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Teaching competencies among special educators

Fauzia Khurshid* and Hajra
NUML, Pakistan.

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ABSTRACT

Present research was designed to measure the teaching competencies among teachers of special education at school level. In this study stratified random sample of 50 male and female teachers was collected from various special education institutions. Among them 42 were female and 8 were male special educators. Finding of the study was beneficial for teachers and administrators and students of special education institution, if special educators learn the art of devising appropriate learning and instructional strategies for special learners this will certainly improve quality of special education.

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Introduction

Quality of education is directly related to quality of the institution, and instructional competencies, in this context educators or teachers are real players. The competency and talent of a teacher always reflects back from the students to whom he/she is delivering knowledge. The students are the true representation of the teachers, a competent and a skilled teacher would always add a lot to the character building of the society. Competency is actually the attitude, character, attribute and behavior. Competency can easily be judged by creating the relationship among the intentions and the action taken on that particular intention. The results and outcomes for that action taken depicts the effectiveness of the competency level adopted. Competency is actually the way of coping and catering various issues and problems that occur. A competent teacher in a classroom is always capable of handling and dealing the complex situations effectively. His skills, attitude and behavior help him to find out the ways for the perfect situation handling. All these attributes count to grade the competency level.

Teaching competencies include personality appearances, personal competencies, knowledge of subject matter, communication skills, planning & instruction skills, evaluation skills, problem solving, analytical thinking skills, equity, professionalism, and social competencies. Personal competencies include values, norms, attitudes and appearance. Personal competencies take a responsibility to contain various personal attributes such as the way of thinking, assuming things, taking decisions, adopting ways to cater the complex situation, interacting with people and responding to the situation all work together to shape a personality.

It is a common understanding that a successful teacher is a person who is well accepted due to the reason of the qualities which he or she carries. He/she needs to contain the characteristics i.e, popular among student people, charismatic

appearance, well maintained physical and mental health, the positive approach and stance in critical situations. He / she should be well aware of physical and mental growth of growing students and able of adopting pro-active approach towards life. (Gilchrist et al., 1985)

Academic competencies imply that teacher has knowledge and skills for academic purpose, so he/she should be capable of delivering the teaching skills and also exhibit the competency through their attitude. They should rapidly adopt and realize the changing needs of society along with the pace. They should be capable of understanding the basics of education and the factors that influence the education (Kohl 1992).

Callahan (1966) believes that teachers can easily locate their weak areas and can work on them to improve and polish personal and academics competencies. Sometime teachers may come to the conclusion that they have a particular weak area (subject) and may work out on it to improve. Curriculum literature decides that what type of teaching and schooling methods should be adopted. The curriculum provides the set of expectation based on the educational needs. These expectations help to lay down solid bases for the classroom environment. It is a general consent that in spite of an excellent educational resources, materials and equipments an educational system can never stand firm in the absence of competent and skilled teachers. Thus it could easily be assumed and believed that teachers play a vital role in the development of a perfect educational culture (Mirza et al., 1995).

According to Honey Ford (1982) teachers' competency, character, personality and skills play a key role in development of a learning atmosphere. Teachers also play a role to modify and purify the minds of students. They also help to grow the minds of students to the maturity level. A student reflects the competency of the teacher at every forum quite convincingly. The competency level of a teacher has a huge impact on

students' mind. The students are well aware of the skills and qualities of a teacher. An ideal classroom involves the students in the classroom activities quite actively whereas as restricting the deviancy in educational settings (Laslett and Smith, 1984).

Teachers are responsible for controlling the classroom educational environment. An active teacher would certainly involve the latest techniques and the traditional teacher adopts the old techniques of teachings. An active teacher helps to motivate the students and enhance their urge of learning. The dynamic teachers adopt the technical and modified techniques to plan his day to day working and schedule (Dhand, 1990).

Teachers who have managing ability handle the class in a way that minimizes the disruptions they adopt few things to streamline their class room environment. Teacher should try to view all students at a stance every time and should not focus attention on particular students, the materials used for teaching should always be available to save wastage of time, they should try to avoid rush in populated areas of class, all the students have a complete right to view the presentations so the sitting plan should be free of such problem. Standard operating procedure should be followed religiously in the same manner as the course curriculum or course content good and well planned class room is a result of continuous hard efforts rather than done by a magic stick (Sadker and Sadker, 1997).

