



# Research on the Development History of China's 0-3-year-old Infant Care Service Education Policy

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**Abstract.** In order to promote the long-term and stable development of China's population, and optimize the birth policy, the policy of "children's education" is clearly put forward. Childcare policies and services are an important part of China's government's solution to children's welfare. How to effectively and quickly establish a quality 0-3-year-old childcare service system is the guarantee to satisfy the people's yearning for a better life in the new era, and it is also an important support that directly affects the country's liberalization of the population and childbirth policy. This study sorts out the development process of childcare policies in China for 0-3 years old, and discusses the development and changes of childcare services, which will help to clarify the development trend of childcare services in the future. Through the research, it is found that the development of China's childcare policy needs to clarify the positioning of childcare services, increase government support, integrate social resources, and establish a professional childcare talent team.

**Keywords:** childcare service; education policy; infants aged 0-3; preschool education

## 1 Introduction

With the development of society, China's population growth pattern has undergone tremendous changes in the 21st century. Faced with problems such as "low birth rate" and "aging population", China passed some resolutions at the National People's Congress on March 11, 2021, which means the government has formulated a long-term strategy for population development. The strategy aims to optimize childbirth policies through multiple means, enhance inclusiveness, improve prenatal and postnatal care services, and establish a comprehensive childcare system to achieve population structure adjustment and curb low fertility levels. The formulation of this long-term strategy is expected to provide more stable and powerful support for China's population development and lay a good foundation for sustainable development. The goal is to reduce childbirth, childcare, and education expenses while promoting equitable and sustainable population growth. The government aims to boost the quality of the population while achieving a balanced demographic structure in the long term [1]. China also issued a decision

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to optimize the fertility policy, aiming to actively promote the long-term balanced development of the population. The decision sets out recommendations for the development of an inclusive childcare system, establishes supportive policies and standards, and actively promotes the development of all forms of childcare. At the same time, it emphasizes the comprehensive supervision of these services, and enhances their service capabilities and quality while ensuring their healthy development [2]. The childcare service system has become the primary task of making up for the shortcomings of people's livelihood. At present, the nature of childcare services for 0-3-year-old infants in China has not yet been clarified, resulting in unclear responsibilities of governments at all levels and relevant functional departments in childcare services. In addition, the government's insufficient financial support has also brought great difficulties to the childcare industry. At the same time, the childcare industry lacks professional teacher training and talent reserves, which has become a bottleneck for the current industry development. There are multiple difficulties in implementing this national policy. By sorting out relevant policy research and academic research, the author analyzed the different development levels of childcare services in various periods in China, summed up historical experience, and explored childcare services in the new era for China.

## 2 Research on Policy Development of Childcare Services

For the convenience of research, the author compiled a table (see Table 1) according to the important time nodes and functions of childcare policies, and analyzed them in different historical periods. The table is divided into three phases: Early Childhood Inception, Early Childhood Reconstruction, and Preschool Accelerated Development.

**Table 1.** Policy evolution of childcare services for 0-3-year-old infants and young children in China

Development period	Serial number	File name	Organs	Promulgation time
The founding of New China - the period of the Cultural Revolution	1	The first national working conference for women workers	women's movement	August 1950
	2	The first enlarged meeting of the third executive committee	All China Democratic Women's Federation	September 1950
	3	"Provisional Regulations for Kindergartens (Draft)"	central Communist parliament	March 1952
	4	"Joint Notice on Several Issues Concerning Nursery Schools and Kindergartens"	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs	February 23, 1956

