Assessing the Teaching Competencies of Teacher Educators with Special Reference to Naional Professional Standards for the Teachers in Balochistan: An Ecaluative Study

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Abstract

This study was carried out to assess teaching competencies of teacher educators of Baochistan in light of the national professional standards set for teachers in Pakistan. The study participants were teacher educators and prospective teachers from the ADE degree awarding institutions of Balochistan province. A mixed method approach was used for the study. T-Test and ANOVA were used as statistical tools to analysis quantitative data whereas thematic analysis was used to generate qualitative themes. The study found out that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male/female and married/unmarried teacher educators regarding understanding and practices of the professional standards. Similarly, no significant different was found between the mean score of the educators based on age, degree, institution, trainings attended, and experience. However, there was significant difference in the mean

score of prospective teachers (students) regarding the competency levels of their teachers. Additionally, the qualitative analysis revealed the educators have only working knowledge on the professional standards and some of the standards are being used in their teachings only covertly.

Keywords: *Teacher Competencies, National Professional Standards, Teacher Educators*

1.0 Introduction

Teacher lies at the heart of all educational activities (Darling-Halmond, 2000). This assertion gives teachers a central part in bringing around educational change and development. However, the current face of affairs, regarding teachers' competencies in playing their due role, seems contrary to the desired. Although the authorities have been feeling the extra-ordinary role of teachers, their response has been meager and half-hearted. The objective approach brought them to create professional standards for teachers, urging them to capacitate themselves so they can interact with students in a prepared manner. These professional standards necessitated teachers to enhance their teaching competencies holistically – by having expertise in pedagogy, knowledge of the subject matter, assessment techniques, skills in instructional planning and strategies, communication and ICT skills, and creating conducive learning environment for students.

Competence is an all-encompassing term, covering a cluster of knowledge, skills, and attitude, observed in a real performance context (Mulder, 2014). As regard to teaching competencies, the requirements become more intense. How to bring teaching profession to a level that contribute to the holistic growth of students seems a challenging scenario. Setting professional standards for teachers in Pakistan is an episode to respond to the challenge at hand.

This study focused to evaluate the current competency understanding and practices of teacher educators in Balochistan province. Though there are no separate professional standards for teacher educators, the professional standards set for teachers are deemed to fulfill the need in some ways. It is generally assumed that teacher educators working in teacher training institutes understand teaching competencies and professional standards for teachers because they are enshrined with task to prepare future teachers. Therefore, it

has to be made sure through organized investigation the way they understand, portray, and demonstrate the required teaching competencies. The same exercise must be done with the prospective teachers to ensure they are prepared for classroom practices. Furthermore, as students at teacher education institutions, how do these prospective teachers view and visualize the competencies of teacher educators. There has been an array of research studies focusing to investigate what types of competencies really educators need. At the initial level, these competencies have been classed and bifurcated into hard and soft ones (Jacobs, 1989). According to Jacobs (1989), the analytical and organizational competencies are considered as hard competencies whereas creativity, interpersonal, and behavioral skills are soft competencies. The soft and hard competencies both are indeed essential for effective work performance. Soft competencies, in fact, control and determine dispositions of observable behavior and performance (Hodges &Burchell, 2003). However, this concept of classification is often criticized claiming differentiation between hard and soft competencies is always difficult to understand and establish conceptual and practical significance (Woodruffe, 1993). Despite the criticisms, the scheme of classification of competencies into soft and hard skills is still popular and in practice (Rainsbury et al., 2002). These competencies are often theoretical, conceptual, and observable.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To assess teacher educators' understanding of teaching competencies and professional standards for teachers in Pakistan.
- To find out relationship between teacher educators perceived or unperceived professional standards and teaching competencies with their classrooms' practices.
- To explore difficulties faced by teacher educators in practicing professional competencies and standards.

2.0 Research Methodology

The combinations of qualitative and quantitative techniques were applied in whole research study commonly known as mixed method approach. The rationale behind taking the mixed method approach is to use the best opportunity to achieve the purpose of the study and address the planned research questions.

