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Measuring Secondary School Teachers' Competency in the Subject of English

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Abstract

This study examines the qualifications of secondary school English teachers in South Punjab, Pakistan. It emphasizes the central role of teachers in education, emphasizing that their effectiveness is linked to their knowledge, skills, and attitude awareness. Competency standards are divided into academic skills, professional skills, and personal skills. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, and observations, which ensured reliability. The sample consisted of 3600 high school students, equally distributed across gender and urban/rural areas. Results showed that although the teachers are competent in many areas, they lack the knowledge to teach the vocabulary components, oral communication with correct pronunciation and intonation, and assessment of student work. In addition, teachers strive to provide quality care to students. Studies have recommended needs-based training for teachers to address these weaknesses.

Keywords: Teachers' Competency, Curriculum, Knowledge, Self-Structured, English Language

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Title

Measuring Secondary School Teachers' Competency in the Subject of English

Abstract

This study examines the qualifications of secondary school English teachers in South Punjab, Pakistan. It emphasizes the central role of teachers in education, emphasizing that their effectiveness is linked to their knowledge, skills, and attitude awareness. Competency standards are divided into academic skills, professional skills, and personal skills. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, and observations, which ensured reliability. The sample consisted of 3600 high school students, equally distributed across gender and urban/rural areas. Results showed that although the teachers are competent in many areas, they lack the knowledge to teach the vocabulary components, oral communication with correct pronunciation and intonation, and assessment of student work. In addition, teachers strive to provide quality care to students. Studies have recommended needs-based training for teachers to address these weaknesses.

Keywords: [Teachers' Competency](#), [Curriculum](#), [Knowledge](#), [Self-Structured](#), [English Language](#)

Introduction

English is taught as a foreign language in Pakistan. In spite of having freed the country from the sovereignty of the English in 1947, English has been given much importance even though Urdu is left behind which is the national language of Pakistan (Sikandar, 2017). The reasons are given that it is a transnational language and language of higher education. Resultantly, English nowadays is taught from the beginning

of class i.e. nursery as a compulsory subject to produce competency in the students. In a formal system of education, students depend on their teachers who transmit, interpret, and facilitate knowledge (Hamidah et al., 2005). Thus education of the highest quality requires teachers of the highest quality. Teaching is a set of skills, values, beliefs, and practices that combine to make a teacher competent and competency depends upon consistency of work. According to



Sujathamalinia (2007), it is knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes demonstrated in specific backgrounds designated for professional tasks. With the emergence of technology and its use in teaching a competent teacher should have a firm knowledge of the curriculum of a subject and use technology in the curriculum (UNESCO, 2008u).

In Pakistan, the school education system works under the provinces, and selection criteria are predefined. Teachers are appointed based on their academic and professional qualifications. Academic qualification for teachers is postgraduate; teachers who have to teach English have a master's degree in English and have professional training (B.Ed or M.Ed) called pre-service training. They are also trained by the Directorate of Staff Development before joining the class. Later on, trainings (In-service) are conducted by the department. Thus, it can be said that teachers have a lot of opportunities to get professional training. In this respect, it can be said that teachers are competent but this study was designed to find out to what extent they are competent. Due to English being given so much importance, this study will further focus on teachers' competency in the subject of English.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To study secondary school teachers' competency in the subject of English.
- ii. To find out the competency levels of secondary school teachers in the subject of English.

Importance of the Study

In Pakistan, stages of education are; primary, elementary, secondary, higher secondary, and university education. The stage of secondary education plays the role of nexus and provides a nursery for further education. Therefore, this stage has central importance and much emphasis is given to it. Keeping in view the importance of the role of the teacher this study was planned to assess secondary school teachers' competency in the subject of English.

