A Study on the Classroom Competencies of College Lecturers in Arts and Science Colleges

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I.   Introduction

The onslaught of IT has opened the vistas for complex opportunities and escalated the expectation level of the stakeholders too. The academic arena that earlier dwelt only on sheer dissemination of information and knowledge, which revolved around monologue sessions from the teachers' end has transitioned to technology aided teaching, with the plethora of information available at a mere click of the mouse. Gone are the days when access to updated information and knowledge posed a big challenge to the teaching fraternity.

The advent of IT has phenomenally changed the meaning of teaching in the current scenario. The SMART class technology combined with novel teaching aids and methodology call for teachers to be equipped with better skill set and competencies. The Gurukul method that boasted the supremacy of teachers with subject mastery is now a thing of the past. The present day teachers have to possess newer skills to handle their students, and there is n urgent need to metamorphose change.

The changing attitude of Gen Y students has paved way for a mushroom growth of problems unheard of in yesteryears, and culminated into escalating expectations from teachers by the student community in general. The teacher competency standards hence traverse through 3 distinct phases, namely- professional attributes, professional knowledge and teacher competency standards. The latter paves way for development of professionalism by transcending five dimensional stages, namely- facilitating student learning; assessing and reporting student outcomes; engaging in professional learning; participation in curriculum policy and other program initiatives in an "outcome focused" environment; and concluding to forge meaningful partnerships within the student community.

This study has attempted to study the classroom competencies that teachers need to have to carve a niche for them. To enable a better understanding, the Snapshot of the Review of Literature tabulated below throws light on the different dimensions of teacher competencies:-

II.   A Snap Shot Of Review Of Literature

FACTORS	AUTHOR &YEAR	DIMENSIONS DISCUSSED
Assessment of teacher performance	Firestone,W & Pennell,J., (1993)	Teacher commitment and its correlation to student outcomes; knowledge; observation.
Teacher Development Programs	Hoerr, T.,(1998)	Teacher coordination and cooperation; sentimental thought process.
Teacher pay structure based on performance	Chamberlin, et al., (2002)	Student outcomes; reading; comprehension; reasoning; critical analysis.
Organizational Development change in teaching	Huse and Cummings., (1993)	Good working conditions; enhanced morale; efficiency; development
Types of skills	Birkette: P(1993)	Cognitive skills; behavior (hard and soft) skills.
Impact of social and emotional competencies	Jennings and Green Berg (2009)	Problem solving; student cooperation; proper instruction.
Teacher impact on students	Kusche, C.A., Greenberg, M.T (2006)	Teacher listening; comprehending student feelings; better learning and brain development.
Impact of teacher competence in Public and Independent Schools	Eva Myrberg, Monica Rosin www.iea.nl/fileadmin	Student performance/ effectiveness; relation to teacher education.
Determinants of student achievement	Coleman et al., (1996)	Student family; peer background; achievement.
Differentiation between low and high income students by good teachers	Hanushek (2002)	Teacher competence; definition by various indicators.
Quality of teacher education	Gustafsson and Myrberg (2002)	Teacher education outside Universities.
Relationship between teacher qualification and skills	Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (1998)	Teacher education not significant in school quality.
Competition among schools	Friedman,M., (1962)	Quality of education; competition among schools; voucher system.
Student -Teacher relationship	Murnane and Philips (1981) & Khitgaard&	Positive relationship between teacher and

	Hall (1974)	students.
Definition of competency	Boam & Sparrow (1992), Kemp (1998);Blank, NellImpious (1996)	Behavior patterns; customer value; task performance.

III.   Objectives Of The Study

- To analyze the personal competencies of college lecturers in Arts and Science Colleges, causative for effective teaching.
- To offer suggestions to improve their skills and commitment level.

IV.   Research Design

(A) METHODOLOGY

Exploratory Research was conducted to identify the key competencies of lecturers in Arts and Science Colleges for better teaching and comprehension. For this purpose, the researcher identified 15 personal teacher attributes/competencies that ultimately result in quality teaching for the clear understanding of the students in the classroom. These competencies range from assertiveness, integrity, emotional stamina etc to communication and continuous improvement. The reason for choosing these competencies in particular was keeping in mind the fast changing student expectations from teachers in the current scenario, and the wide exposure and access to information at any given point of time.