2.1 Population of the Study

Research participants of this study were all the teacher educators engaged in teaching associate degree of education program and students enrolled in the same program at teacher training institution of Balochistan

2.2 Sampling

Only those teacher educators and students were the part of same who were involved in ADE program of studies at 16 elementary colleges and 6 universities across Balochistan.

2.2.1 Sample Size

For the purpose of sampling the researcher applied multistage sampling techniques.

Initially stratified sampling technique was used in order to select sample institutions. Total 8 teacher training institutions and 3 universities from 02 different strata were selected on the basis of equal wattage. In the next stage 20 students from each sample institution (Total = 220) were selected through simple random sampling technique, 55 teacher educators were also selected through simple random sampling technique. Finally, 10 teacher educators were selected through convenient samling from the same sample (1 from each institute). These teachers were the part of survey and interview.

2.3 Research Instruments

A survey questionnaire was developed after a thorough analysis of national professional standard for teachers in Pakistan.The questionnaire was divided into two parts; first part was based on demographic profile of the respondents. The second part of questionnaire was designed to identify five different competencies based on national professional standards of teachers in Pakistan. These include: subject matter knowledge, instructional planning and strategies, assessment, effective communication and use of ICT and learning environment.

Semi structured interview protocol was also designed to explore teacher educators' understanding of teaching competencies and professional standards and difficulties faced by them in practicing these professional competencies and standards.

2.4 Data Analysis Technique

The data gathered through above mentioned tools were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Both forms of data were analyzed differently; in the end data were triangulated by comparing and contrasting in order to establish more authenticity in the research findings. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for quantitative data analysis. The process included cleaning and analyzing the data. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. Independent sample t-test and ANNOVA were applied as statistical tools for analysis and inference.

Thematic analysis was used as a method to analyze Qualitative data.

3.0 Results of the Quantitative Data Analysis

This section comprises of the analysis of data drawn from teacher educators of the teacher education institutions. The analysis is presented against each of the hypothesis developed for the purposed.

Ho1: There is a no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female teacher educators regarding the five selected standards – content knowledge, instructional planning & strategies, assessment, effective communication & use of ICT, and learning environment.

Table 1

Independent Sample t-test to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Male and Female teacher educator educators' Responses for their Overall Teachers' Competencies

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df.*	*MD*	*t*-value	sig.
Male	27	50.63	7.142	215	4.15	1.51	.137
Female	27	54.78	12.361				
Total	54						

Table 1 shows the result of independent sample t-test to identify difference in mean scores of male and female teacher educators' responses for their overall competencies. It is evident that there is no significant mean difference in male (M = 50.63, SD = 7.142) and female (M = 54.78, SD= 12.361) teacher educators' responses t (52) = 1.51, $p < .05$. The level of significance at 0.05 is 0.137 > 0.05 so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% fails to reject the Ho.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of married and unmarried teacher educators regarding the five selected standards.

Table 2

Independent Sample t-test to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Married and Unmarried Teacher Educators' Responses for their Overall Teachers' Competencies

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df.*	*MD*	*t*-value	sig.
Unmarried	18	51.39	10.966	52	2.72	.901	.372
Married	36	54.11	10.217				
Total	54						

Table 2 shows the result of independent sample t-test to identify difference in mean scores of married and unmarried teacher educators' responses for overall competencies. It is evident that there is no significant mean difference in married (M = 51.39, SD = 10.966) and unmarried (M = 54.11, SD= 10.217) teacher educators' responses t (52) = .901, $p < .05$. The level of significance at 0.05 is 0.372 > 0.05 so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% fails to reject the Ho.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the five selected standards based on age, degree, institution, trainings attended, and experience.

