

Teacher competence: An important factor to ensure the quality of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in Vietnam

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Teacher competence is regarded as a key factor in developing quality of education for all schools. It also has a particular importance in the achievement of successful inclusive education for children with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct theoretical and practical research on teacher competence for inclusive education of children with intellectual disabilities in order to educate and train teachers for meeting the needs of learning and quality learning in Vietnam. The article reflects some research results on teacher competence for inclusive education of children with intellectual disabilities from two bilateral international cooperation projects: (1) Protocol: “*Strengthening capacity of human resources for early intervention and education of children with disabilities in Vietnam*” between Vietnam and Australia, led by Nguyen Van Le; (2) The study of bilateral international cooperation: “*Experience lessons of the United States on quality assurance of inclusive education of children with intellectual disabilities: Recommendations for Vietnam*” between the Hanoi National University of Education in Vietnam and the University of Missouri in United States, led by Nguyen Xuan Hai. In addition, the article content also refers to a number of related studies of other authors in Vietnam.

Key Words: Teacher Competence, Inclusive Education, Intellectual Disabilities, Vietnam

Introduction

According to statistics of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Vietnam has about 1,2 million children with disabilities in which children with intellectual disabilities (ID) making up the largest proportion (about 28.6%) (MOET, 2012a). Inclusive education (IE) in Vietnam is understood to be placement of children with disabilities to study together with other children in a school in their neighborhood and has been implemented over the past 20 years. Since the school years 2002 - 2003, inclusive education (IE) has been considered to be a main way to carry out basic rights of children with disabilities, especially the right to have access to a quality education.

By the school year 2011 - 2012, more than 400,000 children with disabilities have gone to inclusive education schools, mainly preschools and primary schools. MOET has a goal for the year 2020 to mobilize 70% of children with disabilities to class (MOET, 2012b). However, besides the goal of

mobilization, it's time for Vietnamese schools to pay more attention to quality teaching and learning. The question is how children with disabilities, especially children with ID, who have most difficulties among children with disabilities, can learn with quality in inclusive settings. It is a currently challenging issue for administrators and professionals, especially for teachers who directly take care, educate, and teach children in Vietnam.

Quality factors of inclusive education of children with Intellectual Disabilities

Quality of education is defined together with different standards and criteria in a diversity of comprehensive studies according to approaches of each country. In Vietnam, quality of education is understood in different approaches. According to the overall overall, quality of education is reviewed in a broad range of educational categories. The combination of quality factors makes up the quality of education. According to the approach of

components or dimensions, quality of education is focused on quality of educational components or dimensions. Both approaches indicate the quality factors of the educational process, have great impact on the quality of inputs, to develop and improve the quality of education.

Based on the concept of quality of education in general, we believe that quality of IE of children with disabilities means quality of the overall process or quality of all components of the whole IE process in schools, which results to the development of children with ID.

In sum, quality of IE of children with ID: 1) is reviewed and has access to an educational process in a macro level - school level; 2) is not only the quality of each component but also the overall quality or the quality of all components of all factors; and 3) is indicated in its final product as the results of the development of children with ID. Teacher competence is one of quality factors of IE of children with ID.

**Teacher competence framework
in inclusive education
of children with intellectual disabilities**

Profession standards of IE teachers of children with disabilities in general and children with ID in particular have been not fully and systematically studied and issued in Vietnam.

Research at the national level by Le Van Tac and Sijtze (2006) on *Teacher performance standards of special education in Vietnam* and another by Nguyen Van Le et al (2012) on *Capacity of human resources for early intervention and education of children with disabilities in Vietnam* had approaches based on meeting requirements of a teacher's job position in IE for each kind of disabilities, including children with ID. Although this approach has been applied for a long time in developed countries, it is newly used to develop professional standards in Vietnam.

This is a research-based teacher competence framework in IE of children with ID, which includes 04 standards and 18 criteria as indicated in the following figure (see Fig.1).