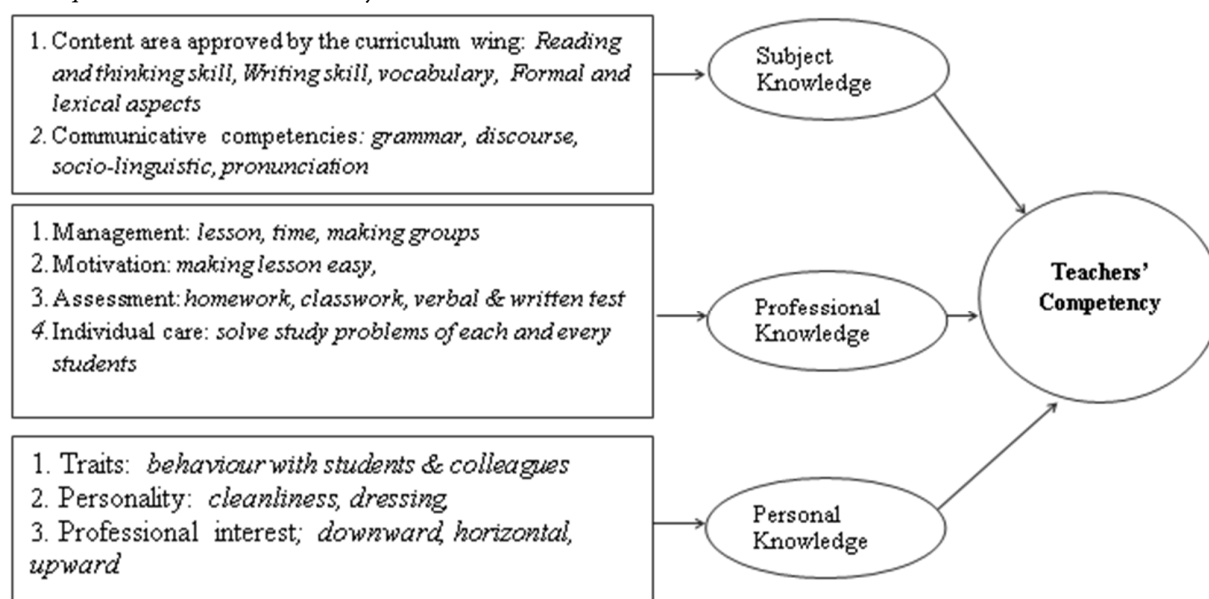
Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this study learning outcomes required for matric students in the subject of English framed by the National Curriculum for English Language (2006, Grade 1-XII) for secondary students were considered standards. These standards were classified into three traits as done by Huntly (2003) and Bibi (2005) in their works. These areas;

- Subject knowledge competency
- Professional competency
- Personal competency

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Literature Review

It is a perceived concept that teachers make citizens who make a nation and a high level of knowledge, competencies, and skills are the very basic conditions for active citizenship. However, only a competent teacher can produce knowledge and skill among the students. So, the competency of teachers in the education system matters a lot. The word competency was spread by the work of Clelland in 1950 (U.K. psychologist) which means standards that a person brings to a job. But later on, it was said that pre-specified performances were stated as segments of overt behavior. This word traveled a lot and even now changing and adding some terms from the works of researchers (Davies & Ellison, 1997; Saeed & Khalid, 2002; Rychen & Salganik, 2003; Eslami & Fatahi, 2004; Rahman, et al., 2005) and defined by (UNESCO, 2008) sense can be concluded. Competency is a set of technical skills and professional capabilities that a teacher needs to fulfill their job completely. Teachers' competency is a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they apply to their students' better learning. In the same way, researchers categorized teachers' competency in different domains as done by Huntly (2003) and Bibi (2005) into three main domains: knowledge competency, professional competency, and personal competency. As a competent teacher should be able to determine what is needed or what would work the best with their students to achieve the desired goals. According to Khalid & Khan (2006), teachers' performance is judged on the basis of students' learning outcomes that are defined in the curriculum. So, in this work, these indicators were considered standards to measure teachers' competency.

