Journal of Contemporary Educational Research, 2026, Volume 10, Issue 1
http://ojs.bbwpublisher.com/index.php/JCER
ISSN Online: 2208-8474
ISSN Print: 2208-8466

Exploring a Practical Teaching System Model for Preschool Education Guided by Teacher Certification Concept and Standards: The Case Study of Shanghai Sanda University

Xing Li

College of Education, Shanghai Sanda University, Shanghai 201209, China

Abstract: The concepts and standards of teacher certification provide a scientifically sound approach to addressing issues such as unclear practical teaching objectives, single content, irregular management, and inadequate safeguards in preschool education programs. This approach centers on a comprehensive practical teaching system structured around "four modules and three tiers": a content framework encompassing skill training, course-based practice, educational practice, and innovative practice; and a management system grounded in dual-mentor guidance and institutional protocols. This model offers a reference framework for practical teaching in preschool education programs at private applied universities.

Keywords: Teacher certification; Preschool education; Practical teaching system

Online publication: February 4, 2026

1. Research background and significance

Teacher education program certification, as a vital component of China's teacher education quality assurance system, holds profound significance for standardizing program development and enhancing teacher training quality. Its core principles—"student-centered, outcomes-oriented, continuous improvement" [1]—require teacher education programs to establish practical teaching systems aligned with graduation requirements, ensuring students acquire sufficient practical competencies and comprehensive literacy. In the field of early childhood education, policies such as the "Teaching Standards for Early Childhood Education Programs (Higher Vocational Education, Undergraduate Level)" [2] have established a fundamental requirement that practical teaching hours constitute no less than 60% of total instruction. This underscores the critical role of practical teaching in preparing early childhood educators.

Shanghai Sanda University's School of Education actively responds to teacher education certification requirements, defining its goal as cultivating high-quality early childhood educators who possess: sound

professional ethics, correct educational philosophies, passion for the field, solid theoretical knowledge and professional skills, strong practical application abilities, innovative thinking, and lifelong learning capabilities. In recent years, through multiple research exchanges, the college has continuously absorbed advanced practices to optimize its practical teaching system.

This research aims to systematically examine the current status, distinctive innovations, and existing challenges of the practical teaching system in Shanghai Sanda University's Early Childhood Education program based on teacher education certification standards. By conducting an in-depth analysis of its practical teaching model, it seeks to provide a reference example for practical teaching reforms in early childhood education programs at similar institutions, thereby promoting the intrinsic development of the discipline.

2. Conceptual framework for building the practical teaching system from the perspective of teacher education program certification

2.1. Positioning of practical teaching objectives

Guided by teacher education certification standards, Shanghai Sanda University's Early Childhood Education program closely aligns practical teaching objectives with graduation requirements, particularly focusing on key indicators such as teaching and care competencies, classroom management skills, comprehensive educational capabilities, and reflective research abilities. The program explicitly cultivates students' mastery of "Ten Professional Skills," encompassing comprehensive competencies in playing instruments, singing, drawing, dancing, narrating, crafting, composing, observing, describing, and writing. Skill proficiency is assessed through evaluations and competitions. These skill requirements directly support the achievement of graduation criteria related to educational knowledge and competencies, as well as holistic education.

At the objective level, the program establishes a three-tiered competency development pathway: foundational skills → integrated application → innovative research. This aligns with the core pedagogical certification principles of "learning to teach, learning to nurture, and learning to develop." The foundational skills tier focuses on training fundamental teaching competencies across domains; the comprehensive application tier emphasizes the ability to design and implement complete educational activities; and the innovative research tier concentrates on cultivating reflective and research capabilities regarding educational practice issues. This forms a progressive practical teaching objective system aligned with accreditation standards.

2.2. Systematic design principle

Guided by the outcome-based approach of teacher education certification, the early childhood education program employs backward design in its practical teaching system. This involves first analyzing industry demands for preschool teacher competencies, then defining graduation requirements, and finally designing practical teaching components and content. This systematic approach ensures seamless integration between practical and theoretical instruction, along with progressive and coherent practical learning sequences.

Emphasizing the concept of "continuous improvement," the program certification has established a dynamic adjustment mechanism within the practical teaching system. Through regular collection of feedback from practice bases, graduate tracking surveys, and analysis of industry demand changes, the content and methods of practical teaching are continuously optimized.

