



RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDY TRAVEL INSTRUCTORS IN CHINESE HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGESⁱ

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Abstract:

As key members of study travel teams, the competency levels of study travel instructors directly impact the quality of study travels. This study conducted semi-structured interviews with five higher vocational college teachers specializing in study travels and five employees from study travel companies to explore the current state and future pathways for cultivating study travel instructors in Chinese higher vocational colleges. The findings reveal that while higher vocational college-trained study travel instructors have a high level of professional recognition, their competency alignment is relatively low. There are several issues identified, such as the lack of practical experience, insufficient professional knowledge, inadequate creativity, and a weak sense of responsibility. It is recommended that higher vocational colleges collaborate closely with enterprises to plan talent cultivation pathways and restructure the curriculum for study travel instructor programs, based on the competency requirements for study travel instructors.

Keywords: higher vocational colleges, study travel instructors, talent training, professional competency, study travel

摘要

研学旅行指导师作为研学旅行团队中重要的组成部分，其职业能力水平的高低直接影响研学旅行质量的优劣。本研究对5名高职院校研学旅行专业教师和5名研学旅行企业工作人员进行半结构化访谈，探讨中国高职院校培养的研学旅行指导师职业能力现状，及未来的培养路径。研究结果发现高职院校培养的研学旅行指导师，对这一职业的认可度较高，但职业能力适配度较低，存在实践经验匮乏、专业知识欠缺、创意能力欠佳、工作责任心不强等问题。建议高职院校研学专业在培养研学旅行指导师过程中，基于研学旅

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行指导教师职业能力要求，校企深度合作共同规划人才培养路径、重构研学旅行专业人才培养方案。

关键词：高职院校，研学旅行指导教师，人才培养，职业能力，研学旅行

1. Introduction

In China, study travels combine education with tourism, offering an experiential learning approach aimed at enhancing students' learning outcomes and comprehensive qualities through hands-on experiences and field studies (Borbajo *et al.*, 2023). This method integrates theoretical knowledge with practical experiences, helping students broaden their horizons, gain knowledge, and develop various skills and qualities (Ritchie, 2003). Since 2013, study travels have been incorporated into China's national development blueprint, with the government providing strong policy guidance and support (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2013). Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (2016) issued study travels in primary and secondary school education plans, and provinces and cities subsequently issued supporting documents to establish study travels as mandatory courses for students. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China (2016) emphasized that study travels are not just travel experiences but also opportunities for students to expand their knowledge and enhance their abilities through field exploration, practical operations, and cultural exchanges in an enjoyable atmosphere.

According to data from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2021), there are 207,200 schools in the compulsory education stage nationwide, with 158 million students enrolled. Additionally, statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China (2021) show that the 0-15 age group represents 19.03% of the total population, with a significant proportion of these being primary and secondary school students aged 6-15. These statistics highlight that primary and secondary school students are the main participants and consumers in the study travel market. As the core of the Chinese families, the children's economy has become a crucial growth point in the current consumer market. Study travels, as an emerging force in this economic sector, hold substantial market potential (Ali *et al.*, 2022).

Study travel instructors, as essential and indispensable members of study travel teams, play a leading role throughout the study travel process. Their professional competency directly influences the quality of study travel (Castro, 2019). Inconsistent quality among guides can injure the effectiveness of study travels (Ali *et al.*, 2022).

However, research on the cultivation of talent for study travel in China emerged relatively late, with insufficient attention and scattered content, which does not match the prosperous trend of the study travel market. Especially, research on the cultivation of study travel professionals in vocational colleges, which is a newly established major in 2019, is even more scarce. Therefore, this study, set against the background of the structural shortage of study travel instructors in China (Li & Liang, 2020), aims to explore

the professional competency elements of study travel instructors in China. It investigates the current situation of higher vocational colleges in cultivating study travel instructors' professional competencies and how to construct cultivation pathways for study travel instructors in Chinese higher vocational colleges.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Competency-Based Vocational Education Theory

The origins of competency-based education theory can be traced back to the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, which laid the foundation for applied education (Shepard & Wahle, 1981). With the advent of advanced agricultural machinery during the Industrial Revolution, land-grant colleges were established in rural areas to provide training opportunities for future farmers. These training programs emphasized practical application over rote memorization (Goodchild & Wechsler, 2007). The final assessment focused on students' ability to apply their learned knowledge to real-world situations effectively. Competency-based education is an integration of liberal arts and vocational education, emphasizing practical preparation for careers. Tyler (1976) advocated for students to learn theoretical foundations to better understand how to apply their learned knowledge to practices. This educational approach is recognized by many academics and accrediting institutions for its integration of theory and practice (Hall & Jones, 1976; Johnstone & Soares, 2014). Introduced to China from Canada in the 1990s, competency-based education has become a global trend in higher vocational education reform and development. Gervais (2016) defines competency-based education as an outcome-based educational approach that integrates teaching and assessment models, measuring students' mastery by their knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviors. This refers to the theory of organizing curriculum and instruction based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for a particular job position, which is now widely adopted by Chinese higher vocational colleges.