Table 3

ANOVA to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Male and Female Teachers' Responses for their overall Competencies on the Basis of Age, Degree, Institution, Trainings attended, and experience

Variable	*Sum of Squares*	*df.*	*F*-value	sig.
Between Group	98.523	4	1.019	.406
Within Group	1232.316	51		
Total	1330.839	55		

Table 3 shows the results of ANOVA to identify difference in mean scores of teachers' responses for the overall competencies of their teachers on the basis of age, degree, institution, trainings attended, and experience. It is evident that there is no significant mean difference in students' responses F (4) = 1.019, p = .406, so we conclude that the

upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% fails to reject the Ho.

However, the following two competencies on the basis of institution and trainings attended showed significance difference in the mean scores of teacher educators based on male and female bifurcation.

Table 4

ANOVA to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Male and Female Teachers' Responses for their Effective Communication and Use of Technology Competencies on the Basis of Institution

Variable	*Sum of Squares*	*df.*	*F*-value	sig.
Between Group	334.506	6	2.742	.022
Within Group	996.333	49		
Total	1330.839	55		

Table 4 shows the results of ANOVA to identify difference in mean scores of teachers' responses for effective communication and use of technology competencies of their teachers on the basis of institution. It is evident that there is significant mean difference in students' responses F (4) = 2.742, $p < .05$, so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% falls in critical region to reject the Ho.

Table 5

ANOVA to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses for their Instructional Planning Strategies Competencies on the Basis of Trainings they had attended

Variable	*Sum of Squares*	*df.*	*F*-value	sig.
Between Group	84.588	12	2.057	.042
Within Group	147.340	43		
Total	231.929	55		

Table 5 shows the results of ANOVA to identify difference in mean scores of teachers' responses for instructional planning strategies competencies of their teachers on the basis of number of trainings they had attended. It is evident that there is significant mean difference in students' responses F (12) = 2.057, $p < .05$, so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% falls in critical region to reject the Ho.

Prospective teachers' responses regarding their teachers

This section presents the analysis of data drawn from prospective teachers regarding their teachers in the teacher education institutions

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students (prospective teachers) regarding the five selected standards.

Table 1

Independent Sample t-test to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Male and Female Students' Responses for Overall Teachers' Competencies of their Teachers

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df.*	*MD*	*t*-value	sig.
Male	90	64.71	11.38	215	7.31	4.81	.000
Female	127	57.40	10.78				
Total	217						

Table 1 shows the result of independent sample t-test to identify difference in mean scores of male and female students' responses for overallcompetencies of their teachers. It is evident that there is significant mean difference in male (M = 64.71, SD = 11.38) and female (M = 57.40, SD= 10.78) students' responses t (215) = 4.81, p< .05, so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% falls in critical region to reject the Ho.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students (prospective teachers) regarding the five selected standards based on semester and institution.

Table 2

ANOVA to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Students' Responses for the overall competencies of their Teachers on the Basis ofSemester and Institution

Variable	*Sum of Squares*	*df.*	*F*-value	sig.
Between Group	325.9	10	6.99	.000
Within Group	960.13	206		
Total	1286.03	216		

Table 2 shows the results of ANOVA to identify difference in mean scores of students' responses for the overall competencies of their teachers on the basis of institutions. It is evident that there is significant mean difference in students' responses F (3) = 6.99, p < .05,

so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% falls in critical region to reject the Ho.

However, the learning environment competency was he only exception where the responses of the student teacher did not show significant difference in the mean scores.

Table 3

ANOVA to Identify Difference in Mean Scores of Students' Responses for Learning Environment Competencies of their Teachers on the Basis of Semester

Variable	*Sum of Squares*	*df.*	*F*-value	sig.
Between Group	32.74	3	1.22	.305
Within Group	1912.79	213		
Total	1945.53	216		

Table 3 shows the results of ANOVA to identify difference in mean scores of students' responses for learning environment competencies of their teachers on the basis of semester. It is evident that there is significant mean difference in students' responses F (3) = 1.22, p = .305, so we conclude that the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals at 95% fails to reject the Ho.

3.1 Findings of the Qualitative Data Analysis

After a thorough thematic analysis of the qualitative interviews, the following themes and sub-themes emerged. Each of the major themes carries more sub-themes. Sub-themes have not been highlighted separately.

