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Kindergarten Teacher's Perceptions of Child's Play, Conflict, and Knowledge-Learning in China

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Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.

Datum und Unterschrift

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ABSTRACT

The early childhood education in China nowadays is going through a profound reform in both teaching philosophies and practices. The leading administrative guidelines, *Some Opinions of the State Council on Improving the Development in Current Early Childhood Education (ECE)*（State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2010), and *Early learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged 3-6 (ELDG)* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012), unanimously stressed the significance of child-centered nurturing spirits by preventing preschool education that is centralized on play from shifting into an academic-focused elementary education. This is achieved by focusing on individual differences and interests, the cultivation of self-initiation and creativity, and the reinforcement of a warm, equal and responsive adult-children relationship.

The focus of this study is to explore the ways in which the child-centered values are absorbed and implemented in the early childhood kindergarten setting, in today's economic-galloping China. In the aspect of child's play, investigation was carried out to find out the extent to which child-initiated play and teacher-organized play were presented and scheduled on a daily basis; In terms of the knowledge-learning dimension, the researcher investigated the practitioners' perceptions, such as the position of academic reinforcement in preschool education, the traditional whole-class activity and the alteration of the teacher's value towards child nurturing and education; In the relationship aspect, the researcher attempted to find out the teacher's preference for either a responsive and equal, or domineering and controlling, interactive manner. Besides, the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' working experience, academic degree and kindergarten type, was also explored and discussed.

Study participants consist of 490 kindergarten teachers in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, People's Republic of China. As a well-developed city in Eastern China, the study in Hangzhou might present a brief panorama of the perceptions of preschool teachers towards child-centered spirits in China's urban regions. The researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, which specifically included 490 collected questionnaires and 9 teacher interviews. Data analysis composing of Multinomial Logistic Regression and descriptive statistics such as frequencies/percentages, means, and multiple response analysis, are employed in the study of the findings.

The findings of this study indicated that the ratio of child's free play considerably decreased in contrast to the dominance of teacher-organized play. Adding onto the list of factors to be reckoned with, some other variables that cause the caregiver to adopt a more domineering and directive attitude in the play activities are: a high children-teacher ratio, limited activity space, enormous emphasis on safety, and traditional values about child learning. In terms of academic reinforcements today, the intensity of teaching knowledge has receded into the background while the cultivation of behavioral and psychological capacity took on a prominent role. In addition, the landscape of adult-children interaction in early childhood setting changed profoundly into being embodied by a more equal and responsive teacher talk and an obvious dampening of the teacher's authority.

By and large, the study on teacher's perception of child's play, knowledge-learning and adult-children interaction sheds light on the intriguing perspective that child-centered spirits have in the past decades been understood and absorbed by the Chinese preschool teachers, who then customize them accordingly to each unique situation. They are now more likely to think of ways to provide more free choices and motivate children's self-initiation. However, due to the differences in context and

culture, there is a discrepancy between the extent to which child-centered practices can be fulfilled in Western countries and in China.

Key Words: play, knowledge-learning, interaction, China

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die frühkindliche Bildung in China durchläuft heutzutage eine tiefgreifende Reform sowohl in den Lehrphilosophien als auch in der Unterrichtspraxis. Die wichtigsten Verwaltungsrichtlinien "*Einige Stellungnahmen des Staatsrates zur Verbesserung der Entwicklung in der aktuellen frühkindlichen Bildung (ECE)"* (Staatsrat der Volksrepublik China, 2010) und "*Leitfaden für frühes Lernen und Entwicklung für Kinder im Alter von 3-6 Jahren (ELDG)"* (Bildungsministerium der Volksrepublik China,2012) betonten einstimmig die Bedeutung der kinderzentrierten Erziehung. Es sollte verhindert werden, dass die spielerische Vorschulbildung auf eine akademisch orientierte Grundschule ausgerichtet ist. Stattdessen sollte viel mehr Wert darauf gelegt werden, dass die frühkindliche Bildung charakteristisch dafür ist, sich auf individuelle Unterschiede und Interessen zu konzentrieren, Eigeninitiative und Kreativität zu fördern und eine warme und gleichberechtigte Beziehung zwischen Lehrern und Kindern aufzubauen.

Der Schwerpunkt dieser Studie liegt auf der Erforschung der Art und Weise, wie die kinderzentrierten Werte in der frühen Kindheit im heutigen wirtschaftlich aufstrebenden China aufgenommen und umgesetzt werden. Im Hinblick auf das Kinderspiel wurde untersucht, inwieweit das von Kindern initiierte Spiel und das von Lehrern organisierte Spiel täglich präsentiert und geplant wurden. In Bezug auf die Dimension des Wissenserwerbs untersuchte der Forscher die Wahrnehmungen der Praktiker, wie die Position der akademischen Verstärkung in der Vorschulerziehung, die traditionelle Aktivität der ganzen Klasse und die Veränderung des Wertes des Lehrers für die Erziehung. Im Beziehungsaspekt versuchte der Forscher herauszufinden, welche Präferenz der Lehrer für eine reaktionsschnelle und gleichberechtigte oder dominante und kontrollierende interaktive Art und Weise hatte. Darüber hinaus wurde auch der Zusammenhang zwischen den Überzeugungen und

der Berufserfahrung der Lehrer, dem akademischen Grad und dem Kindergartentyp erforscht und diskutiert.

Die Studienteilnehmer bestehen aus 490 Kindergärtnern und Kindergärtnerinnen in Hangzhou, Provinz Zhejiang, Volksrepublik China. Als gut entwickelte Stadt im Osten Chinas könnte die Studie in Hangzhou ein kurzes Panorama der Wahrnehmungen von Vorschullehrern gegenüber der kinderzentrierten Pädagogik bieten. Der Forscher nutzte sowohl quantitative als auch qualitative Forschungsansätze, die insbesondere 490 gesammelte Fragebögen und 9 Lehrerinterviews umfassten. Die Datenanalyse, die sich aus der multinominalen logistischen Regression und deskriptiven Statistiken wie Häufigkeiten/ Prozente, Mittelwerten und Multiple-Response-Analysen zusammensetzt, wurde in der Untersuchung der Ergebnisse verwendet.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie zeigten, dass der Anteil des freien Spiels des Kindes im Vergleich zu dem vom Lehrer organisierten Spiel deutlich zurückging. Durch Hinzufügen einer weiteren Liste von Faktoren, wie ein hohes Kinder-Lehrer-Verhältnis, begrenzter Bewegungsraum, enorme Betonung der Sicherheit und traditionelle Werte des Kinderlernens, neigte der Betreuer dazu, sich bei den Spielaktivitäten dominanter und kontrollierter zu verhalten. Bei den akademischen Verstärkungen wurde die Intensität der Wissensvermittlung vermieden, während die Kultivierung von verhaltens- und psychologischen Fähigkeiten eine herausragende Rolle spielte. Darüber hinaus hat sich die Interaktion zwischen Erwachsenen und Kindern in der frühen Kindheit grundlegend verändert und wurde durch ein gleichberechtigteres und reaktionsschnellere Lehrergespräch und eine offensichtliche Dämpfung der Autorität des Lehrers verkörpert.

Im Großen und Ganzen beleuchtet die Studie die Perspektive, dass kinderzentrierte Pädagogik in den letzten Jahrzehnten von den chinesischen Vorschullehrern verstanden und aufgenommen wurde. Sie denken jetzt eher darüber

nach, wie sie mehr Wahlfreiheit bieten und die Eigeninitiative der Kindern mehr motivieren können. Durch die Unterschiede im Kontext und in der Kultur besteht jedoch eine Diskrepanz in dem Ausmaß, durch welches kinderzentrierte Praktiken in den westlichen Ländern und in China erfüllt werden können.

Schlüsselwörter: Kinderspiel, Wissenserwerb, Interaktion, China

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abundant studies have increasingly indicated that contextual surroundings and experiences categorically affect the structural and functional development of an infant's brain (Black & Greenough, 1986; Greenough & Black, 1992). The early brain development are highly plastic and "a variety of environmental factors play a significant role in modulating early brain growth" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 196). The absence of essential experiences during the sensitive periods of childhood may lead to a risk of dysfunctionality sticking around for a lifetime. Meanwhile, an exposure to harmful or inappropriate experiences will impose irreversible effects on the early development of the brain whereas the advantageous conditions are very necessary for, and beneficial to, healthy brain growth. Consequently, it is of significant importance to provide a variety of rich learning experiences at an early age to shape and precipitate the brain circuitry. A growing body of research also found that by comparison to children from the working class, the middle-class children acquired a distinct language development by virtue of the influence of parents' varied vocabularies and elaborative descriptions (Zanten, 2003; Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990).

Early educational intervention affords an opportunity for the children[1] to reap the advantageous experiences, and further, their cognitive and academic gains. Considering that the early childhood programs[2] have an impact on adult academic skills and facilitate school success not only during the initial school stages, but also

[1] In this dissertation, the terms "children", "preschool-aged children" refer to children aged between 3 and 6.

[2] In China, early childhood programs are mainly conducted by institutions consisting of kindergartens (3-6 years old), and pre-primary classes (5-6 years old).

during the periods of middle childhood or adolescence (Wasik, Ramey, Bryant, & Sparling, 1990; Campbell et al., 2001), families nowadays are struggling to provide high-quality experiences for their children in their early years, and these take on an active and pivotal role in yielding significant improvements and facilitating a child's emotional well-being, social competence, and school readiness (Donoghue, 2017). Apart from hereditary factors, a child-care program functions positively and significantly through a series of mutually-influential elements, such as the children's characteristics, the role of caregivers, and the surroundings. "Children are not passive recipients of stimuli" (Campbell et al., 2001, p. 232) and they construct their own experiences proactively in their early environment when equipped with play activities and learning materials. Warm, responsive adult-child interactions gradually enhance the relationship between teacher and children, as well as stimulate the preschool-aged with profuse motivations to explore and engage with the surroundings. The developmentally appropriate environment will simultaneously provide the mature conditions for children's cognitive growth, which in turn, pushes forward as an incentive the smooth transition into elementary school and increases the likelihood of their initial academic success.

While the question on the degree of importance to which educational intervention plays in early childhood still remains unanswered (Bloom, 1964; Campbell & Ramey, 1994), the early intervention programs have proven to be pivotal on many early developmental fronts, especially on gains in intellectual functioning. The Carolina Abecedarian Project (Campbell & Ramey, 1994) tested a linear relation between the number of years of early intervention and positive intellectual and academic outcomes from infancy through age 12 (in both the preschool and school-age phases). Within the provisions of a supportive learning environment in preschool, the impoverished children who were at high risk for academic failure regained an academic advantage and this scholastic achievement (primarily targeting basic skills

in reading and math) persisted through 7 years in public school. The magnitude and duration of the early educational intervention significantly reinforced preschool gains during the transition to elementary school. Meanwhile, in their middle-childhood (age 7-10 years), children from low-income families who have had preschool interventions demonstrated less likelihood of being retained in grades and had relatively higher IQ levels by comparison with those without the early treatment.

Apart from the magnitude and duration, the intensity of the early intervention programs also matters. "Programs that are more intensive produce larger positive effects than do less intensive interventions" (Ramey & Ramey, 1998, p. 115). The Early Training Project (Gray, Ramsey, & Klaus, 1982) indicated that different intensity of high quality, carefully developed preschool programs (no preschool, two summers, and three summers) exerted measurable influences on the gains in intellectual functioning of black young children from low-income families. These low-income children, who are now equipped with improved cognitive and intellectual abilities, are more likely able to perform the school tasks they encounter in the middle and upper grades of public school. A sound preschool program appears to reduce the likelihood of grade retention, special-education placement, school dropout rate, and ultimately produce greater life success (Stevens, 1982). The Perry Preschool Project (Weikart, Bond, & McNeil, 1978), based on a sound educational approach that included a low staff-to-child ratio, an active learning curriculum, and a home visitation component, demonstrated the value of early intervention efforts in the protection of the high-risk children from juvenile delinquency. The children attended the program from Monday to Friday for 2.5 hours per day over two years (Wilson, 2000). Based on the intensity of this program, the participants' performances were characterized by satisfactory achievements such as better academic performances, higher graduation rates, higher standardized test scores, stronger school commitment and attachment to teachers. The experimental group at ages 15 and 19 demonstrated

college aspirations. The significant improvements yielded by early intervention programs developed a strong foundation for later development. In addition to children's scholastic success, the project also strengthened positive parenting skills. The Infant Health and Development Program (Ramey, Bryant, Wasik, Sparling, Fendt, & La Vange, 1992) is an intensive early-childhood intervention service for infants (0-3 years of age) with premature LBW (Low birth weight). LBW has some bearing on the risk of intellectual impairment and LD (Learning disability) embodied by the increased likelihood of disability in both reading and math (Litt et al., 2015). The program provided intensive preschool education alongside home visiting and parent education to stymie the adverse effects of LBW, whose favorable and significant effects were manifested in cognitive and achievement domains during children's school-age years (Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005).

The benefits of early and extensive childhood care are not only manifested on children's academic front, but also on children's social skills and emotional well-being. Play activities in the care go a long way to getting children involved in understanding language, social participation and the rest (Bruner, 1966). Children can independently arrive at the "law of the universe" by experimentation or, in the children's version of experimentation, in play (Maxwell, 1983). According to Vygotsky's theory, a real play is a leading activity in children's development, which includes three elements: imaginary situation, roles and rules (Vygotsky, 1967). In the pretend play, children could create an imaginary situation and act out roles, which build up the links to their social understanding, socialization, interpersonal interaction and emotional regulation. Hoffman and Russ (2012) found that children were better able to manage their emotions and comfortably engage in the task of the pretend play, which combined elements of fantasy, make-believe, and symbolism. The actual act of pretending also steps up higher levels of children's imagination and social organization as they act like they are different people in another place and time.

During free play, effective means and opportunities are provided for children to apply their social skills in the ongoing communication such as taking turns, sharing, listening, and using appropriate greetings (Lynch & Simpson, 2010). The adult also takes on a prominent role that influences the children's developmental outcomes through the adult scaffolding. The care provider's use of scaffolds refers to the process of transition from teacher's assistance at the beginning to children's independence at the end (Bodrova & Leong, 2001). The varying amount of adult assistance at different play stages is in compliance with the child-centered principle and maintain the ongoing play at a high quality. Caregivers provide assistance by creating an imaginary situation with multipurpose and unstructured props, giving hints and clues to help children act out roles and asking questions to guide children to understand what and how the action will happen in a mature play (Leong & Bodrova, 2012).

Considering the benefits of early childhood programs, which includes intellectual activities and play, on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development in the early childhood context, the study of how the caregiver perceives and situates the children's academic learning and play within cultural contexts becomes an important emerging aspect of research in the field of early childhood education. However, there is a gap in the literature and few studies present the Chinese caregivers' opinions and beliefs on how they conceive the role of children's academic learning and play, or how they organize those activities routinely based on their own knowledge.

The objectives of the present study are to 1) collect the teacher's perceptions of children's play and academic learning in Chinese early childhood setting; 2) investigate how teachers handle the relationship with the preschoolers in their daily routine, especially when encountering disputes; 3) contemplate the transformation China's current early childcare education has undergone hitherto, while taking into

account the prevalence of Western values and philosophies, and 4) deepen the knowledge of teacher's perceptions of the inconformity between China's traditional education values and Western child-centered beliefs.

A student in China takes 12 years to complete the primary and secondary education, which are divided into primary, junior secondary and senior secondary stages. The nationalized nine-year compulsory education includes primary education (either 5 or 6 years) and junior secondary education (either 3 or 4 years) in both rural and urban areas (National People's Congress, 1986), but excludes the preschool education. Currently, there is no governmental plan for the inclusion of preschool education into the compulsory education system, yet the demands for kindergartens with high quality and low cost invariably remain strong (State Council, 2015). "Early childhood education in China refers to education for children from birth to age of 6" (Zhu, 2009, p. 51). There are mainly three types of early childhood programs for children under 6 in China: nurseries (0-3 years old), kindergartens (3-6 years old), and pre-primary classes (5-6 years old) (Zhu, 2009), of which kindergarten is the main formal type. In 2014, the nationwide enrollment rate of children aged from 3 to 6 years old in kindergartens has increased by 70.5% (Ministry of Education, 2015). "Nurseries are not considered educational institutions under the supervision of educational authorities" (Zhu & Zhang, p. 174). Kindergarten serves the twofold purpose of child care and educational preparation, and is generally grouped by age: juniors (3-year-olds), middle (4-year-olds), and seniors (5-year-olds) (Vaughan, 1993). The class size will increase with age, with as many as 25, 30, 35 children respectively (Ministry of Education, 2016).

In the past decades, China's rapid economic growth has urbanized the country. Johnson (2013) predicts that by 2025, 70% of China's population, about 900 million people, will be integrated into cities. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2016), 771 million people lived in urban regions while 603 million in rural

regions of China in 2015. Alongside the growing pace of urbanization are the early child care centers continuing to flourish. Unlike the western pattern of kindergarten expansion, which responds to the participation of women in the labor force and caters to the working-class, the appearance of kindergartens in China was to meet the demands and needs of privileged families. The advocation of making preschool education accessible to blue-collar class started from China's "New Culture Movement" in the 1920s (Feng, 2017). Nowadays, early childhood education in China is widely seen as a part of basic education (Zhu, 2009). According to the report by Ministry of Education (2015), 40,507,100 children aged between 3 and 6 years were cared for in 209,900 kindergartens in 2014; the nationwide enrollment rate in kindergartens has increased by 70.5%; By comparison with the number in 2009, the amount of kindergartens in 2014 has grown by 51.9% with public kindergartens (built by education sectors) accounting for 50.13%; and 86.55% of the newly open kindergartens allocated in rural areas. Besides, the funds, an staggering amount of 204,876 billion yuan, invested in preschool education in 2014 accounted for 3.5% of the entire budget for national education. The task of further developing public kindergartens and non-profit private kindergartens has been widely recognized as one of the priorities for the government (Ministry of Education, 2017).

The obvious improvements and progress in China's early childhood education cannot, however, obscure the problems that have existed for a long time and which are affected by both traditional and social-economic factors. One of the insurmountable obstacles is the tendency of preschool education to become oriented towards elementary education. In 2010, *Some Opinions of the State Council on Improving the Development in Current Early Childhood Education (ECE)* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2010) was issued. It directly noted that educating the preschool-aged too early in the form of primary education is breaching the law of children's natural development. Preschool education is supposed to be

having fun. Being overwhelmed with academic knowledge on a daily basis is contrary to our original intentions of nurturing children. As such, caregivers ought to pay more attention to the individual interests and differences, develop their creativity and fantasy in free play, and cultivate their social skills through warm, friendly interactions with adults and peers. In fact, the regulations and publicity of child-centered values don't appear to decimate the phenomenon of massively academic-knowledge learning in the early childhood period. The enacted *Early learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged 3-6 (ELDG)* (2012) categorized educational contents in kindergarten into five areas: Health, Language, Sociability, Science, and Art. However, there is a discrepancy between theory and reality. Many kindergartens that offer interest-oriented classes such as music, drawing, dancing, ceramics, and taekwondon, will also offer English and mental abacus courses. Despite the breach in regulations, the defense is that those academic courses were set up under the pressure of parents. Also, parents in favor of knowledge acquisition insisted that a head start is significant for "normal" children without the privilege of birthright that those borne into wealthy or upper-class families possess (Song, 2012).

Apart from the external barrier, another apt representation of this obstacle is how the caregiver deals with the ratio of play and teach on a daily basis in the kindergarten. Zhu (2014) noted that early care practices are not only affected by educational ideals, but also by political, economic, social and cultural factors. From the political perspective, preschool education under a decentralization system seems to put more emphasis on child play while the same education under a centralization system would focus more on the teacher's instruction. In the economic aspect, the early childhood care in developed regions tends to be deluged with free play activities whilst its counterpart in impoverished regions tends to be filled with teaching activities. This is due to the lack of play materials in the poorer regions. On the other hand, from a cultural point of view, Westerners value more on child's natural

development while Easterners emphasizes on early learning right from the childhood. There is no single educational philosophy that befits all different social and cultural backgrounds across the whole world. The Western DAP concepts that are based on age and individual appropriateness have been prevalent in China for several decades. Adding onto the other aforementioned influencing factors, the intractable barrier for the caregiver today is to handle the extent to which the child's play takes on prominence in everyday activities.

Play, as a gift from God, doesn't have any hardships to sponsor. It's an autonomous and automatic activity that is initiated by children to entertain themselves, with no aim for utility. In contrast, kindergarten is a facility to cultivate the younger generation with its accompanying goals, approaches and methods. At the same time, it definitely refers to teaching. In the context of early childhood care, the teacher will emphasize on both child's play and teaching. The play activities are aimed at facilitating natural development whereas the teaching arrangements prepare younger children for their life trajectory in conformity to the norms for which our culture and society advocate and practice. Theoretically, child's play and teacher's teaching can be divided into two subjects for research and study purposes. However, in practice, there is very little chance in differentiating both subjects because they always proceed as a unit in early-childhood setting. Zhu (2014) believes that activities which prioritize teaching are easier to regulate than the ones that focus on play. The former is teacher-dominated and has its own instructional goals and contents while the latter is child-initiated in combination with many uncontrollable factors. Furthermore, according to the Western DAP spirits, individual appropriateness and interests must be considered as the cast-iron golden rule in child-centered early childhood programs. This imposes scores of challenges on the Chinese care providers. Handling the relationship between play and teaching throws up three questions at them: why, what and how they can teach. Letting children play freely

without any intervention may remain the method of play in a low-structured scheme, which impede the enhancement of the developmental outcomes of younger children. On the other hand, intervening too much or too frequently in child-driven activities may breach the beliefs of DAP, in which the teacher acts as a facilitator to create a warm, safe, and comfortable environment and any learning pressure should be absolutely avoided.

One of the purposes of this study is to inquire the caregivers' opinions about child's play. After many years of influence by the DAP spirits, have the Chinese preschool teachers fully accepted and implemented the form of child-centered education? Do traditional Chinese education values exert an influence on early childhood practice and the care provider's judgments and methods of implementation? How does the teacher's role change in a play situation? Does play represent the child's autonomy by downplaying on the teacher's dominance? Another goal of my research is to acquire the teacher's thoughts on the knowledge-learning in kindergarten. With regard to the significant social-economic changes in the past decades in China, parents nowadays are desperate for conductive conditions for their children's education, for the purpose of earning a head start at the outset. Inevitably, keeping a step ahead of their counterparts in this lifelong competitions requires an academic advantage. Taking into account that the current education system focuses a lot on the child intellectual capacity, honing the child's academic ability becomes vital later on when it is time for the national examination, which decides the division of universities that the students can be admitted. This pre-existing system elicits alarm and anxiety from the parents when their children's intellectual development falls behind others in the same age group. Consequently, early childhood learning is chosen as a form of insurance for a better future. In context of the aforementioned economic and social background, my study will try to understand the role that academic learning plays in Chinese preschool today and also the way in which the

DAP spirit stymies the trend of intellectual-determinism. Furthermore, taking into consideration that the form of collective teaching within a relatively big class is the traditional approach in imparting knowledge, can there be any change in the way early childhood education is put into practice in China, especially under the influence of western values such as a smaller class size? Apart from examining the teacher's perceptions of play and teaching activities, the daily relationship between caregivers and younger children will also be studied on the premise of how care providers handle children's disputes. For decades now, the teacher has been traditionally acknowledged as an authoritative symbol. However, will teachers today prefer to have a warm and equal relationship with their students as apposed to the conventional unequal relationship of the past?

The study of Chinese care providers' perceptions of early childhood practice will provide us a different perspective across different social and cultural contexts around the world. Given the ongoing transformations in Chinese society, the education sector is going through an increasingly comprehensive reform in both ideals and practices. It's worthy representing the strong collision between traditional Chinese and Western education philosophies, and the ways in which ensuing conflicts brought about by the cultural difference are dealt with by the front-line practitioners. The results of this study will also deliver a handful of suggestions to the policymakers and education officials. Recently, the decentralized kindergarten curriculum model (Li, 2006) and an approach called "same lesson designed from different styles, approaches and methods" (Zhu, 2010) are prevailing in China. The initial intentions of those reforms are to upgrade the caregiver's specialized skills and professionalism. However, in the implementation phase, many caregivers are unable to develop a single curriculum or course without some form of guidance or input from an expert; or in some newly-developed activities, children have a lot of fun on a superficial level but the contents defy basic common sense, which obviously breaches the initial core goals of

education. In this study, actual opinions from teachers about kindergarten activities will be collected and analyzed. The results may reveal the current dilemmas and professional developmental needs that they currently face, which will serve as helpful suggestions for the education officials on the organization of more targeted training sessions.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Teachers' Beliefs

This portion of literature is unfolded in three respects: the definitions and features of beliefs, the role of teacher beliefs in shaping teachers' behavior, and factors influencing teacher's beliefs.

The Definitions and Features of Beliefs

Numerous literature has in both theoretical and practical realms made a detailed discussion of the features and definition of beliefs. However, there is no consensus on the belief definitions in the literature with regards to "where the boundaries of the scope 'beliefs' originate and finish" (Galvis, 2012, p. 98). A wide range of definitions have focused on different informal or extended types in accordance with specific situations and even a theoretical type can refer to different orientations such as more or less philosophical or psychological (Österholm, 2009). Österholm (2009) argued that a definition of beliefs from an individual perspective and from a social perspective could result in the corresponding defining properties of beliefs. When a definition arises from both perspectives simultaneously, there will be a concept fraught with "a messy construct".

Beliefs play a significant role in helping teaching candidates make sense of the classroom context, cope with the new information and color the memories selectively in favor of their deeply-held preconceptions. "Teachers' beliefs are knowledge, experience, and environment-based" (Mansour, 2009, p. 33). Mansour (2009) suggested that some factors act as barriers to prevent teachers applying their beliefs into practice and lead to a mismatch "between the teachers' expressed beliefs and

their observed practices" (p. 39). Kagan (1992) described beliefs as filters to examine the new information an individual has encountered. The teacher candidates are apt to behave in a certain manner mirroring their previous experience when faced with the reality of the classroom. An earlier study by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) proved that university teacher education didn't play a pervasive role in shaping the professional perspectives of novice teachers. Consistent with this view, Ball (1989) corroborated that "what they have learned about the subject matter in elementary and high school turns out to be a significant component of their preparation for teaching" (p.11). Nespor (1987) argued that one of the most important functions of beliefs was to define tasks. When the task contents are incongruent with the belief system, they will be more likely automatically categorized into "unrelated domain of activity" and the rest will be arranged conforming to the preconceived beliefs. For the purpose of fundamentally describing the relationship between beliefs and knowledge, Österholm (2009) described belief as "being related to uncertainty in some way" (p. 159). Borg (2001) defined belief as "a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior" (p. 186).

Pajares (1992) noted that tons of studies have tried to define beliefs but those definitions can seldom be utilized clearly "as a conceptual tool". Although there is yet no agreement on the meaning of beliefs, the obvious commonality among different meanings is explicit. As Pajares described, "belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge is base on objective fact" (p. 313). Österholm (2009) discussed that from the defining properties of beliefs, uncertainty can be regarded as "a more general aspect of beliefs", while knowledge is seen as more logical and consistent, and less affective and episodic. Nespor (1987) analyzed the beliefs' structural characteristics and summarized them as existence of immutable entities, utopian

alternatives, affective and evaluative components, and episodic storage. The affective and emotional components build heavily on personal preferences. Unlike knowledge of a domain which encompasses set rules and doesn't rely on people's moods, feelings and emotions, the belief system has a stronger nexus with subjective evaluations. "The affective and emotional components of beliefs can influence the ways events and elements in memory are indexed and retrieved and how they are reconstructed during recall" (p. 324). The feature of non-consensuality intimates that the belief systems can be disputable. The propositions, concepts, and argumentations an individual brings with at the outset can not always ensure the appropriateness and validity. In contrast, knowledge system is recognized as validate and consensual. The knowledge individuals possessed have been well proven and they are always open to the outside evaluation. In this regard knowledge systems can be seen as dynamic given the fact that the outside evaluations will make the knowledge system in a constant state of flux and ever-changing. To the contrary, outside examination is not accessible to the belief systems. Nestor (1987) suspected that the belief system could only be recognized by self-reflection. It is, therefore, more apt to be static and inflexible. Likewise, the analogous emphasis made by Rokeach (1968) is that beliefs can not be measured in a direct way but can be inferred through the observation of what the individual has said and done. Another difference between belief and knowledge is that knowledge is mainly stored in settled semantic networks, while beliefs are mostly stored in a episodic manner. The episodic storage refers to the previous personal experiences, episodes and events. The critical personal episodes are able to "color or frame the comprehension of events later" and served as "an inspiration and a template for his or her own teaching practices" (p. 320). Consistent with the episodic nature of beliefs, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) put the individual biography as one of the determinant factors to the teacher socialization process. Schram, Wilcox, Lanier, Lappan and Even (1988) found the prospective mathematics

teachers showed commitment to holding the traditional approach of teaching they've experiences as pupils. Goodman (1988) explained that teacher candidates had already formed their pre-professional images based on their own early childhood and school experience and call those images as teacher's "intuitive screen" consisting of "individual's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, values, and actions (p. 134). The analogous notion was also proven by Calderhead and Robson (1991), whose study indicated that teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice played a significant role in helping them make sense of the activities and teaching ideas after the entry of EEP program.

The belief's unique characteristics serve as an determined factor to elicit more influence on a person's behavior than the knowledge. Nespor (1987) intimated that the belief was static and less malleable. Pajares (1992) added that "the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter" and "newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable" (p. 317). The power of belief is also represented by its considerable persistence in the case that those beliefs later are scientifically and convincingly proved wrong and inappropriate. According to Nespor (1987) the emotional and attitudinal feature of beliefs plays a significant role in recalling the personal memories. The mood and emotions are prone to color the retrieved memories and reconstruct them based on incomplete information to cope with the events. As a result, the original beliefs can be comfortably kept intact. Once beliefs have been moulded, the individuals have a strong inclination to deeply held them even when those incorrect beliefs become illogical or no longer represent the accurate reality (Pajares, 1992; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). The change of an individual's belief is the main source of headache. For the teacher candidates, Pajares (1992) suggested that the prospective teachers should first recognize the sharp conflict between original preconceptions and the new information. The next more critical procedure is to make them realize that efforts to try to assimilate the new ideas into the original beliefs are

of no value and success. Adding to this assumption, Nespor (1987) also concluded that the pivotal step to transform teacher's beliefs is that the new beliefs possess the same function as the old ones to enlighten them to practically deal with complex classroom situations. Otherwise, the prospective teachers will once again grasp the original preconceptions. In line with this reasoning, Ball (1989) argued that the elementary preservice teachers held deeply their learning experience in elementary and high school as an irreplaceable element of the teaching preparation. McDiarmid (1990) likened the individual belief to a resilient web and prospective teachers were inclined to reject or ignore the contents that did not fit their initial beliefs. Schram, Wilcox, Lanier, Lappan and Even (1988) found that after a systematic training of new teaching methods the preservice mathematics teachers showed their appreciation of the new teaching concepts but they still had the inclination to zero in on the traditional approach and "consider them eminently credible".

A fundamental assumption of teachers' educational beliefs defined by Pajares (1992) is "Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decision regarding such tasks; hence, they play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information" (p. 325). Nespor (1987) argued that beliefs' structural characteristics encompassing immutable entities, conceptualizations of ideal situations and non-consensuality posed an important impact on teaching practice, especially on task definition. Kagan stated that "the most significant characteristic of classroom teaching is its many uncertainties" (p. 79, 1992). It is no wonder that the nature of teaching is filled with ill-structured problems and entangled domains, resulting in the teachers expending energy to define their work with clear-defined goals, constraints, and operations compatible with their own belief systems. With regards to ill-defined problems, Nestor saw those as the ones requiring teachers to "go beyond the information" and "use background knowledge or make guesses or assumptions" (p.

324). The teacher needs to encode a wide range of information in as many ways as possible. In concrete, the cognitive processing first combines the already-possessed individual perceptions and knowledge together and utilizes them as cognitive resources to form strategic thought coping with the problems. The assumptions of the existence of entities, conceptualizations of ideal situations, subjective evaluations based on personal preferences, important episodes and experiences gained earlier can all make up teacher's cognitive and information-processing strategies. In this circumstance Pajares suggested that the beliefs and belief structures teachers've drawn on to adjust to a new situation are accompanied with the beliefs' inappropriateness and inconsistencies. The belief system has more to do with the task definition. Nestor also noted that "to understand teaching from teachers' perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work" (p. 323).

Teachers' Beliefs Play a Significant Role in Shaping Teacher Behavior

From the psycho-social angle Goodman (1988) studied the dynamics that underlay the development of teachers' professional perspectives. The author found that since preservice teacher entered the EEP, they had tended to verbalize a relatively homogeneous philosophy of teaching, and at the same time this leading belief would create internal and external conflicts in their practicum. The teaching philosophy contained two broad perspectives: Teaching as a Problem of Control and Teaching as the Facilitation of Children's Growth (p. 124).

Teaching as a Problem of Control is a combination of three guiding images: cooperation, authority, and autonomy. The image of cooperation is showcased in two interpretations: one is to teach children to obey the predetermined rules and keep the classroom activities in order; the other is to guide them to understand the nature of group activity in achieving an assignment with others. However, within a highly structured institutional system some teachers verbalized their ethical concerns because it appeared that there was a thin line "between leading a class and being

autocratic" and "between freedom and permissiveness" (p.125). The image of authority is implied to deal with the discipline problems. When children don't maintain order in the classroom setting, instead of analyzing this single component in a broader school context, his behavior will be categorized as "the problem" and teacher will use the institutional authority to discipline them and regain control. To the contrary, some practitioners held the opposite perception that the disciplining problem could not be attributed to pupils' misbehavior, but the overly structured institution, given the facts that "organizational structure and curricular demands for the school system were taken for granted (p.125)" and that teachers as agents of the institution had to be committed to standing for this system. The autonomous image is broadly limited in a high structured institutional environment. Given the teaching procedures have been predetermined, mechanistic and set, there is few space provided for the teachers to implement their new ideas. The perspective of Teaching as a Problem of Control is coping not only with the children, but also with "the power structure within the school" (p. 126).

The humanistic perspective of Teaching as the Facilitation of Children's Growth is embodied by two images: self-concept and individualization. The belief's compliance with the standard curriculum is seen as the prerequisite for the implementation of individualized teaching. In the practicum preservice teachers were inclined to create conditions for children to learn, for example, with their own workbook, seat-work practice duly meeting their capacity and at their own pace. The end of individualized arrangement was to pass the test, improve the test scores, finish the teaching assignment and meet the institutional expectations within the high-structured instructional system. There is of few significance to strengthen the connection between individualization and pupils' interests. However, opposed to following the overly institutional expectations, some held the critical belief against the standard curriculum and nature of instruction, verbalized that individualizing

instruction could also be implemented in the domain of the exploration of children's originality and unique ways of learning, rather than the monotonous drilling and testing. The set instructional procedures to teach math, reading, and grammar should not be emphasized, rather, teachers develop varieties of learning activities in an individual approach. In terms of enhancing children's self-concept, it is unanimously agreed that teachers should improve children's self-perception through a warmly, friendly, and responsively interpersonal interaction. Some teachers seemed to understand this perspective within the framework of the institutional standard curriculum. Correspondingly, related practices included praising children's performance when they got right answers or good scores. In contrast, there were some preservice teachers believing that the improvement of children's self-concept need to be combined with the the change of instructional strategy. Instead of utilizing the traditional way of focusing on what they don't know, teachers should be committed to recognizing and appreciating what children have known and developing their self-esteem as learners.

In all, Goodman implied that the practical philosophy of two teaching perspectives were combined with different guiding images and each teacher "uniquely interpreted the images within each perspective, and thus their practical philosophy of teaching differed significantly" (p. 129).

Katz and Raths (1985) viewed desirable dispositions as characteristics of effective teachers. Dispositions is defined as "trends or summaries of frequencies of given categories of actions" (p. 307). As the representation of teacher's conception of the teaching and learning process in the classroom context, dispositions impose an critical impact on what the teachers do. Specifically, desirable dispositions, for example, "to empathize, to put oneself in another's shoes, or to 'read' another's mind" (p. 305), indicate teachers' behavioral tendency and can "constitute bases for

judging the appropriateness of curriculum content and be applied as a set of criteria for the evaluation of practice and assessment of candidates' competence" (p. 305).