**Professional practice
of inclusive education teachers
of children with intellectual disabilities
in Vietnam**

Overview on inclusive education teachers of children

with intellectual disabilities in Vietnam

According to the MOET (2012b), each teacher can teach no more than 2 children with the same disability in one class. It is suitable for preschool and primary education teachers when they work full-time with their students in a day. But for secondary education teachers who teach the same subject in different classes in a day, there is a need of at least one third teachers in lower secondary schools to have knowledge on IE of children with ID. Therefore, this following table (Table 1) shows the need of IE teachers of children with ID in Vietnam for the three latest years.

The draft on Strategy of Inclusive Education Development for Children with Disabilities until year 2020 reported most teachers have not been educated and trained on special education. Since 1990s, Vietnam has over 12.000 preschool and primary education teachers to be trained in a short time in this field. About 200 lower secondary education teachers were first trained on IE of children with ID in the summer of 2012. There has been about 3000 special education teachers at colleges and universities. Reviewing the numbers of this table Vietnam at these rates needs many more years to meet the need of IE teachers of children with ID.

Professional practice of IE teachers of children with ID in Vietnam

Professional practice is considered to be the most important teacher competence. This article reports some results of study on professional practice of IE teachers of children with ID in Vietnam.

So an evaluation form of professional practice of IE teachers of children with ID in 06 areas of skills (43 items) was designed as: 1) Skills of diagnosis and assessment (S1 - 8 items); 2) Skills of setting goals and objectives of education and care for children (S2 - 6 items); 3) Skills of making activities of education and care for children (S3 - 7 items); 4) Skills of education and care for children (S4 - 9 items); 5) Skills of using equipments and devices to support children (S5 - 6 items); 6) Skills of progress evaluation of children (S6 - 7 items). Each area of skills consists of sub-skills (Items); for example, skills of diagnosis and assessment include communication skills, interview skill, skill of asking questions, skill of using diagnostic and assessment tools and materials.

All of questions are close-ended questions with 5 answer options and every answer is given a number or value of a 5-point Likert scale: excellent

