

## Importance of Developing Teacher Competencies and its Impact on Improving Students Performance, Case of Schools in Jordan

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### Abstract

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*This research highlights the significance of developing teachers' competencies and its significance in the performance of the students in the context of schools in Jordan. The research has established that teachers' competencies is one of the major factors that affect the performance of the students in Jordan. Further, the research has highlighted that the types of competencies to be developed by the teachers include their experience (through licensing), mastery of the subject area, their training and skills, delivery of the course content, and the strategies they use. All these competencies positively impact the performance of the students. For instance, the use of a number of strategies by the teachers while teaching positively contribute to the performance of the students while the use of a single strategy lowers the performance of the students. Licensed teachers also produce higher performance than those who are not licensed. In the context of Jordan, several researchers as highlighted in the literature review indicate that teachers' competencies directly affect the performance of the students. For example, the performance of English as found by some researchers has been hampered by the movement of well trained and competent teachers from Jordan. Thus, it is vital to develop teacher competency so as to achieve higher student performance in Jordan.*

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**Keywords :** Teacher Leadership, Distributed Learning, English Language Teaching , Competency, Academic achievement

### Introduction

According to Al-Taj and Al-Oweidi (2017), the educational sector has been greatly transformed all across the globe (p. 136). Notably, the development in the educational sector has been considered one of the greatest issues as education is the pillar upon which man understands the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Al-Taj and Al-Oweidi (2017, p. 136). In light of this, Donnelly (2010) has noted that since the teachers are the major element in the educational system, it becomes paramount to focus much of the effort on the development of the teachers (p. 14). Advancing the same argument, Ismail et al (2009) have noted that competency-based education for the teachers can be viewed in two dimensions; the behavioral dimensions and the performance dimension (p. 166). While the behavioral dimension looks into the planning of the curricula through the determination of the behavioral objectives that can be shaped to model a behavior, performance, on the other hand, looks into how to measure and improve performance (Ismail et al, 2009, p. 167). It is this latter dimensions that will be focused on in this research.

Based on this brief background, this research paper intends to look into the significance of developing teacher competency and how this has an overall effect on the learners. To place the research into perspective, the paper will focus only on the impacts of teacher competency on the students in Jordan. The paper starts by giving a brief overview of the conceptual framework followed by for the study and meaning of teacher competency followed by a review of the literature detailing the cases in Jordan. Further, a conclusion will be drawn based on the findings of this research.

## Conceptual Framework

The importance of this research is linked to the conceptual framework upon which it lies and its subsequent contribution in the school improvement agenda. The research may also be used as the basis for improving the teacher professional learning models and the development of the notions of what constitutes an effective teacher. For a long time, the school improvement agenda has been on the forefront and teachers are at the center of the debate due to their invaluable contribution to not only the development of schools but also on the learners' performance. In Jordan, the government has launched a number of strategies to boost learning in the country including increased budgetary allocation for education and training (Alhabahba et al, 2016, p. 9). This research is embedded within the context of the effects of teachers' competencies on the performance of learners and will investigate the correlation between the teacher competency and the performance of the learners in Jordan. The review of literature in the next chapter indicates how the competency of teachers impacts the performance of learners in Jordan.

## Literature Review

Importance of teacher's competencies on student's performance

Guerriero (2017) has noted that teaching has been viewed as a knowledge-rich profession with teachers as the learning specialists (p. 3). As such, teachers are usually expected to evaluate and process new knowledge that can help them to boost their practice. Additionally, this knowledge is expected to meet the new teaching demands and the needs of the learners (Guerriero, 2017, p. 3). On this note, Guerriero (2017) has further noted that teacher's competence include features like, "Extensive pedagogical content knowledge, better problem-solving strategies, better adaptation for diverse learners, better decision making, better perception of classroom events, greater sensitivity to context, and greater respect for students" (p. 3). In addition, Blomeke and Delaney (2012) have recognized a model that encompasses effective motivational traits and cognitive abilities as two main attributes of the professional competence of teachers (p. 2). Further, studies have shown that a teacher's competence is necessary for the development of learners.



