

# Chapter 12

## The Transformation of Government Responsibility and the Development of Educational Policies for Early Childhood Education Reform in China



Jieqiong Fan and Lin Li

Currently, China is undergoing a social transformation driven by its government transformation. During this critical period, the development of nearly all social issues is closely tied to the role and accountability of the government. The development and reform of early childhood education (ECE) are no exception. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), almost all of the development trends of ECE can be attributed to the government's performance in terms of its function and accountability. Exploring the reform and development of ECE in China from the government's changing responsibility could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the bigger picture. The *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World* reminded that "far-reaching advancement in the global economy has us revisiting basic questions about government: what its role should be, what it can and cannot do, and how best to do it" (World Bank 1997: 25–26). In this chapter, we will introduce the status quo of ECE and government transformation in China, focusing on the influences of value orientation, the division of responsibility, and the impact of government accountability on the development of ECE. Furthermore, we will build a preliminary framework of ECE for the future, based on emerging issues and problems.

---

J. Fan (✉) · L. Li

Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China

e-mail: [jqfan@pie.ecnu.edu.cn](mailto:jqfan@pie.ecnu.edu.cn)

© The Author(s) 2020

G. Fan, T. S. Popkewitz (eds.), *Handbook of Education Policy Studies*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8347-2\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8347-2_12)

263

## 12.1 Background and Focus: The Responsibility Shift of the Government Based on the Status Quo of ECE Development in China

Given great progress of ECE achieved in China, there are deep-rooted problems and causes behind. Government responsibility in ECE is one of such salient causes. The following section outlines the background of ECE development and the key issues relating to the responsibility shift of the government.

### 12.1.1 *Pushing Forward Universal-Beneficial Kindergartens and Improving Quality: The Status Quo of ECE Development in China*

Along with more than 60 years of changes and growth since the establishment of the PRC, much progress has been made in ECE. According to the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Education, as of 2016, there were 239,800 kindergartens across China, with a total enrollment of 44,140,000 children, an increase of 20.6% and 13.3%, respectively, compared with 2013 (Ministry of Education 2017a, b). Gross kindergarten enrollment of preschool education<sup>1</sup> across China increased at an annual rate of 4% over a 3-year period, reaching 70.5% in 2014. The *Outline of National Education Reforms and Development Programs (2010–2020)* (hereinafter referred to as the *Outline* (Ministry of Education 2010)) set a goal, whereby 70% of pre-school children would be enrolled in kindergartens throughout China before 2020. This goal was realized 6 years earlier than articulated in the *Outline*. In 2016, overall kindergarten enrollment totaled 77.4%, 27% higher than that of 2009, when the *Outline* had not yet been published (Ministry of Education 2017a, b).

At the same time, along with the launching of the *Professional Standards for Kindergarten Teachers* (Ministry of Education 2012a, b), *Professional Standards for Kindergarten Principals* (Ministry of Education 2015), and the *Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3–6* (Ministry of Education 2012a, b), the teaching–research guidance has been strengthened, and the quality of childcare has improved considerably. However, the ingrained problems in institution remain disparities of ECE between urban and rural areas and in different regions and groups still prevail. Challenges from new trends of population growth and urbanization have not been lifted.

The responsibility shift of the government is key to understanding and deciphering ECE development in China. How government defines and enacts its responsibility

---

<sup>1</sup>Gross kindergarten enrollment of preschool education is calculated by dividing the total number of children aged 3–6 years by the number of children who are actually enrolled in kindergartens. This age group is called “the three years of preschool education.”

for ECE matters positively or negatively in ECE development in China. Positively, the growth of ECE benefited from supportive high-level policies and regulations by increasing financial support for ECE, reforming the management systems, as well as enhancing professional development of ECE teachers. Negatively, however, problems emerging in ECE are also closely linked to the current impaired governance and mechanisms, and the unfulfilled government roles in developing ECE.

### ***12.1.2 Government Transformation and the Responsibility Shift: The Origins of the Reform and Development of ECE in China***

Government transformation contextualizes government responsibility. Globally, governments tend to transform from “domination” to “administration” and then to “service-oriented.” The focus of government responsibility moves accordingly from controlling to serving. A service-oriented government prioritizes public services as its goal and value orientation, aiming at an “equality-oriented” mode. Furthermore, a service-oriented government stresses shared governance by both the government and stakeholders to practice its duties (Gao and Wang 2009).

The Chinese government has vaguely evolved from domination-oriented to administration-oriented, and then to service-oriented. In the early stages of the PRC, the government was mainly domination-oriented. After Reform and Opening up,<sup>2</sup> along with six major restructuring, the Chinese government has been shifting from an omnipotent controller under a planned economic system to a bounded servant under the market economy (He 2008).<sup>3</sup> The major responsibility of the government has gradually shifted from political dominance to economic construction, and then to an equal emphasis on economic and social functions. Finally, government responsibility has gradually moved toward a focus on social management and public service. During this process, the government has continued to diminish its degree of interference with the economy, while improving its performance in social management and public service. By restructuring and adjusting its responsibility, governance mode, and operational mechanism, the government has been striving to

---

<sup>2</sup>In 1978, the Chinese government started to reform the country and began to open up to other nations. This policy included adjusting the relations of production to conform to the level of productivity, as well as opening the country to catch up to the world’s developmental trends and to facilitate modernization.

<sup>3</sup>From the initial years of the PRC to the time before reform began, the government was mainly domination-oriented. Between 1979 and 1994, it was an omnipotent, administrative government under a planned economy. From 1995 to the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was a limited government under the market economy. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has been in the process of becoming service-oriented. Of these types of government, the omnipotent, administrative, and limited types differ in terms of scope and mode when it comes to management, but can collectively be referred to as “administration-oriented.”

develop education, healthcare, culture, and other enterprises. The overall goal is to build a public service system that is fair, inclusive, reasonable, and sustainable. The context of this transformation is crucial to exploring the Chinese government's responsibility, as well as the formulation of policies and their impact on the reform and development of all social undertakings in the country.

The impact of government transformation on ECE development will be elaborated below, mainly from the shift in the government's values, the identification of government responsibilities, and the government's systems and mechanisms with respect to the expansion of ECE, together with the analysis of ECE policies promulgated by the government in different periods. Moreover, based on new problems faced in the current stage of development, the government's response and future trends will also be discussed.

## **12.2 Metamorphosis and Transformation: The Government Precisely Identifying Its Role to Pursue Significant Growth of ECE**

The impact of government transformations since the founding of the PRC on any social undertaking can be summarized as follows: (1) the shift of the values that the government uses to guide the expansion of a social undertaking; (2) identifying the scope of government responsibilities assumed to develop a social undertaking; and (3) approaches to carrying out the government's responsibilities (the systems and mechanisms that the government establishes to further a social undertaking). With regard to ECE, the discussion will be elaborated based on the three aforementioned aspects.

