

QUINTESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES OF A TEACHER: A Research Review

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ABSTRACT

True education when imparted to dynamic human resource leads the nation towards attaining greatness. True education implies to a state when economic prosperity is gained through value based social system and baton of glorious cultural heritage is passed to younger generation with honour and confidence. This dream can not be cherished in absence of professionally qualified and competent teachers. Expectations from teachers are high. In view of this, pressing need of the hour is to acknowledge and develop such competencies in teachers which help them in achieving this endeavour. What standards should be displayed by practitioners of this job? To probe this, many researchers have studied various aspects of teaching as a profession and as a process. Objective of this paper is to review opinions/findings expressed by educationists and researchers and make a list of competencies considered salient for this committed profession.

Keywords: Competency, Teaching, Decision Making, Team Leader, Action Researcher, Communication

INTRODUCTION

Being a multifarious activity, teaching demands intricate role from the teacher. The teacher is the facilitator of knowledge, classroom manager, resource person, leader, decision maker, administrator, promoter of peace and culture-all rolled in one. For this reason, teachers have to comply with certain competencies. Initial and in-service teacher training programmes are two levels at which teachers can be equipped with pertinent competencies. Initial teacher training programmes aim at imparting fundamental competencies while refinement and updating of these take place during in-service programmes. Development of new ideas, practices and techniques in the field of pedagogy is the consequences of knowledge explosion in the areas of science and technology. Teachers need a deep and sympathetic understanding of importance of child centered education. Aim of education must be centrally placed while preparing teachers, as on the one hand teachers have to inculcate the feeling of patriotism and national pride but on the other front concept of global citizenship has to be promoted among students. Teachers in possession of appropriate professional competencies and right attitude towards profession can extend help in this pursuit.

Competencies are those personal and professional characteristics or attributes of a teacher which have specific requirements of teaching profession. These make teaching learning environment more effective, conducive and learner friendly. Competencies are essential for carrying out personal and professional activities successfully. The professional behavior is guided by a mixture of knowledge, skill, attitudes and personal characteristics. Information, skill and attitudes as per demand of profession are called competencies (Vander Schaff and others 2003).

WHY COMPETENCIES ARE IMPERATIVE?

UNESCO (1987) observed that a teacher has to make students literate in terms of reading, writing and arithmetic along with maintaining harmony between school and community. To make students functional and accountable members of society is the primary duty of the teacher.

- Competencies are needed by a teacher to perform job satisfactorily and grow both on personal and professional fronts. Gain in confidence, development of reflective power, practice of professional code of conduct, developing insight of learner, learning environment and factors influencing learning are the areas which provide scope to exhibit competencies.
- Competencies enable a teacher to identify objectives and goals of curriculum and explore practical measures to achieve these.
- Teacher, being an eminent member of the society, maintains social links with the students, the parents and other members of society. Competencies come to fore in this field to also establish the teacher as an active agent of social change. Knowledge of local environment, social settings, cultural aspects and issues help the teacher in executing his tasks with aplomb.

Heck & Williams (1984) have rightly expressed that the teacher has to present himself as genuine individual and competent professional. Ncness, Breedfood and Osborn (2003) supported this idea and claimed the profession of teacher as multifaceted one. Sharma, SR (2005) mentioned that fundamental competencies should enable teacher to realize desired objectives of school.

QUINTESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHERS

Enquiry in the field of education is for improving and updating educational models, their implementation in desirable shape and to encourage effective teaching practices. Teaching competencies can be broadly classified under three headings as:

- Competencies required for classroom teaching
- Competencies essential for carrying out professional engagements in school.
- Competencies needed to be a positive contributor of society.

Sometimes these competencies are also classified as Personal and Professional.

In both cases, competencies overlap each other. Teacher is a professional who lends distinct touch to profession by his personal traits. When these personal traits align with professional competencies, they help the teacher in inspiring young minds to excel in the field of their choice.

