THE COMPETENT TEACHER:
A SURVEY OF DEPARTMENT HEADS IN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract: According to the report of the Education Ministry’s Interim Strategic Education Plan 2011-2020, and recently the Education Development Plan 2012-25, all teachers must possess a first degree before they can join the teaching profession by 2020, aim to improve the overall quality of teachers. Improve the quality of new comer teachers is a need; in addition, there also a need to improve the quality of teachers who are now engage in this field. As a consequence, there is a need to identify the competencies of teachers who are serve the teaching currently. Ability, attitude, knowledge and skill are important elements to be competent. The terms should clearly define to beneficial the in-servicing teachers and the new comer teachers. This paper reports a research aims at studying teachers’ competencies and the most dominant competencies that teachers should have and applied. There are ten themes were identified through the interviews with five department heads in Faculty of Education at one of the IPTA in Malaysia.

Keywords: Competencies, Knowledge, Skill, Ability

Introduction

Teacher is important factor in determine student achievement, improving schools and reform or improve education (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Fielstein & Phelps, 2000; and Colin, 2008). The improvement of student achievement and education are depending on the knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers (Burden and Byrd, 2009).

Teachers require to continuously improving knowledge and skills to enhance and explore their teaching practices to be a competent teacher (Selvi, 2010). Teachers have responsibility to implement new practices concerning the basic teaching functions and develop a supportive and effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

According to Saeed & Mahmood (2002), teaching competency contents of abilities, knowledge and belief which possess and also uses for an effective teaching and learning process. In other words, competency is the possession of adequate skills and understanding to complete certain kind of work satisfactorily. Teaching requires competencies and standards that would encompass the principles and guidelines in order to be successful in the career as teacher.

Ministry of Education Malaysia (2012) had made announce that all teachers must possess a first degree before they can join the teaching profession. The Interim Strategic Education Plan 2011-2012 also highlighted that only competent and high-performance teachers would be teaching specialized subjects in schools. Furthermore, Ministry of Education Malaysia (2012) in the preliminary report of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 also stresses the need of competency and performance based progressions, enhanced career pathways, and improved pre-service training to revitalize teaching profession. High-performing teachers will enjoy faster career progression; teachers who struggling to meet the minimum quality will receive extra coaching support to help them to get back on track; and
teachers who consistently under perform even with extra support will be redeployed to other school-based functions such as administration, discipline management or co-curricular management. Along with this announcement, it is presented that teacher is an important and professional job in educating students; improve quality of education, strengthen human capital of a country and lead to the changes and development of a country; thus, teacher requires competencies and standards that would encompass the principles and guidelines to be competent.

Furthermore, this idea also presents the needs to redefined teachers’ professional development for sustainability. The demands of requiring more capability will directly affect the educational system. Teachers are responsible for operating educational system and they need sufficient and efficient competencies to perform their job as a teacher. Teachers’ competencies must be reviewed so that teachers’ competencies could be redefined depending on the development of the whole life of human and education. Thus, the study on competency of teachers should focus on the teachers’ competencies itself rather than focus on the teaching role of teachers in classroom.

Due to the reason mentioned, identifying the competencies of teacher and the most domain competencies that teachers should have and applied will be focus in this study. The views from heads of department on the term of competence present an important issue to be concentrated in the study. Understanding the themes of competence will facilitate teachers to develop a belief of own ability, value and profession in regulating strategies or handling needs either in academic task or non academic task. Therefore, this study has important implications that enlighten teachers to facilitate strong and efficient competencies thus enabling them to improve their weakness and foster quality competence characteristics in future, as well as can be transferred to other learning institutions.

**Review of Literature**

Bowden and Marton (1998) have defined competences as ability either learning to or being able to handle a variety of perspectives on problems. They clarify that the process of handle problems requires disciplinary and professional knowledge. These requirements are closely related to the requirements of labour market performance. According to Van Loo & Semeijn (2004) on labour market perspective, the concept of competence is regularly equated to “skill” or “qualification”; The concept of competence is also used in perspective of “human resources”; as such, the potential behaviour of individuals in their working environment and also the discipline which is specialized in the use of relevant knowledge. For this, Ellström (1997) refers the competence as the interaction between the individual and the job, which means competence-in-use. The competence-in-use covers the potential capacity of an individual to fulfil the job requirement.

Theoretically, the definitions of competence serve as the job behaviors and qualifications of individual need to display in order to perform a job significantly and greatly. Besides the elements such as knowledge, skills, attitude, values, motivations and belief of a person to be excellent in a job (Gupta, 1999), Mulder (2001) refer competence as abilities or capabilities of a person or organization to achieve particular levels of performance. Experience (Katane et. al., 2006) is another element beside knowledge and skills that needed to manifest in activities. Furthermore, Boyatzis (2008) defined competency as capability or ability. Maximum performance is believed to arise when the person’s capability or talent is
constant with the needs of the job demands and the organizational environment (Boyatzis, 1982).