### ***12.2.1 From "Efficiency Prioritized" to "Equality Foremost": The Shift of Government Values in Developing ECE***

Government's values refer to its political beliefs and pursuits, mainly embodied as its value goals. The formation of a value goal is shaped by the priorities of political, economic, cultural, and national construction at the time. Once the ideological basis is formed, it becomes a restrictive and incentive mechanism of the government's activities and directly impacts its functioning. Furthermore, ideological value usually manifests in specific policies and policy implementation. In a word, policies can reflect government "values" (Shang 2002).

During the course of China's governance mode transforming from domination-oriented to service-oriented, values have played a fundamental role. For example, a domination-oriented government privileges the interests of the ruling class and may completely restrict or sacrifice public interests to fulfill them. Meanwhile, an

administration-oriented government focuses more on the common interests of the ruling class and the public, but its basic values still safeguard the interests of the elite. Ideally, a service-oriented government usually upholds the values of protecting the public interest, thereby benefiting all citizens. With public interest, equality, and justice as its fundamental value pursuits, such a government truly practices the idea of “serving the public” (Li 2004: 30). In ECE, such values turn to be “equality and balanced development, while prioritizing support for the disadvantaged.”

### 12.2.1.1 Shifting Priority from Urban to Rural Areas

In different times, the government held a different understanding of the value of urban and rural ECE, leading to different developmental goals. For a long time, the Chinese government prioritized the expansion of urban zones over the growth of rural areas, not only in terms of economics, but also from social, cultural, and educational angles (Wang 2015). In the course of China’s transformation from an agriculture-dominant society to a nation where industry prevails, urban construction has always been deemed important and favored over rural construction. Either in a domination-oriented or administration-oriented period, the Chinese government focused on “administrative absorbing” with taxes at its core or the policy of “taking more, giving less” to strengthen the supply to urban areas over rural areas (Xu 2009: 15–17).

This orientation has also been reflected in ECE. For example, in terms of financial investments, the government adopted a strategy whereby urban ECE was funded by the district-level and county-level governments, while rural ECE was supported by nongovernmental sectors.<sup>4</sup> In terms of the development priority, the government preferred urban growth to rural areas. For instance, the *Opinions on Strengthening Early Childhood Education Work* in 1988, which was promulgated jointly by eight ministerial departments (including the Ministry of Education and forwarded by the State Council), specified that “early childhood education work should focus on urban areas and rural areas with faster economic development and better educational resources.” Guided by such policies, ECE development in rural areas has been neglected since then. During the Eleventh Five-Year Plan period,<sup>5</sup> gross

---

<sup>4</sup>The most typical policy was as follows: Article 1 of the *Opinions on Strengthening Early Childhood Education Work*—jointly promulgated by the Ministry of Education, State Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Health, and State Price Bureau, and forwarded by the State Council on August 15, 1988—states: “For collectively-owned kindergartens opened in the sub-districts of urban areas, local governments may appropriately allocate finances regarding their establishment, the addition of large equipment, and housing repairs. [Such funds are to come] from the local government’s self-raised endowments. For collectively-owned kindergartens started in townships and villages, kindergartens shall self-raise the required finances, and the guardians of the enrolled children could be charged pursuant to relevant regulations.”

<sup>5</sup>The Five-Year Plan is an abbreviation of the *Outline of the five-year plan for national economy and social development in the PRC*. The government makes this plan every 5 years to prepare for

kindergarten enrollment during the 3 years of ECE was 55.6% in 2007 in urban regions, but only 35.6% in rural areas, with a gap of nearly 20%. It seems this disparity has been widening across time (Pang 2009). In 2009, there were only 27,600 universal-beneficial kindergartens in rural areas, a decrease of nearly 3/4, compared with 106,700 universal-benefit kindergartens in 1995. Around 2/3 of preschool children in rural regions had no access to ECE at the time (Zhang 2010). Moreover, most kindergartens in rural areas were small in size, with limited security and hygiene conditions. Even worse, the teaching content and methods assembled with those adopted in primary schools. The quality of ECE in rural areas did not match its proportion and its status in educating the largest number of children. This severely hindered the sustainable growth and the quality improvement of ECE.

In recent years, China has seen an “expansion...of public service functions,” characterized by prioritizing the development of public education services (The Research Group of the Chinese Academy of Governance 2008).<sup>6</sup> During this period, the transformation of government functions has centered on broadening the scope of public services, allocating educational resources in a rational manner, and the delivery of public services to rural and remote regions with ethnic minorities. The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government have attached great importance to ECE in rural areas. The 2010 *Outline* proposes “prioritizing ECE in rural areas.” The *Opinions of the State Council on the Current Development of Early Childhood Education* (hereinafter referred to as *State Council’s Ten Opinions*), issued by the State Council in 2010, provided further regulations on how to organize ECE in rural education, such as incorporating it into the construction plan of the new socialist countryside, increasing the government’s financial aid, and promoting nationwide ECE programs to support the expansion of Midwest China. Since 2011, to effectively implement regulations from the State Council’s Ten Opinions, three phases of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE have been implemented. Along with efforts made by the central and local governments, it is inspiring to see that ECE in

---

major construction, the distribution of productivity, and the proportion of national economics. These plans played an important role in guiding the development of social undertakings. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan is the blueprint for the period of 2006–2010.

<sup>6</sup>While Western capitalist countries built their public service systems, they underwent three periods: (1) *A free competitive market economy* (before the first half of the nineteenth century, with per capita GDP less than USD 1000) when the government interfered to a minimum. The market economy was underscored as the core tenet, and the government mainly provided sustainable public services. Thus, the government was called the “night watchman” government. (2) *The mixed economy* (1930s–1960s), when per capita GDP was between USD 1000 and USD 8000). This time is also called the period of public service-oriented government construction, characterized by the rapid expansion of public service functions and an increase in the proportion of public expenses in relation to GDP. The growth of public education services was prioritized. This was the golden period of the establishment of welfare states and economic growth. (3) *Market economy globalization* (since the 1960s, when per capita GDP over USD 8000), when core public services (such as education and other human resource capital) began to be provided. A “core public service-oriented” government marks this period. According to the State Statistics Bureau, per capita GDP in China was CNY 46,629 (equivalent to USD 7092) in 2014, indicating that China was experiencing a mixed economy characterized by public services (especially core ones).

rural areas has achieved unprecedented growth which is significantly linked to equality and equilibrium, the foremost goal of China's service-oriented government.