3.1.1 Understanding of Competent teacher as perceived by study participants

As answer to the question regarding who you think a competent teacher is, majority of the respondents said that one who has the requisite knowledge of the field of study. In other words, one who has the up-to-date knowledge of the subject matter. Similarly, a dominant number of participants had consensus that teachers should have sound knowledge of the pedagogical aspects.

3.1.2 Knowledge of professional standards for teachers in Pakistan

When asked whether you are aware with professional standards in Pakistan, the participants were aware roughly with some of the areas mentioned in the standards. For example,Child psychology,teaching

methods/pedagogy,and assessment. Teaching methods/pedagogy and assessment were the recurrent themes as answer to question at hand. Very few study participants were aware with the remaining professional standards – Communication Skills, Classroom management, use of Technology/ICT, Islamic Values, English language skills.

3.1.3 Competencies, teacher educators need to prepare effective future teachers

Most of the participants believed teacher educators should have sound knowledge of the educational Psychology, so they could share the knowledge with prospective teachers. Prospective teachers need to be aware with learning stages of the students. They should also know how students learn. Furthermore, teachers need to be cognizant with needs and interest of the learners.

3.1.4 Efficacy of the standards in routine teaching

As answer to this question, most of the participants said the teachers don't incorporate these standards into their teaching. It means, they are not following the set standards. However, some of them expressed that some of these standards may be followed unintentionally.

3.1.5 Implementation of professional standards

The participants believed that ADE program is a latest pre-service teacher education program. They also agree with most of the standards benchmarked for teachers' competencies. However, they showed their concerns regarding implementation of these standards. One of the participants shared his observations and attributed an aspect of the issue with teachers' ego. He expressed that teachers do not learn from one another as per the demands of the new program based on new approach.

3.1.6 Shortcomings/weaknesses of these standards

Majority of the study participants said the standards are irrational. The standards have not been developed in line with philosophies and theories of teaching. However, some of the participants appreciated the standards saying at least we have something on ground that can be improved.

3.1.7 Ways to improve the standards

Majority of the study participants agreed that there should be some benchmarking criteria for teacher and teacher educators against which they could view their competency levels. Due to lack of understanding regarding the current professional standards teachers, they could not provide reasonable feedback the way current professional standards may be improved.

4.0 Discussion

The quantitative analysis inferred from the responses of the teacher educators pursued: understanding of the five selected standards and how they practice those standards in their teaching based on the difference between mean scores of male/female, married/unmarried teacher educators and prospective teachers. Furthermore, the analysis also pursued mean score difference in the responses of teacher educators and prospective teachers in relation to their age, degree, institution, trainings attended, and experience. Ho1 was developed to see the difference between the mean scores of male and female teacher educators. The analysis concluded that there is a significant difference, $p = < .018$, between the mean scores of male and female teacher educators only in the standard of content knowledge. No significance difference occurred between the mean scores of male and female teacher educators in the remaining four competencies. This shows that there is no significant difference in the understanding and practice of the standards between male and female teacher educators.

Similarly, Ho2 was developed to see the difference between the mean scores of married and unmarried teacher educators. The analysis concluded that no significance difference occurred between the mean scores of married and unmarried teacher educators in all the five selected standards. This shows that there is no significant difference in the understanding and practice of the standards between married and unmarried teacher educators.

Ho3 was developed to see the mean score difference based on age, institution, degree, trainings attended, and experience. The analysis was also done to see the results between the group mean scores. It was noticed that there were no significance differences across the cases. The only exception was the standard of effective communication and ICT skills pertaining to the variables of institution and trainings attended. This means that certain institutions have ICT

facilities whereas the educators of some institutions have more opportunities of professional development than others. Therefore, it can be concluded that physical facilities and opportunities of professional development broadens the prospects of understanding and the practice of the required competencies.

