

# Analysis on Strategies for Bottleneck Breakthrough in Inclusive Private Kindergartens: Research on Chengdu City in Sichuan Province

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**Abstract:** During the three-year preschool action plans, a significant number of private kindergartens, including inclusive private kindergartens, have been recognized and supported by governments, which has helped alleviate issues related to admissions and other challenges. Nevertheless, the development of public-welfare-oriented private kindergartens is confronted with problems such as funding shortages. The underlying causes include unreasonable government funding allocations, an unscientific evaluation mechanism, excessive pressure on teachers, and other related issues. Based on these observations, implementing measures such as the equitable sharing of kindergarten costs, enhancing the management system, safeguarding the legitimate rights of teachers, improving their overall quality, guiding public opinion, and other initiatives will facilitate the healthy development of inclusive private kindergartens and maximize their public welfare value.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Private Kindergartens; Bottleneck Breakthrough; Government Responsibility

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Preschool education is an integral part of the national education system and an important social public welfare undertaking, which is closely related to the healthy growth of hundreds of millions of children.<sup>[1]</sup> In



recent years, to implement national policies aimed at developing inclusive preschool education and to establish a comprehensive preschool education system, China has made continuous efforts to expand the coverage of inclusive kindergartens. To this end, many regions in China have designated a number of private kindergartens as inclusive kindergartens, also known as inclusive private kindergartens. The emergence of inclusive private kindergartens has alleviated the problems of “difficulty in entering kindergartens” to a greater extent. However, the development of inclusive kindergarten is generally faced with many practical difficulties, such as the shortage of funds and the misconduct of kindergarten administrators and so on. At present, although the government has made it clear that it should increase the investment in public welfare private kindergartens, it is still unclear how much the government should invest, how to allocate the funds reasonably, and how to share the cost of running kindergartens reasonably. Current researches concerning such problems mainly focus on the responsibility of government developing private kindergartens, and researchers proposed to raise more financial input, but the study on the proportion of investment and the norms of managing kindergarten is still limited. Even though relevant findings can be found in a small amount of papers, it focus on promoting the local experience of building kindergarten and lacking in-depth analysis of the argument. Based on this, this paper tries to combine the investigation of inclusive private kindergartens in Chengdu, analyze the existing problems in their development, and put forward relevant improvement countermeasures.

## **1. Bottleneck of Inclusive private kindergartens: A case study of Chengdu City**

Inclusive private kindergartens are private kindergartens funded by non-governmental organizations or individuals, which accept the fee standard set by government, follow the enrollment principle of being admitted to neighborhood kindergarten, and the government provides certain financial subsidies and serves for the general public. Small scale, large number, inexpensive, low level of students, low competitiveness, poor quality of childcare and education are the salient characteristics of this kind of kindergarten. For a deep insight into the inclusive private kindergarten development, the research group visited the department of preschool education administration and a large number of inclusive private kindergarten in Chengdu and its main districts and counties including Shuangliu district, Longquan district, Chenghua district, Wuhou district and Dayi County and so on. The research team also conducted in-depth interviews with the relevant person in charge of the department of education of preschool education and the kindergarten and teachers. The research found that there were the following prominent problems in the development of inclusive private kindergartens in Chengdu city.

### ***1.1 Scarce funds for running the kindergarten***

The funds for running inclusive private kindergartens mainly come from the childcare fees and government subsidies. After the private kindergarten is identified as an inclusive kindergarten, its fees for children health care and education are charged according to the standards of public kindergartens. At present, the city's inclusive private kindergartens have been implementing the charge standard set in 2025 (1,500 yuan/month for first-tier kindergartens, 1,200 yuan/month for second-tier kindergartens, and yuan/month for third-tier kindergartens.)<sup>[1]</sup> Since 2015, Chengdu has been offering a subsidy of 2,400 yuan per year to each preschool child with a local household registration in the central urban area, 1,000 yuan per year in the suburbs, and 800 yuan per year in the

