

# An Overview of the Development of Primary Teachers' Teaching Competencies - Policy Implications from the Context of Vietnam

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**Abstract** The top of most educational agendas are criteria and competence that the teaching staff should be qualified in the context of educationally radical and comprehensive change. This paper introduces and analyses an overview of studies in competence for teaching staff in primary teachers. The author reviews current studies to examine why competence are becoming more important than ever. The findings revealed that the teaching staff of the primary educational sector is being significantly influenced by this tendency. In a short time, these changes may not be the most effective way to improve the quality of this staff and then they can make more contributions to education if other relevant factors are not consistently considered and associated with.

**Keywords:** *teaching competency, primary teachers, policy implications, retraining, teaching staff*

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## 1. Introduction

Regarded as the breakthrough solution to educational critical reform, teaching competencies have never been more boyant in Vietnam these days. These markedly features can be seen in various ways, such as, competency-based curriculum, standard-based approach of new policies and are represented in its contents, forms and methods that are being utilized to organize devious retraining courses for teaching staff.

Along with the development of the use of competencies in the organization is the debate about the effectiveness and development of these concepts to really enhance the performance with both individuals and organizations. One of the five commonly cited weaknesses related to the concept include: (1) simplification of these approaches in management roles rather than in overall cohesion [1]; (2) the common nature of competencies that encompass general competencies, regardless of the context, an individual or a specific task [2,3,4]; (3) focus on performance in the present and the past rather than the requirements of the future [5]; (4) competencies tend to emphasize behavior and outcome measurement and eliminate interplaying factors and context [6]; and (5) this approach is mechanical and limited to education [7].

According to the basic characteristics [8,9], competence-based approaches in education include: learner-centered; policy demands; orienting the realities in life; flexibility and dynamism; standards are formulated clearly and specifically. Due to the advantages of

the competence -based approach, training and retraining activities are often developed and developed into measures and benchmarks in the realities of education in general and education management in particular.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. With Regard to Marked Researches in the World

#### 2.1.1. Primary Teachers' Teaching Competencies

Competency-based approach in education generally, in teaching particularly was formed and developed widely in the United States in the 1970s and became a movement with new developments in the 1990s in England, Australia, New Zealand, and Wales...

Many scholars and human resource development practitioners considered the competency-based approach as the most influential, most strongly supported way to balance education and teaching process, as a "way to prepare the workforce for a globally competitive economy" [10] and "a strong answer to the problems faced by schools, individuals and organizations in the 21st century". According to J. Richard and T. Rodger [11] "competency-based approach in teaching focuses on learning outcomes, targeting what learners are expected to do rather than aiming for what they need to learn".

When summarizing theories about the competency-based approach in teaching and development, K.E. Paprock [8] has pointed out five basic characteristics of

this approach: 1) The competency -based approach is based on a learner-centered philosophy; 2) it performs to meet the requirements of the policy; 3) It is oriented to real life; 4) It is very flexible and dynamic; 5) The standards of it are clearly developed. These characteristics make this approach have advantages compared to other approaches in teaching. According to S. Kerka [12] these advantages are: 1) allow to personalize the learning on the basis of the competency model, learners will add their shortcomings to perform specific tasks; 2) It focuses on the outputs; 3) It creates flexibility in achieving the outputs, in specific ways appropriate to the characteristics and circumstances of the individual; 4) This approach also enables the ability to clearly identify what needs to be achieved and the standards for measuring learners' learning outcomes. The focus on the outputs and the objective measurement criteria of the employees needed to produce these results is a special focus of education policy makers and human resource development.

R.E. Boyatzid [13] suggested that teaching development based on the competency model needs to systematically address the following three aspects: (1) identify the competencies, (2) develop them, and (3) evaluate them objectively. To determine the competencies, the starting point is usually the outputs. From there, to determine the roles of those are responsible for creating these outputs. A role is a set of expected behaviors about a person according to his or her duties and job status. The term "job role" refers to the performance of a person's real tasks. On the basis of each role, identify the competencies needed to be able to perform that role well.