In the study on at-risk first graders with diverse backgrounds, Maxon (1996) found that teachers' beliefs were an integral part of classroom practice (p.3) and that there were congruencies between teachers' stated beliefs and their practice in the classroom. Holding the perspective that "all children must be given the opportunity to succeed in school" (p.12), teachers spared no efforts to understand the individual circumstances, endeavored to create a stable environment and curriculum in conformation to children's individual needs and interests and firmly believed at-risk children could break bonds of the socio-economic disadvantages. There is an clear congruency between what teachers say they do and what they actually do. The study on teacher's decision-making, in particularly focusing on the grouping students for reading instruction, shed light on how many potential sources would impose influence on teachers' decisions. Borko, Shavelson and Stern (1981) found that, instead of students' original information, the integrated information and estimates made by teachers influenced more likely their decision making. The aspect of student information that teachers prioritized underlined students' reading ability embodied by reading achievement, observations of student behavior and reading work, and their test scores. Besides, school environment (such as class size and composition, abundance of instructional resources) and teachers' conceptions of reading functioned in a great degree in teacher's grouping practices. Based on this blanket and general estimate students would be sorted and grouped into different ranks of reading ability. In Borko, Shavelson and Stern's teachers' decision-making model, the influential components comprised estimates of student aptitudes, individual differences between teachers, nature of instructional task, alternative instructional strategies and materials, institutional constraints, and external pressures. To the contrary, Duffy and Anderson had doubts about the Borko, Shavelson, and Stern's model. Duffy and Anderson

(1982) suggested that forming the reading groups did not necessarily associate with teachers' planning and decision making. Instead, the grouping practices was carried out mainly due to teachers' concern of the materials coverage and smooth activity flow. In the real classroom context teachers were predominantly engaged with technician behavior such as following instructional guides, asking questions, providing an reactive response, monitoring pupils through materials, and correcting errors. The practice of reading instruction had few bearing on teachers' deliberate decision-making strategies and alternatives. Duffy and his college also believed teachers' actions were motivated mostly by basal materials and management concerns. With regard to Borko, Shavelson, and Stern's suggestion that teacher's conception of reading was one of the most important factors to affect teachers' decision behavior, they repudiated such conceptions in reference to the fact that "instructional practice is governed by the commercial reading materials" (p. 298). Consequently, teachers were not in a position to employ a decision-making model in the face of the outside constraints.

Teacher's belief has a significant relationship with the causes of a student's performance. As Clark and Peterson (1986) noted, "the most important beliefs teachers have about students are those that deal with teachers' perceptions of the causes of students' behavior" (p. 90). In the attributional analysis of achievement motivation, Weiner and Kukla (1970) found that teachers holding high-expectation to the pupils possessing a high-level ability would castigate them and take more instrumental actions when pupils had poor scholastic performance attributed to the motivation deficits, whereas the students, who, based on teacher's perception represented a deficiency of ability and sufficient effort, received more positive feedback. Furthermore, the high-ability children's performance against teacher's high expectation often leads to teachers being more apt to expend time and effort to improve their behavior and facilitate those pupils' success. Cooper and Baron (1977)

investigated the cognitive antecedents of the teacher's feedback behavior in classroom context. "Teachers are active participants in the classroom interaction process that leads to students' successes and failures" (Clark & Perterson, 1986, p. 94) and student ability is "a most salient element of classroom life" (Cooper & Baron, 1979, p. 276). The students, for whom the teachers held the highest academic expectations, "received more praise (positive reinforcement) than did either low-expectation or average-expectation students" (p. 412). Teachers' academic expectations plays a pivot role in determining their classroom reinforcement behavior. Specifically, the low-expectation students were inclined to receive more criticism (negative reinforcement) due to their classroom problematic behavior and got more private interactions concerning academic matters while they had less opportunities to answer questions in front of the class. Apart from the teacher's performance expectations, another cognitive antecedent "teacher's perceived personal responsibility for success and failure" was also investigated in this study and the results indicated that there was no significant relation between teacher's perceived personal responsibility and teacher's academic praise and blame (reinforcement behavior). The above results on stressing the strong relation between teachers' academic expectations and evaluative behaviors are in sharp contrast to statements by others, such as Meyer (1979), who have illustrated evidence that teacher's perceived personal responsibility did "influence the quality and amount of reinforcements distributed in the classroom" (p. 273). The pupils' outcomes attributed to high effort tended to bring more praise from the teacher sides and "teachers' perceptions of the effort expended by pupils" (p. 272) showed in the meantime, significant associations with teachers' reinforcement behaviors (Meyer, 1979; Meyer, Simon, & Butzkamm, 1978).

Furthermore, there is strong evidence for the findings that teacher's belief has not only a stronger nexus with students' academic performance, but also with

different types of interactions in the classroom. Brophy and Rohrkemper (1981) depicted that facing the problem behavior of the students, teachers were more apt to make an attributional analysis about "the motivations and other causal factors" before they orchestrated a distinct set of strategies. There is a strong nexus between the levels of problem ownership and teachers' attributions about self and students. Teachers' strategic behavior grows out of their problem conceptualizing. When the attributional analysis results in teacher's belief that problems students are capable of self-control and intentionally and carelessly misbehave, the teachers' strategic behavior is prone to draw on "higher frequency of punishment" and "restricted language" and the teachers tend to be "pessimistic about their ability to produce generalized improvements"(p. 27). When the teachers perceive that students can not control and misbehave unintentionally, the corresponding construction of the strategy is pertaining to more encouragement, "extensive talk", confidence and self-satisfaction boosting, improvement of mental health, and teachers' considerable commitments. Cooper and Baron (1977) obtained results consistent with those of Trophy and Rohrkemper. The findings found that the teachers held less frequent interactions in the classroom with the students, who were categorized into the academically incompetent or had the disciplined problems.

Lambert (1985) took the example of teachers' dilemma managing in the classroom setting to underscore that, only teacher holding the appropriate and reasonable perceptions towards classroom dilemma can they acquire the sense of self-identity and competently cope with the classroom problems. Holding the traditional and teacher-centered beliefs teachers are prone to directly take actions to deal with particular dilemmas. However, different sorts of actions result in dramatically different consequences.

Lampert asserted that empirical research could illustrate the "generalized theories of instruction, curriculum, or classroom management" (p. 179), but this

approach was incomplete and insufficient to describe the elements of teaching practice, and predictably, relevant and corresponding theoretical assertions were always limited to help practitioners solve the teaching dilemmas in their practice. Another reason that theoretical base could not help solve the practical problems was that the teaching task and goals themselves were contradictory. Between keeping the classroom in order and developing pupils' commitment to learning, or between conforming to the textbook's standards of knowledge and justifying an individual understanding, or between child-centered teaching and curriculum-centered teaching, there always existed two dichotomous aims. Similarly, alternative countermeasures appeared equally undesirable and new conflicts seemed to, at the same time, arise both within the classroom and within teacher's interpretation of their own behaviors. The pedagogical problems could not be "separated one from another", rather, they are "entangled in a web of contradictory goals" (p. 192). The author took the example of how to manage the teaching dilemma between boisterous boys and reticent girls in her own classroom practice, which turned out that paying more attention to boys' behavior would make girls feel ignored and that monitoring girls' performance would inadvertently do harm to the classroom order. Therefore, Lampert sets up the new conception from the point view of teacher, that one particular conflict-solving action would inevitably result in further conflict and "potential adversity makes solving some problems inadvisable" (p. 193).

In many cases the preservice and inservice teachers were affected by powerful sources outside themselves and told, for example, by professors and staff developers, that they should make a choice between two dichotomous alternatives based on which one was more critical for them to gain success as a teacher. Even some social science researchers and government policymakers treated the classroom partitioners as "a technical-production manager", whose major responsibility was to implement the researchers' findings and knowledge. It appeared that, as long as teachers

followed the researchers' solutions, the pedagogical problems and conflicts would be avoided. Differing from the scholar's view, the author asserted that in the face of classroom problems, it was salient to view the teaching practice from the vantage point of practitioner, because they focused on many concrete details which the scholars and researchers didn't possess. Besides, other than researchers and theoreticians recognizing teaching problems in a universal manner, practitioners were involved in those additionally with their own wish and some particular feelings in personal dimension such as personal burden of taking certain actions and of living with the consequences.

Other than making a forced and problematic choice between excellence and equality or between covering the predetermined curriculum and promoting individualized learning, what a practitioner really needs to do is maintain the tensions, accept conflict as endemic and view it as a classroom element that doesn't need eliminating. Lampert implied that "the work of managing dilemmas…requires admitting some essential limitations on our control over human problems. It suggests that some conflicts cannot be resolved and that the challenge is to find ways to keep them from erupting into more disruptive confrontations" (p. 193). Besides, the author emphasized the primary value of building a working identity—that is, "a teacher has the potential to act with integrity while maintaining contradictory concerns" (p. 184). Neither rushing to go through a decision-making process nor choosing one side of either class order or a disorderly classroom, the teacher develops a "ambiguous self-definition—the person that I wanted to be" (p. 184), and takes adjustments to guide the problem into the background, mediates it and brings other specific elements into the foreground. The teaching problem still remains and teachers employ a strategy to peacefully submerge it and prevent it from deteriorating.

In all, dilemma managing is a significant part of the work of teaching. Other than instantly conforming to theories and findings stemming from cognitive

psychologists or curriculum experts, the teacher should first recognize the limitations of taking any single-minded view related to teaching and learning processes. Some classroom tensions are better managed than solved.

Factors Affecting the Teachers' Beliefs

Recent studies has turned their attention to the notion that prospective teachers bring with them a set of beliefs when they start their teaching career. Exposure to the racially and linguistically diverse student groups in American schools, the teachers' perception and understanding towards the growing diversity in school context were interviewed and investigated. Paine (1989) found that prospective teachers conveyed the impression of student diversity and brought this perception into the class. In psychological terms, the prospective teachers responded to difference with an individualized teaching orientation to accommodate individual differences, whereas when the difference referred to "the social relations of the classroom, the dynamics of group interaction, as well as the school context" (p. 10), the preservice teachers expressed reservations about the positive resources and were more apt to treat differences as a problem and a barrier. Social, cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity was oftentimes associated with the hierarchical differentiation and could make some kids feel interior to others. "Prospective teachers talked about diversity as closely associated with issues of fairness and equal treatment" (p.5). In another study of mathematics instruction insinuating teachers bringing with them a set of beliefs, Schram, Wilcox, Lanier, Lappan and Even (1988) illustrated that prospective mathematics teachers have already held many traditional notions of mathematics teaching when they began to teach. They give credence to traditional orientations, in which mathematic is "static, rule-bound, and linearly ordered" (p. 2), teachers should divide mathematics knowledge into isolated bits and pieces to be taught and digested, and pupils should accumulate huge numbers of problems and algorithmic solutions,

memorize “rules and procedures without understanding why they work” (p. 12), and hone their computational skills.

Starting from the notion of the psycho-social dynamics, Goodman (1988) explained the process by which preservice teachers’ beliefs evolved as they learned to teach. The author indicated that before teachers entered EEP, they had already formed their pre-professional images based on their own early childhood and school experience. This idea is also proved by Calderhead and Robson (1991) who saw the student teachers’ early conceptions of classroom practice as images deriving mostly from their experiences in schools as pupils and “being able to recall images, and to adapt and manipulate these images in reflecting about action in a particular context is possibly an important aspect of the task of teaching” (p. 3). These stored images and knowledge helped them understand the activities and teaching ideas after the entry to the EEP program. Goodman described those images as teacher’s “intuitive screen” consisting of “individual’s thoughts, feelings, perceptions, values, and actions” (p. 134). The intuitive screen was not unchangeable but open to external stimuli. The change or reinforcement of the former perspectives depended on preservice teachers’ “emotional as well as intellectual response to the people, settings, ideas, and experiences found in the EEP” (p. 130). An example of the teacher’s emotional response to settings and ideas was that, some beginners developed a stronger orientation towards institutional authority resulting from their concern and fears of classroom chaos and therefore being criticized by peers. Goodman also implied that the preservice teachers were keen on employing an emotional, rather than an intellectual response to new teaching ideas and practices. Solely on the condition that the alteration of their beliefs and exploration of new ideas were safely guaranteed, they seemed fairly open-minded and willing to try the new alternatives. Teachers’ professional perspectives are developing and forming in a dynamic manner. Even though teachers always express similar or common attitudes and beliefs, the essential

meanings of their actions in the real practice could differ significantly. From the view of interplay that exists between a teacher's beliefs and actions, Goodman adequately gives us a real insight into the fluctuating state of professional perspectives preservice teachers develop as they are enrolled into the EEP. Furthermore, Goodman disagreed with many previous studies illustrating teachers' practical philosophy of teaching being moulded passively and constrained by outside forces, rather, he believed that teachers played an active role and there was an internal dialogue carried on to interpret the past and present experiences to develop and improve their own professional perspectives and to reflect their philosophy of teaching.

Goodman didn't attach much importance to exposure to varieties of viewpoints and experiences during professional preparation. In conclusion, based on his study the affecting factors to the development of teacher's professional perspectives comprised "prior conceptions based upon early childhood, school, and societal experiences; emotional reactions to present professional educational experiences; thoughtful consideration of new ideas; and future expectations" (p. 131). Likewise, Maxon (1996) suggested that a list of factors could impose an effect on teachers' belief system and the alterations of beliefs would in turn affect their thinking, planning and decisions. Those factors could be sorted into external and internal components. External factors included family, peers, theoretical knowledge, administrative demands, students, educational policy, school curriculum requirements, classroom events, life experiences and educational experiences while internal factors comprised culture, values, personality, personal practical knowledge and internalized external factors such as positive school experiencing, life experience and love of reading. Moreover, teachers in the interview articulated that their teaching perspectives were moulded and uneasy to be shifted, not least because they had been taught in their teacher preparation programs. The author also found that student population took a substantive role in shifting teachers' educational perceptions.

Numerous studies have illustrated that working experience has an obvious impact on teacher's beliefs of classroom practice. In the study of "differential patterns in the thinking processes of experienced and novice teachers during classroom instruction" (p. 27), Fogarty et. al (1982) found that classroom cues that novice teachers reported were focusing on disruptive behavior (student behavior and involvement) while experienced teachers on "lack of response" and "spontaneous initiation" (student performance). Further could be speculated that experienced teachers made teaching decisions when appropriate responses were lacked or spontaneous responses were initiated whereas the decisions by novice teachers were more "sensitive to student behaviors that will potentially disrupt their planned presentation" (p. 23). In terms of instructional actions, what experienced teacher utilized was diverse but the novice teacher were limited to a few alternatives. Borko, Livingston and Shavelson (1990) explained further the difference in the thinking patterns between experienced and inexperienced teachers. They suggested that the thinking disparity was highlighted when teachers explained the meaning they brought to the classroom practices. In comparison to inexperienced teachers, the experienced can "attend more to informations of instructional significance, are more selective in their attention and more efficient in their processing of information during teaching" (p. 45). Doyle (1977) obtained results consistent with those of Fogarty et. al and Borko et. al. In a further investigation of the teacher response patterns required by demands of classroom setting, Doyle described that the characteristics of classrooms under student teachers were embodied in three aspects: multidimensionality, simultaneity, and unpredictability. A multidimensional classroom is fraught with a large number of purposes, multiple classroom activities, patterns of behavior, and interests. The simultaneity of classroom events is in the sense that teachers not only present the academic contents, but also attend to pupils' behavior and managing the direction and flow of activities. The multidimensionality

and simultaneity in classroom settings lead to an unpredictability in the sense that beginning teachers are unable to predict student reactions and to anticipate the direction and consequences. Those features engender "a special set of environmental demands unique to the classroom" (p. 13). Distinct from experienced teachers using a set of specific strategies to reduce the complexity, beginning teachers with extensive tutoring experience don't amass appropriate options to adjust to the ever-changing environments.

There appears to be a consensus in the literature that teacher education courses impose a substantive impact on preservice teachers' educational beliefs. Jacobs (1968) found that after the initial courses of professional education the student teachers' perceptional orientations ranged from being more rigid, formalized and authoritarian to be more personal and indirect. However, in the student-teaching semester where they were extensively exposed to the classroom situations, the preservice teachers's perceptions tended to be reversed. Jacobs speculated that the face-to-face classroom situations were realistically incongruent with prospective teachers' previous professional learning experiences and therefore, engendered a conflict. Another element to be taken into account is the school atmosphere encompassing "petty regimentation and rote in the school system" (p. 414) and "methodology of school administrators and local boards of education" (p. 415). From Jacobs' findings it can be concluded that not only professional education, but the degree to exposure to classroom situations and the ability to adapt to the school milieu have a significant relationship with student teachers' perception change.

This view, which emphasizes the teacher education programs conducive to belief changes, has received support from Skipper and Quantz (1987) and Beyerbach (1988). Skipper and Quantz investigated two groups of college students who majored in Education and Arts and Science respectively. The authors compared their perception changes after those students finished four-year college study and student

teaching. The results suggested that there were dramatic perception changes in the Education students. In contrast to their initial beliefs as freshmen that teachers should avoid building a stronger nexus between knowledge learning and understanding of political ideologies and that teachers should direct and control the classroom, the Education students had, after four years of professional study, the more progressive inclination to the educational practices. The progressive orientations such as giving pupils more autonomy and freedom in the execution of classroom events, supporting "academic freedom for teachers to teach what they think is right and best" (p. 42) and tailoring instruction to accommodate individual differences, are illustrative of Education teachers' perception changes. In Beyerbach's (1988) study, the author arranged the courses of concept mapping in a undergraduate teacher education program to assist instructional planning. By examining their pre and post maps the student teachers self assessed the differences of two visual representations. Findings suggest that from pre to post-mapping some structural changes are ascertained: the prospective teachers' thinking started to encompass strategies of teaching and became more specific, detailed, clear and elaborate. In their postmaps they found "more focus on the process of planning, and greater development of technical vocabulary" (p. 345). By and large, the use of concept mapping corroborates student teachers' professional growth in technical vocabulary and the change of teaching perceptions. In a further study of the folkway of mathematics teaching Ball (1989) noted that schooling experience as pupils "has instilled not only traditional images of teaching and learning but also shaped their (prospective teachers') understandings (of subjects)" (p. 10). While the continuity of experiences intimates the inevitability of the folklore view of mathematics teaching, Ball argued for drawing on methods courses to guide the preservice mathematics teachers to reconsider and reexamine their own past experiences. The methods course focuses on the "ways of seeing" and the reconsideration of mathematical knowledge and "ways of knowing". The

reinterpretation process functions largely in facilitating teachers' conceptual change, especially on the assumptions about mathematics, classrooms, roles of teachers and students in learning mathematics. The implementation of methods courses gives teacher candidates "a new sense of what it means to 'understand' something in mathematics" (p.14). Although there was great consensus on the conceptual change of mathematics novice teachers, there was also evidence of disagreement in the view that teacher candidates' preexisting beliefs can be altered. Schram, Wilcox, Lanier, Lappan and Even (1988) found at the outset of teaching career the prospective mathematics teachers possessed a traditional approach for mathematical instruction fraught with drill-and-practice and paper-and-pencil tests on computational skills. "Learners are seen as passive receptacles into which mathematical knowledge is poured" (p. 2). The typical routine of math instruction requires pupils to memorize procedures and algorithms without puzzling over the meaning of mathematical processes. Aimed to transform their traditional orientations of mathematical instruction in elementary level, a 10-week conceptually-based course was conducted to "mathematize situations encountered in daily living" (p.12), to engage pupils into wrestling with those situations, and "to explore, conjecture, and validate possible solutions" (p. 8), even though the pupils were still not adept at computational skills. After the course the teacher candidates clearly manifested their appreciation of the value to zero in on "what it means to know and do mathematics" (p. 3) and to "develop a conceptual understanding of long familiar mathematical ideas and they were beginning to value a learning environment organized around problem solving, group work, and opportunities to talk about mathematics" (p. 25). However, they still tended to persist with their traditional beliefs that elementary mathematics was "hierarchically ordered" and that the basic arithmetic such as the four arithmetic operations was the prerequisite for problem solving. "Problem solving was viewed as a separate topic rather than a topic integrated with skill development" (p. 19).

"Prospective teachers consider them (traditional approach) eminently credible" (McDiarmid, 1990, p. 12) and exhibited no willingness to challenge these notions. Another element to stymie the conceptual teaching and understanding are the time and organizational constraints, not to mention the limitation of teacher's ability due to their previous school and university experience that computational and procedural emphasis are largely reinforced. Levin and Wadmany (2005) described the change of a teacher's belief system in a technology-based environment. With the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) teachers' beliefs regarding learning and teaching have gone through a substantive change ranging from being centralized, rigid, and teacher-centered to being collaborative, free, authentic, and student-centered. The integration of technology provides a solid foundation for engaging students in information-rich tasks and engendering a communicative and partnered relationship between teacher and students. Although some teachers after three years in a technology-rich environment fraught with "open-ended tasks and resources" still held the authoritative and discipline-based view, their practice in the classroom and their relationship with students were apt to be more open, creative, flexible and collaborative. The integration of ICT into the educational system provides the evidence that teachers' educational beliefs are not static, but dynamic and reconstructed.

The study by Novak and Knowles (1992) provided a basis for discussing the influence of second-career teachers' personal and professional experiences on their thinking and action in teaching practices. Differing from traditional first-career teachers, second-career teacher candidates possessed diverse career experiences, left their always originally well-established careers, harbored heightened motivations with a long-held instinctual calling to be a teacher, and viewed their second career of teaching as a profession rather than merely a job. With two particular case studies Novak and Knowles recognized that prior life experiences highly and vastly impacted

their teaching beliefs. A second-career teacher candidate being well versed in computer technology would more likely see the use of computer as an integral part in classroom instruction, which in a direct manner further influenced the thinking and implementation of the curriculum. Personal experiences such as a good knowledge-background in mathematics, prior working experience as school secretary, and parenting experience appeared to assist the novice teachers to acquire an insider's view, find proper teaching strategies geared to children's needs and abilities, and enable them to cope with various elements in the classroom context. The authors also found that the teacher candidates with a more professional career sensed teaching more fulfilling and rewarding, possessed more heightened motivations to pursue teaching as a new start in contrast to the ones with a less prior professional career.

Supplementary to Novak and Knowles' findings is Powell (1992) who explored the influence of previous experiences on second career and first-career teachers' pedagogical constructs. Powell found that apart from the prior career experiences, a personal belief system about students had an imposing role in impacting second-career preservice teachers. A rigid perspective held firmly by a career-change preservice teacher that students should be respected and entitled to the autonomy would evidently influence the later instructional constructs. In contrast, the first-career teacher were more subjected to their K-12 schooling experience, former teacher role models, college experiences as a student, and relatives. Besides, both first-career and second-career teachers' teaching constructs were primarily affected by the teacher education programs and content knowledge.

Definition and Categories of Play

Play is simple, yet also profound（White, 2012). The definition of play is both complex and contested due to the lack of an agreed definition (Buettner-Janusch, 1974; Weisler & McCall, 1976). Early theories of play appear to fall easily into four

categories (Berlyne,1969; Gilmore, 1971; Rubin, 1982), namely, (1) the surplus energy theory of play, (2) the relaxation and recreation theory, (3) the practice theory, and (4) the recapitulation theory of play. Each classical treatment of play predicts or explains why play exists and why it is a significant force in the process of development. In the book *The Psychology of Play*, play is defined as "any purposeful mental or physical activity performed either individually or group-wise in leisure time or at work for enjoyment, relaxation, and satisfaction of real-time or long term needs". Similarly, Stuart Brown (2008) defines play as "anything that spontaneously is done for its own sake, which appears purposeless, produces pleasure and joy." The nature of play is perhaps best expressed through the Playwork Principles (2005):

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own ways and for their own reasons.

As Krasnor and Pepler (1980) noted, a content analysis of the social, cognitive, and motor behaviors can reveal what happens during play. The positive components of play include non-literality, positive affect, intrinsic motivation and flexibility. Each component has their own circle and "pure play" can be conceived as the overlap of all these components. Given that play is not considered an "all or none", but "more or less" behavior (Rose-Krasnor & Pepler, 1980), Rubin et al. (1983) defined play in three varied paradigms: (1) play as a disposition; (2) play as observable behavior; and (3) play as context. From the view of "play as a disposition" there are six attributes that must be understood. (1) Play is intrinsically motivated. It is a behavior neither governed by appetitive drives nor by compliance with social demands or inducements external to the behavior itself. (2) Play is characterized by attention to means rather than ends. In this sense, play is spontaneous and freely chosen. It's free from external sanction. The goals are self-imposed rather than imposed by others. (3) Play differs

from exploratory behavior. Exploration is guided by the question, “What is this object and what can it do?” Play is guided by the question, “What can I do with this object?” Play is process-oriented and “ Whatever I wish” is thus the answer to the question “What can I do with this object? ” (4) Play consists of activities that can be labelled as pretense. A chair is no longer used to sit on, but is used as if it were a horse. Play is a nonliteral behavior that is characterized by an “as if” representational set. (5) Play is pleasurable and is free from rules that are externally imposed. (6) Play involves active engagement.

The classification of play has special implications in the various stages of development that are obscured when play is instead taken to be a general behavioral disposition. Narrower taxonomy might more convincingly demonstrate a particular aspect of play (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). Piaget(1962) stressed that play could be categorized into three types: practice games, symbolic games, and games with rules. Piaget’s taxonomy places a special emphasis on what a child can do at each developmental phase (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). As a result of having read the collective works of Bueler, Isaacs, Piaget and Valentine, Smilansky (1968) suggested the following four general stages in play, through which a normal child moved naturally: functional play; constructive play; dramatic or symbolic play; and games-with-rules.

In Parten’s study (1932) on the social participation of nursery-school children, he classified the social participation of children into six types: unoccupied; solitary play; onlooker; parallel group activity; associative group play; and cooperative group play. Most researches have taken Parten’s (1932) social hierarchy as their point of departure (Rose-Krasnor & Pepler, 1980). Similarly, in accordance with different periods of child growth, Anderson-McNamee and Bailey (2010) argued that play is an essential part of all development of children and can be categorized into 11 types: unoccupied play, solitary play, onlooker play, parallel play, associative play, social

play, motor-physical play, constructive play, expressive play, fantasy play and cooperative play. This sequence of play development, which extends from solitary exploration to pretend play, correlates with children's cognitive abilities. The above structural forms of play often take place in a variety of social contexts. Coplan, Rubin and Findlay (in press) further distinguished the features of social play from nonsocial play. Social play occurs when the child possesses the skills to interact, regulates self-emotion, and is motivated to engage in playful activities. It compromises the constructs of social participation, social competence and sociability. By contrast, nonsocial play is defined as the display of solitary activities and behaviors in the presence of the potential play partners.

The Significance of Play

Nature is our mother, and her lessons are especially valuable for the growing child (Cornell, 1979). Children push, pull, and manipulate objects in a large repertory of movements to try to discover their natures (Maxwell, 1983). Haggerty (1979) argued that the game is the best all-around teaching aid and it develops intuitive decision-making, confirms and structures the habits of moving from left to right as in reading and writing, teaches all the basic mathematical operations, and involves pure reason. Games are not to be considered as haphazard ideas of parents or educators, but as educational aids and as stimuli for the spirit, for the fantasy, and for the life-technique of the child (Adler, 1927). A game is like a mathematical model, an artificial but powerful representation of reality (Bruner, 1966). They are communal exercises that allow the child satisfaction and fulfillment of their social feelings (Adler, 1927). Furthermore, 75 percent of brain development occurs after birth and play assists in that development by stimulating the brain through the formation of connection between nerve cells, which further ramps up the development of fine and gross motor skills (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010).

From the evolutionary perspective, play is regarded as the practice of basic skills in the longer periods of immaturity (Groos, 1898), and benefits the players through mediating them culturally to transform and transcend the reality (Poirier, 1972; Barnett, 1990). Play benefits the child's cognitive development theoretically and empirically, as mainly depicted through two aspects: convergent and divergent problem-solving ability (Barnett, 1990; Vandenberg, 1980; White, 2012). The divergent thought process stirs creativity to a greater extent and requires a flexible approach as there is no single right answer to the divergent task. The symbolic pretense nature in pretend play has been described as a good practice of divergent thinking because in pretend play, some novel playful scenarios will be created, while at the same time, it has been proven that a correspondence among playfulness, creativity, and divergent problem-solving ability exists (Dansky & Silverman, 1975; Johnson, James, & Francis, 2005; Russ & Wallace, 2013; Russ & Ethan, 2006; Singer & Singer, 1990).

Meanwhile, the convergent thought process requires children "to organize pieces of disparate information to arrive at one correct answer" (White, 2012, p. 12). This speculation suggests that the exploration and manipulation of objects in playful experiences will help young individuals learn the properties of objects and further apply this set of manipulative skills to various real-life problems and other circumstances in life. Much of the evidence from previous studies of tool uses by animals supports this speculation and shows that playful experience with objects has a direct and close connection with the development in manipulation (tool usage/ problem-solving ability) (Van Lawick-Goodall, 1968; Thorndike, 1901; Dolhinow & Bishop, 1970; Birch, 1945; Jackson, 1942; Schiller, 1957; Bruner, 1972). Under the relatively stable and relaxed environment, the initial play with materials provides the animals with an opportunity to develop a generalized scheme for the object and a greater flexibility to manipulate the tool to meet the requirements in a more extended

task (Birch, 1945; Jackson, 1942; Schiller, 1957; Bruner, 1972). A research conducted by Schiller (1957) indicated that the ape's spontaneous behavior in free play helped in getting acquainted with the tools and making contributions toward problem-solving. This behavior pattern is readily available and is not a consequence that arises from the pressure of a need. The subsequent problem solutions are not a product of specific learning but rather, of maturation facilitated by general functional experience in the spontaneous play activity. Similarly, the development of dexterity in manipulating objects may be of equal importance for younger children. The study of preschool children shows that object manipulation in play facilitates younger children to perform better in a task-solving process (Sylva, Bruner, & Genova, 1976; Smith & Dutton, 1979). The results of Vandenberg's study (1978) suggest that play would be more of an enhancement of tasks than the nonplay experience for children aged 4-10. A more significant relation between task solution and play was demonstrated in the group of intermediary-aged children. In addition, the effectiveness of a play experience in task solutions is influenced by the characteristics of the specific task. When children possessed a prior extensive set of experiences with the play materials, play would be more likely to be task-enhancing, and vice versa. The internal mechanism about how play experience contributes to problem-solving abilities remains unclear (Barnett, 1976). There is no causality between playful experience and the child's critical thinking faculty (in other words, problem-solving ability); that is, former exercise from playful activities and interactions would not necessarily provide a correct solution in a specific task (Vandenberg, 1978; Birch, 1945). However, it does provide "a generalized mode of cognitive approach which the individual utilizes in the problem situation" (Barnett, 1976, p. 141).

In light of the relationship between play and social development, there is a hypothesis that "fantasy play is related to and causes the development of social and social-cognitive skills" (Barnett, 1976, p. 146). Child's pretend play usually emerges

around 18 months of age (Harris & Kavanaugh, 1993). Harris and Kavanaugh (1993) found that 2-year-olds display a considerable competence in understanding make-believe situations. They "go beyond a literal encoding of the other person's actions and remarks to construct a coherent representation of their nonliteral content" (p. 2). The younger children could even appropriately talk about pretend transformations. In comparison with the toddlerhood, the preschool age is the "high season" of pretend play (Singer & Singer, 1990; Singer, 1973). Also, the benefits of pretend play has been long proven both theoretically and empirically. Rubin, Fein and Vandenberg (1983) noted that play consisted of activities that could be labelled as pretense and non-literal. Vygotsky (1967) believed that real play should be dramatic or make-believe play, in which the children create an imaginary situation and act out roles. Pretend play can be the leading activity for preschool-aged children with three play elements—imaginary situation, roles and rules (Bodrova, 2008). Research over the past decades support Vygotsky's (1967) claim. Regarding the relation between pretend play and the child's social understanding (perspective-taking), Cassidy (1998) depicted how 3-year-olds employed the theory of mind to predict the meaning of others' behaviors. Preschool-aged children may construe a false belief when the false belief experiment involves pretense. When a desire component is introduced into this trial, the 3-year-old children exhibited reliance on the desire to predict the actions and thoughts of the agent. The desire is of significant importance to the younger children's psychological understanding of others. However, when the false belief contradicts with the reality, the children's performance will be adversely influenced. In general, Cassidy's findings are consistent with prior findings that claim desire, rather than belief, plays a central role in three-year-olds' mind. Children seem likely to use belief to fulfill the task only when a reality bias does not exist and the belief-based prediction is congruent with the desire-based reasoning. In a study of children's dispositional empathy and prosocial behavior in the face of a victim-

victimizer interaction, Bengtsson and Johnson (1992) found that children in their late childhood within a pretense context demonstrated a mature response to aggravating circumstances and attempted to recognized different concerns from the vantage point of the victim and the victimizer. This trend indicates the child's growing awareness "to differentiate and coordinate social perspectives" (p. 20). In terms of the emotional regulation of the child, Barnett (1984) observed how younger children coped with a distressing situation on their first day of school due to the departure of parents. In contrast to a story-telling session, preschool children with high levels of anxiety were able to remarkably neutralize distress by means of play. Moreover, the style of functional play is more imaginative and engaged with fantasy, within which children could introduce imaginative qualities into the pleasurable play setting. Fiorelli and Russ's (2012) research yielded some heuristic conclusion about early pretend play which claims to facilitate children's learn of emotions. In a study of 61 subjects with an average age of 8.9, Fiorelli and Russ (2012) found that in the pleasurable context of pretend play, players who are inclined to express their emotions are likely to demonstrate positivity in their daily behaviors. Compared with children who are clearly less at ease and more constricted, those with a great amount of affect benefit emotionally more from a pretend play with frequent use of fantasy, make-believe, and symbolism. As to interpersonal interaction, Connolly, Doyle and Reznik (1988) examined how characteristics of children's social interaction differed in two different contexts: social pretend play and social nonpretend activities. As compared with social nonpretend activities, more social skill advancements that encompass enjoyment were observed in social pretend play, such as "a longer duration of play", predominant affective quality, "greater compliance with other children's directives" (p. 310), persistence, and "increased reciprocity of social exchange". Highly frequent engagement in pretend play is conducive to younger children's psychosocial maturity. However, Lillard et al. (2013) reviewed that preceding

findings about the wide-reaching benefits of pretend play are inconclusive. "The inconsistency in correlational studies is against a general casual account" (p. 24). The authors speculated that "pretending is merely an epiphenomenon, something that often goes along with important developments, but does not cause them" (p. 24).

Adult-Involved Play

Adult involvement in play does have some positive effects. For younger preschoolers, adults can take on a more active role in guiding and structuring play (Rose-Krasnor & Pepler, 1980). The study on mother-infant play sessions involving 4-, 6-, and 8-month-old infants (Crawley and others, 1978) noted a positive relationship between maternal play behavior and sensorimotor development at the infant stage. Adult-child play can contribute to providing a good framework for the child's discovery of language. Playful interactions between adults and children has many features that make it an ideal setting for learning language. The adult's comments enriched the narratives of the ongoing play and might help the child to develop skills needed to create his or her own scripts (Sachs, 1980). In the preschool setting, Kontos and Wilcox-Herzog (1997b) confirmed that interactions between teachers and children foster other aspects of children's development. The complexity of the teacher's interaction with the child during play was even coded by Howes and Stewart (1987). According to the Howes Adult Involvement Scale, the interactions were classified into five levels: ignores; routine; minimal; simple; elaborated; and intense. This method is widely used throughout the observation. On the other hand, in the study of the effect of adult presence or absence on the aggression level in children's play, Besevegis and Lore (1983) suggested that adult-dominated or adult-supervised social experience is quite different from that received by children who play in spontaneously developed groups that are not supervised by adults. Siegel and Kohn (1959) explained that a child's aggression is less in the absence of any adult

than in the presence of a permissive adult. The absence of adults who express expectations of the child's behavior will challenge the child to rely increasingly on his own learned standards of conduct. By extension, unsupervised children exhibit a moderate increase in the expression of prosocial behaviors and engage in significantly more cooperative play (Besevegis & Lore, 1983). Also, Smith and Howes (1994) found that during free play, children engage in less frequent and less complex peer interactions and they express more negative emotions in the parent-present situation. Pellegrini and Perlmutter(1989) also noted that the presence of adults minimizes the play of children, possibly because it inhibits their free choice.