2.2 KSA Occupational Competency Analysis Theory

Harvard University psychologist McClelland (1973) proposed that traditional academic and intelligence tests should not be solely relied upon for student selection. He argued that job performance depends more on students' attitudes, cognition, and qualities rather than IQ. This perspective gave rise to the basic concept of the Knowledge-Skill-Abilities (KSA) model. Briscoe *et al.* (2001) studied occupational skill requirements in the British construction industry and proposed a KSA-based Professional Competency training model. This model, based on occupational standards, divides vocational competencies into knowledge, skills, and abilities through job task analysis and designs and implements training according to occupational needs, demonstrating its practical value in competency development. In the KSA analysis theory, knowledge refers to learning and experience in a specific field, including professional and technical knowledge; skills denote the operational and communication abilities needed to complete specific tasks;

and abilities refer to cognitive capacities, emotional intelligence, and personality traits, such as logical thinking and stress resistance (Badea *et al.*, 2015). The KSA model is widely applied in recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and career planning. These studies provide significant insights for constructing the professional competencies of study travel instructors.

2.3 Study Travels

A survey in 2018 on the willingness to participate in study travels in China revealed that 70% of respondents were willing to participate, 70% preferred a duration of 6 to 10 days, and 88% had a per capita spending range between 3,000 and 10,000 RMB. In 2018, nearly 9 million people participated in study travels, with a penetration rate of nearly 5%, which increased to approximately 22 million participants and a penetration rate of close to 12% by 2021 (Wu, 2019). This indicates a strong growth trend and promising prospects for study travels. However, the smooth implementation of study travel programs currently faces severe challenges, primarily due to a shortage of compound talents (Yan *et al.*, 2023). This issue is most evident in the significant imbalance between the supply and demand for study travel instructors. As study travel becomes more popular and widespread, the demand for professionally qualified and experienced study travel instructors is increased, but the existing talent pool cannot meet market demands (Li & Liang, 2020). More importantly, the overall quality of study travel instructor teams is inconsistent, posing a critical constraint on the quality of study travel education. Many guides exhibit deficiencies in moral character, knowledge reserves, and teaching abilities, severely impacting the effectiveness of study travel education and the comprehensive development of students (Lam & Xiao, 2000).

2.4 Study Travel Instructors

Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China (2022) announced the inclusion of study travel instructors as a new profession and defined them as individuals who plan, develop, and implement study travel programs and organize and guide study travel activities. Unlike traditional tour guides, study travel instructors cater specifically to primary and secondary school students, offering services that blend tourism and education into a comprehensive and versatile profession (Wang & Li, 2008). These instructors must have a thorough understanding of the tourism industry and possess teaching skills to guide students appropriately according to their developmental stages (Castro, 2019). Additionally, they need substantial subject knowledge, flexible organizational abilities, and interactive educational skills to ensure the tours are both enriching and meaningful (Yodsuwan *et al.*, 2023).

Currently, study travel instructors in China primarily consist of primary and secondary school teachers and tour guides. Although school teachers have extensive subject knowledge and educational experience, they often lack interdisciplinary skills and team-leading experience which are required for study travels. They are also unfamiliar with the organizational, managing, and logistical aspects of study travels,

making it difficult for them to fully assume the responsibilities of study travel instructors (Chen, 2020). Tour guides, on the other hand, while experienced with working with school students, often lack of the teaching experience and less deep understanding of students' physical and psychological development, leading to educators' deficiencies in teaching methods and educational engagement.

In response to these challenges, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2019) introduced the "Study travel Management and Service" program within higher vocational colleges' tourism majors. However, this new program faces numerous challenges in training interdisciplinary talent for study travel management and services, leading to graduates struggling to meet the actual demands of the study travel instructor profession, thereby hindering the healthy development of the study travel market. Research on the cultivation of talent for study travel began in 2017., Scholars offer recommendations for vocational training in a school-enterprise collaboration context, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary and multi-level tourism professionals to meet the new demands of the segmented tourism market (Sheehan & Garavan, 2018; Hains-Wesson & Ji, 2020).