Figure: Teacher's Professional Competence, Source: Guerriero (2017, p. 3)

Advancing this argument, Baumert et al (2010, p. 135), Hill et al (2010, p. 372), and Voss et al (2011, p. 15) have all argued that better teacher's content and pedagogical knowledge usually lead to high student achievement in Mathematics. However, pedagogical knowledge has been stated to lead to higher student achievement than content knowledge with the former the only factor that positively impacts the quality of instructions (Guerriero, 2017, p. 4). The cognitive ability and more specifically the teacher's verbal ability is positively related to the student academic achievement (Fong-Yee and Normore, 2013, p. 13). Moreover, the knowledge of the subject matter of the teacher also influences the performance of the students. For instance, students whose teachers scored higher in school generally perform better than those whose teachers performed poorly with up to a grade difference of 39% for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Mathematics subject (Fong-Yee and Normore, 2013, p. 13; Kaplan and Owings, 2001, p. 64).

Further, the mastery of the learning and teaching skills also directly affect the learning outcomes of the students (Fergusson and Womack, 1993, p. 55). Research has shown that teachers who undergo a vigorous coursework during training perform better than those who did not. Further, teachers who are capable of using a number of strategies while teaching highly lead to student success as compared to those who use a single strategy (Darling-Hammond and Youngs, 2002, p. 17). Finally, licensed teachers highly contribute to student success in Maths and reading showing that teacher competency is necessary for the development of the learners (Fong-Yee and Normore, 2013, p. 14). Premised on this, the following section explores the impact of teachers' competency on the students in Jordan.

#### Impact of Teachers' Competency in student Performance in Jordan

First, a study by Ismail et al (2009) attempted to examine the effects of knowledge competencies on the teachers in Jordan (p. 166). This study involved 10 training groups and was exposed to training in instruction, management of the classroom, and planning. Further, their competencies were evaluated based on the findings of the study. The sample consisting of 50 teachers were divided into two (25 each) (Ismail et al, 2009, p. 171). One group, the experimental group was attached for about 5 weeks to the training module. On the other hand, the other 25, which were the control group were attached to the ministry of education of Jordan to undergo a conventional training that had been organized by the ministry (Ismail et al, 2009, p. 171). From the analysis of the results using an ANCOVA method, it was ascertained that the differences between the two groups had statistical significance. More specifically, the experimental group had positive results on the development and performance of students. From this study thus, teachers' competency was noted to positively contribute to the mental development of students (Al-Zoubi and Rahman, 2011, p. 1023).

Similarly, Al-Zoubi and Rahman (2011) carried out a study on how training of the classroom teachers in Jordan affected their knowledge and understanding of the need of the students with disabilities (p. 1023). Moreover, they investigated the impact of training and teacher's competency in enabling the teachers to accept the students with disabilities in their classrooms. During this study, a group of 60 teachers in Jordan was divided into two groups of 30 teachers each. The training was based on the learning of the needs of students with disabilities. Like the first case, the experimental group was enrolled in a 6-week training while the other group was kept as a control group (Al-Zoubi and Rahman, 2011, p. 1023). First, the training improved the understanding of the teachers of the needs of the students with disabilities. Secondly, the training increased the teachers' acceptance of the students with disabilities. This further led to the improvement in the performance of the students with disabilities (Al-Zoubi and Rahman, 2011, p. 1023). It can, therefore, be deduced that teacher's competency which, in this case, improved as a result of the training leads to improvement in the understanding and performance of both the teachers and the students.

Moreover, Alkhaldeh (2017) conducted a study on the effects of school-based teacher training in Jordan (p. 51). This study found that there was a need to implement a school-based training for the teachers that was perceived to be more sustainable thus leading to the development of the learners (Alkhaldeh, 2017, p. 51). Advancing the same view, Mohammadi and Moradi (2017) have argued that continuous professional development of the teachers is necessary for the implementation of sustainable education which is beneficial for the learners (p. 22). In addition, it is necessary to explore the perception of the teachers and its significance since the beliefs of the latter critically impact their learners (Alkhaldeh, 2017, p. 55). Besides, Mohammadi and Moradi (2017) found professional development of teachers to be more useful both to the teachers and the learners (p. 34).