Classroom structure has an important influence on children's behavior under preschool settings, which is defined as the degree to which the educational program involves adult-directed activities (Huston-Stein et al., 1977). Carpenter (1979) suggested that children aged 2 1/2 to 5 years spend more time in self-organized play, possess more novel behavior in low structure classrooms than in high structure classrooms, whilst the rate of compliance to teacher's directions is higher in high structure classrooms. Fagot (1973) found that during free-play periods, the class with the less directive, less critical teachers demonstrates a higher rate of children's task behavior. The adult-directed activities with high-task-rate made it impossible for the teacher to see the world from the child's view as the child navigates a world perfectly created just to fit his or her needs (Ginsburg et al., 2007). Huston-Stein, Freidrich-Coder and Susman (1977) found that the adult-directed group activities comprise high levels of direction and control that facilitate the children's concentration on instruction, obedience of rules, conformity to adult expectations and specific types of learning, but do not provide an atmosphere for helping, sharing, empathy, or for aggressive interactions. Moreover, the high-structured, teacher-controlled class is less conductive to the development of self-directing and independent efforts to master motor and cognitive skills, neither does it promote persistence in activities. Although

attachment as a form of teacher-child interaction is important to the socio-emotional development of children, because secure attachments with teachers tend to result in higher social and cognitive competences in the children. Serbin, Connor and Citron (1978) emphasized that in the setting of free play, teachers' behavior exert a marked and immediate influence in affecting the frequency of dependent and independent behavior exhibited by children. When teachers respond by giving cues that reinforce the children's ability to explore and work independently, the children exhibit less inclination to solicit the teacher's attention. Also, proximity-seeking behavior decreased and they demonstrated more persistence in their activities. This finding aided the long-term preventive intervention programs.

Vygotsky's Approach to Play

Vygotsky's approach to define play is distinctly different from the theories of his contemporaries. He does not view play as naturalistic (Karpov, 2005), rather, he limits the use of this term "play" to the dramatic or make-believe play, which largely depends on the degree and quality of adult mediation (Bodrova, 2008). Outside the Vygotskian framework, this kind of play is often labelled sociodramatic play, role play, or pretend play (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). In accordance with Vygotsky's view, a real play consists of three elements: (1) children create an imaginary situation; (2) take on and act out roles; and (3) follow a set of rules determined by specific roles (Vygotsky, 1967). Since mastery of cultural signs and symbols constitutes the core of the development of higher mental functions—mediated, intentional and internalized mental processes, play is considered by Vygotsky to be the leading activity of the preschoolers, the activity that creates their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1977).

Adult Scaffolding

Teacher's use of scaffolds refers to the process of making the learner's job easier by providing the maximum amount of assistance at the beginning stages of learning, and then, as the learner's mastery grows, withdrawing this assistance (Bodrova & Leong, 2001). Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) pointed to the function of a tutor during the scaffolding process, which contains six aspects: (1) Recruitment, which is the arousing of the learner's interest and attention by the tutor; (2) Reduction in degrees of freedom, which involves simplifying the task and letting the learner recognize his own management ability; (3) Direction maintenance, which refers to keeping the learners in pursuit of a problem-solving task; (4) Marking critical features, which is carried out by the tutor who marks certain features of the task to remind the child whether he is in the right direction of problem solving; (5) Frustration control, which is equivalent to controlling the level of difficulty of the task so that it won't cause the child too much frustration or dependency on the tutor; (6) Demonstration, which teaches the learner based on recognition of the tutor's actions.

Scaffolding describes the process of transition from teacher assistance to independence (Bodrova & Leong, 2001). Scaffolding strategies can generally be thought of as spanning a continuum of low to high support strategies, which serves to differentiate the amount of support with which the adult provides to the child who is engaged in a given task (O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, & Vadasy, 2005; Pentimenti & Justice, 2009). High levels of adult support include, but is not restricted to, eliciting, reducing choices, and co-participating, while low levels of adult assistance include, but is not restricted to, scaffolding strategies such as generalizing, reasoning and predicting (Pentimenti & Justice, 2009; Norris & Hoffman, 1990). Given the reality that many of the play skills that children learn today are taught directly by the teachers or learned from behaviors that are modelled after teachers, it is imperative to

keep scaffolding as an appropriate intervention in the classroom to maintain play as a high-quality child-centered activity. Based on Vygotsky and Elkonin's theories of make-believe play, these intervention strategies involve many aspects of teacher's behaviors in the preschool setting.

First, teacher should help children create an imaginary situation. A good approach to promote the development of imaginary situations is not to provide realistic and specific props, but rather, multipurpose props. These unstructured props could gradually develop the children's ability in the symbolic use of objects. They will learn how to transform real objects into pretend ones and use these things to represent something different. Second, teacher should help children act out various roles. The themes and roles that children play should not be stereotypical. Children may not have a clue to the roles in a play theme, but with the teacher's help, children will learn what people do in different settings, how they interact with each other and what kinds of tools they use. By acting out the roles in these play scenarios, children will be exposed to and accumulate these experiences. The critical point that teachers need to get a grip on is that children's attention should not be guided to things and objects in the play scenarios, but rather, to the people and their roles. Third, teacher should help children plan their play. A mature player can describe what the pretend scenario is, who is going to do what and how the action will unfold. To create an effective adult scaffolding, the teacher will ask a series of questions to prompt more specific details of the play scenario, including what props they might use, whether they need to assume a supporting character, what rules are associated with them, and so on. Scaffolding the children's play will create an opportunity for children to discuss what is going to happen prior to it happening. This will prevent potential conflicts and help children engage at a higher level of play (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Bodrova, 2008; Leong & Bodrova, 2012).

Child-Centered Play with Rules and Child's Socialization

While Vygotsky's notion of play being the most restrictive context based on a set of rules may sound counterintuitive, he explained that rules are created from the imaginary situation. For example, when the child is playing the role of a mother in make-believe play, she will think of the rules of maternal behavior. The imaginary situation will always contain rules and this rule-based nature is an essential characteristic of children's make-believe play (Bodrova, 2008).

In the child-organized, rule-controlled games, for instance the game of marbles, children manipulate rules, bluff each other and deploy the "gamesmanship" to add on the odds of winning. The deployment of gamesmanship is a clear evidence of the child's development of social understanding, namely, an appreciation of the rules. The rules hold the play together (Furth, 1996), but the official rules provide only a framework and cannot decide what happens next (Lancy & Grove, 2011b). In fact, games that are relatively simple, such as tag and chase, can cause boredom after numerous repetition (Blatchford, 1998; Thorne, 1986). The chase games involve only the most basic rule: chase and be chased. These require little background knowledge or negotiations about interpretations. Recent studies on playing marbles, hopscotch and jump rope indicate that children modify the game or invent new variations through negotiation to keep their play interesting (Opie & Opie, 1997; Goodwin, 1985). Apparently, rule modification creates conflicts and thus, needs consistent negotiations for the application of the new rules (Goodwin, 1998). Modifying old rules keeps the play new, interesting and challenging. Also, more time is typically spent negotiating and re-negotiating rules in play than in play per se (Garvey, 1977). The rules governing play are flexible, negotiated by players in different ways, and not set in advance (Garvey, 1977; Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002), although sometimes, the whole process is not filled with good emotions. Child-initiated play often proceeds with the alteration and manipulation of rules, along with the

improvement of children's diplomatic skills. Besides, game play can promote the formation of a group and in this game, group ideas are shared while group problem-definition and problem-solving take place. Members are valued for their contributions and each knows who within the group has the relevant expertise to assess any problem (Oblinger, 2006). The critical elements of this activity are rule-governed play, flexibility in applying the rules, and an absence of adult guidance or interference (Lancy & Grove, 2011b).

The History of Kindergarten's Philosophy Alterations

There seems to be a broad agreement that both academic and social-motivational goals are important to younger children (Stipek, Feiler, Byler, Ryan, Milburn, & Salmon, 1998), but there is little agreement about the kinds of child abilities and behaviors at school entry that are most likely to lead to future academic success and what constitutes school readiness (Claessens, Duncan, & Engel, 2009). Also, in terms of preschool pedagogy, the debate is always mired in extremes of whether the preschool classroom should present either content-centered (teacher-directed) or child-centered (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013). The changes in the orientation of kindergarten curriculums go hand in hand with different stages of educational philosophies. These alterations reflect the goals of kindergartens. Based on the philosophy of Friedrich Froebel, the Froebelian kindergartens were child-centered and the curriculum consisted of "gifts and occupations", in others words, various manipulative materials and craft activities (Froebel, 1887). In Froebel's curriculum model, natural development was encouraged in younger children while the teacher's role was considered as "a follower of children's leads" (Spodek & Clark, 1993). Direct instruction was not emphasized on. Assisted by these symbolic materials and activities, and alongside the teacher's demonstration in a prescribed

manner, an educational form of kindergarten that is based on children's play was developed.

Maria Montessori shared Froebel's opinion that children's development should unfold in a natural manner. However, her unique approach to early childhood education was influenced more by the knowledge of anthropology and special education than developmental psychology (Spodek & Clark, 1993; Shapiro, 1983). She believed that children are able to self-educate. Children acquire knowledge through their interaction with the environment, which was different from Froebel's prescription that children's knowledge are gained from manipulative materials containing abstract symbols (Spodek & Clark, 1993). What ought to be prioritized in kindergarten was to provide varieties of materials and activities to train and stimulate children's senses (Montessori, 1964). Those materials had the function of self-correcting and children could explore by themselves without the teacher's direction (Spodek & Clark, 1993). In Montessori's curriculum model, the environment takes on a major role in the modification of younger children's development. Considering that children can affect their own development in the process of interaction with environments, the role of the teacher is to prepare various settings and demonstrate the use of different materials, so that children acquire new experiences and sensory exercises that are in line with their developmental phase.

As an extension of Froebelian prescriptions, G. Stanley Hall (1890, 1893, 1900) pointed out that early childhood education should coincide with children's minds rather than adult's thoughts. He emphasized on the emotional development and regarded free play as critical medium of children's development. He disagreed with the claim that Froebelian kindergartens are dedicated to children's intellectual growth and overrun with sedentary activities (Ross, 1972; Young, 2016). Consistent with Hall's thoughts John Dewey advocated progressive education and insisted that kindergarten activities and curriculum model come from and reflect children's

everyday lives at home and in their communities, rather than from Froebelian's manipulative activities, in which the materials are abstract and structured, and prescriptive activities are unrelated to the children's real-life experiences that are personally meaningful (Shapiro, 1983; Weber, 1969). Knowledge come from social life. New, concrete experiences within a social context are provided in kindergartens. The teacher's role is to help children understand ideas and meanings from those experiences.

The concept of kindergarten education has gone through a series of changes. Until today, there is no unanimous agreement on the goals of kindergarten education. Kindergarten education, as a beginning point in schools and an educational continuity into school programs, has been developed and perfected along with the guidance of different ideals, principles and philosophies, which try to resolve the conflicting educational ideologies, reach a reconciliation and provide some clear recommendations. As Spodek (1996) noted, we "could not find a unifying theme in the ideas that underlie the field of early childhood education….early childhood education is not one thing. It consists of many kinds of services, presented to many types of clients, by a diverse group of practitioners, through agencies under varied sponsorships, aimed at achieving a broad range of purposes" (p.10).

Academically-Directed Early Childhood Education

The preschool years lay a powerful foundation for subsequent learning (Hines, McCartney, Mervis, & Wible, 2011). Early childhood education should give children the tools they will need to succeed academically in the later grades (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013). Also, a growing body of evidence shows the recent trend in the preschool curricula's orientation towards a solely content-focused education, particularly in reading and math skills (Elkind & Whitehurst, 2001; Claessens & Engel, 2013; Clements & Saraentry, 2011, 2014).

In the study of cognitive and non-cognitive skills that are predictive of the fifth-grade academic achievement, Claessens, Duncan and Engel (2009) found that rudimentary math skills were the single most important set of skills. Similarly, Duncan and his colleagues (2006) showed that the children's school-entry math, reading, and attention skills are the strongest predictions of their corresponding attachments later on, while their socio-emotional skills, including internalizing and externalizing problems, and social skills were generally non-significant predictors of such academic performances. The importance of mathematic instruction in the earliest years of schooling should be highlighted because it not only affects later achievement in math but also achievement in other content areas (Claessens & Engel, 2013). In line with the idea of Claessens and his colleagues, Magnuson, Ruhm, and Waldfogel (2007) suggested that most of the preschool-related gap in academic skills at school entry is quickly eliminated for children who are placed into small classrooms and classrooms where the teacher provides reading instructions of high quality. Based on the results shown by the National Center for Educational Statistics, 38 percent of 4th-graders could not read at the basic level in 1998 in the United States. Whitehurst (2001) suggested that failure in early reading places a child's future at risk and more academically oriented preschools reflected significantly higher scores in reading. He also indicated that children who began to learn about print, sounds, and writing in content-centered preschool were more likely to be ready to read at the end of kindergarten and more likely to be reading successfully in elementary school.

Highly-structured, teacher-controlled classroom setting with systematic instruction and positive reinforcement promote children's academic achievements, especially in reading (Stallings, Cory, Fairweather, & Needels, 1977). The Direct Instruction Model is clearly specified, concrete and well-articulated, which helps to maintain the continuity and consistency of it (Good & Grouws, 1979; Stallings, 1980;

Meyer, Gersten, & Gutkin, 1983). This characteristic will aid teachers in easily understanding and successfully applying this model in practice. Meyer, Gersten and Gutkin (1983) described the Direct Instruction Model as monitoring, administrative and supervisory, which helps teachers to keep track on how students are performing. The Direct Instruction Model is believed to be an effective approach which helps highly economically disadvantaged students match their academic achievements to that of their middle-class peers. The Direct Instruction Model enables monitoring both in quantity and quality of the instruction. Quantity monitoring is achieved through the submission of a lesson progress report form by the teacher, while quality monitoring is assessed through criterion-referenced tests. Both approaches are aimed at finding the errors in teaching and providing further precise feedback for improving the performance of the teacher.

Carnine, Carnine, Karp, and Weisberg (1988) advocated direct instruction within early childhood. They described the transition from home to preschool as child-centered, while the transition between preschool and the first-grade is inevitably teacher-directed, given the fact that first grade is content-centered and choices are curtailed. Likewise, Gersten, Darch and Gleason (1988) suggested that the teacher-centered, academically-directed instruction is the most appropriate approach to educate children from low-income families who are economically disadvantaged, and help them cope effectively with the transition from preschool into first grade. Gersten and his colleagues (1988) believed that there is no ambivalence between teacher-centered teaching and the social and emotional development of children. The conceptualization of direct instruction is characterized by instruction being carefully sequenced and catered to the attention span of the children, at a much slower rate, in a much more interactive approach, teaching through games when the contents are introduced. Another evidence to prove direct instruction is superior to other approaches is its long-term academic benefits; that is, children who have received an

academic reinforcement during early childhood education have a big advantage over their counterparts in terms of reading, language, and math in the elementary phase.

Child-Initiated Early Childhood Education

Educators and policymakers have placed heavier emphasis on the academics in the kindergarten. The reform of early schooling effectiveness should not start from the first grade, but rather, the kindergarten. The academic learning in kindergarten has been viewed as an important approach to improve the pupil's academic performance in elementary schools. With this notion, the kindergarten curriculum has shifted from being more progressive and developmental to being more academic. The narrowly-defined curriculum expects the children only capable of doing four things: sit still, pay attention, recognize and write numbers (Walsh, 1989).

In the research of child later school success Marcon (2002) unfolded that by the end of children's fifth year in school, there were no significant differences in academic performance between the children in academically-directed and child-initiated preschool classes. However, by the sixth year, children involved in the academically-directed classes acquired lower grades than those in child-initiated classes, which indicated that children's later school success might be strengthened by more active, child-initiated early learning experiences. This is in line with the previous concern about the didactic, formal, teacher-centered instructional approach that short-term academic gains would be offset by long-term stifling of children's motivation and self-initiated learning. Pushing children too soon may actually backfire when children move into the late elementary school grades (Elkind, 1986; DeVries, Reese-Learned, & Morgan, 1991; Hart, Charlesworth, Burts, & DeWolf, 1993; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995; Walsh, 1989; Zigler, 1987). Studies conducted by Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, and Milburn (1995) reviewed that teacher-directed, didactic method is more effective for the letter/reading achievement, which

is highly dependent on memorization. However, children in this didactic setting shows lower confidence, greater school-related anxiety, and more deferring to adults' authority and direction rather than trusting their own initiative. In contrast, the children in child-centered classrooms are tended to possess stronger intrinsic motivation, more confident and proactive to learn basic skills and willing to be challenged.

Accelerated early instruction will prematurely turn a toddler into a preschooler and a preschooler into a first-grader (Zaporozhets, 1986). Instead of taking the approach known as "acceleration of development", which forced kindergarten-aged children into inappropriate activities, Alexander Zaporozhets advocated the approach called "amplification of development" that children's foundational competences would be revved up through the expansion and enrichment of the content in the appropriate activities (Zaporozhets, 1986; Bodrova, 2007). Elkind (1986) suggested that the formalized educating approach devised for school-age children didn't suit to infants and the younger children. Younger children can not learn best through a curricula with workbooks and papers, rather, children learn thing through direct encounters with the nature, with their environment in a self-directed way. Elkind noted that the concept of "competent infant" raised in the 1960s was used to rationalize the teacher-centered, formalized instruction, plus people's intuitive belief that children today are more sophisticated than children in the past. The continuity of formal instruction would lead to long-term and short-term consequences, as Elkind suggested. The short-term risks are younger children struck into a state of stress in the formal schooling setting. The long-term risks include the potentially negative harms to children's motivation to learn, children's intellectual development, and children's self-esteem (Elkind, 1986, 1988). Walsh (1989) noted that policy with a certain academic purpose has a greater influence on sorting children in an early age, but works less on promoting early schooling. In the research of reading instruction in

kindergarten, which was aimed to solve the problem of readiness, Durkin (1987) found that children's difference in ability and knowledge have been hardly taken into account when the instructional activities, for example, phonetic instruction, letters naming, words naming, blending sounds working, were proceeded. Teachers, willingly or unwillingly, all bowed to the commercially instructed materials rather than teacher-made materials. Notably, the instructional contents in the commercialized materials are prescribed, reinforced by tests, bowing to reflect the wish of the board of education and parents in making kindergarten programs more academic-oriented. Moreover, the contents are also inclined to be in line with the first grade teacher's expectations, rather than children's differences in interests and abilities. Durkin also found that teacher had no plan and strategies to deal with children who were already in good mastery of the prescribed contents. Lack of more variation and accommodation, individual differences were completely ignored in this uniform methodology.

Child Care Quality—Structural Quality and Process Quality

Howes and Hamilton (1993) conceptualized child care quality through two items: structural quality and process quality. "Structural quality refers to regulatable variables including adult-child ratio, group size, and teacher characteristics (the amount and kind of formal education and child-related training, experience in child care and stability in the classroom). Process quality refers to the provision of developmentally appropriate activities and to warm, nurturing, and sensitive care giving within the child care arrangement" (Howes & Hamilton, 1993, p. 325).

"Structural variables are assumed to influence process variables" (Howes, Phillips, and Whitebook, 1992, p. 450). Lower adult-to-child ratios, smaller group size could simplify the management style, make the teacher more sensitive, less restrictive and controlling, and provide more opportunities for interactions and

attachments between the adult and each child. Child can benefit from both socioemotional and cognitive realms (Ruopp et al., 1979; Howes & Olenick, 1986; Howes & Rubenstein, 1985; Francis & Self, 1982; Bruner, 1980; Field, 1980; Smith & Connolly, 1981; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). In terms of the teacher education and training, children are more likely to receive developmentally appropriate caregiving when the teachers are trained in high levels of early childhood education, and simultaneously the teacher will perform more sensitively, responsively and less controlling and restrictively (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990; Stallings & Pprter, 1980; Howes, 1983; Clarke-Stewart & Gruber, 1984; Ruopp et al., 1979). Teachers tend to change their intentions through the depth of training and behave with more developmental appropriateness. In addition, Wilcox-Herzog and Ward (2004) suspected that training was likely not forceful enough to change teacher's beliefs, but training could provide useful guidance and help teacher engage in more appropriate interactions with children. The turnover of teachers, however, will negatively influence the formation of attachment relationships between child and care givers (Clarke-Stewart & Gruber, 1984; Cummings, 1980). The empirical literature on the stability of children's relationships with teachers and mothers indicates that child entering the child care could keep a relatively stable and positive relationship with mothers. Maternal attachments are likely child's most consistent adult relationship. In contrast, due to the inevitably frequent change of teachers in the child care, the child-teacher relationship is not stable and causes disturbance and insecurity to the child, especially for the infants and toddlers (Howes & Hamilton, 1992).

Effective Child-Teacher Interaction: the Appropriateness of Raising Questions

Varieties of evidence found that children from lower-class families would not categorize the life-size objects and the pictured objects as the same, while the middle-

class children treated them as equivalents (Siegel, 1993; Siegel, Anderson, & Shapiro, 1966; Siegel & McBane, 1967). The lower-income children could not get the idea that an object could be presented in a variety of ways. In order to explain the discrepancies on children's categorization ability, it comes to studying the children's cognitive environment. The study found that in the low-income families, the parents often raised questions in an authoritative manner, and children had to passively respond and there was lack of encouragement and self-exploration, which hindered children to reconstruct and re-present their previous experiences (Siegel, 1993).

Siegel (1982) put forward the distancing strategies, which aimed to provide adults with approaches to effectively interact with the younger children. Different types of presentations have different effects. Some types of talks, such as the open-ended inquiry could place a mental operational demand on the children to respond because those talks led to the mental conflict and imbalance in children's cognitive process. Considering "the Piagetian perspective that cognitive growth is a function of changes from a static equilibrated state to a dynamic nonequilibrated state" (Siegel & Saunders, p.178, 1979), the cognitive conflicts would elicit children to take action to resolve the discrepancies. Actions lead to the resolution. The resolution arouses either mental or motor actions from children, and when resolution is achieved, children's existing knowledge will be elevated to a new level.

In concrete, faced with the nonequilibrated situation children would activate their anticipatory or reconstructive schema to engage in the dynamic state of tension. As Siegel described, in the distancing interactions children projected themselves through "transforming information from one symbol to another; organizing previous experience by using classifications, sequencing, and so on; or anticipating outcomes (predications)" (Siegel, p.52, 1982). Therefore, appropriate inquiry needs to be paid extra attention by the teachers. "Questions which create discrepancies, pose contradictions, and require shifting of perspective are believed to have maximal

impact on cognitive growth" (Siegel & Saunders, p.184, 1979). The facilitative questions will disturb the equilibrium in children's cognitive process and orient them to respond toward the future or the past, that is, toward the future the children will respond in an anticipatory sense; toward the past the children will create mental images of events to try to re-present previous experiences.

The questioning promotes the children to make their ideas more explicit (Siegel & Saunders, 1979). However, some types of talks, such as closed-ended inquiry, or declarative statements, could not intrigue the younger children to transform the information from one domain to another. Those talks contain less additional information and are not able to create inconformity against children's previously existing ideas. In all, as an activator of children's cognitive thinking, distancing interaction "imposes a demand on children to re-present and transform experience into some form of symbol system" (Siegel, 1982, p.75).

The types of question in the distancing interactions are as important as giving children real choices. When the question is combined with two or more alternatives, children will be likely motivated. More alternatives mean more possibilities and the options will enlighten children to make a rational choice. In addition, given the fact that the underlying processes are the same, the distancing strategies can not only be applied into the cognitive areas, but also into socioemotional, ethical, aesthetic and motor skill domains, such as understanding rules, solving disputes among children, etc. (Siegel & Saunders, 1979).

Effective Child-Teacher Interaction: Child-Adult Attachment Relationship

"Child care quality indicators are proxies for interactions and relationships within child care" (Howes & Hamilton, 1993, p. 328). Child's outcomes do not depend on various forms of child care (such as center based, family day care homes, in-home care with or without relatives, etc.), nor depend on adults (mother, father, or caregiver), but depend on "the quality of relationships that the child is able to form

and sustain with the adults and peers in child care" (Howes & Hamilton, 1993, p. 322). Children's relationship with adults is treated as an important prediction of their later social competencies. Abundant evidence on children's attachment relationships with adults have been focused on children's parents and child care teachers (Ward, Vahghn, & Robb, 1988; Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Goosens & van IJzendoorn, 1990; Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988; van IJzendoorn & Travecchio, 1987). Teachers as a resource of emotional support during the out-of-home care are "particularly important for infants and toddlers as well as young preschoolers" (Howes & Hamilton, 1993, p. 330). Sensitive and responsive emotional support will promote the formation of secure attachment relationships between teachers and children, which is of great importance for child's later development because "insecure attachment has been associated with incompetent social behaviors with both peers and adults through early childhood" (Howes & Hamilton, 1993, p. 330). Two categories of child's social behavior in child care: "sociability with adults and sociability with peers have been seen as the function of both attachment security with mother and with the caregiver" (Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988, p. 413). Howes, Phillips, and Whitebook (1992) supported the pathway that when the secure attachment relationships with teacher was well established, child would at first, have more active, exploratory interactions with the teacher, and with this advantageous performance child tended to be more competent in engaging the interactions with peers.

Attachment is seen by Bowlby (1958, 1969) and Ainsworth (1963, 1964, 1967) as "the affectional tie that binds persons togethers in space and endures over time"(Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 50). Attachment behavior is defined as "the behaviors promoting proximity and contact, including seeking behaviors such as approaching, following, and clinging, and signaling behaviors such as smiling, crying, and calling"(Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 50). "Attachment is not coincident

with attachment behavior" (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 64) and "attachment behavior may diminish or even disappear" (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970, p. 64) when there is a prolonged absence of the attachment figure.

"Attaching quality is viewed as being strongly determined by quality of caregiving" (Ward, Vahghn, & Robb, 1988, p. 644). Attachment theorists have proven that caregiving is an important factor to influence child's social and emotional adaptation (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, Blehar, Water, & Wall, 1978; Bretherton, 1985; Ward, Vahghn, & Robb, 1988), which will likely bring more effect on children's personality development in later stage than the factors residing in the child (Robert, Block, & Block, 1984; Ward, Vahghn, & Robb, 1988).

Children receiving adequate caregiving in child care setting are likely to be emotionally secure with teachers. When children develop an emotional security with caregivers, they are more inclined to be competent in the interaction with peers. This research pathway from child care quality (structural quality and process quality) to teacher attachment to the relationship with peers is identified and supported (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992). It makes it clear that teacher's role is of great importance in the child care context. Study on the links between attachment security with adults and later engagements with peers suggests that attachment security with the caregiver, rather than with mother, is more influential in determining the sociability with peers (Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988). With appropriate caregiving and provision of developmentally appropriate activities teacher has an advantageous situation to develop a secure attachment with children, which promotes them capable in the social competence with peers.

Some researches linked with incompetent caregiving demonstrate that the incompetence will result in the emotional insecurity and children are inclined to be avoidant or ambivalent with the teacher. This unhealthy attachment relationship will make those insecure children further at risk of peer rejection. What's worse,

children's later adjustment and success in school age will also be negatively influenced (Vandell & Powers, 1983; Vandell, Henderson, & Wilson, 1988; Harper & Huie, 1987). In all, attachment quality is independent of the adults (mother, father, or caregiver), but is dependent on the qualities of the adult-child interactions (Ward, Vahghn, & Robb, 1988; Goosens & van IJzendoorn, 1990). Unequal assignation of attention toward infants and preschoolers at kindergarten age is likely to lead to diverging attachments between the same teacher and different children (Goosens & van IJzendoorn, 1990).

Study relating to the relationships between infant-caregiver attachments and infant-mother or infant-father attachments suggests that they are mutually independent (Goosens & van IJzendoorn, 1990). There exists nonconcordant attachment relationships with mothers and caregivers, that is, "the children's attachment relationships with their mothers did not always predict the quality of their attachment relationships with their caregivers" (Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988, p. 414). Alternative and nonconcordant attachment relationships, can likely compensate for insecure maternal attachment relationships. On one side, children insecurely attached to their parents can acquire competent development through building positive and secure attachment to their stable, responsive caregivers (van IJzendoorn & Travecchio, 1987; Main & Weston, 1981; Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988); On the other side, when the secure attachment to parents has already been well-developed, the formation of teacher-child secure, alternative relationship will further promote child's emotional and physical caregiving (Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988). What must be noted to the secure attachment relationship is that the children are less likely to form healthy, secure, responsive relationship with caregiver when there is a higher child-teacher ratio, bigger group size, or there are less developmentally appropriate activities and more ignorance from the teacher

within the child care (Howes & Olenick, 1986; Howes & Stewart, 1987; Erickson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 1985; Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988).

Child Disputes and Teacher Intervention

The child disputes presented in this chapter is confined to the interpersonal, social conflicts between at least two individuals. Piaget's classic work on peer interaction and moral judgement (1932) posits that conflict contains egocentrism and interpersonal conflicts first engender cognitive conflict, making the dispute participant learn to adjust and cooperate with others. In the process to achieve cognitive equilibrium between existing structures and reality, the child will in general acquire cognitive and social progress (Shantz, 1987). Shantz (1987) defined conflict as "two or more individuals being in social conflict, one opposing the other" (p. 285). The conception of conflict is not solely concerned with individual's behaving, but a dyadic relation of individuals, combined with the interactional forms of mutually social exchange, such as opposition, yielding, and resistance. Younger children's conflictual relations have been studied with topics in relation to sex and age differences, incidence, duration, goals, rule transgressions, and social-cognitive development (Green, 1933; Dawe, 1934; Hay, 1984; Shantz, 1987; Krasonor & Rubin, 1983; Shantz & Shantz, 1985). The most frequently pursued goals in conflictual situations are to obtain assistance, direct play, elicit the adult's attention and initiate some activities which are less directive and more sociable (Krasonor & Rubin, 1983). Child's goals may add strong predictability to the final problem-solving outcomes. A goal involving a higher cost often requires children to possess a higher level of social problem solving skills, and thus, this goal tends to fail (Krasonor & Rubin, 1983). In terms of what issues causing a state of conflict among children, an abundant of literature suggests that the possession and use of objects are accounting for the biggest proportion of conflicts among toddlers and preschoolers (Hay, 1984;

Dawe, 1934; Hay & Ross, 1982; Garvey, 1984; Bronson, 1981; Bakeman & Brownlee, 1982; Maudry & Nekula, 1939; Killen & Turiel, 1991; Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001). In addition, the tendency for conflict is going to decrease with age (Bakeman & Brownlee, 1982; Dawe, 1934); methods of interacting in conflicts become progressively more social, negotiative, and harmonious in the preschool age range (from 2 to 5 years of age) (Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001; Turiel, 1983); as children get older, more socially-oriented issues are increasingly occupying a relatively larger proportion among conflicts, such as disagreements about classroom rules and routines, conflicts about play and ideas (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001). The issues on play and ideas have a significant increase between 2 and 5 years (Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001). The type of object possessions "decrease with age but still holds the lead over other types of conflicts at all ages" (Dawe, 1934, p. 155). Meanwhile, retaliation and aggressiveness increase as children grow older (Hall, 1899; Levy, 1925; Dawe, 1934). The physical harm in conflicts from 4-year-olds constituted 9.7%, more than those from 3-year-olds with only 2.4% (Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001).

In another study about child's social-conceptual level of functioning in social conflicts, Shantz and Shantz (1985) assessed children's developmental level of social-cognitive functioning in conflict situations through three social-cognitive conceptions: child's understanding of persons, child's understanding of rules and child's conceptions of conflict strategies. The outcomes suggested that the predominant issues causing a state of conflict were "to control an object or to control another's behavior" (p. 18). Child's developmental level of social-cognitive functioning was significantly related to the conflict issues and their success in resolving conflicts, but no significant relation to strategies used during conflict (behavioral tactics include verbal aggression, physical aggression, commands and requests)(for example, Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). Shantz and Shantz viewed the issues

of conflict as the goals of conflict participants. By knowing the goal of the conflict opponent adds more predictability to solve social problems than knowing special strategies. The type of strategies employed in conflicts should be adjusted according to their goals (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). Additionally, the conflict rates were unrelated to child's social-cognitive functioning level, but were strongly predictive by child's gender and age.

In the early childhood stage two aspects of children's behavior in relation to later school success are suggested: "engagement in activities with goals; and the use of high order social strategies" (Layzer, Goodson, & Moss, 1993, p. 103). Peer conflicts can provide preschoolers positive opportunities to recognize and appreciate the ideas of others and a social foundation for children to develop socially, morally, and cognitively (Ross & Conant, 1992; Killen & de Waal, 2000; Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001). Krasnor and Rubin (1983) conducted the study on how an "individual accomplished their own goals in social interaction through a problem-solving process" (p. 1557). Social problem solving (SPS) was conceptualized as "the process of achieving personal goals through social interaction" (p. 1545). The study suggested when child's attempts to solve the social problem failed, they would tend to reattempt with a change of the failed strategy. This flexibility after failure represented by negotiation, compromise, consideration of other's viewpoints, and readjustment of goals would more likely step up child's cognitive growth. Besides, Krasnor and Rubin noted that child social competence consisted of two dimensions: the social acceptability and effectiveness of their behavior. Considering these two dimensions at odds in some conflict situation (for example, aggressive behavior is more effective but less acceptable), the authors suggested that children developing the ability to achieve the balance between these two dimensions in conflicts would be of great importance and profitability for child's cognitive and social development. Hay and Ross (1982) held that child disputes were not blind fights; instead, they possessed

their own social characters. It was evidenced that child disputes "possessed a patterned interactive structure and explicit communicative content" (Hay & Ross, 1982, p. 105). Child's actions were socially directed to the adversary and the communicative expression was explicit with contents. Statements such as negatives (such as "No") and assertions of possession (such as "it's mine") were most frequently used. In struggles of objects children expressed the components of a message that conveyed the most information (Greenfield & Zukow, 1978), even though the response was short and simple. Also, socially pertinent events preceded or followed the majority of the occurrence of object struggles. The disputes were partially caused due to child's attempts to "take control of the play environment and the peer's operations within that environment" (Hay & Ross, 1982, p. 111). A discarded toy could become the "bone of contention" when it was once again in another child's possession. In the majority of object disputes the objects themselves fade in importance in comparison with their social significance.

Many studies on early peer relations are inclined to systematically exclude caregiver involvement (Russon, Waite, & Rocherster, 1990). That is generally recognized that peer interactional system and peer-caregiver interactional system are independent ones. Thus, studying on peer functioning should suppress caregiver's interfering. Moreover, it is believed that independent peer interaction fosters positive encounters and does good to peer social competence (Hatch, 1987; Howes, 1987a; Howes, 1987b; Ross, 1982; Rubenstein & Howes, 1979). In the study of children's skills of peer interaction in the establishments of peer games, Ross (1982) found that play overtures, assumed to be invitations for the peer participation, were intended and could be comprehended by the play partner. When the overture failed to elicit a peer response, the initiating child would tend to repeat frequently aiming to continue their interactive play. The children in the sample were between 15 and 24 months of age. Compared with younger children, older children, regardless of the game contents

taught in the training sessions, were inclined to negotiate interchanges, select actions and carry out new activities. The new invented activities and play roles were borrowed from prior experiences, which served "as a source of ideas" (sources might have been exploited from games played with parents or an adult partner before, or from a less structured play with peers, or from a mutual exchange with peers)(p. 518). It suggests, thus, that peer interaction could be seen as an innovative process with creative endeavors. With increase of age the younger children's motivation to pursue more structured play will enlarge along with peer novelty within interactive exchanges.

Preventing the child from physical injuries in conflicts is one of the teacher's main tasks in early childhood daily caring. However, from the perspective of social development, generally the adult should let children solve their conflicts by themselves because the adult intervention would deprive of their opportunities to "learn social adjustment" (Dawe, 1934, p. 154). The study on duration of child quarrels figures out quarrels outdoors and indoors with average 34.48 seconds and 18.45 seconds respectively (Dawe, 1934). Researchers indicate that the duration of quarrels is so short that most conflicts are already solved before the adults have time to intervene; the children tend to use the strategy of negotiation to overcome their disagreements in the absence of adults (Dawe, 1934; Killen & Turiel, 1991). Another study on handling infant peer problems (Russon, Waite, & Rocherster, 1990) suggested that caregiver interventions were elicited mostly by negative events such as aggression, conflicts over caregiver attention and objects, crying, accidents or danger. Poor handling over the focal young children's peer-related behavior by caregivers would increase hostility later and thus hinder children's growth of social competence.

