Analysis of Staff Academic Working Competencies in Malaysian Private Universities

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Abstract

This article presents the academic staff competencies in Private Institutions of Higher Education. It also considers individual development goals in achieving high standards to perform well. This article presents insights based on a survey of competencies for a total of 400 academic staff representing a total of 26 private universities in Malaysia. There are two types of competencies surveyed: the first is a Personal Competence dimension which includes three sub-dimensions (a) self-motivation, (b) social interaction and, (c) integrity. The second is a Teaching Competence, consisting of two sub-dimensions (a) Subjects and Pedagogical Skills, and (b) Teaching Presentation Skills. The results show that both dimensions of competence, regardless of the gender of the academic staff, are very effective and indicate superior performance and good performance of duties. However, there is still an important need for the improvement of quality services at Private Higher Learning Institutions.

Introduction

A dynamic transformation of education in the 21st century led to a challenge for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to enhance the quality of teaching and learning services. Bahari (2004) for example argued that the major challenge faced by today's university education system is to provide quality service. There have been growing questions about the competency of academic staff at Private Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia. Concerns have been raised about their ability, knowledge, and skills. According to Marrelli (1998, 2001), knowledge is awareness, information, or understanding about facts, rules, principles, guidelines, concepts, theories, or processes needed to perform a task successfully whereas a skill is a capacity to perform mental or physical tasks with a specified outcome. The former Minister of Higher Education Malaysia, Mohamed Khaled Nordin has stated that PPPM 2013-2025 will serve to uphold national higher education as an international hub of higher education excellence through the development of the competence of people within the institutions as follows: (a) strengthening efforts to produce human capital, (b) enriching the creativity and innovation of organizational personnel (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). Hence, there is a need to improve the personal and teaching competence of academic staff. According to Mok (2000), it is essential to define the role of

academic staff in the field of education. One of the personal competences that is regarded as necessary is staff self-motivation. The public knows that to achieve success self-motivation is required (Chan, 2005; Ennis, 2008). As explained by McClelland (1973) the nature lover is the physical character who always consistently implement to environmental information. He also states that a competent staff is self-motivated regarding matters that are related to the basic thought and stimulus and that affect their performance. According to Donaldson (2006) self-motivation occurs when staff are willing to think positively, especially if there are problems in terms of assisting students. Competency experts (such as Rothwell and Wellins, 2004; Teodorescu, 2006) note that many personal characteristics may be required for or may influence effective performance (Ennis, Tondora & Michael, 2005).

Literature Review

Competencies can be understood as *those characteristics that underlie a successful performance or behavior at work* (Slivinski et al., 1996). According to Narimawati (2007), the concept of competence should be effectively centered on a specific standard. This statement is supported by Goh, Shah Saad and Wong (2012) who state that maturity and wise behavior in handling assignments is one standard for measuring competence. Personal and teaching competence is one of the things that need to be presumed for competent academic staff work. Research by McClelland (1973) shows that the quality of staff correlates closely with the character of the staff. Likewise, Boyatzis (2008) and Tahir Kaleem Sidique (2010) who argue that character is drawn from individual experience. Cheetham and Chivers (1996) state that for academic staff to act with virtue they need to control their mental and internal character. Nelson (2002) say that staff needs to understand and reflect on competencies objectively and subjectively. A competent staff] provides guidance to students in order to help them understand the assignment that has been given. However, motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain behavior. It represents the reasons for people's actions, desires, and needs (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The example is giving words of praise and encouragement to the student's willingness. This will enhance the integrity and the social interaction between academic staff and students.

Research Questions

The research questions that motivate this study are as follows:

(a)   What is the effectiveness level for the competence of the academic staff working in Private Institutions of Higher Educational learning in Malaysia?

(b)   Is there a significant difference related to gender in the effectiveness of the competence of the academic staff working in Private Institutions of Higher Educational learning in Malaysia?

Research Design

The researchers used quantitative data analysis to analyze the survey questionnaires. All the data obtained from the questionnaires were processed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 20.0 (SPSS Ver. 20.0).

Research Sample and Data Collection

26 private universities in Malaysia were selected. The population in this research was staff academics that hold a Master's Degree. All the private universities gave full commitment for this research but are not named for reasons of confidentiality. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), population size of 13,328 was 375 for sampling purpose. The questionnaire was designed by a panel of 15 experts with three rounds of Delphi Method.

