

THE STUDY OF TEACHER COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS AT SCHOOLS IN THE THREE SOUTHERN PROVINCES OF THAILAND

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Abstract The research study aimed to determine the teacher competence level and investigate the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size and teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The method of survey research was used through questionnaire. The unit of analysis was teachers, 750 were selected by simple random sampling methods from nine educational regions, 18 secondary schools, under the Basic Education Commission of Thailand (OBEC) at Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala province. The instrument used for collecting data was a questionnaire, constructed by the researcher, employing the professional standards of knowledge and experience from the Teacher Council of Thailand (2005) containing nine competence areas. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the reliability was 0.96. The questionnaire consisted of two parts; part one cover up independent variables, part two was 5- rating scale questionnaire pertaining to teacher competence. The statistical devices used in analyzing data were descriptive statistics; percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation to determine the teacher competence level and employed the Pearson's Product Moment Correlations Coefficient to investigate the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size and teacher competence.

The findings revealed three features that most of (1) the teachers (92.88%) hold bachelor degree; very few teachers (6.23%) hold master degree or higher degree. Most of the teachers (71.07%) had teaching experience of more than 10 years. (2) The level of teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand was at high level. 'Teachership' was the highest teacher competence. In order from the highest to the lowest of nine competence areas, the ranking was teachership; psychology for teachers; educational measurement and evaluation; classroom management; learning management; educational innovation and information technology, language and technology for teachers; curriculum development; and educational research. 3) An analysis of the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size and teacher competence of teachers was conducted. This was carried out in the three southern border provinces of Thailand by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients. The results revealed that: (a) There was a positive, significant relationship, between teacher qualification and teaching experience, teacher competence areas in language and technology for teachers, curriculum development, and educational research. (b) There was positive, significant relationship, between teaching experience and school size, teacher competence areas of curriculum development: This was a negative significant relationship with competence areas in language and technology for teachers and educational innovation and information technology.

The results of the findings provide several directions for future research and practice. The results confirm the value of professional teacher standards of knowledge and experience for teachers and educators and its relations in the context of the schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

Background of the Study

Teacher competence and teacher quality are concepts that are often referred to and frequently applied in different educational contexts: Whitty (1996) identifies professional competence, which includes knowledge and understanding of children and their learning, subject knowledge, curriculum, the education system and the teacher's role. Professional competence also necessitates skills such as subject application, classroom methodology, classroom management, assessment and recording and undertaking a wider role.

According to the professional standards of teaching profession in Thailand (2005) the teacher competence was set for the professional guideline, consists of nine areas of competence; language and technology for teachers, curriculum development, and psychology for teachers, educational measurement and evaluation, classroom management, educational research, educational innovation and information technology, and teachership. The researcher believes that the nine competencies could generate the competent teachers individually and student learning and achievement. Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct a research study to promote the teacher competence for professional development, student learning, and the achievement of the school goals and objectives. This needs to be done in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. There were 44 unpleasant incidents, 148 intentional injuries, 134 deaths and case fatality rate (CFR) of 22.3 percent for incidents related to teachers, students, and schools. The

impact of the unpleasant occurrences such as burning down the schools, murder teachers, principals, the people in the community, intentional injury have directly or indirectly influenced the student, teacher, and principal's life safety and other government officers includes quality of teacher's work and student learning, since the schools have to be closed (Deep South Watch Report, 2008). Providing quality education is an important part of schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. Teacher with high competence is one of the most significant factors manipulate the student learning as well as serving the schools to meet its objectives and missions. Therefore, the teachers and students at schools in three southern border provinces of Thailand also necessitate enhancement of student learning and teacher competence, which is high competence and is one of the critical obligation that schools in three southern border provinces strongly desire to be highlighting on.

The researcher conducted this research study with expectations to provide evidence, indicate necessity and develop understanding of the importance of teacher competence as well as prove the relationship of teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size and teacher competence. The study investigates how to show administrators, policymakers, educators, as well as instructors a manner to enhance and promote teacher competence and accepted performance with appropriate strategies. These appropriate strategies are for developing teacher competencies for improving teacher performance and contribution to achievement. The researcher aims to open this field of study teacher competence in the three southern border provinces of Thailand and to contribute ideas to educational management so that study of this issue can be enhanced.

Statement of the Problem

In Thailand, especially in the three southern border provinces; Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala province, Education in the south engulfed in fear, since teachers targeted in spiral of reprisal killing and violence. Since the resurgence of insurgent violence in January 2004, *Pejuang Kemerdekaan Pattani* have put the Thai education system as their primary target, calling it a symbol of infidel occupation and suppression of ethnic Malay Muslim identity. About 71 teachers from government schools have been murdered and more than 100 injured in attacks carried out by alleged separatist militants, while 170 schools have been burned down. The lack of security has occasionally forced government schools in a district or even entire province to close down (Human Rights Watch Report, 2007). Brad Adams, Asia Director at Human Rights Watch said, "Insurgents are terrorizing teachers and schools, which they consider symbols of the Thai state and these attacks are grave crimes and cannot be justified by any cause." The official in Narathiwat province have been forced to close more than 300 government schools in all 13 districts, after insurgent kills three teachers on June 11, 2007.