Kindergartens in China

Table A Types of Early Child Institutions in China

Term	Duration	Age	Focus
Nurseries	Up to 3 years	Up to 3 years old	Care
Kindergarten	2-3 years	2-5 or 3-6 years old	Development and Education, with focus on literacy and numeracy in the last year
Preschool	1 year before grade 1	5 or 6 years old	Preparation for literacy and numeracy
Preprimary education	1-3 years	3 years old and older	OECD term for subsector of education before grade 1

Sources: Wu, Young, & Cai (2011), Feng (2017).

In China there are primarily three types of early childhood institutions: nursery, kindergarten and preschool (or pre-primary classes) (Zhu, 2009; Feng, 2017; Wu, Young, & Cai, 2011). Nurseries cater to children from birth to age 3; Kindergartens focus predominately on care and education for children between 3 and 6 years of age; Preschool or pre-primary classes serve mostly the younger children from age 5 to 6 (see Table A). In some rural areas, instead of receiving three-year early-age education in kindergartens, the majority of the low-income children have one year of pre-primary classes before grade 1 (Wu, Young, & Cai, 2011; Zhu, 2009). In this study, 3-year kindergartens in urban regions are chosen as the research subject.

Between 1979 and 2009 is a period in which major economic and political reforms in China have nationwide taken place. However, the pace of change in the early childhood education has outstripped the government's ability to rectify the situation fraught with a wide range of demands and pitfalls (Feng, 2017), not the least of which is "hard access, great expense" ("入园难，入园贵"). Feng (2010) noted

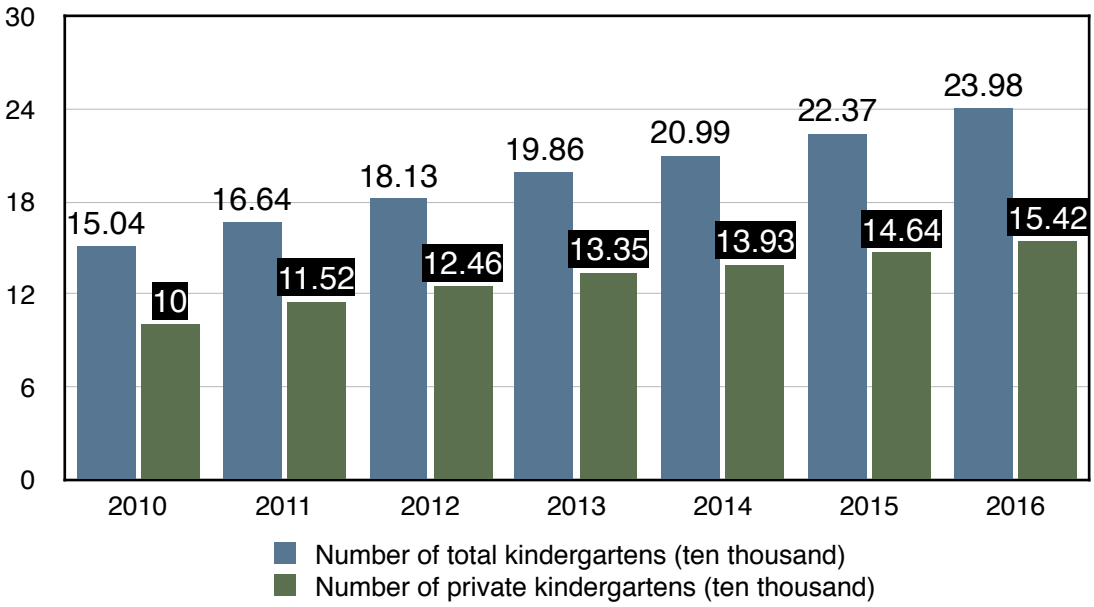
that in the 1990s the universal access to early childhood education was not seen as a problem given that there were four types of institutions in place capable of satisfying the demands of the people. The four types were public institutions run by government entities, institutions affiliated with enterprise, institutions, governmental bodies, and so forth, institutions run by urban and rural neighborhood and collective units, and private kindergartens (Wu, Young, & Cai, 2011). The former three took up around 90% of the entire institutions. Low-cost expenditure, residence-based distribution, and convenience emphasis met well the folk's needs at that time while the quality to some extent was not always guaranteed. Meantime, the funding investment in this period was shared by three parties: the government, government entities and collective units, and families (Feng, 2010). Since 1992 the central government has launched the economic reform to transform the system from command economy to market economy. As a result, numerous enterprises closed and amounts of workers were out of work. The public kindergartens affiliated with state-owned enterprises, institutions and collective units also bore the brunt of the reform and the growth of public provision was at a low ebb. In concrete, the number of public institutions from 1997 to 2009 has suffered a sharp decrease from 160, 000 to 50,000 (Song, 2012). In contrast, the number of private kindergartens in 2009 accounted for nearly 65% of the country's kindergartens. Also, in China's 32 provincial-level administrative divisions, the scale of private kindergartens of 7 provincial-level divisions in 2009 accounted for over 80%, 13 provinces over 60% (Song, 2012).

Zhu and Zhang (2004) analyzed the reasons why private kindergartens in recent decades reaped such a substantial development. First, the public expenditure into early childhood education has remained at a lower level for decades. As a result, the private-sponsored centers are embraced with a surge in demand. Second, with the increasing living standards there is a stronger appeal for better educational quality. Simultaneously, people have high hopes for private kindergartens filling this vacuum.

Third, the government has long adjusted the policies from regulating and controlling for-profit providers to supporting and sustaining, not least because the central government promulgated a series of national laws and guidelines to protect the interests of private provision.

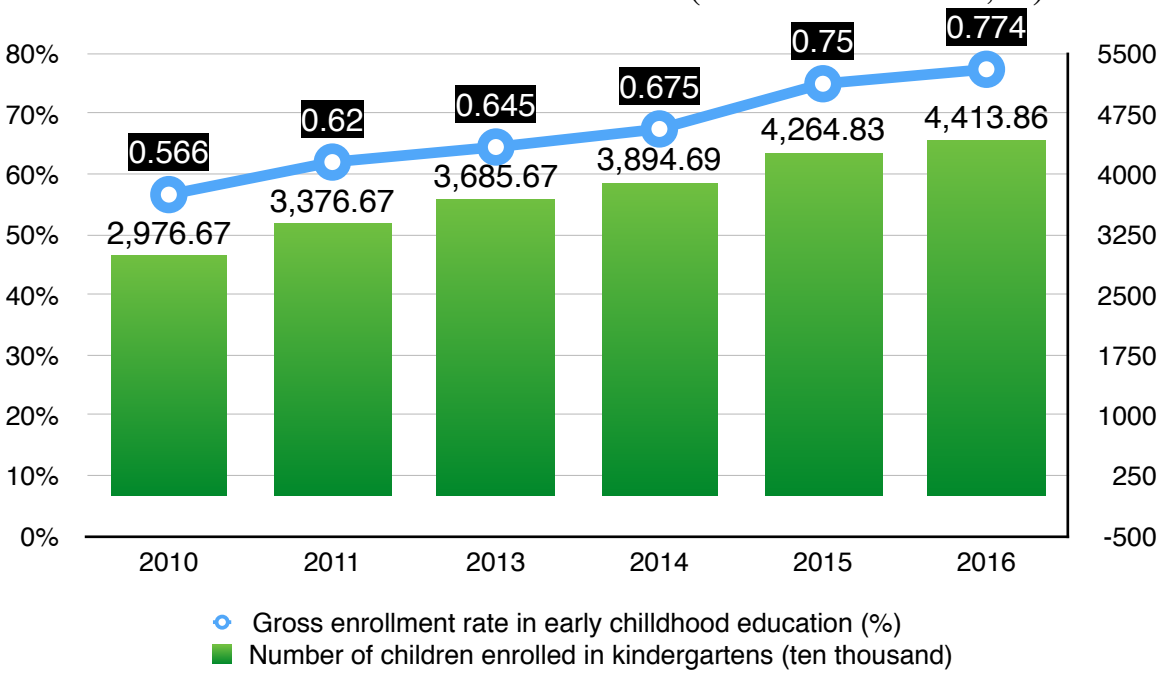
According to the official data from the Ministry of Education, the entire quantity of kindergartens nationwide in 2016 amounted to 239,800, and the number of children enrolled in kindergartens reached up to 4,4139,000, among which the number of private-sponsored kindergartens accounted for 154,000 (see Figure A and Figure B). Besides, the amount of public-subsidized institutions had an overall rise between 2010 and 2016 (see Figure C), but it is a far cry from meeting the burgeoning demands. Liu and Song (2013) investigated the disparities of family expenditure for care services in east, centre and west of China and expatiated on the government obligation to push for an adequate and equitable school funding. With a sample of 7718 families of 3-6-year-old children, the authors found that the underprivileged families needed to pay 888.41 RMB per month for preschool education out of their own pocket, while the high-income families paid 2583.7 RMB. Astonishingly, the corresponding family expenditure in underprivileged families accounted for 34.67% of monthly household income while in high-income households the percentage took up only 18.17%. Further it was inferred that high-poverty families paid the least fees but shouldered the heaviest financial burden for early childhood education. The existence of much research has evidenced that lower spending can irreparably damage a child's future, especially for kids from poor families. China's public expenditure on childcare and early education in 2017 is 0.39 percent of the total GDP, significantly lower than 0.7% of GDP on average in OECD countries in 2013 (see Figure D and E).

Figure A: Changing tendency of the number of total and private kindergartens between 2010 and 2016 in China (unit: ten thousand)



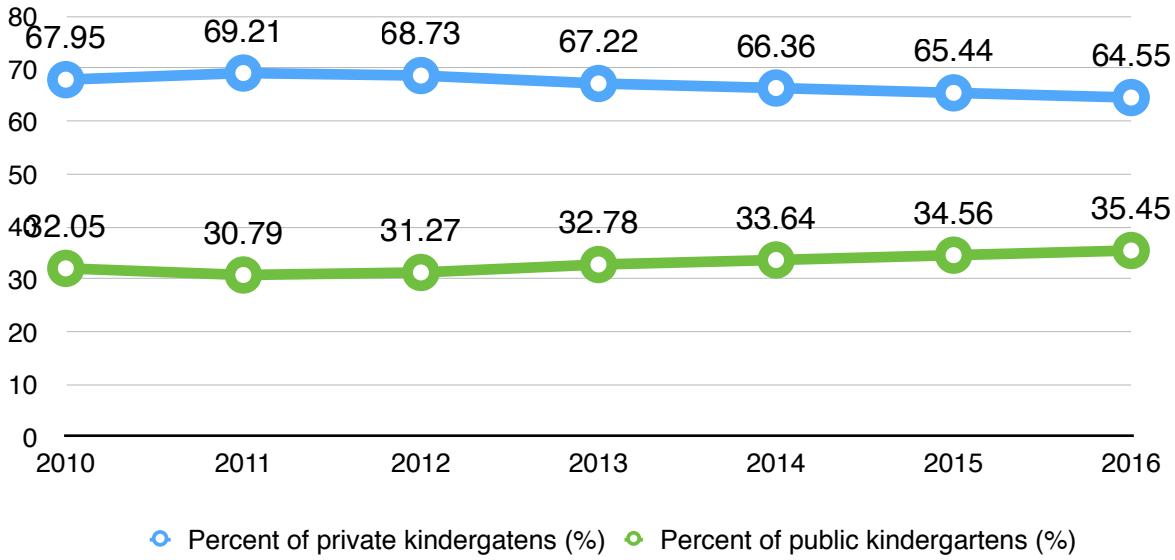
Source: Ministry of Education (MOE) various years

Figure B: Changing tendency of number of children and gross enrollment rate between 2010 and 2016 (units: ten thousand, %)



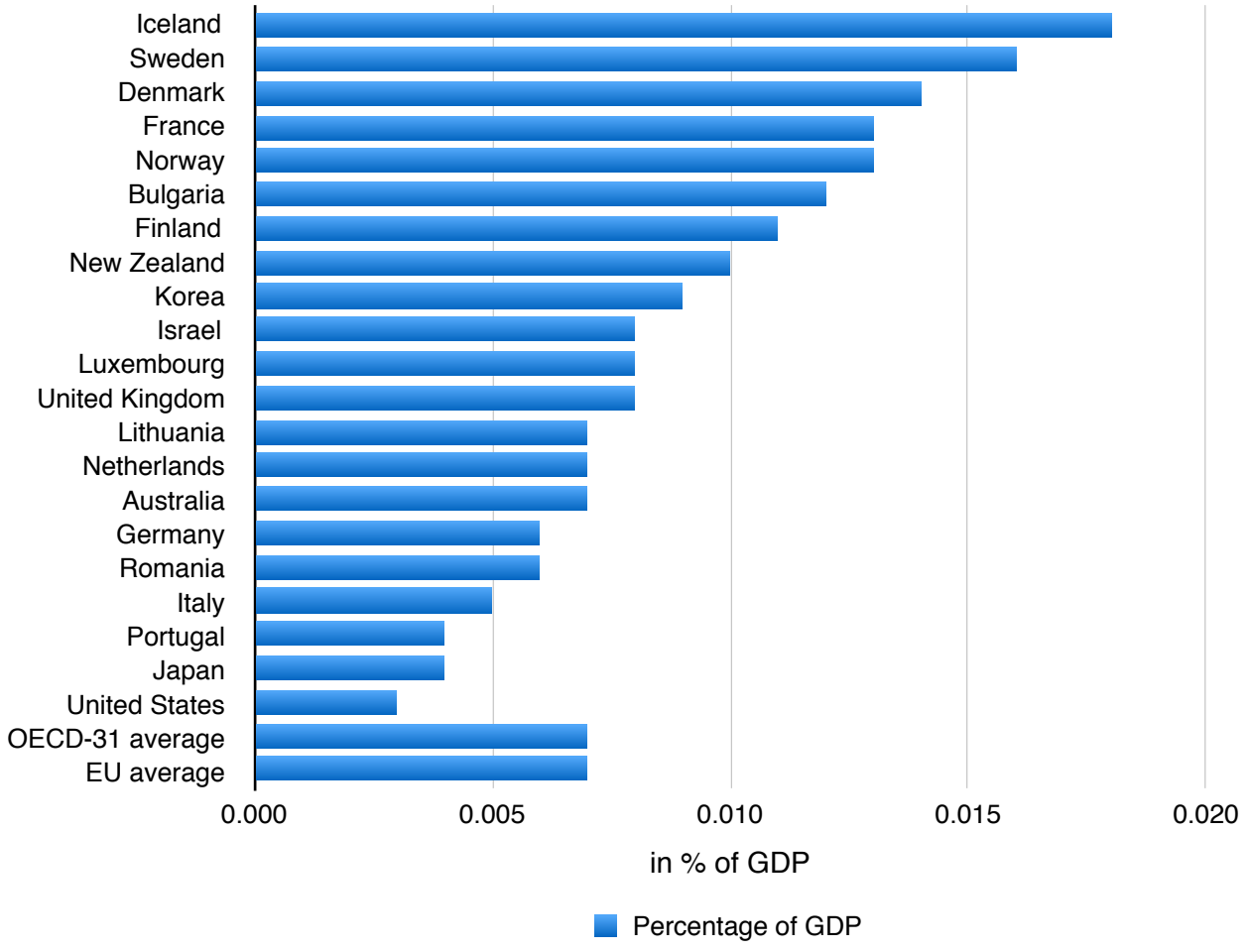
Source: Ministry of Education (MOE) various years

Figure C: Changing tendency of the percent of public and private kindergartens between 2010 and 2016 in China (unit: %)



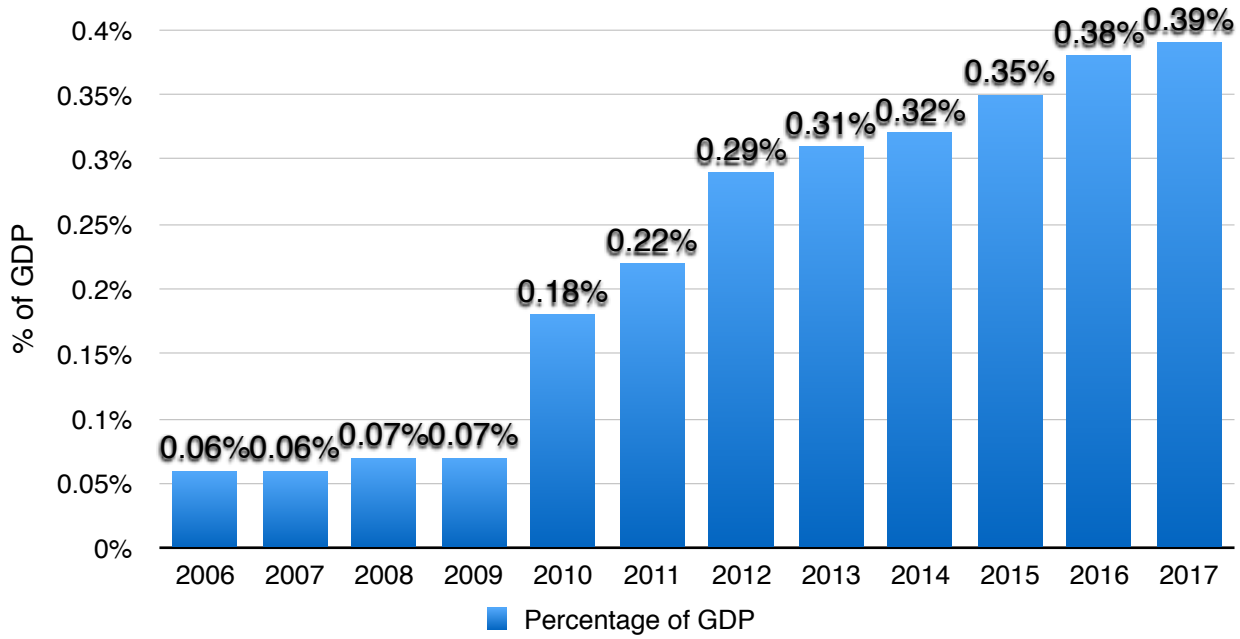
Source: Ministry of Education (MOE) various years

Figure D Total public expenditure on early childhood education and care, as a % of GDP, 2013 in OECD countries



Source: OECD Family Database.

Figure E Change of allocated public funding on preschool education as the percentage of GDP between 2006 and 2017 in China (unit: %)

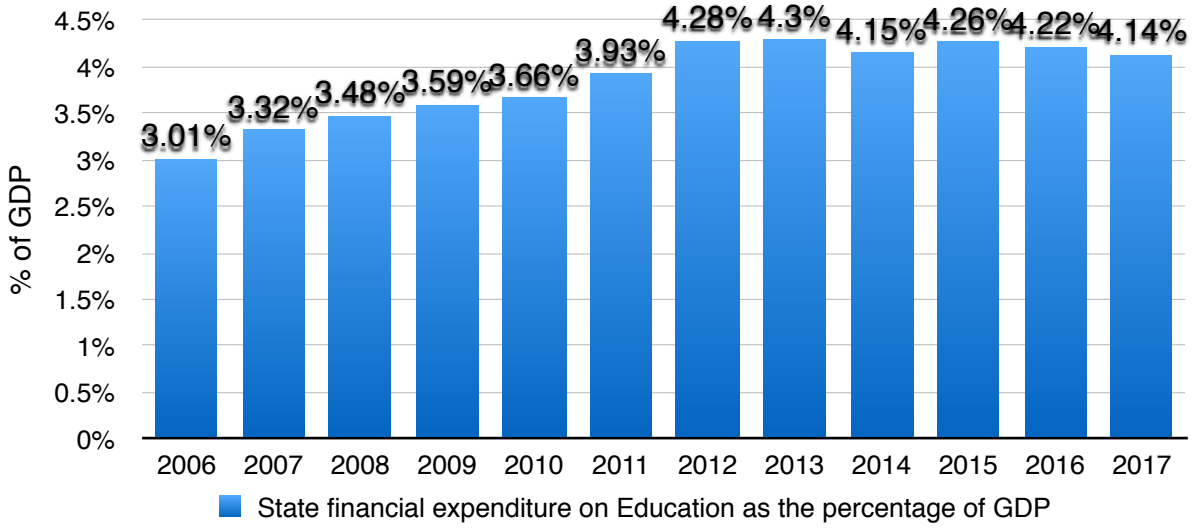


Source: Ministry of Education, State Statistical Bureau, and Ministry of Finance.

Although the early childhood coverage has reaped immense growth in recent decades, China still lags many other western countries on its public investment for early childhood education. *Suggestions on Implementing the Third Round of Three-Year Action Plan for Early Childhood Education* (Ministry of Education, 2017) set up the plan that until 2020 the national gross enrollment rate of early childhood education reaches 85%, and the coverage rate of universal-benefit kindergartens approximately attains 80%. Dong and Du (2018) inferred that the ratio of non-profit sector remains so far relatively low in stark contrast with the high proportion of for-profit sector. The task to establish 80% non-profit institutions is arduous and beyond our ken given the current configuration that it is pervasive in China that universal, non-profit early childhood resources are of severe insufficiency, not to mention the population projections in 2019 that newly-added preschool-aged children attain approximately 6,000,000 due to the relaxation of one-child policy and that in 2021 the breach in the quantity of early childhood centers reaches up to around 110,000.

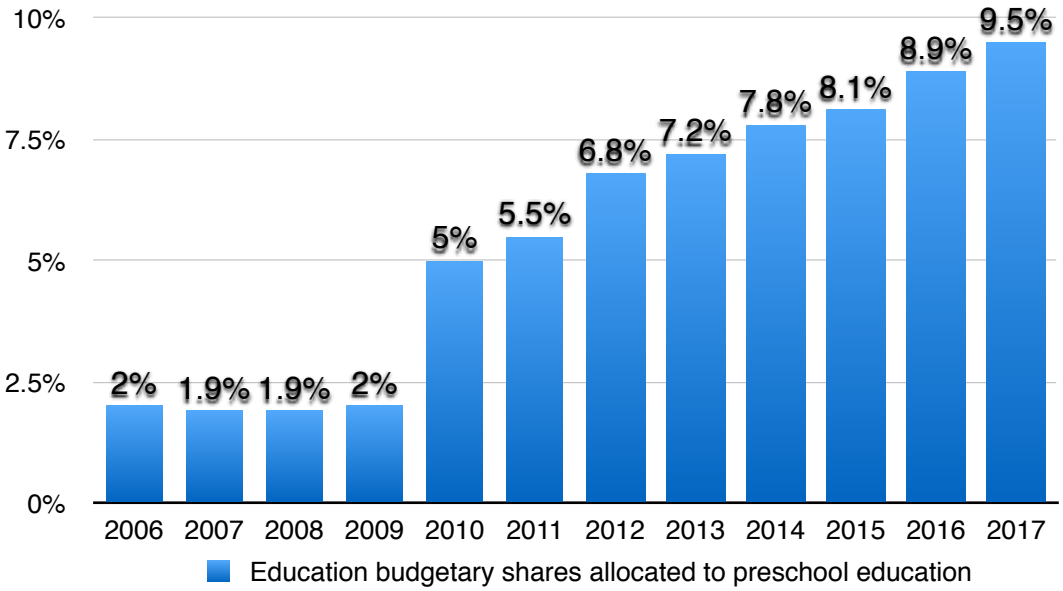
Non-profit supply should be universal and representing the equity and generalization of social welfare. Zhao and Hu (2012) are illustrative of two types of not-for-profit supply of early childhood education: government-sponsored sector and private-providers-funded, government-assisted sector. Zhao and Hu (2012) conjectured that, premised on the idea that the state financial spending on Education amounted to 4% of GDP, and the funding on non-profit provision of childhood care services reached up to 7% of the budgetary shares allocated to public institutions, the government should shoulder 65% and the family 35% of the expense for the universal-benefit kindergartens. What has been invigorated thus far is since 2012 the allocated spending on Education has remained over 4% of GDP (see Figure F) and the share of government funding on preschool education has attained over 7% of the total Education budgetary spending since 2013 (see Figure G).

Figure F Change of allocated state financial expenditure on Education as the percentage of GDP between 2006 and 2017 (unit: %)



Source: Ministry of Education, State Statistical Bureau, and Ministry of Finance, various years.

Figure G Education budgetaray shares allocated to preschool education in China between 2006 and 2017



Source: Ministry of Education, State Statistical Bureau, and Ministry of Finance, various years.

The provision of universal preschool education attests to having considerable heuristic value in life-long benefits for individual children and society at large. The currently intractable predicament of "hard access, great expense" ("入园难，入园贵") has been interpreted by Yu (2010), who noted that in some regions of China there indeed existed the substantive lack of child care resources and no appropriate early institutions were in place for preschool-aged children. On the other hand, hard accessibility was also embodied by parents' relentless pursuit of quality-guaranteed and low-cost public kindergartens. *National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2010) brings forward the goal of reaching universal access for one year of kindergarten or preprimary class before primary school. *Suggestions on Current Development of Early Childhood Education* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2010) proposed to build a public early childhood education system based on non-profit and universal-benefit. An indivisible measure weighing heavily on

solving the current predicament is on one hand, to further expand public kindergartens sponsored by central, provincial and local government agencies; on the other hand, the governmental entities should be determined to see the expansion of private kindergartens through, not the least of which is universal-benefit care service run by private providers. Qin and Wang (2011) implied that universalization, non-discrimination, and non-reciprocality were characteristic of the universal-benefit property. In a further investigation of the realization of the early policy Dong and Du (2018) added that generally-benefit preschool education should be affordable, acquirable and high-quality. Zhuang and Cheng (2012) defined the universal-benefit private kindergartens as public-targeted, low-cost, and quality-guaranteed. Against a backdrop that overemphasis on the expansion of publicly-subsidized provision poses unbearable pressure on the financial burden of local authorities, Zhuang and Cheng (2012) suggested that the providers of universal-benefit private child care be absolutely not worse than useless and be a feasible tack to back the mix-market provision of child care service to the hilt. Faced with the burgeoning demands and inadequate public sectors, supporting the universal, generally-benefited private provision has its idiosyncratic significance to wrestle with the present demands at scale. However, Dong and Du (2018) speculated on the dilemma that the staffing and financial funding could become a problem considering the operation of a private sector is leaning heavily on fees and public funding is mostly flowing into the public sectors. There is for private providers, therefore, a natural paradox and stricture between profit-turning and welfare-service provision.

By contrast with the sole reliance upon government provision of preschool services, Levin and Schwartz (2007) noted that a mixture of government, non-profit, and for-profit educational providers was more conducive to educational equity and children's skill development for school readiness. The authors used four criteria to examine the voucher-featured preschool program: freedom of choice, productive

efficient, equity and social cohesion and results indicated that the churning of diverse provision engendered spillover effects, especially the support for the children from different races and social class backgrounds. In the tested preschool program the government-sponsored, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors accounted for 45%, 48%, and 9% in the marketplace respectively and this market structure appears to spur a robust and reasonable competition, with further greater accessibility, considerable choices, substantial stability and peer diversity guaranteed. Additionally, the authors referred to the educational vouchers as the feasible and desirable vehicle for combing public finance with private provision. Muehler (2010) analyzed the influences of universal, public and non-public provision of child care on "availability and quality of the service" in Germany. There are mainly four types of universal provision: public, non-religious, religious, and commercial. The market share of public centers accounted for 34.5% while the non-public sectors took up 65.5% (Child and Youth Welfare Survey, 2009). Regarding availability and quality of child care services, the author found the diversity of child care provision contributes to the child care availability. Meantime, non-public provides are largely dominated in German market and the study indicates that non-public provision is as quality-ensured as public provision. With regard to the more profit-oriented commercial centers, this type enriches the parental choices and is more apt to provide high-quality care service.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: How do the kindergarten teachers conceive the children's free play and teacher's role in teacher-organized play?

Hypothesis (1): There will be an obvious decrease of children's free play on a daily basis in kindergarten.

Hypothesis (2): The teachers' role is inclined to be more directed and dominated in teacher-organized play.

Hypothesis (3): Teachers' perceptions towards children's free play and teacher-organized play are related to teachers' working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree.

Research Question 2: What is the kindergarten teachers' perception towards children's academic learning in kindergarten?

Hypothesis (1): Due to the influence of the child-centered Western values and ideas, the kindergarten teachers are probably more inclined to prefer children's free play to academic-knowledge learning.

Hypothesis (2): Considering teacher-directed collective teaching activities are mainly deployed for children's academic learning, kindergarten teachers likely avoid taking those collective activities on a daily basis.

Hypothesis (3): Teachers' perceptions towards children's academic learning and teacher-directed collective teaching activities are related to teachers' working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree.

Research Question 3: How do the kindergarten teachers get a handle over child's disputes, such as child's tattling behavior in the early childhood environment?

Hypothesis 1: Teachers might believe that the frequent responses to children's tattling behavior can not reduce the frequency of tattling.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers tend to talk with children in a positive and responsive manner in dealing with children's disputes.

Hypothesis 3: Teachers' perceptions towards child's conflict are related to teachers' working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study is focusing on the Chinese kindergarten teacher's perceptions and beliefs on early childhood curriculum against the backdrop of China's rapid economic growth and social transformations. Premised on the Belief-Intention Scale (Wilcox-Herzog & Ward, 2004) and ECLS-K Kindergarten Teacher Questionnaire (Bassok, Lotham, & Rorem, 2016), the specific research objectives include: 1) to analyze teacher's ideas towards child's play and academic learning; 2) to showcase teacher's notions of collective whole-class activities against the background of the prevalence of DAP values in China; 3) to analyze teacher's role in teacher-child interactions within the early childhood context.

This study was conducted in Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang Province, People's Republic of China. Hangzhou is located in East China with a population of over nine million people, and it is only 161 km away from Shanghai. As one of the most economically developed areas in China, Hangzhou is currently verging on the first cashless society around the world. Apart from the remarkable progress in economic dimension, the early childhood eduction in Hangzhou has also reaped conspicuous rewards. This study can be regarded as a vehicle to catch a glimpse of the development of early childhood education in China's urban regions. Besides, the author graduated in 2014 from Zhejiang University, Hangzhou. During the master studies the author has participated in some teacher training programs, which were simultaneously cooperated by the educational administration sectors in various districts of Hangzhou. Those program experience and cooperative contact with the administration officials are of great importance to conduct this study.

Participants

A large sample was prepared to complete the questionnaire adapted from the Beliefs-Intention Scale and ECLS-K Kindergarten Teacher Questionnaire. The participants included 490 kindergarten teachers (171 teachers from Shangcheng District and 319 from Xiacheng District) from urban preschools serving children 3 to 6 year olds in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, People's Republic of China. All participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire through the online questionnaire survey platform Wenjuan and the ultimate number of submitted questionnaires from these two districts reached 490.

Part of the items related to teacher background information were to collect data representing a blanket reality of the local circumstances (for example, education level, teacher qualification, types of kindergartens, income satisfaction, daily workload, and teacher's motivation to work in the field of early childhood education). The demographic information is listed in Table B. Apart from the questionnaire survey, teacher interviews were also conducted as a supplementary tool to solidify the analytical results. There were 9 kindergarten teachers from 4 preschools (3 public and 1 private) in total participating in the interview and predetermined questions related to the research purposes were inquired.

Table B Research Participants

Gender	Male	Female
n=490	6	484
%	1.2	98.8

Age	18-25	26-29	30-39	40-49	50+
n=490	87	119	177	98	9
%	17.8	24.3	36.1	20.0	1.8

Type of School	Public	Private
n=490	426	64
%	86.9	13.1

Major/Field of Study	ECE	Elementary	Arts	Others
n=490	424	2	38	26
%	86.5	0.04	7.8	5.3

Years in ECE	(less than) 1	2-3	4-5	6-10	10+
n=490	44	62	68	114	202
%	9.0	12.7	13.9	23.3	41.2

Degree before ECE	<HS	HS	AA	Bachelor	Master
n=490	2	126	190	170	2
%	0.4	25.7	38.8	34.7	0.4

Highest Degree	<HS	HS	AA	Bachelor	Master
n=490	1	1	76	402	10
%	0.2	0.2	15.5	82.0	2.1

Teacher Certification	Yes	No
n=490	483	7
%	98.6	1.4

Table B (Continued)

Income Satisfaction	n	%
Very Satisfied	0	0
Moderately Satisfied	23	4.7
Slightly Satisfied	227	46.3
Dissatisfied	174	35.5
Very Dissatisfied	66	13.5

Reason to Enter ECE	n	%
Parents' arrangement	51	10.4
I like children	267	54.5
Eager to find a job	5	1.0
I like being a teacher	117	23.9
I don't know	24	4.9
Others	26	5.3

Reason to Stay in ECE	n	%
Living a much more enriched life	19	3.9
Taking responsibility for that position	237	48.4
Liking the job	117	23.9
Reflecting the achievement of self-value	64	13.0
Having a good relationship with colleagues	29	5.9
Others	24	4.9

Daily Workload	n	%
Very High	163	33.3
Moderately High	274	55.9
Neither High nor Low	53	10.8
Moderately Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0

Measures

Four measures are used in this study. Items for the questionnaire adopted in this study are adapted from the scales and questionnaire described below.

The Beliefs-Intentions Scale

The Beliefs-Intentions Scale (Wilcox-Herzog & Ward, 2004) evaluated three aspects of teacher-child interactions: (1) teacher's overall role in the setting of children's play when interacting with children; (2) sensitivity of interactions with children; (3) teacher's verbal and nonverbal involvement of interactions with children. The scale is an adaption from four different observational measures consisted of Classroom Interaction Scale (Arnett, 1989), Teacher Verbalization Scale (Wilcox-Herzog & Kontos, 1998), Adult Involvement Scale (Howes, 1990) and play style definitions representing a continuum of teacher involvement (Enz & Chiristie, 1994). The 26-item Classroom Interaction Scale (Arnett, 1989) was aimed to measure the caregivers' sensitivity of interactions with children, and contained four categories of teachers' responsiveness: positive interaction, punitiveness, permissiveness and detachment. The Teacher Verbalization Scale (Wilcox-Herzog & Kontos, 1998) was to examine the relationship between certain types of teacher's talk and children's development. The teacher verbalizations range from the highest level to the lowest and contain: elaboratives, non-elaboratives, directives and no teacher verbalization. The elaborative statements came from Howes' assertion (Howes, 1990) that certain talk types such as suggestions, open-ended questions, and elaborative statements increased more likelihood to positively affect children's competence; The non-elaborative statements referred to the closed-ended questions restrained within the task's sphere and including less additional task information; the lowest level of teacher verbalizations included no verbal interaction and directly told the child what to do. The Adult Involvement Scale (Howes & Stewart, 1987) was utilized to examine teacher interaction with the child during free play. The caregiver's behavior

with the child would be rated on a six point scale: (1) ignoring the child (the caregiver was within three feet of the targeted child and there was no interaction); (2) routine caregiving (the caregiver provided routine care but made no verbalizations); (3) minimal caregiving (the caregiver touched the child for discipline, moved a child away from another, answered directed requests for help, or gave verbal directives with no reply encouraged); (4) simple caregiving (child's verbal bids were answered in a positive but brief way or there were no positive physical contacts in caregiver's responding); (5) elaborated caregiving (caregiver extended the child's verbal bids such as giving positive physical gestures, remaining a close proximity, sitting with the child during play, responding to child's statements, and putting forwards play suggestions); and (6) intense caregiving (caregiver provided comfort by hugging or holding the child, restated the child's statements, engaged the child in a prolonged conversation and built an interactive play atmosphere). The previous study by Kontos and Keyes (1999) indicated that teacher presence (routine and minimal caregiving) rather than complex teacher interaction during free play time related positively to child's competence with objects and peers.