Along with the definitions above, competency consists of variety themes based upon job requirement in identification and determination of individual competence. The elements such as ability, skill, knowledge, attitude, value, motivation, belief and experience are generally concerned as essential factors constitutes individual competency and have an impact on growth and retention of a profession. In this study, competency of teacher refers to the themes of ability, attitude towards job, curriculum, knowledge, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, role and attitude, skill and soft skill. The themes from the view of department heads on term of competency postulate an important issue to be concentrated in this study which clarifies the most practical definitions and requirements on teacher competency.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

Five department heads in Faculty of Education at one of the IPTA in Malaysia were chosen purposely for the study.

**The Research Design**

The survey design method was used for this study. Question to identify the competencies of teacher was developed. In personal interview with department heads, the interviewer reads the question to the respondent in a face-to-face setting and records the answer. According to Cohen et. al. (2007), interview is a flexible tool for data collection and enabling multi-sensory channels to be used, verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. The question can be well explained to the respondent (Kumar, 2005).

**Content Analysis**

The descriptive information from the respondents was analyzed through content analysis. The themes that emerge from the descriptions given by the respondents were identified. Codes to each theme were assigned. The analysis was done using theme frequencies.

**Results and Discussions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Towards Job</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The Frequency of Themes in View of Teacher Competences
Table 1, shows that theme of ability scored 6.72% which hold the fifth place among the ten themes.

A competent teacher should have ability to perform the job, ability to suit the pedagogy with content, ability to share the knowledge and ability to suit the psychology make up of student.

The theme of attitude towards job scored 8.96% which hold the forth place among the ten themes. Teacher should show enthusiasm in job; the interest of teacher towards the job, participation in job related task and sincerity in job are the essential elements to be a competent teacher in term of the attitude towards job.

The theme of curriculum scored 3.73% which hold the eighth place among the ten themes. Teacher should have good understanding and knowledge on the education system; they should have subject content that suited with the curriculum that implementing currently to fulfill the demand of the curriculum and the needs of the education system in their country.

The theme of knowledge scored 11.19% which hold the third place among the ten themes. There are three sub-themes that forming the theme of knowledge. There is specification of knowledge, application of knowledge and supplementary of knowledge. The specification of knowledge means the subject based knowledge, specific knowledge on the skills in teaching and learning process and knowledge to be competent. Beside the equivalent knowledge, teachers should know how to apply the knowledge effectively and efficiently into teaching and learning process to beneficial the students. Teacher should have the supplementary knowledge to complement the teaching and learning; they should equip themselves with the knowledge of technology and more knowledgeable and skilled in using the technology than students.

The theme of pedagogy scored 33.58% which hold the first place among the ten themes. This is the most important theme among the founded themes in this study. Pedagogy is the basic element to be a teacher. Teacher should understand the pedagogy, know how to implementing pedagogy and prepare the subject contents. Basically, teachers have to know the teaching and learning methods and always understand the teaching and learning process. Through the teaching and learning process, teachers will have knowledge how to implement and transmit the knowledge, making students think creatively and critically about the learning through the approach planned to the students. Furthermore, teacher should able to prepare good subject content to match the needs of the trends. Teaching is not just transfer the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role &amp; Attribute</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Skills</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
syllabus into the content of teaching, but is make sure the students learn and apply the knowledge.

The theme of philosophy scored 5.97% which hold the sixth place among the ten themes. Teacher should understand the philosophy of the education and implementing what is expected from the philosophy of the curriculum.

The theme of psychology scored 0.75% which hold the last place among the ten themes. Understand the psychology of students will beneficial the teachers in understand personally the behaviors of students, the problems of the students and the needs of the students either to give the punishment, reward or motivation to enhance the learning.

The theme of role and attribute scored 15.67% which hold the second place among the ten themes. This theme discuss about the roles of teacher as a role model in classroom, as parents and as agent of the transformation of society. Teacher should have leadership qualities, patient, good personality and respected by students. Teacher should display the roles of be responsible, understand student lacks and student problem; good personality is the role model either in classroom or outside the classroom for the students.

The theme of ability scored 8.96% which hold the forth place among the ten themes. There are three sub-themes under the theme of skill. There is specification of skill, application of skill and supplementary of skill. Teacher is holding the responsibility to impart the knowledge and skills to the students; skills of teaching shows how a teacher deliver the knowledge and skills to the students, how a teacher apply the skills in teaching and also the use of supplementary skills to complement the job as a competent teacher.

The theme of ability scored 4.48% which hold the seventh place among the ten themes. Soft skill is one of the defined competences which shows the major concern on communicate with the students, with parents, with colleagues and with the society. Being able to communicate is essential to being a competent teacher because communication not only conveys information, but it tends to encourage effort, improve attitudes and stimulates thinking among these groups.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are ten themes that were identified in this study. Pedagogy, role and attribute, knowledge, skills, attitude towards job, ability, philosophy, soft skills, curriculum and psychology are the themes forming the image of teacher to be a competent teacher. The themes were the views from Head of Department which plays a significant part in making decisions on academics programmes for teacher recruits. It is necessary to reviewed and redefined regularly the competencies of teachers in parallel with the changes and needs in education to enable teachers to equip themselves with the competencies to cope with the changes.

**References**