3. Model construction of Shanghai Sanda University's practical teaching system

Based on teacher education certification standards, Shanghai Sanda University's Early Childhood Education program has established a comprehensive practical teaching system centered on a "four-module, three-tier" framework. This system integrates practical teaching throughout the entire talent cultivation process, achieving an organic integration of theory and practice, on-campus and off-campus learning, and academic study with real-world application.

3.1. Four-module practical teaching content system

The Skills Training Module focuses on cultivating foundational skills for early childhood education students. Addressing the graduation requirement of "care and education capabilities" in teacher education certification, it offers specialized training courses in visual arts, dance, music, and piano skills. The program has also designed a ten-skill assessment mechanism to ensure every student meets fundamental standards in playing, singing, drawing, dancing, narrating, crafting, choreographing, observing, describing, and writing. Skill training extends beyond classroom learning through club activities and skill competitions, such as the regularly organized "Teacher Education Student Skills Competition," using competitions to drive practice and elevate skill proficiency.

The Course Practice module emphasizes transforming professional theoretical knowledge into practical application skills by embedding hands-on components throughout the curriculum. For instance, the core course "Language Education for Preschool Children" adopts a "theory + project-based practice" teaching model. It incorporates corresponding practical projects centered on designing kindergarten educational activities, creating activities with varying degrees of structure, and developing language-focused educational activities. While learning theory, students directly participate in designing educational activity plans and deepen their understanding through simulated teaching and case analysis. This type of course practice directly supports the graduation requirement in teacher education certification regarding the competency indicator: "Being able to scientifically plan a child's daily life based on the physical and mental development patterns and learning characteristics of children at different age levels, utilizing knowledge of early childhood care and education."

The Educational Practice module serves as the core component of the practical teaching system, comprising three progressive stages: educational study, educational internship, and graduation internship. Educational study corresponds to the observation phase, where students primarily observe to gain an initial understanding of kindergarten operations. Educational internship aligns with the job shadowing stage, where students participate in partial childcare and educational tasks under the guidance of mentors. Graduation internship corresponds to the full-time teaching placement stage, requiring students to independently undertake educational and teaching responsibilities to comprehensively develop practical skills. This integrated "observation-study-internship" design aligns with the natural progression of teacher professional development, enabling students to gradually adapt to their professional roles and progressively master educational competencies. To ensure the quality of educational practice, the college has established stable internship partnerships with 43 municipal and district-level model kindergartens, providing students with high-quality practical platforms.

The Innovation Practice module cultivates students' innovative thinking and research capabilities, aligning with the teacher education certification requirements for "reflective practice" and "communication and collaboration." The college actively encourages student participation in the Undergraduate Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program through projects like "Creating Origami Storybooks for Home-School Collaboration" and "Fun Math Origami," integrating academic learning with innovative practice. Additionally,

activities such as social practice, labor education, and character development guide students to engage with real-world issues in early childhood education, fostering independent thinking and teamwork skills to lay the foundation for lifelong professional growth.

3.2. Three-tiered pathway for practical competency development

Shanghai Sanda University designed its practical teaching system following the progressive nature of competency development, establishing a three-tiered pathway from foundational to advanced:

Foundational Cognitive Level (Years 1–2): Primarily consisting of on-campus training and short-term internships, students gain an intuitive understanding of the early childhood teaching profession through practical components in theoretical courses, skill training, and preliminary professional internships. They acquire fundamental educational skills. This level focuses on supporting the achievement of foundational indicators in teacher certification graduation requirements, such as "educational passion" and "knowledge of care and education."

Comprehensive Application Layer (Year 3–First Half of Year 4): Centered on job shadowing and integrated training, students begin applying acquired knowledge and skills in authentic kindergarten settings. They participate in designing and implementing educational activities, assist with classroom management, and experience the full scope of early childhood educators' work. This stage cultivates core competencies outlined in teacher certification—such as "care and education capabilities," "classroom management," and "holistic education"—transforming fragmented knowledge into comprehensive educational practice through hands-on experience.

Research and Innovation Layer (Year 4): Through full-time teaching placements and innovation/entrepreneurship projects, students independently undertake educational responsibilities and conduct action research based on practical challenges, developing reflective and improvement capabilities. This tier prioritizes achieving developmental indicators such as "Reflective Learning" and "Communication and Collaboration" in teacher education certification, laying the foundation for students' transition from novice teachers to research-oriented educators.