The teacher play interaction styles during play settings have been categorized by Enz and Christie (1994) into five types: stage manager, co-player, play leader, director, and uninvolved/safety monitor. The teacher as stage manager does not join the play but prepares the props and materials, decorates the play setting or throws up some suggested theme-related questions; the teacher as co-player joins the play but only takes a minor role. The children take the lead in the drama play and the teacher tries to extend the play by organizing the role assignment, providing some plot suggestions and directions, and participating in children's dialogues; the adult as play leader takes a more active role over the course of children's play. As one of the members in the ongoing dramatic play, the teachers integrate themselves into the improvisation, put forward new questions, extend sophisticated plot development and

detailed characterization to stimulate children's intensive engagement in the drama and their theme-related language production; The caregiver as director seems to exert dominated control through theme choosing, role assignments, and regulations of children's actions to bring the drama processions into a strict course. The overzealous caregiver is more inclined to prevent the play plots straying from predetermined plans and appears to use repetitive demonstration to teach children how to follow the predetermined pretended actions. Thus, the whole setting appears more contrived. Teacher's actions as uninvolved or safety monitor include teacher's lesson preparation, teacher's verbal warnings to regulate children's behavior and teacher's talk with children after the play ends. Based on the teacher play interaction style definitions from Enz and Christie (1994), Wilcox-Herzog and Ward (2004) developed the six teacher play involvement types: (1) uninvolved, (2) caretaker, (3) safety/ behavior monitor, (4) stage manager, (5) play monitor, and (6) play enhancer. Enz and Christie (1994) also admitted that children's play episodes could be disrupted by not enough and too much adult involvement. The play interaction roles that teacher exhibited in play settings as stage manager, co-plater, and play leader upgraded the quality of play dramatizations. Meanwhile, instead of insisting on consistency of one teacher play style, the use of a wide repertoire of play interaction styles based on different needs and situations would contribute to immersing children in the drama play and role playing. The discrepancy between extending and directing was "the teacher supplies varying amounts of scaffolding but still allows children to remain in control of the play activities" (p. 25).

ECLS-K Kindergarten Teacher Questionnaire

ECLS-K (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study) (Bassok, Lotham, & Rorem, 2016) teacher surveys contain a variety of items examining the school readiness beliefs and kindergarten expectations, curricular focus and time use, pedagogical approach, classroom materials and assessment practices. In this study, the children's

academic learning in kindergarten will be researched through teacher's beliefs about school readiness, teacher's curricular focus and time use, and teacher's pedagogical approach.

In the dimension of teacher's beliefs about school readiness, the necessity of taking elementary curriculum was asked on a 5-point scale ranging from very necessary to very unnecessary. Teachers were also inquired about which ability is more important (e.g., "Learning ability"; "Self-care ability") and how to adapt to the elementary learning environment (e.g., "Parents teach their children some knowledge in their spare time"; "Kindergartens conduct curriculum including writing, numeracy and phonetics, and further enrich child's knowledge reserves"). Furthermore, the necessity of information exchange between elementary school teachers and kindergarten teachers was questioned. In "curricular focus and time use" dimension, based on the ECLS-K items focusing on the teaching frequency of subject areas such as reading, math, and music, the adapted question "What should a kindergarten curriculum be like?" was posed in this study to try to examine teacher's perception towards the curricular emphasis in Chinese social and cultural settings (e.g. "Teacher organizing games"; " Children playing freely").

With regard to the teacher's pedagogical approach, the descriptive question "In which form would you like to implement the kindergarten curriculum?" (e.g. "Teacher-directed small group activities"; "Teacher-directed collective activities") has been inquired. Given the fact that teacher-directed whole class activities have a deep root in traditional Chinese culture, and are widely viewed as a long-standing vehicle for knowledge teaching, the teachers were asked to report their perceptions towards the role of collective activities in Chinese education system (e.g., "The collective teaching activities are more suitable to the primary school"; "The collective teaching activities can be replaced by child-selected activities and group activities"). The contentious argument that more collective activities will transform early

childhood education into being elementary education was also reflected in the questionnaire item and the percentages of teacher's opinions are reported in this study.

Teachers' Personal Background Questionnaire

Teachers' personal background questionnaire was used to collect the personal background information from the participating teachers. The items include: teacher's gender, teacher's age, type of the kindergartens, number of years working in kindergartens, types of the subject major before entering the field of early childhood education, general educational level before working in kindergartens, current educational level, in possession of teacher certificate for kindergarten, satisfaction of the income level, daily workload, the initial reason to decide to work in the field of early childhood education, and the reason now still working in this field.

Teacher Interview

The purpose of the interview is to further explore some supplementary and in-depth information closely related to my research questions. The length of each interview lasted 30-40 minutes, with an adoption of a predetermined list of questions and procedures.

The first research question focuses on the proportion of children's self-selective activities during the daily play settings. Meanwhile, the teacher's role in teacher-organized play is also taken into account in kindergarten context. Numerous studies have reported that unstructured play and teacher-guided play are beneficial to children's developmental outcomes (Johnson, James, & Francis, 2005; Han, Moore,Vukelich, & Buell, 2010). In order to acquire the information about the ratio of unstructured play on a daily basis in Chinese kindergartens, the question posed is "Can you please describe the activities from children entering kindergarten to leaving?". Extensive research (Han et. al., 2010) found that guided-play was an appropriate form to expedite the process of children's academic learning (for

example, language and literacy concepts and skills), and that teacher ought to give thought to children's age and developmental progress during the adult's interventions. The adult involvement should be in accordance with developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1987). In consistence with the DAP values, some questions in the interview are posed to sum up teacher's behavior in adult-involved play settings (for example, "Given the fact that academic learning and play are not mutually exclusive, will you organize children's play in a collective form?"; "If yes, what kinds of preparations will you do for the play?"; "How do you see the decreased children's self-selective activities?"; "One of the reasons for decreasing self-selective activities is the limited play materials and space in Chinese kindergartens. Do you agree with this argument?").

The second research question aims to examine teacher's thoughts towards the importance of children's early academic learning in Chinese social context. In view of the traditional knowledge learning occurring often in the whole-class setting (Hu, Fan, & Leong, 2015; Yang, Hu, & Du, 2013; Li, 2012; Chen & Wang, 2013), the interview questions are divided into two categories: Directly inquired items include: "Academics are generally not given major emphasis until children reach age. Do you agree with this argument?"; "Kindergartens are normally grouped into juniors (3-year-olds), middle (four-year-olds), and seniors (5-year-olds). When the children enter the senior class, it appears inevitable for them to learn academic knowledge. Why and in what form do the children learn knowledge?"; "Without supplying the academic curriculum it will adversely affect the kindergarten's enrollment numbers. Do you agree with this argument?". Indirectly some items switch to the enquiry of collective whole-class activities and are viewed as an allusion to teacher's opinions of preschoolers' early academic growth (For example, "By comparison with the importance of play, do you think it necessary to maintain the collective activities in early childhood setting?"; "Parents are nowadays struggling to seek for advantageous

conditions and give their children a leg-up for academic advantage, is this the reason why we can not give up on the collective activities?") .

The third research question is to offer a few glimpses of the interactive relationship between teachers and children (For example, "How do you see the teacher's authority on a daily basis in kindergarten?"; "Emphasis on the collective whole-class activity also reflects the need to maintain the teacher's authoritative image. Do you agree with this argument?").

Procedures

Data Collection

During the process of data collection it's been clearly clarified that this study is merely used for dissertation writing. There are no right or wrong answers for each item. What matters most is that the participant chooses the option(s) depending on their own daily practices. It will be inappropriate and ineffective to this research if the teacher chooses the answer according to what they should believe instead of what they really believe. All the results will remain confidential and anonymous. Besides, another irresistible fact in Hangzhou is that living in this city you need only a mobile phone and this ongoing transformation is until now still integrating in-depth. Scan the QR-code each time when you buy goods, even the street snacks. Going to the restaurant with paying cash will likely meet the embarrassing situation that the cashier doesn't have any change. It's intimately prevalent here to combine the use of mobile phone with people's daily life. Given the local circumstances that the city is verging on a cashless society, in which people purchase things mostly through the phone app Alipay, I correspondently changed the strategy of sending out the questionnaires.

At the beginning of data collection one education administration official strongly suggested the researcher upload the contents of questionnaire to the online survey

platform “Wenjuan”. After getting the corresponding QR-Code from the website, the researcher sent it to the official, and she forwarded this code to the kindergarten teachers that were belonging to the administrative district. When scanning the QR-Code on the phones, teachers could at any time and in any place fill in this questionnaire. The data collection proceeded from 24th, May to 1st, June, 2017. The ultimate number of questionnaires that participants from Shangcheng District and Xiacheng District submitted reached 490.

Apart from the questionnaire survey, teacher interviews were also conducted in this study as a supplemental solidification. The involved kindergartens locate respectively in Xiacheng, Jianggan, and Xihu District, Hangzhou. Due to the teachers’ requirement, interviews were organized in the form of group. Teachers in each group come from the same kindergarten. Four groups consisting of 9 kindergarten teachers separately took part in the interviews and each lasted from 35 to 45 minutes. The interview was digitally recorded and transcribed immediately following each interview. Notably, those interviews were arranged after the finish of data analysis from the questionnaire, with the purpose to deepen several survey results and acquire the front-line practitioners’ real thoughts and perspectives. The interviews were arranged between 4th and 7th, January, 2018.

Data Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected in this study to explore the three research questions. In the quantitative data analysis, the SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) as one of the most commonly used software solutions for statistical data analysis in the social sciences, was accessed. The analytical strategy comprises Multinomial Logistic Regression analysis and some descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages, means, and multiple response analysis.

Multinomial Logistic Regression is the linear regression analysis to predict the probability of category membership from a dependent or outcome variable. The

precondition to conduct Multinomial Logistic Regression is that there exists a categorical or nominal dependent variable with two or more unordered levels (i.e., two or more discrete outcomes), of which one level of the dependent variable is selected as the reference category. The independent variables can be either dichotomous (i.e., binary) or continuous (i.e., interval or ratio in scale) or categorical. Like any other linear regressions, the Multinomial Logistic Regression is a predictive analysis. The probability of any other levels in the outcome variable is contrasted with the probability of being in the reference level. These relative probabilities are the predicted log odds (the logarithmic of the odds) (Peng, 2003). Estimating the k-1 log odds of each category is the cardinal section of Multinomial Logistic Regression (Hutcheson & Moutinho, 2008). For example, in this study to model which of three Necessity-options is likely to be chosen by a kindergarten teacher, two logit models are computed; one comparing Necessary A with the reference category (Unnecessary C) and one comparing Undecided B with the reference category (Unnecessary C). The model of Necessity-options can therefore be represented using two (i.e., j -1) logit models.

$$\log Pr(\text{Y=Necessary A}) / Pr(\text{Y=Unnecessary C}) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_k X_k$$

$$\log Pr(\text{Y=Undecided B}) / Pr(\text{Y=Unnecessary C}) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_k X_k$$

Besides, the Multinomial Logistic Regression model allows the effects of the explanatory variables to be assessed across all the logit models and provides estimates of the overall significance. The Equation for general Multinomial Logistic Regression is as below:

$$\log \frac{Pr(Y=j)}{Pr(Y=j')} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_k X_k$$

where *j* stands for the identified category, and *j'* stands for the reference category.

For the interview data, the researcher proceeded by virtue of the utilization of content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous analytic methods for

the subjective interpretation or contextual meaning of the content of text data (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967). "The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Resting on a predominately naturalistic paradigm there are three distinct approaches in qualitative content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The teacher interviews that were audiotape-recorded and transcribed verbatim utilized open-ended and targeted questions (such as "Can you tell me more about that?" and "How long will the children take the whole-class activities on a daily basis?"). The direct approach to content analysis was adopted in this study. This approach first identified the key initial categories that represented similar meanings; Next, all relevant and highlighted texts would be coded and classified into efficient predetermined categories. In terms of the text that could not be coded into one of these categories, it would be reexamined. The researcher would then determine if subcategories were needed for the unidentified text, or the data were better to be coded with another new category that captured the essence of teacher perceptions. In this study, three codes were preplanned: child's play, child's academic reinforcement, and adult-children interaction. Considering that findings from a directed content analysis "can be presented by showing codes with exemplars and by offering descriptive evidence" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1282), some narratives further enriching the quantitative results were represented in this research.

In addition, the newly identified categories could either offer a supportive view or contradictorily deny the evidence. In this study the new identified codes such as "regulators of kindergarten curriculum" indicated that in Chinese urban kindergartens the curriculum was on one side, regulated by the provincial education administration; on the other side, the kindergarten had to develop their own kindergarten-based curriculum, which differentiated itself from others. These external and internal

regulations steered clear of the children's learning contents oriented towards academic highlights, by which one of the assumptions is indirectly refined and enriched that preschooler's knowledge learning is not encouraged in kindergartens.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods to focus on three research questions. This section presents both quantitative and qualitative results for each of the three research questions, in connection with analyses of the questionnaire data and the teacher interview data.

Research Question 1: Teacher's Perception of Play

Research question 1 deals with teachers' perception about children's free play and teacher-organized play. It was predicted that children's free play would be inclined to be decreasing (as described in Hypothesis 1) and teacher's role in adult-organized play would be more directed and dominated (as described in Hypothesis 2). At the meantime, there will be a correlation between teachers' perception towards children's free play and teacher-organized and teachers' working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree (as described in Hypothesis 3).

Teacher's Perception of Children's Free Play

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there is less child-driven play than teacher-organized play during daily routines and care. As Valsiner noted, "no play, or any behavior of any organism, can be free in principle, because all behavior is embedded in its context, which sets some limits on its freedom" (1987, p. 213). "Free play does not mean unrestricted play, but free in relation to some boundaries" (Rutanen, 2004, p. 4). "Free play would refer to an action, where the content and form is chosen by the child. Play is spontaneous, emerges almost from nowhere in whatever situation" (Rutanen, 2004, p. 3). Qiu (2000) noted that child's play in Chinese

kindergartens has been habitually categorized into creative play and rule-based play, in which creative play is more self-centered whilst rule-based play are characterized by predetermined plots, unitary goals, high-extent teacher directing, and group cooperation. Similarly, Mao (1999) suggested that the play could be divided into two types: free play and instructional play. Premised on the extent of freedom and autonomous control by the preprimary children, the play activities typically organized in China's preschools can be sorted into different frames (Table C).

Table C

High degree	Moderate degree	Low degree	Loss of self-control
Self-selective activity	Block-building play Chess and card play Jigsaw puzzle play	Role play Performance play Language play Musical play Math play	Instructive activity

Source: Mao (1999).

According to Table 1.1, the child-initiated play with most autonomy "self-selective activity" shares a proportion of 18.8%. The activity involving more teacher guidance and direction such as role play (24.1%), physical play (16.5%), musical play (11.8%), performance play (6.7%), language play (5.2%), and math game (2.8%) accounts for 67.1% in total. Besides, from the interview it appears that every activity on the daily basis has been scheduled, especially the play themes and contents. One teacher commented:

> Play activity penetrates into every procedure of the daily schedule. We try to help children learn things during play. In the whole-class activity teacher could in the form of games organize the knowledge learning; in the group activity, teacher would predetermine a theme and encourage the children to self-select the materials and engage in some creative explorations; during the outdoor time the teacher would lead the children in the play and help them learn and understand rules. Moreover, we do put an enormous effort into respecting child's right of freedom and try to apply this concept into our usual practice. For example, the time for dessert and milk is not fixed, which depends on children's willingness to whenever they eat and drink; in the theme-based group activity, children freely decide which group they want to join and choose the play materials on their own.

Another teacher added:

> The bottom line a teacher must hold during play is not letting children out of our sight. We totally recognize the importance and benefits of children's self-initiated activities. However, child's play in China's localized context will never be the same as the one in the West. We have a relatively high teacher-children ratio but limited space (play materials are abundant). The governmental regulation has issued the size of junior (4-year-olds) and senior group (5-year-olds) should not outstrip 30. In fact, we as the public kindergarten are obliged to recruit the preprimary children belonging to our district and the size is sometimes unavoidably larger. Given the specific local conditions, safety hazard has been viewed as one of the top priorities of Chinese kindergarten teachers.

Table 1.1 Types of Child Play

	Percent
Block-building game ……	9.2
Jigsaw puzzle game ……	1.7
Physical game ……	16.5
Musical game ……	11.8
Language game ……..	5.2
Math game ……..	2.8
Self-selective activity ……..	18.8
Chess and card game ……..	3.2
Role game ……	24.1
Performance game ……	6.7

Table 1.2 The Necessity to Plan Every Procedure of the Game in Advance in Teacher-Organized Play

	Percent
Very necessary……	26.9
Necessary……	56.9
I don't know for sure……..	5.9
Unnecessary……..	10.0
Very unnecessary……..	0.3

Table 1.3 The Necessity to Provide Intervention and Guidance in the Case of Children's Failure to Follow the Pre-planned Procedures in Teacher-Organized Play

	Percent
Very necessary	7.8
Necessary	50.4
I don't know for sure	20.0
Unnecessary	21.4
Very unnecessary	0.4

Table 1.4 Types of Teacher's Difficulties in Organizing Games

	Percent
Children have conflicts when the roles are assigned	5.4
Children are not satisfied with the roles assigned by the teacher	2.8
Children don't know what to do next after the game proceeds for a while	9.1
Children don't obey rules and the discipline is a mess	10.2
Children don't want to stop even if the games end	14.7
Children are not interested in the teacher-designed game	6.9
Teacher can not intervene in the game in an appropriate way	13.4
Teacher can not intervene in the game in the right moment	9.3
Lack of materials and fields	28.2

Teacher's Perception of Teacher-Organized Play

Hypothesis 2 stated that the teacher took the dominant role in teacher-organized games. 83.8% of the teachers thought it necessary to plan in advance the procedures of the game while 10.3% thought it unnecessary (see Table 1.2). Considering the situation that children might not follow the planned procedure during the teacher-organized games, 58.2% of the teachers would choose to intervene and provide some guidances instantly while 21.8% regarded it as unnecessary (see Table 1.3). In light of teacher's difficulties in teacher-organized play, the most three frequently-faced challenges were lack of materials and fields (28.2%), teacher's incapability to intervention in an appropriate way (13.4%), and teacher's incapability to intervention in the right moment (9.3%) (see Table 1.4). In the interview, one teacher commented that '*the localized setting including larger class size, limited play space and parents' attitudes decides that teacher must involve in the play activities*'.

Another teacher added:

> Another reason why we can't unleash more self-control is because of the parents' perception and attitude. When their child slightly gets hurt such as scratching the skin or bleeding, parents will represent extreme concerns and care about the injury. They think they have paid for the service, and thus, caregivers have the responsibility to take good care of their children. This leads to the teacher at most times accompanying and watching the preschoolers. The localized context determines that there is no conflict and inconformity between child's play and teacher's intervention. We can provide more free choices during play settings but the teacher must absolutely avoid stepping aside.

Taken together, these results confirm the assumptions of the corresponding hypothesis.

The Correlation between Teacher's Perception and Teacher's Working Experience, Kindergarten Type, and Academic Degree

Hypothesis 3 emphasized that there existed a correlation between teachers' perceptions of play and teacher's working experience, kindergarten type and academic degree.

Table 1.5a providing some background information about this regression model			
Model Fitting Information	Chi-Square=22.817	Df=15	p=0.088
Goodness-of-Fit	Pearson=.117	Deviance=.237	
Pseudo R-Square	Cox and Snell=.045	Nagelkerke=.052	McFadden=.022
Likelihood Ratio Tests	Sig.		
Years in ECE	0.033		
Kindergarten Type	0.303		
Highest Degree	0.856		
Degree before ECE	0.496		

Table 1.5 Multinomial Logistic Regression of Teacher's Role in Outdoor Play

	Safety Protector		Discpine Maintainer		Supporter and Facilitator	
	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)
Years in ECE	-.311**	.733	-.473*	.623	-.125	.882
Kindergarten Type (base: Private kindergarten)						
Public Kindergarten	-.729	.482	-.860	.423	-.757*	.469
Highest Degree (base: Bachelor or above)						
Junior college or below	-.182	.833	.260	1.297	-.290	.748
Degree before ECE (base: Bachelor or above)						
Senior high school or below	.268	1.307	1.117	3.056	.062	1.064
Junior college	.144	1.155	-.975	.236	.333	1.395

Note: The reference category is: Play Cooperator. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 1.6a providing some background information about this regression model			
Model Fitting Information	Chi-Square=26.717	Df=15	p=0.031
Goodness-of-Fit	Pearson=.912	Deviance=.750	
Pseudo R-Square	Cox and Snell=.053	Nagelkerke=.057	McFadden=.021
Likelihood Ratio Tests	Sig.		
Years in ECE	0.681		
Kindergarten Type	0.005		
Highest Degree	0.088		
Degree before ECE	0.398		

Table 1.6 Multinomial Logistic Regression of the Most Important Game Condition						
	Surroundings and Sites		Game Materials		Game Duration	
	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)
Years in ECE	-.094	.910	.012	1.012	-0.074	0.929
Kindergarten Type (base: Private kindergarten)						
Public Kindergarten	.945***	2.573	1.124 ***	3.078	1.232**	3.427
Highest Degree (base: Bachelor or above)						
Junior college or below	-.250	.779	.196	1.216	-0.611	0.543
Degree before ECE (base: Bachelor or above)						
Senior high school or below	1.429*	4.175	.763	2.144	.029	1.030
Junior college	.101	1.106	-.007	.993	.368	1.414

Note: The reference category is: Teacher's guidance. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

From Table 1.5 it could be concluded that in comparison with the role "play cooperator", teachers with longer working experience have less possibility to act as safety protector and discipline maintainer in children's outdoor games. The other dependent variables kindergarten type and academic degree barely possess the statistical significance.

Results from Table 1.6 indicated that by contrast with private kindergartens, teachers in public sector have the increasing likelihood of choosing surroundings and sites, game materials, and game duration as the most important condition of game preparation, and have little likelihood of selecting teacher's guidance. Besides, teacher's working experience and academic degree barely have the significant connection.

Research Question 2: Teacher's Perception towards Academic Learning

Research question 2 asks about the teachers's views about children's academic learning in Chinese kindergartens. It was expected that the kindergarten teachers would be more inclined to prefer children's free play to academic-knowledge learning due to the influence of the child-centered Western values and ideas (Hypothesis 1) ; the teacher-directed collective teaching activities would not be encouraged and emphasized by the teachers (Hypothesis 2); and teachers' perceptions of children's academic learning as well as collective teaching activities are related to teachers' working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree (Hypothesis 3).

Teacher's Perception towards Academic Learning

Hypothesis 1 represented that children's free play would take precedence over academic-knowledge learning. In the question of the necessity of taking elementary curriculum in kindergarten, 70.8% of the teachers argued that there was no necessity to conduct this in early childhood setting (see Table 2.1). In terms of the contents of kindergarten curriculum, 0.8% chose having academic classes whilst 82.0% treated

the generally daily activities as the curricular contents (see Table 2.2). With regards to the expected form of implementing the kindergarten curriculum, only 3.1% suggested that it should be in formalized classes and the rest tended to the form of games, group activities and collective activities (see Table 2.3). In the query of the approach to help younger children handle the elementary learning environment, only 3.6% suggested the academic contents such as writing, numeracy and phonetics learning whereas the majority of the practitioners (71.1%) advised to help children be ready on psychological, behavioral and emotional fronts (see Table 2.4). In the interview one teacher suggested that '*child's learning exists in everyday's activities. Knowledge learning only takes a minor and insignificant part in our predetermined schedule. The most important is to let children learn to concentrate, to listen to peers, to self-discipline, and to appropriately respond to teachers' directives*. Another teacher added: '*Educating children is like building a house. We need to proceed step by step and lay a solid foundation for children's further achievement in elementary school*.'

Table 2.1 The Necessity to Take the Elementary Curriculum in Kindergarten

	Percent
Very Necessary	1.4
Necessary	9.2
I don't know for sure	18.6
Unnecessary	52.4
Very unnecessary	18.4

Table 2.2 What should a Kindergarten Curriculum be Like?

	Percent
Having academic classes	0.8
Teacher organizing games	9.0
Children playing freely	8.2
Everyday activities in kindergarten	82.0

Table 2.3 The Form to Implement the Kindergarten Curriculum

	Percent
In the form of games	62.2
In the form of formal classes	3.1
In the form of group activities	19.2
In the form of collective activities	15.5

Table 2.4 The Approach to Help Children Adapt to the Elementary Learning Environment

	Percent
Parents teach their children some knowledge in their spare time	14.9
Kindergartens conducts curriculum including writing, numeracy and phonetics, and further enriches child's knowledge reserves	3.6
Parents search for extracurricular tutorial classes	5.5
Kindergartens work on the transition and help child prepare from the aspects of psychology, behavioral habits, and so forth	71.1
Nothing needs to be done and let nature take its course	4.9

The above results related to teacher's perceptions are in conformity with the Hypothesis 1. Kindergarten teachers today in China have gradually received the Western child-centered principles and academic-knowledge learning for the preschool-aged children is not invariably dispensable. In addition, another deeper and unspecified factor has also been unveiled. Based on the conducted interviews all interviewees stressed that the main task of kindergartens was to promote child's cognitive, social and emotional development. One teacher said: '*we don't have any pressure of the academic teaching in kindergarten. Even in the senior group (5-year-olds) focusing on the transition to elementary school, the curriculum puts more emphasis on the behavioral and psychological preparation, such as learning to pack your schoolbag, sharpen your pencil, keep sitting for 40 minutes per time, remain concentrated, listen to peers, and cooperate with teacher's orders*. In light of the intensively academic competition in primary school, another teacher added: '*most of the children in my group have their own interest-oriented courses. After leaving kindergarten at 4 pm their parents will take them directly to those extra-curricular activities ranging from arts performance and sports to academic-knowledge learning. For the children in senior group (5-year-olds) there is a wide range of knowledge-focused classes, such as math, English, literacy, and thinking training*.

Teacher's Perception towards Teacher-Directed Collective Teaching Activities

Teachers' perceptions towards collective activities were inquired and the results are presented in Table 2.5 and Table 2.6. 44.7% of the practitioners argued against the statement that more collective teaching activities leaded to the early childhood care oriented towards elementary education (see Table 2.5) and 65.9% argued for the viewpoint that teacher-directed group teaching activities were desirable to help younger children acquire basic knowledge, experience and skills (see Table 2.6) and thus, were not expendable. In the interview one teacher pointed that *'teacher's view on children and education today has dramatically changed contrasted with before.*

The importance of the whole-class activity is not only lying in the contribution to academic-knowledge learning, but the culmination of children's sense of discipline, concentration, good learning habits and qualities, and the social ability to talk with and listen to peers.' Another teacher added: *'the main criticism of the whole-class activity lies in the past fact that the activity was more teacher-dominated and children had to comply and were passively deluged with amounts of information. As opposed to that, today's contents of whole-class activity are mostly arising from child's daily life experiences and teachers have tried to take an overhaul of the form and contents to better satisfy the individual needs and interests*. The descriptive and interviewing results revealed teacher's positive perspective towards the whole group teaching indicating a rejection of Hypothesis 2.

Table 2.5 Teacher's Perception towards the Statement that More Collective Activities Leads to Early Childhood Education Transforming into Primary Education

	Percent
Strongly agree	7.9
Moderately agree	29.2
Neither agree nor disagree	18.2
Disagree	40.0
Strongly disagree	4.7

Table 2.6 Teacher's Perception towards Collective Activities

	Percent
Collective activities can assure children acquire basic knowledge, experience and skills and there is no other forms replacing collective teaching activities	65.9
Collective activities need long-time planing and preparing and the teacher can not take care of the individual needs.Thus, it can be replaced by self -selective activities and group activities	32.5
Collective activities are more suitable to the children in primary school	1.6

The Correlation between Teacher's Perception and Teacher's Working Experience, Kindergarten Type, and Academic Degree

Hypothesis 3 intimated that teachers' assumptions of children's academic learning and collective teaching activities associated with teacher's working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree.

Table 2.7a providing some background information about this regression model			
Model Fitting Information	Chi-Square=29.991	Df=10	p=0.001
Goodness-of-Fit	Pearson=.276	Deviance=.098	
Pseudo R-Square	Cox and Snell=.059	Nagelkerke=.075	McFadden=.038
Likelihood Ratio Tests	Sig.		
Years in ECE	0.092		
Kindergarten Type	0.001		
Highest Degree	0.607		
Degree before ECE	0.611		

Table 2.7 Multinomial Logistic Regression of Necessity to Take Primary Curriculum				
	Necessary		Undecided	
	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)
Years in ECE	-.261**	.770	-.093	.991
Kindergarten Type (base: Private kindergarten)				
Public Kindergarten	-1.382***	.251	-.041	.960
Highest Degree (base: Bachelor or above)				
Junior college or below	.409	1.505	-.052	.950
Degree before ECE (base: Bachelor or above)				
Senior high school or below	.494	1.638	.296	1.345
Junior college	-.180	.835	-.272	.762

Note: The reference category is: Unnecessary. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The dependent variable "Necessity to take primary course" comprises five categories (Very Necessary, Necessary, Undecided, Unnecessary, Very Unnecessary) with an obvious ordinal-structure. According to Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000), the dependent variable with at least three ordinal-structured categories fits in the Ordinal Logistic Regression. In the meantime, it is indispensable to ensure the p value in the Test of Parallel Lines above 0.05. However, the p value in this case is 0.000, not complying with the precondition to execute an ordinal logit model. Another alternative to an dependent variable containing more than two categories is Multinomial Logistic Regression. The original five categories have been compacted into three possible outcomes (Necessary, Undecided and Unnecessary) and been

regressed on teacher's working experience, academic degree and kindergarten type. The results are described as follows:

By contrast with private kindergarten, teachers in public kindergartens are inclined to believe that there is no necessity to take the primary curriculum in preschool education. Meanwhile, differing from teachers with insufficient working experience, teachers possessing enriched experiences have the increasing possibility to choose non-primary course in kindergarten.

Research Question 3: Teacher's Perception of Children's Disputes

Research Question 3 focuses on the teacher's interactive manner and strategies to deal with children's disputes. It is assumed that frequent responses to children's disputes may not reduce the frequency of their tattling behavior (Hypothesis 1); and in the handling of child conflicts, there is an increasing likelihood for the practitioner to use a positive and responsive interactive technique (Hypothesis 2); and teacher's handling of children's conflicts is related to teachers' working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree (Hypothesis 3).

Teacher's Perception of the Response to Child's Disputes

Hypothesis 1 posed the assumption that the more actively and instantly teachers responded to child's complaining, the less effectively the tattling behavior could be dampened. In the questionnaire survey about teacher's subjective perspectives, only 10.6% believed that frequent responses to children's tip-offs could dampen the frequency of this behavior; 51.8% alleged that it would be ineffective and add up extra burden for the practitioner; 40.6% thought frequent responses worked only to lesser extent (see Table 3.1). Based on the descriptive data, the results are in accordance with the assumption.

Teacher's Perception of the Interactive Approaches

It was assumed that teachers would employ a positive and interactive approach to deal with the peer disputes. In the question of teacher's emotional expressions, only 4.1% admitted that they were often on the brink of anger and agitation when facing children's frequent tattling, whilst 45.9% represented the negative emotions at times and 50% were inclined to deal in a warm and positive technique. The results are presented in Table 3.2. The disposing strategy against children's frequent tattling was questioned as well. The results are presented in Table 3.3. A majority of the teachers chose the positive, responsive approaches to get a handle on the tattling, such as encouraging them to solve the disputes on their own, teaching children empathy and explaining to them with facts and reasons. Only 10.9% chose to use the punitive and restrictive way. In the query of teacher's role-playing the most three-favored roles teachers opted for were "the listener", "the guider", and "the resource mediator", with the percent 28.5%, 28.0%, and 14.3% respectively. The teacher-dominated roles such as "the judge", "the preventer", and the "order-maintainer" accounted for 15.9% in total (see Table 3.4). In the interview one teacher said: '*making younger preschoolers develop an affinity for the kindergarten has been foremost on many teachers' minds. We want the children in a new environment feel at home. We are their good friends and playmates and they can call me "sister" or "aunt*".' Another teacher suggested: '*I don't have any authority. When some disputes occur, I will first figure out the reason and steer clear of any misunderstanding. The fact and reason will be explained and I'll guide the children to think and understand from the opposition's point of view*.' In terms of the whole-class activity, another teacher added: '*Only the collective activity is an exception. In the whole-class activity teacher's authority appears and rules must not be breached. It connects closely to children's etiquette and propriety. As a teacher we don't want any authority but it is necessary to teach*

children to learn to respect.' This interviewing result is according with the questionnaire inquiries. With regards to the activities in which children's tattling likely occur, 61.4% of the teachers opted for self-selective activities with more disputes (see Table 3.5). By and large the descriptive and interviewing results are conforming to the assumption.

Table 3.1 The teacher responds frequently to children's tattling. Do you think if it helps to reduce the frequency of children's tattling?

	Percent
Always	3.1
Often	7.5
At times	40.6
Seldom	37.7
Never	14.1

Table 3.2 Will you show your self-emotions unconsciously such as anger and agitation when children's tattling happens very frequently?

	Percent
Always	1.0
Often	3.1
At times	45.9
Seldom	38.0
Never	12.0

Table 3.3 The Intervention Approaches that Can Best Solve Children's Tattling

	Percent
Require the children to solve it by themselves ……	9.0
Blame and punish the one who was responsible ……..…	1.9
Reason things out and help children understand why he or she was wrong ……	20.6
Teach children empathy and put themselves in other peoples' shoes ……..	34.3
Encourage the children to solve it by themselves ……..….	34.2

Table 3.4 Roles That Teachers Play in Children's Tattling

	Percent
The judge aiming to solve the tattling……	5.5
The resource mediator ……	14.3
The guider ……..….	28.0
The educator aiming at bad behaviors ……..….	13.3
The order-maintainer ……	9.7
The stopper of tattling action ……	0.7
The listener ……	28.5

Table 3.5 Daily Activities in Which Children's Tattling Most Likely Happens

	Percent
Teaching Activities ……	4.7
Games (teacher-involved, child-centered)……..…	25.5
Self-selective Activities ……..……...…	61.4
Life Activities ……..……..	8.4

The Correlation between Teacher's Perception and Teacher's Working Experience, Kindergarten Type, and Academic Degree

Hypothesis 3 zeroed in on the association between teacher's assumption of conflict handling and teacher's working experience, kindergarten type, and academic degree.

Table 3.6a providing some background information about this regression model			
Model Fitting Information	Chi-Square=27.428	Df=15	p=0.025
Goodness-of-Fit	Pearson=.688	Deviance=.628	
Pseudo R-Square	Cox and Snell=.054	Nagelkerke=.063	McFadden=.028
Likelihood Ratio Tests	Sig.		
Years in ECE	0.013		
Kindergarten Type	0.167		
Highest Degree	0.871		
Degree before ECE	0.427		

Table 3.6 Multinomial Logistic Regression of Daily Activities						
	Games (teacher-involved, child-centered)		Self-selective Activities		Life Activities	
	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)
Years in ECE	.527***	1.694	.563***	1.757	.489**	1.630
Kindergarten Type (base: Private kindergarten)						
Public Kindergarten	-1.058	.347	-1.317	.268	-1.879	.088
Highest Degree (base: Bachelor or above)						
Junior college or below	-.067	.935	.218	1.244	.067	1.070
Degree before ECE (base: Bachelor or above)						
Senior high school or below	-1.262	.283	-.813	.444	-.274	.760
Junior college	-599	1.821	.637	1.891	.344	1.411

Note: The reference category is: Teaching Activities. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3.7a providing some background information about this regression model			
Model Fitting Information	Chi-Square=33.257	Df=10	p=0.000
Goodness-of-Fit	Pearson=.021	Deviance=.828	
Pseudo R-Square	Cox and Snell=.066	Nagelkerke=.100	McFadden=.064
Likelihood Ratio Tests	Sig.		
Years in ECE	0.272		
Kindergarten Type	0.024		
Highest Degree	0.214		
Degree before ECE	0.003		

Table 3.7 Multinomial Logistic Regression of Teachers' Response to Child Dispute				
	Often		At times	
	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)
Years in ECE	-.344	.709	-.125	.882
Kindergarten Type (base: Private kindergarten)				
Public Kindergarten	.077	1.080	-1.253 **	.286
Highest Degree (base: Bachelor or above)				
Junior college or below	.209	1.232	-.624	.536
Degree before ECE (base: Bachelor or above)				
Senior high school or below	.799	2.223	.748	2.112
Junior college	-2.132***	.119	-.894**	.409

Note: The reference category is: Never. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

From Table 3.6 it could be concluded that in comparison with teaching activities, teachers with longer working experience have more possibility to choose Games, Self-selective Activities and Life Activities as the one, in which children's disputes more likely take place. The other dependent variables kindergarten type and academic degree do not possess the statistical significance.

