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# The development of professional competency of teachers in Thailand: Meanings and implications

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This study explored five teacher professional competencies: working achievement, motivation, service mind, self-development, teamwork, and teacher's ethics and integrity. A total of 210 university students in Thailand participated in the study. To assess professional competency, the Teacher Professional competency Assessment was used. Results revealed that teacher professional competency were at high level. Analysis of factors that contributed to this, in comparison with earlier studies, were discussed. An alternative perspective is suggested that considers teachers as adult learners who continuously transform their meaning of structures related to online teaching through a continuous process of critical reflection and action. The study demonstrated that a professional development programme for teachers in Thailand is necessitated, one that is closely adapted to a specific context. It further indicates that future models of professional development should be ones which are capable of offering a means by which the desired change to a learner-centred, communicative curriculum might be achieved system-wide in Thailand, one that has up to this point proved very difficult to implement.

**Keywords:** assessment, education, professional competency, self-development, teaching

Nowadays, confrontations to the era of globalisation are characterised by the advancement of information and technology that forces us to adjust and change accordingly. This is reflected across regions of different countries; and they have to be aware of this for themselves in order to survive in this challenging world. Indeed, this is a challenge that everyone has to face in order for them to cope with the dynamics within education. Essentially, to develop one's country citizens should start by developing themselves. Exposure to different teaching cultures and the intercultural experience itself is found to have led to a stronger awareness of the meaning of culturally sensitive pedagogy in both Chinese and British ELT professionals. The significant implication for teacher education is to take a holistic and cognitive view of educating teaching professionals and assist teachers to build up the capacity to act on their knowledge base in their teaching arenas. (Gu, 2005). Education is the crucial process to develop all human beings to have a better quality of life and a number of factors contribute to it such as knowledge, skills, thinking (e.g., cognitive distortion [Acharya, & Relajo, 2017]), manner and values. Any society that provides good education to its citizen will have significant development in their country, which is the main pillar towards strengthening a nation.

Earlier works suggest that the teacher training implemented was favourable to the teachers' professional development and their competence to lead all children to a high level of scientific development. The efficiency of the training process has to be mostly attributed to the strong classification of the researcher-teachers relation and to the strong framing of evaluation criteria, selection and sequence, together with weak framing of hierarchical rules and pacing (Morais, Neves, & Afonso, 2005).

The Thai Government attests five key reform policies in teaching and learning, finance, human resources, research, and administration. When examining governmental policies and actions, educational law, and educational strategies from the Thai Ministry of Education, it is evident the implementation of reform strategies has been obstructed by a number of governmental structures such as staffing and quality of human resources, budget and finance, and consistency in policy and leadership. Increasing flexibility in higher educational management and transparency is the key to higher educational reform strategies in Thailand. Furthermore, Thai policy makers must adopt educational systems with greater responsiveness to global factors (Pimpa, 2011) such as adversity quotient and spiritual quotient (Relajo, 2013).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) holds much promise for educational research. Researchers using CDA can describe, interpret, and explain the relationships among language and important educational issues. One such issue is the current relationship among the economy, national policies, and educational practices. In what Gee and the New Literacy Scholars refer to as fast capitalism, the top-down model of business (and classroom) leadership has been abandoned for a 'community of practice' model (Rogers, 2004).

Teachers are at the heart of educational improvement. Any benefits that accrue to students as a result of educational policies require the enabling action of teachers. It is for this reason that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), through its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), recently undertook a comparative study of policies aimed at improving teacher quality.

Over the past twenty years, policymakers in Thailand have devised a variety of reforms aimed at improving the quality of primary schooling. Initiatives in pre-service education, in-service training, teacher supervision, and the distribution of new instructional materials, despite their variety, share a common aim: to improve student achievement by improving the quality of instruction. This chapter conceives teachers' sense of efficacy and students' perceptions of the quality of instruction as important proximal indicators of the success of such reforms. Analyses based on a large, nationally representative sample of teachers and students provides some validation for this idea, showing that these constructs

can be reliably measured and that they do significantly predict student achievement. Moreover, the analysis provides some evidence of the success of primary school reform in Thailand (Raudenbush, Bhumirat, & Kamali, 1992).