### **12.2.1.2 From Model Kindergartens for Elite Groups to Universal-Beneficial Kindergartens for the General Public**

Since the PRC was founded, the establishment of kindergartens has followed the policy of "walking on both legs," namely the government joining hands with social forces (such as enterprises, institutions, social organizations, neighborhood committees, villagers' committees, and citizens) to promote ECE. At that time the government's responsibility was defined as "establishing model kindergartens." The 1956 *Circular of the Ministries of Education, Health, and Civil Affairs on Issues Regarding Kindergartens* pointed out, "The education authorities should establish some kindergartens in a planned way where possible," and "The health and education authorities should open some high-quality nurseries and kindergartens for purposes of demonstration." The *Opinions on Developing Rural Preschool Education*, promulgated by the State Education Commission in 1983, stated, "Each county-level government should take measures based on its actual conditions to create one model kindergarten, and gradually develop town-level (township-level) central kindergartens."

Nevertheless, the government still had administrative power over kindergartens opened by nongovernmental sectors. During the transition from the planned economy to the market economy, and the period when the market economy system was established and refined, the administration-oriented government upheld the principle of "efficiency prioritized and equality considered." The creation of a small number of "model kindergartens" to drive the expansion of other ones was a strategy designed by the government to develop ECE in an efficient way. A typical policy is the *Circular on the Request for Defining the Leadership Management Division in Early Childhood Education*, jointly promulgated by the Ministry of Education (and other ministries) and forwarded by the State Council in 1987. Another example is the *Opinions on Achieving the Development Goals Specified in the Ninth Five-Year Plan for Early Childhood Education Nationwide*, issued by the Ministry of Education in 1997. The former document saw the "establishment of model kindergartens" as the responsibility of educational authorities for the first time, while the latter document further emphasized that the government's responsibility was to "create public model kindergartens and make them gradually become local examples and models." However, since ECE follows the principle that "whoever opens kindergartens, takes responsibility for them," for a rather long time, the government invested limited public resources in a small number of public model kindergartens, which only served elite groups. For a certain period, launching model kindergartens became the only job of local governments when they attempted to develop ECE, which led to almost no support for a large number of kindergartens of other types. Unfortunately, the scant number of model kindergartens failed to play an exemplary role, resulting in great unfairness.



As the service-oriented government has risen in recent years, the government's values have shifted to "public-oriented and equality foremost." The establishment of service systems for urban and rural public ECE focused on "wide coverage, basic ECE guaranteed, and high quality." Privileged and luxurious public-funded kindergartens have been replaced by standardized and practical kindergartens (Wang 2015). For example, the *State Council's Ten Opinions* emphasize that, "The government's resources are forbidden to charge families high-tuition for their children to attend over-standardized kindergartens." This document also indicates that, "Support shall be provided for the development of private kindergartens with a relatively low charge, and oriented to serve the general public (i.e., universal-beneficial private kindergartens)." Such action helps to promote an ECE system "dominated by public and universal-benefit private kindergartens." In terms of specific measures, the three phases of the Three-Year Action Plan for ECE provided aid for universal-benefit private kindergartens, as specified in the State Council's Ten Opinions. This plan set forth regulations that the government should develop favorable policies and guarantee investment in terms of "purchasing services, reducing and exempting people from paying rent, replacing subsidies with rewards, dispatching publicly-funded teachers, training teachers, comprehensive awards and subsidies, and guidance on teaching and research." The overall goal is to implement policies that reflect the government's new values.

To sum up, the transformation of the government, its functions, and governance mode (underscored by the change in the government's values) determines the evolution of a series of policies and measures, such as the shift from "urban-prioritized" to "rural-prioritized" and from "model kindergartens" to "universal-beneficial kindergartens." Such policies are mixed and center on the principle of "realizing educational equality and benefiting the public." The implementation of these policies and measures aims to create social equality and a system characterized by equal rights, opportunities, and rules, which help guarantee people's rights in relation to development and participation.

### ***12.2.2 From Involvement to Withdrawal and Finally to Leading: A Gradual Clarification of the Service-Oriented Government's Responsibility in Developing ECE***

The second aspect of how the government's transformation influences ECE development lies in "the identification of government responsibility." Regarding the joint efforts between the government and all possible social forces in expanding ECE, the government takes responsibility to a certain extent and plays a specific role. Given the nature of ECE, the changes in the government's capacities, and social and economic growth, the responsibility of the Chinese government in expanding ECE has shifted from involvement to withdrawal, and finally to leadership.



### 12.2.2.1 The Government's Overall Planning and Social Involvement: Joint Efforts Between the Government and Society in Developing ECE

Since the PRC was founded, it has experienced various social and political turmoil, including reform and opening up, and the establishment of the socialist market economy. China has gone through turbulence and tortuosity in its beginning to the stable development of all causes during the period of reform and opening up. Similarly, the relationship between the government and the society in which ECE has developed has also gone through a series of changes. These shifts can be divided into two stages.

Stage 1 was designated from the founding of the PRC to the beginning of reform and opening up. During this time, the core task of ECE was to “guarantee women’s re-engagement in work to the largest extent possible.” The government realized that ECE was “local and mass-oriented” and concluded kindergartens should be “run by the masses under the overall planning of the local government” (Wei 1951). In 1979, this idea was once again reinforced as the policy of “walking on both legs.” One “leg” refers to “actively recovering and developing kindergartens run by educational sectors,” while the other “leg” refers to kindergartens run by community groups, institutions, factories, mines, sub-districts, and individuals. During this period, although the government emphasized social participation. On the one hand, the government required administrative departments for education at all levels to “include a special fund for ECE,” “incorporate ECE projects into educational infrastructure investment,” and ensure that the sources of educational expenditures were secured and that the budget was strictly implemented (The State Education Commission 1983). The government also provided support to social forces—such as industrial and mining enterprises—to run kindergartens by allocating teachers or funds (The State Council 1955). On the other hand, social forces participated more collectively than individually, and most of the collectives (e.g., government-operated enterprises like factories and mines, and rural community groups) were closely related to the government’s regulation and control, so they were still publicly owned.

Stage 2 ranged from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. During this period, the most significant revolution that China went through was establishing the new idea of the socialist market economy system and the comprehensive promotion of Reform and Opening up. The government’s main focus shifted from political struggle to economic construction. Social forces at this time were not only publicly owned “collectives” but also included individuals or private groups that became wealthy along with economic growth. For example, the *Opinions on Reinforcing Early Childhood Education Work* (jointly issued by eight departments including the Ministry of Education and forwarded by the State Council in 1988) stated that “kindergartens should not only be restricted to national ones. Most kindergartens should be run by collectives and individuals, in compliance with national law and relevant regulations.” The government started to rely primarily on social forces to run kindergartens. In terms of policies and systematic management, the government still played a role as the central coordinator and planner in the development of ECE

during this period, but the trend of the government devolving power to society became increasingly apparent. Objectively speaking, this period was a golden age for the fast rise of ECE in terms of enrollment rate and the number of enrolled kindergarten children. Meanwhile, the ECE management system was still in its early stages, and the system of regulating and managing all kinds of kindergartens run by social forces (mainly collectives and individuals) had not yet been established.<sup>7</sup> These fast-emerging kindergartens faced multiple issues regarding administration and quality.