The dependent variable "Teacher's angry response to child dispute" has five categories (from "Always" to "Never") with being ordinally arranged. Catering to this ordinal structure, Ordinal Logit Models should be employed. As a precondition to conduct ordinal logistic regression, the parallel lines assumption intimates that "correlation between independent variable and dependent variable does not change for dependent variable's categories" (Ari & Yildiz, 2014, p. 10). In the Test of Parallel Lines, p value should be above 0.05 to confirm that "dependent variable's

categories are parallel to each other" (Ari & Yildiz, 2014, p. 10). However, in this case, p value is not above 0.05 (p=0.000). According to Peng and Nichols (2003), multinomial logistic regression analysis is an effective technique to "predict the likelihood of a categorical outcome variable" (p. 1). To predict the effect of teachers' academic degree, working experience and kindergarten type on teachers' perceptions of children's disputes, we transformed the original five categories (Alway, Often, At times, Seldom, and Never) into three (Often, At times and Never) outcomes and applied multinomial logistic regression to data comprising 490 kindergarten teachers' self reports. Here are the results from this multinomial logistic regression model:

1>. There is no statistical significance for working experience and Highest Degree;

2>. Compared to the teachers in private kindergartens, teachers in public kindergartens are more likely to choose "Never";

3>. Compared with the teachers with bachelor degree or above after the entry of ECE, teachers with Junior college degree are more likely to choose "Never". That is to say, teachers with bachelor degree or above after the entry of ECE are more likely to choose "Often" and "At times" when they cope with children's conflicts.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Summary of Results

This study explores three research questions about the early-childhood teacher's perceptions of children's play, academic-knowledge learning, and the teacher-child relationship in the kindergarten environment—using both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods.

By means of Multinomial Logistic Regression the acquired outcomes suggest that apart from the teacher's academic degree, it is teacher's working experience and kindergarten type which possess a significant association with teacher's beliefs in regard to children's play, academic learning, and peer disputes.

The descriptive results from the quantitative analysis revealed that self-selective activities, with the child's autonomy, accounted for a very small proportion among different kinds of daily arrangements; most activities and games have been scheduled with predetermined themes. The caregiver was always involved in child's activities embodied by preparing play themes and materials, explaining relevant rules, summarizing the process at the end of an activity, and providing some helpful suggestions. Although the teacher put considerable efforts into the possibility of the child's free choices during play, the general atmosphere was still more teacher-dominated considering a series of key influential factors such as a relatively high teacher-child ratio, limited space and extreme emphasis on child's safety.

With regard to younger preschooler's academic-knowledge learning a majority of kindergarten teachers opted for children's free-play instead of knowledge learning. Kindergarten teachers have recognized the importance of a solid development of

cognitive, social, and emotional foundations during the early-childhood period. It is a given that the behavioral and psychological preparations are taking precedence over academic-knowledge learning in Chinese urban kindergartens today. The necessity of the traditional collective whole-class activities was also examined against the backdrop of China's rapid growth and dramatic education reforms. Additionally, the interview results refer to another unexpected element: parents often send their children to interest-oriented courses, courses ranging from arts and sports to academic reinforcements. As one teacher described, '*the concerns and pressure about being academically lagged behind at the "starting line" during early childhood period are not lying in kindergarten teachers, but the parents*.'

In light of the relationship between teachers and children, the study was conducted by virtue of inquiry in regard to the teacher's handling of children's tattling behavior. Considering the early developmental stage, this phenomenon frequently occurs in the context of kindergarten in which a child secretly tells a teacher, an authority figure, that someone else has done something wrong. Getting a handle over those troubles in a rapid pace on a daily basis could be a sore point with a Chinese kindergarten teacher. Astonishingly, the results demonstrated that kindergarten practitioners tended to employ a positive and responsive manner to handle those disputes, rather than in a punitive or controlling way.

By and large, the interview results based on a qualitative analysis have offered supplemental evidence and potent supports to the quantitative results. Teachers' answers, including their narrative examples, were described and presented.

Teachers' Beliefs

The data based on responses to a questionnaire of 490 kindergarten teachers in Hangzhou illuminates that the kindergarten type and working experience have a significant influence on a teacher's perceptions of children's play, knowledge learning

and dispute. Conversely, the teacher's academic degrees (degrees before ECE and the Highest Degree) pose little effect on those perceptions.

An application of the multinomial logit model reveals the influence of academic degrees on a teacher's pedagogical beliefs has little significance, much less the practitioner's highest degree. This result is consistent with previous research intimating that teacher education programs do not play an important and pervasive role in developing a teacher's belief system or, in other words, "the impact of the college is 'washed out' by school experience" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981, p. 7). Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) found that rather than the formal training and teaching experience, the individual biography "prior to the advent of formal training" (p. 29) and institutional influences were the determinant factors to the teacher socialization process. The key function of individual intent is illustrative of Lortie's (1975) position that the thousands of hours after the advent of school experience overwhelmingly contributes to the internalization of teaching models and shape their teaching beliefs. Consistent with this assumption are the findings by Brousseau and Freeman (1989) who note that the beliefs, which the entry-level teacher candidates initially hold (faculty members do not concur with), are not exceptionally emphasized in the teaching preparation programs. Rather, teacher-educators seemed to stress the prevailing educational beliefs in accordance with the student-teachers. In a sense, it can be inferred that the teacher education program plays an insignificant role in wrestling with the transformation of a novice-teacher's educational orientation and assumptions, regardless of the emphasis by many studies that the teacher-educator should understand the positions prospective-teachers have already adopted and take corresponding steps to challenge the inappropriate initial beliefs. In line with this reasoning is Kalaian and Freeman's (1989) study that examines the gender difference of educational orientations and reports that, after completing the teacher preparation programs, both male and female teacher-

candidates still firmly held the same beliefs as at the outset of their teacher education programs. Those unchanged educational beliefs found by the authors were "commitment to academic goals, accepting responsibility for student learning, and expectations for student learning". The study by Kagan (1992) also supports the conclusion that Brousseau and Freeman (1989) presented. Kagan(1992) first noted that without the change in teacher's personal beliefs, it is unlikely to expect a behavioral change in the pre-and inservice teacher education programs. Although there exists a significant connection between teacher belief and teacher behavior, the teachers are often "unaware of their own beliefs" (p. 66) and they are reticent to express their beliefs publicly. What is more likely is a teacher's behavior diverges from their preconceptions and some similar practices are followed merely to adjust to the contextual restraints in school life. Moreover, after the formal university education, it seems there is no significant conceptual change, whereas the preservice-teachers grow increasingly comfortable with the pre-existing beliefs they brought to the pedagogical context. Kagan also found that in the midst of a teaching career the teacher leans heavily on their own experiences and prior beliefs to solve the instructional problems because:

> "When teachers accept information from outside sources, they filter it through their own personal belief systems, translating and absorbing it into their unique pedagogies" (Kagan, 1992, p. 75).

Echoing this finding is McDiarmid's (1990) analysis of a teacher's belief system and Buchmann's (1987) view of folklore teaching. Differing from teaching expertise, Buchmann (1987) speculated that the folkways of teaching "are patterns of action and interpretation that are existent, considered right, and mostly uncodified" (p. 154) which are held as mere tradition or habit and "are learned and practiced in the half-conscious way" (p. 153) or "without understanding their point or efficacy" (p. 154) in everyday life. The folk patterns of action and interpretation grow out of recurrent

needs and are developed by repetition and imitation. Such actions are pervasive and engrained in the folk system and are often taken for granted; viewed as guaranteed truth and rightness without any explanation. Despite the fact that folkways of teaching do not stem from scientific testing and theory, they are treated as if they are common sense with "an aura of seemliness". Teaching practitioners believe that "teaching as usual" will produce desirable education outcomes. Likewise, the educational reform, such as the alteration of a teacher's teaching beliefs, cannot succeed until the reform provides workable and concrete "means for securing some task attention, content coverage, and control over what students do, as well as opportunities for practice and testing of student learning" (p. 159). Without appropriate substitution, teachers are more likely to solidly hold on to the folkways of teaching regardless of the subsequent blame. Apart from conformity to "teaching as usual" teachers also possess some private beliefs deriving from "peculiar experiences, feelings, and characteristics of individuals" (p. 153). However, it appears that teachers tend to readjust their personal teaching knowledge to be compatible with the folkways of teaching during their occupational socialization process and subsequent schooling. McDiarmid (1990) supports the assumption that a teacher's belief system is a web consisting of various strands; all strands of a teacher's beliefs are interwoven and support one another. Expressed in the classroom context those strands include the "teacher's role, pedagogy, learning, diverse learners, subject matter, context, and learning to teach" (p. 13). Confronting new ideas during the field work would inevitably create cognitive dissonance between the teacher's original belief system and conventional wisdom, ultimately forcing the prospective-teacher to reconsider their initial understanding of teaching and learning, to re-evaluate what teaching really means, and what a "teacher needs to know about learning, subject matter and pedagogy" (p. 18). For example, mathematics-teaching could be a thoughtful activity initiated by pupils' active engagement resulting in changing ideas, but this

vehemently contradicts the traditional image dominated by a teacher's telling, showing, and explaining. However, re-examining does not necessarily mean transforming. McDiarmid likens a teacher's belief system to a resilient web constituted by interwoven strands, the strength of which is formidable. Yet, the destruction of one strand would not play havoc with the whole's function. As McDiarmid (1990) described:

> they either reconfigure ideas and information they encounter to fit with their initial beliefs or they simply reject or ignore what does not fit (p.13).

The multinomial logit model engenders the outcome that teachers taking possession of abundant and enriched job experience do not seem to have the inclination to take more collective teaching activities and to resort to elementary course in preschool education, rather, they are prone to empowering the children to initiate their play and to acting as a listener and cooperator. This finding is potently echoed by the extant literature. Working experience "leads to changes in cognition—in perception, memory, and thought" (Berliner, 1987, p. 76). Calderhead (1983) noted that teachers' perceptions being influential in determining their teaching behaviors in classroom context could be divided into four types: knowledge about pupils in general, general knowledge about particular pupils, specific knowledge about pupils, and knowledge related to diagnostic / remediation routines. By contrast with experienced teachers, beginning teachers possess "little of any of these types of knowledge" (p. 10). Additionally, beginning teachers did not have conceptual structures to make sense of classroom life, tended to be "reactive in their classroom interaction" and incapable to anticipate consequences, which bore little resemblance to the way in which experienced teachers behaved. Similar finding has also been found in this study that as compared to teachers with insufficient experience, expert teachers held the belief that child dispute was more likely to take place in activities affiliated with more child-autonomy and less teacher-authority such as self-selective

activities, games and life activities. In line with this above reasoning, Melnick and Meister (2008) argued that preservice teachers had a natural inclination to hold their preconceived beliefs about teaching and learning, but those thinking was incongruent with the realities of the classroom and therefore, could not meet preservice teachers' expectations. Melnick and Meister accentuated that preservice teachers' behaviors in classroom management and parent interaction differed from those of inservice teachers. The evidence seems obvious that "experienced and novice teachers may differ considerably in their perception of classroom events as well as their underlying schemata for what constitutes an appropriate flow of classroom events" (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 86). A line of research is highly similar to the studies cited above. In a research of the betterment of teacher's group-order managing skills (Chen, 1997), the finding was ascertained that years of work experience was the most determinant factor exerting influence on teacher's classroom managing skills for group activities. Compared to prospective early childhood teachers with the aid of verbal instruction and teachers authority, experienced teachers were prone to handling it by means of skill categories such as "Music and Games", "Using Props or Dramatic Effect" and "Giving Rewards". Becoming an expert teacher can be a lengthy process alongside with a wide range of qualitative skill changes. In Okas, Marieke and Krull's (2014) research on preservice and expert teachers' perspectives of professionalism, they found experienced teachers placed emphasis on the practical knowledge regarding "teacher's role as an educator", whereas under the role-fulfilling novice teachers had high expectations of IT equipments and digital learning to "make students work independently". In another study of the instrumental stimulus to facilitation of children's creativity in early childhood education, Lau (2007) demonstrated that the observed three kindergarten teachers with over 13 years of job experience at average were committed to musical teaching and ushering in an approach entailing children's pro-active engagement and creativity. They are

preoccupied with the transformation from a didactic to a thematic, play-based pedagogy, open to children's self-initiated activities and risk-taking, flat-out to correct children's "out of control" behavior, and unequivocal to underpin "certain infringements of freedom are a necessity" (p.180). They held the pedagogical belief firmly that "children learn from play, especially drama, fantasy and imaginative play (p. 178). Premised on this assumption a curriculum combined with integration of physical movement with role and musical free play comes to fruition. Besides, experienced teachers believe in that activities embodied by imaginative thinking, creative self-expression, aesthetic development and symbolic representation incorporating a diversity of materials, props and musical instruments have the making of a child-centered, play-based kindergarten environment.

However, not all researchers lend support to the view that experienced teachers have more virtues than student teachers. Georgious (2008) spelled out how experienced and student teachers saw dispositional and malleable factors on student achievement. Specifically, experienced teachers gave credence to attributional biases and put more emphasis on the inherited and uncontrollable facets such as intellectual ability, gender, and family status. A student with biologically-determined intelligent ascendancy increased the likelihood of embracing teacher's higher expectations. The experienced practitioner was more apt to hold the gender-role stereotypical thinking that mathematics is a male domain. Likewise, the experienced held the belief with socio-economic stereotypes, that is, affluent and well-educated parents function in a deterministic fashion on children's academic achievement. By contrast with experienced practitioners, the novice teachers drove the message home that hereditary characteristics did not have the final say, rather, the controllable factors such as educational system, teacher and student effort, could to a greater degree impact the school achievement. Erkan and Akyol's (2017) research is also evidence of disagreement in the views of experienced teachers possessing effectiveness and

appropriability. In their study on the concept of children's learning and participation in preschool programs, both experienced and prospective teachers were found to have maintained analogous views that "children learn by doing and living" (p. 375) in dynamic activities related to multiple facets such as language, music, literacy, drama and science and that sufficing for children's interests and needs would activate their pro-active participation. With regards to the relationship of learning and participation, all preschool teachers believed that there is a direct connection between them and children's well-grounded development lays foundation for their full participation and skill acquisition.

Deriving from the multinomial qualitative model it has been argued that a teacher's pedagogical beliefs have key linkages with the institutional context. The front-line practitioners from public and private sectors maintain diverse and distinct views about younger children's knowledge-learning, play, and disputes. This result aligns squarely with countless prior studies. Goodman (1988) describes that the teacher's existing preconceptions about teaching and learning are open to external stimuli and they develop a stronger orientation towards institutional authority. Due to this inclination it is apt to be preferential to employ an emotional, rather than an intellectual, response to the new and challenging pedagogical and managerial concepts. Goodman further notes that the practical philosophy of teaching is not passively moulded, but that teachers played an active role in coming to terms with the constraints from outside forces. Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984), who expand upon the findings regarding institutional constraint concur. Distinct from the notion that during occupational socialization the student-teachers' teaching beliefs were heterogeneous, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) illustrate that prospective-teacher candidates could, in a more negotiated and interactive manner, "control the direction of their socialization and develop more elaborate versions of the perspectives" (p. 34). In another longitudinal study to understand the extent to which beginning-

teachers acted in ways demanded by institutional control mechanisms, quite distinct from Lacey's (1977) view that there is some discontinuity of the teacher's initial beliefs encountering the conflict between individual intent and institutional pressures, and Power's (1981) assumption that the student-teacher retains a remarkable stability in the transition to becoming a teacher, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985) find that novice-teachers employ diverse social strategies to cope with the organizational sanctions and that no homogenous culture into a teacher's socialization process exists. Yet, some informal school cultures that are characterized by diversity and uniqueness are found to act as a countervailing force to the formal control mechanisms. The four observed teachers have either conformed to institutional regularities emanating from the workplace or maintained their initial resistant perspectives toward fitting-in with the institutional norms. Therefore, behavioral conformity and value commitment during the teacher's socialization should not be taken for granted and officially sanctioned practices could not guarantee a teacher's ready acquiescence. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985) borrowed Richard Edwards's (1979) conceptualization of organizational control to demystify the social structure of the workplace. The ethos of organizational control is composed of personal or direct control, bureaucratic control, and technical control. Stacking up against the latter ones, personal supervision from the school or the principal plays a peripheral role. The bureaucratic control is characteristic of its impersonal and hierarchical dictates, whereas technical control, including "the timing of instruction, the curriculum and curricular materials and the architecture of the school" (p. 17), is the most powerful force to render the first-year teachers susceptible to change their initial predispositions. Supporting this view is Maxon's (1996) study in which the characteristics composed of administrative demands, educational policy, and school curriculum requirements were projected as the institutional forces. Kuzmic (1994) presents the gap between the kindergarten teachers' image of teaching which they

brought with them after the entry of ECE and institutional context they have confronted. Due to the lack of placing teaching within the context of the situation, they struggled in reality with a series of problems and barriers which conflicted with their original image of, their views about, classroom structuring and organization. Those teachers who did not develop "a fundamental understanding of school as bureaucratic organization" (p.24), encountered many paradoxes and dilemmas in the contextual realities which further limited their effectiveness to actualize the image they had of themselves as a teacher and the atmosphere they wished to achieve at the outset of the teaching career. Kuzmic argues that once beginning-teachers confronted those constraints, constraints such as classroom management and discipline, they were more apt to internalize them as their personal limitation, faults and incapability to question themselves about what has been taught and how to correct and improve it, but not to develop "an awareness of schools as organizations, an understanding of how this affects the lives of teachers" (p. 25), let alone to consider that those encountered problems could be attributed to "the context in which she was teaching" (p.22). Kuzmic listed these contextual constraints encompassing students' family status, guidelines and expectations for curriculum implementation, "limitations on time imposed by rigid scheduling" (p. 23), structure and organization of the classroom, etc. Teaching activities often extend, to a certain extent, outside of educational activities. Curricular content and teaching pedagogy are important components of teacher training but as is a teacher's awareness of the institutional constraints and any teacher training program that fails to acknowledge institutional constraints fails to serve the teachers. It is vital in university preparatory programs to equip prospective-teachers with knowledge of the realities of a classroom and school life. Blase (1985) defines knowledge about "institutional characteristics of schools as bureaucratic organizations" (p. 24) as "organizational literacy".

Goodman (1985) contends that curriculum is the primary institutional force to adjust teachers to the predetermined and highly routinized instructional paradigms. Against the backdrop of public outcry about falling students' academic achievement, the educational emphasis has been transformed from enriching pupils' creativity and tailoring individual interests to the utilitarian emphasis on test scores as "pupils' test scores reflected the quality of teaching" (p. 33). Goodman finds that a great deal of student-teachers view the institutional power and attached curricular execution as unproblematic. Despite this, there exists prospective-teachers reacting to the outside constraints with "latent resistance" as if "on the surface it appeared as if these students accepted the status quo; however, internally they maintained a desire to do things differently when eventually employed" (p. 38). Akin to this assumption is Lacey's (1977) previous definition of a "social strategy" as that which prospective-teachers warm to. Lacey's (1977) "social strategy" recommends confronting both overt and covert forces, one of which is referred to as "strategic compliance". On one hand, the probationers are doing routine, mechanical types of teaching activities compatible with contextual requirements; on the other hand, they "retain private reservations about doing so" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985, p. 9) and even "attempted significantly to redefine the range of acceptable behaviors" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985, p. 12), thereby highlighting the contradiction between formal and informal school cultures. Apart from the extant literature showing a teacher's resistance to institutional power and maintenance of their prior perspectives, there is also a great deal of literature indicating that a teacher's claimed belief is not always in accordance with their actions in practice. Nestor (1987) suspects that the belief system could only be recognized by self-reflection and that outside examination is not accessible to the belief system. Beliefs cannot be measured in a direct way but can be inferred through the observation of what the individual has said and done (Rokeach, 1968; Pajares, 1992). It is therefore more apt to be static and inflexible. Mansour

(2009) suggests that some factors act as barriers to prevent teachers from putting their beliefs into practice, leading to a mismatch "between the teachers' expressed beliefs and their observed practices" (p. 39). Sahin, Bullock, and Stables (2002) draw attention to the teachers' use of questioning in classrooms with children aged 7-11. When asked the reason behind choosing to employ questioning, the teachers presented the predisposition to believe that the use of questioning was merely to check pupils' understanding, or to understand what children knew. However, they did not "acknowledge the variety of ways in which such questions are developed and modified according to the circumstances" (p. 377); inconsistent with the teachers' claimed belief, they made frequent use of procedural questions in their practice, which teachers during interviewing barely referred to. Moreover, those questions with underlying procedural understanding could not only check pupils' understanding, but also make pupils "more conscious about their learning", challenge their thinking, develop their creativity, and "think through the problem". Classroom observations indicated that teachers were not aware that they had a better knowledge of procedural questioning as "teachers' statements about what they believe does not always show what they do in classrooms" (p. 382). In response to this incongruence it is conjectured that contextual factors, for instance complexities of classroom life, are the predominant reasons and that "teachers are not fully aware of context as a significant factor" (p. 381) which influences their actions or that teachers are unaware of "how this influence operates". Lee (2007) chose teachers' written feedback in student writing as the research subject and found ten mismatch between teachers' beliefs and teachers' written comments. In the following respects comprising the usage of error codes, score-awarding, writing approach and pedagogy, efficacy of teacher feedback and so forth, there is a clear incongruity between what they believe and what they've written in the form of feedback. Lee opined that institutional context and values seem likely impinge on the congruence between teachers' beliefs

and practice. In an exploratory study about the relationships between preschool teachers' self-reported belief statements and their actual teaching behaviors, McMullen, Elikcer, Goetze, Huang, and Lee (2006) found that teachers with high level of endorsement and engagement in DAP beliefs are frequently found to employ the teacher-directed method of instruction. By means of surveys, direct observation and document analysis techniques in a collaborative fashion, it is also discerned that teachers' reported belief aligning with traditional, or academic-oriented philosophy is not fully in line with their observable behaviors. Specifically, creative arts and encouragement of free expression and choice-making permeate their curricula. McMullen et al. inferred that in spite of numerous literature corroborating the discrepancy between DAP and traditional beliefs, it seems there is lacking "a clear dichotomy" in reality. Based on previous literature emphasizing the incongruity between teachers' expressed beliefs and actual behavior, we should also discreetly deliberate on the outcomes of this study.

There is a great deal of empirical research supporting the view that the formal school culture elicits compliance with the existing teaching ideologies and institutional demands. Therefore, it is advisable to equip the prospective-teachers with knowledge about the formal control mechanisms in their preparatory education programs. In this study, standing in marked contrast to Chinese private-funded teachers, the working staff from the public sector presented the predispositions to empower the children in their initiated play, fulfill their role as a listener and cooperator rather than the discipline protector, and attach less importance to knowledge-learning in early childhood periods. These disparate outcomes between privately- and publicly-subsidized teachers allude to a deeper Chinese social and economic basis behind practitioners' diverse perspectives towards teaching and learning.

The current financial and administrative system of preschool education is highly decentralized in China (Wu, Young, & Cai, 2011). The central government sets out national guidelines for ECCE while local governments are given the autonomy to set up their development plans and service systems. *Guidelines Governing the Reform and Development of the Early Childhood education* (Ministry of Education, 2003) formulated that government expenditure on early-childhood education is the responsibility of local governments. Based on this expenditure assigning mechanism, the governments at the country and township levels take on the heaviest responsibility for childcare centers in rural regions (Zhou & Zhang, 2011). In comparison with the financial advantage of provincial and municipal governments, it can be speculated that the lower level governmental agencies can hardly bear the budgetary burden to expand public kindergartens.

James (1993) recapitulates that the limited government spending for the public-sector result in "excess demand for quantity" and provide insufficient access for "people who would prefer to use the public schools but are unable to find a place" (p. 574). The limited public funding could largely explain the phenomenon of private schools springing up in developing nations. In a further study of the private provision of preschool education in China, Song (2012) finds analogous results consistent with those of James' (1993) earlier research. Two negative correlations were recapitulated by Song: one negative correlation exists between the scale of private kindergartens and government spending as the distribution of private kindergartens is inclined to be on a larger scale in areas where public financial inputs are insufficient; the second negative correlation is embodied between regulatory control and the scale and coverage of private kindergartens. The more stringent and rigorous measures the local governments take, the smaller the proposition of private kindergartens is apt to be. The imposed costly requirements in this context contain the implementation of identified access threshold and the rigorous registration process for opening a private

kindergarten. Song (2012) also noted that contrary to the nonprofit private kindergartens in OECD countries, the majority of non-public institutions in China are profit-oriented and the private sector leans heavily on private funding (for example, fees); by contrast private providers in developed nations are heavily funded and regulated by the state (James, 1993) while in China the public funding is mainly flowing into public kindergartens, especially into the institutions sponsored by government agencies. In another study of government investment in different types of kindergartens, Song (2011) illustrates that public spending in a variety of care centers is unfairly funded leaving such centers inadequately funded. With respect to the entirety of public kindergartens, the sharing ratio of the public funding expenditure attained less than 40% while the sharing ratio reached up to 60%, when taking solely the government-funded centers into account. The discrepancies can largely be attributed to funding inequity. Song speculates that 91.9% of the private sector and 33.8% of the public sector are unfunded. Among the public providers, public institutions run by government entities, and institutions affiliated with enterprise, institutions and governmental bodies received the most government funding whereas institutions run by urban and rural neighborhood and collective units acquired very little. The established unequalized funding system exacerbates a large discrepancy in quality between different types of kindergartens, to say nothing of ameliorating these disparities and achieve societal and educational equity for the low-income population. Liu and Song (2013) call this tendency the "Matthew Effect" in which the stronger are getting stronger and the weak getting weaker, ultimately going under. Akin to this finding is the prior report by Wu, Young, and Cai (2011) in which the local governments have been struggling with the financing and delivery of ECEC services and "even public sector institutions are fee based" (p. 56). The current government funding system distributes the majority of public sources into limited public kindergartens, especially organizations run by government entities. Such a funding

inequity reverberates across social layers and should be reformed and rectified through diversified channels and in various forms. On one hand, more financial inputs are needed and the government should play a predominant role and answer for the value of universalization and non-profit in early-childhood education. On the other hand, various sponsoring targets, such as private organizations and less-sponsored public institutions, should be incorporated so as to benefit the low-income families. At any time the vale of social equity exceeds the betterment of the few in positions in importance.

Conceivably, the unequalized funding system could bring about multiple consequences. Pang (2010) indicates that high-price, low-quality is a burgeoning but precarious tide of private-funded institutions. Unable to access government funding, private-publicized kindergartens are heavily reliant on family shares. Also, it has been a common practice to reduce the employee's wages and the inputs on materials, toys, and hardware facilities keep plummeting, all for the sake of profit. This profit-oriented, financing-narrowed institutional operation results in, more often than not, a sharp drop-off in enrollment creating a further existential crisis, much less a shore-up in quality. Another conundrum to wrestle with is the leadership of private institutions which takes relentless, even myopic, efforts to expand enrollment and gain instant benefits among which parents, instead of the professional early-childhood practitioners, are offered considerable leeway over the curricular contents. Those shortsighted measures have turned the tide of a widely-recognized, child-centered ethos with the result being that a knowledge-based kindergarten curriculum is now a forgone conclusion. This vicious circle of low-quality institutional operation also discourages the exchange of ideas, values, and kindergarten-featured practice among various centers (Zhou & Li, 2010). In terms of the leadership management in non-public organizations, Zhou and Li (2010) show that over 80% of private kindergartens employed a paternalistic style of leadership, this non-public institution

bristled with family members, and the teachers readily acquiesce to the principal's instructions.

A great deal of literature is also centered on Chinese private kindergarten teachers as the research subject and there seems to be an agreed consensus that the care from private kindergarten teachers has not been the embodiment of good quality.

Wang (2010) indicates that university graduates dodge job offers from private providers, even the novice-teachers with a degree from a junior college have an inclination to work in a private institution as a subordinate. At the moment, a gulf has been exposed between public and private kindergartens. Standing in sharp contrast with public provider, the private-sector teacher earns a relatively low salary, remains uncovered by social insurance, and is excluded from the teacher's professional title assessment (Wang, 2010). Those hapless limitations have ravaged teachers' dynamism and ambition and done no good for their career or ambitions. Zhou and Li (2010) also find that in-service training, as a vehicle to bolster a practitioner's professionalism, is not always accessible to private kindergarten teachers. Liang and Feng (2004) find, in comparison with other influential variables— such as workload, societal supports, role homogeneity, participation in determination, and the right to be informed— the opportunity to facilitate professional growth is the most significant factor in a teacher's sense of job-burnout. Simply, the more chances for occupational professionalism they garner, the less occupational burnout they will be engulfed in. Private kindergarten teachers, to a certain extent, are locked in a vicious circle of inadequate teacher preparation, lower degrees of professionalization, and outdated pedagogical concepts (Fang & Deng, 2014). In accordance with this assumption are Zeng, Zhang and Luan's (2016) and Li's (2012) studies. Zeng et al. (2016) investigated the public and private kindergarten teachers' professional quality in rural regions. The number of teachers between the ages of 20 and 30 in private sector is larger than in the public sector, but when considering senior-teachers, teachers with

more than 6 years job experience, non-private institutions have an evidently proportional advantage. With regard to a teacher's professional knowledge and skills, there is of distinct significance; the practitioners from the public-subsidized sector are more well-equipped than those from the non-public sector. Li (2012) finds that many teachers from private sector do not accomplish their teaching preparation in the field of early-childcare education. With an insufficient systematic knowledge-base, these practitioners are more likely incapable to exhibit desirable traits and uphold the standards of the profession. In preference to the pledge of quality childcare, excessive enrollment is always high on private teachers' list of priorities.

Incongruent with previous findings that suggest kindergarten teachers are inclined to treat their profession as an instinctual calling (Lambert, 1985; Wong, 2015), Li suggests that a great deal of private caregivers, in the face of limited professional development opportunities, view childcare merely as a job, in which they are barely required to proactively upgrade their educational achievement, nor do the kindergarten principals supply appropriate chances. Qin, Gao, Wang, and Fang (2017) analyzed the quality of teacher-children interaction in publicly and privately financed child care centers. The results indicated that the kindergarten-operating mechanisms posed a significant impact both on the teacher's quality and on their interaction with children. Caregivers from the public provision outstripped those from private provisions in routine and discipline, daily language communication, and teacher-initiated emotional and peer interactions. Private caregivers failed to hold more individual, emotion-facilitated, and socialized conversations and this deficiency of quality-teachers in private-supported centers was attributed to differential operating mechanisms, in which various expenses in the private-sector are not covered by government funding, so as to not enable to pay consequential attention to cultivating highly qualified teachers.

In general, the publicly-financed sector has a definite advantage over the privately-funded sector in various areas such as budgeted posts, wages, professional titles, and in-service training all of which overwhelmingly precipitates to form a cadre of stable, high-qualified professionals (Qin, Gao, Wang, & Fang, 2017). Private-subsidized organizations, as distinct from the public-subsidized, are mostly not entitled to equip their workers with professional titles. Another huge divide within a public institution arises from an unedifying inequity of income and pay bonus heavily dependent on whether practitioners have garnered a certain title (Xiang, Wei, & Chen, 2011). In addition, early-childhood education is the only educational phase without an independent title promotion process, whose promoting requirements and standards are brought into those for elementary teachers (Wang, Guo, & Wu, 2014). According to *Proposed Regulations of Primary and Secondary Teacher's Assigned Duties* (Ministry of Education, 1986) the professional title of school instructors will be ranked in order of their job experience and professional ability. Correspondingly, the ranks are divided from high to low into 4 categories: Senior-level, Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. Li (2012) argues that the establishment of the professional title assessment mechanism is today a cardinal stimulus to facilitate the caregivers toward the relentless pursuit of their professionalization. A job title is of great value and treated as an important sign, leading to social recognition. Xiang, Wei, and Chen (2011) depicted the teachers' attribute of organizational commitment in public kindergartens and find that caregivers with a senior professional title are, to a high extent, more apt to be committed to their work. Accompanied by a better rapport and identification within the organizational culture, the professionals tend to be appreciative and willing to step up their efforts to contribute and achieve a sense of self-fulfillment. However, the majority of private kindergarten teachers have not yet been brought into the evaluational system of professional ladders, and private-funded centers have been, to a greater degree, subjected to the instability and drain of

teaching staff (Wu & Wang, 2012). Even in public institutions, the ratio of staff owning a certain title is out of step with their elementary counterpart (Wang, Guo, & Wu, 2014). A study (Feng, Tian, & Jiang, 2017) with 3650 kindergarten teachers in Beijing found that 44.8% of the staff in 2015 could not apply for the professional title assessment, among which 75.2% have a bachelor or junior college degree and 45.1% possess more than 5-years work experience. Astonishingly, the nagging strictures grow out of merely the personal native place. The teaching staff whose place of registered permanent residence ("Hukou" in Chinese) is not in Beijing, are not entitled to participate in the standardized evaluation of professional titles. Conceivably, many non-Beijing kindergarten teachers, with highly-trained and well-qualified skills, living in a metropolis without abundant income could hardly be an easy option or a suitable situation in which they fend for themselves. Those regional policy constraints have, to a certain extent, precipitated the rate of staff turnover and, in no small part, done harm to maintaining the stability of working staff and improving early-childhood education.

Apart from the small proportion and low level of title-owning in early-childhood centers, the positions with government budgets are remarkably lacking. For a long time, local governments have had a firm grip on the number of budgeted posts in the public early-educational services. Against the backdrop of a commendable increase in the provision of ECE services, private kindergarten teachers and public teachers who do not have budgeted posts constitute the bulk of teaching staff (Wang, Guo, & Wu, 2014). Being mired in the constricted permanent positions, many classrooms in early institutions cannot be assured of a relatively moderate student-teacher ratio and hiring a large amount of temporary staff has to be the last option. Compared to practitioners with a permanent position, teachers without a budgeted post annually earn 2 to 3 times less or, even worse, are not entitled to a title promotion, pay bonus, awards, or in-service professional training opportunities (Wang, Guo, & Wu, 2014). Besides,

Wang (2014) also finds that staffing standards for public kindergarten teachers are incorporated into the standards for primary and secondary teachers. The lack of independence in staffing exposes the early-childhood staff to the ambiguity of the teacher identity (Lin, 2012).

Decreased Child-Driven Play

Active play is so central to a child's development as it allows children to develop creativity and imagination while developing physical, cognitive, and emotional strengths. Play is how children learn to socialize, to think, to solve problems, to mature, and most importantly, to have fun (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010). When play is allowed to be child-driven, the results are that children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue (Ginsberg et al., 2007). When play is controlled by adults, children acquiesce to adult rules and concerns and lose some of the benefits play offers them, particularly in developing creativity, leadership, and group skills (MacDonald, 1993). Children's free play is also defined by Mao (1999) as an activity that is characteristic of children's autonomy and complete control of the play-contents, time, locations and selections of play-objects. It is utilized as a comparison relative to group activities and collective whole-class activities. While free play puts emphasis on the child's autonomy, it also needs the teacher's appropriate guidances.

Playful opportunity (free-play experience with materials along with active exploration and object manipulation, such as object-play) facilitates the learning process and is more useful and favorable than non-playful practice (training session, adult tutoring, passive observation) according to previous theoretical works (Loizos, 1967; Smith & Dutton, 1979; Zammarelli & Bolton, 1977; Dansky & Silverman, 1973, 1975; Sylva, 1977). While adult tutoring contact with disadvantaged children

could benefit the children's cognitive and social growth (Smilansky, 1968), the equal amount of play tutoring does not benefit the normal children in the same way (Smith & Dutton, 1979). Apart from fantasy play, other forms of play combined with adult tutoring contact— such as play tutoring or skills tutoring in a non-playful context— do not exceed the effects of playful practice upon learning on a task (Zammarelli & Bolton, 1977; Smith & Dutton, 1979). The finding from Sylva (1977) shows that while both groups of children completed the task with help of the experimenter, the 3–5-year-old children, who were given a play opportunity (10-minute free play with materials) needed less help and fewer task hints in the problem-solving process than those children with training experience on a task (2-minute solution demonstration by the experimenter). When the task becomes harder, which needs some greater degree of innovative or flexible thinking, Smith and Dutton (1979) find that 4-year-old children with playful practice (play opportunity) solved the problem faster and needed fewer or no hints. Conversely, children with non-playful practice (training experience) showed less motivation toward problem-solving. It seems that the more challenging the task the more innovative applications of previous experience, rather than solely following specific instructions, are required. The innovative behavior sequence is not likely to be directly learned through non-playful practice.

