

The Construction and Practice of a Home-School Co-Education Communication Mechanism from the Perspective of “Good Early Childhood Education”

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Abstract: Home-kindergarten co-education represents a vital approach to implementing the "Quality Early Childhood Education" policy; however, its effectiveness is significantly hindered by the predominantly unidirectional nature of communication. This study, conducted at No.1 Kindergarten of Jinshui District, Zhengzhou City, systematically identifies current challenges in home-kindergarten communication—characterized by a dominance of notifications, lack of feedback, superficial content, and limited communication formats—through the administration of 239 questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The causes of these issues are analyzed across four dimensions: conceptual understanding, communication mechanisms, stakeholder capabilities, and needs. Drawing on a six-month pilot intervention, the study proposes strategies to establish a bidirectional collaborative communication system encompassing mechanism development, format innovation, content enrichment, and empowerment of participants. Empirical data indicate that following the pilot, the proportion of parents providing proactive feedback increased from 11% to 48%, while satisfaction with co-education improved from 52% to 89%. This research offers a practical framework for kindergartens to transcend the limitations of unidirectional communication and advance high-quality home-kindergarten co-education.

Keywords: Quality Early Childhood Education; Home-Kindergarten Co-education; Unidirectional Communication; Two-way Collaboration; Communication Mechanism

1. Introduction

National education policies have identified "Quality Early Childhood Education" as a key goal for improving people's well-being, promoting the transformation of preschool education from "basic security" to "quality development" ^[1]. Under this policy direction, the deep integration of families and kindergartens has become a critical pathway to achieving high-quality preschool education. Zhengzhou City has made remarkable progress in expanding and upgrading preschool education resources. However, amid the dual challenges of declining birth rates and the miniaturization of family structures, parents' demands for early childhood education have shifted from "basic care" to "personalized growth planning," highlighting the increasing shortcomings of traditional home-kindergarten co-education models.

From the perspective of Habermas's theory of communicative action, genuine communication should be oriented toward "understanding," fostering equal dialogue between both parties. The prevalent "notification-style" model in current home-kindergarten communication falls into the pitfall of "strategic communication," which treats parents as mere recipients of information rather than as partners in co-constructing educational meaning. This theoretical perspective offers a framework for understanding the essence of unidirectional communication.

Existing research has examined home-kindergarten communication from various perspectives. Hong Xiumin (2021) discussed the direction of value reconstruction in home-kindergarten co-education at the policy level ^[2]; Wang Haiying (2020) explored two-way interaction mechanisms from an empowerment perspective ^[3]; Liu Jingbo (2020) focused on the types of home-kindergarten conflicts and their resolution strategies ^[4]. Li Min (2023) investigated innovative pathways for home-kindergarten communication models in the context of digital transformation ^[5]; Chen Xiangming (2022) studied the cultivation of communication skills from the perspective of teacher professional development ^[6]; Zhang Hua (2024) systematically reviewed the home-kindergarten collaborative

education mechanism under the "Quality Early Childhood Education" policy framework^[7]. However, most existing studies remain at the level of advocating ideas, lacking empirical research grounded in real-world contexts, and particularly lacking systematic diagnosis and actionable strategy development targeting the specific problem of "unidirectional communication." This study addresses this research gap by using a real kindergarten setting to explore a comprehensive pathway from problem diagnosis to strategy implementation.

Preliminary investigations revealed that unidirectional communication has become a major obstacle to effective home-kindergarten collaboration. Kindertgartens primarily communicate through "notices and requirements," neglecting parents' educational needs and feedback. As a result, families remain passive and compliant for extended periods, leading to misaligned educational goals and fragmented co-educational efforts^[8]. This situation significantly conflicts with the principle of "equal family-kindergarten cooperation and collaborative education" promoted by the "Quality Early Childhood Education" policy.

Based on this, the study uses No. 1 Kindergarten of Jinshui District, Zhengzhou City, as a sample and focuses on the following questions: What are the current manifestations of unidirectional communication in home-kindergarten co-education? What are the underlying causes? How can a two-way, collaborative home-kindergarten communication mechanism be established?

Using stratified sampling, 189 parents, 35 teachers, and 15 community workers from the junior, middle, and senior classes of No. 1 Kindergarten in Jinshui District, Zhengzhou City, were selected as research subjects. A total of 239 valid questionnaires were collected, including 189 from parents, 35 from teachers, and 15 from community workers.

