program. After the *Teacher Education Act* (1994) was passed, teacher preparation programs become multiple. This allows qualified college and universities graduates to become kindergarten teachers. This should strengthen kindergarten education at the same time that it opens up alternative prepara-
tion, a move that could help relieve the kindergarten teacher shortage.

Right now there are some alternative certification programs to admit persons with at least a bachelor degree and with a commitment to kindergarten education. One-year evening post-baccalaureate pre-school teacher preparation program is provided to them. After having completed at least 26 credits of early childhood education courses, they need to have one-year internship in kindergarten, then they can receive the kindergarten teacher certificate. In order to maintain and improve the quality of early childhood education, admission to such alternative programs should be done with care and the courses that are offered to individuals in such a program should be comparable to those in regular early childhood teacher education programs in teachers colleges.

Establishing the commonality between the standards of kindergarten teachers and nursery school caregivers

As noted above, there is different regulations in kindergarten and nursery schools. Revising the related regulation about the standard of kindergarten teachers and nursery school caregivers for the children from age 4 to six is needed. This would require that the education and social welfare institutions compromise and create a common standard for early childhood practitioners who serve children of the same age. This not a simple matter and depends on economic as well as pedagogic issues. Nursery school caregivers, who have lower qualifications, also receive lower salaries. It would not be reasonable to have kindergarten teachers meet the lower qualifications of the nursery school. If nursery school teachers to be expected to meet the same qualifications as kindergarten teaches, then they ought to be paid the same, with salaries comparable to those in public school kindergarten. It is suggested that kindergartens serve the children from age 4 to 6, and nursery schools serve children from one month to four years of age. This is still an issue that needs to be solved.

Improving the salaries and benefits for kindergarten teacher and establishing professional career lattice

Because of low salaries, poor working conditions, and heavy workload, the turnover among kindergarten teachers is very high (Lin, 1994; Tsai, 1989). Many prospective teachers do not consider early childhood education as a long-term career choice, and teachers leave their jobs. Increasing salaries and benefits, creating a career ladder, providing good working condition benefits, and reasonable workload, offering further in-service training or advanced education, and benefits are needed. Fortunately, the government is establishing more public kindergartens which are affiliated with elementary schools and serve children of 5 years of age. Teachers in these public school kindergartens receive higher salaries and higher employment benefits.

In order to upgrade the quality of early childhood professionals, establishing the lattice of early childhood professional development is necessary. A conceptual framework of early childhood professional development must set high standards for professional performance and distinguish the specialized skills and knowledge of the early childhood profession from those of other professions. The idea of establishing a career lattice system is allowing kindergarten teachers to move through stages to higher levels of professionalism. A career lattice would provide for the multiple roles and settings within the early childhood profession, each allowing for steps of greater preparation tied to increased responsibility and compensation within that role-setting, and allows for movement across roles. Each strand of the lattice is interconnected; all strands are a part of the larger entity (the early childhood profession). Kindergarten classroom teachers should be able to qualify for positions as supervisors and teachers educators if they received advanced degree. This is possible when opportunities for advanced study in the field of early child education are available. Right now, there are few universities which provide advanced degree programs, such as the Division of Early Childhood Education in Graduate Institute of Home Economic in National Taiwan Normal University, and the Graduate Institute of Youth, Children Welfare in Chinese Culture University. Fortunately, in 1998 the Min-
istry of Education approves the other Graduate Institute of Early Childhood Education in National Hsin-Chu Teachers College, but it still only has a limited number. Most early childhood teachers are seeking advanced education in other countries.

Conclusion

This paper presented the history of early childhood teacher preparation in Taiwan. From the discussion above, we can understand that during the past 50 years, early childhood teachers were originally prepared in pre-service training programs, then became in-service training. More recently, pre-service training program has again been established. Originally, there was only three-year pre-service teacher preparation in normal schools. Later, early childhood teachers were prepared in two-year programs in normal junior colleges and teachers colleges. Then, four-year programs (the department of early childhood education) in teachers colleges were established. Now, early childhood teachers can be prepared not only in teachers colleges but also in general colleges or universities that having established pre-school teacher training program. In a word, there becomes multiple ways to prepare early childhood teachers right now.

Insufficient good-quality early childhood institutions for prospective teachers to have interns, difference in standard for kindergarten teachers and nursery school caregivers, and shortage of kindergarten teachers are considered as pressing issues in the preparation of early childhood teachers. Some suggestions are provided to improve the quality of early childhood teachers: establishing a flexible certification system, establishing a suitable mentor system, establishing the commonality between the standards of kindergarten teachers and nursery school caregivers, and improving the salaries and benefits for kindergarten teachers and establishing professional career lattice.

Early childhood teacher preparation is a relatively new field in Taiwan, and its history is relatively short. Although there are some problems in the current situation, we believe these problems can be solved in the future. Solutions, however, will require the cooperation of government officials and early childhood educators. It will also require increased economic and human resources. As Taiwan moves into greater parity with western developed countries, we believe that the education establishment will realize the importance of early childhood education as the foundation of children’s educational development and will work to create the necessary improvement.

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台灣幼兒師資培育

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本文旨在探討我國幼兒教師師資培育制度，尤其是幼稚園教師部份。本文首先回顧幼兒教師師資培育的歷史，接著探討目前幼教師資培育的現況及所呈現的重大問題。最後研究者提出幾項改進幼教師資培育的建議，以供有關單位參考。

關鍵詞：幼兒教育、師資培育、幼稚園