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## Competence Required of Teachers to Teach English in Secondary Schools

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*Since Indian Independence a growing number of reformers of education, policymakers and researchers have been arguing that many of the well-publicized shortcomings in school education system of our country, to an important extent, are due to 'incompetent teachers in the system, inadequacies in the classroom conditions, and poor resources and the support afforded to school teachers.' The key to improving the quality of schools lies in upgrading the competencies of the teacher, their status, training, and working conditions, that is, in furthering the professionalization of teachers and teaching.*

Keywords: Competence, Children, Language and Teaching.

### Introduction

In spite of the recommendations of all the committees, commissions and POAs, it is seen that, the curriculum of teacher education and the general curriculum as a whole, remain still silent and vague about the exact nature of competence to be developed in children and in teachers for its transaction. Some of the broad conclusions in respect of teacher education in the country are as follows:

- The professional commitment and overall competence of teachers leaves much to be desired.
- The quality of pre-service education has not only improved with recent development in pedagogical science, but has actually shown signs of deteriorating.
- Teacher education programmes consist mainly of pre-service teacher training, with practically no systematic programmes of in-service training facilities which are lacking.
- There has been an increase in sub-standard institution of teacher education and there are numerous reports of gross malpractices.

The NCTE documents points out: 'teacher education programmes shall focus on competencies and commitment in much greater magnitude. It calls for bringing out a transformation in teacher preparation strategies as well as in behavioural challenges in pupils under their charge. It also emphasizes the need for quality teacher education in terms of competency based and commitment-oriented teacher education.' The National Council of Teacher Education emphasized the need for quality teacher education in terms of competency-based and commitment-oriented teacher education programmes. The NCTE has pointed out in its

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*Competency Based and Commitment Oriented Teacher Education for Quality School Education -Initiation Document* that ‘teacher education programmes shall focus on competencies and commitment in much greater magnitude’.

Teachers of English need the minimum levels of competence to teach English effectively in Secondary School classes. The emergence of English as a global language has put enormous pressure on the teaching profession worldwide. Demand for English language teachers in both public and private sectors far outstrip the supply. When the language of education is not the mother tongue, the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning, demands that the teacher not only possess specific second language teaching competencies but a very high sense of personal linguistic proficiency as well.

### Main Objectives of the Study

To identify the minimum levels of competence required of teachers to teach English in secondary schools of Kerala Competencies. It is a measurable learning objective written in a functional life skills context. Competencies specifically address essential skills for life and work. Competence, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), comprise essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of ‘a real-world task or activity.’ All teachers must develop ‘comparable standards of outcomes in order to be successful in one’s job.’ The minimum levels of competence can be specified in a variety of ways as that of the expected outcome.

### Methodology

- Identification of competencies required of secondary school teachers of English to teach English effectively.
- Construction of competency rating scale.
- Discussion with referees and experts in the field of ELT.
- Administration of the Tools.

The first step initiated by the investigator was to identify the competencies required of teachers of English to transact the curriculum in English for secondary schools of Kerala. The competencies required of teachers were identified:

- by analyzing the revised curriculum in English for the secondary schools of Kerala.
- by reviewing the available literature and net-search.
- by seeking the opinions of experienced teachers, resource teachers and experts in English language teaching.

In addition, literature review and net-search were undertaken to get an overview of what was relevant both in India and overseas regarding language teacher competencies, their

development and the different dimensions of language teacher competence. The researcher's experience as a teacher of English and as a teacher trainer, and the exposure he had in the development of training materials, gave the researcher deeper insights into the problem under study. However, information obtained from the discussions with curriculum framers and experts was used to supplement the formulation and framing of competencies.

Accordingly, nearly 84 competencies were identified which are found required of teachers for teaching English in secondary schools, and connected to teacher-quality in one way or the other. After a careful editing the required competencies (n=55) were presented as Competency Statements. Only those items pertaining to the teaching of English in the context of the revised curriculum in English of Kerala State were considered and selected for inclusion in the Competency Rating Scale. Also, care was taken to word the competency statements in comparatively simpler terms so as to avoid ambiguity.

The competencies were classified under different competency domains, namely Subject-specific Teaching Competencies, General Teaching Competencies, ICT Competencies, Assessment Competencies, and Professional Competencies. A Competency Rating Scale that consists of a total of 55 competencies which are found relevant to and required of secondary school teachers of English to transact the curriculum and syllabus in English in the State of Kerala was developed.

The sample of teachers (high school and higher secondary) and Experts selected for validating the competency statements were requested to indicate their extent of agreement against each competency statement on a three-point scale: [to a Great Extent (GE), to Some Extent (SE) and Not at All (NA)].