A three-dimensional research instrument system was developed, comprising the Parent Questionnaire, Teacher Questionnaire, and Community Worker Questionnaire. Items were designed to cover dimensions such as communication mode, communication frequency, communication content, feedback channels, and communication satisfaction. After compilation, three preschool education experts were invited to assess content validity, and a satisfactory Content Validity Index (CVI) was obtained. Reliability was evaluated using the test-retest method; participants were retested after two weeks, with a correlation coefficient of 0.82, indicating good reliability. Additionally, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 parents and 10 teachers. The interview guide was finalized after three rounds of revision based on pilot interviews.

2. Current Characteristics and Cause Analysis of One-Way Communication in Home-School Co-Education

2.1 Current Status Characteristics

Survey data shows that 38% of respondents identified unidirectional communication as the primary problem in home-kindergarten co-education. Its manifestations exhibit distinct "four mores, four less" characteristics (see Table 1).

Table 1: Main Manifestations of Unidirectional Home-Kindergarten Communication

| Dimension | Specific Manifestation | Proportion (%) | Typical Characteristics |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Communication Subject | Teacher notification dominates | 89 | Parents passively receive information |
| Communication Subject | Parents proactively provide feedback | 11 | Rarely actively express concerns |
| Communication Content | Basic care information | 85 | Meals, attendance, safety |
| Communication Content | In-depth educational discussion | 15 | Behavioral habits, emotional development |
| Communication Format | Unified mass notifications | 90 | Whole-class group announcements |
| Communication Format | Personalized communication | 23 | Dedicated communication for children with special needs |
| Communication Channel | Primarily offline formats | 75 | Parent meetings, pick-up/drop-off talks |
| Communication Channel | Convenient online channels | 42 | Dual-income parents face participation difficulties |

First, there is more teacher notification and less parent feedback. 89% of respondents indicated that daily communication mainly consisted of teachers providing updates on their child's performance in kindergarten and general announcements. Only 11% of parents had experience raising concerns. As one parent shared in the interview: "There are dozens of messages in the class group every day, all notices and photos from the teacher. I want to ask how my child has been eating lately, but I'm afraid of bothering the teacher." Teachers also mentioned that due to their busy daily work, most of their communication focused on one-way information release.

Second, the information exchanged tends to be more superficial, with less in-depth discussion. The content primarily focuses on basic care details such as child attendance, meals, and safety, which account for 85% of the information. In contrast, in-depth discussions on core educational topics—such as behavioral habits, emotional development, and social skills—make up less than 15%. Additionally, some parents reported, "I only know what my child ate and played at kindergarten, but I don't understand the child's developmental issues or directions for improvement."

Third, there is a greater reliance on unified mass notifications and less on personalized communication. Kindergartens primarily use class groups to send information, accounting for 90% of communications. However, communication addressing children's individual differences is severely lacking. For introverted children or those with specific behavioral habits, only 23% of parents reported receiving dedicated suggestions from teachers.

Fourth, there are more offline formats but fewer convenient communication channels. Traditional communication formats primarily include parent meetings and brief exchanges during pick-up and drop-off, accounting for 45% and 30% respectively. However, parent-teacher conferences follow a "teacher talks, parents listen" model, and interactions during pick-up are too brief to allow in-depth dialogue. Additionally, many parents reported missing communication opportunities due to work commitments. "Apart from notifications, there are few ways to interact."

2.2 Underlying Causes

Unidirectional communication results from the interaction of multiple factors.

Conceptual cognitive bias is the primary cause of this issue. Sixty-two percent of teachers believe that "the kindergarten is the educational leader, and parents are supporters," which limits communication to mere one-way transmission and overlooks parents' role as active participants. At the same time, many parents regard co-education as simply "cooperating with the kindergarten's work," lacking the awareness to engage in equal communication and express their needs. This two-way bias creates a communication dilemma characterized by "teachers only speak and parents only listen." From the perspective of field theory, there exists an asymmetry of cultural capital between families and kindergartens: teachers leverage their professional identity to dominate communication, while parents self-marginalize themselves due to their perceived lower status.

The lack of institutional mechanisms exacerbates the problem. The kindergarten lacked a systematic communication and feedback mechanism, with no clear "parent feedback → processing → response" process. Daily communication typically occurs only when a problem arises, rather than being preventive and continuous, resulting in passive and fragmented interactions.

Insufficient communication skills are also a significant issue. Forty-five percent of teachers reported not knowing how to engage in in-depth communication with parents, especially when confronted with conflicting educational philosophies or when giving feedback on children's issues, as this often triggers parental resistance. Additionally, some teachers communicate in an overly professional or rigid manner, lacking empathy, which hinders the effectiveness of communication.

A notable issue is the mismatch in addressing diverse needs. The kindergarten's communication formats and content failed to consider family differences. Specifically, there was a lack of tailored design to accommodate the fragmented communication needs of dual-income parents, the simple needs of grandparents, and the more in-depth requirements of nuclear families.

