



TEACHERS' COMPETENCY : A KEY AREA TO QUALITY LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The growth of higher education in India over a little more than half a century has been even more staggering. Indian higher education is in need of radical reform with a focus on enforcing quality education. Improvement in quality of education places a major responsibility on teachers and their professional competencies. Competencies are the skills and knowledge that enable a teacher to be successful. Teachers' competencies can be commonly categorized into four groups viz. Teaching / Academic competencies, Behavioural competencies, Managerial competencies and Research competencies. As the saying goes 'Destiny of a nation is determined in the classroom', it is time to realize that the destiny of the classroom is determined by the teacher. Thus, imperative is the teacher competency.

KEYWORDS : Assessment, Competency, Education, Learning, Teacher, Quality.

INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM – AN OUTLINE

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Higher education system is one that is student- or customer-centred rather than institution-centred. It comprises certified and caring institutions that have the resources required and the core mission of ensuring that students/customers acquire the knowledge/skills/abilities and dispositions that they need to achieve their individual goals and to maximise their contribution to society.

The growth of higher education in India over a little more than half a century has been even more staggering. The quantitative explosion in higher education institutions has not been matched by the quality of the education they provide. In fact, the gap between quantity and quality is so large.

"India is entering the global employment marketplace with a self-imposed handicap of which we are just beginning to become conscious — an acute shortage of Quality institutions of higher education. For far too long, we have been complacent about the fact that we had produced, since the 1960s, the world's second largest pool of trained scientists and engineers."

- **Shashi Tharoor**
Author and Former UN Diplomat

Hence, Indian higher education is in need of radical reform with a focus on enforcing quality education.

QUALITY CONCEPTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality in industries could be defined as adhering to the stated or implied performance requirements of the customer, but with interpretations as varied as the individuals, it is rather difficult to define the Quality in educational institutions. Although, the Quality management concepts in business and in education remain same, there are certain limitations in adopting the corporate methods of Quality management because educational institutes cannot be considered as industry and the products are not their students, but it is the education imparted to the students. Students, their parents, and their future employers are the customers of this product (education). In Quality management, the customer is defined as the next person in line. In an educational institute, students directly receive the teaching services and hence are the customers of the teacher, whereas the faculty and the Institute's administrators are the suppliers of the services.

Education specialists around the world assert that quality refers to an education that is student-centred and driven by the needs of the local community. The curriculum must be relevant to the immediate community, learning environment that must be stimulating and attractive to students, classroom learning activities must be problem based and interactive, teaching methods should promote critical thinking skills, creativity, and innovative approaches.

"The modernisation of the curriculum and skilled personnel in the profession would help India to achieve the set goals. Better qualified people should come to the noble profession of teaching to develop innovative mechanisms in Indian education system."

- **Montek Singh Ahluwalia**

*Deputy Chairman
Planning Commission*

All the above-mentioned areas of concern in the education system that can bring improvement in quality of education places a major responsibility on teachers and their professional competencies. Therefore, teachers' competencies must be reviewed and redefined in the Higher Education System.

TEACHERS' COMPETENCY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Competencies are the skills and knowledge that enable a teacher to be successful. To maximize student learning, teachers must have expertise in a wide-ranging array of competencies in an especially complex environment where hundreds of critical decisions are required each day. Teachers' competence refers to the right way of conveying units of knowledge, application and skills to students. Teachers' competency also refers to the ability of the teacher to help guide and counsel his or her student to achieve high grades.

Teachers play in their daily activities not only the role of traditional teacher by giving new knowledge for students. Today's teacher is a consultant, an advisor, elder friend, a researcher and so on. It is difficult to list all roles of today's teacher. But teachers' knowledge, skills, personal qualities and values affects not only students' learning, motivation and achievement, but also formation of their national identity. It is expected that educators provide not only knowledge and skills necessary for life, but also develop students' tolerance for other cultures and help them become aware of the meaning of his national cultural.

As the saying goes '*Destiny of a nation is determined in the classroom*', it is time to realize that the '*Destiny of the classroom is determined by the teacher*'. Thus, imperative is the teachers' competency.

Teachers' competency required for Higher Education

Competencies required for teacher in Higher Educational sector are commonly categorized in to four. They are as follows:

1. Teaching / Academic Competency
2. Behavioural Competency
3. Managerial Competency and
4. Research Competency

This competency framework allows for teacher to become professional in particular teaching subject or sphere, enables him/her to organize the educational process and feel comfortable in a professional environment.