Many studies of the interaction between teacher certification and student learning outcomes conclude that teachers who are certified against standards have better student learning outcomes than teachers who neither are nor certified, when other factors are held constant. (Darling-Hammond 2000 cited in Teaching Australia, 2005). The results of scores of the student mathayom six from the National Test Center revealed that the scores are at low to moderate level (OBEC, 2007). Yet, it has not found any research studies have been conducted on teacher competence and its relationship to other domains in the context of the three Southern border provinces of Thailand. The researcher believes that the teacher with high competency could generate the competent teachers individually and increase student learning and achievement. Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct a research study on the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, school size and teacher competence at schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand in order to promote the teacher professional development, student learning, and the achievement of the school goals and objectives.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the level of teacher competence at schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.
2. To investigate the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, school size and teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

Significance of Study

The findings from this research will enable administrators, policy makers, and teachers understand thoroughly the aspects of teacher competence to indicate plans and programs for teacher competency development.

The findings of the significant relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size and teacher competence will be useful for educational administrators and policy makers in planning and organizing for success. The findings will also help in allocating resources and facilitating teachers and students to promote teacher competence, student learning, and achievement. This will allow for the maintenance of and possible increase in the level of teacher competence and student learning and achievement.

Research Methodology

The research study was conducted by using the quantitative method through the survey research. The unit of analysis was teachers from 18 secondary schools, from nine educational regions of the three southern provinces of Thailand.

The sample was 750 teachers that selected by simple random sampling methods from 18 secondary schools, under the Basic Education Commission of Thailand (OBEC) from nine educational regions in Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala province. The details were as follows:

Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Part I consisted of personal information of teacher and school, contained of teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size

Part II was the questionnaire with 33 items for investigating of the level teacher competence and its relationship between the teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size. It was 5-item rating scale questionnaire pertaining to teacher competence based on nine competence areas established by the Teacher Council of Thailand, 2005.

The content validity was evaluated by five experts in the field of Educational Administration. The researcher conducted a pilot study for the instrument reliability with 30 teachers at a secondary school, located in the three southern provinces of Thailand that excluded the samples of this study. The Cronbach's Alpha was computed. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was 0.96

Data Collection

The researcher coordinated with the research coordinators that worked as teacher guidance in the schools and distributed the questionnaire to the teachers as respondents at the secondary schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand; Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat province. The research coordinators collected and sent the questionnaires back to the researcher via post mail.

Data Analysis

(1) The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, frequencies and percentage were used to describe the respondents related to the teacher qualification, teaching experiences, and school size. In addition, measure the level of teacher competence in nine competence areas. (2) The Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients was employed to investigate the relationship of those variables. The 0.05 level of significance was identified to determine the significance.

Research Findings and Discussion

Research objective one: To determine the level of teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

The level of teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern provinces of Thailand was at a high to very high level. Comparing each of the nine areas of teacher competence, 'teachership' was the highest teacher competence factor for teachers in the three southern provinces of Thailand, while the other eight teacher competence areas were also at high levels. The research ranks them all, revealed that teachership, psychology for teachers, educational measurement and evaluation, classroom management, educational innovation and information technology, learning management language and technology, curriculum development, and educational research.

Research objective two: To investigate the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, and school size and teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern provinces of Thailand.

The analysis of the relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience and school size and teacher competence of teachers in the three southern border provinces of Thailand by utilizing the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients, it was found that;

1. There was positive significant relationship between teacher qualification and teaching experience, and teacher competence area in language and technology for teachers, curriculum development, and educational research respectively.
2. There was positive significant relationship between teaching experience and school size, and teacher competence areas in curriculum development, and it was negative significant relationship with competence areas in language and technology for teachers, educational innovation, and information technology respectively.

Conclusion

1. The level of teacher competence of teachers at schools in the three southern provinces of Thailand based on the professional standards of knowledge and experience which pertained to nine competence areas; language and technology, curriculum development, learning management, Psychology for teachers, educational measurement and

evaluation, classroom management, educational research, educational innovation and information technology, and teachership.

Focusing on nine teacher competence areas, classified by each competence it was found that the level of teacher competence in area of teachership was the highest (\bar{X} 3.99, S.D. 0.43) among nine areas, most of teachers (92.88 %) hold the bachelor degree and had teaching experience(71.07 %) for more than 10 years. Hence, it was noticed that the safety to be teacher at school in the three southern provinces of Thailand was less concerned.

2. The relationship between the teacher qualification, teaching experience, school size and teacher competence.

It can be concluded that there was positive significant relationship between teacher qualification, teaching experience, and teacher competence area in language and technology for teacher, curriculum development, and educational research. There was positive significant relationship between teaching experience, school size and teacher competence area in curriculum development, and it was negative significant relationship with teacher competence area in language and technology for teachers, educational innovation, and information technology

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the findings provide several directions for future research and practice. The results confirm the value of professional teacher standards of knowledge and experience for teachers and educators and its relations in the context of the schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The current findings increase the understanding of the relationship between teachers' characteristic such as teacher qualification and teaching experience of teachers and characteristics of school such as school size. Thus, based on the literature review and the findings of the research study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The research study did not measure a level of teacher competence of teachers as perceived by administrators, principals or school directors. A suggestion would be to replicate the study but also include the measurement of teacher competence as perceived by the administrators, principals or school directors. Thus, the study could compare and confirm the perception from both teachers and administrators. The results of the research study will indicate whether there is discrepancy between them.

2. The research study focused on the professional standards of knowledge and experience only, has not cover the other two professional standards such as standards of practice and code of conduct for teachers.

3. The sample of the research study covered only teachers at secondary schools under the Basic Education Commission of Thailand only, should cover private secondary schools and other school level.

4. The research study used a quantitative approach, thus providing the answer to "What" questions only. Further inquiry for "Why" questions that will explore the contexts of the schools setting in the three southern border provinces of Thailand by using qualitative approach.

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