The founding of New China - the period of the Cultural Revolution	5	"Instructions on Educational Work"	Central Committee of the Communist Party of China	September 1958
	6	"Resolution on Several Issues Concerning the People's Commune"	The Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China	December 1958
	7	Symposium on maternal and child health care, eugenics and prenatal care, and early childhood education	Maternal and Child Bureau of the Ministry of Health in Rudong County, Jiangsu Province	1975
Reconstruction phase of preschool education	8	"Government working report"	Second Session of the Fifth National People's Congress	June 1979
	9	"National Child Care Work Conference Minutes"	Central Committee of the Communist Party of China	October 1979
	10	"Nursery and Kindergarten Health Care System (Draft)"	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education	October 1980
	11	"Nursery, Kindergarten Health Care system"	health department	December 1985
	12	"Code for Design of Nursery Schools and Kindergartens"	Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection, National Education Commission	September 1987
Reconstruction phase of preschool education	13	Notice on the Request for Instructions on Clarifying the Division of Responsibilities for Leaders and Management of Early Childhood Education	Office of the State Council	October 1987

	14	"Opinions on Strengthening Early Childhood Education Work"	State Council	August 1988
Stage of rapid development	15	The People's Republic of China Health Act	passed by the National People's Congress	October 1994
	16	"Nursery and Kindergarten Health Care Management Measures"	Ministry of Health, State Education Commission	December 1994
	17	The publication "Implementation Opinions on the Ninth Five-Year Development Goals of National Early Childhood Education"	State Education Commission	July 1997
	18	"China Children's Development Program" (2001-2010)	State Council	May 2001
	19	"Guiding Opinions on the Reform and Development of Early Childhood Education"	State Council	March 2003
	20	"Pay attention to pre-school education"	Hu Jintao's report to the Communist Party of China's Seventeenth National Congress	October 2007
Breakthrough stage	21	Several Opinions of the State Council on the Current Development of Preschool Education"	State Council	2010
	22	"China Children's Development Program (2011-2020)"	State Council	2011
	23	"The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education"	State Council	2012
	24	"Children are educated"	Report of the Nineteenth National Con-	October 2017

			gress of the Communist Party of China	
25	"Several Opinions on Deepening Reform and Regulating the Development of Preschool Education"		State Council	November 2018
26	A set of "Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Development of Care Services for Infants and Young Children Under 3 Years Old"		State Council	May 2019
27	"Decision to optimize childbirth policy to promote long-term balanced population development"		Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee	May 31, 2021
28	"Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China" "Three-child Policy" officially		NPC Standing Committee	August 2021
29	"Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Construction of Child-Friendly Cities"		National Development and Reform Commission	October 2021

## 2.1 New China's Founding

**The Early Stages of Childcare Policy.** The first national working conference for women was held in August 1950, during the formation of New China, and it connected the socialization of childcare with the emancipation of common working-class women [3]. The third enlarged meeting of the first session of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation fully and systematically discussed the relationship between women's liberation, women's employment and housework, and the socialization of childcare, and treated the issue of childcare as a public issue [4]. The first "Provisional Regulations for Kindergartens (Draft)" in 1952 clarified that the tasks of kindergartens are: to educate young children according to the new democratic education policy, so that their bodies and minds can develop soundly before entering elementary school; so that mothers have time to participate in political life, productive labor, cultural and educational activities, etc. [5]. On February 23, 1956, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued the "Joint Notice on Several Issues

Concerning Nursery Schools and Kindergartens", which made specific regulations on the leadership of nurseries and kindergartens. It is divided by age, that is, children under the age of three are accepted as nursery schools, and those who accept children between the ages of three and six are kindergartens. Specific assignments have been made regarding policies, policies, regulations, systems, decrees, educational plans, educational content, educational methods, and child health care [6]. In September 1958, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Instructions on Educational Work", which stated that the whole country should "basically" complete the task of enabling most preschool children to enter nursery schools and kindergartens within three to five years. In December 1958, the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China "Resolution on Several Issues Concerning the People's Commune" stipulated that nurseries and kindergartens should be run well so that every child can live better and be better educated than at home [7].

From 1966 to 1976, the development of childcare services in China encountered stagnation and regression. Until 1975, the Bureau of Women and Children of the Ministry of Health held a symposium on maternal and child health care, prenatal and postnatal care, and early childhood education in Rudong County, Jiangsu Province. The supply of childcare services has only slowly increased. Official data show that in 1975, the enrollment rate and the number of nursery students almost returned to the level of 20 years ago. Then the family planning policy began to be formally implemented. With the decrease of the urban population, childcare services also entered a period of slight reduction [8].