### 12.2.2.2 Government Giving Society a Role: The Government Devolves Responsibility for ECE Development to Society

This period started from the mid-1990s and lasted until the first few years of the twenty-first century. China entered its ninth Five-Year Plan, a crucial time when political structural reform got reinforced and economic structural reform was deepened. Generally speaking, the government's economic function transformed from intervening in a microsystem ("direct regulation and control") to a macro-system ("indirect regulation and control"). The government followed this reform idea in the field of social sectors as well. This means that the government backed off from certain fields in which it deemed did not need a lot of intervention and devolved responsibility to society.

In education, the government was retreating from ECE as it was neither the compulsory education nor the social focused area. Two policies were unveiled at the same time: *Opinions on Enterprises Running Kindergartens*, issued by seven ministerial departments (including the Ministry of Education) in 1995, and *Opinions on Implementing the Ninth Five-Year Plan Development Goal for Early Childhood Education Nationwide*, issued by the Ministry of Education in 1997.<sup>8,9</sup> These two

---

<sup>7</sup>In 1989, the Ministry of Education issued the *Administrative Regulations on Kindergartens*, stipulating that ECE in China was "under the responsibility of the local government and the system of hierarchical management. All relevant departments shall cooperate accordingly." In the same year, *Kindergarten Work Regulations (Draft)* was promulgated, which set forth the standards for running kindergartens but did not establish any administrative system for various types of kindergartens specifically.

<sup>8</sup>One of the most influential points of this policy is to "actively and steadily promote ECE in society." It created provisions for the systematic transformation of public kindergartens "based on the principle of stable transition...under the overall plan of the government, kindergartens can be handed to the local administrative education departments, which can continue to run them in multiple ways, such as handing them over to the care of communities, or qualified organizations or individuals." Although this stipulation mentioned that such a transformation should be stably conducted under "the overall plan of the government" and the plans of "educational departments," it was common for kindergartens to be regarded as "burdens" or "profitable instruments," and they were thrown into the market.

<sup>9</sup>One of the most influential points of this policy is to "actively and steadily reform the system for opening kindergartens, further clarify government responsibility at all levels, explore an establishment mode and an internal management mechanism of kindergartens, and promote ECE in society

policies played an important role in accelerating the devolution of ECE responsibility from the government to society. In cities, state-owned enterprises deepened their reform to break the shackles of “enterprises burdened with social responsibilities.” Many kindergartens that had been run by state-owned enterprises were considered “burdens” and thrown into the market. In villages, kindergartens that had been run collectively over a long period of time were stepping into a “privatized” sector. On the one hand, the government backed off almost completely from its joint efforts with society in the field of ECE, including those in the rural areas. On the other hand, the government did not create any corresponding management strategies in response to the rise of private kindergartens. Therefore, this was also the start of a massive, difficult, and arduous decline of ECE in China. The situation was especially severe in rural regions: The numbers of kindergartens and enrolled kindergarten children in rural areas declined by 54.23% and 30.48%, respectively, from 1997 to 2002.

### 12.2.2.3 Led by the Government and Co-governed by Society: Joint Efforts of the Government and Society to Co-govern ECE

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, along with the reform of China’s economic and administrative systems, the country’s overall national strength has rapidly enhanced. The government has been prioritizing public to private and service-oriented, which means that its functions will become more clearly defined. The responsibility of such a government is to “steer” more than to “control.”

Since 2010, the trend of the government recovering its leading role has become increasingly apparent. That year, the *National Outline for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* summarized the blueprint for educational development. The government saw this as an opportunity and, that same year, issued the *State Council’s Ten Opinions* on ECE, which has supreme legal authority on educational affairs. In order to realize the recommendations of the *State Council’s Ten Opinions*, in 2011, the government formed a task force consisting of directors of 11 departments/offices, including the Department of Basic Education II of the Ministry of Education, and led by the vice minister of the Ministry of Education.<sup>10</sup> The main goal was to carry out the *Three-Year Action Plan for Early*

---

step by step.” This has accelerated the socialization of kindergartens.

<sup>10</sup>*The Circular on Establishing the Pre-school Education Leading Group to Promote the Three-Year Action Plan* by the General Office of the Ministry of Education [Z], March 8, 2011. The leading group mainly consists of directors from the following departments: The group leader will be the vice minister from the Ministry of Education. The other team members include the director of the Department of Basic Education II, the vice director of the General Office of the Ministry of Education, the director of the Information Office, the vice inspector of the Department of Policies and Regulations, the vice director of the Department of Development Planning, the vice inspector of the Department of Personnel, the vice director of the Department of Finance, the vice inspector of the Department of Basic Education I, the vice director of the Ministry-based Supervision Bureau, the vice director of the Department of Minority Education, the vice director of the

*Childhood Education*. Thus far, the first two stages of the plan have been fulfilled, and the third stage is being promoted. Hence, the government has attached great importance to ECE and taken back its responsibilities.

First the government recognized that the nature of ECE was a public welfare and reinforced its leading role. For instance, the *State Council's Ten Opinions* states that "ECE is a significant part of the national education system, and an important undertaking of social public welfare." The document also emphasizes that the "government's leading role" must be upheld, and "the responsibility of government at all levels must be fulfilled."

Second, in terms of financial investment, the policy declares that "government at all levels should increase investment in rural ECE" and that "spending on ECE should be included in the financial budget. Newly increased educational funds should be allocated toward ECE." Furthermore, "the central government should set up special funds to support ECE in central and western rural areas, areas with ethnic minorities, and border regions." From 2014 to 2016, the central government invested CNY 51.8 billion to support the expansion of universal-beneficial education resources, leveraging local investment of more than CNY 200 billion. In 2016, the national funds for ECE accounted for about 4% of the total budget, more than twice that of 2010, which was 1.6% (Ministry of Education 2017a, b).

