Research Article

Research on “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate Transition Examination” of Preschool Education Specialty Based on Ability Orientation

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Transition examination is the key link of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talent training, which affects the quality of talent training. Based on the study of the characteristics of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talent training, this paper puts forward the basic principles of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate transition examination” design. Focusing on kindergarten teachers' professional competence, a competency-oriented transition examination core evaluation system has been formed. The “comprehensive quality test” and “education hotspot evaluation” projects pay attention to the evaluation of students' comprehensive ability. Using “learning bank,” the process evaluation is carried out, and students' learning achievements in the first three years are brought into the transition examination core system, so that learning is motivated. Practice has proved that the comprehensive ability assessment-oriented transition evaluation is effective. The results are mainly reflected in the transformation of talent training from short-term exam-oriented education to long-term ability training. The classroom is dynamic, the teaching quality is high, the students' comprehensive quality is high, the development potential is sufficient, the teachers' achievements are outstanding, and the curriculum construction is fruitful.

1. Introduction

Education is an important part of the modern national education system, and it plays a special and important role in the implementation of the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and the strategy of strengthening the country through talents. Education can improve labor productivity and promote scientific and technological progress. Vigorously developing vocational education is an urgent need to promote China’s industrialization and modernization. Developing vocational education is an important way for China to turn huge population pressure into human resource advantage. The State Council’s Decision on Accelerating the Development of Modern Vocational Education in 2014 stated that we should promote the close connection between secondary vocational education and higher vocational education, give play to secondary vocational education’s fundamental role in developing modern vocational education, and give play to higher vocational education’s important role in optimising higher education’s structure, strengthening the link between vocational and general education and creating an “overpass” for students to make a variety of choices and develop their talents in multiple ways [1]. Beijing, Jiangsu, Shanghai, and other cities have conducted pilot projects on the through training mode of secondary vocational education and applied undergraduate education and built an “overpass” for the through training of talents, in order to implement the State Council’s spirit. The “3 + 4” and “connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” projects, for example, were implemented in Shanghai in 2014. That is, students enter applied undergraduate study for four years
after receiving three years of education in secondary vocational school through a transition examination.

In recent years, social attention has shifted to high-quality preschool education. Shanghai issued “Implementation Opinions on Promoting the Deepening Reform and Standardized Development of Preschool Education” in 2020, proposing the creation of a high-quality preschool education team and emphasizing the creation of a through-training system linking secondary vocational education, higher vocational education, applied undergraduate education, and professional master’s degree [2]. The 7-year through-type talent training mode for preschool education has solved the requirements of a long training period, a wide range of high-skill requirements, and a high degree of integration of theory and practice, solved the respective difficulties of the previous two sections, met society’s demand for high-quality preschool education teachers, and conformed to the needs of the times. Since 2015, Tianhua University, in collaboration with Shanghai Xinlu and Qunyi secondary vocational colleges, has carried out the talent training mode of linking secondary vocational education with undergraduate education in the specialty of preschool education, which is an unprecedented exploration.

The transition examination is the key point of the talent training mode of linking up secondary vocational and undergraduate education, an important means to test the quality of talent training, which is related to the efficiency and fairness of talent selection in the college entrance examination of vocational education, and plays a “baton” role in the curriculum system, teaching content, teaching methods, and student development of the seven-year integrated talent training. The project team of preschool education specialty, which is formed by undergraduate colleges, secondary vocational schools, and industry experts, has explored the important issues of what to test and how to test.

2. Teaching Principles for the Cultivation of “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate”

2.1. Goal Progression. The goal of preschool education is multifaceted and needs the active participation and joint formulation of multiple disciplines. The formulation of talent training objectives for schools of the same major and different levels should focus on solving two major problems: consistency of achieving common objectives and compatibility of phased objectives. “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate transition examination”, as a beneficial exploration of talent training mode in secondary and higher vocational education, is the inherent requirement and inevitable choice of constructing modern vocational education system and realizing the connotative development of secondary and higher vocational education. No matter what kind of education system, curriculum is the core element of that system. From the perspective of vertical integration, the training goal of preschool education professionals should be to enable students to gradually master the skills of preschool teachers. The kindergarten teachers need to have comprehensive literacy such as professional ethics and identity, cultural foundation, professional knowledge, artistic skills, childcare and education capabilities, and educational research.