**Influencing Factors.** This period is a period of transition from new democracy to socialism. The people's political power is consolidated, the economy develops, and the socialist system is established. The Marxist view that the socialization of housework is a prerequisite for women's liberation is the main basis for China's intervention in childcare for more than 30 years. The demand for women's labor force in national construction is an important and even decisive driving factor [9]. Therefore, many leaders of the women's movement, based on this theory, promoted the socialization of childcare and closely linked childcare services with women's liberation.

Socialized issues such as childcare and housework faded from women's organizations and the national agenda during the "Cultural Revolution." China's childcare services are facing a crisis of regression and shrinkage. Until 1970, the implementation of the family planning policy and the stimulation of the "preferential birth and childcare" policy, the high-quality care of children led to the redevelopment of childcare services.

## 2.2 Reform and Opening Period 1978-1990

**Reconstruction Stage of Preschool Education.** In June 1979, China put forward guiding opinions on strengthening leadership, funds and wages, career development, childcare teams, and quality of childcare, which played a role in setting things right [9]. In 1985, the "Nursery and Kindergarten Health Care System" regulated the health care

work of nursery institutions in various places and played an active role in ensuring children's health. In 1988, the "Opinions on Strengthening Early Childhood Education Work" proposed various channels and forms for the development of early childhood education [10].

**Influencing Factors.** The "Cultural Revolution" had a huge impact on education. The spread of fallacies such as "uneducated laborers" and "the more knowledge the more reactionary" caused schools to fail to operate normally. China started putting the education policy into practice, changing its course and actually doing a good job with education reform, in order for education to significantly advance and improve. Education is not just the responsibility of the education department. It should be taken seriously as a significant issue by party committees at all levels, and people from all walks of life should actively support and advance education [11]. Under the guidance of the strategic policy of Deng Xiaoping's educational theory, along with social and economic development, preschool education has a new development mission. However, childcare services are still provided in the form of collective welfare, and children over 3 years old have significantly improved in kindergartens.

### 2.3 Socialist Construction Period 1990-2019

**Stage of Rapid Development of Preschool Education.** From September 1991 to February 1992, China issued some policies. These policies indicate that China has joined the global upsurge of children's rights protection [12]. In June 2010, the International Symposium on "Theory and Practice of Child Care for 0-3 Years Old" was held in Shanghai. More than 200 0-3-year-old infant care workers and researchers from all over the country attended the meeting. The convening of this meeting has accumulated practice and experience for the early education of children aged 0-3. To implement the "Educational Planning Outline" and explore the model and experience of developing early education for 0-3-year-old infants, China issued "About the Pilot Work of Early Education for 0-3-year-old Infants and Toddlers". This move is intended to provide policy guarantees and technical support for the continued development of preschool education [13]. In April 2019, some measures are asked to be taken to promote the development of care services for infants and children. First, the government should improve the support and direction of family care for infants and children, fully implement the maternity leave policy, and establish convenient conditions for infant care; second, the government should increase support for community infant care services and establish a secure and comfortable environment for infants; and third, the government should standardize the development of various types of infant care services Institution [14].

**Influencing Factors.** From 1990 to 2019, trust and services entered a stage where the private sector was the mainstay, and the public and private markets were developed simultaneously [8]. Since 2003, the country has undergone a transformation of its strategic goals, advocating scientific development and a harmonious society. The country's public expenditure on social welfare has increased significantly, and the field of social

welfare has also expanded. The society has put forward higher requirements for the quality and quantity of preschool education [15]. With the liberalization of the birth policy of "a couple who are only children can have a second child" and "a couple who is an only child can have a second child", the development of my country's preschool education industry is facing huge challenges. At this stage, units no longer contract childcare services, but use the form of private market or government funding to invest.

