

# *A Case Study on the Professional Development Needs of Novice Preschool Teachers from the Perspective of Lewin Field Dynamics Theory*

**Lin Weng, Baoyi Chen, Bishan Wu**

*South China Business School, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Trade, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510545, China*

**Keywords:** Novice Preschool Teacher, Professional Development, Power System, Field

**Abstract:** Paying attention to the professional needs of novice preschool teachers can effectively promote their professional development. Starting from the perspective of Lewin's field dynamics theory, this study divides the field of novice preschool teachers into teacher field and school field, and constructs field dynamics systems for professional development in different fields. Through case study method, grasp the true thoughts of novice preschool teachers on professional development, analyse their professional development difficulties and needs in the teacher and school fields. It also puts forward the professional development path of novice preschool teachers from three levels. First, from the government level, improve policies, laws and regulations, build a professional development platform; Secondly, from the kindergarten level, targeted systematic vocational training, caring to give multi-level support; Furthermore, from the individual level, professional development plans should be formulated, practice should be emphasized, self-reflection should be strengthened, and teaching strategies should be continuously improved and adjusted.

## **1. Question Raising**

The professional development of teachers is a gradual process that involves continuous improvement and self-improvement in various aspects such as teacher literacy, ideological and moral values, education and teaching, professional skills, emotional attitudes, etc. For novice teachers, this is even more so. Novice teachers face a transformation in their environment and identity, transitioning from student roles to teacher roles, and from absorbers of theoretical knowledge to practitioners of theoretical literacy. Faced with the challenge of limited qualifications and experience, effective professional development research can provide better assistance and support for the future professional development of novice teachers.

In 1942, German American psychologist Kurt Lewin proposed the field dynamics theory, emphasizing the interaction between individuals and the environment. In this theory, he uses professional terms such as physics and mathematics to study and explain that an individual's behavior is determined by their internal needs and external environment. The theory of field dynamics includes two major theories: field theory and dynamics theory. Field theory refers to the

environmental field in which an individual is located, such as the learning, work, living, or psychological environment in reality. Field theory explains that individuals are influenced by their environment. The theory of motivation discusses the internal sources and directions of an individual's motivation. For example, emotions, goals, etc. can all become an individual's internal driving force. The theory of field dynamics is mainly based on the study of human behavior and psychological activities in living spaces or dynamic fields [1]. From this, we can understand how individual behavior is influenced by both internal motivation and external environmental fields. Lewin said, "In order to understand or predict behavior, it is necessary to view people and their environment as a collection of interdependent factors. We refer to these factors as a whole as the individual's living space, and use  $B=f(P, E)=f(LS)$  to represent it [2]. Living space includes people and their environment, and behavior occurs in this living space. It is both a function of people and environment, and a function of living space [3-5]. Therefore, when we bring professional development research for novice preschool teachers into the formula [6-7], the individual and their internal motivation for novice preschool teachers are P in the formula, and the environmental field or external environmental influence experienced by novice teachers is E in the formula, while LS is." The living space of novice teachers includes individual P and environment E. Therefore, B is the behavior that occurs in the living space of novice preschool teachers [8-9].

This study is based on the perspective of Lewin's field dynamics theory and conducts in-depth interviews with four novice preschool teachers to grasp their true thoughts on professional development, analyze their professional development difficulties and needs in the teacher and school fields, and propose paths for the professional development of novice preschool teachers [10].

## 2. Research Design

### 2.1 Research Object

Select four newly appointed preschool teachers A, B, C, and D who have been employed for 1-2 years and hold a bachelor's degree as the case study subjects, and conduct in-depth analysis of their professional development needs in the early stages of employment. Researchers and teachers A, B, C, and D are all college students with high familiarity and the ability to fully understand the actual situation (see Table 1).

Table 1: Object of Study

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>educational background</b>	<b>Location of employment</b>	<b>Teaching experience (years)</b>
<b>A</b>	Undergraduate	Maoming City, Guangdong Province	2
<b>B</b>	Undergraduate	Maoming City, Guangdong Province	1
<b>C</b>	Undergraduate	Guangzhou City,, Guangdong Province	1
<b>D</b>	Undergraduate	Guangzhou City,, Guangdong Province	1

### 2.2 Research Methods

The study adopts a case study method. Under the premise of informed subjects, this study adopts semi-open interview and guided interview to understand the basic situation of teacher A and the professional development planning of novice preschool teachers. This paper uses guided interview method to collect specific information. The interviews of the research subjects were conducted after

work on weekdays and on weekend evenings, and the entire interview process was recorded. After the interview, the collected video materials were separately extracted into text for simple organization, and finally an interview text report was formed.

