

CURRENT STATUS AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING FOR NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS AT GUANGDONG POLYTECHNIC

Junjiang LI¹ and Suttipong BOONPHADUNG²

1 Student of Master in Educational Administration, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand; s67561802137@ssru.ac.th

2 Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand; suttipong.bo@ssru.ac.th

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the current status of professional development training for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic and proposed strategies for its improvement. A mixed-methods approach was employed. Questionnaire data were collected from 169 newly hired teachers, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that the overall level of professional development training was high. The participants positively evaluated the training objectives, content, methods, instructors, evaluation, and support. However, improvements are still needed in practical training, diversified training methods, mentoring, evaluation, and continuous professional support. The study proposes several strategies to improve the professional development training system and provide practical references for higher vocational colleges.

Keywords: Professional Development Training, Newly Hired Teachers, Vocational Education, Teacher Professional Development, Guangdong Polytechnic

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INTRODUCTION

Research Background

Teachers play a vital role in improving educational quality, and their professional development has become an important issue in higher education. Professional development training helps newly hired teachers adapt to their teaching responsibilities, improve instructional competence, and support long-term career development (Li & Yang, 2022). Effective teacher training also contributes to teaching quality and institutional development (Robbins & Judge, 2023).

With the continuous reform of vocational education in China, higher vocational colleges are expected to cultivate high-quality technical professionals who can meet the needs of modern industries. This has placed higher requirements on teachers' professional competence, practical teaching ability, and continuous learning. Consequently, professional development training has become an essential strategy for improving teachers' knowledge, teaching skills, and professional identity (Jiang, 2020; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

Guangdong Polytechnic has implemented professional development training programs for newly hired teachers to facilitate their transition into higher vocational education. However, previous studies have indicated that teacher training programs still face challenges, including insufficient practical training, limited training methods, inadequate evaluation systems, and a lack of continuous professional support (Eskens et al., 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Therefore, investigating the current status of professional development training and proposing improvement strategies is important for enhancing teacher professional development and improving educational quality in higher vocational colleges.

Research Significance

This study is significant because it provides empirical evidence on the current status of professional development training for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the strengths and challenges of existing training practices and provide practical strategies for improving teacher professional development. Effective professional development enables teachers to enhance their teaching competence, adapt to educational reforms, and improve instructional quality (Li & Yang, 2022).

In addition, the findings may serve as a useful reference for higher vocational colleges seeking to improve their professional development systems for newly hired teachers. By strengthening training objectives, content, methods, evaluation, and institutional support, vocational colleges can better promote teachers' professional growth and enhance the quality of vocational education (Eskens et al., 2020; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

What is the current status of professional development training for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic?

What strategies can be proposed to improve the professional development training system for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design by integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the current status of professional development training for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic. The quantitative method was employed to examine teachers' perceptions through a structured questionnaire, while the qualitative method was used to obtain in-depth insights through semi-structured interviews. Combining these two approaches enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive and complementary evidence, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative findings provided an overview of the current training situation, whereas the qualitative findings

offered further explanations and practical suggestions for improving the professional development training system.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consisted of approximately 300 newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, 169 teachers were selected as the quantitative sample using simple random sampling. This sampling method ensured that each newly hired teacher had an equal opportunity to participate in the survey.

For the qualitative phase, five newly hired teachers were selected using purposive sampling for semi-structured interviews. The interview participants represented different educational backgrounds and teaching experiences, providing diverse perspectives on the current professional development training system. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data enabled a comprehensive understanding of the current status of professional development training and the identification of appropriate improvement strategies.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data for this study. The questionnaire was developed based on the research objectives, relevant literature, and theories of teacher professional development, including Adult Learning Theory and the Training System Model (Knowles et al., 2020; Goldstein & Ford, 2002). It consisted of two parts: Part I collected respondents' demographic information, and Part II contained 30 items measuring six dimensions of professional development training: training objectives, training content, training methods, training instructors, training evaluation, and training support. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to measure respondents' perceptions. To ensure the quality of the instrument, the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The IOC values ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, indicating acceptable content validity (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.9152, indicating excellent internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2019). Therefore, the questionnaire was considered valid and reliable for the study.