Findings support the central role of these processes in teacher competence and the generative power of reflections revolving around student thinking and tools, such as classroom discourse and visuals. Teachers' communities also played an important role in teachers' decision making. A model of teacher competence from a situated perspective is proposed and the classroom video assessment is discussed as a measure of teacher competence in context (Santagata & Yeh, 2016). Language teachers have a new role: helping their students develop autonomy in learning. How can language teachers aid their learners in becoming autonomous? How do learning strategies contribute to learner autonomy? How can the promoting of autonomy be incorporated into the teaching and learning of second languages? This article reports an attempt to teach students how to learn and how to become autonomous in their own language learning by combining learning strategy instruction with the content course of second language acquisition (Yang, 1998).

Hopkins and Stern (1996) present findings of the country studies conducted in 1993. Following a description of the conceptual framework of the OECD study, the two central sections of their works contain an analysis first, of the attributes and activities of these highly accomplished teachers, and second of the key characteristics of the schools in which they work. The key characteristics of high quality teachers highlighted by the study are: commitment, love of children, mastery of subject didactics and multiple models of teaching, the ability to collaborate with other teachers, and a capacity for reflection. The school level characteristics supportive of high quality teachers identified in the case studies are: a consensus on vision and values, an organisation for teaching and learning, coherent management arrangements, formal and informal leadership, staff development focused on the workplace, and effective relationships with the community and local district. The evidence of the case studies suggests that there are three sources of teacher quality: the individual teacher, the individual school, and the external policy environment. In the final section of the paper these three alternative sources of teacher quality are described, as well as the policy implications flowing from them.

Teacher mentoring programmes have increased dramatically since the early 1980s as a vehicle to support and retain novice teachers. However, researchers and facilitators of mentoring programmes are recognising that mentors also derive substantial benefits from the mentoring experience. Benefits to mentors include improved professional competency, increased reflective practice, teacher renewal, enhanced self-esteem, improved teacher collaboration, and development of teacher leadership. Working with new teachers can also lead mentors to participate in university research projects or teacher research. The benefits of mentoring programmes have important implications for funding decisions made by administrators and staff development personnel. Principals must understand that creating a structure that allows experienced teachers to work with novice teachers will ultimately benefit the students, and the overall organisation will be stronger as a result of the increased capacity of teachers serving as mentors. Staff developers should embrace mentoring programmes not only as a valuable resource for beginning teachers, but also as a growth-promoting experience for mentors (Huling & Resta, 2001). Aside from this, other approaches such as assessment of comprehension should also be taken into account (Reajo, dela Rosa, & Pilao, 2016).

Works on this area raise more questions, perhaps, than it answers. Should teachers simply acquiesce to students' wishes, even though, in their own judgement, they may not serve what the teachers consider to be the best practice of language learning? Further, given the comment at the start of the paper that practice and beliefs may or may not coincide, or may relate subtly or, indeed orthogonally, future research would need to identify these kinds of relations (Cubukcu, 2010). Also, teachers' general academic ability did not affect their instruction. The multidimensional model of teachers' professional

competence introduced in this article seems suited to stimulate further research on the personal indicators of teacher quality (Kunter, et al., 2013).

In the UK, the past years have seen a major change in initial teacher training (ITT) in the UK through the introduction of national competences, later developed as standards, which govern the arrangements for teaching and assessing on all programmes leading to the award of qualified teacher status. This article takes as its focus the value to be placed on a competence-based approach to ITT in the context of a programme which gives emphasis also to reflection on practice. The issues are first explored in a general way, and then examined through a case study of one higher education institution ITT programme (Burchell & Westmoreland, 1999). Approaches to addressing this intransigent problem, exacerbated if not caused by policies which have led to the marginalisation of music education in the primary curriculum, have been investigated and shared for many years but this was the first opportunity (since the early 1990s) to apply and evaluate effective practices in a national context (Hennessy, 2017).

In this article we consider the current situation in teacher education in Britain. We examine the nature of the crisis in supply and some of the responses to this crisis from governmental and other quarters. These responses share a common fault, a failure to give serious consideration to questions of quality in teaching. Having critically scrutinised the 'alternative routes' to teaching which have now been introduced we move in conclusion to outline some principles and a structure for ensuring the maintenance and development of quality in teaching in the years which lie ahead.