The competency model has been developed around the world with the National Quality System of vocational training in England and Wales; New Zealand national quality framework, Australian National Council of Education's quality standards; Necessary skills required by the National Training Council of America.

### 2.1.2. The research on Refresher Courses of Primary Teachers

Training of primary teachers and the expertise of primary teachers that Toutaoui and Mebdoua Zoulikha affirms training a teacher means preparing for educational skills and to achieve that skills depends on the ability of the teacher, creating and interacting, and mastering science and applying different teaching methods to each learning situation, and that happens when the teacher manages his class successfully, and this management also relies on the personality of the teacher and his or her style of communicating with students inside and outside the classroom, so all educational reforms must really be based on teacher training; In addition, the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) (2007), Wiratchai et. al. (2004) point to the fact that the achievement of learners in the field of thinking is still at the "unsatisfactory" level, especially analytical thinking (one of the required competencies). The issue of quality in analytical thinking of Thai children needs to be significantly improved (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Thai pedagogical students are in a difficult situation to develop their analytical thinking, which is a serious problem that requires immediate remedies. In general, learners are not capable of analytical thinking stemming

from a teacher's ignorance and experience in preparing academic management for the development of analytical thinking (Erwin, 1993; Kammanee), 2003; Art-in, 2011)

## 2.2. Reference to the Studies Conducted in Vietnam

### 2.2.1. Studies of Teaching Competency and Development of Teaching Competency for Elementary Teachers

Competency and competency-based education have been mentioned by some authors through a number of research works. Especially, Dang Thanh Hung, the author has studied the competencies from the perspective of education, access mechanisms and competency standards [14]. On the other hand, skills and competencies are also compared for clarification and in-depth analysis in teaching process [15].

A number of researches on competency development and teaching competency development for primary teachers have also point out a conceptual system, the status of competencies of this teaching staff and solutions for competency development for them are generally expressed in different aspects. The researches have clearly shown the importance of improving teaching competency for teachers and pedagogical students such as the works [16,17,18]... can be seen, in the context of globalization and knowledge economy, with the considerable development of teaching technology, the dramatic change of technology and globalization lead to improving teaching competency for teachers is necessary. Therefore, to improve the quality of Vietnamese education, it is necessary to improve the teaching competency for a teacher that was found by many domestic studies on teaching competencies.

Analysis of concepts of skills, teaching skills, skills and competencies, a group of teaching skills, a group of teacher competencies, developing cognitive and operational competencies activities in teaching process ... and the specific skills of teaching students in secondary school are shown in the work [19] mentioned the competencies and skills of teaching students in secondary schools.

The inadequacies of training teaching competency in pedagogical practice today and the proposals for innovation in teaching competency training in pedagogical practice of technical pedagogical university students associated with implementation competency in terms of renewing the objectives, content, processes and evaluating the results of training teaching competency in pedagogical practice of pedagogic university students shown in the research on pedagogical university students to improve the quality of this activity [20] Innovating competency-based training of teaching competency in pedagogical practice of technical pedagogical university students

Another study [21] is to build the process of training the teaching competency of the technical pedagogical schools: gave general studies on the theoretical and practical basis of process building teaching competence of technical pedagogical university students in competency-based performance pedagogical practice. On that basis, propose a process to apply in practical training at technical pedagogic universities;

Theoretical basis for training teaching competency for technical pedagogic university students in pedagogical practice competency-based performance; the situation of training teaching competency for the students in pedagogical practice and analyzing the limitations, inadequacies, indicating the causes; and a proposal on setting up the objective, content, process design, criteria, evaluation tools and implementation of teaching competency training for students of these universities; organize an experiment in training teaching competency for these students shown in the thesis, Training teaching competency for technical pedagogic university students in competency-based performance pedagogical practice.