Semi-structured Interview Outline

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information that complemented the quantitative findings. Five newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic were purposively selected as interview participants. An interview outline was developed based on the research objectives and the six dimensions of professional development training investigated in the questionnaire. The interview questions focused on training objectives, training content, training methods, training instructors, training evaluation, and training support. Participants were also invited to provide suggestions for improving the professional development training system. The interview data were used to explain and enrich the quantitative results, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the current status of professional development training (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative phase, questionnaires were distributed to 169 newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic. The respondents completed the questionnaires voluntarily and anonymously. For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five newly hired teachers selected through purposive sampling. The interviews focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding the professional development training program. All data were collected in accordance with the research objectives and used solely for academic purposes.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics,

including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to describe the respondents' demographic characteristics and their perceptions of professional development training (Field, 2018). The qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns related to the current status of professional development training and recommendations for improvement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 169 valid questionnaires were collected from newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic. The respondents included teachers with different genders, age groups, educational backgrounds, and teaching experiences. Most respondents held a master's degree and had less than three years of teaching experience, indicating that the sample was representative of newly hired teachers in higher vocational colleges.

The results show that 98 respondents (58.0%) were female, while 71 respondents (42.0%) were male. Regarding age, the largest group was teachers aged 25–30 years (43.2%), followed by those aged 31–35 years (24.3%), under 25 years (16.6%), and above 35 years (15.9%).

In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of respondents held a bachelor's degree (74.6%), followed by a master's degree (23.7%), while only 1.7% possessed a doctoral degree. Regarding teaching experience, 60.4% of the respondents had less than one year of teaching experience, 27.2% had 1–3 years, and 12.4% had more than three years of teaching experience. These findings indicate that the respondents were representative of newly hired teachers and provided an appropriate basis for examining the current status of professional development training.

Overall Status of Professional Development Training

The overall status of professional development training for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic was evaluated across six dimensions: training objectives, training content, training methods, training instructors, training evaluation, and training support. The results indicate that respondents generally held positive perceptions of the current training system. Five dimensions were rated at a high level, while the training instructors dimension achieved a very high level.

Among the six dimensions, training instructors received the highest mean score ($M = 4.27$, $S.D. = 0.61$), indicating that newly hired teachers expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the trainers' professional knowledge, teaching experience, and guidance. In contrast, training evaluation obtained the lowest mean score ($M = 4.00$, $S.D. = 0.77$), although it remained at a high level. This finding suggests that the evaluation system could be further strengthened, particularly in providing timely feedback and promoting continuous professional development.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Guangdong Polytechnic has established a relatively effective professional development training system for newly hired teachers. The high ratings across all six dimensions indicate that the current training program generally meets teachers' professional needs and supports their adaptation to vocational education. Nevertheless, continuous improvement in training evaluation and follow-up support would further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the training system.

Status of Each Dimension

The results of the six dimensions indicate that newly hired teachers generally expressed positive perceptions of the professional development training program at Guangdong Polytechnic.

Training Objectives. The training objectives were rated at a high level ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.69$). The findings suggest that the training objectives were clearly defined and helped newly hired teachers understand their professional responsibilities and institutional expectations. The objectives also supported teachers in adapting to their new teaching roles.

Training Content. The training content received a high level of evaluation ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.72$).

Respondents agreed that the training covered essential knowledge and teaching skills required for newly hired teachers. However, some participants suggested that additional practical and discipline-specific content should be incorporated to better meet individual professional needs.

Training Methods. The training methods were also evaluated at a high level ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.73$). Although respondents were generally satisfied with the current training approaches, they indicated that more interactive, practice-oriented, and technology-supported learning activities would further improve training effectiveness.

Training Instructors. Among all six dimensions, training instructors obtained the highest rating, reaching a very high level ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.61$). Respondents recognized the instructors' professional expertise, practical experience, and ability to provide effective guidance throughout the training process.

Training Evaluation. The training evaluation dimension achieved a high level ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.77$). The findings indicate that the current evaluation practices were generally acceptable; however, respondents expected more timely feedback, continuous assessment, and follow-up evaluation to better support their professional development.

Training Support. Training support was evaluated at a high level ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.74$). Respondents agreed that the college provided adequate organizational support and learning resources. Nevertheless, further improvements in mentoring, professional consultation, and long-term support mechanisms would enhance the sustainability of teachers' professional development.