outer suburbs (cities) and counties. The fee for health care and education is 360 yuan per child per month. The above is all the funds for the inclusive private kindergarten. According to the above subsidy and fee standard, a inclusive private kindergarten with 300 children and 50 teaching and administrative staff would only pay 1.8 million yuan annually for the fee of health care and education. The 1.8 million yuan will cover all expenses such as the salaries of kindergarten teachers and staff, going out for study and training, maintenance of kindergartens and the purchase of teaching aids and toys. The average monthly salary of teachers and staff is estimated at 3,200 yuan (including social security), which means that the salary expenditure is 1.92 million yuan a year. In addition, the local preschool education administrative departments require all-inclusive private kindergartens to provide 5% of the health care and education fee for the staff to go out to study and training, and 10% of the fee to improve the hardware facilities of the kindergarten and purchase teaching aids and toys and so on. Those two expenses alone are 270,000 yuan. All the money collected must be spent on feeding the children. It can be seen that the shortage of funds is the biggest obstacle to the development of inclusive private kindergartens.

### ***1.2 Improper behaviors of kindergarten administrators***

Due to the shortage of funds for running kindergartens and the pursuit of economic benefits, the administrators of inclusive private kindergartens will inevitably behave improperly. The problem of immoral and corrupt behavior in running kindergartens is concentrated in the following aspects: on the one hand, the administrators deviate from the purpose of running inclusive kindergartens for public benefits, and maximize the pursuit of economic benefits. The most basic rule in the qualification examination for inclusive private kindergartens is that full-time teachers must have a college degree or above. The materials of the teachers provided by many private kindergartens to the administrative department of education in annual inspection is in line with the requirements for teachers' educational background. However, in order to reduce personnel wage costs, some administrators reduce the standard of employment, hire some technical secondary school education, or even middle and high school graduates as teachers. On the other hand, administrators violate the law of education and cram more students into classrooms. In reality, the phenomenon of cramming more students into classrooms is relatively common, and some have more than 60 children in a class. The increase of class size naturally saves the cost of running the kindergarten, but also increases the workload of teachers, increases the difficulty of class education, teaching, management, and more seriously reduces the quality of preschool education. What's more, the study found that the inclusive private kindergartens mostly adopt the centralized management system of the principal. In this management system, the principal integrates financial rights, personnel rights and business rights, which makes the management decision of the kindergarten more subjective, brings the arbitrariness of management, and increases the risk of decision-making. In the absence of power monitoring, administrators' behavior will inevitably behave improperly.

### ***1.3 Unstable teaching staff***

The unstable and serious loss of preschool teachers is another prominent problem in the development of inclusive private kindergartens. In the first half of 2016, there were 27 full-time teachers in a kindergarten in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, and 11 teachers were lost during the first phase, with a staff turnover rate of 41%. The abnormal phenomenon of the serious loss of teachers in the kindergarten has become a "new normal" in the



inclusive private kindergartens. In order to prevent the loss of teachers to bring passivity to the teaching work of kindergartens, kindergartens generally reserve 3–5 trainee teachers. Before it was recognized as an inclusive private kindergarten, the most busy thing for principals in winter and summer vacations was to organize enrollment and compete for recruiting students. Now, after being recognized as inclusive kindergartens, the government has implemented the principle of nearby enrollment, so the principals do not worry about students, but the unstable and frequent turnover of teachers has become a major worry for them. In winter and summer vacation, the principals run in various higher vocational colleges, busy with “recruiting” staff, and dare not slack off.

#### ***1.4 Low social recognition***

The survey revealed that numerous principals frequently expressed concerns that the quality of childcare and education had not improved but had actually deteriorated following the kindergarten’s recognition as a universal institution. Additionally, social recognition had diminished, making it increasingly challenging to operate the kindergarten. Before that, due to the low charge for the enrollment, the children of a part of the low level of the family was filtered out, kindergarten children are basically to some middle and high level of the family, the parents’ economic income, social status, knowledge level, comprehensive quality, educational concept and other aspects are relatively better than ordinary parents now. They are relatively easy to understand and accept the concept of kindergarten education and the method of nursing education. Now on the road of inclusive development, enrollment follows the principle of nearby admission, facing the local ordinary parents, parents of different levels. For example, in Longquanyi District of Chengdu City, there are new residents returning to the green land (farmers from the former hills), migrant farmers, and urban “Gaozhi” (advanced talents brought in by the local economy). However, due to the poor reputation of inclusive private kindergartens, some parents with higher social levels worry that their children’s quality will be affected, and gradually turn their children to middle and high-end private kindergartens. Such a vicious circle has made inclusive private kindergarten gradually become a synonym for the vulnerable groups, cheap fees, low quality kindergarten or vulnerable kindergarten label.

