
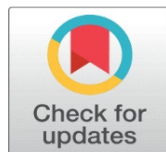


A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-3 - TAKING A NURSERY INSTITUTION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE AS AN EXAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

As the two-child and three-child policies have been universally put into place, China has introduced a lot of policies and measures to optimize birth rate to promote the growth of the new population, Amid policy circumstance, care service for children aged 0-3 has emerged and developed vigorously. However, the number of non-governmental child care institutions is increasing rapidly, and some early education institutions and training institutions have set up child care institutions using existing customer groups, resulting in fierce market competition. In addition, the short development period of infant and child care services in China leads to unsatisfactory service quality and unbalanced supply of service, moreover, in some child care institutions, there are excess children in class, insufficient teachers, high mobility of nursery governess, uneven professional ability of teaching staff, and insufficient hardware facilities, etc. Under the background of the development of A daycare institution in Shandong Province, in this paper, how the institution should seize the development opportunity of this new industry was discussed, and its own development strategy was formulated to base on the fierce market competition and realize sustainable development.

Keywords: Child Care Service, Child Care Institutions, Child Care

1. INTRODUCTION

As the two-child and three-child policies have been universally put into place, China has introduced a lot of policies and measures to optimize birth rate to promote the growth of the new population, Amid policy circumstance, care service for children aged 0-3 has emerged and developed vigorously. However, the number of non-governmental childcare institutions is increasing rapidly, and some early education institutions and training institutions have set up child care institutions using existing customer groups, resulting in fierce market competition. In addition, the short development period of infant and childcare services in China leads to

unsatisfactory service quality and unbalanced supply of service, moreover, in some child care institutions, there are excess children in class, insufficient teachers, high mobility of nursery governess, uneven professional ability of teaching staff, and insufficient hardware facilities, etc.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Childcare service concerns the healthy growth of infants and young children, concerns the vital interests of thousands of families, as well as the future of the country and the nation. According to figures released by the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China, there are about 40 million infants and children under the age of three in China, but the childcare service for infants and young children is in serious shortage. The admission rate of children aged 0-3 in all kinds of institutions in China is only 5.5%, which is far lower than that of some developed countries. The insufficiency of childcare service increases the burden on family raising and affects women's career development, which is one of the major factors restricting reproduction.

Through CNKI and Wanfang Database and other knowledge service platforms, the author collects authoritative literature in connection with this study, and retrieves "childcare service", "child care institutions" and other keywords to look through important written information and data systematically.

2.1. STUDY ON THE PRESENT SITUATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICE INDUSTRY IN CHINA

The three-child policy is not only to simply encourage the families with two children to have the number of children from two to have an extra child, but also to fully deploy supporting policies to effectively address the worries of the masses and unleash the fertility potential. The specialized child care service plays an important role in the children's physical and mental health, social communication and cognitive level, proving the positive effect of such institutions in caring for infants and young children.

Over the past two years, the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China has taken the lead in actively exploring the development of child care service, effectively playing a leading role by the government and stimulating the willingness of social forces to do so. As of May 27, 2021, a total of 247 child care institutions in Shandong Province have passed the record, and the figure became 716 as of December 31, 2021.

According to the *Operation and Trend Report of Chinese and Foreign Child Care Markets in 2022-2023* by [Iimedia Research \(2022\)](#), the care market in China amounted to RMB 139.66 billion in 2021, an increase of 127.9% over the same period last year, the child care market for children aged 0-3 is estimated to be RMB 186.32 billion by 2027. More parents are considering sending their children to child care institutions as China's three-child policy increases the demand for childcare.

[Xuanxuan, Q. \(2016\)](#) found that the market space of China's infant education industry until 2026, including advancing urbanization, increasing consumption capacity of residents, and scientific development of infant education. There is great potential for child care market in China, where the growing demand for child care among the childbearing couples and high-quality education resources stimulate more couples to send their children to child care institutions to receive scientific and safe care for healthy growth.

2.2. STUDY ON THE EXISTING PROBLEMS OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS IN CHINA

According to the study by [Junmin et al. \(2022\)](#), public childcare resources are too insufficient to meet the general and strong needs of the people, since China's child care service started late. A significant number of parents are looking to child care services, such as private kindergartens, early education institutions, private child care institutions and babysitting services, which are expensive, of mixed quality and level, as well as lack of market supervision and standardized curriculum system, some even have fire, safety, hygiene and other hidden dangers, and even make off with money. Teachers in some child care institutions only have the qualifications of "nursery teacher" and "early instructor", so there is no way to assess their specialization level.