Knowledge-Based Competency

Subject knowledge is the basic and essential need of the teacher. A competent teacher has sound knowledge of the subject, specific teaching skills, and understands teaching activities to achieve the goal. It is also expected that a teacher knows from basic to complex concepts of the subject. (Hamidah, et al., 2005; Kumari & Srivastava, 2005, Gu, Q. (2007). Teacher Development: knowledge and context. <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA83449428>; & UNESCO, 2008). According to the national curriculum of English for secondary classes, students should acquire skills in;

- Reading and thinking skills, Writing skills, Formal and lexical aspects of English.
- Communicative competencies: grammar, discourse, socio-linguistic, pronunciation.

The term communicative competency was first used in 1965 by American linguist Noam Chomsky. Communicative is the ability to produce language correctly and to use it for a particular purpose in a contextually appropriate way. While according to Yuwono (2004), Canale & Swain (2008); Sad (2008) and Reid (2015) communicative competence is the ability to apply the grammatical rules of a language to form correct utterances and to use utterances appropriately.

Grammar is the system of rules to form words and put the words together to make sentences meaningful. According to Prialgaukaite (2008), the purpose of teaching grammar to students is to enable them to use authentic language in their communication.

It is said that to have a big vocabulary means to know a lot about a language. Lexical items are the minimal units used for syntactic purposes. But in learning L2 (second language) lexis is taught through translation from English (L2) into Urdu or L1 word by word. This word-by-word translation is done orally by the teachers in the class. In this kind of approach, students have to translate every single word in order to understand the meanings of the whole text (Simon, 2003; Aizzi, 2007; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2015). Attempts are made by teachers to encourage pupils to grasp the general meaning of the texts and make pupils understand the meaning of the unknown words in ways different from a detailed translation into L1 paraphrasing, gesturing, drawing on the blackboard, showing objects, or miming (Elyildirim, & Ashton, 2004; Grigoryan and King, 2008). So, a teacher should be aware of which technique where to use and can do if one has an abundance of vocabulary.

Professional Competency

Teaching is a profession now that needs commitment and passion as well as skills to explore new theoretical paradigms about teaching and learning. English being a second language needs specific skills and competencies for teaching. Rowan (2001) emphasized that is pedagogical content knowledge of a teacher builds on professional knowledge.

Planning

Every profession needs planning and crucial in the teaching profession. It begins with the pre-fixed goals of a particular teaching-learning situation. Good planning builds confidence and makes a teacher feel more secure in lesson execution. According to Ryan (2004), teaching can be thought of as a

planned learning activity. Planning helps a teacher to manage time as;

- To cover the syllabus in the prescribed time
- Teaching techniques
- Needed time for a topic or chapter
- Assessment time

According to Borg (2006), a competent teacher of a foreign language has the ability to organize, explain, and clarify, as well as to arouse and sustain interest among students during learning. And to create interest and motivation among students to learn is crucial. Because teachers are considered responsible for making students learn. It is also an assumption that a teacher has countless pedagogical regimes to labor as an academic achiever of students that make the lessons interesting. According to (Cindy & Grab, 2000; Bibi, 2005; Lawler, Chen, and Venso, 2007 & Lukasik, 2010) among these are; group work, dialogue in a language class, quizzes, audio-lingual methods, the use of technology. While group work is considered ideally suitable for practice (Sze, 1999; & Azzai, 2007). Groups develop communication skills among students through; dialogues, and questioning-answering.

There are four skills that are developed by teaching a language; reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and two skills i.e. listening and speaking skills are developed with the help of dialogue. According to Elyidirim & Ashton (2006) and Early (2008) speaking practice with correct pronunciation presents a great learning environment in different activities such as dialogues, dramatization, role play, and so on.

According to the European Union Report on Quality Education (2007), evaluation serves a number of purposes at national, local, and school levels. According to Emmitt (2004), we can be truly professional only if we continually reflect upon and evaluate our practices.