Theoretically, the main advantage of a play opportunity over non-playful experience "might be in a slightly more innovative problem-solving situation" (Smith & Dutton, p. 831). Koehler (1926) finds that after the ape learned to use a stick to draw in food, he tried then using it very soon for other special behaviors such as poking, digging, and dipping. The variant explorations in a higher variety of tools uses gives chimpanzees widespread efficacy in tool manipulation and subsequent complex-problem-solving. This very crucial feature of tool skills is not only possessed in chimpanzees, but in humans (Bruner, 1972). The trying out of variants in different contexts can produce the flexibility that makes tool use possible and

efficient. Notably, this remarkable transformation for the young to manage immaturity is processed in a relatively pressure-free, playful environment. Special skills and behaviors are more likely to be developed with no incentive and freedom from reinforcement (Bruner, 1972; Dolhinow & Bishop, 1970). The speculation by Bruner indicates that the ways for the young chimpanzees to manage immaturity include a pattern of observation of adult behavior and a pattern of play. The observed behavior occurs more likely in play within a more relaxed setting, rather than "under the pressure of a lure which they attempted to obtain" (Schiller, 1952, p. 186). The special behaviors and skills for using an object in a new arrangement are not specifically learned and trained, but due to maturation facilitated by general functional experience. Those behaviors will be practiced, perfected, and varied in a playful setting, but inhibited when the youth is reinforced to perform a play behavior (Barsh, 1972; Bruner, 1972).

Regarding the first hypothesis, results reveal different proportions of child-driven play and teacher-organized play during daily routines and care; the teacher-organized play has a larger portion of time than child-driven play. This finding is consistent with previous research which finds that child-driven play is decreasing in the kindergartens of today. Several studies also indicate the reasons why the kindergarten of today is characterized by a reduction in opportunities of free play.

First, it is important to note that today children's play is, to a much greater extent, different from the play of yesterday. In the past, play often occurred in a multi-age group; younger children learned to play from the older "play experts" and through observation and imitation they acquired skills. In contrast, most of the play activities today are happening within the kindergarten setting in which the teacher plays an important role in helping and guiding children to master play skills. Considering that the children surrounding them are all same-aged, inexperienced

peers the play forms become more adult-directed and the teacher has taken the role of play expert.

Second, a heightened focus on academic skills and readiness for the elementary school have resulted in the child-unstructured play being taken away and replaced by a more structured, aim-oriented, teacher-controlled play. The emphasis on academic reinforcement is, on one hand, due to the increasingly competitive modern society. On the other hand, academic emphasis is inextricably intertwined with the Chinese tradition—the Confucian values. Confucius (551-479 BC) is the Chinese philosopher, educator, and politician and the Confucian tradition affects "the Chinese people's definition of self, life goals, and ways of getting along with others within the family and in society at large" (Lin & Tsai, 1996, p. 158). It is hard for the Western world to imagine how deeply Confucian philosophy and its practices influence the people and their values throughout China. Although there are some other value systems in traditional Chinese culture, such as Daoism and Buddhism (Lin, 2008), Confucius' wisdom holds a unique and preeminent position in forming and maintaining Chinese culture and imposes its influence on every aspect of the societal progress (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Lin, 2008; Sun, 2008; Fairbank & Reischauer, 1973; Johnson, 2013; Hu & Szente, 2009; Yim, 2011), particularly in the field of education (Sun, 2008; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Chen & Chung, 1994).

Confucius stresses the importance of a moral education and the five virtues centered on in Confucian values: Ren (benevolence), Yi (righteousness), Li (courteousness), Xiao (filial piety) and Zhi (wisdom) (Yim, et al., 2011). Illustrative of these values is the believe that "Knowledge, if apart from the main stream of humanity, serves little purpose except as an adornment" (Lin, 1994). The Tao of the human (the true nature of a moral being) is placed at the most important position in Confucian philosophy. One cannot realize the Tao without learning and education. Therefore, the utmost morality can only be possible to achieve in a lifelong process of

self-cultivation (Sun, 2008). Obviously, Confucius believed that the degree of a person's achievement on morality depended on his invested efforts and diligence. Only via education, lifelong learning, self-cultivation and practice may a person reach the stage of an ideal human model. The end of Confucian education is to cultivate the person with noble morality, outstanding knowledge, and multiple skills. "When one enjoys learning, one is close to knowledge. When one is never tired of learning, one becomes a person of wisdom" (Sun, 2008, p. 570). In Confucian educational practices study encompasses finding a good teacher and imitating his words and deeds. The pedagogical methods are characteristic of posing questions, citing passages from the classics, and using apt analogies, aiming to finally enlighten the students to arrive at the right answer. Six arts are emphasized to learn: ritual, music, archery, chariot-riding, calligraphy, and computation (Jeffrey, 2013). The belief that "Learning to be human is the core of Confucian educational philosophy" (p. 575, Sun, 2008) and that the emphasis is on education and learning in Confucian thought has gradually become rooted in the Chinese people's minds after 2500 years. In light of the perfectibility and educability of human beings "education should be provided for all people without discrimination" (Chen & Chung, 1994). Confucian emphasis on education is reflected in a modern Chinese family and their belief that the children's education is always the absolute priority of the family issues. The one-child-per-family policy introduced in 1979 and formally phased out in 2015, has also inflamed this orientation and caused some social concerns are reflected in the "4-2-1 syndrome" (Zhu, 2009; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989)— that is, four grandparents and two parents are all investing their hopes and ambitions on the only child. Inevitably, a Chinese single-child faces great expectations from elders in regard to academic performance starting from the preschool years (Hu & Szente, 2009). As the Chinese saying goes, if anything is to be impoverished, it is not education; If any people are to suffer, it is not children. The Chinese parents, from the perspective of

the child's natural development, hope their children have a happy and carefree childhood; yet, with considerations of the children's future development, parents will also think that "happiness is people's own rich and powerful mind" (Hong & Howes, 2014, p. 47), which contributes to the children's future academic success (Hu & Li, 2012)—an obvious reflection of the philosophy of Confucianism.

Furthermore, the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), or gaokao, is broadly viewed by the Chinese as one of the most important means to "affect an individual's future occupation, wealth, and social status" (Wang, 2010, p. 16). This purely academic examination is implemented to measures one's knowledge and evaluate the students' underlying level of intellectual ability. Even today it is regarded as the most practical and effective approach to provide the massive population with opportunities for receiving higher education (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). However, in the implementation process some imbalances of the entrance policies and operational procedures among different areas create disparities. Those factors include the provincial fixed-quota admission policies, the province-specific college entrance examination questions, and the independent enrollment policies developed by different top-level universities (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Wang, 2008a, 2008b; Wang, 2010). The college entrance examination is highly selective and ultra competitive. Only top-performing students can be accepted by the prestigious universities (Brandernburg & Zhu, 2007; McBean, 2008). All of the elements above only serve to inflame the parents' anxiety and they hope for the implementation of academic-oriented kindergarten curriculum—with a focus on literacy, mathematics and reading, rather than on children's free play (Hu & Szente, 2009; Zhu & Zhang, 2008)—will reward their children with a head-start and a level of preparedness for future academic success.

Confucianism has been closely intertwined with the Chinese people's ethics of daily life. Correspondingly, it is seen as the pragmatic rules for the daily behaviors.

One of the key principles is the hierarchical relationship among people. As mentioned above, the Confucian philosophy emphasizes a person's inherent qualities (higher morality) through constant learning and self-cultivation. The leader, therefore, is supposed to be one who exemplifies characteristics such as benevolence, righteousness, courteousness, filial piety, and wisdom. In regard to the relationship between leader and follower the leader demands absolute authority and the followers' loyalty, deference and obedience (Chen & Chung, 1994; Fu & Tsui, 2003), which is reflected through three sides: giving directives that the followers must conform to; making centralized decisions; and maintaining a large and hierarchical power distance between leader and followers (Lin, 2008; Chen, 1995; Javidan et al., 2006; Dorfman et al., 1997; Chen & Chung, 1994). This hierarchical nature has influenced not only past and current Chinese leadership (Lin, 2008), but also the educational practices. In the classroom this nature is translated to the methods whereby the teacher always dominates the instructional activities in a more authoritative manner while the students are more inclined to obey and conform to teacher's orders and requirements.

"Collectivism is not indigenous to China" (Lin, 2008, p. 304) and it stresses the fact that "all citizens of the country are required to enjoy each and every resource of the county in an equal manner" (Lin & Huang, 2014, p. 39). The most salient feature of collectivism is to "benefit the entire group, not any one individual" (Lin & Huang, 2014, p. 39). Similarly, Confucian tradition defines selfhood "in the social whole" (Lin & Tsai, 1996, p. 159) and collective interests take precedence over self interests. The emphasis on group interests relates to the love of country. When individual interests are contradictory to national interests, one should sacrifice the personal interests for the betterment of the larger society, a highly emphasized tenet in the Confucian moral code and also "the most important vision of collectivism" (Lin & Huang, 2014, p. 40). Hence, Confucianism has been broadly

regarded as the leading factor in China to keep political, economic, cultural, and societal activities organized and implemented in a collective fashion; "Confucianism leads to a strong perception of collectivism in China" (Lin & Huang, 2014, p. 40).

Similarly, the early childhood-education in China is not only affected by the traditional and Western cultures, but also communist culture (Zhu, 2009; Wang & Spodek, 2000). The communist ideals such as Maoism and Marxism, are highly valued and seen as "contributing to society" (Hui & Tan, 1999; Hunt & Meindl, 1991; Fu & Tsui, 2003). According to Fu and Tsui's study (2003) on Chinese leadership, the communist party members must first of all serve the people wholeheartedly, even at the expense of themselves (p. 425). The leader must develop and possess some moral attributes such as collectivism, self-sacrifice, service, honesty, and loyalty. Collectivism is reflected in the educational practices in which "children see themselves as part of a group and think and act in terms of 'we'" (Hu & Li, 2012, p. 20). Self-centered individualism is tempered and younger children in kindergarten are more inclined to "obey authority and seek needs and goals as a group" (Hu & Li, 2012, p. 20). Their activities are less likely organized in the form of free play, which is in accordance with the previous studies that suggest Chinese teachers are more accustomed to didactic and directed instruction.

Third, many parents still hold the long-standing viewpoint that child-driven play is useless and only with the teacher's involvement and guidance can and will younger children learn. To a large extent, this thought is in compliance with the survey results. In the query of children's self-selective activities, one teacher in the interview noted that the adult's role must not be downplayed during play and children could learn things through those interventions.

Being a kid is not what it used to be. Our kids are growing up so fast that the lines that used to distinguish between adulthood and childhood are becoming blurred (Kathleen, 2002). Those forces contributing to "hurried child" are not only coming

from mass media, but from adults themselves (David, 2001). The modern competitive society incites more parents' fears—that their children can end up losers when they lag behind at the starting line. Even children who have done very well at school are still required, by their parents, to go to a tutoring center or a variety of interest-oriented courses because from the parents' point of view, their kids seem to lack the killer instinct needed for success in today's world (David, 2001; Kathleen, 2002; Ginsburg, 2007). The booming business of youth marketing provides superficial services for a child's all-around development, and parents often view buying those services as an essential element of good parenting. According to Li (2011), 90.7% of the younger preschoolers living in urban regions have participated in at least one extracurricular course. More specifically, 57.7% of the children took two extra-curricular classes, 31.3% attended three, and 11% took four or more interest-oriented courses from Monday to Sunday. By contrast, merely 9.3% of the preschoolers did not take any extra-curricular activities during their early childhood period. Parents are succumbing to peer-pressure and imposing adult standards of success and achievement on children, ultimately hoping to push their kids to excel at earlier ages with adult-supervised or adult-driven activities (David, 2001; Kathleen, 2002; Ginsburg, 2007). In fact, those extra services and tools have left children overscheduled and, apart from time for sleep and eating, there is no chance for free and child-driven play. Although the over-programmed kids in the modern world are suffering from burnout and their childhoods have been bent out of shape (Kathleen, 2002), some things still don't change—namely, children value their relationships with their parents and other adults, and the high-quality interaction time is one of the basic aspect of child rearing. However, more and more parents complain that they have less and less time for their children because of work pressures. Adults rush children into adulthood because they themselves are victims of stress which is societally induced and passed along generationally (Nancy, 1985; David, 2001).

Another reason for decreased child-driven play is that many parents worry that unstructured play can be unsafe and that the teacher as the cooperator, observer, and protector in the setting is obliged to be involved to ensure the child's well-being. The overemphasis on safety makes the play become more stereotypical, general, and lack imaginary situations. In America, for example, some schools have chosen to ban games or activities deemed unsafe and, in some cases, to discontinue recess altogether in light of the many issues connected with child safety (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Some even reduce recess time to make room for the improvement of children's academic abilities (Ginsburg, 2007) which is terrible considering that recess, whether performed indoors or outdoors, will make children more attentive and more productive in the classroom (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2004). Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills (Ginsburg, 2007). The benefits of interruptions are best served by unstructured breaks rather than by merely shifting from one cognitive task to another to diminish stresses and distractions that interfere with cognitive processing (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2004). Play is child's work (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010), but overemphasis on safety has, to some degree, reduced many children's ability to reap the benefits of play (Ginsburg, 2007).

Teacher's Dominant Role in Teacher-Organized play

A compelling, and growing body of evidence supports the belief that play and academic learning are compatible (Campbell, Ramey, Pungelli, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Gardner, 1995). Meanwhile, adults can facilitate children's learning in preschool settings by maintaining a pleasurable atmosphere known as "guided play". Fisher (2009) defined guided play as a synergistic learning process, in which learning continually oscillates between planned, teacher-enriched contexts and self-directed,

emergent learning contexts over time. Guided play sits between free play and direct instruction, which incorporates adult-scaffolded learning objectives but remains child-directed. In guided play, teachers define the learning goals and are responsible for maintaining focus on these goals in child-directed activities, which is a critical point for the adults to ensure children's learning outcomes in a playful environment (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013). The guided play, on one hand, involves children's active engagement, flexibility, plenty of fun, and no extrinsic goals. On the other hand, it is infused with curricular content through providing play activities. Guided play is not only structured and teacher-facilitated, but also simultaneously child-centered (Nicolopoulou, McDowell, & Brockmeyer, 2006). In guided play adults might enrich the environment with objects/toys (Berger, 2008); teachers may enhance children's exploration and learning by commenting on children's discoveries; by co-playing along with the children; through asking open-ended questions about what children were finding; or exploring the materials in ways that children might not have thought to do (Ash & Wells, 2006; Berk & Winsler, 1995; Callanan & Braswell, 2006; Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Singer, & Berk, 2010). However, guided play may transform into adult-directed experiences when teachers intervene too much. Adults must continually evaluate and be highly sensitive to the line between child-centered learning activities and direct instruction, otherwise this developmentally appropriate approach could become overly intrusive in the children's learning (Fisher, Hirsch-Pasek, Golinkoff, Singer, & Berk, 2010).

Regarding the second hypothesis, results revealed that in teacher-organized games 83.1% think it necessary to plan every procedure of a game before operation, and during the game proceeding 58.3% support belief that the teacher should intervene instantly when the child does not follow the planned play procedures. Only 19.4% think it unnecessary to provide guidance. Additionally, in the interview one teacher stressed that, due to the potential pressure added by the parents, the

practitioner took considerable responsibility for children's safety. Adding to that the relatively high teacher-children ratio and limited space of a kindergarten, a kindergarten teacher had to be very scrupulous about what kept children engaged. One teacher also commented: '*the play environment in the West is culturally different from the one in China. I can't allow to let the preschoolers in my group out of my sight'*.

As mentioned above, teacher-guided play is structured, teacher-facilitated and child-centered. Combining play and more structured efforts can lead to gains of content knowledge, retain children's active engagement and accelerate their readiness for school and long-term development (Kagan & Lowenstein, 2004). More importantly, the adult's role in guided play is active, although not dictatorial (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013). The adult follows the child's lead and allows the child to engage in discovery within the context of a prepared environment with subtle scaffolding. Unlike direct instruction, in which the children's attention is manipulated by a teacher and does not emerge from their own interests, teacher-guided play will represent a context to contribute to child's self-efficacy (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013; Regoff, 2003; Mayer, 2004). Therefore, instant intervention in play when the child does not behave correctly would seemingly not contribute to the child's self-exploration and further reduce their interests and motivations of active participation. Huston-Stein, Freidrich-Cofer, and Susman (1977) find that younger children manifested less prosocial behavior such as cooperation, empathy, and understanding in adult-directed activities. The adult input was significantly higher and made the preschool-aged children lack in opportunities of autonomy and imaginative play. Also, sensory stimulation is insufficient and replaced by frequent restrictions on maintaining specific body positions. The class atmosphere is inclined to be more critical and less warm, leading younger children to show less tendency and willingness to initiate more informal, positive, responsive,

and playful interactions with the adult (Muste & Sharpe, 1947; Prescott, Jones, & Kritchevsky, 1967; Huston-Stein, Freidrich-Cofer, & Susman, 1977). This approach is more successful in promoting children's specific types of cognitive skills, although the specific cognitive skills acquired are not an accurate predictor of later school success and, by comparison to the other attributes— such as social participation, curiosity, and inventiveness— which do not function in a more lasting way (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Miller & Dyer, 1975). Within a more adult-dominated classroom structure the children's attention is more likely directed toward tasks and in accordance with teacher's expectations. Meanwhile, the younger children possess a poor performance of independent self-regulation. When the adult supervision is absent, the continuing engagement, concentration and persistence in activities is obviously tempered and decreased, which aligns with Beller's findings (1969) that the high levels of adult control are negatively related to a child's independent task-oriented behavior.

Vygotsky's student Daniel Elkonin (1977, 1978) raised the idea of mature play. He identified the main structural elements of play as roles, pretend actions, the use of props, and the relationships children build during play (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Also, he identified four levels of play, ranging from less to more mature. The mature play is characterized by the following features: (1) The way props are used in mature play differs from the way the same objects are used in real life. A stick is used as a horse or a banana as a cellphone; (2) The child's actions and logic are determined and directed by the role, along with consistent actions, speech and interactions that fit this character; (3) When a child acts in a way inconsistent with the real-life logic of actions, other children will try to correct it and avoid breaking the rule; (4) The roles are well defined and relationships between the characters are well-performed throughout the entire duration of pretended play; (5) Mature play is high quality play scenarios, in which preschooler children take more time to plan and negotiate and

some even play multiple roles (Bodrova & Leong, 2015; Leong & Bodrova, 2012; Bodrova, 2008). A growing body of research has investigated how pretend scenarios and fictional stories contribute to the child's cognitive and social capacities. What distinguishes pretend play from other playful activities is its maturity and contribution to children's symbolic understanding, theory of mind, and counterfactual reasoning (Weisberg, 2015). In many circumstances when parents or school administrators replace play in an early childhood classroom with more academic activities, they are prompted by the fact that the play they see in classrooms is actually happening at an immature level (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). An mature play should "leave the true state of affairs behind" (Weisberg, 2015) and create a representation of someone's mental states in a hypothetical or counterfactual scenario, in which children in the pretend frame generalize the information from the non-real and fantasy tasks.

In terms of the roles of adults and children, Fisher's theory about guided play and Elkonin's theory about mature play are not contradictory, rather, they are inherently in accordance with one another. Fisher's theory stresses the function of the teacher as a facilitator while Eikonin's emphasizes the role of children as initiators in teacher-organized play.

Theoretical and Practical Reasons to Temper Knowledge-Orientation

The results of this study indicate that kindergarten teachers do not favor the assumption that more academic content should be taught to younger children. Here, in the queries of the contents of curriculum, conducting form of the curriculum, teacher's subjective thoughts about the curriculum, children's transition from kindergarten to the first grade, and external evaluation of the teacher's performance, it is concluded that academic-oriented learning and teaching is not to be advocated.

It is possible that the disagreement of the academic-oriented approach may have been due to the fact that kindergarten teachers gradually know and understand the importance of younger children's social-emotional development. The formalized, teacher-centered, content-directed learning and teaching approach may be an appropriate option for elementary schooling, but not for the early-aged children in kindergarten. The didactic fashion may lead to the academic success in the short term, but in the long run children's self-initiated learning experiences will have a more active stimulation for the child's all-round development and their later school success. One could still argue that kindergarten teachers place academic learning in a subordinate position due to the policies launched by the government. Since 2010 the State Council and Ministry of Education issued a few important documents to emphasize on the importance of early childhood education and strongly against the existing tendency to educate younger children too early in the form of primary schooling.

The results of this study confirm the earlier research into the learning of academic content for early-aged children (Elkind, 1986; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995; Meyer, Gerstner & Gutkin, 1983; Carnine, Carnine, Karp, & Weisberg, 1988; Katz, 1991; Bredekamp, 1987). In their studies the academic-oriented, teacher-directed, content-centered, didactic method was opposed as the researchers found that the younger child should not spend most of their time on learning academic content in kindergarten through the formalized approach. Rather, with the teacher's appropriate scaffolding the children should engage more in the self-initiated activities. Obviously this observation leads to the question: why should the younger child be actively engaged in self-initiated activities rather than academic-oriented learning activities?

First, in combination with currently domestic conditions in China, the low proportions of academic learning in kindergarten are likely in connection with the

policies launched by the central government. In February 2010, the State Council issued the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2010) and promulgated it until 2020, one-year preschool education should be universalized nationwide, two-year preschool education basically covered, and three-year early-childhood education in areas with suitable conditions popularized. The outline puts an end to the preceding undesirable situations lasting for years in which preschool education was on the margins of the national education system. In October, 2010, *Some Opinions of the State Council on Improving the Development in Current Early Childhood Education (ECE)* (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2010) was issued and the "Ten Regulations" were listed. The principles stipulated that preschool education should pay attention to individual differences, combine education with recreation, insist on playing games as the basic activity, and prevent and rectify the tendency to educate children too early in the form of primary school. *The Notice of the Ministry of Education on Standardizing Early Childhood Education and Preventing and Correcting the Tendency to Primary Education* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011) was enacted and put a heavy emphasis on preventing the tendency of early-childhood caring to elementary education. When implemented, the Notice states that any form of examinations for entrance to primary school is strictly forbidden. The kindergarten needs to provide a rich variety of materials and activity areas and insist on placing games as a basic activity. Any academic contents belonging to elementary schooling are forbidden to teach in advance. Instead, the child's self-initiated activities and experiences should be enriched and encouraged. The *Early learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged 3-6 (ELDG)* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012) also stressed that the transition from kindergarten to the first grade should be well handled. It is strictly prohibited to compact the elementary curriculum in

kindergarten or to ramp up the teaching pace in the first grade. The two-way transition between kindergarten and the first grade should be proactively explored. The prescribed prohibition of early childhood caring transformed into primary education and the perpetual emphasis on child-centered education values are a typical embodiment of implementing Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) principles and altering the preceding situation that in China "the teaching methods are quite different from the developmentally appropriate practices" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 198).

Second, from the theoretical perspective, the previous studies by Siegel, Katz and the DAP can further clarify the necessity and importance of the emphasis on pre-primary children's self-initiated activities. Sigel (1987) defended the belief that children were eager learners; adults should make full use of this advantage and provide basic knowledge and learning experiences for a child's future intellectual development. Instead, based on the research on cognitive development, Siegel notes that due to the biological developmental limits at a particular age, the young children learned academic subjects such as memorization of words, number counting always in a rote, mechanistic way. They could not wholly understand the concepts and skills, which made learning more difficult. Besides, Siegel warns that when the children came to believe the reason why they were valued and praised was what they learn, how they performed, and what skills they possessed that would easily lead to children being stuck with achievement anxiety. Further, in terms of the kindergarten curriculum question about "What should be learned" Katz (1991) put forward that four types of learning goals needed to be taken into account: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings. The teacher-centered, academic-oriented instructional processes promote children to acquire knowledge and skills, but that does not guarantee what they have acquired can be used and applied; "Having" is not necessarily "doing" (Cantor, 1990). Subsequently, Katz (1993b) defined disposition

as a "pattern of behavior exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control, and that is intentional and oriented to broad goals" (p.16). According to Katz's definition, we can conclude that when a child has acquired skills and knowledge for reading—and in the meantime, he possesses a robust disposition to be a reader—then he will manifest the reading performance more frequently, mindfully, and voluntarily. Not all dispositions are desirable, as Katz notes, a child can develop a positive disposition such as curiosity, creativity, cooperation, resourcefulness and persistence, but can also complain consciously and frequently and is inclined to be a complainer (Katz, 1993a). Given the fact that younger children's positive dispositions possess an important and predominant position in the development, its function needs to be recognized by the practitioners and teachers should consciously exploit and cultivate a child's dispositions in the early childhood environment.

First, many researchers have indicated that younger children learn most effectively in an interactive setting. Children's dispositions are environmentally sensitive and they can be acquired, promoted, or weakened in an interactive environment with adults and peers (Katz, 1986, 1992, 1993a; Bertram & Pascal, 2002). Katz did not ignore the teacher's important role in the kindergarten setting and suggested that through appropriate scaffolding the teacher should promote the child's desirable dispositions and contain their undesirable dispositions, such as intolerance, impatience and selfishness because it is "adults [who] tend to respond to children in ways that increase the chances that the characteristics they already have will be strengthened; and only the adult can break the cycle the child is caught in" (Katz, 1986, p. 8). Given the fact that some dispositions could help children use and bring their acquired knowledge and skills into practice has, therefore, a great implication to enlighten the kindergarten teacher and guide them toward appropriate kindergarten curriculums and teaching methods (Katz, 1991; Katz, 1993a).

Second, Katz notes that a high amount of drill and practice will do harm to the formation of the child's dispositions. The introduction of academic learning into the kindergarten curriculum featured by worksheets, drill and practice, mechanic reading, and reciting in rote way, cannot prove to be the best way to serve children's intellectual and social growth. The emphasis on academic-oriented learning can elicit an outstanding performance on standardized tests in the short term, but in the long run, the influence can be counterproductive. Younger children are more inclined to follow the adults' requirements, but their willingness at a given age is not a reliable indicator to testify how valuable an activity for their learning and development is. A content-centered approach conducted through formal instruction methods might assure the child's academic success, but it damages their dispositions to use and apply them. On the other hand, the children can also not perform well when they only possess dispositions and not the required skills and knowledge (Katz, 1992). "The acquisition of reading skills and the disposition to be a reader should be mutually inclusive goals of education," as Katz (1993a) pointed out.

Third, some dispositions, especially intellectual dispositions, can be inborn and less malleable. Thus, the teacher's appropriate scaffolding and self-displaying play a critical role to enriching the child's experiences and stimulating their dispositions. The teacher's supporting role is indispensable but that does not mean it can be achieved through a didactic, academic-directed, teacher-controlled process. Rather, children acquire dispositions through adult modeling. Katz (1993b) points out that "If teachers want their young pupils to have robust dispositions to investigate, hypothesize, experiment, conjecture, and so forth, they might consider making their own such intellectual dispositions more visible to the children" (p.19).

The emphasis on the child's cultivation of positive dispositions—such as curiosity, creativity, cooperation, friendliness, or to observe, experiment, inquire, investigate, examine and so forth—is an answer to the question "what should be

learnt?". It provides us with some indications and enlightenments about the contents, teaching methods, and the direction of a kindergarten curriculum, which aligns with the research result that most teachers chose children's everyday activities in the kindergarten classroom as the curriculum, rather than the academic classes, the teacher-organized game or the child's free play.

Katz's research provides us with some paramount insights into the question "What is being taught" in kindergarten and stresses the cultivation of the children's dispositions as more important in the long-term than only achieving the academic learning in the short-term. As Elkind (2001) points out:

> any effective early-childhood educator is both directive and nondirectve and offers content that is both pre-academic and not pre-academic … Early childhood classrooms are not easily divided along the lines of direction versus non-direction, nor along the lines of content that is pre-academic versus content that is not. What really distinguishes them is whether or not the direction and the pre-academic contents are developmentally appropriate (p. 20).

Elkind's theory avoids the eternal debate about whether the educational practice in kindergarten is child-centered, teacher-centered, content-directed, or academic-oriented. Rather, he chose the developmental appropriateness as the gauge to evaluate the practice in the kindergarten environment. In terms of the question "How it is being taught", the theory of development appropriate practices (DAP)（Bredekamp, 1987) supplies us with a different view to find a suitable solution.

In 1987 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a book entitled *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8* (Bredekamp, 1987). The book was written to describe developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and inappropriate practices (DIP) for 4 and 5 year olds. Some guidelines were listed,

which were aimed to provide preschool and child-care teachers with educational strategies and help them address the decisions about how best to professionally meet the needs of young children in general. In the first set of NAEYC guidelines, developmental appropriate practices (DAP) are theoretically supported by a Piagetian, or, in other words a constructivist. Teachers serve primarily as resources to the children's self-initiated learning. The revised NAEYC Guidelines take a more Vygotskian, social-constructivist approach, suggesting that teachers play a significant role in children's learning.

The core of DAP lies in three areas of the teacher's knowledge. First, the teacher's knowledge about children's age; the teacher needs to grasp what children of a particular age are and are not able to do, as well as what children at a certain stage do or do not like. Second, the teacher's knowledge about a child's developmental status. Children differ in many aspects, such as personalities, interests, strengths, special learning needs, socioeconomic status, approaches to learning, and so on and based on the children's developmental variations the teacher needs to treat each child as an individual and focus on the individual appropriateness. Third, is the teacher's knowledge about contextual factors. Narrowly, the context can be viewed as the family. Broadly, the context can also be seen as the social and cultural community featured by their values, traditions, expects and ambitions. Arguably, the appropriate practices include that the teacher creates a learner community, where caring relationships between adults and children are developed. In this early-childhood setting children feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable rather than stressed and frightened. Children learn to acknowledge the differences of others, respect them and value each person. Added learning pressure is avoided to prevent frustration and the discouragement of children. High-quality mature play will be promoted by the teacher's effective scaffolding. A rich variety of materials, challenges, and ideas are presented to ensure all children's full participation. The child-initiated activities are

encouraged to maximize the self-regulatory, linguistic, cognitive, and social benefits (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Bryant, Clifford, & Peisner, 1991; Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, Fleege, Mosley, & Thomasson, 1992). In contrast, the inappropriate practices are those in which "the teacher directs all the activity, deciding what children will do and when; the teacher does most of the activity for the children; children are expected to sit down, watch, be quiet, and listen, or do paper-and-pencil tasks for inappropriately long periods of time; a major portion of time is spent passively, sitting listening, and writing; large-group, teacher-directed instruction is used most of the time" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 54).

Age and individual appropriateness are the underlying cores of DAP (Bredekamp, 1993) and widespread agreement has been made that the DAP approach should provide children with considerable opportunities for self-initiative activities and exploration of concrete materials (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Furthermore, an interactive approach to learning and teaching is also emphasized (Bredekamp, 1993). Children achieve learning through the interaction with the adults (Bredekamp, 1993). Considering that children's cognitive development in DAP is achieved in an interactive process, Bredekamp (1993) stresses that this interaction contains both teachers and children. They must be all actively engaged in interaction, rather than either only children or only teachers initiating (Bredekamp, 1993). Therefore, we can conclude that the emphasis on the appropriate practices does not mean that the teacher doesn't teach or the teacher-directed activities should be prohibited. Instead, children can be engaged in teacher-directed activities. Child-initiated activities do not occur without the teacher's guidance and direction (Bredekamp, 1993). DAP does not exclude large group, highly structured, or teacher-directed activities; however, the dominant social regularity is defined by constant use of diverse, child-initiated activities (Huffman & Speer, 2000; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & DeWolf, 1993).

Integration of DAP Values into the Chinese Context

Against the backdrop of China's economic reform and Open-up policy at the outset of 1980s, the influx of foreign values and ideas such as those of Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey and Montessori have considerably altered the child-rearing values and practices in China (Zhu & Zhang, 2008). In 1989 the National Education Committee (the former Ministry of Education) enacted the *Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures* whose spirit not only embodied the shift from formal education to child-centered play but included other activities which emphasized individual difference. This document has been widely viewed as the attempt to apply Western philosophies and ideas about "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" (DAP) into the educational practices in China (Hu & Li, 2012; Zhu & Zhang, 2008). However, the DAP theories and practices have generated considerable discussion and controversy in this field concerning child-centered teaching and a play-based approach. Traditionally, the pre-primary children would be educated in a didactic manner within a big group. The teaching method is teacher-directed along with a degree of the child's deference and "is geared towards total group instruction instead of individual learning" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 196). Thus, the enactment of government regulations brings the front-line practitioners into the dilemma of maintaining a balance between DAP principles and traditional practices in the Chinese context. The specific cultural requirements and conditions inevitably influence the teacher's instructional beliefs and practices in early-education. In order to help the practitioners become capable of reaching and implementing the government regulations, the Ministry of Education subsequently issued the *Guidance for Kindergarten Education (trial version)* (2001) and *Early learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged 3-6 (ELDG)* (2012). The *Guidance for Kindergarten Education (trial version)* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2001) stipulates that the educational contents of preschool should

be comprehensive and enlightening, and could be relatively divided into five different content domains: Health, Language, Sociability, Science and Art. Content across different areas should be mutually-developed and promote the children's development of emotion, attitude, capability, knowledge and skills. Also, the Guidance suggests teaching be delivered multilaterally, rather than monologically. The *Early Learning and Development Guideline for Children Aged 3-6 (ELDG)* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012) is based on the main five domains (Health, Language, Sociability, Science and Art) with suggested specific expectations respectively aimed at children aged 3-5. The expectations were listed in detail to make educational practitioners and parents understand what a child should know, what a child could do, and to what developmental cap a child of each age might reach.

The new guidelines (ELDG) published in 2012 provide effective methods on how to observe, record and evaluate children's learning and development against the backdrop of the application of DAP principles into educational practices in kindergarten classrooms and the new demands on the caregiver, who is expected to have a good mastery of children's developmental and psychological knowledge. The ELDG provides teachers with knowledge on learning patterns and the development characteristics of young children and, therefore, helps them to establish sensible expectations and step up their own professional growth. Unsurprisingly, the front-line early-education teachers found that under the new Western method organizing a game was more difficult because the teacher needed to be professionally well-versed in children's play behavior and capable of analyzing their developmental level through the observation of play (Wang, 2015). The ELDG covers the shortage of the guidelines issued in 2001 which lack the descriptive explanation about children's learning and development standards and goals at different ages. Also, it alters the situation that "China does not have any national standard or accreditation criteria

similar to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards" (Hu & Li, 2012, p. 15). The ELDG is seen today as an important gauge to monitor quality and make the governmental regulations of the kindergarten classroom into daily routines. In addition, the ELDG also corrects some of the parenting misconceptions and offers practical recommendations to parents.

It is assumed that the "overall beliefs in a DAP philosophy and engagement of DAP instructional practices" (McMullen et al., 2005, p. 461) varies across nations and "what defines quality care and education and what is considered 'appropriate'" (McMullen et al., 2005, p. 452) differs as well within different traditions and cultures across the world. It appears that Confucian and socialist traditions are at odds with Western ideas (McMullen et al., 2005). The DAP's underlying values, such as individual creativity, autonomy and critical thinking originate from American individualist culture and may not be well adapted for, and integrated by, the Chinese Confucian and socialist customs which hold that collectivism and the group interests should always be the first consideration (McMullen et al., 2005). As Wang and his colleges (2008) note, "cultural influences are necessarily reflected in early childhood teachers' beliefs about early childhood curriculum and in their classroom practices" (p. 228). In the deep-rooted Confucian culture, group achievement and altruism (rather than autonomy, imagination and critical thinking) are emphasized and encouraged. Through the teacher's guidance and discipline public correction and criticism are deployed and the children "generally appear to be orderly and attentive"(Vaughan, 1993, p. 199) because "the instructional method puts importance on whole group activities and learning, but may stifle creativity or the pursuit of the children's individual interests" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 200). In the study of American and Chinese early-education, the teacher's curricular beliefs and classroom practices are congruent with DAP principles and practices. Wang, Elicker, McMullen and Mao (2008) find that, compared with

American teachers— who always took children's interests, characteristics and individual needs into account— Chinese teachers often had to consider the practical limitations (such as large class size and limited materials) and government regulations in their teaching practices. Although teachers from both countries endorsed beliefs (including child-initiated learning, teacher-directed instruction of basic school skills and integrated curriculum), opposed the highly teacher-directed teaching method, and matched well to DAP principles and practices, there was a distinct difference in the extent to which the teaching method was deploy; that is, the Chinese teachers were more inclined to deploy "teacher-directed or early school skills-oriented instructional beliefs and practices" (p. 245), whereas American teachers tended to use a less structured and more children-initiated approach.

