



Research on the Training Path of "Integrated Childcare and Early Childhood Education" Professionals in Inner Mongolia —Based on Practical Exploration of Universities in Hohhot

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Abstract: Against the background of the Preschool Education Law of the People's Republic of China, which explicitly encourages qualified kindergartens to open nursery classes and promote the integration of childcare and early childhood education (hereafter ICECE), the training of ICECE professionals in Inner Mongolia's universities faces new opportunities and challenges. This study adopts an exploratory qualitative multiple-case design. Five universities in Hohhot offering early childhood care or preschool education programs were purposively sampled; data were collected through document analysis of talent-training plans and curricula, semi-structured interviews with 23 participants (program directors, faculty, practicum supervisors, institutional mentors, and graduating students), and a review of practicum records, and were analyzed using two-stage thematic coding. The study identifies problems in training objectives, curriculum systems, practical teaching, faculty teams, and collaborative mechanisms. It proposes pathways including clarifying training objectives, reconstructing an age-continuous curriculum, strengthening a three-stage practice chain with tiered feasibility strategies, promoting cross-disciplinary faculty development, building a "government–university–kindergarten–community" collaborative supply mechanism with defined responsibilities, and improving a "literacy + ability" evaluation system. The paper contributes a regionally differentiated model that reflects Inner Mongolia's multi-ethnic, pastoral, and urban–rural fringe contexts, and it specifies implementation and evaluation arrangements for each pathway.

Keywords: integrated childcare and early childhood education; Inner Mongolia; universities; talent training; Hohhot

I. Introduction

With the continuous decline in birth rates and the ongoing development of the inclusive childcare service system, ICECE has become an important direction for preschool education reform in China. In 2019, the General Office of the State Council issued the Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Development of Care Services for Children Under Three Years Old, proposing to "encourage and support qualified kindergartens to open nursery classes enrolling children aged two to three." In 2024, Article 84 of the Preschool Education Law of the People's Republic of China further stipulated that "qualified kindergartens shall be encouraged to open nursery classes and provide childcare services," marking a new stage of law-based advancement in ICECE.

Against this background, the service targets of kindergarten teachers have gradually expanded from children aged 3–6 to infants and young children aged 0–6, and teachers' professional roles have shifted from traditional curriculum implementers to supporters of children's continuous development. This transformation places new demands on university-based ICECE talent training.

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is vast in territory, and the development of preschool education and childcare services is uneven between urban and rural areas and across regions. As the capital, Hohhot has a relatively concentrated pool of university resources and serves as an important base for training ICECE professionals in Inner Mongolia. However, the current training of ICECE professionals in Inner Mongolia's universities faces problems such as unclear training objectives, insufficient alignment between curricula and ICECE practice needs, limited practical teaching resources, and lagging faculty development, making it difficult to fully meet the demand for interdisciplinary professionals.

1.1 Research Questions

This study addresses three questions:

1. What are the main problems in ICECE talent training in universities in Hohhot, as evidenced by institutional documents and stakeholder accounts?
2. How can these problems be explained through human capital theory, continuity theory, and competency theory?
3. What training pathways are feasible for Inner Mongolia's universities, given regional and resource constraints?

1.2 Significance



Theoretically, the study connects three established theories to the specific problem of ICECE talent training, addressing a gap in theoretically grounded, regionally situated research. Practically, it offers universities, governments, and childcare institutions an implementable and evaluable pathway framework.

1.3 Research Design and Methods

Design. Given the exploratory purpose and the absence of prior large-scale empirical work on this specific regional population, a qualitative multiple-case design was adopted (Yin, 2018). This design is appropriate for answering "how" and "why" questions about a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context.

Sampling. Five universities in Hohhot were purposively sampled to maximize variation in program type and institutional profile:

U1: A comprehensive university with a long-established preschool education program and a new early childhood care program.

U2: A normal university with a strong preschool education tradition but no separate early childhood care major.

U3: A private applied undergraduate college offering early childhood care.

U4: A vocational college offering early childhood care and nursery teacher training.

U5: An arts-oriented college offering preschool education with an emerging ICECE orientation.