Third, in terms of establishing the system of kindergartens, the policy stipulates that "public and universal-beneficial private kindergartens should be the main part of [this] system" and that "public kindergartens should be promoted, especially in rural areas." In addition, the government focused on strengthening the construction of supervision and evaluation. Local governments as well as kindergartens will be supervised and evaluated. For instance, the *Opinions on the Implementation of the Second Phase of the Three-year Action Plan for Early Childhood Education*—jointly issued by three departments (including the Ministry of Education) in 2014—states that, "The Ministry of Education, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Finance should inspect the implementation of the action plan across the country. All local authorities should carry out supervisory inspections, enforce accountability mechanisms, and incorporate the implementation of the action plan and policy into the evaluation index local governments' educational work at all levels." From policy-making to supervision and assessment, the government has clearly assumed its responsibility of leading.

To sum up, along with social, political, and economic growth and the government's gradually deepening understanding of ECE, the government experienced involvement and withdrawal, and eventually took over ECE once again. This change is in line with the development of ECE in China and efficiently promotes ECE's healthy and sustainable development.

### ***12.2.3 Ongoing Improvements in the Government's System and Mechanisms for Developing ECE***

How the government's transformation influences the development of social undertakings lies in "how the government fulfills its responsibility." In terms of ECE, this refers to what kind of system and mechanisms the government establishes to promote ECE expansion. In other words, how the government performs its responsibility and the role that it plays. According to the government's functions in terms of public utilities, the government has played an omnipotent role since the PRC was founded in the mid-1980s. The government comprehensively intervened in the development of public utilities, adhering to the principles of equality and unity. During the abovementioned time period, the government aimed to ensure equality and fairness among public utilities and to support public welfare social services by means of macro control and resource allocation (such as policymaking, planning and management, financial investment, supervision, and evaluation) (Gao and Wang 2009).

In the course of ECE development since the 1990s, the two roles of "steering" and being "service-oriented" co-existed and were inseparable. In contrast, in the present day, the government is transforming from being "steering" to "service-oriented." The government's "steering" and "servicing" functions are mainly reflected through the construction and improvement of the two systems and two mechanisms.

#### **12.2.3.1 System Reform: The Government's "Steering" Function, Highlighted by the Systems for Managing and Establishing Kindergartens**

The government's "steering" function in the spread of public utilities means that instead of being an omnipotent government, the government plays a guiding, leading, and decisive role in the core functions of this undertaking. In the field of ECE, the government's "steering" function is mainly reflected in the construction and renovation of the systems for managing and establishing kindergartens.

Currently, the government further clarified its division of power and responsibility at all levels and gradually built mature administrative system step by step. These measures founded the basis for the government to lead ECE. For the first time, the *Administrative Regulations on Kindergartens* in 1989 declared that China should implement a management system, characterized by "local accountability, hierarchical management, and cooperation within relevant departments" in ECE. In the context of decentralization and devolving power to local authorities, this system spurred local initiative to develop ECE. However, the definition of this management system was not clear enough in the sense that "local accountability" did not specify which level of government should assume the main responsibility, and "hierarchical management" failed to define government responsibility at different levels.

Moreover, the section on the “cooperation of relevant departments” did not specify which departments were pertinent or the kind of cooperation mechanisms needed. As a result, while implementing this management system, the responsibility for developing ECE was shifted from cities to the districts and sub-districts and from villages to townships. There were difficulties at the level of districts and townships in terms of coordinating or guaranteeing financial and human resources, which hindered the growth of ECE. In recent years, the vague definition of the ECE management system has been amended. For instance, the *Opinions on the Implementation of the Third Stage of Early Childhood Education Action Plan* was promulgated in 2017 by four departments, including the Ministry of Education. The document states that, “An ECE management system, led by the State Council, planned by the provincial/municipal governments, and oriented by counties, should be established and improved. The overall planning of provincial and municipal governments should be strengthened, and support for poor areas should be increased. The responsibility of county governments should be fulfilled, and the functions of village and town governments should be made full use of.” This document further defined the rights and responsibilities of government at all levels and greatly strengthened its “steering” function in terms of administration. This was a milestone for ECE development.

In terms of the system for establishing kindergartens, the government has specified a distribution pattern in which public and universal-benefit private kindergartens are the main focus, and all kinds of social forces jointly participate in ECE governance and development under the government’s leadership. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the government has learned from developmental mistakes caused by having abdicated responsibility for ECE during previous periods. In regard to the system for establishing kindergartens, the government’s “steering” function has been especially strengthened. For instance, the *State Council’s Ten Opinions* and the *Three-Phase Three-Year Action Plan* both point out that “public kindergartens should be vigorously developed.” In rural areas, an important government task is to set in motion a trend of opening public kindergartens. Meanwhile, “it is essential to guide and support private kindergartens to provide universal-benefit services.” This trend moves forward practically in the third phase of the Three-Year Action Plan. The plan further states that “all provinces/districts/cities should establish accreditation standards for universal-benefit private kindergartens, and license a specific number of them each year” and that government should effectively support their development at all levels through a series of strategies called government purchasing services, such as “reducing rent, giving awards as subsidies, allocating public teachers, training teachers, providing comprehensive awards and subsidies, and providing guidance on instruction and research.”

### 12.2.3.2 The Mechanism Innovation: The Government's "Service" Function, Highlighted by the Teacher-Cultivating and Cost-Sharing Mechanisms

The "service" function refers to supporting the development of public facilities by providing basic conditions and resources. Regarding ECE, the government's service function is mainly reflected in manpower and material resources, which serve as the innovation for the teacher-cultivating and cost-sharing mechanisms.

In terms of teacher-cultivating, various levels of governments have realized that adequately qualified teachers are crucial for ECE to move forward from basic coverage to quality improvement. This is especially critical in the present time as China is facing a much larger need for kindergarten enrollment that calls for unconventional ideas and actions. First, the *State Council's Ten Opinions* stipulates that "staff of public kindergartens shall be checked and ratified" and that "the status and treatment of kindergarten teachers shall be ensured in accordance with laws." The latest *Third Phase of the Three-year Action Plan for Early Childhood Education* states that "various measures shall be taken to solve the problem of the low salaries of non-tenure public kindergarten teachers, and equal pay for equal work should be gradually realized. Private kindergartens shall be guided and supervised on being equipped with adequate teachers, and their salary shall be secured in accordance with the law. According to the law, kindergarten staff should be included in the social security system." This helps to stabilize the status of non-tenure teachers in both private and public kindergartens.