## **2.3 Research Process**

The researcher has been studying and living in G city for a long time, majoring in preschool education. The theoretical foundation of the major is relatively solid, and they are able to handle interpersonal relationships well. They have close interactions with senior students and senior sisters. Therefore, researchers adopted two methods, semi open interviews and guided interviews, to obtain first-hand research data for senior students based on research objectives and design. In terms of sample selection, the researchers sorted and divided the interviewees based on their employment area and age.

In the past two years, researchers have conducted internships in kindergartens in multiple locations during their spare time and winter and summer vacations. Through methods such as observation, recording, and questionnaire surveys, they have found that novice preschool teachers in kindergartens generally experience anxiety, internal friction, and self-doubt. Interview senior and senior students who have already started working in kindergartens within their major. During the interview, ask questions based on a semi open or guided interview outline, and supplement the questions according to the interview situation. The researcher will conduct one-on-one interviews with the interviewees, with each interview lasting 30-40 minutes. With the interviewee's consent, the researcher will use multimedia recording software to record the interviews. After each interview, the researcher will immediately organize, summarize, and analyze the recorded files. After all interviews are completed, further sorting, analysis, summarization, and refinement will be carried out.

## **3. The Professional Development Needs of Novice Preschool Teachers**

### **3.1 Internal Requirements Analysis of Teacher Field Power System**

The teacher's field motivation is a combined force formed by the interaction of four sub dynamic systems: concept, cognition, emotion, and will [1]. For novice preschool teachers, if they are not satisfied in the four sub dynamic systems of the teaching field, it indicates that the combined force formed by the interaction of the four sub dynamic systems is relatively low, and their enthusiasm for the profession of preschool teachers will gradually decrease.

#### **3.1.1 Teacher philosophy: The conflict between teacher expectations and complex realities leads to "self-doubt"**

Teacher philosophy refers to the teacher's own understanding of future educational work, which is formed based on their own understanding and imagination before actual practice, and has a certain degree of idealism. This ideal teacher philosophy often collides with complex reality.

"After truly working, I realized that it was completely different from what I had initially hoped for. As a preschool teacher, I basically don't have any rest during working hours, and the workload is relatively heavy and long, making it easy to overload. The pressure is also very high, requiring frequent overtime and leaving work late, so it is completely different from my ideal preschool teacher career." Teacher B stated that the ideal preschool teacher career is completely different from the practical experience in reality. "This made me very skeptical of myself. At first, I had great confidence in myself and felt that I could shine in the field of preschool education because after

working in this kindergarten, I felt that all my enthusiasm seemed to be quickly eroded. Teacher B believed that the conflict between the ideal teacher's expectations and the complex reality was eroding my passion for the preschool profession, becoming less confident, constantly doubting my abilities, and so on."

### **3.1.2 Teacher cognition: The ambiguity of the professional identity of preschool teachers leads to "anxiety and unease"**

Teacher cognition refers to the teacher's own understanding of their job responsibilities. Generally speaking, preschool teachers are mainly responsible for teaching work, designing appropriate teaching plans based on the age characteristics and personality differences of young children. However, many kindergartens currently assign preschool teachers to do other non-job tasks, which make their professional identity unclear.

"At the kindergarten I am in, the teachers take turns serving as caregivers and assistant class teachers. In fact, caregivers are also very hardworking, and their work is a different system, so it is quite difficult for us who are studying preschool education because we have not learned it before. We can only learn and do it at the same time, which is different from what I initially imagined. Currently, we are in a conflicting state of having multiple roles but also being a preschool teacher. Personally, I feel that there is a situation where we cannot find ourselves." Teacher A, as a novice teacher in preschool education, felt helpless when faced with the work arrangement of rotating as caregivers and assistant class teachers. In the face of confusion and confusion, as the professional identity of preschool teachers becomes blurred, they begin to struggle to find their "self" and so on.

### **3.1.3 Teacher's Will: Weak professional knowledge and abilities lead to "numerous difficulties"**

Teacher's will refers to the persistence of a teacher in their profession, which is influenced by their professional and practical abilities. If a teacher has a weakness in a certain skill, it can lead to a lack of confidence and limitations in their work, making it very difficult for them to carry out their own educational work.

"In terms of professional skills as a kindergarten teacher, I feel that I am relatively weak in communication with parents and class management. I rarely reply to parents and provide feedback on daily life in group chats. Personally, taking the initiative to communicate with strangers is a big challenge. My piano skills are also relatively weak and cannot be improved overnight. Playing the piano in front of young children and other teachers makes me feel scared and stressed, but I will continue to work hard to improve my professional abilities in this area." Teacher D feels stressed and scared because of his weak professional abilities in certain aspects, but he has strong perseverance in his profession and a strong will to overcome his weaknesses through continuous efforts.

