

SIREP Report No. 1:

Teaching Competency Standards in Southeast Asian Countries: Eleven Country Audit



Raising Teacher Standards in Southeast Asia: Eleven Country Audit

“Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.” – Bill Gates

In a sound and progressive society, teachers are one of its main pillars who, apart from parents, are the main source of knowledge acquisition and values formation for children. Indeed, as technology advances and floodgates of information abounds, societies still recognize how crucial the teaching profession is in producing the best human resources possible. From primary to the highest degree of education, teaching is essential as knowledge and values are passed on to students to prepare them for further education, work life and family building.

The Declaration of the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 states that “by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.” This universally subscribed goal can only be achieved if students have access to competent motivated and knowledgeable teachers.

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To raise educational quality, reducing school dropout rates and providing enough school buildings and materials are certainly important inputs, enhancing the qualifications of teachers, however, also needs urgent and undivided attention specially since a majority of children in the world either get no or low quality primary education due to lack of access to learning materials, poorly built or no classroom, or they have a teacher who is inadequately prepared or unmotivated due to low compensation.

It is for these reasons that SEAMEO INNOTECH gathered teacher education experts from eleven Southeast Asian nations to discuss Southeast Asian teaching competency standards under the SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP).

The SIREP research study explored the current trends in teaching competencies in Southeast Asian countries. By investigating how these countries developed teaching standards to achieve quality education, the research thus drew a landscape of teaching competencies throughout the region. The research intends to assist other member countries in the region in benchmarking and developing their own teaching competency standards. Moreover, it recognized the importance of harmonizing teacher standards in the region as an essential step forward.

Teacher Competency: A Shared Goal

Being a teacher is not only about standing in front of one's students and telling them what to do for the day. A teacher must have a clear understanding of his or her work and roles as well as the required knowledge and skills. Bringing out the best in students is a teacher's primary task. Teachers must help all students to think critically and creatively, investigate and solve complex problems, as well as master subject matter content. Teachers must also be able to effectively manage their learning environment. From using various methods of teaching to ensure learning is taking place, to taking responsibility for tracking the performance of students through assessment, teachers play a critical role in helping students prepare for and succeed in life.

Among the key findings of the SIREP Research on Teacher Standards is the identification of common domains of teaching competency standards in Southeast Asia, namely: *professional practice, personal value and professional engagement*.

Professional practice refers to pedagogies, classroom management, and learner assessment. On the other hand, *personal value* pertains to the sound and ethical standards of ethics and morality resulting to being a good role



model in the school and community. Lastly, *professional engagement* is described as professional development and lifelong learning such as participation in professional teacher organizations and activities; and demonstrating a desire to enhance the teaching profession, etc.

Skills in Pedagogy

The results of SEAMEO INNOTECH's Teaching Competency Standards survey, summarized the characteristics of a competent teacher as a knowledge worker with the following pedagogical skills: 1) selects/ states long-term goals and short-term measurable objectives based on a prescribed national and/or school curriculum; 2) uses creative and innovative instructional strategies that are appropriate to a lesson's objectives and students' abilities, interests, and learning styles; 3) selects and uses appropriate resources and available technologies when teaching to suit students' abilities, interests, and learning styles; 4) states the objectives of lessons and skills that the students need to master in relation to past and future lessons; 5) gives concise but clear directions for students to follow; and 6) explains concepts, terms, vocabulary and principles related to lessons clearly and provides examples when necessary.

However, the survey shows that numbers 1-3 are the only pedagogical skills found in the existing teachers standards in all Southeast Asian nations.

Southeast Asian education experts added other teacher pedagogical competencies as being critically important, among them are: providing guided practice as necessary and reviews at appropriate time intervals; using up-to-date lessons; setting learning objectives and outcomes that match students' real-life situations; sequentially and attractively teaching lessons while taking account of students' learning; and providing students with learning opportunities during and outside school hours.