4. Conditions and support mechanisms for practical teaching

4.1. Development of dual-qualified faculty

A high-caliber faculty is crucial for ensuring the quality of practical teaching. The Early Childhood Education program at Shanghai Sanda University places significant emphasis on building a dual-qualified faculty team, implementing multiple measures to enhance teachers' practical guidance capabilities. On one hand, the college actively recruits faculty with both theoretical expertise and practical kindergarten experience, requiring professional instructors to regularly engage in practical training at kindergartens to stay abreast of frontline educational developments. On the other hand, it invites outstanding kindergarten teachers and principals as industry mentors to directly participate in practical course instruction and internship guidance. This dual-mentor system of "in-house mentors + industry mentors" provides students with comprehensive practical guidance.

4.2. Modern practical teaching environment

To meet practical teaching needs, Shanghai Sanda University has invested substantial resources in constructing modern, multifunctional training facilities. The campus houses a Preschool Education Training Center featuring specialized spaces such as game training rooms, music training rooms, health training rooms, picture book

training rooms, and Montessori training rooms. Additionally, ample arts skill training venues—including piano studios, dance studios, and art studios—are provided to fulfill students' comprehensive skill development requirements.

4.3. Comprehensive systems and management mechanisms

Shanghai Sanda University has established a comprehensive system for managing practical teaching to ensure the effective implementation of all aspects of practical instruction. The university has formulated normative documents such as the Detailed Rules for Practical Teaching Management in the School of Education and the Preschool Education Internship Handbook, clearly defining the quality standards and requirements for each stage of practical teaching.

For process management, the college employs a multidimensional approach combining "practical manuals + reflective journals + observational assessments." Students are required to meticulously document their practical experiences and reflect on their insights, with instructors conducting regular reviews and evaluations.

Additionally, the college has constructed a diversified practical teaching evaluation system. This system combines formative and summative assessments with both internal and external evaluations to comprehensively assess students' practical skill development. The evaluation content focuses not only on skill mastery but also emphasizes dimensions such as professional ethics, educational passion, and professional competence. This aligns with the graduation requirements of teacher education certification, ensuring the comprehensiveness and scientific rigor of the evaluation.

5. Implementation outcomes and innovative features of the practical teaching system

5.1. Significant achievements in practical teaching

Shanghai Sanda University's Early Childhood Education program has achieved remarkable outcomes through its systematic and standardized practical teaching system. Regarding teacher certification pass rates, 98.5% of Early Childhood Education students obtain their teaching credentials before graduation. In skill competitions, students have participated in the Shanghai Teaching Fundamentals Competition for five consecutive years, winning 9 first prizes, 5 second prizes, and 5 third prizes. For innovation and entrepreneurship projects, they secured 2 municipal-level, 7 university-level, and 8 college-level projects over the past three years. These achievements fully demonstrate students' solid professional skills and comprehensive practical abilities.

Regarding employment and career development, graduates receive widespread acclaim from employers, with an employment rate ranking among the highest across all university programs. Employers consistently request recommendations for outstanding graduates from the Early Childhood Education program at Sanda University. Most graduates quickly adapt to kindergarten work environments, demonstrating strong professional ethics and specialized competencies.

5.2. Innovative features of practical teaching

The practical teaching system of Shanghai Sanda University's Early Childhood Education program features the following distinctive innovations:

Ten-skill assessment system: The program innovatively established an assessment mechanism for ten essential skills. Through systematic training and rigorous evaluation, every student masters the fundamental competencies required of early childhood educators before graduation. This approach has gained recognition

and adoption by peer institutions, becoming a hallmark of the program.

Theory-practice integration training model: Aligned with the revised Preschool Education Teaching Standards, the program employs a dual-drive "theory + practice" teaching model. Practical courses emphasize integrating theoretical guidance with hands-on operations, preventing a disconnect between theory and practice. For instance, in health-related training, students not only master operational procedures but also comprehend underlying educational principles, achieving unity of knowledge and action.

Tiered practical progression pathway: The program's three-tiered pathway—"Foundational Understanding → Comprehensive Application → Research Innovation"—aligns with teacher professional development stages, enabling students to grow progressively. This tiered design considers the phased development of competencies while ensuring continuity in practical training, effectively supporting graduation requirements.

6. Challenges and directions for improvement

Although the Early Childhood Education program at Shanghai Sanda University has achieved significant results in building its practical teaching system, several issues remain to be addressed urgently.