Foremost task of teachers is classroom teaching. William Cosbie (1996) concluded that the classroom proceedings are index of a school's quality. Joyful learning experiences are based on various components like methods of teaching, resources used and motivation level of students. Key to effective teaching-learning environment lies in ensuring meaningful participation of students in classroom. This is possible when the teacher possesses persuasive communication skill, voice clarity, creativity and above all, ability to motivate students. Kwoklum & Lew (1981) advocated that essential qualities possessed by effective teachers are clear voice, fluency in speech, leadership quality and ability to stimulate thought process. Being friendly and cheerful, knowledgeable and poised, lively and interesting, firm and above all non-directive are the prime qualities of an effective teacher as listed by Veldman & Peck (1963).

Students think highly of a teacher who can stimulate them intellectually, uses new teaching approaches and inspires them to excel academically. These remarkable teaching competencies have been pointed by

Rosenshine and Frust (1971), Walberg & Hartal (1990), Good & Brophy (1990) and Borich (1988). Similarly Lowman (1984) opined that interpersonal rapport and stimulating thought process are two factors which compose outstanding teaching performance. Sound knowledge of the subject matter not only helps the teacher in the class but also helps in restoring the faith of students in the teacher. James and Choppin (1977) pointed out that thorough knowledge of the subject matter is a vital factor while imparting instruction. Kohl (1992) stated that along with knowledge of the subject matter, the needs of society and factors influencing education must be known to teachers. Medley (1977) expressed that teacher with good command over subject matter exhibits positive attitude towards school as well. Dewey (1966) considered experiences given to students through various activities as education. Teacher acts as the organizer of such activities. Best (1991) stated that basic aim of teaching is to promote independent thinking, reasoning and spirit of enquiry. Sound knowledge of the subject matter, application of psychological principles while teaching, creation of interest and relationship with the students are factors which influence teaching (Kalra, 1997). Research by Larson & Silverman (2000) and Nodding (1984) emphasized that care and respect form healthy relationship between teacher and student. Zimmerman (1990) and Clatox (1996) believed in organizing learning process in such a way that students take responsibility of their own learning.

Proficient classroom teaching involves proper use of teaching skills. Anderson (1991) viewed that competent teacher possesses knowledge and skill to translate educational goals into reality. While Gilchrist *et.al* (1985) maintained that yardstick of good teaching is making goals and exploring the ways to achieve them, route to achieve educational goals passes through the instructional objectives. Setting the objectives in behavioral terms by the teacher is the initiating step of classroom teaching. Gronlund (1985) stressed on importance of instructional objectives by stating that forming instructional objectives in behavioral terms help the teacher in giving direction to teaching learning process.

According to George (1975), competencies that prove useful for the teacher in the classroom are securing student's attention, active participation in classroom activities, proper use of explanation and questioning skill, voice modulation at required junctures, correct body language and identifying problems of learners. While Jangira (1979) considered writing instructional objectives, organization of content matter, set induction, questioning, illustration with example, use of teaching aids, evaluation, reinforcement of desired behavior and classroom management as main teaching competencies, Passi (1976) identified writing instructional objectives, introducing topic, questioning, illustration with example, stimulus variation, reinforcement, use of blackboard, closure of topic as skills imperative for successful teaching.

Teacher's biggest strength in the classroom is sensitive and sensible communication. Language as means of communication should be used taking into consideration age, gender, socio-economic, linguistic and ethnic background of the child. This skill is put to use by teacher not only inside classroom but while managing different affairs of school or interacting with the society. For Edward *et.al* (1996) core competencies of teacher include abstract thinking, problem solving ability, encouraging team work and above all effective communication. Poor communication can make learning of even the most simple and straight forward subject matter far more difficult (Anderson, 1991). Mukopadhyay (1994) believes that logical meaningful behavior to achieve the goal is the result of the effective communication. Stressing on adequate volume of voice of teacher (communication), Laslett & Smith (1984) gave reasons that child with hearing disability may find it difficult to participate in classroom proceedings.

'To question well is to teach well' opined Dewey (1966). Questioning skill is used by teachers to make teaching learning a two way process. A well planned lesson is intermitted by questions and queries both by the teacher and the students. Sadker and Sadker (1979) referred to questioning skill as group alerting technique. Anderson (1991) maintained that balance should be maintained in lower order and high order questions. Questioning facilitates teacher in evaluation of student's comprehension, stimulates thought process and helps in maintaining discipline.