Social competency of teachers relate to the attributes they follow and the character they carries for the social society that may include the persons involved in his professional and personal circle their social competency relies on the need based requirement of the society in which they engaged. A socially competent teacher should have a well- accepted social attitude, he / she should be dynamic enough to adopt the social change, and he should have personal qualities like patience and non partial behavior. (Kohll, 1992).

In a study conducted by Callahan (1987) various competencies of the teachers identified such as, wise, command on subject, good communication skills with the student, capable of achieving targets, able to use teaching methods effectively, able to establish cordial relationship with the students, capable of motivating the students He should plan effectively and should carry an impressive teaching personality.

An effective teacher would try to plan out the time in the class room in such a way that maximum time should be spent on the productive activities and should minimize the time being wasted on the irrelevant activities and useless activities (Laslett and Smith, 1984). An efficient teaching activity ensures the environment which is less confused and more productive in a sense that carries the less confusion and spends most of the time on productive activities (Misra, 2002).

Pakistan is an Islamic state and as per Islamic teachings teacher has got a vital place in the Islamic society. It is considered as a Prophetic profession. Hazrat Ali Rahmatullah Alihe said "Anyone who will teach me a single word will be my master thereafter ". Imam Shafie stated that a person who has acquired the knowledge from the teacher is far better than the person who acquired from the books. Books alone cannot fulfill the requirement of knowledge and it ultimately require a teacher to convey the message. The required peak in knowledge can only be attained with the assistance of the teacher (Siddiqui, 1970).

In 1978 Rana & Begum carried out a study on the identification of teaching competencies. For that reason they took the questionnaire from 104 parents. Results indicate that

competent teacher must carry a good character, clear and obvious vision passion for teaching.

Perveen & Qadri (1982) also worked to investigate the competency of secondary schools teachers and for that they took 99 teachers and through that they come to know that a competent teacher must acquire the attributes of skills, pleasant behavior, and command over subject, cordial relationship and ability to sum up the large information into a summarized form.

In 1986 Iqbal conducted a comprehensive study on 150 teachers and 50 Heads to find out the personal characteristics of teachers and with the help of that she concluded that teachers must be honest, dedicated, focused, confident, delightful, ambitious and hard working who is eager to maintain the cordial relationship with students and their parents.

Anjou and Masih (1990) managed to take their questionnaire to 100 educated persons of the concerned to locate the required features of teachers. They located required characteristics of teachers as; awareness of subject material, simplicity in action and expression, the ability to create positive attitude towards the curriculum.

Ali and Awan (1993) also carried out a study and the results extracted on the account of that study revealed that characteristics such as well dressed, cordial relationship with the parents, engaging students during the lectures, sympathetic behavior must fall in a competent teacher.

Government of the Punjab Pakistan in 1999 conducted a study to locate the desired competencies of school teachers. They come to the conclusion that the traits like patriotism, clarity, simplicity, seriousness, cordial relations, adaptability of modern technology, and mastery of subject matter, flexibility in character, good communication skills, self esteem and ability to monitor the situation are the personal competencies of school teachers. Moreover the required professional competencies involve the time management, lesson planning, evaluative study and finding out the learning difficulties etc. for the school teachers.

A number of factors may affect the performance of teachers but type of competencies required by the teachers teaching to normal and special education is also different. In the field of teaching competencies researches are available in general education but little research is available in field of special education in Pakistani context. The present research is therefore, designed to investigate the teaching competencies among special education educators.

Problem Statement

The problem of the study was to determine the teaching competencies among the special educators, it further aims to evaluate the role of demographic variations in determine the level of competencies among the special educators.

Research Objectives

Objectives of the study are as below:

1. To explore the present level of teaching competencies in special educators.
2. To identify deficiencies in the competencies of special educators.
3. To identify the role of role of demographic variations in determine the level of competencies among the special educators.