It is recommended that the training of study travel instructors focus on experiential learning, emphasizing the ability to summarize and enhance experiences, as well as evaluate the training process and outcomes (Parsons *et al.*, 2019). Scholars also suggest that the training of study travel instructors requires collaboration among the government, enterprises, and schools, with each party defining its roles and responsibilities. The government should lead and monitor the development and assessment of training programs for study travel instructors, clearly specifying the assessment content (Fu, 2022).

Following the establishment of the "Study Travel Management and Service" program in 2019, researches on training study travel professionals has become more abundant. Although this major belongs to the tourism category, its talent cultivation system is bound to have overlapping parts with tourism management and tour guide majors. However, due to the differences in service objects and purposes, there should also be distinctions. (Hong *et al.*, 2023). Fei (2021) highlighted the necessity of developing interdisciplinary study travel instructors who can be trained based on their professional characteristics and through tourism education.

Solihin *et al.* (2024) argue that university students, through project-based learning, can design and implement their own study travel programs and lead various study travel activities. Training study travel instructors can be achieved through specialized vocational college programs, leveraging a modern apprenticeship education model (Ji & Li, 2021). This approach integrates resources from education, professions, industries, and enterprises, fostering collaboration to explore and share educational models (Berezovska *et al.*, 2020). School-enterprise integration can help build a team of "dual-profession" teachers capable of fulfilling both enterprise and academic roles (Wang *et al.*, 2023), and create a "dual-mentor" teaching team combining full-time and part-time instructors

(Karathanos-Aguilar & Ervin-Kassab, 2022), in order to enhance the training effectiveness of study travel instructors.

Povilaitis *et al.* (2019) emphasized that study travel instructors, as outdoor educators, need to master teaching skills, organizational and coordination abilities, team guide services, and emergency response and first aid skills. Mees *et al.* (2020) suggested that the adaptability of outdoor educators like study travel instructors warrants further research, particularly in training and educating them to gain flexible and engaging teaching methods.

3. Research Method of the Study

3.1 Research Design

In this study, a qualitative research approach was chosen by employing semi-structured one-on-one interviews, with purposive sampling as the sampling method. As the profession of study travel instructor is emerging, current researches on their professional competencies in China is scarce, one-on-one interviews can accumulate richer and more in-depth data. The "Study Travel Management and Service" program is also new, and qualitative data analysis can better construct talent training programs. The interview method provides opportunities for appropriate interpretation, follow-up, and guidance, enabling the acquisition of novel and in-depth information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). During the interview process, interviewers should avoid leading questions, primarily adhering to open-ended questions to allow interviewees to freely express their opinions and insights, fully describing relevant content (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Purposive sampling aligns better with the research objectives, enhancing the rigor and credibility of the results, and explaining the reasons behind the phenomena and context of the subjects being studied (Campbell *et al.*, 2020; Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Guest *et al.* (2020) suggest that for qualitative interviews, research typically seeks a smaller sample size for targeted groups to ensure that individual cases have a voice in the study. In explanatory phenomenology, the sample generally involves interviews with 8 to 12 target individuals, with an in-depth analysis of each case.

3.2 Participants

This study selected 10 participants, including 2 deans of tourism colleges in higher vocational institutions with over 8 years of experience, 3 heads of study travel programs in higher vocational colleges with over 6 years of experience, 3 senior executives from study travel organizations with over 8 years of experience, and 2 study travel instructors with over 6 years of experience (as shown in Table 1). These individuals were interviewed to understand their perspectives on the professional competency training of study travel instructors and to gather expert suggestions and opinions.

Table 1: Table of interviewees

Interviewer	Sex	Work unit	Job position	Years of service
Int ¹ .1	M ²	Vocational college	Dean of the school of tourism	8
Int.2	M	Vocational college	Dean of the school of tourism	6
Int.3	F ³	Vocational college	Director of study travel major	8
Int.4	F	Vocational college	Director of study travel major	6
Int.5	M	Vocational college	Director of study travel major	6
Int.6	M	Company of study travel	Executive of study travel company	8
Int.7	M	Company of study travel	Executive of study travel company	8
Int.8	F	Company of study travel	Executive of study travel company	6
Int.9	F	Company of study travel	Study travel instructor	8
Int.10	F	Company of study travel	Study travel instructor	6

Note: 1= Interviewee, 2= Male, 3= Female

3.3 Data Collection Tool

Based on relevant literature, two sets of semi-structured interview questionnaires were designed for higher vocational colleges and study travel enterprises.