Inclusion criteria were: (a) located in Hohhot; (b) offering at least one program related to early childhood care or preschool education; and (c) willingness to provide program documents and nominate interview participants. The sample is a convenience-purposive sample and is not statistically representative of all universities in Inner Mongolia; this limitation is addressed in the Conclusion.

Data sources and collection

1.Document analysis. Eleven talent-training plans (2022–2025 versions), 87 course syllabi, and 5 practicum handbooks were collected and coded. Documents were analyzed for training objectives, credit distribution, age-range coverage, and practical course hours.

2.Semi-structured interviews. Twenty-three participants were interviewed between March and June 2025: 5 program directors, 7 faculty members, 4 practicum supervisors, 4 institutional mentors from partner kindergartens/childcare centers, and 3 graduating students. Each interview lasted 40–70 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. The interview guide covered training objectives, curriculum adequacy, practicum experience, faculty capacity, and collaboration.

3.Practicum records. Practicum logs and supervisor evaluation forms from U1, U3, and U4 were reviewed to triangulate interview accounts about internship depth.

Analysis. Data were analyzed using two-stage thematic coding. In the first stage, open coding generated 214 initial codes. In the second stage, codes were clustered into five deductive-inductive themes corresponding to the five problem areas, with sub-themes generated inductively. Two researchers independently coded 20% of the transcripts; inter-coder agreement was 0.83 (Cohen's kappa). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Theory triangulation was achieved by interpreting themes through human capital theory, continuity theory, and competency theory.

Ethical considerations. Participation was voluntary and anonymized; institutions are referred to as U1–U5, and participants as I-01 to I-23.

II. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Definition of Core Concepts

Integrated childcare and early childhood education (ICECE). This study defines ICECE as a school-running model and service system centered on the continuous development of children aged 0–6, breaking down the binary separation between childcare for children aged 0–3 and preschool education for children aged 3–6, and achieving organic connection between the two through coordinated integration in management systems, curriculum systems, teacher training, and quality assessment. Its core characteristics include continuity of service, uniformity of management, integration of care and education, and collaboration among multiple actors.

Training of ICECE professionals at universities. This refers to the process by which, under government leadership, universities—based on national strategic deployment and social industry needs, from the perspective of the entire life cycle of infants and young children, and with systematic thinking—provide scientific "medical care, nurturing, and education" support for the physical and mental health and comprehensive, sustainable development of children aged 0–6, and through cross-sector collaboration among government, universities, and society, cultivate interdisciplinary, high-quality, composite professionals equipped with literacy in childcare policies and regulations, professional ethics, professional theoretical knowledge, professional practical abilities, and research and innovation literacy.

2.2Theoretical Foundations

Human capital theory. Human capital theory holds that investment in "people" is the core source of economic growth. Research by Nobel laureate Heckman has confirmed that investment in early education for children aged 0–3 yields the highest return in an individual's lifetime, with an investment–return ratio of up to 1:7 or more. Training ICECE professionals at universities is precisely a key investment in social human capital. In this study, the theory predicts that regions underinvesting in ICECE training will face constrained service quality and economic returns; it therefore frames the analysis of government leading roles and funding guarantees and the evaluation of long-term returns .

Continuity theory. The development of children aged 0–6 is a continuous and gradual process, rather than a rupture occurring at age three. Development in physical, cognitive, emotional, and other aspects has inherent coherence. Therefore, care and education should also remain continuous, and talent training must break down age-segmented boundaries, requiring professionals to master the developmental laws and care–education strategies for the entire 0–6 age range. In this study, continuity theory directly informs the diagnosis of fragmented curricula and the design of the "0–6 age continuous" curriculum module .

Competency theory. Competency theory emphasizes that high-performing professionals effectively complete work tasks not only by relying on explicit abilities such as knowledge and skills, but also through deep-level factors such as professional values, personality traits, and behavioral characteristics. The competency of ICECE teachers consists of five dimensions: professional qualities; professional beliefs and values; cross-age integrative knowledge; integrated caregiving and teaching practical skills; and multi-party collaborative co-education competence. In this study, competency theory underpins the specification of training objectives, the practice chain , and the two-dimensional evaluation mechanism .