2.2. Connection of Content Modules. Many factors such as teachers, students, courses, equipment, management, and evaluation will be connected between secondary vocational education and applied undergraduate education as part of the construction of a modern vocational education system. The curriculum is the most fundamental and important of them all, and other school-related activities revolve around it. It is necessary to learn from foreign experience and divide specific courses into different modules in the practice of preschool education in China, within the framework of mainstream teaching mode in secondary vocational schools and higher vocational colleges. Modules are assigned to the level of connecting schools in a reasonable manner. At every level of education, a specific number of curriculum modules is focused on so that students can achieve an excellent professional level and in-depth professional skills while learning. In order to avoid the problems of curriculum repetition and waste of educational resources in secondary vocational education and applied undergraduate education, the pilot education of connecting secondary vocabulary and graduated transition examination will play a larger role. The talent training goal of “connecting with secondary vocabulary and graduated transition examination” should be realized, and a reasonable management mechanism should be established to ensure the smooth implementation of curriculum convergence.

3. Design Principle of “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate Transition Examination”

3.1. Benchmark Market Post Capacity Demand. With the continuous development of the economy and the upgrading of the industry, the students trained by traditional vocational education cannot adapt to the development of today’s society well and have insufficient ability, unskilled skills, and poor comprehensive quality. The “3 + 4” and “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talent training mode delivers high-quality preschool teachers to the society, and talent training should pay attention to social needs. Therefore, in the early stage, the project team extensively investigated 16 competency characteristics of high-quality kindergarten teachers from kindergarten directors. The survey shows that the ability to integrate educational ideas into action, good conduct, reflection, learning, practical experience, and evaluation are the ability characteristics that kindergarten directors pay more attention to. The market demand is the direction of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talent training, and it is also the focus of the transition examination evaluation.
3.2. Reflect the Connection of Talent Training. Different from the selection of college entrance examination and "college-to-undergraduate" examination, the "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" transition examination mainly reflects the continuity, cohesion, and penetration of personnel training and ensures that students in secondary vocational schools have the ability to receive higher education in the follow-up period.

What role does the transition exam play in talent development convergence? This brings us back to the main goal of "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" talent cultivation. Currently, secondary vocational and undergraduate talent training goals are divided according to professional ability levels. The general consensus is that secondary vocational schools should focus on developing skilled talents, whereas undergraduate institutions should concentrate on developing applied talents [3]. The core of secondary vocational education for skilled talents is training in practical ability. Application-oriented talents pay more attention to the application of knowledge, design and planning ability, and cooperative innovation ability [3], rather than just the understanding and mastery of theoretical knowledge of disciplines.

Under the segmented integration design of talent training objectives, the overall training goal of "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" for preschool education specialty is to cultivate compound preschool teachers who can meet the requirements of national basic education reform and development [4, 5], develop morally, intellectually, physically, aesthetically, and laboriously, master the basic theories of preschool education, have outstanding comprehensive quality, noble morality, good comprehensive education ability, and sustainable self-development ability, and can engage in teaching and research work in various kindergartens [6, 7]. The training goal of secondary vocational school is to cultivate preschool education talents who have solid basic cultural knowledge and artistic skills, master the basic knowledge of preschool education, have good cultivation of teachers' ethics, have certain comprehensive education and self-development ability, and can engage in nursing and education in various kindergartens. Based on the segmented connection of talent training objectives, the transition examination focuses on the basic knowledge of culture and the basic knowledge and skills of preschool education and focuses on the assessment of students' comprehensive ability and sustainable development ability.

3.3. Changing the Tendency of Examination-Oriented Education in Secondary Vocational School. Teachers in secondary vocational schools pay more attention to students' achievements in foreign languages and other cultural courses and artistic skills certificates and pay less attention to what abilities students need to study in university, what they learn, and how to learn after entering university. This kind of training method [8–10] leads to the decline of students' initiative and enthusiasm, and the lack of self-development ability. In order to reverse the tendency of short-period exam-oriented education that pays attention to knowledge and skills in traditional secondary vocational schools, it is necessary to ensure the integration of "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" talent training. Therefore, through the transition examination, teachers in secondary vocational schools can know what to teach and how to teach, and students can know what to learn and how to learn.

4. Capability-Oriented “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate Transition Examination” Evaluation System

At present, Shanghai's "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" transition examination requires students to take the cultural class of unified proposition in the city and the skill level test of independent proposition in universities after completing their secondary vocational studies. After years of exploration, the project team focused on kindergarten teachers' professional ability and students' comprehensive ability evaluation according to the basic principle of "cultural quality plus professional ability test."