Skill of evaluation assists the teacher in maintaining progress of the students. Continuous comprehensive evaluation is done in modern times (in new C.B.S.E scheme) to assess all round development of the child and to minimize rote learning. In light of this new scheme, relaxation is given to students regarding use of reference materials in examination or by giving prior information of the questions (Aggarwal 1997). Teacher must be properly trained and made competent to carry out such assessments so that diagnosis of learner's problem and special remedial activities can be carried out inside and outside classroom (Airasian 1994).

Efficacious use of teaching aids alleviates student's attention and interest in the classroom. These also boost discipline of the class and fulfill the prime task of subject matter clarity. Laslett & Smith (1984) advocated for initiating teaching with the help of activity to keep students attentive and occupied. ICT is a potent tool in making India as knowledge based society and can bring revolutionary changes provided it is used as an integral element in teaching learning scenario. Competency to use ICT judiciously is indispensable for today's teacher. Gupta (2007) stressed importance of audiovisual aids by accepting the vital role teaching aid play in perceiving and assimilating content of instruction and developing purposeful experience. Jain (2004) argued that activities like fieldtrips and exhibitions ensure improvement in quality of education.

Motivating students inside or outside the classroom is a task which brings acclaim to both teacher and student. Sprinshall (1994) pointed out that principles of positive reinforcement can be applied by teacher irrespective of time and space. Appropriate and consistent reinforcement generates confidence and helps to raise academic achievements (Dilworth 1991). Motivation can also be provided by giving personalized feedback to the students after evaluation. Farris (1996) explained that teacher needs to be competent enough to pace, monitor, assess and give feedback to the students.

Professional acumen of the teacher gets highlighted when s/he selects various techniques and strategies while teaching (Dhand 1990). Learning styles when encompassed by teacher help in generating significant amount of interest among students. Spoon & Schell (1998) described that knowledge of learning styles of students could provide impetus to student centred approach of teacher. Learning styles are different approaches / ways of learning. Grasha (1996) supported an integrated model of teaching learning styles and stressed the need of cultivating a teaching style which is beneficial to a large extent for the students with different learning styles. Practice of different teaching styles provides change for teacher and acts as a motivational factor for the students (Dhand, 1990).

Creativity or power of self expression tops the list of competent teachers. Such teachers believe in using various creative channels while teaching. Intrinsic motivation takes learning to a higher level if freedom of expressions, thoughts and emotions are endowed to students. Gardner (1977) identified eight areas of intelligence i.e. verbal, linguistic, logical, mathematical, visual, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. Gardner's notion supported that creative and unique ways of learning need to be integral part of teaching learning process.

Appropriate lesson plan, delivery of lesson, lesson developing questions for interaction, verbal/non-verbal communication, controlling physical environment, correct use of teaching aids and discipline – all are components of classroom management. Laslett & Smith (1984) noted that successful classroom management implies to a state where involvement in academic work is more and distractions are less. Walberg (1988) opined that planning of lesson, initiating teaching, handling deviances are the factors that influence learning. Ainley (1987) pointed out that equipments, materials, strength of class and seating arrangement form physical environment and need to be dealt in affable manner. Opportunities must be provided to each student in the class for sharing his understanding and skill (Proctor *et.al*, 1995). A teacher requires high level of sensitivity while dealing with a classroom which accommodates students from different parts of the country/ world having ethnic, linguistic and other variations. Nel (1992) supported this idea by stating that on the teacher's

part, it is urgent to be earnest while teaching in multicultural scenario. Mangla (2005) elucidated that classroom management is of utmost importance to a teacher. For dealing with the problems of student's behavior in secondary schools, in-service programmes should be designed in such a manner that help is extended to teachers and administrators in dealing with behavioral problems of students. Ur (1996) mentioned that classroom discipline specifies to a state where accepted code of conduct is followed by teacher and students for smooth functioning of class.