Personal Competency

A teacher is ideal for his/her students so, should have a good relationship with his/her colleagues and students that his/her pupils may follow or imitate. A teacher has to interact with his/her colleagues. According to Platts (2008), we are indeed all teachers in an institution we need to work in collaboration with our colleagues and influence positively. Personal traits or competencies have a great impact on our profession. A teacher interacts with Colleagues and Students and should know about his/her students by name and call them by their names. According to McGee and Frasher (2012), it will help

the teacher to know their individual differences prior knowledge, mental attitudes, and cultural and social differences (McGee & Frashar, 2012).

Culture is a set of values. Every society has an established set of values a person has to follow that culture to live in that society that takes conscious measures at various levels. Obviously, the moral, cultural, and religious training of the child should not be left behind from the preview of education. It is the teacher who should know the cultural values of the society where has to serve. Pakistan is an Islamic country so; education should provide an Islamic atmosphere throbbing with life in our educational institutions due to having an Islamic country. A competent teacher becomes a model for his/her students and the students try to follow their teacher.

Research Methodology

It is a basic research in which the survey method was used. Keeping in view the nature of the study descriptive method of research was used as descriptive work is concerned with how? What? or Why related to some proceeding or event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event (Cohen; Manion & Morrison, 2007). Due to having a large population and getting maximum responses survey method was considered the best method and thus adopted. The aspects left behind in quantitative method (questionnaire) responses qualitative method (observation of teachers during teaching) was used. So, by method, it is a mixed-method type of research.

Population

In Pakistan, school education is working under the provinces. This study was conducted in the southern part of the province of Punjab, Pakistan. There are three divisions in Southern Punjab; Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur. The population of this study was the students of 9th and 10th grade classes (secondary level).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample was selected with a simple random sampling technique and one district from each division was selected. The sample distribution is with an equal number of schools from rural and urban as well as male and female. Due to not having any authentic source of data for students and teachers (information is not updated with the passage of time on the

web page of SED) twenty students (20) from each school and one teacher for observation were considered in this study.

Table 1

Detail of the sample distribution

Division	District	Gender	Total Schools	Schools Selected	Sample Students
Dera Ghazi Khan	Muzafar Garh	Male	90	30	600
		Female	42	30	600
Multan	Lodhran	Male	58	30	600
		Female	35	30	600
Bahawalpur	Rahim Yar Khan	Male	130	30	600
		Female	84	30	600
Total				180	3600

Self-Reported Questionnaire

A questionnaire-based 5-point Likert scale was developed. Teaching-learning is a behavioral process and the best tool to assess it is a questionnaire if it is on a large scale (Gatfield, 2000); & Singh and Bajpai, 2007). Ranking order was from lower to higher order (1-5 value).

In the Likert scale ranking order from lower to higher values enables the respondents to identify, compare, and select the suitable choice (Utts & Heckard, 2004; Creswell, 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The questionnaire as a tool was used in 2016-17 and later on in 2020-22 observation and discussion with the teachers teaching English at the secondary level were conducted to see the changes brought after certain trainings conducted by the school education department as well as to seek the answer of the questions left behind in questionnaire. The questionnaire has two major parts; demographic and teachers' competency

items that were statements. The teachers' competencies were the outcomes of secondary school students in the subject of English as prescribed by the National Curriculum (2006). These competencies were grouped into three aspects. A number of statements in an aspect are given in table-2. The reliability of the questionnaire was checked by calculating Cronbach's Alpha value which was 0.889 overall (Ingalill, Thomas, John, and Bondmark, 2007; values ≥ 0.70 are acceptable). When inter-item reliability was observed one item needed replacement and was replaced. Thus now the questionnaire was ready to collect data.

The observation method was used to observe teachers' activities in the class to develop English language learning skills as; classroom discipline, sitting style of students, use of whiteboard, group work for dialogues, individual work, assessment homework and tests, teachers' and students' dressing, attitude with students.