## **2. Root Cause for the Bottleneck of Inclusive Private Kindergartens: a Policy Perspective**

The above problems seriously hinder the sustainable development of inclusive private kindergartens. The reasons are mainly caused by the following factors.

#### ***2.1 Allocation of government funds are unreasonable***

Since the Outline of the National Program for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development was promulgated, Chinese governments at all levels have attached great importance to the development of preschool education. To ensure the rapid development of preschool education, many regions have issued policies to include the full amount of preschool education funds into their financial budgets, with the input funds increasing year by year. For example, a district and county in Chengdu, from 2014 to 2017, the total investment

in preschool education reached 450–million-yuan, accounting for 6.6% of the total education expenditure in 2016, up from 1.46% in 2010, and the proportion is expected to reach 7.1–7.2% in 2010. Each year, the district and county spend more than 100 million yuan on preschool education.

However, the majority of these substantial preschool education funds are primarily allocated to several areas. Firstly, they are used for the construction, reconstruction, and improvement of kindergarten facilities. Secondly, they cover the replenishment of teaching equipment and the payment of salaries and training expenses for authorized personnel teachers, including the five social insurance benefits and one housing fund. Additionally, these funds support the training of backbone teachers, including administrators, and provide subsidies for preschool childcare fees for children with local household registrations. They also partially cover social security contributions for non-authorized personnel teachers in inclusive private kindergartens, with the local government bearing 40% of the social security costs for these teachers. However, the actual investment directed towards inclusive private kindergartens remains relatively limited. For instance, a district and county in Chengdu had more than 36 inclusive private kindergartens in 2016, and the district finance allocated special funds of about 20 million yuan. This seemingly large amount of special funds is basically spent on the subsidy of preschool childcare fees with local household registration, and the government only subsidizes the local children's families. For inclusive private kindergartens, there is no amount of government subsidies. The government's measures only ensure that inclusive private kindergartens will not worry about students, solve the employment problem of some people, and solve the problem of ordinary people's children entering affordable kindergartens, but do not really solve the problem of the shortage of funds for the majority of inclusive private kindergartens.

## ***2.2 Evaluation and assessment mechanism is not perfect***

At present, the evaluation and assessment of inclusive private kindergartens by preschool education administrative departments is basically based on the annual assessment standards of local kindergartens. There are few assessment texts and special indicators specifically for inclusive kindergartens. The education administrative department focuses on the assessment of inclusive private kindergartens as follows: first, check safety hazards to ensure the safety of teachers and students; second, to ensure the public welfare, to assess whether the kindergarten is in accordance with the government's standard fees, whether the fee standard has been raised; third, check whether the kindergarten will spend all the food costs on the child, investigate whether the child's nutrition is reasonable; fourth, assess parents' satisfaction. These assessment standards do not really highlight the characteristics of inclusive kindergartens, not to mention the actual operation of inclusive private kindergartens. Therefore, such assessment and evaluation standards are obviously lack of pertinence, scientific and practical operation, and the assessment conclusions are of little significance obviously.

## ***2.3 Teachers are too stressed***

There are many factors that cause the unstable and frequent flow of preschool teachers, but too much pressure is the main reason that leads to the serious loss of teachers. Preschool teachers' pressure is reflected in the following aspects. First, economic pressure. Kindergarten teacher salary is not high, thirty to forty thousand yuan a year on average. Just imagine how to live in big city rely on such low salary. They can't afford to buy a house, raise children, let alone support parents. Second, work pressure. In recent years, educational