Ho4 captured the responses of students (prospective teachers), studying in the teacher training institutions, regarding competencies and standards of their teachers. The data analysis produced interesting results. A significant difference was noticed between male and female students regarding their teachers in referral to the five selected standards. Similarly, there was a significant difference in the responses of the students regarding their teachers' competencies/standards based on semester and institution as against Ho5. We can infer here that institutions differ based on its culture (learning environment), teachers' competencies and exposure to capacity building programs, understanding of the subject matter, and communication skills.

Qualitative analysis revealed many interesting themes. The first major theme encircled the way study participants perceived qualities in a competent teacher. The participant wanted to see the following competencies in a teacher: understanding of the knowledge of the field, pedagogical skills, expertise in English language, students' assessment, and lesson planning. Some of the subthemes revealed that a few educators are aware with more advanced concepts of how a modern teacher or teacher educators should be. For example, one of the participant believed that teachers should apply culturally responsive teaching and learning. Similarly, two of the participants argued that knowledge of assessment alone is not sufficient but understanding of formative assessment must be requisite for a teacher. One of them said that portfolio-based assessment should be introduced.

Most of the participants were found incognizant to the framed professional standards for teachers. However, they had knowledge of some of the standards covertly. As regard to the standards, child psychology, assessment, and teaching techniques were the recurrent themes in their responses under the themes of teachers' knowledge of professional standard for teachers in Pakistan. Some of the participants had the opportunity to be exposed to professional development opportunities encompassing professional standards and or teaching competencies. As a whole, they had only working knowledge of the professional standards and teacher competence. The participants

argued that the professional standards should be part of ADE and BS (Education) curriculum.

Need of competencies for teacher educators, emerged as a sperate theme from the responses of teacher educators and students (prospective teachers) collectively. The participants emphasized that both teachers and teacher educators should have sufficient knowledge of educational psychology and learning theories. Educators should know how students learn. Furthermore, teachers should be aware of the needs and interests of learners. It emerged as a subtheme that teachers should treat students with respect. This shows that teachers usually do not treat students with respect. The concept leads to the idea that learners' self-esteem should be kept intact. Another important point, relating to the culture of institution, was highlighted by the study participants.

The participants argued that teacher education institutions and schools should have a collaborative environment. This point can be connected to the Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of 'communities of participation'. Institutions should be learning communities where new comers become experts with the help of old timers while responding to the situation. The participants also urged teachers and teacher educators to be creative. This notion stresses the idea of giving more autonomy to the educators in their work of influence. However, the educators, to be more creative and empowered, should have opportunities of capacity building.

Majority of the participants claimed that the standards are irrational. They argued that the standards are based on philosophies and theories of the field. Therefore, these standards should be revised. The participants agreed that there should be benchmarking criteria for teacher and teacher educators against which they could view their competency level. Most of the participants said stressed that there should be separate standards for teacher educators.

The literature confirms that teacher competencies revolve round some of the selected competency standards – subject matter knowledge, instructional strategies, learning atmosphere. However, the literature also emphasizes on professionalism of educators which seems to be a missing link as for as this study is concerned.The literature supports the idea of standard-based teaching.

The participants stressed the creativity of educators which is consistent with the prevalent literature (Hattie, 2009). Furthermore, the literature highlights the necessity of creating learning environment for the motivation of the learners (Attakorn, Tayut, Pisitthat, &Kanokorn, 2014). The literature also asserts that teachers should be inquisitive by using exploratory methods.

The researchers inferred some of the competencies set down in the professional standards for teachers in Pakistan as prerequisite to teaching effectively (Archer& Hughes, 2011).

4.1 Implications and Recommendations

This study has enormous implications for policy actors, educationists, education managers, teachers, and teacher educators. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that teacher education in in Pakistan needs a profound policy. The new policy should be in line with Cultural fabric and dimensions of the province so that it could be translated into practice.

The study implies to the current states of professional standards for teachers in Paksitan. The participants suggested that the standards are already time-barred. Therefore, these standards need to be revised, improved and contextualized as per the orientation of the latest theories of the field.

Another finding recommends that there should be separate standards for teacher educators and teacher education programs. The current standards are formed in consideration to the needs of teachers. Therefore, new Standards for teacher educators should be framed.

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