[Shi and Liu \(2019\)](#) held that urban families show multi-level and diverse demand of for child care services. Lost of problems have existed in the child care services, such as wide gap in supply and demand, single mode of care institution, insufficient teaching staff, lack of industry standard and lack of government supervision.

[Xiumin et al. \(2019\)](#) found the contradiction between high cost of child care service and universal benefit demand, high quality of child care service and mixed quality of institutions, as well as single supply mode of services and diversification of demand.

According to the *Data and Trend Report of China and Foreign Child care Market of 2022-2023* by iiMedia Research, Chinese families still give priority to family care for infants under 3 years old and lack of awareness and trust in child care institutions and services. At present, China's child care is challenged with problems such as lack of institutions, insufficient teachers and inadequate supervision. In terms of the child care market, China needs to call for faster development, from infrastructure, employees, curriculum quality and other all-round layout of the service chain, to enhance social awareness and influence.

2.3. COMMENTS OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

Through a comprehensive analysis of the domestic research on child care services, we can find that in recent years, thanks to the support of government policies, China's child care service industry in recent years has improved significantly in social cognition, market demand and scale. This kind of service industry in China will also have a huge development space in the future. However, in contrast with other developed countries, the child care industry in China has not formed a perfect industry system because of its weak foundation and late start. Therefore, uneven service level and teaching quality, institutional shortage, insufficient teachers and many other problems can be found in China's child care institutions.

With the market demand and market scale increasing, the child care market is becoming industrialized and marketized, and the competition of such institutions is intensifying in the market. If the child care institutions desire to gain a foothold and steady development in the fierce market environment, they should formulate targeted, rational and effective enterprise development strategies to improve their core competitiveness.

Based on the research of child care service industry in China, this study starts with A Care Institution in Shandong Province, in combination with internal and external environment of the institution, tries to put forward some reasonable suggestions for its future development, chooses the right development direction for the institution to seize opportunities in order to ensure its sustainable development, thereby providing reference for development of other child care institutions.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS METHOD

Through collecting, consulting, analysing and collating the relevant documents, this paper analyses the relevant materials from different perspectives to understand the current research trends at home and abroad, and it draws on the relevant experience from the existing research results and look for new views so as to provide a new idea and method for the future research.

3.2. SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS

The education of children aged 0-3 in Shandong Province was investigated, from which A Care Institution was selected as the main research object, the research contents included its establishment, faculty, curriculum implementation and other aspects.

3.3. CASE STUDY METHOD

Taking A Nursery Institution as a sample, this paper highlighted problem direction, analysed its development situation, pointed out its problems in development, and put forward suggestions and suggestions for the development strategies of it and other similar ones.

4. SURVEY ON THE PRESENT SITUATION OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-3 IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

Shandong Province is located on the eastern coast of China and the lower reaches of the Yellow River, with a maximum north-south area of over 420 kilometers and a maximum west-east width of over 700 kilometers of 700 kilometers, and the total area is 158,000 square kilometers, accounting for about 1.64% of China's total area. The urbanization rate of the resident population reached 59.02%, an increase of 2.01 percentage points over the previous year. It is one of the most developed and powerful provinces in China, and also one of the fastest growing provinces. In recent years, the early education of children aged 0-3 has been gradually strengthened in the province. Here is an overview of child care institutions for children aged 0-3:

4.1. BASIC SITUATION OF CHILD CARE AT THE AGE OF 0-3 IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

1) Basic Situation of Children Aged 0-3

According to statistics, nearly a thousand babies are born every day in medical institutions across the country, leading to continued increase of infants aged 0-3. In

addition, as the 8-4-2-1 family structure has gradually formed in China, attention to infants and young children is gradually increasing, together with manpower, financial and material capabilities, and other aspects. Thus, infants aged 0-3 are the most vulnerable group in the entire society and a group of general concern. The growth of infants aged 0-3 is also the most important concern of parents and the most critical issue.

2) Current Situation of Education and Care for Infants Aged 0-3

The results of 100 surveys of residents aged 0-3 are as follows: 63 infants received early childhood education in hospitals and 95 infants needed early education. The planned fund of 52% families for nursery education is under RMB 5,000, and those of 35 % and 2% families are RMB 5,000 -10,000 and more than RMB10,000, respectively. 88 infants were ready to attend child care institutions.

Most kindergartens in China do not accept infants aged 0-3 years, so in the past, Chinese infants and young children were often cared by grandparents, which had disadvantages, however. As a result, young parents have attached great importance to scientific parenting and education in recent years as the consumption level of residents has risen, and a growing number of childbearing couples are willing to send their children in professional child care institutions.