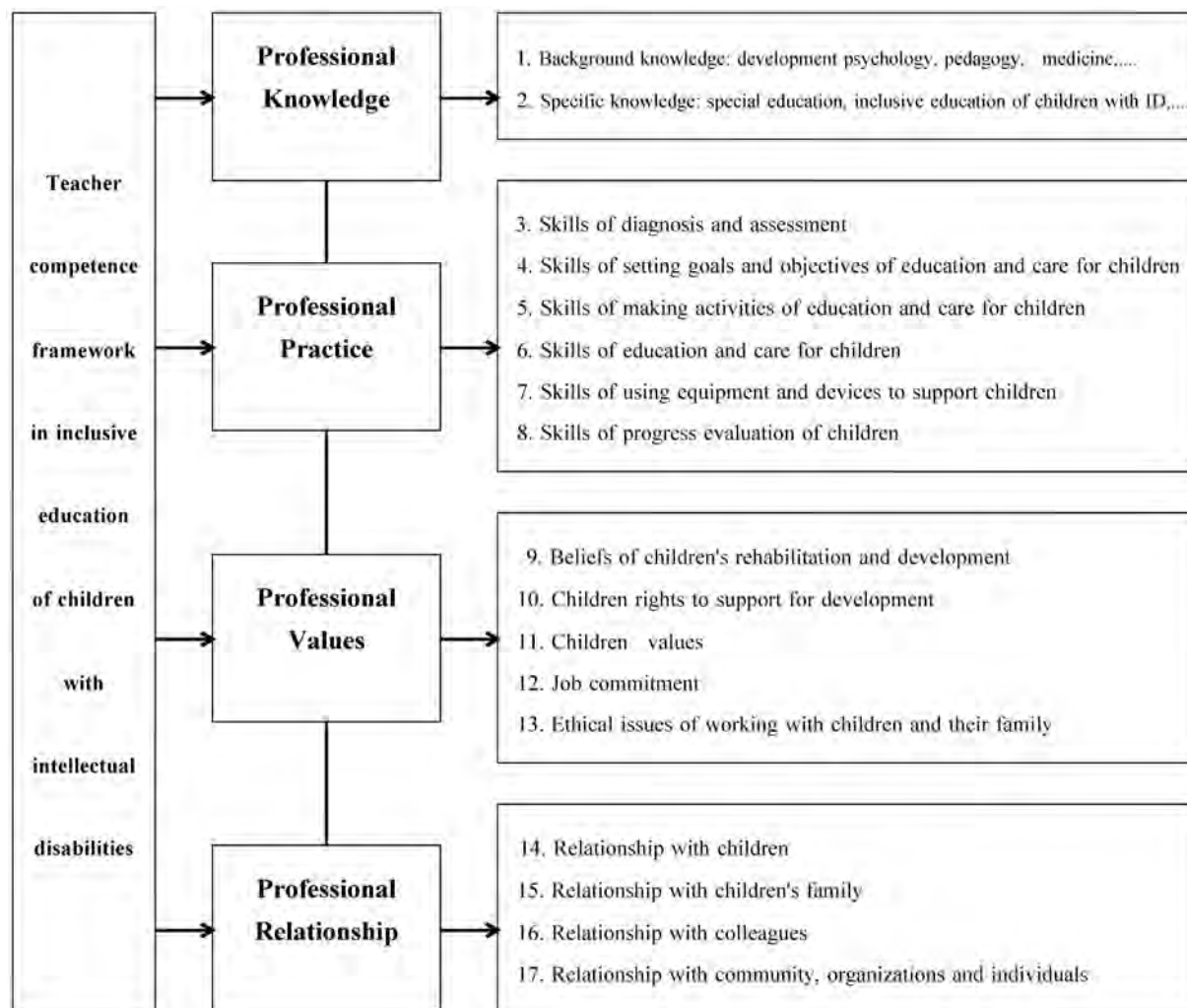


Fig.1 Teacher competence framework of inclusive education of children with intellectual disabilities in Vietnam

Table 1 The need of inclusive education teachers of children with intellectual disabilities in Vietnam

Year	2010			2011			2012		
	Total of children with ID	Preschool teachers	IE teachers of children with ID	Total of children with ID	Preschool teachers	IE teachers of children with ID	Total of children with ID	Preschool teachers	IE teachers of children with ID
Preschool	21,859	195,852	10,930	23,989	211,225	11,995	25,122	229,724	12,561
Primary	107,351	347,840	53,676	117,821	359,039	58,911	123,382	366,045	61,691
Lower Secondary	183,505	313,911	104,637	201,390	312,710	104,237	210,896	311,970	103,990
Total	312,715	857,603	169,242	343,200	882,974	175,142	359,400	907,739	178,242

(Unit: person)

- good - average - fair - poor (corresponding to 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 point).

Survey sample includes 2,138 IE teachers of children with ID in preschool, primary and lower secondary schools of 6 provinces throughout 3 regions of Vietnam (Northern, Central and Southern part) during 2 years (2010 and 2011). All teachers had been trained at least one time (in nearly 3 days) and had at least two-year experience of IE of children with ID.

Methods of collecting data were questionnaires, observations, direct interview, semi-structured interview, seminars, expert consultations. Data was analysed by computing means (\bar{X}).

Reliability of survey tool was analysed by using pre-test in a small scale and adjusting item format and content, and then using test for a whole of survey sample. To evaluate the reliability of the survey tool, we used two halves of the questionnaire: one half was about the odd questions, another half was about the even questions, and then calculated the correlation coefficient between the two halves. It is the correlation coefficient for the reliability of half of the questionnaire. The

reliability of the whole questionnaire was calculated by the Spearman-Brown formula: $r_{11} = 2r_{1/2} / (1 + r_{1/2})$, of which $r_{1/2}$ is the correlation coefficient between two test scores of two halves of the questionnaire and r_{11} is the correlation coefficient for the reliability of half of the questionnaire.