administrative departments at all levels have issued many policy documents to regulate teachers' behavior, and kindergartens have also formulated many rules and regulations for preschool teachers. These policies and regulations are like the "high voltage wire" hanging on the head of the kindergarten. Preschool teachers must always be cautious of "electric shock". The safety of children is another great pressure of teachers, as long as the child is a little bit of a problem, parents take it for granted that it is the responsibility of the teacher, always complain to the principal, always expose to the news reporters, always post information on the Internet, so that the nerves of preschool teachers are often in a state of high tension. Third, family pressure. Preschool teachers devote the most prime time of their life to the kindergarten and children. This period of the most precious time is also the most difficult and stressful one in the life of preschool teachers, faced with getting married, taking care of children, self-development and so on. Preschool teachers often drag tired body back to home, busying themselves with a variety of household chores cheerfully, otherwise, they would be accused of treating family members with an unpleasant face, which would cause all kinds of contradictions. This is one of the reasons why divorce rates among preschool teachers are rising year by year. Fourth, pressure for self-development. Now kindergartens and parents have increasingly high professional requirements for preschool teachers, and many preschool teachers originally graduated from technical junior or secondary school. In order to meet the requirements of the development of the situation, teachers must squeeze out money from the meager salary to participate in the self-study examination, to improve their academic qualifications. Otherwise, it is inevitable to be eliminated because of low education background.

#### ***2.4 Quality of private kindergarten childcare and education is inferior***

In recent years, inclusive private kindergartens are not recognized by the majority of parents and the society mainly because the quality of childcare and education is not high. And the factors which lead to the quality of private kindergarten childcare and education lies in the following aspect: on the one hand, the natural "fit" between the "profit-seeking" motivation of private kindergartens and the "utilitarian" educational values of parents is mainly manifested in the lack of "gamification" teaching methods and the serious trend of "primary school" in the universal private kindergartens (Hu, 2025: 3). On the other hand, the professional skills and comprehensive quality of preschool teachers need to be improved. Due to the small scale, weak competitiveness and low salary of teachers, it is difficult for inclusive private kindergartens to recruit professional preschool teachers with high education background, strong ability and good comprehensive quality. Its teachers mainly graduate from some vocational college graduates, some even from junior high school graduates. The lack of quality of teachers in inclusive private kindergartens naturally affects the improvement of nursing and education quality. Besides, inclusive private kindergarten classes are too large. Research team members found that a large proportion of inclusive private kindergartens expanded the number of classes at will in order to reduce the cost of running the kindergartens. The expansion of class size naturally increases the difficulty of teachers' education, and then affects the improvement of the quality of childcare and education.

### 3. Countermeasures for Inclusive Private Kindergarten Bottleneck Breakthrough

#### 3.1 *Reasonable sharing of the cost of running the garden*

To ensure that the inclusive private kindergarten serves public good and benefits all as well as maintain the long-term sustainability of development, it is important to dynamically adjust the child-care and education fees for inclusive private kindergartens, and further determine the cost-sharing ratio between governments at all levels and children's families in accordance with the principle of non-compulsory education cost sharing, which is based on the level of economic development, the cost of running the park, and the affordability of local middle and low income families as a prerequisite. For governments at all levels, how they view private education determines whether they are willing to provide more support for inclusive private kindergartens, which is the key to the reform of classified management and the breakthrough of the development bottleneck of inclusive private kindergartens (Wang, 2017: 3). According to the "benefit principle", inclusive private kindergartens hold the principle of "ensuring basic enrollment rate", "wide coverage", "solving the problem of children education at the bottom of the social class", hence, the government should bear most of the cost of running the kindergarten. On the basis of the cost sharing proportion of preschool education in foreign countries, according to the economic development level and combining with the present situation of preschool education development, some researchers think that the cost sharing proportion between the government and parents is reasonable at about 7:3 (Hong, 2023: 1). At present, parents and owners of inclusive private kindergartens in China bear most of the cost of running kindergartens, which is obviously unreasonable.

The cost of running a inclusive private kindergarten mainly includes staff salary (including five social insurance and housing fund), teacher training, rent and maintenance of kindergartens, purchase of teaching toys, and update of facilities and equipment, etc. In terms of the proportion shared by governments at all levels, according to relevant policies, the central government mainly bears the responsibility of subsidize children from poor families and a certain proportion of public funds, and its burden should not be less than 20 percent of the preschool education summary fee in the budget. Provincial-level governments set the per-student funding standards and the per-student financial allocation standards for inclusive kindergartens, and other local governments shall bear no less than 30 percent of the total budget for preschool education. The county government (including economically developed areas, sub-districts, and even villages and towns) covers the costs related to kindergarten construction and land supply for transformation. It also provides a portion of the staff salary and welfare funds, as well as public funds. The proportion of its financial burden is less than 50% of the total budgeted funds for preschool education (Counties or even cities with low fiscal revenue can lower this burden ratio). (Li, 2017: 3).

