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## DEVELOPING THE COMPETENCY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN DONGGUAN CITY FOR THE NEW ERA

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### Abstract

Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and promoting high-quality development of primary education is the primary task of basic education reform. Teachers are the main body of education and teaching construction and reform work, and the key to the reform and development of primary education lies in primary school teachers. Dongguan is a prefecture level city in Guangdong Province, China. Primary school teachers in Dongguan need to further improve their comprehensive quality to meet the needs of students' all-round development and Dongguan's "quality education". This study is based on the development environment of primary school teachers in Dongguan. Firstly, it analyzes the background of the competency development of primary school teachers in Dongguan; Secondly, representative literature on the competency of primary school teachers in the past five years was reviewed, specifically from two dimensions: relevant international literature and Chinese research literature; Thirdly, the significance of conducting research on the competence of primary school teachers has been summarized. I hope that through in-depth research on the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan, we can promote the comprehensive improvement of the overall quality of the primary school teacher team in Dongguan.

**Keywords:** Primary School Teachers, Competency, New Era

### Introduction

Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and promoted the connotative development of basic education and comprehensively improved the quality of basic education is one of the key focuses of current education work. The development of primary education in the new era is facing new situations and tasks, which also puts forward new requirements for the education work of primary school teachers. Combining the requirements of the new era, studying the competence of primary school teachers can better fulfill the new mission entrusted by the times, further enrich the research on competence theory, and effectively verify the theoretical value of the theory of person job matching for the study of competence of primary school teachers in the new era.

Dongguan, located in the south-central part of Guangdong Province, is a prefecture level city under the jurisdiction of Guangdong Province and the central city on the east bank of the Pearl River Delta approved by the State Council. Guangdong is a major economic province in China, and Dongguan ranks among the top prefecture level cities in terms of comprehensive strength. In 2023, the net population inflow reached 7.5125 million, ranking first among ordinary prefecture level cities in China. The large influx of population has become one of the important favorable factors for the vigorous development of primary school education in Dongguan. According to the 2023 Dongguan Statistical Yearbook, as of the end of 2022, there were 341 primary schools in Dongguan with 44600 primary school teachers, an

increase of 6709 teachers in the past five years; There are 832700 primary school students in Dongguan City, which has remained stable at over 800000 for five consecutive years.

Based on the development environment of primary school teachers in Dongguan, starting from the reality of regional social and economic development and the particularity of resources, conducting research according to local conditions is an inevitable path to do a good job in building the primary school teacher team in Dongguan. By studying the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan, building a teacher competence structure and elements based on the characteristics of primary school teachers in Dongguan, and integrating teacher competence into the recruitment process, training courses, and performance management of teachers, we can comprehensively improve the scientific of primary school teacher recruitment and selection, the efficiency of education and training, and the fairness of performance evaluation. Overall, studying the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan can establish a continuous improvement mechanism for cultivating a sufficient number and qualified teacher team, alleviate the dilemma of insufficient quantity and level of teachers in Dongguan, and enable higher-level and higher quality teachers to become the main force of primary school teachers.

### **Context of Primary School Teacher Development in Dongguan City**

Internal Requirements of the State for the Development of Primary School Teachers in the New Era

Promoting high-quality development of primary education is the primary task of basic education reform. Teachers are the main body of education and teaching construction and reform work. The key to the reform and development of primary education lies in primary school teachers, which requires them to undertake more roles and challenges. In the context of the new era, the Party and the state attach great importance to the construction of the teaching staff. In 2012, the report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed for the first time that "cultivating morality and nurturing people as the fundamental task of education and cultivating socialist builders and successors with comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and aesthetics". In 2017, the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly stated the need to fully implement the Party's education policy and carry out the fundamental task of cultivating morality and talents. The country has put forward the development concept of "the foundation of education and the source of education" and set the "four have" good teacher standards of having ideals and beliefs, moral sentiments, solid knowledge, and benevolence. In the new era, teachers not only need to spread advanced ideological and cultural ideas, but also maintain the ruling position of the Party, safeguard the healthy growth of students, and take moral education as the center to guide, educate, and shape people. The new requirements put forward by the times and the country for teachers should be paid attention to and studied as a new connotation of primary school teacher competence, which is also the mission of the research on primary school teacher competence in the new era.