Teaching / Academic Competency

Being a teacher at any level requires a significant amount of knowledge and skill. Paying attention to this core competency helps to ensure that all teachers are prepared to make a positive experience for students.

Various teaching competencies identified by several research studies are subject knowledge, detailing ability, giving appropriate examples, clarity of presentation, gaining pupils' attention and participation, encouraging active participation in class, motivating students, re-teaches lesson until students get clear, completion of curriculum,

method of teaching, proper use of teaching aids, accurate appraisal of students, discussion on performance feedback, updating subject knowledge, developing theories / models, developing new course / curriculum and expertise in technology.

Behavioural Competency

Any behaviour attribute which contributes to the development of an individual in the organisation to take up bigger roles is known as behavioural competency. It can be applied to individuals at all levels, which simply means that it is not restricted to just top, middle, or lower level. Behaviour competency is used to enhance the competency of employees at all the positions in the organisation for smoother transition of workflow. It is not just limited to career, but personal life as well. It involves traits which an individual has or should have to be successful. So, it has also become very important for teachers to have a good and healthy relationship with students.

Several studies acknowledged that behavioural competencies of teachers involve many attributes such as generous, honesty, punctual, forgiving, friendly, well-wisher, responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, discipline and compliance with order, humour, wise, scholar, man of character, emotionally mature, cool in conflict situations, calm in stressful situations and man of character.

MANAGERIAL COMPETENCY

Managerial competencies are the skills, motives and attitudes necessary to a job. According to the "Gwinnet Daily Post," "Traditional wisdom says that success or failure is largely determined by skills and knowledge. But there's a third element of success that's more intangible." A highly skilled computer programmer, for example, who refuses to interact with the development team on a major project can turn out to be more of a liability than an asset in spite of his technical skills.

Likewise, the role of the teacher is broadening and becoming more demanding. Teachers are expected to use a wide variety of methods, tools and approaches and to tailor them to the learners' needs. They also need to have competences and skills necessary to create a positive classroom environment and work collaboratively with other stakeholders in order to provide timely support to learners.

Managerial competencies of teachers identified by various researchers include planning skills, execution skills, evaluation skills, analytical skills, strategic planning, risk handling, adaptability, emotional intelligence, conceptual thinking, leadership skills, communication skills, managing people / teams, quick decision-making and addressing problems.

RESEARCH COMPETENCY

Research Competencies include the competencies of research methods and techniques, designing and carrying out research in teachers' fields. Research competencies are influential for teachers in following the developments in their fields and developing themselves based on these developments. Besides, the research competencies of teachers are of great importance for students in gaining the scientific thinking and scientific process skills. It also increases esteem and social acceptance for the teachers in the society.

It includes participation in conference / seminar / workshop, presentation of papers, publication of books and articles, participation in professional association, carrying out quality research work, project grants from Government / funding agency and patent / copyrights for the project. Carrying out quality research is the main factor in research competency.

COMPETENCY MAPPING OF TEACHERS

Competency mapping is a process of identifying key competencies for an organization and / or a job and incorporating those competencies throughout the various processes of the organization. In India however competency development and mapping still remains an unexplored process. Not much study has been done on competency mapping of teachers in higher education sector.

During the past decade, there has been a growing interest in learning and competency-based systems in various areas of education, training and professional development especially in higher education. Competency-based education and assessment initiatives have been insisted by University Grants Commission (UGC). There has been a

constant reminder to update teacher potential. This has become a challenging issue especially after the announcement of 6th pay commission and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council's (NAAC) Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for assessment. NAAC, established in 1994, is responsible for setting of standards of higher education institutions in India as an External Quality Assurance (EQA) agency. The stalwarts of higher education insist that the institutions of higher learning should foster a closer relationship between the 'world of skilled work' and the 'world of competent learning'. These demands for competency mapping of teachers which will have a significant impact on strengthening students' competencies.

CONCLUSION

With liberalization and globalization of economic activities, the need to develop skilled human resources of a high calibre is imperative. Consequently, the demand for internationally acceptable standards in higher education is apparent.

'Education is pre-eminently a matter of quality, not amount.'

Henry Ford

Therefore, competencies of teachers assume a lot of importance towards quality education.

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