(B) DATA COLLECTION

The researcher has made use of both primary and secondary data to source meaningful information. While articles published in journals, magazines and newspapers were sourced as a means of secondary data, several websites and search engines were also surfed for the same. A structured questionnaire was framed in keeping with the vital information necessary to draw inferences in the context of the study.

CONSTRUCT	CONSTRUCT CODE	NO. OF QUESTIONS
Demography	DEM	10
Personal Competencies	PC	15

(C) SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

As this study was conducted among teachers in Arts and Science Colleges, the sample was purposive and judgemental in nature. For the purpose of the study a sample of 50 faculty members was taken from leading Arts and Science Colleges for Women in Chennai City. The reason for the limited choice of the sample was to trace the nuances of personal teacher competencies.

(D) TOOLS USED

The researcher used the following tools for the purpose of analysis and interpretation of data collected with the help of the SPSS 16.0 version software.

- Cronbach Alpha to test the reliability of the results.
- Kendall'sW Test.
- Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance.

(V) ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- Cronbach's Alpha

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	50	70.4
	Excluded[a]	21	29.6
	Total	71	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.959	15

Inference

The test of reliability was applied on the sample of 50 respondents and reveals a value of 0.959 that substantiates the fact that the data has a very high level of reliability as the value is closer to 1. The thumb rule for Cronbah's Alpha accepts a value that ranges between 0.60 and 1. The closer the value to 1, higher is the accuracy level. However, a value that falls short of 0.50 insists on a change in the questions.

- Kendall's W Test

In addition, Kendall's W Test was also administered and Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance was determined to add impetus to the study. It is a non-parametric test which does not assume normal distribution.The Kendall's test is applied in cases involving more than two dependant samples and used to test the null hypothesis. The W test is used to assess the trend of agreement among the respondents, and its value ranges between 0 and 1. While 1 refers to complete agreement among/between the respondents, 0 refers to the contrary.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Prsnl- assertive	50	3.4800	1.12920	2.00	5.00
Prsnl - integrity	50	2.9800	1.59706	1.00	5.00
Prsnl - self sufficiency	50	2.8800	1.49339	1.00	5.00
Prsnl - emotional stamina	50	2.8800	1.49339	1.00	5.00
Prsnl - adaptability	50	3.8800	.59385	3.00	5.00
Prsnl - stress tolerance	50	3.6200	1.21033	2.00	5.00
Prsnl - self motivated	50	3.8800	.93982	3.00	5.00
Prsnl - honesty	50	3.7600	.68690	3.00	5.00
Prsnl - proactive	50	3.4000	1.01015	2.00	5.00
Prsnl - high energy levels	50	3.6600	.71742	3.00	5.00
Prsnl - creativity	50	2.8600	.78272	2.00	4.00
Prsnl - communication	50	3.1200	1.17178	2.00	5.00
Prsnl - learning oriented	50	3.1200	.93982	2.00	5.00
Prsnl -prblm solving initiative	50	2.2600	1.12141	1.00	4.00
Prsnl - continuous improvement	50	3.2400	1.81333	1.00	5.00

Kendall's W Test

Ranks

	Mean Rank
Prsnl- assertive	9.31
Prsnl – integrity	6.46
Prsnl - self sufficiency	6.00
Prsnl - emotional stamina	6.00
Prsnl – adaptability	10.47
Prsnl - stress tolerance	9.45
Prsnl - self motivated	11.33

Prsnl – honesty	10.19
Prsnl – proactive	8.21
Prsnl - high energy levels	9.59
Prsnl - creativity	6.65
Prsnl - communication	6.97
Prsnl - learning oriented	7.57
Prsnl -prblm solving initiative	3.58
Prsnl - continuous improvement	8.22

N	50
Kendall's W[a]	.259
Chi-Square	181.301
Df	14
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

INTERPRETATION

The Table shows the result of the descriptive statistics for a sample of 50 respondents spanning 15 variables/factors relating to the personal competencies of teachers in class rooms. The mean value ranges between 3.88 and 2.66. Kendall's Test implies that self motivation, adaptability and honesty are the top three competencies of the teachers, with a mean rank of 11.33; 10.47 and 10.19 respectively. The last three ranks are bagged by problem solving; self sufficiency and integrity as personal competencies.