Table 2

The distribution of items in each sub-group of the questionnaire

S.N	Major Competency	Sub-competency	Number of items	Total
1	Knowledge	Reading and thinking skills	4	16
		Writing skill	3	

S.N	Major Competency	Sub-competency	Number of items	Total
2	Professional	Oral communication skill	4	12
		Formal and lexical aspects	5	
		Motivation	3	
		Time management	2	
		Assessment	3	
		Individual care	4	
		Traits	3	
3	Personal	Personality	3	8
		Professional interest	2	
Total statements in the questionnaire			36	

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data was coded by giving the values never=0, rarely=1, often=2, sometime=3, and always=4 in SPSS-12 (version) software and was analyzed. The percentage values of frequency, mean values, and standard deviations were

found. Teachers' competency levels were defined with the help of a range of mean values while standard deviation helped to see differences of opinion. There are five levels of teachers' competency given in the table below approved by the accreditation council for teachers while no standard is rated lower than 2.00.

Table 3

Teachers' competency levels

Levels	Level-0	Level-1	Level-2	Level-3	Level-4
Range of mean value	2.50 < 3.00	3.00 < 3.50	3.50 < 4.00	4.00 < 4.50	4.50
Name	Not Demonstrated teacher	Emerging teacher	Developing teacher	Proficient teacher	Accomplish teacher

(<http://www.pacte.pk>)

Table 4

Subject knowledge competency

	Reading and thinking skills	Writing skills	Communicating skill	Formal and lexical skill
Always	46.14%	39.33%	46.41%	50.10%
Often	26.45%	21.46%	22.18%	08.79%
Sometimes	15.67%	17.43%	14.48%	8.78%
Rarely	6.35%	09.93%	07.94%	30.17%
Never	3.36%	12.22%	09.11%	02.16%

	Reading and thinking skills	Writing skills	Communicating skill	Formal and lexical skill
Mean	M:4.39	M:3.65	M:3.90	M:3.75
S.D	S.D:0.45	S.D:0.45	S.D:0.34	S.D:0.79
Levels	III	II	II	II

Maximum Mean value: 5.00

According to the percentage values in Table 3 majority (46.14+26.45=72.59%) of the teachers are competent in developing reading and thinking skills, (60.79%) in writing skills, (68.59%) in communicating skills and most of the teachers 58.89% are competent in developing formal and lexical skill in their students. The mean value of four aspects of teachers' subject knowledge competency is as; reading and thinking skills 4.39, writing 3.65, communication 3.90, and

formal and lexical also called grammar 3.75. The standard deviation values are not great thus opinions of the students do not vary much. The teachers' competency level in developing reading and thinking skills is at Level III (proficient teachers) while their competency level in developing writing skills in students, communicating skills as well as in formal and lexical skills are at Level II (developing teachers).

Table 5

Professional competence

	Traits	Personality	Professional interest
Always	52.69%	50.73%	55.62%
Often	27.96%	23.95%	11.67%
Sometimes	12.77%	15.94%	05.83%
Rarely	04.38%	05.00%	05.83%
Never	02.29%	04.38%	06.67%
Mean	4.24	4.11	3.94
S.D	0.69	0.56	0.39
Levels	III	II	II

Maximum Mean value: 5.00

According to the percentage values in Table 3 majority (79.72%), of teachers are competent in motivating students to teach English, (77.6%) in time management, (73.46%) in assessment, and (73.25%) give individual care to their students. The mean value of four aspects of teachers' professional competency is as; motivation to learn 4.24, time management 4.00, assessment skill 3.99, and 4.01 in giving individual care to students. The standard deviation values are not great thus opinions of

the students do not vary much. The result in percentage and mean value indicates that the teachers are competent with respect to professional competency. The teachers' competency level in motivating their students to learn, time management, and in giving individual care is Level III (proficient teachers) and in giving individual care to their students and are at Level II (developing teachers) in assessing their work.