In the late twentieth century, accountability and value for money are two of the major themes influencing developments in education. Reflecting these themes, recent government legislation has produced a set of teaching competences, later revised as standards, for use in initial teacher education and assessment of teaching performance. They are used as criteria for teacher training, in some cases forming the theoretical underpinning of courses. Turner-Bisset (1999) argues that that model of knowledge essential for teaching presented by the 10197 standards is impoverished. Instead, there will be a comprehensive model of knowledge bases for teaching, which can inform our understanding of teaching and provide a more sophisticated theoretical underpinning than that imposed by government legislation. The model was developed through a recent doctoral study of subject knowledge and teaching competences. The model is illustrated by an example of teaching in history, which shows how it can act as a theoretical underpinning both for experienced and beginning teachers.

Curriculum statements describe intentions. Without valid student assessment practices the actual achievements are never compared in a legitimate way with the intentions. Assessment strategies have been devised to gather evidence of growth of competence in mathematical modelling and applications. Problems with teacher-made assessment strategies are explored and data collected to overcome some of these problems. Item response modelling was used to develop scaled score equivalents for raw scores on three tests and examples are provided on their use (Izard, Crouch, Haines, Houston, & Neill, 2003).

Action learning can help teachers gain the necessary professional competence for making better judgements and taking effective action in ambiguous situations. It thus enhances teachers' professional practice and performance in a changing and uncertain environment. This paper intends to propose a leadership framework for facilitating teachers' action learning in school. This framework may not only bridge the theoretical gap between school leadership and teachers' action learning but also enrich the knowledge base of school leadership. The framework comprises three dimensions – inspiring, social supporting, and enabling – and eight components. The inspiring dimension is composed of three components: building and institutionalising shared vision, providing individualised job design and modelling. The social supporting dimension encompasses another three components: reducing defensive routines, fostering learning culture, and mobilising social support. The enabling dimension

comprises two components: enhancing theoretical knowledge and repertoires of skills, and providing intellectual stimulation (Yiu Yuen & Cheong Cheng, 2000).

Needham and Burchell (1987) reported the experiences of a local curriculum development project which has developed an English course and summative profile for lower-attaining pupils. The way in which criterion-referenced assessment was incorporated into the development of the profile is described, together with the results of a small-scale survey of teachers' views of the use of such a profile. Key issues for those developing such profiles in English and other subjects are identified.

Drawing upon earlier works in teaching competency, this work aims to investigate: (1) the professional competency of teachers at Prince of Songkla University (PSU); (2) assess the professional competencies of students in relation to their demographic characteristics; and, (3) to identify problems and potential solutions relating to professional competency of teachers and students at Prince of Songkla University.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive research to explore the professional competency of teachers at Prince of Songkla University. To ascertain this, the researchers used a self-made questionnaire which encompasses motivation, self-development, teamwork, ethics, and integrity. The pre-assessment data were analysed by three independent experts from the University. It yielded a strong reliability ( $\alpha = .95$ ). The questionnaires were also analysed by a pool of researchers at the University.

## RESULTS

The researchers calculated for the standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA. There were 210 students from PSU consists of 11.9% male; 88.1% female. Students were studying arts (51.9%) and science (48.1%).

Table 1

Comparison of teachers' competency in relation to demographics

Competency	Aspect	<i>t</i>	Area
Motivation	Ability to plan	.028	GPA
	Ability to follow-up	.036	Subject
Service-oriented	Teamwork	.030	Sex
	Leadership	.036	Sex
Ethics and integrity	Pursuing opportunities	.026	Religion
	Being a good role model	.046	Sex

## DISCUSSION

The results of an earlier study (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008) indicated that the teachers and students agreed on the relative frequency of some strategies but not on the frequency of other strategies and that, although the teachers' reported use of motivational and traditional strategies was not related to the students' English achievement, attitudes, motivation, or language anxiety, the students' perceptions of these strategies tended to be related to their attitudes and motivation at both the individual and class levels. In addition, when the students were the unit of analysis, there was a negative correlation between the students' ratings of the frequency of traditional strategy use and English achievement. Path analysis indicated that integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, and instrumental orientation predicted the motivation to learn English and that motivation was a positive predictor of

English achievement, whereas attitudes toward the learning situation and language anxiety were negative predictors of English achievement. Hierarchical linear modelling analysis confirmed these findings but indicated that the effects of strategies are much more complex than previously thought. Strategy use as reported by the teachers did not influence the regression coefficients for any of the predictors, but strategy use reported by students had a positive effect on the predictability of motivation on English achievement.