In the present perspective, the role of teacher has crossed boundaries of classroom and found extension in every sphere of education. New dimensions are being added to teacher's duties and responsibilities. In light of this, competencies such as decision making, curriculum developing, researching, and leadership have become inevitable for teaching profession. Slins & Mulford (2002) concluded that student performance improves when leadership is not confined at the top but distributed in school and when teachers are empowered to lead in their respective areas. Lambert (2005) also supported this idea by stating that schools must focus on developing leadership capacity in teachers. Bolin (1989) stressed on developing decision making competency by stating that teacher's opinion in ascertaining goals and objectives of school must get respect. In addition to teaching, teachers act as team leaders, action researchers, curriculum developers and in-house trainers (Boles & Troen, 1992). Ovando (1996) found that teachers with leadership competency are more innovative and exude positive effect in the classroom. Kotzenmeyer & Mollen (2001) have rightly put forth that professional development programmes need to respond to new roles of teachers as leader, mentor, and action researcher enabling them to develop competencies in aforesaid areas.

Team work is needed in every sphere of life; more so on professional front. Louis (1992) observed that collaboration with peers increases effectiveness of classroom teaching. Team work promotes cooperation and healthy competition among teachers leading to increased professional efficiency. Wong (1996) claimed that positive effect on student learning is observed when there is a strong bond of fellowship between principal and teachers. Collaboration among teachers increases personal understanding and enhances adaptability for team work (Little, 1990). Teachers exert a great influence on the society. Danielson (2007) admitted that influence of the teacher operates in classroom, school and beyond, and also in the society. Teacher can act as an ambassador of change by transmitting, transecting and transforming knowledge for a better society.

DISCUSSION

Acquisition of knowledge and application of knowledge are two axes on which learning depends. Situations are designed for acquiring and applying knowledge in the curriculum and facilitated with the help of the teacher. Rapid advancement in Science and Technology has revolutionized all aspects of human life. In this context teachers need to acclimatize in the changed educational landscape. Consolidation, up gradation and refinement are needed in knowledge as well as in skills / competencies to match pedagogical improvements. A teacher is a life long learner with positive attitude for educational reforms (Fullan, 2007, Triggs & John, 2004: Scrimshaw, 2001). The premier and perennial competencies which are advocated by all researchers and eminent educationist in a teacher are sound knowledge of subject matter, systematic presentation of content matter, effective communication, proper classroom management, unbiased evaluation, use of various approaches and teaching models in the classroom. Teacher cannot limit himself to classroom only. His influence extends from classroom to school and finally to the society. Competencies like leadership, decision making, working in teams as a member or team leader, organizer of events, action researcher etc. are essential for teacher to fulfill professional engagement in the school. Interacting with parents as mentor of students, being a member of social forums, raising concerns for social issues as an intellectual are the areas where teacher's participation confirms him as a multidimensional contributor of society.

A competent teacher's role is well-knitted in educational, social and cultural systems of society. So competencies can not be distinctly categorized as personal or professional. Competencies such as

communication, decision making, team work play a crucial role for teacher irrespective of whether s/he is in the classroom, school or in other social settings. Nature and treatment of competencies may vary depending on situation and wisdom of the teacher.

ICT is responsible for paradigm shift in education. Technology has the advantage of enhancing higher order thinking among students, which promotes team learning and reduces dependence of learner on teacher (Jefferies, 2003). Yet competencies like respect for learner, compassion, individualized attention, impartial behaviour are always cherished in a teacher as significance of these lies in making strong bond between the teachers and the taught and form the basis of teacher ethics. Competencies pertaining to dealing with emergency situations, disaster management, environmental awareness, basic knowledge of first aid, guidance, counselling, education for adolescents and special children must find place in initial as well as in-service teacher education programmes, as the need of the fast changing world order.