Findings

This section explains the research findings as below.

The Effectiveness Level for the Competence of the Academic Staff Working in Private Institutions of Higher Educational Learning in Malaysia

Data analysis was based on a survey. The personal competency dimension and its three sub-dimensions were at high performance. The same is true of the teaching competency dimension with the two sub-dimensions. This is due to the interpretation of the mean score at a high level when the mean score is 3.80 to 5.00. The overall findings of the academic staff competence dimension are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1 The Effectiveness of Personal Competence for sub-dimension of Self-motivation

Self-motivation	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Implementation	Interpretation
Proactive thinking in all fields	4.93	0.31	High	Very Satisfied
Feel self supervised by creator (Allah)	4.54	0.50	High	Very Satisfied
Passionate about teaching	4.38	0.56	High	Very Satisfied
Eager to increase self knowledge	4.66	0.47	High	Very Satisfied
Have a high level of competitiveness	4.66	0.47	High	Very Satisfied
Show enthusiasm when working	4.50	0.50	High	Very Satisfied
Think positively when receiving taks	4.56	0.58	High	Very Satisfied
A positive attitude in dealing with problems of teaching and learning	4.62	0.51	High	Very Satisfied
Pioneering the practice of continuous learning	4.69	0.46	High	Very Satisfied

Table 1 shows that all items of the sub-dimension Self- motivation were at a high performance level with a mean score from 4.38 to 4.93. The finding implies that the academic staff are very satisfied with their level of competence in the sub-dimension of Self-motivation. Table 2 shows the information for the study of the Social Interaction sub-dimension.

Table 2 The Effectiveness of Personal Competence for sub-dimension Social Interaction

Social Interaction	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Implementation	Interpretation
Good at socializing with colleagues	4.59	0.52	High	Very Satisfied
Pro active in formal interaction	4.71	0.43	High	Very Satisfied
Pro active in informal interaction	4.71	0.43	High	Very Satisfied
Mutual trust with colleagues	4.67	0.49	High	Very Satisfied
Able to interact on a mutual basis.	4.58	0.58	High	Very Satisfied
Trying to understand other people's feelings.	4.57	0.51	High	Very Satisfied
Capable of establishing friendly relations with students.	4.61	0.58	High	Very Satisfied
Provides an opportunity for others to express their views.	4.63	0.52	High	Very Satisfied

Table 2 shows that all items of the sub-dimension Social Interaction were at a high performance level with a mean score from 4.57 to 4.71. The finding shows that the level of competence for the academic staff is very satisfied under the sub-dimension of Social Interaction at Private Institutions of Higher Educational learning environment . This can be shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The Effectiveness of Personal Competence for the sub-dimension Integrity

Integrity	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Implementation	Interpretation
Profesional attitude when carrying out the duties	4.53	0.54	High	Very Satisfied
High level of integrity	4.49	0.65	High	Very Satisfied
Honest in duties	4.57	0.57	High	Very Satisfied
Displaying proper behavior	4.47	0.62	High	Very Satisfied
Has honorable character	4.53	0.60	High	Very Satisfied
Role model for students	4.60	0.55	High	Very Satisfied
Level of Emotional Inteligence (EQ) is high	4.51	0.56	High	Very Satisfied
A clear understanding of the mission and vision of the academic staff.	4.50	0.52	High	Very Satisfied

Table 3 shows that all items of the sub dimension Integrity were at a high performance level with a mean score from 4.47 to 4.60. The finding shows that the level of the level of competence for the academic staff is very satisfied under the sub-dimension of Integrity at Private Institutions of Higher Educational learning environment.

Table 4: The Effectiveness of Teaching Competence for the sub-dimension Subject and Pedagogical Skills

Subject and Pedagogical Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Implementation	Interpretation
Mastery of subject content taught	4.31	0.59	High	Very Satisfied
Subject Matter Expert (SME)	4.36	0.58	High	Very Satisfied
Understand the content of teaching	4.35	0.63	High	Very Satisfied
Master in pedagogical skills	4.27	0.60	High	Very Satisfied
Designing teaching activities in accordance with the current requirements	4.50	0.61	High	Very Satisfied
Understands the process of teaching and learning objectives	4.51	0.59	High	Very Satisfied
Able to explain concepts	4.72	0.44	High	Very Satisfied
Able to explain theories	4.65	0.52	High	Very Satisfied

Table 4 shows that all items of the sub-dimension Subject and Pedagogical Skills were at a high performance level with a mean score from 4.27 to 4.72. The finding shows that the level of competence of the academic staff is very satisfied under the sub-dimension of Subject and Pedagogical Skills at Private Institutions of Higher Educational learning environment.