As Zhu and Zhang (2008) note, the Chinese kindergarten curriculum models have, in recent years, borrowed the spirit of a series of Western ideas and been reframed by those values such as DAP, the Montessori curriculum, Reggio Emilia, the Project Approach, High/Scope and the Whole Language Approach. These borrowed approaches, on one side, satisfy the increasing requirements from a certain better-off group for a higher-quality, early-childhood education. Yet, on the other side, the Western approach and their quality rating tools and standards will likely deprive the Chinese people of their unique cultural value orientations and make the regulators blindly chase the high standard regardless of the local conditions (Zhu, 2006). As the educational anthropologist Tobin (2007) points out, "many countries … have much less ability to stand up to pressure to introduce a Western approach to early childhood education" (Tobin, 2007, p. 142). It is widely assumed that the world today is becoming increasingly connected without regard to geography or distance. With globalization comes many benefits such as the exchange of freer ideas and modification of the educational systems across nations to afford the global citizen with a standard of flexibility, innovation, international horizons, and critical thinking.

The educational reform in China, which aims to transform the skills-based education system into a more constructivist approach (characteristic of child-initiated learning and respect of child autonomy), is exactly an embodiment of this current trend (Hong, 2010). However, globalization is not the predominant impetus to incite changes, rather, the local culture's implicit values and traditions act as a counterforce and are resistant to those alterations. The implicit cultural beliefs and practices that are implicit are less open to scrutiny, criticism, and reform efforts (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). That implicit cultural knowledge has been deeply rooted in the pedagogical practices and is always overlooked by reformers and regulators. Jiang and Deng (2008) also note that early-childhood education is closely connected with the Chinese native culture. Depending on what kind of cultural settings, conventions, and fashions there would be a kind of educational standpoint, basis, and vision for early-childhood education. The Chinese traditional thinking mode—with a stress on heritage but which also de-emphasizes innovation—will likely lead to doctrinairism of foreign ideas and values (Wang, 2011). However, the blind adoption of Western philosophies and theories could not be viewed as the integration into globalization and educational modernization. The assumptions of quality standards in early-childhood education are not "universal, generalizable, and non-contextual" (Tobin, 2005, p. 424). Without taking into consideration "Chinese taste" and being obsessed with the criteria of the evaluative tools and standards, early-childhood education would likely be locked into over-rationalism.

As Tobin (2005) notes, "the beliefs and practices of a culture can not be meaningfully evaluated using the criteria of another culture" (p. 425). Some core values of American quality standards in early-childhood education—such as small class size, low adult-children ratio, constructive intervention in children's disputes, scaffolding children's social development and adult modeling—seem to produce higher educational quality, but some cultural beliefs are reflected in their pedagogical

practices—such as higher adult-children ratio, teacher-centered and academic curriculum, less play, and group-teaching— and should not be fully denied or seen as the direct antithesis of good quality, if only because these beliefs challenge the "universalized" American quality standards. In other words, it is clear that "attempts to come up with universal, decontextualized, external standards of quality are conceptually flawed, politically dangerous, and often counter-productive" (Tobin, 2005, p. 425).

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) is currently one of the most widely used research instruments in preschool classrooms (Cassidy, Hestenes, Hedge, Hestenes, & Mims, 2005). ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005) contains seven subscales to evaluate the process quality in settings for children: personal care routines, space and furnishings, language reasoning, activities, program structure, interactions, parents and staff. With an extensive reflection of the values of the DAP, ECERS-R has been applied into some conspicuous research projects in the United States such as: Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES 2003); More at Four (MAF) Evaluation in North Carolina; and the Study of Early Child Care and Youth and Development (NICHD SECCYD) (Clifford, Reszka, & Rossbach, 2010). However, due to the cultural and contextual differences between China and the Western nations, some ECERS-R subscales fail to distinguish the quality differences among Chinese kindergartens (Hu & Szente, 2009; Dai & Liu, 2003; Hu & Li, 2012; Hu, 2015). For example, the relatively big class size and low teacher-students ratio in the Chinese context make it impossible to assure enough individual interactions between the teacher and the children; under the dual influence of collectivism and Confucianism the emphasis on teacher-directed, group-teaching cannot conform to the ECERS-R's criterion for substantial amount of time for free play; the inclusion of disabled children is also not in accordance with the native conditions throughout most of the kindergartens in China as they are not serving the

children with special needs (Hu, 2015). Therefore, some modifications of the instruments are necessary in order to highlight the cultural specific relevance (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sammons, Melhuish, Elliot, & Totsia, 2006; Mathers, Linskey, Seddon, & Sylva, 2007). Based on the ECERS-R's seven subscales, Li, Hu, Pan, Qin and Fan (2014) developed a new subscale called "whole-group instruction" in order to evaluate how effectively a teacher gave a group lesson, examining seven aspects: objectives and content of teaching; emotional support; instructional design and organization; teaching process; instructional support; student performance; and classroom culture. This new evaluative instrument is seen as a potent step to fill the long-standing vacuum of psychometrically sound measures to assess the quality of early-childhood education in China. A few studies with the use of CECERS have already been conducted in the Chinese social and cultural contexts as well (Cheng & Wang, 2013; Chen, Hu, Fan, & Li, 2013; Yang, Hu, & Du, 2013; Hu, Zhou, Li, & Roberts, 2014; Hu, Vong, Chen, & Li, 2015; Hu, Fan, Leong, & Li, 2015).

Group-teaching has long been one of the organizational forms of early-childhood education in China (Cheng & Wang, 2013). Given the relatively large class size, group-teaching is widely seen as am effective approach to solve the problem of teacher-student ratio imbalance. Meanwhile, the teacher is viewed as the primary source from which children gain experiences and helps children construct, share, and regroup their acquisition of knowledge in a more systematic way (Liu, 1997). Also, it is proposed that teacher-directed, whole-group teaching is the most efficient way to fulfill the aforementioned teacher's roles and functions. Considering the tremendous parental expectations of their children's academic success, the goal-oriented group-teaching is to some degree preferred to learner-centered free play (Hu, Fan, Leong, & Li, 2015; Hu, 2015). Hu, Fan, Leong and Li (2015) conducted the empirical investigation on whole-group teaching and children's free play on a daily basis in Chinese kindergartens which found that whole-group instruction was an efficient

approach in Chinese sociocultural contexts. Within the collectivist cultural environment, group-teaching improved the instructional efficiency and fostered a sense of group responsibility, cohesion, altruism, sharing, generosity and belonging. It contributed to maximizing the children's developmental outcomes and was "therefore culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate" (p. 10). Nikolakaki (2012) notes that in the prerequisite of the decentralization of the teacher's power, group-teaching can "develop collective forms of thinking and action its members could not develop outside the group" (p. 400). Based on the Chinese native conditions, Zhu (2014) suggests that kindergarten curriculums consist of two aspects: group-teaching and play. Play takes a critical role in the child's natural physical and mental growth, whereas group-teaching assures that the child's development is in accordance with the societal and cultural demands. Notably, one is useless when the other is lacking: when group-teaching is over-emphasized, the kindergarten curriculum will tend to be transformed into academic-centered elementary education. For all intents and purposes, and against the backdrop of early-childhood education reforms based on child-initiated Western values and ideas, group-teaching in many Chinese kindergartens has diminished and all the activities are even generally called "play activities" on a daily basis. The introduction of the universalizing standards such as DAP, NAEYC quality standards and Reggio Emilia "carries the cost of a loss of local specificity and national diversity" (Tobin, 2005, p. 428). The subsequent problem that arises is the generalization and dissimilation of "play activities". Many front-line practitioners complain that knowing the Western ideas does not necessarily assure new ways of behaving and that they do not know how to teach today even though they could teach well in the past. In contrast, the teachers who previously were not adept at teaching are now "more happy-go-lucky" (Zhu & Zhang, 2008, p. 178).

Group-teaching is attuned to the local Chinese context and is an indispensable part of kindergarten education. While it does not coincide with the NAEYC— advocating multicultural, constructivist, and child-centered approach— it should not retreat from progressive practices (Tobin, 2005). On the other hand, we must admit that the pedagogical and curricular concentration of group-teaching has its own limitations. Zhu (2014) points out that teachers tend to impose the instructional goals onto the children and it had been a long-standing conundrum to transform the external instruction goals into children's intrinsic interests and self-needs. In group-teaching, lecturing and demonstrating are the primary formats for delivering knowledge and there is an obvious paucity of diversity. The teacher's interactive responding focuses on some simple statements of encouragement and praise such as "well done" and "very good", but there is a lack of teacher inductions to promote children's self-exploration and critical thinking (Cheng & Wang, 2013). Li (2012) studied seven well-organized kindergarten open-courses in the form of group-teaching and found that the frequency of teacher questioning in class was too high to leave children with chances for in-depth thinking and free exploration. Rather, the class was inclined to be filled with asking and cramming. The way of answering was more often in the collective and assigned form. Furthermore, in order to assure the group-teaching proceeded in a pre-planned path, the teacher seemed more likely to assign the more competent children to answer questions and ignore the randomly-appearing teachable opportunities. Additionally, due to the intrinsic culture values that emphasize authority (Wang, 2011), the younger children seemed fully engaged with question-answering and seldom asked a question in return or in a proactive way. Those failings can be further highlighted in rural kindergartens across China (Yang, Hu, & Du, 2013).

Benefits of A Positive and Responsive Interaction

The results of this study suggest that teacher as a mediator towards children's tattling behavior, tends to use positive, responsive techniques to interact with the child. Meantime, teachers are inclined to believe that child disputes are most likely to happen in free activities, and least likely to occur in teaching activities.

We can speculate about why kindergarten teachers are inclined to implement an positive, approval-oriented manner to deal with children's tattling behavior. The responsively interactive way may be more effective to upgrade the developmental level and improve child's functioning. This interpretation is manifested by the findings in conjunction with results of studies by Fagot (1973) and Segel (1982). Fagot (1973) found that in a class, in which children were task-involved and oriented, came along with a specific characteristic of teacher talk. Teachers tended to actively respond to child's questions rather than giving information directly. Avoiding less criticism and direct guidance, the responsive interaction contributed to a child's persistence in a single task and reduced the rates of nontask behavior, such as wandering, being unoccupied, following the teacher or sitting. Fagot also found that teacher's physical affection to children would lead to their dependency and this interactive manner would make child less able to play and work independently. The forms of teacher talk such as criticism, suggestion, and direction will create different influence on children' on-task behavior. More suggestions, for example, will elicit the development of children's autonomous behavior, while the use of directions will discourage child's autonomy and this controlling interaction makes them less independent and constructive in play behavior (Hamilton & Gordon, 1978). Positive social interaction with teachers provide children with emotional security, and secure-attached children are more likely to be involved in the intensively interactions, in which the teachers are observed more responsively, sensitively, and less detachedly (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989; Howes, & Smith, 1995). Meantime, children

immersed in the creative activities along with positive interactions would reach further cognitive growth (Howes, & Smith, 1995). In the classroom emphasizing on teaching, the positive verbal expressions are presented by questions, explanations and praises (Layzer, Goodson, & Moss, 1993).

Siegel found that different types of teacher talks imposed on different effects on child's cognitive growth. The verbalizations containing more detailed statements, more information, more expression of ideas would bring child's cognitive status from a static equilibrated state into a dynamic nonequilibrated state. In order to cognitively restore order and fix discrepancies, children would try to re-present their previous experiences through transforming information or respond by anticipating outcomes. Siegel proposed the distancing strategies. The distancing interaction lies in proportionately more elaborate communication styles. The higher-level elaborate statements from the teacher are aimed at eliciting more comments from the child through posing contradictions and discrepancies, requiring shifting of perspective and offering more options for solving problems. In contrast, teacher's authoritative talk featured by more restriction, more directive, limited and stereotyped statements will not function to upgrade child's cognitive development (Smothergill, Olsen, & Moore, 1971). In addition, teacher's level of questioning is seen as a basic technique to facilitate child's problem-solving process, which contains at least three domains: discovery, novelty, and generalizability (Blank, 1973; Duncan, 1959; Estvan, 1969; Gagne, 1964; Shaftel & Crabtree, 1963). The level of teacher inquiry will place different degree of demands on the child's cognitive processes. By changing their question-asking techniques and aiming at more appropriate level of cognitive questioning, more of child verbalizations are likely in response to teacher elicitation. This elaborative style will promote the development of intellectual operations and the growth of problem-solving facility in the young children (Turner & Durrett, 1975). This pattern of findings suggests that the communication style establishes a close link

to young children's performance in the classroom setting. Teacher's expressions including proportionately more elaboration, rather than proportionately more directive statements will booster child's initiative, reflection and flexibility and enable the preschool-aged to generate significantly more alternative solutions to problems. Furthermore, Siegel also stressed that the elaborative style of teacher talk expedited the process of younger children's development in socioemotional respect.

Child Disputes and Teacher Involvement

This chapter centers on the discussion of practitioners' handling of child's disputes, primarily embodied by the dealing of younger children's tattling behavior. The further representation will be unfolded in three directions: the necessity of teacher involvement in child disputes, child's concept of authority and teacher's effective coping strategies against tattling behavior.

Necessity of Teacher Involvement in Child Disputes

The manner of teacher-children interaction exerts direct influence on child's social and cognitive performance. Thus, teacher involvement in child disputes seems likely more necessary. This is suggested by Krasonor and Rubin's (1983) finding that the conflict initiator achieved their goals on a higher rate of possibility through an aggressive act. That is, the adoptions of aggressive act strategy "predict better success than others" (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983, p. 1546), even though they are less socially acceptable (Patterson et al, 1967). While the tendency to conflict is going to decrease with age (Dawe, 1934), some investigators have emphasized that retaliation and aggressiveness increased as children grew older (Hall, 1899; Levy, 1925; Dawe, 1934). Children's conflictual behaviors are affected by dyadic factors (different patterns of actions chosen in interpersonal communication, such as communicative, instrumental, or aggressive moves) as well as dispositional factors (individual personality traits, temperament) (Hay & Ross, 1982). A dyad's interactive experience

is likely restricting the occurrence of conflictual behavior; on the other side, a child is more likely than the winner to initiate the next dispute when they lost a dispute at the beginning, which indicated the individually dispositional difference.

The study on early peer relationships should not exclude the roles which caregivers take. Otherwise, the final outcomes generated can be atypical patterns (Russon, Waite, & Rocherster, 1990). Research on caregiver's directive interventions in infant peer encounters (Russon, Waite, & Rocherster, 1990) suggests that teacher intervention mostly aims at inhibiting or discouraging inappropriate behavior, but also by redirecting (redistributing toys, distracting infants away from conflict activities to opportunities for more positive exchange) or assisting peer interaction. Teacher intervention could effectively temper the rate of child conflict whereas in the absence of teacher intervention 80% of aggressive behavior would be reinforced (Smith & Green, 1975; Patterson et al., 1967; Serbin et al., 1973; Roff & Roff, 1940; Clarke-Stewart, 1989). Child's social competence can be conceptualized in two dimensions: the social acceptability of the behavior and the effectiveness of the behavior (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). Krasnorr and Rubin suggested that the two dimensions could be in some situation contradictory. The aggressive act seen as more effective in conflict-solving was however, less sociable and acceptable. The authors believed that "the ability to achieve a balance between social acceptability and effectiveness" (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983, p. 1556) would be in great importance and central position for children to develop. The young preschoolers are likely to learn the basics of conflict resolution with appropriate help and guidance from supportive child care providers. The finding by Chen, Fein, Killen and Tam (2001) suggests that during the formative preschool years (from 2 to 5 years of age), the older children (4-year-olds) seem to be both dependent and independent. The 4-year-olds are being more dependent because they tend to resolve peer conflicts on their own in a more elaborate and negotiative manner. Their resolutive strategies reflect the knowledge of

morality, socially conventionalized rules, and "increased awareness of 'otherness' " (p. 539). In view of child's increasing ability to resolve their own conflicts during the preschool years, the authors suggested that teacher, as the facilitator, should and could support and nurture this ability. On the other hand, the older children are also showing more dependency in face of the peer conflicts. They solicit more teacher interventions than 3- and 2-year-olds. Chen et al. held that 4-year-olds displayed more awareness of the power and authority of the teacher. In conflictual context the older children respond to their adversary by stressing teacher as "enforcers of social rules" (No, you don't. The teacher said that to me) (p. 539), which can be viewed as an evidence of child's social development.

Perhaps from the perspective of attachment theory the teacher involvement in child conflicts seems more potent. This interpretation is suggested by the findings in the study by Russon, Waite, and Rocherster (1990). Russon, Waite, and Rocherster found that in the face of the peer conflict 53% of the interventions were initiated by caregivers, while 42.5% were solicited by infants. In addition, 80% of infant soliciting was successful. "Soliciting almost guaranteed intervention" (p. 432); soliciting functions "as a social tool" (p. 432) and as alternatives to independent handle of peer problems (Russon, in press). Faced with programatic peer encounters younger children are more actively and extensively soliciting caregiver intervention and presenting considerable direct dependency. Caregiving, as an important factor in child care environment to affect children's socioemotional growth, has been proven by attachment theorists that attaching quality is a critical determinant of the quality of caregiving (Bowlby, 1969; Ward, Vahghn, & Robb, 1988; Robert, Block, & Block, 1984). A well-established emotional security with the caregiver will not only help the preschoolers competent in peer interaction, but also bring positive effect on children's personality development in later stage. In addition, Russon et al underlined that caregiver, as manager and mediator of children's relationships, took an important role

in settling peer disputes, especially in passing conventionalized routines and helping infants interpret peer social messages. Recognizing other's perspectives and forming conventionalized behavior are largely contingent on "caregiver prompting" (p. 436). These are an "important adult contribution to social competence, because they (younger children) are difficult to acquire directly from peers" (p. 433). Furthermore, quality rather than quantity of caregiver intervention is the critical element to social competence. Individual needs should be carefully considered and are viewed as an important step to improve the interfering quality in peer problems.

Child's Concept of Authority

Teacher involvement in children disputes does not mean that younger children have to obey to authority or children don't possess autonomy (DeVries & Zan, 1994; Nucci & Weber, 1995; Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2008). The 4-year-olds can understand the legitimacy of non-parental adult authority and reflect keen awareness to use authority in the handle of peer conflictual resolution (No, you don't. The teacher said that to me) (Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001). Children's right to authority and choice need to be respected and acknowledged. They are indeed in a position to speak their own voice (Schapiro, 1999; Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011) and teacher as a facilitator, "enable(s) children's voices to be heard" (Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011, p. 32). This interpretation is consistent with the psychological studies by Laupa (1994, 1986) and Muthin (2007). Laupa found that preschoolers are able to conceptualize the authority by considering four attributes: adult status, adult knowledge, adult's social position and type of act commanded (Laupa, 1994; Laupa & Turiel, 1986). In children's reasoning about authority (including assessing the legitimacy of authority and showing obedience to authority), the adult's position in a social organization functions and adult's knowledge place more importance than adult status. In addition, in terms of child's rationales for obedience to authority commands when adults gave opposing command type, researchers found that children were not

primarily oriented to obeying commands from adults. Instead, they made judgements about the commands' legitimacy based on the nature of the commands, rather than the dictates of authority, that is, preschoolers judged whether the commands were acceptable acts and causing harm. (Damon, 1977; Laupa,1991) Therefore, children's concepts of authority is not unitary. They do receive and reject commands and form differentiated understanding about the boundaries of authority jurisdiction within the context of a social system.

Meanwhile, Muthin (2007) disagreed with the existed idea that younger children did not possess any autonomy due to the lack of knowledge and experience, volitional stability, rational and reflective capacities. The lack of volitional stability refers to children being seen as heteronomous and not yet being able to speak in their own voice and understand the long-term effects of their decisions. However, Muthin insisted that younger children can exercise personal autonomy, or self-governance in some areas of their lives. Child does have a self and child's personal autonomy refers to a matter of "governing and guiding their activities to accord with what they value, care about, and want to accomplish" (p. 539) and "hence can act autonomously" (p. 540). Specifically, "child's intimate relationships with adults (for example, child's love for caregivers) will provide them with volitional commitments" (p. 541), even though the child doesn't possess the volitional stability in the early developmental stage. Muthin noted that volitional commitments referred to child's endeavor to bring about the desired outcomes that were in accordance with their love and cohered with what they care about most. Volitional commitments boost child's confidence and provide them reasons for action. Such commitments is an crucial factor to govern their activities being consonant with what they care about things, ideals, or persons.

Muthin opposed to the notion that child's emotional dependence was an evidence of heteronomy. Instead, the emotional bonds could be a source of autonomous self-governance (autonomy). Muthin borrowed the work of Harry Frankfurt about the role

of love, which argued that the nature of love would make a person shape his priorities and that would guide and constrain their acts. “Love can be a source of autonomy” (p. 547) and “young children are willing to give up momentary satisfaction in order to avoid hurting those they love” (p. 544). “When a child loves a parent, friend, or caregiver, and this love plays a role in guiding and constraining the child’s activities, then the child has some local autonomy” (p. 544).

In consideration of the importance of the relationship between volitional commitments and emotional dependence in child’s exercise of autonomy, Muthin indicated further that emotional independence was not a prerequisite for autonomous agency (autonomy). What matters is “the character of the relationship” (p. 542), is “whether the more dependent person is given room to develop and express interests and commitments” (for example, child is given room for options and they will likely be in active responses to adults and pleased to receive and give) (p. 543). In addition, Muthin suggested that paternalism was not excluded in child’s exercise of autonomous agency, but highly required. Considering children’s lack of pertinent information and experience and incapacity of making good decisions, caregivers’ behaving paternalistically will do some good to avoid the harm. Adults should value, respect and support child’s efforts, and meantime, adult’s persuasion, constraint, or act opposing to what child cares about are also needed. As Muthin noted, “good relationships with young children require a combination of respect for children’s already existing autonomy, support for their development of skills and capacities which enhance autonomy, and varieties of caregiver behavior that constrain those activities that appear to threaten the children’s long-term interests” (p. 549).

Teacher’s Appropriate Coping Strategies in the Face of Child’s Tattling Behavior

The study by Layzer, Goodson and Moss (1993) on interactions between adults and children found that in a slot of programmatic activity, teachers were actively engaged with children in the classroom nearly 70 percent of the time, but not

individually, rather within the group. The individual interaction did not take place among more than half of the children. Similarly, in the research of the relationship between teacher talk and child functioning in daily childcare routines Wilcox-Herzog and Kontos (1996) found that within 3 feet of the target children, the teachers spent 81% of the time keeping no talk, less than 20% of the time engaging in the high-level teacher talk (suggestions, open-ended questions, and elaborative statements). It could be concluded that on one side, teachers were inclined to use high-level talk when they interacted with children; on the other side, only a small proportion of high-level teacher talk took place in the process of interaction. A further speculation could also be made that high frequency of high-level talk was not necessary and important compared with the proportion. The type of teacher talk, rather than the amount and frequency of teacher's verbalizations, matters in influencing children's competence. Another research on the supportive classroom structure also supported this argument. Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips (1990) found that in a whole observation period, the time that teachers were engaged in the most intensive responses and interactions with the toddlers accounted for 27%; the time with the preschoolers accounted for only 10%.

In view of the previous outcomes and experiences on the teacher-children interaction, the handling of child disputes should likely not be frequently responded. The results from this study shows 51.8% of the teachers held that higher frequency of teacher's response to peer disputes did few good to reduce the conflict behavior. While the frequency of adult involvement is positively related to children's attachment to caregivers (Howes & Smith, 1995), and type and amount of adult involvement are also related to the overall classroom quality (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992), this is not the same case in the context of child disputes. This interpretation is also suggested by the finding from Russon, Waite, and Rocherster (1990). The authors found that teachers took an important role in children's grip of

conventionalized routines because younger children could not directly acquire them from peer interactions. Moreover, children's aggressive behavior will not be reinforced when teacher interferes appropriately (Smith & Green, 1975). In view of the inconsistence between child's behavior on social acceptability and the effectiveness, teacher can provide more appropriate, supportive guidance to help children enable to achieve the balance of these two dimensions (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). Russon, Waite, and Rocherster also emphasized that quality took precedence over quantity of teacher intervention in child disputes. Individual needs should be taken into account and this is an important procedure to improve the intervening quality in child conflicts.

In addition, the rates of child's conflictual behavior is significantly related to child's gender and age (Shantz & Shantz, 1985), and knowing the goal of the adversary is also strongly predictive to solve the conflict (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). In contrast, the strategies children employ during conflicts add little predictability to the rates of disputes (Shantz & Shantz, 1985; Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). With regards to improving teacher intervening quality, several teacher-intervention approaches have been proved to be successful with which the children resolve their disputes through mediation. The contemporary finding by Mashford-Scott and Church (2011) suggested that the kindergarten teacher ought to endeavor in two aspects: facilitating collaborative action and returning authority to dispute participants. In the collaborative process of conflict resolution, the teacher puts questions to younger children and opens up the possibility for each to provide a potential solution, which the teacher displays positive acknowledgement and respect to. By repeating, summarizing and simplifying each suggestion the teacher confirms that a collective understanding of the proposed solution has been arrived at by the rest of the children. The opened multiple participation framework (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004) will likely "make all voices to be heard, not just those children who contributed a

suggestion" (p. 26) and it delivers the idea to all the dispute participants that each possesses the agency and authority (DeVries & Zan, 1994; Nucci & Weber, 1995; Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2008) to exert effect on the final dispute outcome. Meantime, some inquisitive, hypothetical questions (e.g. 'what do you think we can do'; 'I wonder if there's a different way we could do it?' 'what do you think is better'; 'what do you want to do?') (p. 23; p. 26) rather than authoritarian questions, should be raised. These responsive questions demonstrate what each alternative solution will lead to and make children more aware of its merits and demerits. Teacher as a facilitator, will directly and effectively orient children's conversations and discussions in a collective way to the ultimate dispute resolution. Another approach to improve the interfering quality is to return the authority to dispute participants. It emphasizes on the role of teacher as an outsider, while child's position is centralized in the dispute resolution (Goodwin, 2007; Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1993). Particular pronouns (e.g. 'I', 'we', 'you', 'she') need to be employed to help children aware that they possess the authority to deliver a direct complaint to the adversary. Teacher ought to show no stance on child's resolutive communication (e.g. 'and did you tell him that?') (p. 28), but they can provide advice with regard to how to express and communicate their perspective or how to resume the activity with the dispute partner.

Limitations

The present study is an exploratory study to investigate Chinese teachers' perceptions of the child-centered nurturing approach in the localized context. A large sample of Chinese kindergarten teachers were recruited to ensure a reliable descriptive analysis of the teacher's perspective on child's play, tattling behavior and academic learning. Interviews were also launched as a supplemental means to further deepen the quantitative results. However, all those samples were collected from one city in urban regions of East China. It may reflect the brief panorama of a teacher's

perception in well-developed areas, but considering the given that there is still a large population living in rural areas, the exploratory results are untenable to sum up the elaborative panorama of the whole of China's teachers' beliefs.

Although tremendous efforts have been made to scrupulously adapt the items based on well-developed teacher belief scales and questionnaires, it is important to keep in mind, that this research centers on the teacher's perceptions and beliefs. It might be a favorable predictor to figure out how teachers understand and behave in their daily practices, but it is difficult to know whether the teacher's perceptions actually represent what they are doing with younger children. This is not a rare case as practitioners during surveys chose the option of what they should do instead of what they really did. It will be helpful and essential in the future to conduct the research in both a direct and an indirect approach. The researcher directly observes how the teacher operates and organized the daily schedule in a kindergarten context and ensures what they have described aligns with what they do in a real setting.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire

Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire

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Thank you very much for participating in this questionnaire survey. This survey is centering on early childhood teacher's perceptions on child's play, knowledge-learning and teacher-child interaction. There are no right or wrong answers in each item and please chose the option(s) depending on your own daily practices. The data will merely be analyzed and used for academic study and writing. It will take you 15-20 minutes to fill out this questionnaire and please submit it before 1st, June, 2017. Thanks again for your participation and help.

****

1. What kind of games will children play mostly in your class? (multiple choices, please choose no more than three options)

A Role play
B Block-building play
C Performance play
D Jigsaw puzzle play
E Physical play
F Music play
G Language play
H Mathematic play
I Self-selective activities
J Chess and card play

2. Do you think it necessary or not to plan every procedure of children's games in advance in the teacher-organized collective games?

A Very necessary
B Necessary
C I don't know for sure
D Unnecessary
E Very unnecessary

3. When the child doesn't follow the planned procedures to play games in the teacher-organized collective games, should the teacher at this moment intervene and provide some guidances?
A Very necessary
B Necessary
C I don't know for sure
D Unnecessary
E Very unnecessary

4. Which of the following statements best describe the difficulties of organizing games you've been faced with? (multiple choices, please choose no more than three options)
A Lack of materials and fields
B Some conflicts take place among children when the roles are assigned
C Children are not satisfied with the roles assigned by the teacher
D Children don't know what to do next after the game proceeds for a while
E Children don't obey the rules and the discipline is a mess
F Children don't want to stop even if the games come to an end
G Children are not interested in the teacher-designed games
H Teacher can not intervene in the game in the right way
I Teacher can not intervene in the game in the right time

5. Do you think it necessary for kindergarten to take the elementary curriculum?
A Very necessary
B Necessary
C I don't know for sure
D Unnecessary
E Very unnecessary

6. What should a kindergarten curriculum be like?
A Having academic classes
B Teacher organizing games
C Children playing freely
D The everyday activities in kindergarten

7. In which form would you like to implement the kindergarten curriculum?
A In the form of games
B In the form of formal classes
C In the form of groups
D In the form of collective activities

E Others (please note)

8. If a teacher arranges very few academic courses and makes children spend most of their time playing, will children's parents be satisfied with this arrangement?
A Always
B Often
C At times
D Seldom

9. Will " How many phonetic letters, Chinese characters and numeracy does the child learn? " be one of the standards in your kindergarten to evaluate your performance?
A Always
B Often
C At times
D Seldom
E Never

10. Do the parents demand you to teach their children more phonetic letters, Chinese characters and numeracy?
A Always
B Often
C At times
D Seldom
E Never

11. More collective activities will transform the early childhood education into being primary education. Do you agree with this statement?
A Strongly agree
B Moderately agree
C Neither agree nor disagree
D Disagree
E Strongly disagree

12. What is your opinion towards the collective teaching activities?
A The collective teaching activities can assure children acquire basic knowledge, experience and skills. There's no other forms taking place of the collective teaching activities
B The collective teaching activities needs long time preparing and the teacher can not take care of every individual. They can be replaced by free activities and group activities

C The collective teaching actives are more suitable to the primary school

13. The teacher responds frequently to children's tattling. Do you think whether it helps or not to reduce the frequency of children's tattling?
A Always
B Often
C At times
D Seldom
E Never

14. Children's tattling takes place very often in daily routine and activities. In order to assure the ongoing activity continues, the teacher should handle and solve those "emergency events" in the shortest time. Do you agree with this statement?
A Strongly agree
B Moderately agree
C Neither agree nor disagree
D Disagree
E Strongly disagree

15. Do you think which of the following intervention ways can best solve children's tattling?
A Require the children to solve it by themselves
B Blame and punish the one who did it wrong
C Try to reason things out and help the child understand why she/he is wrong
D Teach children empathy and put themselves in other people's shoes
E Encourage the children to solve it by themselves
F Others (Please note)

16. Will you show your self emotions unconsciously such as anger and agitation when children's tattling happens very frequently?
A Always
B Often
C At times
D Seldom
E Never

17. In which of the following daily activities do you think will the children's tattling most likely to happen?
A Teaching activities
B Games

C Free activities
D Life activities

18. In which of the following daily activities do you think will the children's tattling least likely to happen?
A Teaching activities
B Games
C Free activities
D Life activities

19. What the following roles do you play in children's tattling? (multiple choices, please choose no more than three options)
A the judge aiming to solve the tattling
B the resource mediator
C the guider
D the educator aiming at bad behaviors
E the order-maintainer
F the preventer of tattling
G the listener

20. What do you think is the most important activity in children's everyday activities?
A Collective teaching activities
B Free activities
C Self-help skills learning activities (Life activities)
D Outdoor activities
E Games

Background Information

1. What is your gender?
A Male
B Female

2. How old are you?
A 18-25
B 26-29
C 30-39
D 40-49
E 50+

3. Your kindergarten belongs to
A Public kindergarten
B Private kindergarten

4. What did you major in before you started to work?
A Early child care and education
B Music and drawing
C Physical education
D Dancing
E Elementary education
F Others

5. How many years have you been working as a kindergarten teacher?
A This is my first year
B 2-3 years
C 4-5 years
D 6-10 years
E Above 10 years

6. What is your academic degree before you started to work as a kindergarten teacher?
A Junior high school
B Senior high school or vocational high school
C Secondary vocational school
D Three-year college
E Bachelor
F Master or above Master

7. What is your highest academic degree currently?
A Junior high school
B Senior high school or vocational high school
C Secondary vocational school
D Three-year college
E Bachelor
F Master or above Master

8. Do you have the teacher certificate for preschool?
A Yes
B No

9. Are you satisfied with the income currently?
A Very satisfied
B Moderately satisfied
C Slightly satisfied
D Dissatisfied
E Very dissatisfied

10. What was the reason at the time to choose to be a kindergarten teacher?
A My parents arranged it.
B I like children.
C To be a teacher is my dream.
D I was eager to find a job.
E I don't know.
F Others (please note)

11. You are so far still working in the kindergarten. What's the reason?
A Because I like this job.
B Because I have made the choice. I need to continue to do so.
C Because this job is a reflection of self-value.
D Because I need to earn money and make a living.
E Because I don't want to leave my colleagues.
F Others (please note)

12. What do you think of your daily workload in the kindergarten?
A Very high
B Moderately high
C Neither high nor low
D Moderately low
E Very low

Appendix B: Teacher Interviews

Interview Questions:

1. Can you please describe the activities from children entering kindergarten to leaving on a daily basis?
2. Given the fact that academic learning and play are not mutually exclusive, will you organize children's play in a collective form?If yes, what kinds of preparations will you do for the play?
3. How do you see the decreased children's self-selective activities?
4. One of the reasons for decreasing self-selective activities is the limited play materials and space in Chinese kindergartens. Do you agree with this argument
5. Academics are generally not given major emphasis until children reach age. Do you agree with this argument?
6. Kindergartens are normally grouped into juniors (3-year-olds), middle (four-year-olds), and seniors (5-year-olds). When the children enter the senior class, it appears inevitable for them to learn academic knowledge. Why and in what form do the children learn knowledge?
7. Without supplying the academic curriculum it will adversely affect the kindergarten's enrollment numbers. Do you agree with this argument?
8. By comparison with the importance of play, do you think it necessary to maintain the collective activities in early childhood setting?
9. Parents are nowadays struggling to seek for advantageous conditions and give their children a leg-up for academic advantage, is this the reason why we can not give up on the collective activities?
10. Imagining that children in senior groups don't currently go to the extracurricular courses, will they be able to catch up with the pace in elementary school?
11. How do you see the teacher's authority on a daily basis in kindergarten?

12. Emphasis on the collective whole-class activity also reflects the need to maintain the teacher's authoritative image. Do you agree with this argument?

Appendix C: Background Information of Multinomial Logistic Regression

Here is Table D describing the characteristics of the variables		
Variable Name	Value	Variable Assignment
Years in ECE	1~5	One year or less one year=1, 2-3 years=2, 4-5 years=3, 6-10 years=4, More than 10 years=5
Kindergarten Type	1~2	Public Kindergarten=1, Private Kindergarten=2
Highest Degree	1~2	Junior college or below=1, Bachelor or above=2
Degree before ECE	1~3	Senior high school or below=1, Junior college=2, Bachelor or above=3

Table E about some descriptive results			
		Number	Marginal Percentage
Teacher’s angry response to child dispute	Often At times Never	20 411 59	4.1% 83.9% 12.0%
Daily activities in which children’s disputes most likely happen	Teaching Activities Games (teacher-involved, child-centered) Self-selective Activities Life Activities	23 125 301 41	4.7% 25.5% 61.4% 8.4%
Teacher's role in outdoor play	Safety Protector Discipline Maintainer Supporter and Facilitator Play Cooperator	101 12 282 95	20.6% 2.4% 57.6% 19.4%
The most important condition to game organization	Surroundings and Sites Game Materials Game Duration Teacher’s Guidance	142 193 51 104	29% 39.4% 10.4% 21.2%
Necessity to take elementary course	Necessary Undecided Unnecessary	52 91 347	10.6% 18.6% 70.8%
Highest Degree	Junior college or below Bachelor or above	78 412	15.9% 84.1%
Degree before ECE	Senior high school or below Junior college Bachelor or above	26 292 172	5.3% 59.6% 35.1%
Kindergarten Type	Public Kindergarten Private Kindergarten	426 64	86.9% 13.1%
Total		490	