The system of teaching competency of competency based performance of vocational teachers is expressed through 4 component competencies: teaching design competency, teaching implementation competency, assessment and evaluation competency, competence Teaching management was studied through the work [16] Teaching competency of competency based performance of vocational teachers.

### 2.2.2. Other Studies on Refresher Courses of Teaching Competency

The refresher courses of teaching competency of teachers in high school specialized teams clarifying the role of professional groups in developing teaching competency of high school teachers [17] can help to improve the teaching competency of teachers in high schools and propose some measures for improving the teaching competencies for teachers high schools

To discuss the issue of teaching an advanced geometry at the Pedagogical University in the direction of preparing students for mathematics teaching competency [22] to form teaching competency for students of mathematics. Collaboration between vocational schools and employers in improving teaching competency for vocational teachers offers some solutions for coordination between vocational schools and other employers to improve professional competency, update new technology and practical experience for vocational teachers

Management of refresher courses on teaching competency improvement for high school teachers in Hanoi [14] mentioned the situation of refresher courses of teaching competency and management measures to improve teaching competency for high school teachers in Hanoi to meet professional standards.

In addition to the research projects, many materials of training and competency development for teachers are interested by researchers.

Situation of primary teachers at U Minh district, Ca Mau province, Du Thanh Hong primary schools (2015, Journal of Education and Social Affairs No. 52 (113) - July 2015) presented the results of assessing the status of primary teachers in U Minh district, Ca Mau province: quantity, training level, structure, quality and competency in which primary teachers' competency is concerned, according to the author, a management solution is to improve the competency of primary school teachers of this area.

Appreciate the management role of educational institutions in forming teaching competency for elementary teachers, research on "Competency framework of primary teachers

in new context" [23] has given the necessary competency framework of elementary teachers in the current context and proposed solutions for training primary teachers at pedagogical university / faculty to meet new competence framework.

Teaching competency of primary teachers plays an important role in ensuring the quality of primary education [24] clearly analyzed the situation and causes of impacts of primary teachers' competency on teaching design. In elementary schools, the author proposed solutions to develop competency for primary teachers in designing lessons for students.

There are not many researches on developing teaching competency for primary teachers but there are a number of research works on primary teachers' teaching competency development has brought the need for teaching competency development for teachers generally, primary teachers particularly and factors related to the development of teaching competency of primary teachers.

The research on theoretical basis and solutions for competency-based performance refresher courses of primary teachers who are ethnic minority in mountainous areas [25] studied the rationale and factors affecting teaching competency of ethnic minority teachers; the situation of teaching competency and refresher course of primary teachers in Cao Bang; and to propose a system of solutions to improve the teaching competency for these teachers;

Some psychological components in teaching competency of primary teachers [26] investigated the current state of intellectual, emotional and willpower components in teaching competency of primary teachers, based on which find appropriate measures to promote the role of psychological components, contributing to improve teaching competency for primary teachers;

The refresher courses of teaching competency for primary school teachers through "lesson study" [27] presents the principles of teaching competency development (professional development) through lesson study at schools and steps to study a lesson.

### 2.2.3. The Researches into Management of Refresher Courses of Primary Teachers

According to the authors, teaching competency plays an important role in bringing teaching results to meet the set goals. In education generally and primary education particularly, the teaching competency of teachers is really concerned, the teaching competency of teachers directly affects the outputs and the impact of teachers with teaching competency will directly influence on the quality of education, therefore, the competency-based performance of refresher courses of primary teachers in particular according to the orientation of developing teaching competency were researched by varied approaches.

The quality of primary teachers depends heavily on the autonomy and management thinking of a school, which requires the recognition and evaluation of strategies for the development of the school generally and the quality of teaching particularly. This is an important level and the first to form the skills and thinking of the high school level, which is the premise for the later learning process. Especially in the context of competition and international integration, the characteristics of educational

and school management and the requirements for changes and innovations such as management decentralization, improving autonomy and forming a school culture are studied.

