

Study on the Current Situation and Influencing Factors of Kindergarten Teachers' Emotional Labor

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Abstract: Kindergarten teachers belong to the high emotional labor group. The emotional labor of kindergarten teachers is closely related to the teaching quality, the teachers' mental health and the satisfaction of teachers' work. This paper explores the significance, dilemma and influencing factors of kindergarten teachers' emotional labor, and on this basis, summarizes and puts forward strategies and suggestions to improve kindergarten teachers' emotional labor, such as standardizing kindergarten teachers' emotional standards and creating a good working environment, to reduce teachers' emotional labor pressure and improve their teaching efficiency and work satisfaction.

Keywords: Kindergarten teachers; Emotional labor; Status quo; Influencing factors

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1. Introduction

The occupation of kindergarten teachers has a certain particularity^[1]. Teaching is not only a cognitive activity but also an emotional labor^[2]. In addition to teaching knowledge and skills, kindergarten teachers also need to take care of children's emotions and build a good atmosphere in kindergarten^[3]. Such a special nature of the task often requires teachers to invest a lot of emotional labor, that is, to evaluate and control their emotions to meet the requirements of the job. However, it is understood that the current situation of the emotional labor of some kindergarten teachers is not satisfactory, and many factors affect the effect of their emotional labor. This article aims to carry out an in-depth exploration of the relevant content to improve the working environment of kindergarten teachers and lay a good foundation for the healthy growth of teachers and children^[4].

2. Explore the significance and dilemma of emotional labor for kindergarten teachers

2.1. The significance of kindergarten teachers' emotional labor

With the continuous innovation and improvement of the education system, the global research on brain science and neuroscience is more and more in-depth. Regarding individual growth and improving cognitive level, we

should also pay attention to cultivating their positive social-emotional ability. In the field of early childhood education, the key to improving children's social-emotional abilities is to study how to improve kindergarten teachers' social-emotional abilities. The research shows that the emotional labor of kindergarten teachers not only directly affects the teaching strategy and teaching style of teachers, but also has a close relationship with the harmonious construction of the teacher-child relationship and the professional growth path of teachers ^[5]. The specific significance is as follows:

- (1) First, it helps to clarify the professional quality evaluation standards of kindergarten teachers. Judging from the current situation, the criteria for evaluating whether kindergarten teachers have high-level professional literacy generally include professional knowledge and skills, moral literacy, and other aspects, while the positive social-emotional ability of teachers has not been included ^[6]. However, it should be known that teachers' emotional health directly affects whether the teaching task can be successfully completed. Therefore, improving teachers' emotional labor level is conducive to their professional development to play a positive guiding role.
- (2) Second, it is helpful to help children grow up healthily both physically and mentally, and enhance their adaptability to the future society. There are essential differences between children and adults. Children's psychological world is more delicate, their thinking is unique and sensitive ^[7]. Through effective emotional labor, excellent kindergarten teachers, on the one hand, can better regulate their emotions, on the other hand, they can actively guide children to manage negative emotions and make them actively pursue positive emotions, thus enhancing their self-confidence in facing many challenges and difficulties in the future.

2.2. Kindergarten teachers' emotional labor dilemma

- (1) Lack of emotional labor training for kindergarten teachers

The training of emotional labor for kindergarten teachers is an important part of ensuring the professional development of teachers and the healthy growth of children. However, at present, although kindergarten teachers generally have an awareness of emotional labor, they only clearly understand that they should present the best state to children, but as for how to present, no matter before or after service, there is a lack of clear training and training. The specific performance is in the lack of training content, single training method, and scarce training opportunities ^[8]. Most kindergartens lack systematic and targeted training on emotional labor, and most training programs mainly focus on teaching skills and preschool education theories. As for the emotional labor aspect, there is no corresponding practical operation or explanation of coping strategies. As a result, kindergarten teachers often rely on personal intuition or experience to deal with emotional problems in practical work, which is non-scientific. It is also unprofessional, which directly affects the teaching quality of teachers and is not conducive to the emotional development of children.