Table 6

Personal competence

	Traits	Personality	Professional interest
Always	52.69%	50.73%	55.62%

	Traits	Personality	Professional interest
Often	27.96%	23.95%	11.67%
Sometimes	12.77%	15.94%	05.83%
Rarely	04.38%	05.00%	05.83%
Never	02.29%	04.38%	06.67%
Mean	4.24	4.11	3.94
S.D	0.69	0.56	0.39
Levels	III	III	III

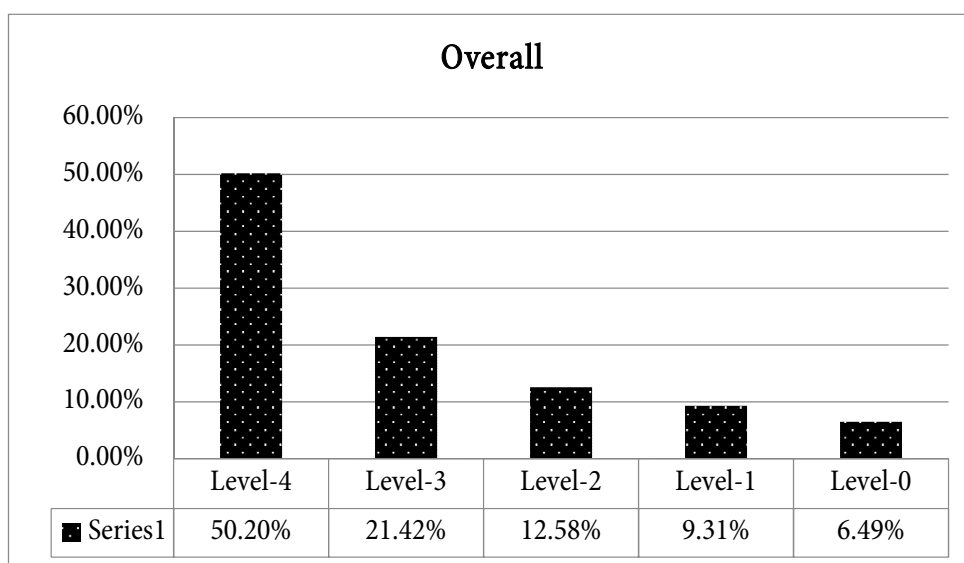
Maximum Mean value: 5.00

According to the percentage values in Table-5, (52.69+27.96), 80.65% of teachers practice personal traits, 74.68% of teachers reflect their personality, and 67.29% of teachers have professional interests. The mean value of four aspects of teachers' personal competency is as; traits 4.24, personality 4.11, and professional interest 3.94. The standard deviation values

are not large thus opinions of the students do not vary much. The result in percentage and mean value indicates that the teachers are competent with respect to personal competency but their level of competency is Level-III (proficient) in three aspects; personal traits, personality, and professional interest.

Figure 2

Overall results



The overall competency of teachers is presented in Figure 1. The cumulative result of three types of teachers' competency with respect to level is 50.20% of teachers are at Level IV (accomplished teachers), 21.42% are at Level III (proficient teachers), 12.58% are at Level II (developing teachers), 9.31% at Level-I

(emerging teachers) and 6.49% at Level-0 (not-demonstrating teachers). It can be said from the data that only half of the secondary school teachers at Level are called accomplished teachers. While rest of the teachers that are fifty percent needed to improve and elevate them up to that level that may be said is desired