Training and refresher courses of teachers to meet the needs of primary schools [27] studied the use, organize of teaching, implementation of programs in primary schools, through the differences between primary teachers in different regions, through the review of the pedagogical school's program, thereby giving some suggestions of training and refresher courses for teachers comes from practice;

Research into methods of refresher courses for primary and lower secondary teachers to meet the new textbooks [28] raised the following issues: International experience in teacher training, requirements of teacher retraining from the perspective of the program, new textbooks in elementary and junior high schools; Current situation of refresher courses for primary and lower secondary teachers to meet the new curriculum and textbooks and proposing some solutions to innovate the method of refresher courses to meet the requirements of the new textbook program in elementary and junior high schools;

To develop some refresher courses for primary teachers on environmental protection education using for science and education television program on VTV2 (Vietnam Television Channel 2), [29] presented the theoretical and practical basis of developing the refresher courses for primary teachers on environmental education: Environment, environmental protection education, and refresher courses for on environmental education through TV channels; Prepare lesson, record video and broadcast the program; Training courses for teachers on environmental education.

A number of measures to organize refresher courses for teaching skills for primary teachers in Ben Tre Province [30] identified the theoretical basis of fostering teaching skills for primary teachers. Assess the situation of teaching skills of Ben Tre primary teachers and the organization of training skills for such teachers. Proposing some measures to organize refresher courses for teaching skills for primary teachers in Ben Tre province: assigning and decentralizing the organization of refresher courses for teaching skills; select appropriate content and form of refresher courses for teaching skills, meet the requirements of teachers; well organize self-study and self-refresher courses activities for the primary teachers in Ben Tre province;

Some psychological components in the teaching competency of primary teachers, [26] explored the current state of psychological, emotional and willpower components in the teaching competency of elementary school teachers, based on that, finding suitable measures to promote the role of psychological components, contributing to improve teaching competency for primary teachers. ;

Some solutions to develop primary teachers in Binh Phuoc [31] assessed the situation of primary teachers in Binh Phuoc province. To proposed some solutions to develop the refresher courses for elementary teachers in Binh Phuoc province: solutions for training; solutions for competency-based performance refresher courses for primary teachers.

The competence of primary teachers is seen in many aspects including evaluating the ability to implement new

curricula and textbooks of primary and secondary school teachers [14] that mentioned on the evaluation of the ability to implement the new textbook program of primary teachers based on the situation research, the author has proposed solutions for training and competency-based refresher courses for developing teaching of primary and secondary teachers

Some solutions to develop ethnic minority primary teachers in Binh Phuoc province [32] reviewed some theoretical issues related to the development of primary teachers and teaching staff in Binh Phuoc province. Assessed the current situation of ethnic minority primary teachers in Binh Phuoc province and propose feasible solutions to develop the province's ethnic minority primary teachers: to develop solutions to planning; professional and teacher training; refresher courses; using teachers; creating environment and policies for teacher development;

Some solutions contributing to improving the quality of refresher courses for primary teachers (math) to meet the requirements of the new curriculum and textbooks [33], further clarified the theoretical basis for refresher courses of primary teachers, the current situation of teacher training on the basis of which proposes solutions to improve the competency of primary teachers. Some basic solutions to improve professional competence to meet the requirements of primary teachers' professional standards are reflected in the research on refresher courses of primary teachers - Current situation and solutions [34] through studying the theoretical basis and the status of fostering elementary school teachers. Another study [34] "Some issues of refresher courses of primary teachers" mentioned the issue of refresher courses of primary teachers, the need and importance of refresher courses of teachers in primary schools, what refresher courses should be provided, how to provide, which agencies implement the training and need to check and evaluate the training results;

Some solutions for refresher courses of ethnic minority primary teachers to implement the new curriculum and textbooks [35]. The article proposes some solutions to refresher courses of primary teachers in general, ethnic minority teachers in particular to improve the knowledge and competency of teachers to meet the requirements of implementing new programs and new textbooks;

To develop the teaching staff of elementary teachers of ethnic minorities in the Northwest region to meet the requirements of renewing education and training [35], the author researched the theoretical basis on developing a teaching staff in primary education according to the approach to human resource development by assessing the teaching staff, developing the this staff who are ethnic minorities in the Northwest region.