- (2) There is a mismatch between preschool teachers' social treatment and emotional labor

The work tasks of preschool teachers are heavy. They should not only undertake teaching tasks but also deal with the various emotional needs of children and parents and properly provide emotional care and guidance. Most preschool teachers need to pay high emotional labor. However, nowadays, society has not fully recognized the value of the profession of preschool teachers, and sometimes, they still stay at the superficial cognitive level of "nanny", resulting in the social status of preschool teachers not significantly improved ^[9]. In addition, compared with teachers in other stages, the salary of preschool teachers is also unsatisfactory. Compared with their professionalism and labor intensity, especially in emotional labor, they fail to get corresponding material and spiritual incentives, which results in the

contrast between high emotional labor and low pay of preschool teachers, which is highly likely to reduce teachers' career satisfaction. It may also lead to a series of problems such as emotional fatigue and job burnout of teachers, which directly affects the stability of the teacher team and may also reduce the quality of early childhood education.

(3) The emotional labor of preschool teachers is heavy on inhibition and light on adjustment

Research shows that most of the emotional labor of preschool teachers tends to be emotional suppression rather than positive adjustment. In the long run, if the high-intensity emotional labor of preschool teachers is not actively supplemented or repaired, they will often feel emotional indifference, emotional exhaustion, and even a series of negative emotions will be derived. It is likely to weaken their sense of happiness and pleasure at work greatly, thus affecting teachers' education and teaching effect and children's emotional development^[10]. In the aspect of this, the training preschool teachers to face up to their emotions and positively adjust their emotions in emotional labor has become a necessary measure to improve the quality of education and maintain the occupational health of teachers.

3. Analysis of factors affecting kindergarten teachers' emotional labor dilemma

3.1. Lack of emotional labor consciousness of teachers

Emotional labor refers to the process by which individuals monitor and manage their emotional expression at work according to the requirements of the organization. However, nowadays, no matter before or after service, there is a lack of training for teachers in the cultivation of emotional labor skills and reasonable emotional expression, which may lead to some teachers thinking that teaching knowledge and daily care is all of the work of preschool teachers but ignoring that emotional management also has an important impact on children's growth^[11]. In addition, in the current large-scale examinations such as teacher recruitment examinations and public institution examinations, the contents of the examinations mostly focus on comprehensive knowledge of education and professional knowledge of kindergartens and rarely involve the investigation of knowledge and skills of emotional labor, which is one of the key factors leading to the weak awareness of emotional labor of kindergarten teachers. In addition, for post-service training, the training content mainly focuses on teaching methods and child psychology, and there is a lack of training on teachers' emotional management ability, which makes it difficult for teachers to effectively carry out emotional labor in actual work.

3.2. Teachers' emotional labor needs to be improved

First of all, some teachers focus on intellectual education but lack moral and emotional education, so the traditional education concept is very likely to cultivate children with low social responsibility and weak life abilities. Secondly, from the perspective of teachers, on the one hand, some teachers have limited emotional self-regulation ability. When facing pressure and challenges in work, they lack effective emotional release channels, which makes it easy to produce an emotional backlog^[12]. On the other hand, in the face of children's improper behavior or unreasonable requirements put forward by parents, some preschool teachers are easy to get emotional, and sometimes even overreact to children's or parents' emotions.

4. Kindergarten teachers' emotional labor dilemma solutions

4.1. Standardize the emotional standards of kindergarten teachers and enhance their emotional labor awareness

The purpose of standardizing the emotional standards of kindergarten teachers is to ensure that teachers can

show appropriate emotional responses in their daily work to have a positive impact on children. Enhancing teachers' emotional labor consciousness specifically refers to guiding teachers to fully realize the importance of emotional labor, which is an important part of teachers' professional role.