### **Realistic requirements for promoting the construction of primary school teacher team in Dongguan City**

Educational activities are constrained by social environment and cultural background, with distinct regional characteristics. As an important city in the Pearl River Delta, Dongguan has a unique geographical location and natural environment, strong economic vitality, and is a megacity with a permanent population of more than 10 million. In 2021, based on the actual needs of urban development, Dongguan City has made "creating quality education" the core strategy for accelerating the modernization of education in Dongguan. Dongguan City plans to

add 250000 public primary and secondary school places and 20000 full-time teachers in public primary and secondary schools during the period of 2021-2025. The city will focus on promoting the "Dongguan Good Teacher" initiative, quality classroom initiative, balanced development of compulsory education, smart education initiative, and education evaluation reform initiative. Dongguan primary education is shifting towards comprehensive development in response to the diversified needs of education. In this context, primary school teachers not only need to teach subject knowledge, innovate teaching methods and techniques, and carry out classroom teaching mode reforms, but also need to pay attention to students' moral education, mental health education, inheritance and promotion of local culture, etc. Primary school teachers need to further enhance their comprehensive qualities to meet the needs of students' all-round development and Dongguan's "quality education". By conducting in-depth research on the current competency status of primary school teachers and identifying their shortcomings, we can provide a basis for the government to formulate more precise teacher training policies and promote the comprehensive improvement of the overall quality of Dongguan's primary school teacher team.

### **Promote the balanced development of equity and quality in primary education in Dongguan City**

At present, the primary education field in Dongguan City presents a pattern of coexistence of public and private schools, and differentiation between urban and rural areas. Specifically, the number of public primary schools is relatively small while there are more private primary schools, and the resources of urban primary schools are concentrated while those of rural primary schools are widely distributed. Through research, it is not only possible to accurately identify the specific gap in the abilities and qualities of public and private primary school teachers, but also to provide solid data support for the government and educational institutions to formulate training strategies and incentive mechanisms, gradually narrowing the gap between the two and laying a solid foundation for achieving educational equity. At the same time, competency research is like a key that can unlock deep-seated problems and their causes in the ability development of primary school teachers in urban and rural areas. It can more targeted strengthen the environmental transformation, resource allocation, and teacher growth system construction of primary schools in rural areas. This process can promote the balanced development of urban and rural education quality. Therefore, through the study of the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan City, it is beneficial to narrow the gap in competence between public and private, urban and township primary school teachers, promote significant improvement in the overall quality of primary education in Dongguan City, and actively promote social equity and harmony.

### **Research related to the development of Primary School teachers' competency**

The "Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Trial)" issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education proposes that primary school teachers are professionals who fulfill their responsibilities in primary education and need to undergo strict training and development, possess good professional ethics, and master systematic professional knowledge and skills. This study suggests that primary school teachers can be defined as professional and technical personnel (excluding principals and vice principals) whose main task is to educate and nurture students, master systematic subject knowledge and professional skills, and exert influence on students' physical and mental health during the primary education stage.

The concept of "competence" can be traced back to Taylor's scientific management in the early 20th century. Taylor studied the matching of workers' abilities with job requirements and proposed scientific management methods that can effectively improve workers' work

efficiency. Harvard University professor David Mc Clelland published an article titled "Testing for Competency Rather Than Intelligence" in the American Psychologist magazine in 1973, formally introducing the concept of "competence", which is considered an important indicator of the beginning of research on competence. Later, McClelland redefined competency in 1998, stating that it refers to the motivation, traits, self-concept, attitude, values, knowledge, and identifiable behavioral skills and personal traits that can distinguish high performers from average performers through effective measurement. This study suggests that competence is comprehensive, dynamic, and measurable. Competence combines individual comprehensive qualities with the requirements of tasks, positions, and duties of the job itself, including social roles, self-concept, values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, personal traits, etc.

### **International research**

The competence of primary school teachers is a research topic of great interest to international scholars. In recent years, research on primary school teaching competence has focused not only on technology and skills, but also on teachers' self-efficacy, interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and information technology abilities.

Fauth, B., Decristan, J., Decker, A. T., B ü ttner, G., Hardy, I., Klieme, E., & Kunter, M. (2019) investigated the relationship between teacher competence, teaching quality, and student outcomes in basic science education. They measured the conceptual understanding and interests of 1070 students in two pre - and post designed teaching units. The results indicate that teachers' knowledge of teaching content, self-efficacy, teaching enthusiasm, and students' interests are positively correlated; Self efficacy is positively correlated with students' academic performance. The three dimensions of teaching quality - cognitive activation, supportive atmosphere, and classroom management - mediate these relationships. These results help elucidate the mechanisms behind the influence of teachers on student performance.