Solutions for developing a group of primary teachers in Dong Ha city, Quang Tri province [36] showed the presentation on primary education in Dong Ha City, Quang Tri province; current situation of quantity, age structure, level of political theory, expertise and quality of primary school teachers in Dong Ha city, Quang Tri province; propose solutions to develop primary school teachers of this city. Innovating the competency-based management of primary teachers' training at pedagogical universities [23] presents the significance of innovating

the management of primary teacher training in schools pedagogical university; innovation orientation, contents of management innovation for primary teachers training;

Mobilizing social resources in developing the primary teachers in Dam Ha district, Quang Ninh province [37] presents the theoretical basis and evaluation of the situation of mobilizing social resources to develop primary teachers in Dam Ha district, Quang Ninh province and some measures suggested to mobilize social resources according to the functions and tasks of the Interior Office. With studies on the management of refresher courses of primary teacher shown that the works have come up with the theoretical system was related to refresher courses of teachers, including primary teachers, management solutions to improve the quality of refresher courses. Each research project has its own features, but it also affirms the importance of management in refresher courses in general and primary teachers in particular with the purpose of improving the competency of primary teachers. It can be seen that the research works are still fragmented, no research has focused on the solutions to manage teaching activities in primary schools in the direction of developing teachers' competency.

### 3. Conclusion

Firstly, an overview of the history of problem research has outlined the general picture of competency-based performance of refresher courses of primary school teachers according to the ability of training and retraining institutions, and there is also research showing the orientation of these activities according to actual work needs. Some studies focus on exploiting the specific requirements of teacher training such as: the quality of primary teachers' staff, identifying the content, programs and methods for teacher training, conditions, solutions to improve the quality of training, refresher courses for primary teachers... The research results also show that educational innovation along with developing, improving the quality of the teaching staff has a close relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to renovate regularly and continuously the way of organizing the management of primary teachers' refresher courses of primary school teachers.

Secondly, the above results also show that the researches on the measures of competency-based performance of refresher courses of primary school teachers in the direction of fully and synchronously implementing the management functions of local managers is an appropriate problem with the development trend and requires more and more high quality of primary teachers. Especially, it is necessary to have specific studies on the management of refresher courses of primary teachers that are integrated in modern perspectives of management science, linking social requirements and conditions, organizational practices, manager's ability with teachers' needs and expectations. Therefore, studying the status of competency-based performance of refresher courses of primary school teachers, identifying advantages and disadvantages, subjective and objective causes, and managing measures to improve the quality of primary teachers' training, meeting social needs and advocating the development of

primary education by 2020 is one of the important and urgent tasks. The in-depth study of issues helps to detect, systematize, exploit and propose measures to improve the efficiency competency-based performance of refresher courses of primary school teachers under the influence of relevant factors, at the same time satisfy the needs and expectations of the participants. This is also an indispensable objective in the renovation of education, improving the quality and effectiveness of pedagogical labor of the primary teachers, contributing to building the staff of elementary teachers to meet the requirements of career standards, solve some basic issues of national education development strategy and meet current education renovation requirements.

Thirdly, some lessons can be drawn about the management orientation of primary teachers' training according to the following teaching competencies:

- Countries are interested in developing professional standards, of which the primary teachers' career standards are an inseparable part.

- Use professional standards as an important basis to organize the management, use, training, retraining, teacher evaluation and is the basis for teachers to self-assess, identify the training needs and improving skills occupational force.

- The organization of management of competency-based retraining of primary teachers should be implemented in the direction of promoting the school's active role in identifying the subjects, content, forms and organizational methods associated with the situation of the school, pedagogical competency and needs of teachers.

- Requirements for developing primary education, renovating management of competency-based retraining of primary teachers contributing to preparing human resources for society is an important and necessary content.

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