### **3.1.4 Teacher's Emotion: The work effort is not directly proportional to the gains, resulting in "insufficient effort"**

Teacher emotions refer to the feelings that teachers have towards their profession in their work, such as happiness and satisfaction. Teacher emotions affect the enthusiasm of teachers towards the teaching profession and are a major influencing factor in the motivation of the teaching field.

At present, I believe that the rewards gained from working in kindergarten are proportional in different aspects. For example, the growth of young children and the recognition of parents can bring great satisfaction to teachers. When children say things like "teacher, I love you so much" and "teacher, you are so good", they will be deeply moved and their hearts will be shaped by the

children. "But in terms of salary and career development, it is not directly proportional. Teachers will use a lot of their time in the daily life of young children, and personal time will be very tight, leading to physical and psychological fatigue." Teacher D believes that the current work effort and gains are directly proportional to the recognition of parents and the love of children, but not in other aspects, and they will feel physically and mentally exhausted. Therefore, teachers' emotions mostly come from positive emotional feedback from parents and children.

### **3.2 External Demand Analysis of School Field Power System**

The driving force of the school field is formed by the interaction of four subsystems: leadership management, campus culture, organizational structure, and institutional norms, and is a joint force formed to promote the professional development of teachers [1]. The sense of identity and belonging of novice preschool teachers to their kindergarten, the quality of their job, and their sense of pride in their teacher identity are all influenced by the school's field dynamics.

#### **3.2.1 Leadership management: Novice preschool teachers fall into the dilemma of "leading but not guiding"**

The construction of leadership management is very important for teachers. Every novice teacher will have an experienced and excellent teacher to guide and teach them. Good leadership management can bring a sense of security and joy to novice teachers, making them more motivated in the teaching profession. Conversely, it may lead to difficulties or even give up the teaching profession.

"When I first started working in kindergarten, although I was led by an experienced teacher, it did leave me confused because that teacher and I had completely different ways of dealing with things. Therefore, communication was also very difficult. When I encountered difficulties, she only told me where there was a problem after I tried to figure it out on my own and asked me to make changes myself. At this time, I felt quite aggrieved because I had already consulted the teacher from the beginning, but she did not provide me with any substantial help at that time, which made my work efficiency very low." Teacher C encountered a situation of "leading but not leading", which made me feel quite aggrieved. As a novice preschool teacher, she fell into confusion.

#### **3.2.2 Organizational culture: Weak sense of identity and belonging in novice kindergarten**

In terms of organizational culture, a good organizational culture can provide a good working environment and facilitate the cultivation of emotions between teachers and colleagues. Therefore, novice preschool teachers are influenced by the school's field dynamics system, which can lead to varying degrees of identity recognition and sense of belonging in their respective kindergartens.

As a novice preschool teacher, I have a certain sense of identification with the identity of a preschool teacher, but it may take longer work and integration to deeply understand the sense of belonging to the kindergarten. This is not so easy to achieve because currently, my sense of belonging to the kindergarten is relatively weak. In my understanding, this is only a place for work and overtime, and I rarely pay attention to things such as work and office culture. Teacher D believes that their sense of belonging to the kindergarten is relatively weak, and they separate the kindergarten from personal life. The kindergarten is only a place for work and overtime, and they have little understanding and exposure to organizational culture.

### **3.2.3 Institutional norms: Lack of pre service education and on-the-job training for novice preschool teachers**

Providing pre service education to novice teachers can help them understand the work environment, work system, and work norms in advance, so that they can better engage in their work. On the job training is also an opportunity for novice teachers to continuously improve themselves in their daily work, and is an important influencing factor in the school's field dynamics.

"We have pre service education, but to be honest, it's very formal. It's like giving you a document and letting you go and see it yourself, and then it doesn't work out. It would be very helpful for us to directly take over the teaching work in class." Teacher A didn't receive too much pre service education, so on the first day of work, he felt at a loss. "There are also some types of on-the-job training, such as lectures and lectures, but there is an online learning session, which is a very task-based training. It is not very helpful for me personally, and there are also heavy assessment tasks that require you to use your already limited rest time to prepare, making it difficult for us as novice teachers to catch our breath." Teacher B said that there is also some on-the-job training, but substantive training outside of lectures can put too much pressure on novice teachers.