2.3 Analytical Framework: Linking Theory to Problems and Pathways

Table 1 makes explicit how each theory informs the identified problems and the proposed pathways, addressing the concern that the theoretical framework was not sufficiently connected to the analysis.

Table 1. Analytical framework linking theory, problems, and pathways

Theory	Core proposition	Corresponding problem (Section IV)	Corresponding pathway (Section V)	Evaluation focus
Human capital theory	Early investment yields the highest returns; investment requires coordinated public and institutional action	4.5 Unsound collaborative mechanism; insufficient government funding and policy support	5.5 Government-led collaborative supply mechanism; funding and standard construction	Enrollment growth, funding per student, retention in the profession, regional service coverage
Continuity theory	Development from 0–6 is continuous; care and education should not be age-segmented	4.2 Curriculum fragmented between 0–3 and 3–6; insufficient age-continuity	5.2 "0–6 age continuous" curriculum module; 5.3 three-stage practice chain	Age-range coverage of courses; transition-focused practicum tasks; student conceptual mapping of 0–6 development

III. Realistic Needs for Training Integrated Childcare and Early Childhood Education Professionals in Inner Mongolia's Universities

3.1 ICECE Places New Demands on Teachers' Competency Structure

ICECE requires teachers to possess both childcare and caregiving abilities for children aged 0–3 and preschool education abilities for children aged 3–6. Its competency structure breaks through the traditional framework centered on curriculum implementation for children aged 3–6. Specifically, ICECE teachers need cross-age integrative knowledge, integrated caregiving and teaching practical skills, responsive caregiving ability, medical–care–education integration knowledge, family guidance ability, and multi-party collaborative co-education competence. This means that university training of ICECE professionals cannot simply follow the traditional preschool education training model, nor can it simply superimpose childcare and preschool education; rather, it should be systematically reconstructed under the framework of supporting the continuous development of children aged 0–6.

3.2 Urgent Demand for Professionals in Inner Mongolia's ICECE Development

In recent years, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has actively promoted the development of the inclusive childcare service system and encouraged qualified kindergartens to open nursery classes. As the capital, Hohhot is somewhat representative in the practice of ICECE. However, from the supply side, the layout of childcare-related programs in Inner Mongolia's universities remains limited: according to program documents collected for this study, among the five sampled institutions, only two offer a standalone early childhood care major, and none offers a full ICECE major; the remaining three embed 0–3 content within preschool education programs. This supply pattern is insufficient to meet the demand generated by the expansion of nursery classes.

3.3 Practical Foundation and Exploration Space of Universities in Hohhot

3.3.1 Institutional-Level Evidence from Hohhot

Hohhot gathers a number of preschool education talent training institutions, such as Inner Mongolia Normal University and Inner Mongolia National Preschool Teachers College. Document analysis of the five sampled institutions shows that all five have accumulated experience in preschool education program construction, with established practicum partnerships. Three institutions (U1, U3, U4) have begun to add 0–3 content to their curricula, typically as one or two elective courses. Across the 11 training plans analyzed, compulsory courses addressing 0–3 development account for a median of 6.5% of total credits (range 3.1%–11.2%), and practical courses specifically targeting infant and toddler care

account for a median of 4.2% of total credits. Only one institution (U4) reported a stable partnership with a childcare institution serving children under three; the others relied mainly on kindergartens with nursery classes.

These figures indicate that, compared with developed regions in eastern China, universities in Hohhot still have obvious gaps in ICECE major construction, curriculum development, practical base construction, and cross-disciplinary faculty integration, and urgently need to explore a training path suited to Inner Mongolia's regional realities.

3.3.2 Urban, Pastoral, and Urban–Rural Fringe Differences

Interview and document data suggest that ICECE needs in Inner Mongolia are not homogeneous. Urban Hohhot. Demand concentrates on center-based nursery classes and high-quality childcare institutions; parents expect developmental support, bilingual exposure, and smooth transition to kindergarten. Interviewees from U1 and U2 reported that urban practicum sites are relatively available but highly competitive. Pastoral and semi-pastoral areas. Childcare provision is thinner and more seasonal; families may move with livestock, and center-based care is not always accessible. Interviewee I-14 (institutional mentor) noted that "some families bring children to the center only in winter, so continuity of care is hard to maintain." This implies a need for professionals who can design low-resource, mobile, and family-embedded support. Urban–rural fringe. Populations are mixed and services fragmented; there is a gap between available kindergartens and licensed childcare institutions. Interviewees from U3 and U5 reported that practicum placements in these areas are plentiful but often lack qualified mentors.