Research Purpose

The major purpose of this study is to identify desired personal and professional competencies of special education teachers which are necessary for effective teaching. In this study

following competencies of special school educators are evaluated:

1. Personal competencies
2. Academic competencies
3. Planning curriculum and instruction
4. Class room management
5. Social competences

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2. To identify deficiencies in the competencies of special educators.
3. To identify the role of demographic variations in determine the level of competencies among the special educators.

Population

Population of the study included all teachers of special education working in province of Punjab.

Sample

A stratified random sample of 50 special educators was collected from various special education schools, among them 42 female were female and 8 were male special educators.

Methodology

The study was conducted to explore the competency level of teachers working in special education institutions of Punjab; study was delimited to Dera Ghazi Khan Division due to limitation of time and resources. The sample of the study consisted of 8 male and 42 female special educators. Data was collected with the help of a research questionnaire of 26 items with Personal Competencies, Academic Competencies, Planning and Instruction Curriculum Competencies, Classroom Management and Social Competencies. Respondent rated each item according to their own agreement with the help of five point rating scale. Research questionnaire was developed through standardized procedure specifically for the measurement of the teaching competencies of special educators.

Results

After data collection it was transferred to the computer for statistical analysis and with the help of SPSS .18 various statistical analysis were performed, item-total correlations were computed The results shows that all items have significant correlated ranging from .29 to .84 .Cronbach's Alpha coefficient yields an internal consistency coefficient of .86 for 26 items. Analysis indicates that all factors were significantly correlated with each other and with the total score. The alpha reliability coefficients .89 and inter-correlations indicated that this scale has enough reliability and content validity to measure the competencies of teachers for sample.

Table 1 Item Wise Correlation (N=50)

Item no	Correlation	Item no	Correlation	Item no	Correlation
1	0.71**	10	0.64**	19	0.59**
2	0.75**	11	0.51**	20	0.29*
3	0.61**	12	0.64**	21	0.85**
4	0.84**	13	0.67**	22	0.72**
5	0.79**	14	0.70**	23	0.72**
6	0.58**	15	0.57**	24	0.77**
7	0.38*	16	0.68**	25	0.81**
8	0.77**	17	0.49**	26	0.63**
9	0.59**	18	0.79**		

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tail test) N=39 for all analyses

Table no 1 show that all items of research questionnaire are significantly correlated with the total scale.

Table 2 Inter-scales Correlation between subscales of Teaching Competencies Questionnaire (N=50)

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Person competencies						
2	Academic competencies	.556**					
3	Planning and instruction curriculum	.715**	.636**				
4	Classroom management	.852**	.519**	.784**			
5	Social competencies	.772**	.588**	.830**	.814**		
6	Total	.895**	.739**	.909**	.925**	.896**	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).N=39 for all analysis.

All subscales of the measuring instruments are internally consistent with each other, subscale of classroom management highest correlation with the total scale.

Table 3: Percentile Ranks of Teaching Competencies Questionnaire (N=50)

Percentiles	Personal competencies	Academic competencies	Planning Instructions	Classroom management	Social Competencies
5	7	35	13	7	7
10	8	36	15	8	9
15	8	36	16	9	9
20	9	36	17	9	10
25	9	36	18	19	10
30	9	36	19	9	11
35	10	36	20	10	11
40	10	37	20	10	11
45	11	37	20	10	12
50	11	37	21	19	12
55	12	38	21	12	13
60	12	38	22	13	14
65	12	38	23	14	15
70	12	38	24	14	15
75	13	38	24	14	15
80	14	39	26	15	16
85	15	40	26	15	16
90	16	40	28	16	17
95	17	42	29	18	17

Table 3 is showing the percentile ranks of teachers' scores on teaching competencies questionnaire. Teachers possess higher score of academic competencies, planning and instruction competencies while lowest score is of personal competences. Special educators are at preset deficit and needs to improve their personal competencies, social competences and class room management skills.