## **4. The Path to Enhance the Professional Development of Novice Preschool Teachers**

### **4.1 At the Government Level**

Improving, effective, and targeted policies and laws for preschool teachers, as well as building a professional development platform for the field of preschool education in China, can effectively provide professional development needs for novice preschool teachers.

#### **4.1.1 Improve policies, laws and regulations**

In the interview, Teacher A and Teacher B stated that in recent years, relevant departments have increasingly focused on the development of young children and kindergartens. I hope that relevant departments can also introduce more policies to support preschool teachers. For example, improving the social status, recognition, and economic income of preschool teachers, and improving the policy for evaluating their professional titles.

Due to the late start of the development of preschool education in our country, and the uneven development level of preschool education between urban and rural areas and regions. People generally have stereotypes about preschool education: for example, kindergarten is equivalent to daycare, and preschool teachers are equivalent to child caregivers. So, at the government level, efforts can be made to increase publicity, introduce relevant policies, and increase wages and benefits to make the public recognize preschool education, which can enhance the understanding and sense of identity of preschool teachers. This measure can help preschool teachers improve their social status and salary, and under the guidance of the government, people can also recognize the importance of preschool teacher development.

At the same time, we also found that compared to primary and secondary school teachers, the professional title evaluation and appointment system for preschool teachers is relatively incomplete, resulting in narrow promotion and development opportunities for preschool teachers. Therefore, at the government level, more identity positions can be released based on the actual number of domestic preschool teachers, while improving the policy and system for professional title evaluation in the field of preschool education. Through appropriate policies such as professional title evaluation and identity establishment, it is possible to create a healthy competition among preschool teachers in the field of early childhood education, stimulate their enthusiasm for work and learning,



and promote their professional development. Through the recognition of one's identity by preschool teachers, countless fresh waves can emerge in the field of preschool education.

#### **4.1.2 Building a professional development platform**

Building a systematic and specialized development platform can play a role in resource sharing. Ensure that high-quality resources are not buried and that teaching experiences are transmitted to each other. For novice preschool teachers, it requires a lot of help to quickly transform theoretical knowledge into practical experience.

In the interview, Teacher C stated that in kindergarten, the learning objects are not only the teaching staff, but also more children's teaching experiences uploaded by others on online platforms and software. So, the government and relevant departments can create and improve platforms related to preschool education for preschool teachers, such as holding more regional kindergarten exchange meetings, developing websites for sharing resources related to preschool teachers, providing opportunities for experienced teachers to showcase, and also providing opportunities for novice teachers to learn. Similarly, relevant departments can organize a combination of online and offline seminars to provide opportunities for preschool teachers to discuss relevant teaching experiences in the field of preschool education, and play a role in sharing high-quality resources during the seminars.

At the same time, in order to meet the professional development needs of novice preschool teachers and improve the quality of preschool education in China, the government and other relevant departments can launch relevant teaching guidance plans. Led by experienced senior teachers, drive the development of new teachers. Building a solid and advanced teacher team to contribute to the development of preschool education in China.

### **4.2 At the Kindergarten Level**

Kindergarten is an important place for novice preschool teachers to put theory into practice. The internal and external environment of a kindergarten has an impact on novice teachers, such as the educational philosophy practiced by the kindergarten, the educational atmosphere of the kindergarten, the educational environment of the kindergarten, and the quality of the kindergarten's teachers. A kindergarten with good education can help novice preschool teachers go further on the path of professional development.

#### **4.2.1 Targeted and systematic vocational training**

Vocational training is basically a compulsory course for every preschool teacher. However, how to carry out vocational training in a systematic, systematic, and targeted manner is a question that we should further consider.

In the interview, Teacher B stated that vocational training will be conducted in the daily work of the kindergarten. But after a semester, it was found that very few were truly practical. The respondents hope that vocational knowledge training can effectively help them solve problems encountered in daily work. Teacher D, on the other hand, stated that they regularly participate in training in kindergarten, which can help them update their educational concepts, learn new teaching methods, enable teachers to listen to children's voices through more channels, and enable them to follow children closer.

From this, we can see that there are significant differences in the content and effectiveness of vocational training in different regions and kindergartens. Similarly, each preschool teacher has different requirements for the effectiveness and assistance brought by vocational training. Kindergartens can organize multiple vocational training programs based on the different needs of

different teachers in the kindergarten, and teachers can participate in corresponding training programs according to their own needs. For example, online course training with a teaching system can be conducted for theoretical knowledge, and targeted offline lecture training can be conducted for advanced ideas and concepts.

#### **4.2.2 Caring and providing multi-level support**

The ability of individual workers to integrate into the work environment and their love for the work environment partly depends on whether they can meet groups that can provide emotional support to work with. Especially for novice preschool teachers who do not yet have a strong sense of belonging, multi-level care within the kindergarten is essential.