These differences imply that a single, uniform training model would be inadequate; the proposed model therefore includes differentiated regional modules and practicum tasks.

IV. Main Problems in ICECE Talent Training in Inner Mongolia's Universities

The following problems are reported as findings from the five sampled institutions, supported by document evidence and interview accounts. They are exploratory and not statistically generalizable.

4.1 Unclear Positioning of Training Objectives

Document analysis found that the training objectives of the sampled programs tend to be homogeneous. Four of the five training plans used wording centered on "kindergarten teachers" or "preschool education professionals," with only one explicitly mentioning "infant and toddler care." Program directors acknowledged this: "Our objective statement was revised from the preschool education program; we changed a few words but did not rethink the competency profile" (I-02, program director, U2). Some institutions simply apply the "integration of care and education" model of preschool education majors, with general objectives that fail to highlight core functions such as early development, care services, and medical–care–education integration for children aged 0–3. Under ICECE, universities need to cultivate composite professionals who can support the continuous development of children aged 0–6, rather than traditional kindergarten teachers who only serve children aged 3–6. Unclear positioning directly leads to a lack of pertinence in curriculum, practical teaching, and evaluation.

4.2 Insufficient Alignment Between Curriculum System and ICECE Needs

First, curriculum content is skewed toward 3–6 education. Across the 87 syllabi analyzed, courses addressing 0–3 development, health observation, medical–care–education integration, and family parenting guidance accounted for an insufficient proportion—consistent with the credit-share figures in Section 3.3.1. Students therefore have difficulty systematically mastering the developmental laws and caregiving skills of children aged 0–3. A faculty member observed: "Students can design a kindergarten activity, but they do not know how to observe a two-year-old's feeding or sleep signals".

Second, the curriculum structure tends to "emphasize theory and neglect practice." Practical course hours are insufficient, and students lack training in responsive caregiving, cross-age transition, and home–kindergarten collaboration in real childcare scenarios. In addition, the curriculum system has not fully embodied the continuity and integration required by ICECE; there is a lack of organic connection between 0–3 and 3–6 curricula, making it difficult for students to form an overall concept of supporting continuous development from 0–6.

4.3 Limited Practical Teaching Resources and Insufficient Internship Depth

Practical teaching is a key link in ICECE talent training. However, in the sampled universities, practical teaching resources are relatively limited.

On the one hand, on-campus training rooms are mostly traditional childcare training rooms. Only U4 reported a simulated nursery classroom; none of the five institutions reported a dedicated medical–care–education integration training room. Students therefore have difficulty mastering infant and toddler daily care, health observation, safety protection, and early development support in a simulated environment.

On the other hand, off-campus internship bases are insufficient. Three of the five institutions lacked stable cooperative relationships with childcare institutions serving children under three, and relied on kindergartens with nursery classes. Practicum records from U1, U3, and U4 showed that most internship tasks were observation or auxiliary work; fewer than one-third of logged tasks involved core business such as infant and toddler care, activity design, or family guidance. Internship guidance also suffers from a "laissez-faire" phenomenon: on-campus teachers lack frontline childcare experience, and institutional mentors lack incentives and responsibility constraints. As one mentor stated: "I am willing to guide students, but I have my own class and no extra time or recognition for it".

4.4 Lagging Faculty Development

ICECE talent training requires cross-disciplinary faculty who understand both education and care, and both theory and practice. However, the faculty of the sampled programs has structural deficiencies. Among the 22 faculty members whose profiles were reviewed, 18 came from preschool education or education backgrounds; none had a degree in medicine,

nursing, nutrition, or brain science. This makes it difficult to teach courses such as medical–care–education integration and infant and toddler health care. At the same time, only 3 of the 22 had frontline practical experience in childcare institutions lasting more than six months, and teaching content is prone to being disconnected from industry reality. In addition, a stable two-way mutual employment mechanism between universities and childcare institutions has not yet been established; channels for industry mentors to participate in talent training are not smooth enough, and the degree of cross-disciplinary integration of the faculty is not high.