With the deepening of theoretical and practical research, kindergarten teachers’ professional ability has been continuously developed. In 2012, the Ministry of Education promulgated "Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers (Trial)," which put forward requirements for kindergarten teachers' professional ability from three parts: professional concept, teacher's morality, professional knowledge, and professional ability [3]. In 2021, the general office of the Ministry of Education issued the professional ability standard for teachers of normal students majoring in preschool education (Trial), which put forward four professional abilities, namely, the ability to practice teachers' morality, the ability to care, the ability to comprehensively educate people, and the ability to develop independently [11].

A scientific evaluation system is an important guarantee for "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" to achieve high-quality development. Taking the ability as the main line, combined with the relevant research results of kindergarten teachers' professional ability, based on the investigation of kindergarten teachers' post needs, and in accordance with the integrated talent training objectives of the central and local sections, the project team has constructed the transition examination core evaluation system of four ability modules (Figure 1).

Firstly, transition examination pays attention to teachers' professional ethics and identity. Compared with ordinary senior high school students, secondary vocational school students enter the preschool education professional training system three years ahead of schedule. Incorporating teachers' professional ethics, identity, and basic accomplishment into the transition examination core system is conducive to increasing students' professional identity with kindergarten teachers and improving their professional quality.
Secondly, the transition examination focuses on comprehensive cultural literacy. The senior education system trains high-quality preschool education professionals, who must have high cultural basic knowledge. According to the goal of integrated talent training, students in secondary vocational schools should have solid cultural basic knowledge to provide knowledge and ability support for subsequent undergraduate studies. Therefore, transition examination brings the basic cultural knowledge of secondary vocational school into the assessment system, which is different from the assessment of traditional cultural knowledge and focuses on the evaluation of students' comprehensive cultural literacy.

Thirdly, the transition examination reflects the professional ability. Compared with ordinary senior high school students, the "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" talent training enables students to enter professional study earlier, and students have the basic knowledge and skills of preschool education in advance, which lays a solid foundation for the improvement of kindergarten teachers' educational ability at the undergraduate stage. Combined with the phased objectives of talent training, the transition examination core evaluates students' professional basic knowledge, artistic skills, preliminary creation environment, home collaborative education, and ability to analyse and solve problems, reflecting the connection of talent training.

Fourthly, the transition examination pays attention to students' independent development ability. Nowadays, lifelong learning and sustainable development ability have become the focus of talent cultivation. Secondary vocational school students need to have preliminary reflection and evaluation ability, preliminary learning ability [12], language and writing expression ability, group cooperation learning ability, etc., so as to prepare for the sustainable development of learning ability and thinking ability [13].

5. The Concrete Implementation of “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate Transition Examination”

The project group made it clear that the purpose of transition examination is to evaluate students' comprehensive ability and accomplishment through the tests organised by undergraduate universities and to evaluate the training quality of secondary vocational schools, so as to form the feedback of talent training quality, reflect on the teaching, and finally improve the quality of "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" talent training.

Through extensive investigation of the transition examination nuclear program, the project group has built a distinctive transition examination nuclear model of independent proposition and organization in universities according to the basic principle of “cultural quality + professional ability test.”

5.1. Vocational Ability Test. The sections below explain an evaluation of “comprehensive quality test” and “evaluation and analysis of educational hotspots.”

The vocational ability test in transition examination consists of two major items, namely, "comprehensive quality test" and "evaluation of educational hotspots," with scores of 150 points and a total score of 300 points, each of which is included in the nuclear score of transition examination with 50%.

5.2. Comprehensive Quality Test. “Comprehensive quality test” requires candidates to be in a group of 4–5 people. Based on the kindergarten practice situation, within 3 hours, they will use mobile devices to investigate and search, use the materials provided (cardboard, newspaper, etc.), cooperate to complete the scheme planning, and present it in the form.
of exhibition boards. Finally, accept the reply, and form a project-based assessment procedure of "research and retrieval-scheme design-presentation and report" (Figure 2).

"Comprehensive quality test" provides students with practical situations in kindergarten, such as parent-child games in kindergarten (Table 1), children’s meals, home cooperation, and so on. It mainly examines students' ability to practice teachers' ethics, professional ability, artistic ability, problem analysis and solution ability, scientific inquiry ability, information technology application ability, information processing ability, communication ability, teamwork ability, innovation ability, language expression ability, reflection and evaluation ability, etc.