According to a study by Hurd (2008) on the impacts of training of the teachers on the performance of secondary school students in Jordan, it was found that teachers training could lead to an improved performance of the high school students (p. 21). Further, it was noted that teacher's training had the impact of uplifting the standard of the school (Hurd, 2008, p. 33). However, this effect can be negative if the teachers, in this case, are trainee teachers. This can lead to the diversion of the efforts of the mentors from the classroom direction. Moreover, it was ascertained that the number of trainees did not have any effects on the performance of the learners in the school (Alkhaldeh, 2017, p. 55).

Al-Zboon (2016) carried out a study on how the teacher's leadership (TL) affected the performance of the learning communities in Jordan (p. 1). Notably, the leadership skills of teachers have been categorized as one of the most crucial components of teachers' competencies (Muijs and Harris, 2003).

In light of this, the teacher's leadership is stated to be the right the teachers have to exert their input in the learning process and influence its outcomes (Al-Zboon, 2016, p. 1). A similar study by Zigmond et al (1995) on the structured schools in Jordan highlighted that the responsibility of teachers went beyond co-planning and co-teaching (p. 11). This involved weekly problem solving and conducting meetings that are aimed at improving the curriculum of the schools (Zigmond et al, 1995, p. 11). Therefore, the promotion of teachers' learning has the effect of improving the teaching quality by improving instructional practices for the teachers (Al-Zboon, 2016, p. 1). York-Barr and Duke (2004) also stated that teachers' competency allows them to share best practices amongst themselves, collaborate with their colleagues and guide the new teachers (p. 255). These, as a result, lead to an improved performance of the students in the Jordan schools.

Furthermore, Muijs and Harris (2006) have stated that leader teachers due to their competency have the capacity to establish conditions that allow students to perform better in addition to acting as a motivation (p. 966). These conditions include control of the classroom and improving the contents of the curriculum in addition to the discipline level of the school (Muijs and Harris, 2006, p. 964). Based on this view, the Jordanian national education strategy has in the past encouraged all stakeholders; the local communities, the directors, and the teachers to inculcate a healthy, supportive, productive, and safe environment that can spur learning and development of the students (MoE, 2006). In light of this, Bennett et al (2003) have noted that distributed leadership (DL) one of the most significant teacher competencies is necessary for the development of the learners as it helps the teachers to jointly contribute to the organizations (p. 3). Harris (2009, p. 241) and DuFour (2011, p. 59) have both argued that the most recent reforms in Jordan that implement DL (allowing teachers to take part in making decisions) have indicated that there is a need to improve the capacity of the teachers in order to improve the academic achievement of the students. Both the report highlight the central role teacher's competency play in improving the outcome of learning in Jordan.

Alhabahba (2016) has also noted that teachers' competency plays a critical role in the development of the language amongst the learners in Jordan (p. 5). However, a research by Al-Khatib (2008) revealed the intention of most competent teachers to quit has been one of the factors that hinder the development of the English language learning in the nation (p. 227). In addition, the competency of the ELT in Jordan positively contributes to the development of the learners (Alhabahba, 2016, p. 7). In the context of the learning of the English language in Jordan, both lack of the relevant teacher competencies and poor resources have been attributed to the slow development of the language (Alhabahba, 2016, p. 9). For instance, research has shown that the poor teacher competency that is partly contributed by the resigning of more competent teachers hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum. In view of this, most OECD nations have been stated to lack competent teachers which hinder the delivery of the curriculum to the learners (Manuel, 2003, p. 141; Alhabahba, 2016, p. 9). Manuel (2003) further indicated that effective delivery of education to the learners, not only for the English language, is developed and achieved by more competent teachers (p. 141). In summary, teacher competency in the English language learning in Jordan is hampered by the poor teacher competency. Therefore, teacher competency is critical not only for the development of the curriculum in the context of learning the English language in Jordan but also for the delivery of the curriculum to the learners which directly affect the performance of the students.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers form a major element of the education sector. Further, their competency is much significant as it directly affects the performance of the learners. The teacher's cognitive ability (verbal ability for instance), master of the subject which is based on their training, their experience and licensing, and learning and training amongst others have been noted to directly contribute to the performance of the learners. Licensed teachers, for instance, lead to the higher performance of the learners due to their experience. Similarly, teachers who are able to use a number of strategies in teaching are more effective than those who use single strategies. This has also been noted in the case of Jordan with the learning of the English language as well as other subjects as has been noted. From the researches carried out by past researchers, it is apparent that teachers' competency has an impact on the performance of the students in Jordan.

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