INFERENCE

This indicates the fact that the teachers feel that they are expected to be flexible, honest and self motivated when they address their students. These three competencies are ranked highest because flexibility is the key competency that a teacher should possess to be competent. In this context it could be understood in terms of substitution classes which they take to make up for the absence of their peers on one hand; and while handling students - the understanding they show for students in class room situations (during student absence; late submission of assignments; abstinence to classes and test cycles etc) on the other. Honesty is a core value that is gradually overshadowed by the greed of many a teacher, and is currently becoming a thing of the past. But however students expect their teachers to have a high degree of honesty as they are looked upon as role models. Honesty in the student parlance means acknowledgement of lack of updated knowledge, acceptance of inadequate class preparation, willingness to go the extra mile to help students; have trust in student performance and equal treatment to all the students. Self motivation as expected from the teachers is the ability to make the class interesting despite the mixed response they get from their students; use of activity based teaching methodology to enable easy comprehension; kindle the latent interest of the students through workshops, debates, group discussions and brain storming sessions.

The last three personal competencies as perceived by the teachers from a student perspective are problem solving, self sufficiency and integrity. As regards problem solving, the present day class room culture ranges from stifling rules relating to code of conduct on one hand in several self financed colleges; and a "laissez faire" attitude of teachers in aided /government colleges on the other. The teachers hence opt for the abstinence from issues relating to student conflict. Self sufficiency and integrity in terms of teacher competence find a place in the fag end because a student focuses more on the in depth subject knowledge of the teacher rather than his self sufficiency factors. However, a mediocre importance is attributed to stress tolerance, high energy levels, communication, creativity and assertiveness. It is deploring to note that the core of communicative skills - hard and soft skills have not been ranked at the top by the teaching fraternity that defies the efforts taken at the administrative level to hone their communicative skills. This also accounts for churning out students who lack the confidence to communicate fluently and participate not only in class room activities but also during their placement routine.

Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance
H0 : There is no significant difference between the personal competencies of teachers and their classroom teaching.
H1: There is significant difference between the personal competencies of teachers and their classroom teaching.
Inference

From Kendall's coefficient of concordance, the researcher has drawn two inferences:-
1) The significance is 0.000, which is less than 0.050. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected which implies that there is a significant difference between the personal competencies of the teachers and their classroom teaching. In other words it indicates that the personal competencies of teachers like self motivation, honesty, adaptability, high energy levels, stress tolerance etc have a direct impact on their classroom teaching.
2) Kendall's W value normally lies between 0 and 1. In this case, it is only 0.259 that implies a less complete agreement among/between the respondent teachers.

V. Suggestions
- The primary step the teachers should take is to a step towards solving issues that revolve around the students during class room teaching. This will go a long way in ensuring discipline that is fast declining among the student community.
- To instill confidence among the students regarding communication which is currently posing a big problem for recruiters from all walks of life, teachers should inculcate the lost practice of reading among the students. Involving them in communication exercises that involve the gamification technique is a positive step in this direction.
- Emotional upheavals of the students are a big challenge for the teachers of today. The current student psychology is highly impulsive by nature and it is the duty of a diligent and caring teacher to smoothen their ruffled feathers. Giving a listening ear and guiding them along a value driven path is indeed the need of the hour.
- Creativity in teaching with the help of modern teaching aids like LCD projectors for meaningful presentations help in easy comprehension of subject content. Further, role playing, group discussions, seminars, conferences, hands-on training workshops, case studies etc. make the learning process easy and interesting too.
- Imparting strong values in the students apart from the regular academic curriculum by the teachers helps to lay a strong foundation for the student to evolve as a better human being.

VI. Conclusion
In the present day scenario a teacher stands to gain respect and popularity from the students only when they transition change in class room teaching and student learning- not confined to subject knowledge enhancement, but value driven too. It is at this juncture that Stanford Prof.Carol Dweck's Achievement Goal Theory that suggests a transformation from a "fixed mindset" to a "growth mindset" that hovers on a "person centered relationship with students" that demonstrates trust and empathy in individual student needs, becomes imperatively the order of the day. Class room teaching becomes more refined and focused when teachers advocate a peer coaching concept that identifies "high starters" rather than "talented students". Brain based teaching commonly referred as "Brainology" insists on game based learning for students that provides ample scope for teachers to improve their teaching skills on an innovative and exploratory basis. The famous quote of F.Sionil Jose "The influence of teachers extends beyond the classroom, well into the future. It is they who shape and enrich the minds of the young, who touch their hearts and souls. It is they who shape the nation's future" is apt here. In conclusion, it is appropriate to recall that according to Erin Gruwell " I realized if you can change a class room, you can change a community, and if you can change enough communities, you can change the world".

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