Main Problems Summarized from Interviews

The interview findings further explained the questionnaire results and identified several challenges in the current professional development training system for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic.

First, although the training objectives were generally clear, some participants believed that the objectives focused mainly on orientation and policy requirements, with insufficient emphasis on long-term professional competency development. Second, the training content was considered useful but lacked discipline-specific topics and practical teaching applications. Newly hired teachers expected more training related to classroom management, curriculum development, and the integration of digital technologies into teaching.

In addition, the interviewees indicated that the current training methods relied primarily on lectures and presentations, while interactive activities, case studies, workshops, and practical teaching experiences were relatively limited. Participants also suggested that the evaluation system should provide more continuous feedback rather than relying mainly on end-of-training assessments.

Finally, although the college offered various forms of institutional support, several interviewees expressed the need for stronger mentoring, follow-up guidance, and continuous professional development opportunities after the completion of initial training. These findings suggest that further improvements are needed to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the professional development training system for newly hired teachers.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Overall Status of the Professional Development Training System

The findings of this study indicate that the overall status of the professional development training system for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic was positive. All six dimensions were rated at either a high or very high level, suggesting that the current training program generally meets the professional needs of newly hired teachers. In particular, the training instructors dimension received the highest evaluation, indicating that participants recognized the instructors' professional competence, practical experience, and ability to provide effective guidance throughout the training process.

Despite these positive findings, the results also suggest that some aspects of the training system

require further improvement. The training evaluation dimension received the lowest mean score among the six dimensions, indicating that participants expected more systematic feedback, continuous assessment, and follow-up support after the completion of training. Similar concerns were also identified during the interviews, where participants emphasized the importance of practical guidance, individualized feedback, and long-term professional development opportunities.

These findings are consistent with Adult Learning Theory, which emphasizes that adult learners benefit from learning activities that are relevant to their professional needs and supported by timely feedback (Knowles et al., 2020). The results also support previous studies indicating that effective professional development should integrate clear objectives, relevant training content, competent instructors, appropriate evaluation, and continuous institutional support to promote teachers' professional growth (Eskens et al., 2020; Li & Yang, 2022).

Overall, the findings suggest that Guangdong Polytechnic has established a well-structured professional development training system for newly hired teachers. However, strengthening the evaluation mechanism, diversifying training activities, and providing sustained professional support would further enhance the effectiveness of the training program and contribute to the long-term professional development of newly hired teachers.

Analysis of Dimension Differences and Causes

The findings revealed noticeable differences among the six dimensions of the professional development training system. Among them, training instructors received the highest evaluation, while training evaluation obtained the lowest mean score. These differences suggest that although the overall training system functions effectively, certain components still require further improvement.

The high rating of the training instructors dimension may be attributed to the instructors' professional expertise, teaching experience, and ability to provide practical guidance. According to Adult Learning Theory, adult learners are more likely to achieve meaningful learning outcomes when instructors relate training content to real work situations and encourage active participation (Knowles et al., 2020). The interview findings also showed that newly hired teachers appreciated instructors who shared authentic teaching experiences and practical classroom strategies, which helped them adapt more effectively to their teaching responsibilities.

In contrast, the relatively lower rating of training evaluation indicates that the existing evaluation mechanism could be further strengthened. Interview participants noted that evaluation activities mainly focused on attendance and task completion, while individualized feedback and continuous follow-up were relatively limited. Previous studies have similarly emphasized that effective evaluation should include continuous feedback, reflective learning, and performance improvement to promote teachers' professional growth (Li & Yang, 2022).

Although training objectives, training content, training methods, and training support were all evaluated at a high level, the interview findings suggest that further improvements are still needed. Participants expected more discipline-specific training content, diversified learning approaches, practical teaching activities, and long-term mentoring support. These expectations are consistent with previous research, which suggests that professional development programs should integrate practical learning experiences, collaborative activities, and continuous institutional support to enhance teachers' professional competence (Eskens et al., 2020).

Overall, the differences among the six dimensions indicate that Guangdong Polytechnic has established a relatively effective professional development training system. However, strengthening the evaluation mechanism, enriching practical learning opportunities, and providing continuous professional support would further improve the quality and sustainability of the training program.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study provides both theoretical and practical implications for the professional development

of newly hired teachers in higher vocational colleges.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the application of Adult Learning Theory in teacher professional development. The results indicate that clearly defined training objectives, relevant training content, experienced instructors, and continuous institutional support contribute positively to teachers' professional learning (Knowles et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study extends previous research by examining professional development training within the context of higher vocational education in China, providing empirical evidence that complements earlier studies on vocational teacher development (Eskens et al., 2020; Li & Yang, 2022).