6.1. Primary challenges

Strengthening integration and seamless transition among practical courses: Overlap in course content or insufficient integration exists between certain practical courses, such as the lack of smooth transition between course-based practice and educational practice components, necessitating further optimization and integration.

Uneven distribution of practical teaching resources: While on-campus training facilities are relatively well-equipped, high-quality off-campus practice bases are concentrated in Pudong New Area, making it difficult to meet all students' needs for high-quality internships. In particular, resources at model kindergartens are scarce, resulting in gaps between some students' internship environments and ideal conditions.

The dual-mentor system requires refinement: Collaboration mechanisms between campus mentors and industry mentors are underdeveloped. Communication gaps and unclear responsibilities during student guidance compromise continuity and effectiveness.

Practical teaching evaluation system requires greater scientific rigor: While current evaluations emphasize diversity, there is room for improvement in the scientific validity of assessment indicators and the effective utilization of evaluation data. A more refined matrix linking course objectives to graduation requirements should be established to ensure evaluations accurately reflect the attainment of graduation standards.

6.2. Directions for improvement and recommendations

In response to the above issues, the following improvement recommendations are proposed:

Optimize the practical course system: Guided by the continuous improvement philosophy of teacher education accreditation, regularly review practical course offerings to strengthen horizontal connections and vertical alignment between courses. Establish a "Practical Course Map" clearly outlining the objectives, content, and corresponding graduation requirements for each practical component to avoid duplication and omission.

Expand deep collaboration with practice bases: Building upon existing internship bases, prioritize establishing "Model Practice Bases" with several high-quality kindergartens. Implement multi-level cooperation, including joint curriculum development, shared faculty training, and collaborative project research. Simultaneously, develop information-based tools such as remote observation and online guidance to broaden the coverage and utilization of high-quality practice resources.

Refine the dual mentor collaboration mechanism: Establish a regular university-kindergarten mentor exchange platform, conduct joint teaching and research activities periodically, and unify guidance standards and requirements. Clarify the responsibilities and collaboration methods of dual mentors: university mentors focus on theoretical guidance and reflective improvement, while industry mentors emphasize practical skills and situational response, forming a synergistic educational force.

Strengthen evidence-based continuous improvement mechanisms: Develop a more scientific, practical teaching evaluation system, establish a course objectives-to-graduation requirements matrix, and implement goal-oriented assessments. Enhance the collection and analysis of evaluation data, conduct regular assessments of practical teaching effectiveness, and form a closed-loop system of "evaluation-feedback-improvement" to ensure the continuous improvement philosophy is effectively implemented.

Through these measures, the Early Childhood Education program at Shanghai Sanda University can further optimize its practical teaching system, enhance talent cultivation quality, and better meet the requirements of teacher education program accreditation alongside the demand for high-quality early childhood educators in the field.

7. Conclusion

Guided by teacher education program certification standards, the Preschool Education program at Shanghai Sanda University has established a systematic and standardized practical teaching system. Through its "four modules, three tiers" holistic design, practical teaching is integrated throughout the entire talent cultivation process, yielding significant results. The program's practical teaching experience demonstrates that building a practical teaching system based on accreditation standards can effectively enhance students' childcare and teaching abilities, comprehensive literacy, and employment competitiveness, while also providing a reference model for similar institutions' preschool education programs.

Moving forward, the Preschool Education program at Shanghai Sanda University should further align with accreditation principles, continuously refine its practical teaching system, strengthen resource support, and improve evaluation mechanisms. Building upon its existing strengths, the program should continually innovate practical teaching models to make greater contributions toward cultivating high-quality early childhood educators who meet the demands of the new era.

Funding

The 2023 Shanghai Sanda University Teaching Research and Reform Project "Exploring a Practical Teaching System Model for Preschool Education Guided by Teacher Certification Concept and Standards"

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Ministry of Education, 2017, Implementation Measures for the Certification of Teacher Education Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions (Interim), viewed December 22, 2025, http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/

s7011/201711/t20171106_318535.html

[2] Ministry of Education, 2017, Teaching Standards for Preschool Education Programs (Higher Vocational Education Undergraduate Level), viewed February 11, 2025, http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A07/zcs_ztzl/2017_zt06/17zt06_bznr/bznr_zyjyzyjxbz/gdzyjy_bk/bk_jyytydl/jyytydl_jyl/202502/P020250207568901431338.pdf