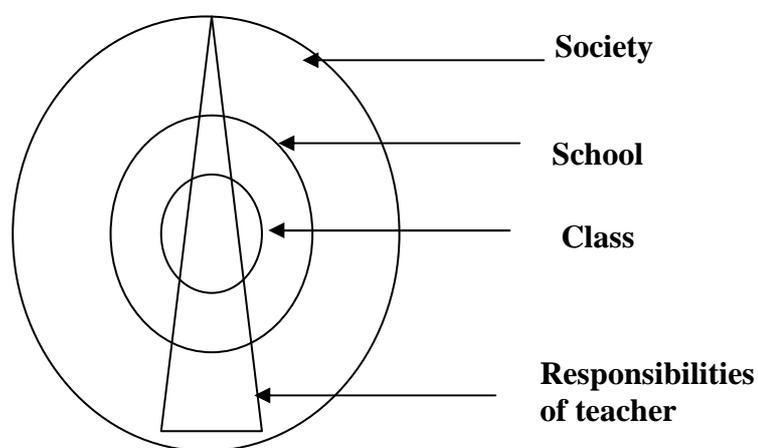


Figure 1

Depicts teaching as a multitasked profession where teacher's duties and assignments cast influence well beyond classroom to school and society.

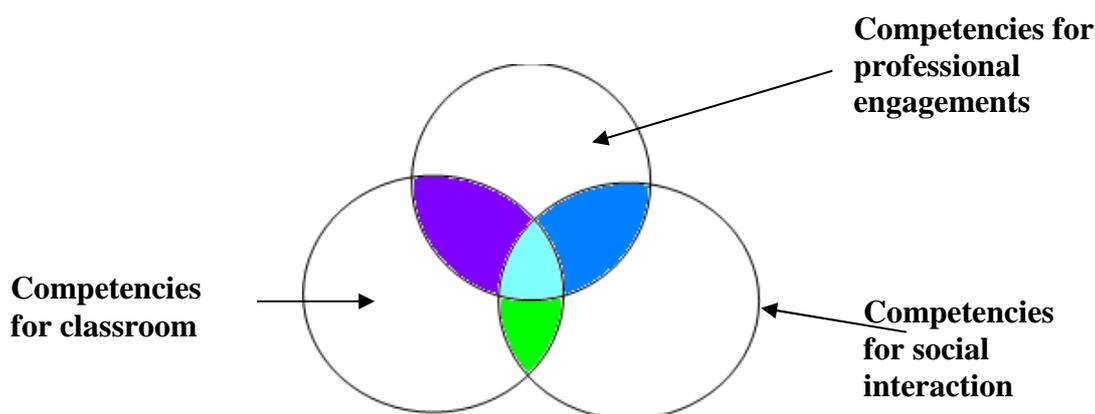


Figure 2

Depicts overlapping nature of competencies in different spheres.

CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHER'S COMPETENCIES

Table 1
 Broad classification of teacher's competencies significant
 in three areas of his work

Classroom	Professional duties	Social contributor
Sound knowledge of subject matter, Application of knowledge	Broad knowledge base, Application of knowledge	Application of knowledge, quest for knowledge
Effective communication (while using different instruction techniques)	Communication with colleagues (Through Seminars, Symposia etc.).	Communication (for interaction with society)
Leadership	Leadership	Leadership
Decision making	Decision making	
Classroom management	Organiser of activities (event manager)	Event manager
Disciplinarian	Disciplinarian	
Capable of translating teaching objectives into practice	Capable of translating educational objectives into practice	Social reformer/ active social participant
Systematic Organization of content matter	Systematic approach for enhancing organizational effectiveness	
Resource person, action researcher	Resource person, Action oriented	Resource person
Compassion and respect for learner	Concern for colleagues	Collaborator and contributor
Comprehensive evaluation and feedback	Evaluation and feedback	Feedback and suggestion
Motivator	Motivator	Motivator
Guide & Counsellor	Guidance & Counselling	Counsellor
Planner	Planner	

CONCLUSION

Education is the central factor around which story of manpower development is woven. Teaching must lead to good ethical behaviour. Complete eradication of vices like social injustice, gender biases and cast discrimination which still prevails in our society can take place only by means of education. India being a vast, enormously populated and culturally diverse country depends on the strong binding thread of education to remain united. Teachers who can help in percolating the benefit of education to grass root level are prerequisite for realizing these objectives. For sustaining and growing knowledge based society, new methods and new competencies are essential. It requires increased investment in human capital. For this concern, the study of teaching competencies and more specifically focusing on developing competencies among student teacher during initial

training programme would enhance pedagogical improvements and consolidate this profession on which the intricate of the world relies.

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