4.2. ANALYSIS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION OF A NURSERY INSTITUTION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

Shandong A Nursery Institution is a professional company engaged in early childhood education and home teaching. It was established in Shandong in late 2009 and transformed from an early childhood education institution into an infant care institution in 2019.

At present, it is a leading institution in child care, with businesses covering home education, early education and infant care. It adheres to the concept of humanistic and scientific parenting and applies the advanced education development thought into practice, providing guidance for healthy development of children and the interaction between parents and their children.

The monthly cost of child care varies from RMB 6,000 to 8,000 depending on the length of one-time childcare. According to the provincial minimum wage criterion announced by the People's Government of Shandong Province in 2022, the monthly minimum wage is RMB 2,100 and the average house price is RMB 16,817 in Jinan, and the charge of A Nursery Institution falls to the middle and high level in this city.

5. SWOT ANALYSIS OF A NURSERY INSTITUTION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

By analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the institution, the paper formulates appropriate development strategies.

5.1. ANALYSIS OF ADVANTAGES

- 1) During more than ten years of systematic operation and development, A Nursery Institution has established excellent reputation in the local industry, significantly reducing the cost of publicity and its operating costs. Moreover, the institution has also partnered with other companies and

obtained their guidance, which makes the business model of the company more quickly than solely relying on their own efforts.

- 2) Currently, the competition is intensifying in this industry, long-term and robust development requires targeted delivery of different services and products. A Nursery Institution provides customers with All-round and multi-angle training since it has always attached to customer's after-sales experience, greatly strengthening the customer-company relationship and trust. In terms of products, the institution focuses on scientific nursing, and it has developed the curriculum and products based on scientific educational ideas and methods.

5.2. ANALYSIS OF DISADVANTAGES

- 1) **Aging of campuses and equipment.** The campus of the institution has been in use for years, three branches has been established, so most of its costs were spent on building new facilities, as a result, there is so insufficient funds for the maintenance of school, equipment, and environment that the equipment cannot be renovated.
- 2) **No enough propaganda.** Since its establishment, the institution has advertised itself mainly via through door billboard, WeChat, and distribution of brochures in the surrounding communities, so the publicity channel is relatively single. New media campaigns on-line and off-line campaigns are less organized.
- 3) **Serious shortage of teachers.** The instructional level of teachers in this institution is relatively high compared with counterparts, but many kindergartens have stepped into this profession, leading to very fierce competition, among them entrants will offer high salaries to attract more teachers, so there is a loss of outstanding teachers.

5.3. OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

- 1) **Stimulus of national policies.** As the two-child and three-child policies have been universally put into place, the government of China has introduced a lot of policies and measures to optimize birth rate to promote the growth of the new population, In recent years, the government has constantly improved the construction of child care service system, vigorously supported the development of the industry, and given policy protection to infant and child care institutions.
- 2) **Increased demand for childcare.** Most kindergartens in China do not accept infants aged 0-3 years, so in the past, Chinese infants and young children were often cared by grandparents, which had disadvantages, however. As a result, young parents have attached great importance to scientific parenting and education in recent years as the consumption level of residents has risen, and a growing number of childbearing couples are willing to send their children in professional child care institutions.

6. THREATS ANALYSIS

- 1) **Fierce industrial competition.** With the support of government policies in recent years, China's infant and child care service industry has seen a

marked increase in social awareness, market demand and market size. Competition in the industry is becoming more and more fierce, many early education institutions and education and training institutions have also transformed or expanded infant and child care services. In such a market environment, many education brands are actively seeking cooperation, bringing more challenges to the development of many small and medium-sized education groups, also putting A Nursery Institution under growing survival pressure.

- 2) **Lack of sound regulations in the child care service industry.** Up to now, the 0-3-year-old child care service in Shandong Province is supervised by the Education Bureau, the National Health Commission, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security, the Fire and Rescue Department Ministry of Emergency Management. However, their specific functions are not clearly defined, without effective communication and coordination mechanism between departments, and there is no perfect legal and regulatory system or reasonable mechanism for classification evaluation, reward, and punishment, such as qualification training and certificates for entry into the industry.

7. STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT COUNTERMEASURES OF A NURSERY INSTITUTION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

7.1. BROADENING PROPAGANDA CHANNELS

On the premise of guaranteeing the quality of service, the institution can expand the channels of publicity and advertise it through online we-media platforms, such as Tiktok and Little Red Book, which are popular with young parents, and cooperate with the developers and properties of the surrounding middle and high-end communities, so that more parents will know about it, so as to expand the customer resource.

7.2. STRENGTHENING TEACHING STAFF CONSTRUCTION

The allocation of teachers is very crucial to the construction of 0-3-year-old child care institutions. The professionalization of teachers not only ensures the quality of education and teaching, but also is the important foundation for the continuous development of 0-3-year-old preschool education institutions, all these institutions must strengthen the construction of teachers.