It is necessary to provide kindergarten rental subsidies and major maintenance subsidies. The incentive funds and other financial subsidies obtained in the annual assessment of inclusive private kindergartens shall be limited to pay for the improvement of operating conditions and quality of kindergartens, such as supplementary teaching toys, nursing and living facilities and equipment. The competent department of education administration shall be directly responsible for the allocation of teaching toys, teaching facilities and equipment in inclusive private





kindergartens.

### ***3.2 Improvement of the management mechanism of preschool education***

In view of the problems existing in the management of inclusive private kindergartens, the competent department of education should focus on the following aspects to establish and improve the preschool education management mechanism.

First of all, strictly implement the admission and exit system of universal private kindergartens. Adhere to the “who approves, who is responsible” system, where the education administrative department examination and approval of qualified private kindergartens, timely issued a inclusive kindergarten operation license, the implementation of the centralized management of the education department. At the same time, it is essential to improve the regular review and inspection system (annual inspection) of inclusive private kindergartens. If they pass the annual inspection, they will continue to be recognized as inclusive kindergartens; if the annual inspection is not qualified, the rectification is limited. The universal private kindergartens that do not meet the standards or refuse to rectify will be removed.

Secondly, the power, responsibility and profit relations among the government, investors and the head of the garden should be clarified; decision-making, execution and supervision should be separated; management authority should be clarified; scientific and democratic leadership, decision-making layer, management and operation network should be established. The garden committee shall be set up to participate in the major decisions of the kindergarten, supervise the work of the kindergarten managers effectively, and safeguard the rights as well as interests of the staff in the kindergarten. The kindergarten’s food procurement and meal collocation shall be supervised by the family committee.

Thirdly, it is essential to standardize the financial management of inclusive private kindergartens. This involves requiring kindergartens to establish dedicated financial institutions and employ accounting personnel. They should implement a robust accounting system and conduct financial disclosures in accordance with relevant regulations. Furthermore, the financial disclosure system must be enforced, with kindergartens accepting joint supervision and inspections from finance, education, pricing, and other relevant departments. The key areas of supervision and inspection for inclusive private kindergartens should include their financial revenue and expenditure, fund operations, personnel salary expenditures, social insurance contributions, and goods procurement. This ensures that the financial budgeting, revenue and expenditure management, examination and approval processes, supervision, and account reimbursement procedures of inclusive private kindergartens are standardized, transparent, and reasonable.

Then, strengthening quality supervision and business guidance is crucial. Thoroughly implement the “kindergarten work rules” and “3–6 years old children’s learning and development guide”, guide kindergarten teachers to make education plans, guide game activities, arrange a day of life, improve the quality of care and education according to the development needs of young children. Such structural quality as hardware facilities, teachers’ qualification and such process quality and outcome quality as curriculum, one-day activity arrangement, teacher-child interaction is supposed to combined to supervise and evaluate. For those kindergarten whose results of supervision and evaluation of nursing and education quality is good and with high satisfaction of parents should be given great support to promote the kindergarten to take measures to improve the quality of childcare and



education. Improving the dynamic supervision mechanism of kindergartens, standardizing the operation of kindergartens, and strengthening safety management is imperative. Strengthening the related supporting teaching aids, creating a rich educational environment for children, and giving play to the leading role of public kindergartens is vital. It is important to strengthen the professional guidance of inclusive private kindergartens and explore the integrated management model of inclusive public or private kindergartens.

Furthermore, improving the assessment and incentive mechanism. According to the characteristics of inclusive private kindergartens, it should establish and improve the special evaluation index system, which focuses on the evaluation of whether the inclusive private kindergartens are standardized, and whether they really highlight the characteristics of public welfare. Through assessment and evaluation, the inclusive private kindergartens can truly realize the development goals of “Guarantee basic preschool education”, “wide coverage” and “meet all children’s access to kindergartens”. On the basis of meeting the enrollment opportunities, it should discuss how to realize the fairness of preschool education process.