In the interview, Teacher B stated that his teaching supervisor and the school leaders will put pressure on him. We tend to use "oppressive education" instead of "encouraging education". This is a significant blow for novice teachers who have just entered society from the "greenhouse" of school. Therefore, in kindergartens, we advocate providing all preschool teachers with a relaxed, joyful, and supportive warm environment. Enable individual teachers to develop a sense of belonging to their work environment. Each level should provide care and support to teachers, helping preschool teachers better explore the path of professional development in this space.

### **4.3 At the Individual Level**

Preschool teachers are the group most closely related to the care and education of young children. The individual development of preschool teachers is not only related to the cultivation of their own professionalism, but also to the physical and mental health growth of young children.

#### **4.3.1 Develop professional development plans and enhance awareness of independent development**

As a novice preschool teacher, we should actively enhance our awareness of independent development. To understand that the learning of theory and practice is endless. Although it has already moved away from the school environment towards the social environment, learning still needs to continue. Novice teachers should independently learn new educational concepts in the field of preschool education and absorb useful concepts as their teaching guidance. We should pay attention to the latest trends in preschool education both domestically and internationally, and strengthen our professional qualities through continuous learning. At the same time, one should have a long-term vision, take responsibility for their future professional path, and formulate a suitable professional development plan.

#### **4.3.2 Improve in practice and accelerate the implementation of identity transition and transformation**

How to quickly transition between student and teacher identities, as well as how to quickly apply theoretical knowledge learned in school to practical teaching, has always been a question worth considering for novice teachers. We believe that the key to achieving identity transformation and practical application is the identification of novice teachers with their own identity. Only novice teachers who recognize their identity as preschool teachers can better engage in practical teaching. Similarly, novice teachers lack practical experience. In the process of practical improvement, novice teachers can better familiarize themselves with the environment and work, thus more recognizing their identity as preschool teachers and accelerating the transition from students to teachers.



### 4.3.3 Strengthen self-reflection, continuously improve and adjust teaching strategies

Reflection is an essential part of education and teaching. Teacher's self-reflection is more important for practical teaching and professional development. Self-reflection can help novice teachers improve their teaching methods, continuously improve and adjust their teaching strategies, and better integrate theory with practice. At the same time, it can also promote the professional growth of novice teachers, make them aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and better plan their teaching career. Through self-reflection, novice teachers can improve their educational and teaching concepts and better pursue their professional development path in the preschool field.

### Acknowledgement

This study is the stage achievement of the routine project (Youth Project) of Guangdong Province Philosophy and Social Science Plan for 2022, titled "Research on the Motivation Mechanism of Professional Growth of Preschool Teachers under the Background of Rapid Development of Preschool Education" (Project No. GD22YJY0)

### References

- [1] Li Sen, Cui Youxing. *On the Systematic Construction and Mechanism Analysis of Teacher Professional Development Motivation: Based on the Perspective of Lewin Field Motivation Theory*. *Education Theory and Practice*, 2013, 33 (04): 33-36
- [2] Lewin K. *Field theory in social science*. New York: Harper and Brother Publishers, 1951: 239-240
- [3] Shen Heyong. *On the Motivation in Lewin Psychology*. *Journal of Psychology*, 1991, (03): 306-312
- [4] Zhao Ru. *A case study on the self-professional development awareness of novice preschool teachers in the subject research*. Shaanxi Normal University, 2012, 56-59.
- [5] Yao Jun. *Research on Teacher Professional Development Training under the Hierarchical Concept*. *Teaching and Management*, 2016, (27): 57-59.
- [6] Liu Zhenghui, Jiang Yemei. *Investigation on professional development needs of novice English teachers in colleges and universities*. *Journal of Kunming Metallurgical College*, 2012, 28(02): 20-23.
- [7] Cui Shiquan. *Analysis of teacher Incentive Policies to Promote Teacher Professional Development*. *Education Guide*, 2023, (06): 26-33.
- [8] Xiao Lili. *Connotation, Demand and transformation Path of rural teachers' Professional Development from the perspective of local culture*. *Education Review*, 2022, (04): 139-143.
- [9] Zhang Y. *Training needs and support strategies for new kindergarten teachers*. *Educational Observation*, 2021, 10(36): 71-73+89.
- [10] Ge Xiaoying, Wang Mo, Yang Dongmei. *Investigation and analysis of kindergarten teachers' training content requirements*. *Journal of Tianjin Normal University (Basic Education Edition)*, 2021, 22(04): 22-28.