Student Assessment Skills

Teachers must likewise be trained in undertaking appropriate forms of learner assessment. Learning assessment, which entails measuring student outcomes using different approaches and methods, is extremely important as it provides teachers with feedback from students on the rate they are learning and provides warning signs if there is a need to change methods of instruction and address crucial learning gaps.

Through the survey, the general competencies that a teacher must possess in student performance assessment were gathered and enumerated as: checks students' understanding, processes, and products by asking comprehension questions and requiring practical applications of skills; measures students' progress systematically using a variety of appropriate assessment methods and instruments; provides feedback about students' performance and making specific recommendations for improvement; and uses assessment results to determine if objectives were met and/or if re-teaching is necessary.

Apart from the student performance assessment skills identified, the SIREP survey was able to elicit additional student assessment competencies required of effective teachers, such as: assessing students' progress in relation to the basic learning competencies identified in the national curriculum; systematically recording students' achievements; making use of authentic assessment forms, among others.

Classroom Management Skills

A teacher must ensure that his or her classroom lessons run smoothly despite any distractions including disruptive student behavior. The study reports that classroom management is closely linked with issues of motivation, discipline and respect. While there are no clear cut rules, classroom management approaches vary depending on what beliefs a teacher holds regarding educational psychology. However, among the identified classroom management skills agreed by the experts "demonstrating respect and consideration for all students and providing constructive criticism when necessary" appears to be a common competency required in all eleven countries in the region.

In addition to the skills identified by the experts, the following teacher competencies were identified to be essential: infusing in students the value of respect and honesty; demonstrating the capability to manage multigrade classes; encouraging less-able students to participate in class; utilizing a seat plan to allow more advanced students to interact with less-able counterparts; ensuring that students have a significant degree of control over their own learning; supporting learning using group work and investigation; encouraging students to be creative; providing basic counseling to his/her students; etc.

Professional Development Skills

In some countries in the region, teaching continues to be viewed as a highly desirable profession. But in other countries, a declining interest in the teaching profession has manifested in recent years. Despite its nobility, teaching has oftentimes failed to attract the best students mainly for reasons of poor compensation, interest other professions, poor equipment and facilities, and limited career growth in the teaching profession, among others. In Southeast Asian countries, one skill identified essential for professional development includes the promotion of cooperation between parents and guardians and the school community.

The study further reveals that most Southeast Asian countries include exhibition of professionalism among peers and administrators, parents and guardians as an important teaching competency.

The experts likewise proposed to include the following teaching competencies pertaining to professional development skills: identifying his/her own professional learning needs and plans for and engages in professional development; developing organizational skills; reflecting and evaluating professional knowledge and effectiveness of one's teaching; practicing school-based management skills; and engaging in self-learning activities.

The Southeast Asian experts added two more teaching competency standards during the experts meeting conducted by SEAMEO INNOTECH:

1. Professional Ethics and Morality wherein a teacher is expected to decently conduct one's self; and
2. Social Human Dimension Competencies which provides that a teacher should be well-aware of social issues, especially on children's rights, environment and have a healthy interpersonal relationship with students.

Common Approaches in Developing Teaching Competency Standards

Southeast Asian countries have utilized different approaches in enhancing teaching competency standards in their own countries taking into consideration each country's policies that support the implementation of teaching competency standards, apart from Timor-Leste which is still in the initial stages of drafting its own set of standards. However, it is important for the countries to have some areas of convergence when it comes to teaching competence.

During the experts' workshop, common approaches utilized in developing and finalizing teaching competency standards were identified. The experts identified five (5) phases in coming up with said standards:

Phase	Description
I	<u>Benchmarking with Developed Countries</u> Southeast Asian countries begin to develop their teaching competency standards by reviewing the best practices of advanced countries. Some engage foreign consultants to provide technical inputs and guidance.
II	<u>Creating a Team/Technical Working Group/ Pool of Experts at the Ministry Level</u> Performance standards and teaching competency standards framework are drafted and developed by a designated team. Some may seek assistance from experts of developed economies.