Qobilovna, A.M. (2023) believes that teachers' communication skills play a key role in effective teaching and focuses on developing and implementing a specific plan aimed at improving primary school teachers' communication skills. This program utilizes educational theory and practical techniques to support the comprehensive development of teachers' communicative abilities, involving many aspects of communication skills. Provide primary school teachers with the necessary tools to enhance communication in the classroom environment through key training courses, interactive seminars, and reflective practices. This study evaluated the success of the program using pre - and post evaluation measures, providing insights into the impact of improving communicative competence on overall teaching effectiveness.

Maba, W., Perdata, I.B.K., Astawa, I.N., and Mantra, I.B.N. (2018) believe that teacher competence and teacher welfare are important aspects for successfully improving the quality of education, and developing teacher competence and teacher welfare assessment tool models to meet the required standards is crucial. They developed an evaluation tool model for teacher competence, teacher welfare, and educational quality improvement through research and development. The evaluation model for teacher competence, teacher welfare, and educational quality in this study has been validated by teachers, principals, and school supervisors. This evaluation model has strong beneficial significance for improving the quality of education and the professional development of teachers.

Lauermann, F. and ten Hagen, I. (2021) argued that teachers' teaching-related competence beliefs such as perceived teaching ability and self-efficacy have been linked to their occupational well-being and external evaluations of instructional quality. Researchers have struggled to establish a reliable empirical link between teachers' competence beliefs and students' academic outcomes. To clarify these puzzling results, this research synthesis reviews

different conceptualizations of teachers' competence beliefs and their hypothesized effects on students and focuses in particular on student-reported classroom processes and outcomes in authentic K–12 classrooms. This review revealed considerable ambiguity concerning the conceptualization and assessment of teachers' competence beliefs in empirical research. Furthermore, there is a paucity of empirical evidence testing central assumptions about the associations between different types of beliefs about teaching competence, mediating processes such as instructional quality, and student outcomes in authentic K–12 settings.

Blömeke, S., Jentsch, A., Ross, N., Kaiser, G., & König, J. (2022) discuss our findings with respect to the teacher-competence-as-a-continuum model and with respect to future research. Existing research indicates inconsistent or at best weak predictive effects of teacher knowledge on student achievement. Rather than direct effects of teacher knowledge on students, they hypothesized an effect chain with multiple mediation processes while controlling for school type and student background. Multi-level modeling with 3496 students from 154 classrooms revealed a mediating role of teachers' skills and their instructional quality for the relation between teacher knowledge and students' learning progress. Effect sizes were medium to strong, and the model explained a large amount of variance. No direct effects of teachers' knowledge on student progress were found.

Suharyatia, H., Laihadb, G. H., & Suchyadic, Y. (2019) found through modeling that there is a positive relationship between teacher creativity and teachers' pedagogical competency with the strength of the relationship. The model Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, normality tests, homogeneity tests, linearity tests and simple and multiple regression. Based on observations, one of the reasons for the low competitiveness of teachers is their low pedagogical competencies and lack of Principal leadership support. It was expected to be found that identification of appropriate creativity can improve the pedagogical competence of teachers in developing innovative learning models.

Kaskens, J., Segers, E., Goei, S. L., van Luit, J. E., & Verhoeven, L. (2020) examined to what extent children's development of arithmetic fluency and mathematical problem-solving was influenced by teacher competence, self-efficacy, and mathematical teaching knowledge. Participants were 610 children and 31 teachers of grade four. Multi-level analyses showed children's math self-concept to be a positive predictor of arithmetic fluency and actual teaching behavior to be a negative predictor. The development of mathematical problem-solving was predicted: positively by mathematical teaching knowledge; negatively by actual teaching behavior and teachers' self-efficacy; and not at all by the child factors of math self-concept, math self-efficacy, or math anxiety. Promoting the self-confidence of young children is essential for their mathematical development. More research into the relationship between teaching behaviors and children's math development is needed.

Bahmannia, H., Malaki, H., & Khosravi, M. (2020) show solicitude for the skills and attitudes required to teach the new content. Computing related content is introduced in school curricula all over the world, placing new requirements on school teachers and their knowledge. As technology develops at a fast rate, so does the content to be taught. Teachers need to develop confidence to independently and continuously explore what is new, what is relevant and how to include digital competence in their teaching. Teachers' self-efficacy is hence of crucial importance. In this paper, they extend that work by analyzing 530 teachers' responses collected in Autumn 2017 during a series of workshops and other professional development events. their goal was to collect baseline data, painting a picture of teachers' current self-efficacy levels in order to facilitate follow-up studies.

