The Study of Elementary School Teachers' Professional Competencies and Comparing it with International Standards

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Abstract
This study aimed to investigate the elementary school teachers' professional competencies and compare it with international standards. This was a descriptive survey research. Reviewing literature and research background, 7 main components and 50 sub- components were determined and questionnaire was developed based on them. The validity and reliability of questionnaire was calculated through content validity method and Cronbach's alpha. The population consisted of 322 primary school teachers in Tehran. The sample was randomly selected. The qualitative and quantitative analysis methods were used for analyzing the data. In quantitative analysis, the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, single-sample t based on the assumption that was reported were used. Also in the qualitative data analysis, the existing theories were adapted with the obtained information. Considering the assumed mean , the observed differences in the seven components of the teachers' professional competence was significant at 99% confidence level. The results showed that the elementary school teachers have desirable professional competence in terms of the seven components.
Keywords: Elementray School, Professional Competency

Introduction
Since the golden age of Ancient Greek and the emphasis of philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, education has been the spotlight of human development history. Instead of formed governments in world history, without a doubt the great human civilizations have been the result of ideas and thoughts of scientists and intellectuals and universities of education such as Jundi Shapur, Alexandria, Nezamiye, and etc. Later, the Islamic Civilization

in the light of pavement by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) became the basis of many human sciences. God in the Quran has mentioned that the most important mission of Muhammad is to read the divine scriptures, refinement, and teaching the Book and Wisdom to people who were in obvious ignorance. In the cultural and scientific heritage of human life, the education has been the cause of creating these works (Osare, 2010).

The teacher should be familiar with teaching methods and techniques and have the criteria for selection of the appropriate method. Familiarity with theories and models of learning, teaching theories, education and behavioral target setting, different approaches of teaching, educational assessment, and knowing the facts and issues before, during, and after teaching are the skills needed to the teacher. Teacher's task is to organize, select, and direct the experiences maximize the student's understanding and knowledge in individual and group activities and create willingness and motivation in them, so that students can think and act simultaneously. The teacher should be interested in the teaching profession, be curious, and have the ability to implement problem-solving approach (Hejazi et al., 2009).

The continuous professional development is a process in which teachers learn the skills and knowledge necessary for effective classroom. This process is continuous and stable and it is a rational response to changing environmental conditions. The professional development can be done in multiple methods. However, selecting a method depends on situation of teacher, learning models, and opportunities facing teachers.

Now, the education system spends a critical period. Today's society is looking for an effective system for education. It is believed that the expectations of society are not consistent with the potential energy of Education system. Therefore, there is a need to improve the quality of education, recreate the educational values and attitudes, and re-engineer the structure. The standards are always a signpost on the road to achieving the goals. The standardization in an educational organization is possible in three levels of education area, school, and classroom (Behrangi, 2003).

Given the role of teachers as operational managers of training organizations and their performance importance, this paper examines the current status of elementary teachers' professional competencies and compares it with international standards.

Today, the process of globalization opens the way towards a knowledge-based society in which knowledge and information are the center of development of any society. Obviously, meeting the challenges of the knowledge- based society requires reviewing and redesigning the educational systems and training process (Bazarghan, 2005). The competence of teacher is defined as teacher's ability to meet the needs and demands of teaching profession in sufficient quantities and using an integrated set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes such that they will be reflected in the performance of teacher (Veldt et al., 2005).

Maleki (2005) considers the competence of teacher as knowledge, attitudes, and skills that the teachers use to help the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development of learners. He classifies the competencies in three cognitive, affective, and skill categories.

Methodology

This is a descriptive - survey study. The population consists of 500 elementary school teachers from different districts of Tehran. Totally, 500 questionnaires were distributed among elementary school teachers of 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 17 districts and 322 completed questionnaires were delivered. According to the population, the simple random sampling was used. The schools from North, South, East, and West of Tehran were randomly selected to

achieve to a sample of 500 individuals. Reviewing literature and research background, 7 main components and 50 sub- components were determined and questionnaire was developed based on them. These components include instructional design, learning space, learning performance and management, measurement and communication, collaboration with parents, community organizations and partners, self- reviewing and self- evaluation, and general academic knowledge. The validity and reliability of questionnaire was calculated through content validity method and Cronbach's alpha. Based on Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of questionnaire in the categories of instructional design, learning space, learning performance and management, measurement and communication, collaboration with parents, self- reviewing and self- evaluation, and general academic knowledge was 0.78, 0.83, 0.89, 0.92, 0.91, 0.92, and 0.95, respectively. The qualitative and quantitative analysis methods were used for analyzing the data. In quantitative analysis, the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, single-sample t based on the assumption that was reported (3), were used. Also in the qualitative data analysis, the existing theories were adapted with the obtained information. The SPSS (version 19) Software was used for data analysis.

Findings
In this section, we analyze the data and provide statistical conclusions for the raised questions.

Table 1.
One-Sample T Table: Learning Space

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
1.6901311	82.620	321	0.001

According to table 1 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the learning space component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=82.620).

Table 2.
One-Sample T Table: Instructional Design

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
1.6105590	68.069	321	.001

According to table 2 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the instructional design component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=68.069).

Table 3.
One-Sample T Table: General Academic Knowledge

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
.4761905	28.1021	321	.000

According to table 3 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the general academic knowledge component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=28.1021).

Table 4.
One-Sample T Table: Measurement And Communication

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
1.4751553	29.629	321	.001

According to table 4 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the measurement and communication component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=29.629).

Table 5.
One-Sample T Table: Learning Performance And Management

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
1.4676131	34.503	321	.001

According to table 5 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the learning performance and management component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=34.503).

Table 6.
One-Sample T Table: Self- Reviewing And Self- Evaluation

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
1.4316770	28.645	**321**	**.001**

According to table 6 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the self- reviewing and self- evaluation component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=28.645).

Table 7.
One-Sample T Table: Collaboration With Parents, Organizations, And Partners

Mean difference	t	Degree of freedom	Significance level
1.4006211	27.265	**321**	**.001**

According to table 7 and considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the collaboration with parents, organizations, and partners component is significant at 99% confidence level (p=0.000, df=321, t=27.265).

Conclusion
Considering the components of professional competence, the results showed that the learning environment (mean = 4.69), instructional design (mean = 4.61), and academic knowledge (mean = 4.48) are the first three important components. The collaboration with colleagues, parents, and organizations with a mean of 4.40 is at the last rank. The mean of all standards is above 3. The appropriateness rate of primary school teachers' professional competencies with relevant international standards in the related components is as follows: instructional design standard (99.4%), learning environment standard (99.7%), training management standard (96.9%), measurement and communication standard (96.3%),

collaboration with parents, organizations, and partners standard (96%), teacher's self-evaluation standard (96.3%), academic knowledge standard (95.3%). Also considering the assumed mean (3), the observed differences in the seven components of the teachers' professional competence is significant at 99% confidence level. The results showed that the elementary school teachers have desirable professional competence in terms of the seven components.

Recommendations

- Using appropriate components of professional competence of teachers in their evaluation
- Using components of professional competence of teachers in their organization
- Encouraging teachers who have well professional competence
- Using the components of professional competence in primary school teachers recruitment test

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