Second, regarding improvement assurance, the *Third Phase of the Three-Year Action Plan for Early Childhood Education* indicates that "the scale and quality of the ECE major in colleges, universities and secondary schools shall be determined according to the requirements of popularizing the three-year ECE, and efforts to cultivate kindergarten teachers in colleges and universities shall be reinforced." In the meantime, the scale of recruitment for student teachers should be broadened through hierarchical exams. Student teachers should be trained accordingly and assigned to different positions after they achieve the relevant qualifications. Through position transfer training, the requirements of the 3-year ECE shall be popularized, the scale and level of the ECE major in colleges, universities and secondary schools shall be determined, and efforts to train kindergarten teachers in colleges and universities shall be reinforced. Furthermore, all kinds of complementary mechanisms for teachers who have already been demonstrated to be effective in practice shall be continuously promoted, such as the complementary mechanisms for teachers in special positions and "directed enrollment, education, and employment" (Pang et al. 2017).<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>The complementary mechanism of "directed enrollment, education, and employment" refers to targeted cooperation between local kindergartens and normal universities, vocational colleges, and kindergarten schools based on the quantity, level, and type of teachers in the specific region, which comprises directional enrollment, development, and position-taking.



During non-compulsory education, cost-sharing is a reasonable mechanism whereby providers and beneficiaries of educational resources jointly shoulder educational expenses. Regarding ECE, this mechanism refers to households paying for part of the costs, while the other part is covered by the government's (or the investors') financial investment. Households have borne ECE costs for a long time, even in rural areas. In the 1980s, under the political principles of "people shall be in charge of their own education" and "what comes from people shall benefit the people," in rural areas, it was mostly farmers and parents who raised their own funds for ECE. The cost-sharing mechanism has gone through substantial transformation, dominated by the government in the new era. For example, the *State Council's Ten Opinions* declares that "households shall bear a reasonable proportion of ECE costs" and that an "ECE subsidy system" has been established for financially disadvantaged families, orphans, and disabled children. The *Second Phase of the Three-Year Action Plan* specifies that "the standards of childcare and fees for education shall be adjusted in compliance with regulations to maintain the household burden within a reasonable range." Meanwhile, efforts to subsidize disadvantaged children shall be reinforced. However, one of the most significant changes in the *Third Phase of the Three-Year Action Plan* is that the proportion a household shall cover is not contingent upon a kindergarten's fee standards, but rather "based on economic development status, operational costs of kindergartens, and household affordability." This reflects the government's determination to perform its functions, and its orientation toward benefiting the general public and serving families.

In conclusion, the government is using the systems for managing and establishing kindergartens through two strategies: the teacher-cultivating mechanism and the cost-sharing mechanism. Not only is this trend closely related to the shift from a domination-oriented to an administration-oriented and service-oriented government; it is also linked to the different demands of ECE in China throughout different periods. This change has been demonstrated to be both scientific and effective.

### **12.3 Responding to Challenges: Government Responsibility and System Construction for Future ECE Development**

Since the PRC was founded, especially since the twenty-first century when the service-oriented government attached great importance to and seriously undertook its main responsibilities, ECE in China has made enormous, critical breakthroughs. However, as put forward in *The Third Phase of the Three-Year Action Plan for Early Childhood Education*, "ECE remains the weakest part of the whole education system." A lack of educational resources to benefit the general public and the unbalanced distribution of public and private kindergartens are persistent common problems. ECE in rural regions remains underdeveloped, a situation that has not been comprehensively or fundamentally improved. ECE is "still in a critical period full of trials, efforts, and lessons." Due to the aging population, the execution of the

universal two-child policy, and the migrant population's growing need for kindergarten enrollment, ECE is experiencing unprecedented pressure as well as opportunities.

### ***12.3.1 New Problems and Challenges That ECE Is Facing During the Development of Social Undertakings***

In recent years, new circumstances have emerged in China's economic and social development, bringing new challenges to ECE. Typical problems include the under-supply of effective labor resulting from the accelerated aging of the population, which has led to the promulgation of the universal two-child policy. Furthermore, new educational obstacles for left-behind and migrant children have appeared due to the ongoing acceleration of urbanization. These two issues are discussed below.

First, China's fertility rate has greatly declined. Along with this trend, the demographic dividend is gradually fading, the population is aging, and the imbalance of the sex ratio at birth is becoming severe. To cope with these difficulties, the government decided to adjust the population policy. China began to implement its universal two-child policy since October 2015, which officially allowed all couples to have two children. As of 2011, couples, both of whom are the only children in their families, are allowed to have two children. As of 2013, couples, either of whom is the only child of his/her family, are allowed to have two children.

The widespread implementation of this policy is expected to have an extensive influence on all aspects of society. The most affected field of all is undoubtedly ECE. Many researchers have made forecasts about future population growth. For example, some believe that the number of kindergarten children will "substantially rise from 2019 onward, and [that this] increase will last until 2021, when it reaches its peak (around 57,508,200). After that, the number will start to gradually drop to about 42,547,800 in 2035" (Yang et al. 2016). Other researchers have estimated that the population of preschool children will grow in a certain region (Beijing), with three potential sub-schemes (high, middle, and low) of population prediction. They also found that "the number of preschool children would reach its peak at around 2023 or 2024, and then gradually drop, forming an inverted U-shape curve" (Hong 2017). Correspondingly, scholars have estimated that in 2021, there will be a shortfall of 110,000 kindergartens and more than three million kindergarten teachers and childcare workers. Furthermore, the public financial budget for ECE in 2021 is predicted to be CNY 303.087 billion more than that of 2013 (Yang et al. 2016). A growing population will not only enlarge the shortfall in terms of resources but also be highly likely to amplify the imbalance of resource distribution.

Second, the phenomena of left-behind and migrant children have created new obstacles for the government. The phenomena of such children are rooted in the migration of labor from rural to urban areas during urbanization. As of October 1, 2015, the total number of Chinese migrants reached 247 million, which means that

1 out of 6 people were “migrants.” There were about 100 million migrant and left-behind children in the migrant population (Yang 2017).

Based on dynamic monitoring of China’s migrant population data and analytical reports in recent years, the number of migrant children is shifting. First, the proportion of young migrant children is gradually rising. Of all migrant children aged under 14 years, the average age is 7.02 ( $\pm 4.525$ ) years. The percentage of children aged 2 and 3 years is at its highest (Huang 2015). Second, the time that migrant children spend traveling is increasing, especially children aged 0–4 years. Most of their life is spent migrating.

Third, in terms of educational opportunities, of all school-age migrant children who were not attending school during the sixth Demographic Census, preschool children comprised the highest proportion (40.2%). As they grow older, the risk of them being deprived of education rises (Huang 2015). Research has found that these children have developed clear characteristics of the migration destination and have become estranged from their culture of origin. However, due to various reasons (such as a lack of social welfare), they cannot genuinely integrate in the migrated cities. This may lead to multiple social issues.

### ***12.3.2 Government Response and Reflection on the Construction of the Future ECE System***

Confronted with a series of new problems, the government has tried to learn from the successful experiences of some areas as well as other countries and constantly makes adjustments and innovates. The government is making all efforts to ensure that China’s ECE goes through healthy, sustainable development. The following section will focus on the government’s responses to these new problems and put forward some suggestions for the construction of the ECE system in the future.