### Ratings of the Competencies

The ratings given to the competencies under various domains by the sample were analyzed to know whether there was any significant difference between the ratings pattern (sub samples: type of respondents and experience).

The findings indicated that though all the competency items under the domain Subject-specific competencies gained comparatively higher scores; there exists variation in the scores given by the samples in some of the competencies. The test of significance for the difference between mean ratings of the sub-sample (Type of respondents, namely teachers of high school, higher secondary and experts) showed that in general there was no significant difference between the ratings given by the sub samples to the Subject Specific Competencies, except for the competencies D1-3, D1-5 and D1-11.

The test of significance for the difference between the mean ratings of the subsample showed that there was no significant difference between ratings given by the sub samples to the 'General Competencies.' This indicated that irrespective of their category all the sub samples had more or less the same levels of agreement to the competency items given under the domain.

The test of significance for the difference between mean ratings of the sub-sample showed that there was no significant difference between the ratings given to ICT competencies, except

for the competency D3-9. This indicated that all the sub-samples had shown more or less the same extent of agreement to all the competency items under the domain 'ICT Competencies.'

The test of significance for the difference between mean ratings of the sub-sample showed that there was no significant difference between the ratings given to the Assessment competencies, except for the competency D4-8. This indicated that all the sub-samples had shown more or less the same level of agreement to all the competency items under the domain 'Assessment competencies.'

The test of significance for the difference between mean ratings of the sub-samples showed that there is no significant difference between the ratings given to the 'Professional Competencies.' This indicated that all the subsamples had shown more or less the same level of agreement to all the competency items under the domain 'Professional Competencies.' This also indicated that irrespective of their category all the sub sample of teachers had the same extent of agreement to the competency items under the domain 'Professional Competencies.'

### Competencies Identified in the Study

The study identified a total of 55 competencies which are found relevant to and required of secondary school teachers to transact the curriculum and syllabus in English of the State of Kerala. They are given below under different competency domains.

Domain: 1

#### The Subject-specific Competencies

- Competency in planning and using integrated language activities that help learners develop real-life communication skills.
- Competency in helping a learner use language to construct different discourses for different communicative purposes considering learners' multiple intelligence level.
- Competency in selecting and using instructional strategies, materials, activities, and models to develop learners' receptive skills and provide them with opportunities to engage in such activities.
- Competency in providing language experiences that develops learners' productive skills (speaking and writing) and helping them to improve oral and written language proficiency.
- Competency in selecting instructional strategies/ materials/ activities to help learners to recognize high-frequency words and to promote their ability to decode increasingly complex words.
- Competency in helping a learner use dictionaries, glossaries, and other sources to determine the meanings, pronunciation, and derivations of unfamiliar words and thereby developing their reference skills.

- Competency in adopting different levels of reading comprehension techniques and developing in them factual, inferential, and evaluative comprehension skills.
- Competency in providing explicit, systematic oral language instruction and supporting learners' learning and use of oral language through meaningful and purposeful activities.
- Competency in planning and providing activities in which learners use the language freely without worrying about errors, focusing on fluency rather than accuracy.
- Competency in analyzing learner errors, providing focused instruction and giving learners opportunities to recognize errors to correct them.
- Competency in providing students opportunities to develop spelling skills in the context of meaningful written expression.
- Competency in using writing conventions and appropriate grammar and usage and providing students with direct instruction and guided practice in those areas.
- Competency in creating an environment in which learners are motivated to express ideas in writing, and making writing an enjoyable activity and a tool for lifelong learning.

Domain: 2

#### The General Competencies

- Competency in finding out the needs, interests, and language difficulties of the learners and the nature of their learning process.
- Competency in facilitating different patterns of interaction viz., teacher-learner, learner-learner and learner-material interaction, (eliciting from class, pair work, learners presenting to class, learner interaction with society).
- Competency in identifying learner levels, individual differences, needs and requirements and facilitating English language development in multiple contexts.
- Competency in helping slow learners and learners with learning difficulty.
- Competency in supplementing and adapting textbooks and planning activities related to learners' interests, prior knowledge and experience.
- Competency in analyzing learner errors in speaking, reading, and writing, and responding to individual student's needs by providing focused instruction.
- Competency in developing teaching learning aids and programmes to facilitate learning.