Table 2: Interview Outline for Study Travel Instructor
Professional Competency Training (Vocational Colleges)

No.	Semi-structured interview questions
1	What are the talent cultivation goals of your institution's study travel-related programs? Are enterprise personnel involved in developing these training programs?
2	What is the curriculum structure of your institution's study travel-related programs? What are related courses offered? Among them, which courses integrate theory and practice?
3	What is the faculty structure of your institution's study travel-related programs? What is the proportion of dual-qualification teachers? ((Dual-qualification teachers typically refer to those who possess both teaching qualifications and industry experience or professional qualifications.)
4	What are the practical training conditions for your institution's study travel-related programs? What are the on-campus and off-campus training bases?
5	Excepting professional studies, through what other means does your institution enhance the skills and qualities of study travel students? What are the outcomes?
6	What is your view on the role of labor education in cultivating the professional competencies of study travel students? Has your institution implemented any related courses?
7	Based on your understanding, how well do study travel students fit into their roles? What are the problems? What can improvements be made?
8	What qualities and competencies do you believe that study travel personnel should possess? Among them, which is the most important?

Table 3: Interview Outline for Study Travel Instructor
 Professional Competency Training (Company of Study Travel)

No.	Semi-structured interview questions
1	How many employees does your enterprise currently have? What is the annual demand for study travel instructors?
2	What are the specific recruitment requirements for study travel instructors in your enterprise?
3	What qualities and competencies do you believe study travel instructors should possess? Among them, which is the most important?
4	What prominent issues do you see in the actual roles of study travel instructors? How can these issues be resolved? Can you provide examples?
5	How does your enterprise enhance the skills of study travel instructors? What are the specific training plans (e.g., trainers, content, methods, frequency, effectiveness)?
6	What suggestions do you have for vocational colleges in terms of study travel instructor training?

3.4 Data Analysis

With the consent of the interviewees, the qualitative interviews were primarily recorded and transcribed manually. The coding method of Strauss and Corbin (1997) was used to analyze the raw data. Utilizing MAXQDA as an auxiliary tool, data was systematically stored and presented, streamlining and integrating the large volume of complex codes, thereby improving coding efficiency.

4. Presentation and Analysis of the Research Findings

4.1 What are the Professional Competencies of Study Travel Instructors?

A. Professional Knowledge

Study travel instructors bear the important responsibility of fostering moral and character development. They must possess specialized educational knowledge and skills, as well as fulfill cultural and educational guiding roles. The research results indicate that all interviewees highlighted three primary areas of professional knowledge: educational subject knowledge, safety and first aid knowledge, and child psychology. Participants expressed:

"[...] I think study travels have educational content and significance. Instructors need to understand teaching, psychology, and must know safety management and first aid."
 (Int.1)

"[...] They need solid educational knowledge to teach study travel courses and multidisciplinary knowledge. Safety is paramount, so they need to prepare safety plans."
 (Int.7)

Given that study travels rely on tourist attractions and use tourism activities as a medium for learning, the nature of study travels requires instructors to first undertake the general responsibilities of tour guides. Therefore, during interviews, participants mentioned the importance of tour guide knowledge five times. Participants said:

"[...]ⁱⁱⁱ I think the knowledge modules should include policies and regulations, subjects, courses, psychology, travel, and risk control. The more comprehensive the knowledge, the better for the position." (Int.2)

"[...] This profession is a combination of teacher and tour guide. It requires a lot of foundational knowledge, such as general tour guide knowledge, policies and regulations, first aid, and understanding camps." (Int.4)

B. Professional Skills

Study travel instructors should have strong verbal and written communication skills to correctly design or revise study travel curricula, ensuring that educational goals are accurate, themes are clear, and content is rich. The research results show that college interviewees mentioned three key areas for identifying the professional skills of study travel instructors: teaching ability, design ability, and management ability. Participants expressed:

"[...] Teaching is a basic skill. Planning skills are very important, such as designing study travel courses and itineraries, and also organizational coordination and adaptability." (Int.3)

"[...] Professional skills according to the talent training program include: planning travel itineraries, guiding learning, solving problems, and handling emergencies." (Int.5)