### ***3.3 Protection of teachers’ legal rights***

Whether preschool teachers can work safely and actively will directly affect whether the quality of preschool education can be rapidly improved. Therefore, it is necessary and vital to improve the living conditions of preschool staff and protect their legal rights.

On the one hand, administrative departments of preschool education at all levels should, in accordance with relevant national regulations and local actual conditions, overcome difficulties to raise the salary of kindergarten teachers and ensure that the salary of kindergarten teachers is not lower than the average wage level of the local society. On the other hand, it is urgent to actively take various ways to effectively solve the problem of low salary for non-authorized strength personnel teachers in inclusive private kindergartens, gradually realize equal pay for equal work for preschool teachers, and integrate all kindergarten staff into the social security system according to law. What more, in view of the difficulty of buying a house without housing provision fund for the majority of preschool non-authorized strength personnel teachers, the local preschool education administrative department should give priority to providing low-rent housing for the majority of young preschool teachers to help them solve the problem of renting a house and buying a house. At the same time, educational administrative departments should actively guide and supervise private kindergartens to guarantee the salaries of staff according to law. Punishment shall be given to behaviors that deduct teachers’ salaries and reduce teachers’ treatment at will. Finally, educational administrative departments should timely supplement public kindergarten teachers by means of approving authority strength quota, unified recruitment and examination management of teachers in districts and counties, so as to provide a green channel for the promotion and authority strength examination of excellent teachers. Constantly improve and implement the professional title evaluation and employment standards for preschool teachers in non-authority strength teachers, so as to provide policy support and professional guidance for preschool teachers in inclusive private kindergartens to participate in professional title evaluation and employment.

In addition, the objective treatment of parents’ petition and fair treatment of the problem parents reflected is necessary. Complaints filed by children’s parents with the administrative department of education represent public opinions, and the same can be said for the appeals made by kindergartens and their teachers to the government.



The demands of kindergartens and their teachers are equally eager to be respected, valued and considered by the government. Once there is a problem, the government should not be indiscriminately put all the responsibility on kindergartens and their teachers. If it is the kindergarten's problem and responsibility, it is naturally shouldered by the kindergarten. However, if the problems reported by parents are not true, it requires the government to make a fair ruling and safeguard the reputation of kindergartens and their teachers. The government should protect the legitimate rights of kindergartens and their teachers.

### ***3.4 Improvement of preschool teachers' quality***

Raising salaries and enhancing benefits represent an effective approach to mobilizing the enthusiasm of teachers in inclusive kindergartens. Meanwhile, the professional skills and overall competence of kindergarten teachers serve as pivotal factors influencing the quality of childcare as well as the sustainable and healthy advancement of preschool education.

On the one hand, it should innovate the supplementary mechanism for preschool teachers. In the current situation of the obvious shortage of excellent professional teachers, the local educational administrative departments should actively explore and innovate to attract more excellent teachers graduates to engage in preschool education by adopting a variety of ways, such as approving authority strength quota and unified recruitment and examination of teachers in districts and counties. On the other hand, it needs to improve the teacher training mechanism. According to the requirements of popularize preschool education for three years, the training scale and level are determined, and qualified kindergarten teachers are trained for the majority of inclusive private kindergartens through a variety of ways. Furthermore, it needs to deepen the reform of preschool teacher training. According to the development needs of inclusive private kindergartens and the actual situation of teachers, it is necessary to deepen the reform of preschool education professional training contents and establish a more effective curriculum training system. Finally, the evaluation and employment standards of preschool teachers are established. According to the actual situation of preschool education, various educational administrative departments shall establish and improve the professional title evaluation and employment standards conducive to the professional development of preschool teachers.

To sum up, the healthy and sustainable development of inclusive private kindergartens should not only consider the establishment and refinement of a robust management system, but also flexible improvement of teachers' comprehensive quality. There should be economic rewards and punishments as well as humanistic moral rules restrictions, which would lead to better results. However, all of this stems from whether the government regards inclusive private kindergartens as partners in improving preschool public services and improving people's livelihood. At the same time, it is crucial for the government to formulate and refine supportive policies for inclusive private preschool education. Moreover, the effective implementation of classified management in private education also hinges on this recognition and policy support.

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