#### **12.3.2.1 Government Leadership and Commitment to Public Service: The Core Values of a Service-Oriented Government in Developing ECE**

The core value of a service-oriented government lies in the pursuit of maximizing public interest. As for ECE, this means that the government acknowledges ECE is public welfare and that investment in children is a basic strategy to strengthen the nation’s future competitive power. Based on the above recognition, the government inevitably plays a leadership role and takes responsibility for expanding ECE. Such a consensus can also be found in the international arena, which has led to many countries having successful experiences of developing ECE.

The United States, a developed nation, issued the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001, which stipulated that the government should “ensure that all children have

fair, equal, and important opportunities for access to high-quality education” (The US Congress 2001). India, a developing country, issued the *National Policy for Children* in 1974, which stated that the “objectives of national policy shall be to provide equal opportunities to children at all developmental stages, reduce inequality, and promote social justice as much as possible” (Indian Social Welfare 1974). Many countries have not only identified the leading role and relevant responsibility of governments in ECE through policies and laws (Pang et al. 2014) but have also established large numbers of public kindergartens, provided free caring and education services to children, and executed other political measures to ensure the government’s dominant status in ECE.

Statistics shows that over 80% of the countries in North America, Latin America/Caribbean, and Europe have more than 50% (or even higher) of children in public kindergartens. The corresponding proportions in OECD countries such as Luxembourg, France, and Hungary are even close to 100%. Many countries also highlighted government responsibility by building a free system of preschool education. For example, the more developed countries and regions—such as Sweden, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and China’s Macao special administrative region (SAR), as well as some developing populous countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Cuba—have included the preschool stage into the coverage of free education (Pang and Xia 2013). Therefore, the government assuming leadership and executing relevant policies, regulations, and specific strategies is an international trend of developing ECE.

### **12.3.2.2 Universal-Beneficial Education, Equality, and Equilibrium: Government and Social Forces Build a New Pattern of Co-supply for Disadvantaged Sectors**

A service-oriented government keeps the public-welfare nature of ECE in mind. Therefore, the government’s primary goal for developing ECE is to construct a system for universal benefits and equal public education services; this provides an important guide for the government to identify the boundaries of its responsibility. The government should focus on structural reform on the supply-side of ECE and make efforts to expand universal-beneficial resources. The existing gap between supply and demand in ECE should be effectively covered; simultaneously, the government should be proactively prepared for the massive, emerging demands of ECE triggered by its new universal two-child policy.

There are two suggestions for the government to achieve the above goals. Data that indicate population changes should be comprehensively collected, classified, and analyzed, and a sound system for monitoring and predicting population growth should be set up. Based on the number of preschool-aged children estimated from the above work, the government should adjust kindergarten enrollment quotas accordingly to meet need. Moreover, the government can alter the distribution of resources in time to balance the magnitude and quality of ECE across various regions (Hong and Ma 2017).

There should be vigorous support for social forces to run universal-benefit private kindergartens, forming a new co-supply pattern for both public and private kindergartens. During the *Two Sessions of 2016 on Measures to Expand ECE Resources*, the Minister of Education stated in a press conference that “the government should make a robust effort to expand public kindergartens, actively support enterprises and institutions to establish kindergartens, and give aid to private kindergartens through government purchases. The development of preschool classes attached to primary schools can also be taken into account if their conditions permit.” This policy signals that, in response to the pressures of increasing demand, it is a natural trend to build a system for establishing kindergartens, led by the government and coordinated by multiple sectors of society. In this context, a large number of universal-benefit kindergartens based on public–private partnerships, as well as enterprise-owned kindergartens, are gradually opening up. In the meantime, service agencies for early education based on the needs of communities and families are emerging.

The government should play a greater role in “strengthening the weak and helping the disadvantaged” by prioritizing the expansion of preschool education in poor rural areas and placing more importance on disadvantaged groups’ right to education. In recent years, the State has been highly concerned with rural ECE, which has received strong support from the central government through national projects. Furthermore, some local governments have promoted grassroots undertakings through international cooperation. While intensifying its efforts to enhance less developed rural preschool education, in the future, the government should also pay attention to the education of disadvantaged groups, such as left-behind and migrant children. As for left-behind children, the State Council issued the *Opinions on Strengthening the Care for and Protection of Left-Behind Children in Rural Areas* in February 2016, and formed an inter-ministerial joint meeting led by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and joined by 27 departments, to carry out a thorough investigation on left-behind children. This is the first high-level policy on left-behind children and the broadest government action in China to study and assist left-behind children, reflecting the country’s progress in safeguarding children’s rights. As for migrant children, many local governments have taken innovative measures. For example, the Shanghai municipal government set up and regulated level III private kindergartens specifically to enroll migrant children, to strengthen the management and development of such kindergartens with government purchase services (such as offering a subsidy to each child, assigning public teachers, arranging teaching supervisors, and providing curriculum resources). Through all these actions, the Shanghai municipal government bears the baseline responsibilities of education.

### 12.3.2.3 Legislation-Based and System First: Constructing an Effective ECE Mechanism Under Policy and Legal Frameworks

Contemporary society is undergoing a strategic transformation from centering on economic development to focusing on institutional construction; that is, making efforts to solve social inequity and other increasingly prominent problems during reform and development through global construction, innovation, and implementation, as well as other measures on institutional modernization. The purpose of these efforts is to represent public interests and maintain social harmony and stability to the greatest extent possible (Hu et al. 2003). This is also the case in education. In January 2016, the Ministry of Education issued the *Implementation Outlines for Administering Education by Law* (2016–2020), putting forward that “By 2020, an educational and legal system that is systematical organized, reasonably classified, scientifically regulated, and effectively operated, should be formed. By the same token, to support and supervise the growth of education, a law-based educational practice mechanism and an educational supervision system should be formed as well, whereby it becomes possible to realized law-based administration by the government, law-based education by schools, law-based instruction by teachers, and law-based evaluations by society. Therefore, the construction of an ECE mechanism should be included in the framework of the legal system in order to maximize its functions.”

First, we should accelerate the legislative process of ECE to fundamentally guarantee and promote the development of education with rigid laws. One primary cause of restricting substantial breakthroughs in preschool education in China is the absence of a *Law on Early Childhood Education* that aims to solve deep-seated problems in the reform and key mechanisms. Currently, preschool is the only stage of education that is not accompanied by a separate law. Legislation on ECE is not only necessary to solve long-term problems in reform and development but is also essential to expansion under the universal two-child policy, poverty alleviation, and other new situations. At present, the Ministry of Education has incorporated ECE legislation into its focus on work, organized experts, and local governments to carry out investigations and commissioned two local governments to draft legislation. For now, more than 20 provinces and cities have explored legislation from a practical angle. Given the rich accumulation of experiences on legislation, the law of ECE is expected to be passed in the near future (Pang et al. 2017).