5.3. Evaluation and Analysis of Educational Hotspots. "Education hotspot evaluation" requires candidates to write a comment from their own perspective according to given educational materials (videos, pictures, words, etc.). Educational hotspots generally come from the current hot topics in the field of preschool education, such as "Resume of Niuwa from Shanghai kindergarten to primary school" (Table 2), "education under epidemic situation," and other educational hot topics, which require students to analyse the phenomena reflected in the materials and mainly examine students' comprehensive abilities such as professional ideas, reading analysis, thinking ability, and language expression. It is important for students to develop the habit of thinking and understanding the hot issues in their study and have a certain significance for students to pay attention to them.

5.4. Process Assessment and Evaluation of "Credit Bank". According to the teachers in secondary vocational schools and undergraduate courses, the students majoring in "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" lack the initiative and enthusiasm of learning, and their autonomous learning ability is poor. Students majoring in "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" enter through projects with better scores than ordinary secondary vocational school students. They think that entering the "safe box" leads to complacency, and after seven years of professional study, they are prone to slackness, weariness, and other emotions. In order to reverse this situation and at the same time change the traditional entrance examination mode with only one exam as the sole standard, the project team implemented the process evaluation method of "credit bank" to give students proper pressure and stimulate their learning motivation.

"Credit bank" is convenient for the exchange and conversion of credits between different levels of academic education in vocational education [14]. Under the "credit bank" system, the credits obtained by the process assessment are used as the basis for transfer admission. Specifically, firstly, in the process of learning cultural basic knowledge and professional skills in the first three years of secondary vocational school, according to the integrated teaching syllabus of "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate," undergraduate universities organise cross-school joint examinations for six semesters to examine students' basic cultural knowledge and professional skills (Table 3). Secondly, secondary vocational schools set up the second classroom teaching of problem-oriented inquiry, students will report comprehensive projects at the end of the term, and the undergraduate schools will organise cross-school evaluation. Through the process assessment throughout the previous three years, the results of the unified examination and comprehensive project report will be converted into credits, which will be effectively included in the transition assessment, so that students can maintain appropriate tension and improve their learning motivation.

It should be pointed out that the project team did not include the artistic skill certificates such as piano, fine arts, and dance and professional qualification certificates such as nursery teachers into the transition examination core evaluation, but in the form of the same ability level, it was designed according to the integration of personnel training, which ran through the teaching and assessment of the previous three years.

6. Main Effects of “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate Transition Examination”

6.1. Transformation from Short-Term Examination-Oriented Education to Long-Term Ability Training. At the initial stage of "Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate" talent training, teachers in secondary vocational schools paid more attention to students’ knowledge and skills, and it was difficult to change the past short-term exam-oriented education tendency. The ability-oriented transition examination core “baton” makes the short-term exam-oriented education of teachers in secondary vocational schools change to long-term ability training. For example, the teaching goal of art field in secondary vocational schools is changed from certificate examination to equivalent level ability, music is changed from piano band 4 to band 4, and fine arts is changed from fine arts skills to fine arts literacy. At the same time, students' artistic accomplishment can be improved through practical teaching such as watching exhibitions, visiting museums, and listening to concerts.

6.2. Vigorous Classroom and Improvement of Teaching Quality. Competence-oriented transition examination forces secondary vocational school teachers to break the traditional exam-oriented education that pays attention to knowledge
and skills and neglects the cultivation of students’ abilities, thus promoting the education and teaching reform in secondary vocational schools. In recent years, there are hundreds of courses in Tianhua University to carry out the reform of dynamic classroom teaching. The dynamic classroom aims to cultivate student-centered teaching, promote the interaction between teachers and students, and improve students’ autonomous learning and problem-oriented learning ability, so as to gain the reflection ability and self-study ability that will benefit them all their lives. Credit transfer can provide a variety of choices for students’ development, avoid retaking, save time and cost, help cultivate “mixed” talents, and help middle and higher vocational colleges and application-oriented colleges to achieve a win-win choice.

Under the integrated teaching reform, with the guidance of undergraduate colleges, classroom teaching reform in secondary vocational colleges is promoted through lecture training, cross-school classroom observation, and discussion. Through years of efforts, the secondary vocational schools have gradually changed their past attention to the scores of foreign languages and various certificates. Classroom teaching pays attention to the cultivation of students’ problem-solving ability and artistic accomplishment. By means of group discussion, problem inquiry and presentation, students’ learning initiative, enthusiasm, independence and criticism of thinking about problems, etc., classroom teaching is full of vitality and teaching quality can be improved.