3. Practical Strategies to Overcome Unidirectional Communication

Based on the problem diagnosis and cause analysis, the No.1 Kindergarten of Jinshui District, Zhengzhou City, constructed a home-kindergarten communication system across four dimensions: mechanism construction, format innovation, content deepening, and subject empowerment. Over the

six-month pilot, all indicators showed significant improvement.

3.1 Mechanism Construction: Establishing a "Demand Response → Two-way Interaction → Effectiveness Tracking" Closed Loop

Establish a mechanism for regularly collecting parental feedback. The kindergarten launched a Parenting Demand Express Lane, a dedicated feedback section on the Grow Up Together app, allowing parents to raise parenting questions at any time. Teachers are required to respond within 24 hours. Offline, a "Home-Kindergarten Communication Mailbox" was installed, and a monthly "Principal's Reception Day" was held. Additionally, two communication representatives were appointed for each class to serve as a bridge between parents and the kindergarten.

Develop standardized communication processes. A clear procedure was established with three stages: before communication, during communication, and after communication. Before communication, teachers prepare a summary of the child's development; during communication, they focus on listening to parents' concerns and collaboratively developing education plans; after communication, a Home-Kindergarten Communication Record Form is created to track implementation.

Establish a mechanism to evaluate communication effectiveness. The effectiveness of home-kindergarten communication was incorporated into teacher performance assessments. Evaluation criteria included the timeliness of feedback, personalization of communication, and parent satisfaction. A parent communication satisfaction survey was conducted quarterly, and the results were used to optimize communication strategies.

3.2 Format Innovation: Creating a "Layered, Categorized, Online+Offline" Multi-Communication Matrix

The dual-track communication model balances commonality and individuality. Common issues are addressed collectively through class groups or online parent meetings, while individual concerns are discussed in depth through dedicated family communication groups, one-on-one WeChat chats, or face-to-face meetings. Additionally, a communication file was maintained for each child in every class.

Tailored communication formats were developed for different parent groups. For dual-income parents, a "fragmented communication" service was introduced, featuring videos of children's daily activities on the app and live sessions held on weekends. For grandparents, a combination of brief conversations, themed meetings, and simplified guides was implemented, with monthly meetings specifically for grandparents. For nuclear families, quarterly "Co-education Salons" were held to facilitate discussions on specific parenting topics.

Contextualized communication was integrated into daily life. Communication scenarios were expanded to include activity sites, enabling teachers to interact with parents spontaneously during children's activities. Parents were encouraged to record videos at home and send them via the app to communicate with teachers, achieving contextual extension.

3.3 Content Deepening: Upgrading from "Basic Care" to "Educational Collaboration"

Focus on children's core developmental indicators. Centered on the Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3–6 [1], communication content was categorized into five developmental domains, with key points determined by age group: the junior class focuses on kindergarten adaptation and self-care; the middle class on social skills and emotional management; the senior class on task awareness and transition to primary school. Teachers conduct in-depth communication with parents monthly, focusing on one core indicator.

Enhance problem-oriented communication content. For common child-related issues, teachers and parents jointly analyze the causes and provide practical strategies. For example, to address picky eating, teachers share nutritional knowledge, develop a "Home-Kindergarten Diet Collaboration Plan," and monitor implementation.

Increase experience-sharing communication content by introducing a "Parenting Experience Sharing" session. Parents were encouraged to share effective parenting tips, with professional feedback from teachers. Additionally, teachers shared kindergarten educational methods to guide parents in extending scientific education into the home environment.

3.4 Subject Empowerment: Achieving Two-way Growth for Teachers and Parents

Empowering teachers to enhance communication skills. Specialized workshops were conducted with practical exercises in "empathetic communication" and "problem-based communication." To improve communication about children's development, teachers were trained to use an "affirmation first, guidance later" approach. A Home-Kindergarten Communication Case Book was compiled, containing over 20 common communication scenarios. Teacher communication support groups were also established to facilitate experience sharing.

Empowering parents to enhance communication awareness. Parent communication classes were introduced, with 4 thematic lectures per semester covering topics such as "How to Communicate Effectively with Teachers" and "How to Express Parenting Concerns." A Home-Kindergarten Communication Guide was distributed to clarify parents' rights and available communication channels. Additionally, a points reward system was established to encourage active parental feedback.