Second, the construction of a country-appropriate, scientific, and effective ECE mechanism in the context of corresponding policies and laws should be intensified. Reforming mechanisms and systems is key to ECE development in China; it is more like a systematic project. This issue is discussed from two angles. One aspect is that a government-led management system of “administration, operation, and evaluation separately” can be explored in new situations. Under the policy of “walking on two legs,” China’s ECE has always been a community of interrelated—but relatively separated—“organizers, operators, and administrators.” Currently, all participating subjects in ECE are growing gradually, and the government proposes building governance structures. In this context, it is the right time to further explore a new path

for developing ECE, which includes government management, operations involving multiple subjects, and assessments by third parties.

The other aspect is that an investment system based on per capita financial support and a differentiated cost-sharing mechanism should be actively established. In the second phase of the *Three-Tier Action Plan* for ECE, the Chinese government has begun to advocate for “equal work, equal pay” as a solution among tenure-track and non-tenure teachers through financial allocation, based on the number of students enrolled. This is a powerful measure to break the gradual inequality caused by financial investment according to the number of tenure-track teachers. Meanwhile, the government should actively examine and form different cost-sharing structures between urban and rural zones among families with different incomes. In different regions, nationalities, and groups, financial investment is usually meant for disadvantaged areas and groups to the maximum extent possible (Wang 2015). The active trials of some local governments, such as the differentiated cost-sharing mechanism in urban and rural areas in Guizhou Province, can be summarized for learning and generalization.

## References

- Gao, X., & Wang, L. (2009). *Introduction to service-oriented governments*. Beijing: Renmin Press.
- He, Y. (2008). Review on the Chinese government institutional reforms over the past 30 years. *Chinese Public Administration*, 12, 21–27.
- Hong, X. (2017). The second child is coming: Assess and then adjust early childhood resources—Taking the arrangement of early childhood resources in Beijing as an example. *Newspaper of Chinese Education*. Retrieved May 14, 2017.
- Hong, X., & Ma, Q. (2017). Changes and Challenges of Supply and Demand of Early Childhood Education Resources in the Context of National Two-Child Policy: A Case Study of Beijing. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 2, 116–128.
- Hu, A., Wang, S., & Zhou, J. (2003). *The second transformation of the construction of national mechanism*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.
- Huang, Y. (2015). The current situation of education on immigrant children in China—Based on dynamic monitoring data from National Population and Family Planning Commission. *Population and Society*, 31(4), 89–96.
- Indian Social Welfare. (1974). *Government of India Department of Social Welfare. National Policy for Children 1974 [EB/OL]*. Retrieved August 22, 1974, from [http://www.childlineindia.org.in/CP-CR-Downloads/national\\_policy\\_for\\_children.pdf](http://www.childlineindia.org.in/CP-CR-Downloads/national_policy_for_children.pdf).
- Li, J. (2004). *Public-service governments*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Ministry of Education. (2010). *The outline of national education reforms and development program (2010–2020)*.
- Ministry of Education. (2012a). *Professional standards for kindergarten teachers*.
- Ministry of Education. (2012b). *The guideline for learning and development of children aged 3–6*.
- Ministry of Education. (2015). *Professional standards for kindergarten principals*.
- Ministry of Education. (2017a). *Public report of statistics of the development of national education in 2016*. Retrieved from [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_sjzl/sjzl\\_fztjgb/201707/t20170710\\_309042.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/201707/t20170710_309042.html).
- Ministry of Education. (2017b). *The Ministry of Education held a conference for implementing the third phase of “Action Plan” in early childhood education*. Retrieved from [http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/gzdt\\_gzdt/moe\\_1485/201705/t20170524\\_305708.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/moe_1485/201705/t20170524_305708.html).



- Pang, L. (2009). Speeding up the development and popularization of preschool education. *Educational Research*, 352, 28–30.
- Pang, L., & Xia, J. (2013). International early childhood education developmental strategies: Universalization, Equity and High Quality. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 9, 49–55.
- Pang, L., Sun, M., & Xia, J. (2014). On the policies and enlightenment of the leading responsibility of government in promoting fairness of early childhood education in main countries and regions in the world. *Studies in Early Childhood Education*, 229, 53–59.
- Pang, L., Wang, J. & Chang, J. (2017). *Legislation for the development of early childhood education*. Retrieved from [http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/xw\\_zt/moe\\_357/jyzt\\_2017nztzl/2017\\_zt01/17zt01\\_mtkjy/201703/t20170315\\_299668.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_zt/moe_357/jyzt_2017nztzl/2017_zt01/17zt01_mtkjy/201703/t20170315_299668.html).
- Research Group of National Executive Faculty. (2008). *Issues about building a public service system and a service-oriented government* (Vol. 1). Academic Newspaper of National Executive Faculty.
- Shang, R. (2002). *The foundation of a government*. Beijing: Economic Daily Press.
- State Council. (1955). *Regulations of the establishment of schools and kindergartens by mines and enterprises*.
- State Education Commission. (1983). *The opinions on developing rural preschool education*.
- The US Congress. (2001). *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [EB/OL]*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsee/leg/esea02/index.html>.
- Wang, H. (2015). The transformation and the future in Chinese preschool education policy. *Early Childhood Education (Educational Science)*, 6, 3–11.
- Wei, Q. (1951). *Consolidate and develop primary education and teacher education—Report in the first National Conference of primary education and teacher education*.
- World Bank. (1997). *World development report 1997: The state in a changing world*. Beijing: Chinese Financial and Economics Publishing House.
- Xu, Y. (2009). *Frontier research of villages and farmers in China*. Beijing: Economics and Science Press.
- Yang, D. (2017). *Report of the development of education on immigrant children in China*. Beijing: Social Science Academic Press (China).
- Yang, Y., Li, L., Zhang, B., & Yin, X. (2016). The universal two-child policy and preschool educational resources allocation—Based on the prediction of school age population in the next 20 years. *Studies in Early Childhood Education*, 8, 3–13.
- Zhang, Z. (2010). The responsibilities of the government should be strengthened to develop early childhood education. *Newspaper of Chinese Education*. Retrieved August 9, 2010.

**Jieqiong Fan** Chen-hui Scholar in the Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, East China Normal University. Her research focus is on child development and education, which includes research fields such as the effectiveness of learning environment, evidence-based family education, and the socialization of approaches to learning and thinking styles.

**Lin Li** Lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, East China Normal University. Her research areas include the development of early childhood education in rural areas and policies regarding the governments' responsibilities.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