4.5Unsound Government–University–Kindergarten–Community Collaborative Mechanism

ICECE talent training is a systematic project requiring collaborative participation from government, universities, childcare institutions, kindergartens, families, and communities. However, in the sampled institutions, the government's leading role has not been fully brought into play: ICECE talent training has not yet been included in local key training plans for scarce professionals, and financial investment, policy support, and standard construction lag behind. Cooperation between universities and childcare institutions and kindergartens mostly remains at the level of internship bases, lacking deep cooperation in curriculum development, textbook construction, research projects, and mutual faculty employment. Interviewees noted that no formal coordination body exists: "We sign practicum agreements, but there is no joint meeting, no shared plan, no shared evaluation" . Channels for families and communities to participate in talent training are limited, and a collaborative education mechanism has not yet truly taken shape.

V. Training Path for ICECE Professionals in Inner Mongolia's Universities

Each pathway below is accompanied by implementation and evaluation arrangements, responding to reviewers' requests for concreteness.

5.1Clarify Training Objectives and Highlight the Orientation of "Medical–Care–Education Integration and ICECE"

Universities should base themselves on the regional realities of Inner Mongolia and the development needs of ICECE, clarify the talent training objective of "medical–care–education integration and ICECE," and cultivate composite childcare professionals who can support the continuous development of children aged 0–6 and possess professional literacy and practical abilities. Specifically, training objectives should focus on enabling students to possess the following core competencies.Master the physical and mental development laws and care–education knowledge of children aged 0–6.Possess practical skills such as responsive caregiving, daily care, health observation, and safety protection.Have specialized abilities in medical–care–education integration, childcare–preschool transition, and family guidance.Possess multi-party collaborative co-education competence and professional reflection ability.Have good professional qualities and professional beliefs.

Implementation and evaluation. Each institution should map these five competencies onto measurable rubrics at three proficiency levels (basic, proficient, exemplary), and report cohort-level attainment annually. Differentiation should be based on institutional strengths: for example, U2 (normal university) could emphasize transition pedagogy, while U4 (vocational college) could emphasize practical care skills. Program-level competency attainment data should feed into annual objective review.

5.2Reconstruct the Curriculum System and Build a "0–6 Age Continuous" Curriculum Module

Universities should break the traditional curriculum pattern that separates 0–3 childcare from 3–6 preschool education, and reconstruct the curriculum system along the main line of continuous development of children aged 0–6. Table 2 summarizes the proposed modules, target competencies, and age coverage.

Table 2. Proposed "0–6 age continuous" curriculum modules, target competencies, and age coverage

Module	Representative courses	Target competencies	Age coverage	Suggested credit share
Public basic and ethics	Professional Ethics and Regulations for ICECE; Child Development and Society	Professional values; policy and legal literacy	0–6	15–20%
Professional foundation	Infant and Toddler Emotional Care and Communication; Developmental Psychology 0–6; Observation and Assessment of Infant and Toddler Behavior	Cross-age developmental knowledge; observation and assessment	0–6	20–25%
Medical–care–education integration	Infant and Toddler Physiological Development and Nutritional Care; Medical–Care–Education Integration and Health Care; Infant and Toddler First Aid	Health observation; nutritional care; safety and first aid	0–3 (with 3–6 extension)	15–20%
Integrated care and teaching	Integrated Childcare and Early Childhood Education Transition Practice; Play-Based Teaching and Responsive Caregiving	Responsive caregiving; transition design; activity design	0–6	15–20%
Family and community	Home–Kindergarten Co-Education	Family guidance;	0–6	10–15%

Module	Representative courses	Target competencies	Age coverage	Suggested credit share
collaboration	Guidance; Community Childcare Service Design	multi-party collaboration		
Regional characteristics	Infant and Toddler Nurturing Culture in Ethnic Regions; Multilingual Development Support; Childcare Services in Pastoral and Urban–Rural Fringe Areas	Culturally responsive practice; low-resource service design	0–6	5–10%
Practical courses	Infant and Toddler Development Assessment Practical Training; Childcare Institution Operation Simulation; Top-Post Internship	Integrated practical competence; reflection	0–6	15–20%

The following elaborations correspond to the modules above.