Enhancing the training of professional skills. Teacher training is a long-term undertaking, so managers need to have a long-term vision to develop an integrated development and training programme, taking into account the realities of the campus and the basic conditions of the existing teachers, and to incorporate the programme into the development goals and plans of the institution. Long-term development planning and short-term work arrangements should be combined through a set of concrete steps and measures. The managers of 0-3 year-old child care institutions should start with reality, actively create the necessary learning environment and receive training accordingly.

7.3. OPTIMIZING THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- 1) The environment in A Nursery Institution must meet the safe and sanitary conditions of an educational institution, for example, building construction, education, health care, and teaching supplies must meet the relevant

regulations of the educational administration. Housing for education for children aged 0-3 should be isolated from all pollutants and conform to the environment protection standards of health authorities. Furthermore, there should also be separate entrances and exits, emergency evacuation exits, and corresponding security measures in the institution.

- 2) Playrooms, sensory integration rooms, Montessori classrooms and others must be arranged according to class hours. Toilets should meet the needs of infants aged 0-3 and ensure hygiene and safety.
- 3) The early childhood facilities and equipment must match with the age characteristics of the young child, for instance, toddler toys should be provided with baby cards, handbells and so on, considering infant characteristics, so as to meet the needs of various activities of infants, with nursery activity area of more than 100 square metres. The space per person in each activity room should be no less than 5 square meters, and as the number of participants increases, the space in the classroom should be expanded according to the standard of 5 square meters per person.

7.4. ATTACHING IMPORTANCE TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

The early childhood education in China is set up mainly for children aged 0-3, but there is no unified curriculum system and teaching plan. The first thing for this kind of institutions is to have the strength of development and scientific research, otherwise, they will not have high-quality resources to obtain good teaching resources.

- 1) **Select quality teaching resources.** According to the characteristics of children aged 0-3 years, it is necessary to select appropriate teaching contents from different teaching resources. Children's cognitive characteristics and learning environment vary with geographical location, so the institution should choose common, familiar, and acceptable contents as teaching materials.
- 2) **Strengthen the teaching practice of teachers** The content of teaching is not immutable, and young children may not necessarily cooperate with their teachers in the original teaching plan, thus creating a higher demand for teachers' teaching level. In the course of teaching, teachers must have the ability to adapt, express and organize, in order to achieve the teaching objectives. Therefore, in the practice of 0-3-year-old child care at A Nursery Institution, every teaching activity must be designed in various forms so that it can be in line with the curriculum implementation plan.

7.5. CULTIVATING THE HUMANISTIC SPIRIT OF THE ENTERPRISE

- 1) **Essentially reduce teaching contents and be student centered.** A Nursery Institution should foster a corporate culture. Education is a cause of love. It should strengthen their educational objectives, educational philosophy and organizational culture for children aged 0-3, stick to the goal of "education is the foundation". Starting from the basic laws of physical and psychological development of children aged 0-3, the

institution must make their due efforts for the growth of children from all levels.

- 2) **Infiltrate emotional education into all stages of teaching.** In terms of educational content, it should integrate sensory integration and Montessori content into parent-child education, tap children's potential solidly and efficiently in a scientific way, and attract children in a professional way. Teachers should understand every child accurately so that parents do not question the quality of education and teaching.
- 3) **Pay more attention to parents.** Plentiful family activities can be provided to improve the level of scientific parenting of parents and enhance mutual attraction parents and children. Teachers need to grasp the physical and psychological characteristics of the infants aged 0-3 and to understand the problems that parents encounter when taking care of their children, such as child care.

8. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the development status of 0–3-year-old childcare service industry in China is discussed and analyzed. A Nursery Institution in Shandong Province is analyzed with SWOT model. China's care service for children aged 0-3 is still in the primary development period, especially in such relatively conservative areas as Shandong Province. Under the current system and market environment, it is worth studying and discussing how to improve the teaching and management of early childhood education and enhance the service quality of the childcare institutions. For this purpose, this paper makes a comprehensive and systematic investigation on the development of 0-3-year-old childcare service in Shandong Province through thorough arrangement of domestic and foreign data. Following the analysis, the development strategy of such institutions in China is preliminarily discussed by taking A Nursery Institution as an example,

Finally, some suggestions are put forward to expand propaganda channels, strengthen professional construction of teachers, optimize educational environment, pay attention to curriculum development and research, and cultivate the humanistic spirit of enterprise, which will provide reference for the future development of A Nursery Institution and other childcare institutions in China.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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