## 2.4 The Period of Sublimation of Socialism in 2020 - the Future

**Perfect Stage of Preschool Education.** China declared on June 26, 2021, that it is essential to concentrate on creating an inclusive childcare service system, include infant care services in plans for social and economic development, strengthen policy guidelines, and improve support policies in areas such as land, housing, finance, talents, etc., in order to encourage social forces to actively participate. At the same time, the government must vigorously develop various forms of inclusive services and strengthen comprehensive supervision [16]. The implementation plan for population and family planning should provide for population control, improving the quality of the population and promoting an appropriate level of fertility, optimising the population structure, strengthening maternal and infant health and childcare services, and promoting family development [17]. This bill formally confirms the implementation of the three-child policy. The opinions stated that by 2025, 100 child-friendly city construction pilot projects will be carried out nationwide to promote the concept of child-friendliness in the hearts of the people. Policies, government programs, the protection of human rights, open space for development, and other factors are all completely taken into account [18]. This document further underlines the social significance of a well-developed childcare service system.

**Influencing Factors.** With the implementation of the family planning policy in 2020, in order to cope with the new form of population change, many young people still have the dilemma of "desire to have children but dare not have children". "Children have children" is an important part of improving people's livelihood and well-being. It is of great significance to increase the population and improve the quality of the population [19].

## 3 Future Suggestions for China's Childcare Policy

How to improve the childcare system and how to build a child-friendly city with Chinese characteristics are two major issues facing the managers of cities in China. China's childcare system is advancing with the times and adapting to social development.

### 3.1 Adhere to Children First

Adhere to the priority planning of public utilities, the allocation of public resources, and the guarantee of public services, and promote the integration of the principle of



children's priority into social policies. Strengthen publicity and guidance, and create an atmosphere in which the whole society cares about children's growth [20]. Whole society expand the supply of inclusive childcare services, focus on children's development and family relationships, increase government support and high-quality children's activity spaces.

### **3.2 Strengthen the Top-level Design**

A systematic plan for balancing women's work and family expenses. Strengthen the government's leading responsibility and cultivate the concept of childcare services. Coordinating Government Agencies to Develop Relevant Infrastructure. Government should Formulate industry norms and improve relevant laws and regulations. Before formulating policies, it is necessary to analyze and predict the child-rearing needs of the broad masses of the people scientifically and reasonably.

### **3.3 Resource Gap Short Construction**

The government expands the supply of childcare service resources. Government policy making policies, fully consider the differences between urban and rural areas, actively explore service resources, and meet the diverse childcare service needs of different types of families. The financial fund plays a supporting and guiding role in childcare services, provides subsidies to low-income families that need to support family development, and encourages social forces to participate in the provision of childcare services through tax cuts, institutional subsidies and government purchase services [21].

### **3.4 Constructing a Talent Team for Childcare Services**

The government increases the scale of professional talent training, encourages qualified vocational colleges to provide childcare majors, or develops childcare professional courses, establishes a comprehensive training system, and encourages qualified schools to train a group of infants, young children, health care, and child management through middle schools and high schools. This will pave the way for sustainable development and enhance the quality of childcare services [22]. The government has increased funding to improve public services and welfare policies for children. Most parent surveys hope that the government will play a role in the supervision of nursery institutions (82.12%), teacher training (65.15%), and financial support (44.85%) to standardize nursery institutions and create a safe and stable environment for infants and young children. education environment [23].

## **4 Conclusion**

Through the comparative analysis of China's childcare policies in the past 70 years, people can find that in different periods, China's childcare policies can meet the needs of national development, but they are also affected by economic and cultural policy

factors. Especially in the development stage of the country's early education, China's childcare services have played a vital role. Considering the key position of economic development and social stability, the researchers believe that China's childcare services in the future need to establish a comprehensive childcare system, and meet the needs of the public as the core goal. This move is not only conducive to ensuring a win-win situation between families and employment, the country, and the public, but also an important means to maintain social stability and promote economic development. Therefore, we should explore a more comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable childcare service mechanism to ensure that the interests of the public and all aspects of society are taken into account and maintained.

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