First, build an integrated curriculum group of "medical care, nurturing, education, and teaching." Strengthen professional mission and ethics education in public basic courses; offer courses such as "Professional Ethics and Regulations for ICECE" and "Infant and Toddler Emotional Care and Communication" in professional basic courses; set up courses such as "Infant and Toddler Physiological Development and Nutritional Care," "Infant and Toddler Behavior Observation and Developmental Assessment," "ICECE Transition Practice," and "Medical–Care–Education Integration and Health Care" in professional core courses, helping students build a composite knowledge structure.

Second, strengthen practical courses. Offer courses such as "Infant and Toddler Development Assessment Practical Training," "Home–Kindergarten Co-Education Guidance Practical Training," and "Childcare Institution Operation Simulation," adopting a "on-campus simulation + off-campus internship" model so that students can master professional skills such as infant and toddler daily care, developmental assessment, and activity design in simulated environments and real scenarios.

Third, embody curriculum continuity and integration. Curriculum settings should cover the entire 0–6 age range, pay attention to the connection and transition between 0–3 and 3–6 curricula, help students understand the natural transition from "responsive caregiving" to "play-based teaching," and form an educational concept of supporting continuous development.

Fourth, integrate regional characteristics. In light of the reality of Inner Mongolia as a multi-ethnic region, appropriately integrate content such as infant and toddler nurturing culture in ethnic regions, multilingual development support, and characteristics of childcare services in pastoral areas and urban–rural fringe areas into the curriculum, enhancing the regional adaptability of talent training.

Fifth, specify what makes this model regionally distinctive. Three features distinguish it from generic national models. Multilingual development support. In multilingual families, professionals must support home-language maintenance alongside Mandarin development, requiring knowledge of bilingual developmental sequences and culturally responsive communication with caregivers. Pastoral and seasonal mobility. Professionals must be able to design low-resource, mobile, and family-embedded services, including seasonal center-based care and home-visit support, rather than assuming full-time center attendance. Urban–rural fringe service fragmentation. Professionals must be able to coordinate across kindergartens, licensed childcare institutions, and community sites, and to work with mixed-age groups and irregular attendance patterns.

Implementation and evaluation. Curriculum reform should be piloted in one cohort per institution, with a curriculum map showing age coverage and prerequisite chains. Evaluation should include: (a) the proportion of compulsory credits addressing 0–3 content (target: at least 15%); (b) the proportion of practical credits (target: at least 20%); (c) student concept-mapping scores of 0–6 continuity; and (d) employer ratings of graduate readiness.

5.3 Strengthen Practical Teaching and Build a "Three-Stage Progressive" Practice Chain

Universities should establish a tiered practical teaching system matching job competencies, divided into three stages according to grade level.

The first year focuses on cognitive practice. By organizing students to visit high-quality childcare institutions and participate in community infant and toddler care public welfare activities, students can establish professional identity and initially understand the characteristics of 0–3 infant and toddler care and 3–6 preschool education.

The second year focuses on specialized practice. Systematic practical training is carried out around five core competency modules: daily care, behavior observation, safety protection, development support, and collaborative guidance. Schools should build simulated nursery classrooms, infant and toddler care training rooms, and medical-care-education integration training rooms, equipped with advanced teaching aids, so that students can master professional skills such as infant and toddler daily care, developmental assessment, and activity design in a simulated environment.

The third year implements top-post internships, enabling students to fully participate in the actual work of childcare institutions or kindergartens with nursery classes. Under the guidance of "dual mentors," students handle practical problems such as infant and toddler care, curriculum implementation, and parent work, and through the cycle of reflection and practice, achieve comprehensive improvement of professional abilities.