From a practical perspective, the findings provide useful recommendations for higher vocational colleges seeking to improve their professional development training systems. The results suggest that institutions should strengthen the training evaluation mechanism by providing timely feedback and continuous follow-up support. In addition, training programs should incorporate more practical teaching activities, discipline-specific content, and diversified learning approaches to better address the professional needs of newly hired teachers. Establishing mentoring programs and promoting continuous professional learning may further enhance teachers' teaching competence and long-term career development.

Overall, the findings of this study may serve as a useful reference for educational administrators and policymakers in designing more effective professional development training programs for newly hired teachers in higher vocational institutions.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Improve the Policy and Institutional System and Build a Closed-Loop Governance Mechanism

Guangdong Polytechnic should further improve its policy and institutional system by establishing a closed-loop governance mechanism for professional development training. The training process should include needs assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, feedback, and continuous improvement to ensure the effectiveness of the training program (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). In addition, regular evaluation and feedback should be conducted to identify teachers' needs and improve future training activities. These measures are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that continuous evaluation and institutional support are essential for effective teacher professional development (Eskens et al., 2020; Li & Yang, 2022).

Optimize Management Operations and Enhance Inter-Departmental Collaboration Efficiency

The findings suggest that Guangdong Polytechnic should further optimize its management operations by strengthening collaboration among different administrative departments. Effective coordination between the Human Resources Office, Academic Affairs Office, and academic schools can improve the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development training.

Regular communication and information sharing should be established to ensure that training activities are well organized and aligned with teachers' professional needs. In addition, digital management tools can be used to monitor training progress, collect feedback, and improve management efficiency. These measures are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that effective organizational collaboration contributes to the quality and sustainability of teacher professional development programs (Eskens et al., 2020; Li & Yang, 2022).

Innovate Training Methods and Enhance Practical Learning

The findings suggest that Guangdong Polytechnic should adopt more innovative and practice-oriented training methods to improve the effectiveness of professional development programs. In addition to traditional lectures, training activities should include workshops, case discussions, classroom observations, and peer learning to encourage active participation and practical skill development. Digital learning platforms and blended learning approaches can also be integrated

to provide flexible learning opportunities. These strategies are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that practical and interactive learning experiences contribute to teachers' professional competence and continuous development (Knowles et al., 2020; Eskens et al., 2020).

Strengthen Professional Support and Establish a Sustainable Development Mechanism

The findings indicate that continuous professional support is essential for the long-term development of newly hired teachers. Guangdong Polytechnic should establish a sustainable support mechanism by strengthening mentoring programs, providing regular teaching consultations, and encouraging collaboration among experienced and newly hired teachers. In addition, the college should offer continuous learning opportunities through workshops, academic exchanges, and online learning platforms to support teachers' ongoing professional growth. These strategies are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that continuous institutional support is a key factor in promoting teachers' professional competence and career development (Knowles et al., 2020; Eskens et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the current status of professional development training for newly hired teachers at Guangdong Polytechnic using a mixed-methods approach. A total of 169 questionnaires and five semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine six dimensions of the training system: training objectives, training content, training methods, training instructors, training evaluation, and training support. The findings indicate that the overall professional development training system was evaluated at a high level, with training instructors receiving the highest rating and training evaluation receiving the lowest.

The interview findings further revealed that although the current training system effectively supports newly hired teachers' adaptation and professional development, improvements are still needed in training evaluation, practical learning opportunities, and continuous professional support. Based on these findings, this study proposes four improvement strategies: improving the policy and institutional system, optimizing management operations, innovating training methods, and strengthening professional support.

Overall, this study enriches the understanding of professional development training for newly hired teachers in higher vocational colleges and provides practical recommendations for improving teacher training systems. The findings may serve as a useful reference for educational administrators and policymakers in designing more effective professional development programs for newly hired teachers, thereby promoting teachers' professional competence and supporting the sustainable development of vocational education (Knowles et al., 2020; Eskens et al., 2020).

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