Before the study travel, the instructor should prepare the course well; during the tour, he/she should organize, supervise and manage effectively; and after the tour, he/she should summarize and evaluate the whole process properly. Research results indicate that enterprise interviewees identified four key professional skills for study travel instructors: verbal expression, communication, innovative thinking, and teamwork. Participants stated:

"[...] study travel instructors are like outdoor teachers, so they need good verbal skills to engage primary and secondary school students." (Int.6)

"[...] study travel instructors need to attract students and communicate with teachers and parents. They need educational and collaborative leadership skills." (Int.8)

C. Professional Abilities

Study travel instructors primarily work with primary and secondary school groups, acting as guides and mentors for their healthy growth. Therefore, they must possess excellent professional abilities. Research results show that college interviewees

ⁱⁱⁱ Content from the interviewee's words is omitted.

mentioned professional ethics and physical and mental health five times as key qualities for study travel instructors. Participants noted:

"[...] You have to love what you do. When training students, we hope they love their profession. Instructors should be healthy and caring, patient, and attentive." (Int.1)

"[...] No matter the profession, professional ethics is paramount. For study travel instructors working with children, they need good physical and psychological health." (Int.3)

High professional abilities enable study travel instructors to develop positive and healthy life and value perspectives, fostering good learning and living habits and enhancing professional ethics for sustainable personal development. Research results indicate that enterprise interviewees mentioned physical and mental health, extroverted personality, and responsibility five times as key qualities. Participants commented:

"[...] Newcomers need to develop a sense of responsibility, ensuring the safety of study travel students. Lack of responsibility can lead to problems." (Int.7)

"[...] Instructors should have high-quality traits, especially being passionate about children and work, to inspire student enthusiasm." (Int.10)

4.2 What is the Current State of Professional Competency Training for Study Travel Instructors in Chinese Higher Vocational Colleges?

Research results show that three college interviewees were not very satisfied with the current training of study travel instructors. Although students have a high recognition of the industry, they face some issues in practical work, such as mismatched skills. Participants noted:

"[...] Currently, most study travel positions are filled by tourism management graduates who are recognized but not well-matched to the job. Study travel companies have high requirements that may be difficult for vocational graduates to meet." (Int.3)

"[...] The matching rate is low because students worry about job instability, lack opportunities for practical experience, and some have unrealistic expectations." (Int.4)

Additionally, research results show that four enterprise interviewees were also not very satisfied with the professional competency of new study travel instructors trained by vocational colleges, citing deficiencies in professional knowledge, skills, and qualities. Participants stated:

"[...] I think the problem with new instructors is a lack of practical experience, treating different camps with the same approach, lacking innovation and attractiveness in activities." (Int.6)

"[...] Common issues with young instructors include carelessness during activities, lack of teamwork skills, and insufficient first aid and safety skills." (Int.8)

4.3 What are the Training Paths for Professional Competency Development of Study Travel Instructors in Chinese Higher Vocational Colleges?

Research results show that college interviewees offered various suggestions for improving the training of study travel instructors, such as through public welfare activities, school-enterprise cooperation, integrating courses with certifications, and skill competitions. Participants suggested:

"[...] The training objectives and programs should be restructured, integrating professional competency requirements into the curriculum." (Int.2)

"[...] It's best to combine job, course, competition, and certification, while teachers should focus on evaluating students' daily performance." (Int.4)

Research results also show that enterprise interviewees emphasized the importance of strengthening school-enterprise cooperation and practical training. Participants recommended:

"[...] Vocational colleges need to closely connect with the industry, update curricula and training programs, and we can provide venues for student practice." (Int.9)

"[...] I suggest several points, such as organizing practical projects for students to engage in study travels, arranging internships, and having experienced instructors from enterprises work part-time as teachers." (Int.10)

5. Discussion – Conclusions

5.1 Constructing the Professional Competency Framework as the Foundation for Talent Training

In the study by Arocena *et al.* (2007), they pointed out that professional competency is not isolated but cultivated through carefully designed professional layouts in vocational education curricula. To ensure seamless integration between vocational education and professional work, the key part is to develop students' cross-job adaptability. This adaptability, embedded within professional competencies, is characterized by its transfer-ability and flexibility. Therefore, the focus should be on developing students' adaptability so that they can navigate diverse work environments with ease, thereby

demonstrating the wide applicability and profound impact of professional competencies. Incorporating professional competencies into university education to enhance students' learning outcomes has become a key indicator of educational quality (Fallows & Steven, 2000). The utility of universities lies not only in ensuring students acquire disciplinary knowledge but also in preparing them adequately for the labor market (Yorke, 2006). Participants in this study believe that, as a new profession, refining the professional competency elements and constructing the professional competency framework for study travel instructors is crucial, which directly influences the effectiveness of talent training in vocational colleges. Including study travel instructors as a new profession in the "Occupational Dictionary" sets new standards and requirements for standardization, talent training, and management of this new occupation. This study, based on qualitative research methods, has constructed a framework for the professional competency elements of study travel instructors.