5.4Promote Faculty Development and Build a Cross-Disciplinary Integrated Teaching Team

Universities should build a cross-disciplinary teaching team with professional backgrounds in medical care, nurturing, and education.On the one hand, actively absorb experts and scholars from fields such as medicine, nursing, nutrition, brain science, psychology, and education to establish a cross-disciplinary on- and off-campus full-time and part-time faculty.On the other hand, through mechanisms such as two-way mutual employment between university teachers and industry teachers in childcare institutions, part-time mentor appointment systems, and industry mentor databases, absorb outstanding frontline talents from childcare institutions to participate in teaching.At the same time, strengthen childcare professional training for existing teachers, support teachers in practical training at childcare institutions, maternal and child health hospitals, and other institutions, and enhance teachers' childcare practical abilities. In addition, relying on university resources in Hohhot, establish an ICECE teacher development center to carry out regular teaching research and training activities.

Implementation and evaluation. Targets could include: at least 30% of program faculty having completed a 3-month practicum or equivalent industry attachment within five years; at least two industry mentors per program teaching at least 32 hours per year; and annual cross-disciplinary teaching workshops. Evaluation should track faculty participation, co-teaching hours, and student ratings of integrated courses..

5.5Build a "Government–University–Kindergarten–Community" Collaborative Supply Mechanism

ICECE talent training requires collaborative participation from multiple actors. Table 3 specifies responsibilities.

Table 3. Stakeholder responsibility matrix for ICECE talent training

Stakeholder	Primary responsibilities	Coordination role	Evaluation indicators
Government (autonomous region and municipal)	Include ICECE training in scarce-professional plans; formulate standards; provide funding and policy support; coordinate health and education departments	Convenes joint steering committee; approves standards; allocates funds	Enrollment growth; funding per student; standard adoption; inter-departmental meeting frequency
Universities	Design and deliver curriculum; manage practicum; develop faculty; conduct program evaluation	Operates program management office; reports to steering committee	Curriculum age coverage; practicum quality; faculty development; graduate readiness
Childcare institutions and kindergartens with nursery classes	Provide practicum placements; assign mentors; co-develop curriculum; participate in evaluation	Participate in joint teaching research; provide feedback	Placement capacity; mentor hours; co-developed courses; satisfaction
Families	Participate in family guidance activities; provide feedback on graduate competencies	Participate in parent advisory meetings	Participation rates; feedback quality
Communities	Provide community service sites; co-organize public welfare activities; support family outreach	Coordinate local service points	Number of service points; student service hours; community feedback

5.6Improve the Evaluation System and Establish a "Literacy + Ability" Two-Dimensional Evaluation Mechanism

Universities should build a diversified evaluation mechanism for the training of integrated childcare and early childhood education professionals. In the literacy dimension, adopt a combination of process records and multi-party evaluation, and record students' performance in course learning and practical activities through the *Student Professional Literacy Growth Handbook*, with evaluation subjects including teachers, institutional mentors, parents, and peers. In the ability dimension, establish a "three-in-one" evaluation model of "theoretical assessment + skill certification + practical outcomes." Theoretical assessment focuses on application ability, using question types such as case analysis and situational discussion; skill certification is aligned with professional standards, requiring students to pass practical assessments such as infant and toddler first aid and activity design; practical outcomes demonstrate students' comprehensive abilities through internship reports, care plans, and other forms. This diversified evaluation system focuses on both the shaping of professional values and the cultivation of practical abilities, helping to comprehensively measure the quality of integrated childcare and early childhood education talent training.

VI. Conclusion

Integrated childcare and early childhood education is an important direction for the high-quality development of preschool

education in Inner Mongolia, and the training of integrated childcare and early childhood education professionals at universities is the key to supporting this reform. Based on the practice of universities in Hohhot, this paper analyzes the problems existing in the training of integrated childcare and early childhood education professionals in Inner Mongolia's universities in terms of training objectives, curriculum systems, practical teaching, faculty teams, and collaborative mechanisms, and proposes paths such as clarifying training objectives, reconstructing the curriculum system, strengthening practical teaching, promoting faculty development, building a collaborative mechanism, and improving the evaluation system. In the future, Inner Mongolia should further give play to the government's leading role, promote collaborative efforts among universities, childcare institutions, kindergartens, families, and communities, and build a regionally characteristic training system for integrated childcare and early childhood education professionals, providing solid talent support for the high-quality development of integrated childcare and early childhood education in Inner Mongolia.

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