Table 5: The Effectiveness of Teaching Competence for sub-dimension Teaching Presentation Skills

Teaching Presentation Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Implementation	Interpretation
				Very Satisfied
Confident in teaching.	4.48	0.61	High	
Has skills to teach.	4.52	0.61	High	Very Satisfied
Uses effective teaching aids.	4.57	0.53	High	Very Satisfied
UsesICT skills to enhance teaching and learning process.	4.67	0.50	High	Very Satisfied
Student-centered teaching.	4.69	0.50	High	Very Satisfied
Uses questioning techniques appropriate to the level ofstudents' intelligence.	4.64	0.49	High	Very Satisfied
Practices soft skills in the teaching and learning process.	4.53	0.54	High	Very Satisfied
Adjusts delivery techniques based on students' intelligence level.	4.63	0.50	High	Very Satisfied
Diversity in teaching methods.	4.63	0.50	High	Very Satisfied

Table 5 shows that all items of the sub-dimension Teaching Presentation Skills are at a high performance level with a mean score from 4.48 to 4.69. The finding shows that the level of competence of the academic staff is very satisfied under the sub-dimension of Teaching Presentation Skills at private institutions of higher learning educational environment.

Significant Difference Related to Gender in the Effectiveness of The Competence of The Academic Staff Working In Private Institutions Of Higher Educational Learning In Malaysia
Table 6, Mann-Whitney U analysis, shows that there is no significant difference in the level of competence of academic staff working relative to gender when the total value of p is 0.67 with $p>0.05$.

Table 6: Analysis the level of significant competency by gender of academic staff

Sub dimensions (Competency)	Gender	*N*	Mean	Z Value	Median	*P* Value
Self-motivation	Male	233	203.62	.645	42.0	.519
	Female	167	196.15		42.0	
Social Interaction	Male	233	202.70	.453	37.0	.651
	Female	167	197.44		37.0	
Integrity	Male	233	201.65	.242	37.0	.809
	Female	167	198.86		36.0	
Subject and Pedagogical Skills	Male	233	204.21	.764	36.0	.445
	Female	167	195.33		36.0	
Teaching Presentation Skills	Male	233	200.00	.061	42.0	.951
	Female	167	200.09		42.0	
Total						.670

The test results indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of competence of academic staff for the sub-dimensional Self-motivation when the score *p*>0.05 where (*Z* =.645, *p*=.519), but the level of work competence for men is higher than for women with a mean score of 203.62 compared with a mean score of 196.15 for women. The test results indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of competence of academic staff for the Sub-dimensional Social Interaction when the score *p*>0.05 where (*Z* =.45, *p*=.651) but the level of work competence for men is higher than for women when the mean score of 203.62 compared with a mean score of 203.62 for men compared with a mean score of 197.44 for women. The test results indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of competence of academic staff for the sub-dimensional Integrity when the score *p*>0.05 (*Z* =.242, *p*=.809) but the level of work competence for men is higher than for women when with a mean score of 201.65 for men compared with a mean score of 198.86 for women. The test results indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of competence of academic staff for the sub-dimensional Subject and Pedagogical Skills when the score *p*>0.05 where (*Z* =.764, *p*=.445) but the level of work competence for men is higher than for women with a mean score of 204.21 for men compared with a mean score of 195.33 for women. The test results indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of competence of academic staff for the sub-dimensional Teaching Presentation Skills when the score *p*>0.05 where (*Z* =.061, *p*=.951) but the level of work competence for woman is higher than for man with a mean score of 200.09 compared with a mean score of 200.00 for man.

Conclusion
The crucial asset of organization is people that include leaders and employees. Therefore, they must have a high level of competence in order to achieve the goals of organization. Leaders should have a high competence in leading organizations' resources, in particular, human

resources or workers. Meanwhile, workers must be given certain competence in respect of their employment.

Furthermore, the main difference between private and public organizations is on the goal of offering services. Private organization is more on profit-oriented while public organizations stay in giving social welfare. Therefore, private organizations like Private Higher Education Institutions should keep up controlling the quality of service. This goal can be achieved by having highly competent employees in order to improve their services.

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