First of all, emotional labor skills should be investigated in the recruitment and appointment of kindergarten teachers. First, in the written test, emotional labor should be taken as a part of the comprehensive quality test, and the content of the written test should be enriched, which can be examined in written form or the form of case studies. Second, in the interview process, situational simulation tests and psychological quality inspections can be added, through the simulation of the real kindergarten situation, so that candidates can respond on the spot, and then the examiner examines the candidates' emotional management skills^[13]. In addition, kindergartens can also rely on third-party certification bodies to assess the psychological quality and emotional regulation ability of candidates by using professional psychological tests and other tools. The main method is communication between the examiner and the interviewer. In the process, the examiner can catch the subtle emotional changes of the interviewer in time, and then understand the key information such as the enthusiasm of the interviewee for teaching and the attitude towards education in detail. Of course, before formally hiring teachers, kindergartens can also include relevant emotional labor scale tests to grasp the overall fit between candidates and kindergarten teachers from different levels, which can also be regarded as a callback to teachers before they enter the workplace.

4.2. Create a good working environment and adjust the content of emotional labor

A good working environment is conducive to ensuring the emotional stability of kindergarten teachers, making teachers behave more naturally in emotional labor and work more effectively.

To advocate the leadership culture of emotion-oriented kindergartens, from the perspective of kindergarten managers, they should implement the idea of "people-oriented" throughout the management process. In short, kindergarten managers should fully respect and affirm the work of kindergarten teachers, such as class management, environment creation and teaching activity arrangement. In addition, the managers should strive to reduce the work burden of kindergarten teachers. To effectively solve the problem of heavy work and psychological pressure on kindergarten teachers the state has long stipulated that the allocation of teachers in each class should be "Two education and one protection." However, the workload of some kindergarten teachers is far beyond imagination, which is very likely to bring serious work burdens to teachers, resulting in physical and mental exhaustion of teachers. To effectively solve this problem, kindergartens can reduce the work burden of teachers by appropriately increasing the number of teaching staff, rationally arranging teachers' working hours, or arranging appropriate group leisure and entertainment activities for teachers, so that their bodies and minds can get pleasure and rest.

4.3. Focus on pre-service training and in-service training to enhance kindergarten teachers' ability to use emotional labor strategies

First of all, in the aspect of pre-service training, schools should focus on the cultivation of the emotional labor ability of preschool education students in normal schools. On the one hand, emphasis should be placed on the integration of emotional courses into the curriculum system of preschool education. For example, the Love and Emotional Labor in Nursing course at the University of Edinburgh provides direction and reference for the education and training of pre-primary teachers. In addition, schools should regularly organize lectures related to emotions. Schools can invite front-line kindergarten teachers and psychological experts with rich practical experience to show the correct expression of emotions for specific situations to preschool education students so that future teachers can understand the importance of emotional labor in the early stage^[14]. Of course, schools

should also strengthen the assessment of students' knowledge and skills related to emotional labor. The key is to integrate the investigation into daily learning evaluation, simulate specific situations, observe students' different emotional responses in different situations, and give targeted guidance to students to lay a solid foundation for them to carry out good emotional labor in the future formally on the job.

For post-service training, kindergartens need to provide teachers with emotional labor knowledge and skills training. This way, it will not only help to improve the emotional labor ability of kindergarten teachers but also enable kindergarten teachers to constantly self-reflect in the learning process. From the perspective of teachers themselves, they should regularly observe the process of personal emotional changes, and it is best to show this process in the form of words, which is of great benefit to them to self-reflect in time ^[15]. At the same time, teachers should also master effective ways to vent their negative emotions, such as running, listening to music, talking to friends or colleagues, etc., which are helpful for teachers to sweep away negative emotions and effectively avoid energy consumption caused by emotional labor.

5. Epilogue

To sum up, emotional labor is not only the need for the personal development of kindergarten teachers but also the key to improving the teaching effect and building a harmonious teacher-student relationship. By standardizing the emotional standards of kindergarten teachers, the awareness of emotional labor should be enhanced. To create a good working environment and regulate the content of emotional labor, kindergartens should pay attention to pre-service training and in-service training, enhance kindergarten teachers' ability to use emotional labor strategies and other measures, with the hope to minimize the generation of bad emotions, help kindergarten teachers to work better, and greatly enhance their professional joy and pride.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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