level for teachers' competency according to the standards fixed by NACTE/PACTE.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study was designed to measure teachers' competency in the subject of English with the help of a questionnaire and observation. This study found gaps in the three types of competencies. It is concluded that the teachers are competent in subject knowledge but at (Level-III) at the developing stage in reading and thinking skills, while at the developing stage (Level-II) in writing skills, communicating skills, and formal and lexical skill-producing ability. During observation, it was observed that a few teachers explained the theme of the lesson before starting. No doubt some of the teachers explain the lesson by relating it with the practical life of the students as there are lessons on the practical life of the students (Road safety etc.). Teachers only read the chapter and translate it into Urdu. During observation, it was observed that groups were formed to learn the lesson not for the purpose of developing communication skills in the students. The findings are similar to a study conducted by Coleman (2010) and Tarranum and Majoka (2017) that in teaching a second language; communication skill is ignored area. No change has been measured in spite of training provided to the teachers by the Directorate of Staff Development at certain times. When asked by the teachers the answer was that it has no weightage in the final examination so, is not targeted during teaching. They were only preparing students for the written examination. Oral communication with proper intonation and accent has been a benchmark of the National Curriculum Standards (2006). The communicative method of teaching also called CLT (communicative language approach) develops grammar, vocabulary, and word choice along with discourse competency (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006; & Ahmad and Rao, 2013). According to Jin (2008), the teaching of the English language and its purposeful learning is still a desired objective in Pakistan.

In professional competency, teachers were found proficient teachers (Level-III) in motivating their students to learn, time management that is coming to class on time and leaving the class on time completing the syllabus on time also giving individual care to their students. There is diversity of the students in a class with respect to mental level as well as by nature so, some of the students in the class need more attention and care. In this respect, teachers were found helping their students in free periods and even sometimes explaining the lesson in their mother tongue but a few were doing so. A competent teacher should know the individual differences of the students and come to their level while teaching (Hinchliff, 2009). Assessment plays an important role in the teaching-learning process. Teachers were measured at the developing stage (Level II). Teachers in assessing their students' work and giving them feedback on their written work, tests, and homework were not as vigilant as needed. During observation, the notebooks of the students were not found checked or not checked properly by their teachers. On the other hand, evaluation of student's performance paces up students' learning and is also helpful in rewarding students (Jabbarifar, 2009).

The third aspect of teachers' competency is the personal competency or traits of the teachers, in which teachers were measured at the proficient stage (Level III). That is teachers come to school well dressed, are friendly with students and colleagues, and know the objectives of education. However, during observation, it was observed that they do not report to students' parents their study progress or any kind of problem but a few do this.

The overall result indicates that only half percent of the measured teachers have achieved Level-IV that is have achieved proficiency level and demonstrated competence. While a low fraction is those who have inadequate growth toward achieving standard (s). No doubt a teacher should update their knowledge to meet the needs of the era. According to Sandlin (2010), teachers are constantly being taught, constantly learning, and constantly unlearning. Education is an

enveloping concept, a dimension of culture that maintains dominant practices.

Recommendations of the study

Suggestions are made on the base of some gaps measured in three aspects of the teachers' competencies as none was in Level IV which is called accomplished teachers.

1. The first domain of teachers' competency was subject knowledge competency. A major gap in this was measured in developing communication skills among students. Teachers may be competent but not interested due to not having been given weightage in the final examination. It is suggested to conduct an oral examination of the students by giving it proper weightage so that teachers would give attention to producing this skill in their students. The other aspect where the gap was measured is in developing writing skills; and formal and lexical items. It is suggested to emphasize this aspect in pre-service training

material as well as in-service training. Because this skill is not developed in a short time of training.

2. In professional competency, teachers were measured as less competent in the assessment of students' work and giving individual care. When the researcher analyzed training material this domain was found absent in it. It is suggested that teachers should be given proper training to prepare valid tests, and evaluation procedures and give feedback to the students. Teachers do not bother to report their students' parents about students' performance in the school. As students spend most of their time at home where only their parents can watch them so, teachers should involve students' parents in their learning activities.

In general, it is suggested to conduct teachers' training repeatedly. It is further suggested to train the teachers on need-based i.e. the teachers who needed training and the aspect/s that are needed.

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