The reliability of the questionnaire on professional practice of IE teachers of children with ID was computed at 0.5908. It means the result of the survey is reliable. Figure 2 shows the data analysis results.

The results indicate that S2, S3 and S4 are above average, corresponding to $X_{average} = 2.69, 3.08$ and 2.64 . Whereas, S1, S5 and S6 are below average, corresponding to $X_{average} = 2.33, 2.25$ and 2.43 . S3 (Skills of making activities of education and care for children) is ranked the highest and S5 (Skills of using equipment and devices to support children) is ranked the lowest among the skill areas of IE teachers of children with ID.

In conclusion, professional practice of IE teachers of children with ID is low and basically did not meet the practice of caring and inclusive education of children with ID in schools.

Table 2 Professional practice skills of IE teachers of children with ID in Vietnam

Skills	Total	$X_{Average}$
S1 Skills of diagnosis and assessment	322	2.33
S2 Skills of setting goals and objectives of education and care for children	371	2.69
S3 Skills of making activities of education and care for children	425	3.08
S4 Skills of education and care for children	365	2.64
S5 Skills of using equipments and devices to support children	311	2.25
S6 Skills of progress evaluation of children	336	2.43

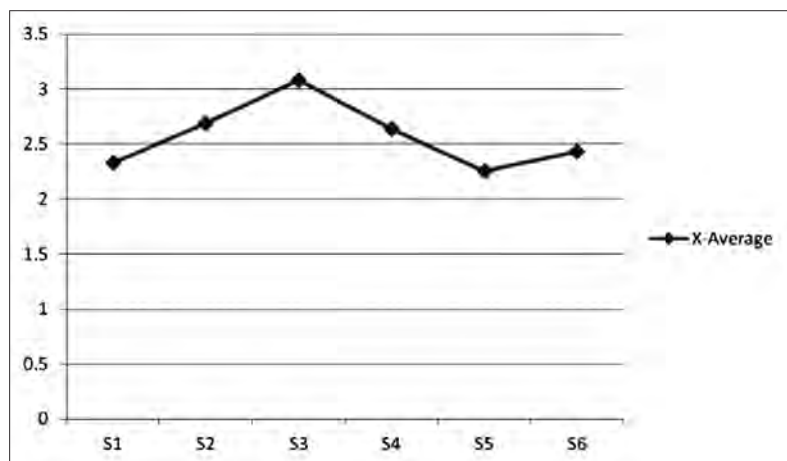


Fig.2 Professional practice skills of IE teachers of children with ID in Vietnam

Some comments and conclusion

Based on research results on teacher competence of IE of children with ID in Vietnam, some comments and conclusion are as the following:

1) Vietnam has gained important achievements of IE of children with disabilities in general and children with ID in particular on theoretical and practical studies on mobilization of children to school. A growing number of children with disabilities have attended inclusive classes and had access to an increasingly quality education and other basic rights committed to the international community by the Government of Viet Nam.

2) IE quality of children with ID in school level includes seven basic components as mentioned above and manifests in: 1) Quality of resources; 2) Quality of activities or process; 3) Quality of output. Overall quality of IE is the combination of quality components. Ensuring quality of IE of children with ID means ensuring the combination of these quality components.

3) Teachers are a particularly important factor to ensure the quality and success of IE of children with ID in schools. Although a number of teachers has been trained and retrained about special education and IE of children with ID and now they are all using their knowledge and skills in the practice of IE of children with, is not enough to meet the needs. 4) Teacher competence framework consists of 04 areas, 18 criteria and the evaluation

results of professional the practice of IE teachers of children with ID and will contribute to be the orientation of teacher education and training for IE of children with ID in Vietnam.

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