6.3. Students Have High Comprehensive Quality and Sufficient Potential for Development. At present, the comprehensive quality of the students in the “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” project of preschool education specialty is outstanding in the same major and grade. The pass rate of teacher qualification certificate is high, and it has won many successes in the national and Shanghai normal students’ teaching ability competitions, and it was booked by the employer in advance. Employment is distributed in Shanghai public demonstration parks and first-class parks, and employers have indicated that the students who have completed the project have solid theory, strong hands-on ability, high artistic accomplishment, strong ability to solve practical problems, and sufficient development potential.
6.4. Teachers’ Achievements Are Outstanding and the Curriculum Construction Is Fruitful. Competency-oriented assessment makes teachers reverse design courses, reconstruct the syllabus of courses, and compile teaching materials that highlight the characteristics of personnel training under the integrated curriculum construction. Teachers have made outstanding achievements in the teaching competitions in the Yangtze River Delta region and Shanghai, and their teaching ability is strong. Qunyi and Xinlu Vocational School’s “Kindergarten Teacher’s Dance Basis” and “Children’s Hygiene and Health Care” were selected as the first batch of excellent teaching materials for Shanghai vocational education and continuing education. Many courses of preschool education major in Tianhua College have been selected into the national first-class courses, Shanghai first-class courses, Shanghai key courses, curriculum ideological and political education reform pilot, and other curriculum construction projects.

7. Suggestions on the Effective Implementation of “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate Transition Examination”

Transition examination is the key link of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talent training. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the transition examination. It is necessary to continuously improve and perfect the following aspects.

7.1. Unifying the Connotation of Talent Training Quality. The main goal of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” is to provide diversified talent training paths through integrated talent training program design. The quality of talent training is the key to the construction of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate.” The seven-year consistent talent training spans the two stages of secondary vocational and undergraduate education, and different types of schools have different views on quality. Therefore, the two training subjects must reach an agreement on the educational concept, curriculum and teaching, assessment, and evaluation and reach a unity in the quality connotation, so as to ensure the high-quality development of the training of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” of preschool education.

7.2. Improve Top-Level Design. With professional ability as the link, the concept of “advancing with the post” should be implemented, and the detailed professional ability should be integrated into the curriculum system according to the path of “preservice training of post ability,” and the talent training plan, curriculum content, and teaching requirements of preservice training of preschool teachers in the “3 + 4” stage should be planned as a whole. At the same time, according to the talent training plan, curriculum content, and teaching requirements, we should realise the gradual combination of students’ knowledge and ability and efficiently realise the coordinated connection between preschool preservice training education and secondary vocational undergraduate education.

7.3. Formulate the Curriculum Standards of “Connecting with Secondary Vocational and Undergraduate”. The educational administrative department shall organise the heads of the educational administrative departments of professional colleges and kindergartens at all levels, preschool education experts, and preschool education professionals, through the research and analysis of the professional competence of preschool teachers, to uniformly develop the curriculum standards of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” and to jointly plan and publish teaching materials, to ensure the continuous training of students and the quality of talent training.

7.4. Design an Independent Evaluation Index System. There are big differences in knowledge, ability, and quality between students majoring in connection and general majors, and the quality of talent training cannot be evaluated with the same ruler, as it will deviate from the original intention of connecting talent training. Therefore, it is particularly important and urgent to design a set of independent evaluation index system to evaluate the quality of students in the through mode. The student quality evaluation index system under the connection model is conducive to giving full play to students’ skill advantages and personality and improving the recognition of this new training model by schools, society, and students’ parents; it is also conducive to mobilising the enthusiasm of school evaluation reform consciousness.

8. Conclusion

The key point of convergence for talent training is “Connection with secondary vocational and undergraduate transition examination.” This assessment scheme abandons the traditional exam-oriented education examination mode, establishes a competency-oriented transition examination core evaluation system, and realises the diversification and process of assessment and evaluation, all guided by the value of cultivating high-quality talents that meet the needs of economic and social development, under the seven-year integrated talent training programme. We can provide feedback on the quality of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talents training and scientifically guide talents training, which is effective in teaching quality and students’ overall quality, through the evaluation of transition examination. This assessment plan must be continually summarised and improved over time in order to promote the connotation construction of “Connecting with secondary vocational and undergraduate” talent training quality, as well as provide reference experience for other majors passing the transition examination.
Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors do not have any possible conflicts of interest.

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