Table 4: Professional Competency Framework for Study Travel Instructors

Primary Category	Secondary Category	Tertiary Category
Professional Knowledge (K)	Tour Guide Knowledge	Attraction Knowledge, Travel Agency Knowledge, Hotel and Catering Knowledge, Transportation Knowledge
	Subject Knowledge	Educational Fundamentals, Specialized Subject Knowledge
	Safety Knowledge	Safety and First Aid Knowledge, Student Psychology Knowledge
Professional Skills (S)	Design Skills	Curriculum Design Skills, Activity Design Skills
	Teaching Skills	Teaching Organization Skills, Instructional Skills, Inquiry Guidance Skills, Outcome Evaluation Skills
	Management Skills	Communication and Coordination Skills, Time Management Skills, Safety Management Skills, Teamwork Skills
Professional Abilities (A)	Professional Ethics	Dedication, Law Abidance
	Physical and Mental Qualities	Physical Health, Appearance, Caring and Patience, Psychological Quality
	Other Abilities	Learning and Innovation, Environmental Awareness

5.2 Low Occupational Fitness of Study Travel Instructors Trained by Higher Vocational Colleges

This study, based on interviews, found that the occupational fitness of study travel instructors is low, with the problems including as the lack of practical experience, insufficient professional knowledge, inadequate creativity, and low sense of responsibility. Some scholars have similar opinions. Porfeli and Savickas (2012) defined career adaptability as the preparedness and psychological resources that individuals need to cope with current and future career development challenges. It includes the proactive attitudes, core competencies, and adaptive behaviors individuals exhibit to achieve job-person fitness. However, the current training of study travel instructors needs to be significantly improved, having notable lag. Therefore, higher vocational

colleges should thoroughly analyze job content and focus on the development of the professional adaptability of study travel instructors (Vashisht *et al.*, 2023), to ensure that they can swiftly adapt to industry changes and job requirements. Further research reveals that the theoretical construction and faculty development of study travels lag behind practical development. They emphasize that the faculty training mechanism for study travels is still imperfect, with varying levels of teachers implementing study travels, which undoubtedly affects the quality of study travels (Martin, 2018). Thus, study travel enterprises should highly value the professional competency development of study travel instructors, integrating this task throughout the training process to ensure the professionalism and efficiency of the instructor team. Additionally, the current talent in study travels lacks broad vision and knowledge reserves, which, to some extent, restricts the in-depth development and quality improvement of study travels. Therefore, to promote the healthy development of study travels, more investment is needed in talent training, broadening training channels, and enhancing training quality to meet the talent demands of the study travel industry.

5.3 Constructing Training Paths for Study Travel Instructors Based on Professional Competencies

Participants in this study provided professional opinions on constructing training paths for study travel instructors, focusing on training objectives, curriculum systems, teaching models, and evaluation systems, and jointly reconstructed the talent training program on this basis. Some scholars hold similar views that the training of study travel instructors should be primarily led by higher vocational colleges, advocating for deep strategic cooperation between colleges and enterprises (Afonso *et al.*, 2012). Through collaborative research and continuous improvement of talent training programs, various forms of customized talent training activities can be jointly carried out. This cooperation model aims to achieve seamless connection between schools and enterprises, professions and occupations, and students and jobs, ensuring that what students learn can be directly applied to practical work, thereby forming an effective mechanism for positive interaction and sustainable development (Abdullah, 2021).

Furthermore, for the development of professional skills and the adaptability of study travel instructors, higher vocational colleges need to communicate closely with study travel enterprises in advance, deeply understanding and grasping the professional skill requirements of enterprises (Figueiredo & Fernandes, 2020). Based on these requirements, colleges should integrate these professional skill standards into their curriculum systems, ensuring a high degree of alignment between educational content and industry needs, thus laying a solid foundation for students' future success in the workplace.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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