4. Practical Effectiveness

After a six-month pilot, the home-kindergarten communication system achieved significant results (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Key Indicators before and after the Pilot

| Indicator | Pre-Pilot (%) | Post-Pilot (%) | Improvement |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| Rate of parents' proactive feedback | 11 | 48 | ↑37 |
| Teacher response rate within 24 hours | --- | 100 | --- |
| Awareness rate of scientific parenting concepts | 65 | 92 | ↑27 |
| Consistency of home-kindergarten educational goals | --- | 89 | --- |
| Parent satisfaction with co-education | 52 | 89 | ↑37 |
| Parent initiative in participating in co-education | 35 | 88 | ↑53 |

The communication model has shifted from one-way notification to two-way interaction, with the rate of proactive feedback from parents increasing from 11% to 48%. Additionally, the response rate to parental concerns within 24 hours reached 100%, fostering an environment where teachers proactively inquire and parents proactively respond.

A high level of alignment between home and kindergarten educational philosophies was achieved. Parents' awareness of scientific parenting concepts rose from 65% to 92%, and the consistency of home-kindergarten educational goals reached 89%.

Children's core competencies improved significantly. The incidence of issues such as anxiety, picky eating, and social withdrawal decreased by 40% in the pilot classes.

Parent satisfaction with co-education increased significantly, rising from 52% to 89%. Additionally, parental initiative in participating in co-education grew from 35% to 88%.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Essence of Unidirectional Communication is Unequal Power Relations

This study identifies a fundamental cause of unidirectional communication as the "kindergarten-led mindset." This aligns with Wang Haiying's (2020) concept of "imbalanced empowerment between home and kindergarten" [3]. Teachers position themselves as "professional authorities," while parents view themselves as "supporters." This unequal power dynamic impedes communication from evolving into a reciprocal, two-way understanding. From Habermas's perspective, genuine communication necessitates both parties engaging in equal dialogue within an "ideal speech situation," which is precisely lacking in current home-kindergarten interactions. Addressing this issue requires not only enhancing communication techniques but also restructuring the power relationship between home and kindergarten at an institutional level, thereby genuinely transforming parents from "supporters" into

"partners" ^{[2][7]}.

5.2 Mechanism Construction is More Important than Skill Training

The findings of this study indicate that merely training teachers in communication skills has a limited impact. What truly drove change was the institutional design: the demand collection mechanism provided parents with stable channels to express their concerns; the standardized process established a clear framework for equal communication; and the evaluation mechanism incentivized teachers to prioritize two-way interaction. This suggests that optimizing home-kindergarten communication cannot be limited to "teaching teachers what to say" but must be elevated to the institutional level by constructing a comprehensive closed loop of "willing to communicate → being able to communicate → communicating effectively" ^{[3][4]}. As Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence emphasizes, effective interaction among family, school, and community domains requires institutionalized communication mechanisms as foundational support.

5.3 Layered Communication is an Inevitable Choice to Respond to Family Heterogeneity

Contemporary kindergartens encounter a progressively diverse parent demographic, including dual-income families, skip-generation families, single-parent families, and families with multiple children. The communication requirements of these varied family structures differ substantially. The "subject-specific communication" strategy examined in this study confirms the efficacy of a "differentiated response" approach. This methodology can be applied more broadly within educational service domains, emphasizing that addressing family heterogeneity entails delivering precise, need-based support rather than uniform, standardized services ^{[5][7]}.

5.4 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications of this Study

Theoretically, this study introduces Habermas's theory of communicative action and Bourdieu's field theory into the analysis of home-kindergarten communication, revealing the deep structural causes of unidirectional communication and expanding the theoretical perspective of research in this area. Practically, this study provides a complete pathway from problem diagnosis to strategy construction and effectiveness evaluation, offering a replicable operational framework for kindergartens seeking to optimize home-kindergarten communication.

Although this practice effectively addressed the fundamental issue of unidirectional communication, certain limitations persist.

Personalized communication strategies for families with two or more children, as well as for skip-generation families, require further refinement. The survey revealed that the communication needs of these specific family types differ significantly from nuclear families, and the current strategy does not fully address these differences.

The long-term sustainability of communication effects requires enhancement. Additionally, some parents' awareness of proactive communication still necessitates ongoing development. Further investigation is needed to determine how to establish communication as a habitual practice rather than a mandatory task.

The integration of home-kindergarten communication with child development assessment remains inadequate. Despite the considerable volume of data accumulated, it has not yet been effectively utilized to provide targeted support for child development.

Future efforts will concentrate on optimization in three key areas:

Further develop stratified and categorized communication strategies by formulating tailored communication plans for distinct family types.

Establish a long-term monitoring system to evaluate the effects of communication, thoroughly integrating communication processes with children's developmental portfolios.

Facilitate the advancement of home-kindergarten communication into a "home-kindergarten co-education community," thereby transforming communication into a platform for collaborative curriculum design, joint child assessment, and cooperative promotion of child development.

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