Teaching should consider the current situation within its context. One work examined the nature of the crisis in supply and some of the responses to this crisis from governmental and other quarters. These responses share a common fault, a failure to give serious consideration to questions of quality in teaching. Having critically scrutinised the 'alternative routes' to teaching which have now been introduced we move in conclusion to outline some principles and a structure for ensuring the maintenance and development of quality in teaching in the years which lie ahead (Hextall, Lawn, Menter, Sidgwick, & Walker, 1991).

Moreover, the importance of ICT in empowering teachers and learners, and enhancing teaching and students' achievement has been highlighted in several studies. Similarly, the digital divide between the developed and developing nations had been of a serious concern to educators. The paucity of studies on ICT integration in the developing nations needs to be addressed so as to ensure total integration of ICT in the school curriculum. This study examined empirically student-teachers' competence and attitude towards information and communication technology (Yusuf & Balogun, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to explore the professional competency of teachers in Thailand and the results show that students themselves perceive that it is a very respectable position. Teachers' ethics and integrity are at the core of what they do. As a matter of fact, students' perception was ranked at high level across all competencies. This is reflected in the efforts of academics to have their works published and have an impact (Lane, 2018). Academics wish people to see their work. They want their work to have value in their respective academic discipline, for it to be noticed and if appropriate, make a meaningful difference to the quality of people's life. How work is valued by people varies between subject academic disciplines. For a discipline such as sport psychology, it is possible for work to have a direct benefit to the popular. The traditional approach is to publish work in peer refereed academic journals, where the steer is that the higher the impact factor, the better. An impact factor is after all an indication of engagement with work from the journal and thus, to some degree, such an argument makes sense.

One study (Hayes, 2008) explored the motivation and circumstances of a group of Thai teachers in government schools which influenced their becoming teachers of English. Through data derived from in-depth interviewing it seeks to privilege the perceptions of the informants and thus illuminate features of teachers' experience of their educational systems, in this particular case how they entered the teaching profession. The paper contends that the reasons why individuals who are non-native speakers decide to teach English as a foreign language has been little studied in the TESOL professional discourse, but that such research is crucial for any educational discipline, given that initial motivation and personal circumstances may have a significant impact upon future classroom practices and long-term commitment to teaching. The findings here suggest that individuals may choose to become members of their state teaching systems first and foremost and that their choice of subject to teach is a secondary consideration, simply arising from their own school performance in and aptitude for that particular subject, and this also includes academic performance (Bautista, Relajo, Pilao, Tubon, & Andal, 2018). Also, it has been argued in the past that 'competency' should be understood in terms of a change in the social control of expertise in society involving a move from a relatively autonomous form of liberal professional community to more direct state control (Jones & Moore, 1993). This, in turn, is located

within a broader analysis of the nature of regulation in late modern societies and draws upon the recent work of Guldens and Bernstein in order to analyse the positioning of expertise between its primary theoretical base in higher education and the social relations of everyday life with which it is concerned.

That said, this could also be observed in other countries. For instance, one report (Watson, 2001) presents an instrument designed as a profile of teacher achievement and teacher needs with respect to the probability and statistics strands in the mathematics curriculum. In developing the profiling instrument, there were two primary objectives. First, the instrument was to assist in the assessment of teacher achievement in the context of the adoption of professional standards for mathematics teachers. Second, the instrument was to assess professional development needs for teachers in the light of changes to the mathematics curriculum.

In summary, these findings would like to highlight the importance of supporting provisions in improving teachers' competencies. As with any vocation, teachers need to develop robust identities as professionals. In addition to a range of factors such as recruitment, remuneration, and opportunities for advancement, teacher professionalism is also impacted by access to quality professional development. It is rather challenging to feel like a professional when you don't feel competent, when you get no training or support, when you teach students with severe academic and emotional needs and when you have no idea how to address these needs.

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