Table 4. Gender Wise Comparison on Teaching Competencies Questionnaire (N=50) Gender

Competencies	Male (N=8)		Female (N=42)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Personal competencies	21.0	3.3	21.3	3.1
Academic Competencies	15.5	3.7	15.1	2.9
Planning & Instruction Competencies	33.6	4.1	32.6	4.3
Classroom management Competencies	26.5	4.8	31.9	4.8
Social Competencies	12.3	1.9	12.4	1.8
Total	98.9	17.8	104.3	16.9

Table 4 shows that female teachers have higher scores on teaching competencies questionnaire which shows they are more aware of their professional career and role identity as compared to male teachers. While male special educators are good at classroom management.

Table No.5. Academic Qualification Wise Differences

Competencies	B.A (N=18)		M.A (N=42)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Personal competencies	21.7	2.6	22.3	3.3
Academic Competencies	16.5	3.5	18.8	3.9
Planning & Instruction Competencies	31.7	3.4	33.4	4.3
Classroom management Competencies	27.5	4.1	28.5	5.8
Social Competencies	12.7	2.9	15.6	2.8
Total	110.1	15.5	118.6	18.1

Table no 5 describe the qualification wise differences of teachers' scores, from this table it can be seen that more qualified teachers have better teaching competencies in all five area of competencies than teachers with less qualification.

Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to explore the teaching competencies of special educators. Five teaching competencies were categorized on the basis of literature review in this area. These styles were listed as:

1. Personal Competencies
2. Academic Competencies
3. Planning & Instruction Competencies
4. Classroom Management Competencies
5. Social Competencies

Personal competencies of the special educators deal with teachers' ability to work with the students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional and physical disabilities. Different special educators work in either public or private schools but both the sectors demand a lot of hard work from the teacher of special children due to the certain expectations attached with their role such as, personal expectations, educational expectations and professional expectations.

Addressing about the expectations related to the personality of special educators must be extra patient and caring. They possess tolerance and reiterate if questions asked by these students frequently, as such students can create problems for teacher in classroom situation, so the teacher should be able to come up with the solutions to their problems. Special educator should be a keen observer so that he may observe or assess the strengths, weaknesses and problems of students related to personal or educational life which they fail to express because of any mental or physical disability. Special educators should be creative so they can easily teach in a creative way by using different teaching methods and techniques.

Transfer of knowledge is not a simple task especially in special education, for these first teachers have complete knowledge, communication skills, and understanding of the laws of leaning. They must possess interpersonal intelligence which leads them towards social competency and able them to attune special students to their environment and society.

Special education is a challenging field that requires great responsibilities from its teaching professionals and those are capable of offering support and guidance to the special students is of great value. Professional in the field of special education

must be enthusiastic, optimistic and responsive to individualized needs of the students. Moreover this profession demand proper time, ethical considerations and dedication from its employee's competent professionals not only work for professional success but also for the betterment of their students and society.

Conclusion

In the light of the data analysis and interpretation, it can be concluded that teaching play vital role in the knowledge acquisition personality development and social adjustment of special learners. The outcomes of this study may help the special educators to realize their existing teaching competencies and they may try to improve their weak competencies.

1. There are five major teaching competencies and normally the special educators may be aware of their strong and weak competencies.

Competencies while they need to improve their personal competencies, social competences and class room management skills.

2. Higher academic qualification of teachers leads towards better teaching competencies.

3. Female educators are more aware of their duties and have better score on teaching competence questionnaire when compared to male educator

Applied Significance

As most of the students with special experience more learning academic skills than normal students' experience. Special educators must exhibits special patience, hope, and technical skills to present academic tasks so special students can understand and respond to them properly. Special students need extra care in are encountered with role identity and confusion. Special teaching competencies have deep effects on students' knowledge and adjustment in society. Present research is unique as it attempts to measure the teaching competencies among the special educators, furthermore, this research also helps to develop awareness among special educators own competencies and teaching styles.

Suggestions for Further Research

- i. This study was confined to Dera Ghazi Khan Division due to limitation of time and resources in future it can be extended to other areas as well.
- ii. This study takes into consideration only special educators it can be extended to general education as well also.
- iii. It will be fruitful to study the comparison of teaching styles between public and private special educational institutions.

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