The Analysis of the Research Feature of the University-affiliated Kindergartens

—Take the Example of UA Child’s Program

Yanan Hu
School of Primary Education
Shanghai Normal University Tianhua College
Shanghai, China

Abstract—As an import part of the kindergartens, the university affiliated kindergartens enjoy good education and research resources and therefore usually have a better growing potential. This paper, based on five-month observation of the UA Child’s Program and two semi-structured interviews with the professors and the director of the affiliated kindergartens of the University of Alabama, analyzed the research features of this type of kindergartens and draws the conclusion that the university affiliated kindergartens have the following features. First, most of the research projects are multi-disciplinary. Second, teachers and students work together to finish the projects. Third, a timely sharing of the research results.

Keywords—university-affiliated kindergartens; research resources; research features; multi-disciplinary

I. INTRODUCTION

The UA Children’s Program is kindergarten that is affiliated to the Child Development Research Center of the College of Human Environmental Sciences of the University of Alabama. As the name refers, the UA Children’s Program offers high quality education and research service to the teaching staff and the community residents. One thing worth mentioning is that the UA Children’s Program is a high quality childcare center accredited by the National Association for Education of Young Children and reached the high standard level of the NAEYC.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Question

What are the research characteristic of University affiliated kindergartens?

B. Respondent Selection

I used purposeful sampling as my respondent selection strategy. In purposeful sampling, “the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon” [1]. I purposefully choose the director of the UA Child’s Program and the head of the research programs in the Child Development Center.

C. Data Collection

My major qualitative data were three one-on-one interviews with the respondents. In addition, I have also conducted some observation notes in the UA Child’s Program. Online data included the official website of this kindergartens.

D. Analysis Procedures

As for the coding, I followed both Creswell’s and Patton’s suggestions on data coding, category grouping and theme finding procedure [2] [3]. First, I “create and organize files for data”. Second, I read through all my data to get a general impression of the information. I used marginal notes to start my initial organizing and coding. After several readings of the text, I used different color pens to start my open coding. Each different color represents a different category and I wrote shorthand codes on the relevant places in the text.

III. RESULTS

As an important part of kindergartens, the university affiliated kindergartens have their special features in terms of their organizations, the target customers and rich education resources. And how to make good use of these resources has a positive effect on the long-term development of the kindergartens. Therefore, this paper, taking the example of UA Child’s Program, analyzes the research features of the university affiliated kindergartens.

The most distinctive feature of UA Child’s Program is its research characteristics. Just as the director Michelle Darabaris emphasized that what differs UA Child’s Program from other kindergartens is the fact that it is a lab school and its main purpose is to better understand the physical and psychological development of children and therefore provide advice and suggestions to the parents, teachers and childcare centers. Based on my five-month observation and two semi-structured interviews with the director and the professor, I have found that the research characteristics of UA Child’s Program is demonstrated in the following aspects…

First of all, the research projects in UA Child’s Program are multi-disciplinary. Every year, professors from different departments of the university lead their team to conduct various
As showed above, among the ten research projects conducted in 2017, seven were conducted by the Human Development and Family Studies, three were conducted by the School of Psychology. As for the research areas, apart from the common linguistic studies (six), studies of games (two), health studies (one) and family studies (one). Therefore, we can see that the multi-disciplinary feature of the research conducted in UA Child’s Program. On one hand, the kindergarten provides a good place for professors to observe and collect the data and on the other, the professors can offer the most recent research.
findings to the school and finally improve the all-round
development of the children.

Second, professors and students work together to finish
the project. In the ten projects listed above, seven was
conducted by the teachers and students. During the research,
professor mentor their students to help collecting and analyzing
the data. When participating in the research project, the
students can learn different methods to collect and analyze the
qualitative and quantitative data, which could serve as a plus
for their further academic study. For example, during my five-
month observation, I took part in a program lead by Dr.
Scofield on the linguistic development of children. There are
three students in the project, the doctoral student took part in
the design of the project, the master student is in charge of the
testing of the linguistic software and the undergraduate student
collects the preliminary data. The whole team meet regularly
on Wednesday and talk about the current problems they face
and through the cooperation between the professors and
students, the professor can relieve the pressure of huge data
input and at the same time help students to better understand
the whole process of doing an experiment and thus improve
their problem solving ability.

Third, a timely sharing of the research results. As the
university affiliated kindergartens, UA Child’s Program
provide a golden opportunity for teachers to learn about the
latest research findings. Just as Michelle Darabarisis, the director
of UA Child’s Program pointed out that one of the most
important reasons that parents choose their kindergarten is
because the parents believe that their kids will be taken very
good care of. Various kinds of lectures will be accessible to all
the teachers working here to improve their knowledge.

IV. RECOMMENDATION TO FURTHER STUDY

My suggestion for the further study is that the Chinese
scholars could dip deep into the learning community between
the university and the kindergartens. Further study could focus
on the deepening of such research collaboration and find some
practical guidelines to conduct such cooperation. Besides,
researchers could also conduct quantitative study to find out the
factors which impact such collaboration.

REFERENCES