Aspelin, J., & Jonsson, A. (2019) contribute to educational research about relational competence in teacher education by introducing a Swedish project which focuses on interpersonal aspects. The study outlined conceptualization of teachers' relational competence

described a methodology for prompting preservice teachers' analyses of teacher–student relationships, the theoretical conceptualization is used together with the empirical data. According to the conceptualization, relational competence includes three sub-concepts: communicative, differentiation, and socio-emotional competence. From the analysis of preservice students' texts, the article identifies development needs in relation to the three sub-concepts. The concluding discussion focuses on lessons learned from the study regarding how to promote teacher students' relational competence.

Gudmundsdottir, G. B., & Hatlevik, O. E. (2018) argued digital resources and digital media are becoming important parts of teachers' everyday practice. They explore how newly qualified teachers are prepared to use ICT in their initial teacher education (ITE), present findings of a nationwide survey in Norway on 356 newly qualified teachers, explore how these teachers' information and communication technology (ICT) self-efficacy is related to how they perceive the quality of, and contributions from, their ITE related to ICT and the development of their PDC. They claim that it is necessary to look at ways to review the quality of ITE and contribute specifically to the development of PDC and developing ICT self-efficacy in ITE.

### **Research in China**

The competence of primary school teachers is a subdivision study of teacher competence, which has become a hot topic in the research of teacher competence in China in recent years and has attracted the attention of many scholars. Some scholars have also conducted more detailed research, such as theoretical and practical research on the competence of rural primary school teachers, general subject primary school teachers, and primary school mathematics teachers.

Zhou Xin (2020) based on research on teacher competence, proposed that the competence of rural primary school teachers includes four dimensions: professional knowledge, professional concepts, professional skills, and professional character. Under the four dimensions, there are 10 main categories including educational theory knowledge, disciplinary expertise, teacher-student relationship view, student view, educational quality view, teaching skills, class management skills, teaching research skills, professional personality, and professional emotions.

Hu Xinxin (2021) comprehensively used text research method, literature research method, open-ended questionnaire survey method, and Delphi expert leadership group discussion method, based on competence theory and job matching theory, proposed that the competence of primary school teachers in the new era includes five dimensions: personal traits, ability literacy, knowledge literacy, professional ethics, and professional literacy, totaling 25 competencies.

Ma Xiaofang (2021) used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to study the competence of teachers implementing project-based teaching. The competency of primary school teachers in project-based teaching includes six dimensions: project-based teaching knowledge, personality traits, thinking potential, relationship skills, internal drive, and project-based teaching skills, with a total of 20 secondary competency indicators.

Wei Xiaoman, Gu Qinhui, Ren Yudan and Han Yifan (2021) Research on the teaching competence of rural primary school teachers from an interdisciplinary perspective, proposing that the teaching competence of rural primary school teachers from an interdisciplinary perspective should be creative, operational, situational, and developmental.

Yu Ying (2022) found that novice teachers still lack subjective initiative, professional skills, self-reflection and information collection abilities, unclear career intentions, outdated training management, formalized professional training, and limited professional development

in terms of competence. An analysis of the reasons for the above issues has been conducted from both internal and external perspectives, and suggestions for enhancing the competence of novice teachers have been proposed.

### **Summary of Primary School teacher competency development to support education in Dongguan City**

Studying the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan is a highly practical task. Dongguan City attaches great importance to the high-quality development of basic education. In recent years, it has actively carried out reform and improvement work in optimizing the ratio of primary school students to teachers, improving the educational level of teachers, adjusting the structure of the teacher team, and enhancing the quality of the teacher team. Combining the needs of Dongguan's primary school teacher team construction, it is an urgent need to study the competence of the teacher team, which has created a good environment for the research of primary school teacher competence.

Conducting a survey and analysis of primary school teachers in Dongguan city, combined with practical needs, to investigate the current situation of primary school teachers' competence in Dongguan city and analyze influencing factors, has certain innovation and practical significance. The research results can play a positive role in the following three aspects.

Firstly, it is beneficial for primary school teachers to make plans for improving their professional abilities. Through the study of the competency of primary school teachers in Dongguan City, we aim to clarify the specific standards for being an excellent primary school teacher, guide them to conduct self-testing and diagnosis, timely identify their own shortcomings in competency, and adjust their personal development plans.

Secondly, it is beneficial for universities to do a good job in cultivating primary school teachers. By studying the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan, we can promote the in-depth development of preservice ability assessment for primary school teachers, and provide a basis for optimizing preservice professional education reform in universities that cultivate primary school teachers, such as primary education.

Thirdly, schools and educational administrative departments should be utilized to develop primary school teacher resources effectively. Data and case studies on the competence of primary school teachers in Dongguan can be applied to management practice, promoting schools and educational administrative departments to comprehensively understand and grasp the current situation and problems of primary school teachers' competence, and formulating measures and plans to continuously improve the competence level of primary school teachers.

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