Phase	Description
III	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Pilot Testing of the First Draft</u></p> <p>The drafts are pilot tested by presenting to stakeholders and subjected to reviews.</p>
IV	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Rollout and Full Implementation of National Teaching Competency Standards</u></p> <p>Six countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Singapore, have already rolled out teaching competency standards. The others are still in Phase III of the implementation Framework.</p>
V	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Monitoring and Assessment</u></p> <p>Audits, reviews and monitoring activities using various observation techniques, survey instruments and consultations meetings are being utilized by countries that have implemented teaching competency standards. Most countries link teaching competency standards with rewards for good performers and teacher training for those who need to enhance their competence.</p>

Rewarding Performing Teachers

As various studies reflect, student achievement is relative to teachers' performance. Hence, schools all over the world have invested heavily in teachers. Ranging from offering higher salaries to improved employment benefits, government and public schools alike have continued to find ways to ensure that their rewards and incentives attract quality teachers. The results clearly show that an attractive and comprehensive rewards and incentives program is necessary to continue to inspire and influence the performance of a teacher.

The study highlights how performing teachers are rewarded and given incentives throughout the region. From the simplest way of showing gratitude such as giving rewards every Teachers' Day, Southeast Asian countries institute schemes such increasing teachers' salary, awarding certificates of recognition, scholarships or training and promotion.

For example, performing teachers in Cambodia are rewarded with salary grade promotions, certificates of recognition, and certificates of higher levels of education. In Malaysia, incentives are also given to teachers in challenging teaching and learning environments such as those without clean water and electricity. In Lao PDR, teachers are promoted from experienced to skilled,

expert, and senior expert teacher status with salary increments from 40% to 100% of their base salaries. In Vietnam and the Philippines, performing teachers are given Certificates of Appreciation and medals in recognition of exemplary performance. Thailand likewise provides academic scholarship support while Timor-Leste gives training programs as incentives to performing teachers though a career scheme for teachers is yet to be put in place.

“Clearly a good rewards and incentives program continue to inspire and influence the performance of a teacher.”

Taking the Next Steps in Teacher Competency

The SIREP Teaching Competency Survey provided support for the development of a SEAMEO INNOTECH Competency Framework for Southeast Asian Teachers of the 21st Century. The common teacher competency standards were identified and translated into a competency framework of over 70 terminal and enabling competencies deemed essential for Southeast Asian teachers to be effective as knowledge workers in the 21st Century. The list of competencies in this framework serves as a guide in identifying instructional design of capacity-building programs of SEAMEO INNOTECH in general and flexible e-learning programs for teachers in particular.

While it identifies general areas of competencies for teachers that may serve as an input to countries in Southeast Asia who are still in the process of developing their own teaching competency standards, the research also cites follow-up studies to flesh out the core competencies identified in the research:

1. Development of comparative statistical profiles of Southeast Asian teachers, which include teachers' education profiles, workloads, hours, class sizes, employment conditions, capacity-building activities, professional development activities, and participation in school- and community-level concerns.

2. A survey of qualifications in the region, focusing on tertiary qualifications, pre-service requirements, and professional training and other requirements used in assessing teachers.
3. Future research studies should be conducted to investigate demographic composition of teaching forces.
4. Review of teacher professional development policy.
5. Within SEAMEO, there is a need to institutionalize the conduct of study visits, benchmarking missions, and secondment programs for MOE personnel to help in developing further their capacity to develop and implement teaching competency standards.

The SIREP Report on "Teaching Competency Standards in Southeast Asian Countries: Eleven Country Audit" can be accessed electronically through www.seameo-innotech.org.

Research Studies Unit

SEAMEO INNOTECH
Commonwealth Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City
Philippines 1101

Tel: (632) 924-7681 to 84

Fax: (632) 926-4455

Email: rsu@yahoo.com

www.seameo-innotech.org



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