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- Competency in breaking down functions, genres and skills into smaller components/parts in order to present realistic ‘chunks’ of the language for learners to process.
  - Competency in providing multiple opportunities for learners to read and respond to a wide variety of children's and young people's literature and to think critically.
  - Competency in applying appropriate instructional strategies for enquiry based, cooperative and collaborative learning.
  - Competency in helping learners to interpret information presented in various formats (e.g., maps, tables, graphs) and how to locate, retrieve, and retain information from a range of texts and technologies.

Domain: 3

### The ICT Competencies

- Competency in doing basic hardware and software operations, productivity applications software, web browsers, communications software, presentation software, and management applications.
- Competency in using ICT to support the development of learners’ knowledge construction skills and their continuous development.
- Competency in using technology to promote learners’ language literacy to access a wide range of appropriate narrative and expository texts.
- Competency in applying the benefits of technology for teaching of writing and writing for publication, and providing instruction in the use of technology to facilitate written communication.
- Competency in providing learners with opportunities to use English language to interpret events and ideas based on information from maps, charts, graphics, video segments, and technology presentations.
- Competency in providing students with opportunities to use technology to produce various types of learner products viz. class newspapers, multimedia reports, etc.
- Competency in deciding where, when (as well as when not), and how to use technology for classroom activities and presentations.
- Competency in finding a variety of subject specific tools for language learning, and the ability to use them in a variety of problem-based and project-based situations.
- Competency in using network resources to help students collaborate, access information, and communicate with external experts for guidance.

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- Competency in developing Multimedia-enabled language learning modules with the help of resource teachers and instructional designers.

Domain: 4

#### The Assessment Competencies

- Competency in applying different means of learner assessment, recording and reporting.
- Competency in planning and using assessment activities that assess not only what learners know about language, but also what learners are able to do as speakers, listeners, readers and writers.
- Competency in teaching learners how to assess themselves and their peers (self-assessment, peer assessment etc.) so that they are aware of their progress.
- Competency in using effective techniques to build learners' self-confidence giving feedback to them on their work in an encouraging way.
- Competency in using informal and formal oral language assessments and using continuous assessment strategies to evaluate learners' oral language skills.
- Competency in selecting and using appropriate informal and formal assessments to monitor and evaluate students' reading comprehension.
- Competency in helping a learner use meta-cognitive skills, including self-evaluation and self-monitoring skills.
- Competency in assessing learners' use of writing conventions and using continuous assessment strategies for monitoring students' development in this area.
- Competency in using informal and formal written language assessment strategies and assessing continuously learners' writing development.
- Competency in assessing learners' learning regularly using a variety of assessment activities, both informal activities (e.g. monitoring during activities and peer/self-assessment) and formal ones (e.g. tests, presentations and projects).

Domain: 5

#### The Professional Competencies

- Competency in developing one's abilities continuously and showing inclination to research, experiment and to innovate.

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- Competency in using technological skill and knowledge of Web resources to acquire additional subject matter and pedagogical knowledge in support of professional development.
  - Competency in using ICT avenues to create professional knowledge communities.
  - Competency in reflecting on one's own performance to further develop as a professional
  - Competency in collaborating and sharing ideas with other professionals, seeking new ideas, and accepting and offering constructive criticism.
  - Competency in having an awareness of the need for continuing professional development.
  - Competency in designing activities around learners' interests considering local and regional specific needs rather than responding to an externally mandated curriculum.
  - Competency in getting professional orientation and developing professional culture to know recent changes in pedagogy by attending seminars, discussions etc.
  - Competency in engaging in pedagogical discussions with other teachers including informal observations of each other's teaching.
  - Competency in involving in peer professional leadership activities, sharing common beliefs about school goals and priorities.
  - Competency in acting as a member of collaborative community of professionals who are continually learning themselves.

## Conclusions

The study identified the competencies required of teachers to teach English in secondary schools were identified. It is recommended that the competencies identified by the study shall be used for accrediting short teacher development programmes and also to serve as a benchmark for accreditation of individual teachers, based on performance. It is recommended that the English teachers' competencies shall be reviewed consistently in tune with the changes and reform in the field of language education. The teachers need new competencies to cope with changes and to cater to the differing needs of the learners. This necessitates redefining the roles and competencies required of him from time to time.

The English teachers' need for acquiring a repertory of teaching strategies, techniques and tactics, and the need for improving teaching skills have to be strengthened through continuous teacher empowerment programmes. With regard to teaching English there needs to be a clear in-service education policy and perspective at all levels especially with the introduction of new curriculum.

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English teachers must be offered a variety of routes to further their professional development and higher status within a framework of lifelong learning. The new methodological trends in English language teaching and the current tendency of the exclusive demand of the language call for readjustments not only in the way of teaching and learning, but also for changing teacher's role.

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