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*TEACHER COMPETENCE FRAMEWORKS  
IN MYANMAR AND HUNGARY*

**ABSTRACT**

Teacher competence framework is a quality improvement tool to regulate continuous professional development activities and to support ethical professional behavior. The aim of this study is to analyze and compare teacher competence frameworks in Myanmar and Hungary, thus, to examine the similarities and differences in two systems. It can be concluded that TCFs were established with international inspiration and support in both countries, in 2006 in Hungary, in Myanmar a decade later. TCFs provide the standards that teachers are to attain at the different stages of their careers and professional growth in both systems. But while in Myanmar there is one single framework, in Hungary there are two separate (although similar) sets of competences: one for teacher appraisal and promotion and one for setting the expected learning outcomes in teacher education. The content of the Myanmar and the Hungarian frameworks, i.e. the teacher competencies are very similar, though in Hungary the later modifications included some new competencies.

**1. Introduction**

According to Rice (2003) teacher quality is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. Many educators and policymakers agree that teacher quality is an important policy issue in education reform. Every country tries to develop and support teacher quality through various instruments and measures. One of the most important among these tools are the teacher competence frameworks. This powerful tool is often used by teacher policies aimed at improving the quality of teacher work (Halász 2019:1).

Teacher competence frameworks and professional standards, which define what teachers are expected to know and be able to do (pedagogical skills), are increasingly seen as key policy tools to support and incentivize teacher quality. They are the basis for a shared conceptualization of teacher quality, for building teacher capacity and for evaluating teacher performance. Several countries have used these tools to support teacher career growth, specifying the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to be developed over the course of the teacher's career. (European Commission, 2018; Ingvarson, Rowe, 2007, cited in Halász, Looney 2019:311). They are based on a functional analysis of teachers' tasks and codes of ethics to which they are expected to adhere (Halász, Looney 2019). In other ways, professional competence frameworks can support decisions not only on staffing including for recruitment, selection and human resource development but also teachers' learning and career progression. (European Commission 2018). "A

shared definition by national stakeholders of what teachers should know and be able to do in the different stages of their career seems to be acknowledged as the basis for quality teaching that contributes to better student learning” (Symeonidis 2019:2).

## **2. Education in Myanmar**

Myanmar, officially the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia and is situated geographically at the strategic location between the economic hubs of China, India and ASEAN countries. According to the country’s 2017\_census, the population is about 54 million. Myanmar is a multi-ethnic country with 135 distinct ethnic groups. The 68% of the Myanmar population is Bamar people and the other ethnic minorities make up the remaining 32% of the population. Some of the ethnic minorities include Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine, and Shan. The Gross Domestic Product per capita in Myanmar was last recorded at 1571.90 US dollars in 2018 (Wikipedia). In Myanmar, agriculture is the most significant sector of the economy, generating 43% of GDP and providing a livelihood for over 70% of the population (World Bank, 2013).

In the 1950s, Myanmar (known as Burma) was one of the richest countries in Asia. It had a high literacy rate. In 1948, Myanmar gained independence and then the government sought to create a literate and educated population. At that time, Burma was believed to be on its way to become the first Asian Tiger in the region. Since 1962 coup d’etat isolated and impoverished Myanmar, all schools were nationalized, and educational standards began to fall.

Myanmar now has a limited parliamentary democracy – one in which the military retains control over one-quarter of the parliamentary seats (Haydena, Martin, 2013). Recent changes in the political landscape are contributing greatly to increased political freedom and the opening up of the country’s institutions to international engagement. There has recently been a re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the West, and external investment is now flooding into Myanmar at a rapid pace (Reuters, 2013). Ethnic rivalries have not disappeared, and military action to quell civil unrest continues in several parts of the country.

In spite of the fact that education in Myanmar is highly valued, its system has been described as highly centralized and higher education institutions in the country lack autonomy to stand on its own. This made its education system complicated. As a result of over 50 years of military rule, education in Myanmar has been in a much-weakened state (Haydena, Martin 2013). This is evident in the poor academic building’s physical and internal structure; the practice of traditional teaching methodologies, and the inadequacy of teacher training programs and other professional development programs for teachers.

The Government of Myanmar has demonstrated increasing financial commitment to the education sector, as education spending has increased from 5.7 to 8.5 percent of public expenditures from fiscal years 2012-13 to 2017-18. According to Endorsement of Myanmar's National Education Strategic Plan (2018), Government expenditures on education will continue to increase, to move toward the International benchmark of allocating 20% of public expenditures to the education sector.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education, drawing on funds from an international consortium of development partners, initiated a Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), the purpose of which was to promote a "learning society capable of facing the challenges of the Knowledge Age" (Haydena, Martin, 2013:48). The CESR process includes a three-phase process: Phase 1 is to a rapid assessment of urgent priorities and reform issues. This assessment identified children with disability, urban/rural location, management as priorities and reform issues. Phase 2 is to be an in-depth sector analysis incorporating more focused investigations. Phase 3 is to develop a costed education sector plan based on the reviews (National Education Strategic Plan /NESP/, Appraisal Report, 2017). In this report, it is recommended that the planned baseline mapping component be fully aligned and harmonized with the MOE's Operational Plan. The next recommendation is to strengthen emergency preparedness to natural disasters affecting schools. Another important issue of concern is falling in the victim of natural disasters while in school. The NESP outlines an effective approach towards strengthening emergency preparedness to natural disasters affecting schools. Additionally, it is recommended that a monitoring and evaluation matrix be developed and added as necessary supporting documentation to the NESP document.

In last two decades, Myanmar has embarked on educational reforms, following their commitment to the "Education for All" world declaration in 1990, which is focused, among other things, on ensuring quality teaching by competent teachers. The government of Myanmar has been undertaking education reforms, recognizing that improvement in quality of teachers is essential to quality education and positive student learning outcomes. As Myanmar raises the quality of education system, it needs teachers with the right values, skills, and knowledge to be effective practitioners (Myint, Win, 2016).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) of Myanmar has been implementing its "30-year long-term plan" for the basic education sector in Myanmar, beginning in the 2001-02 FY and lasting until the 2030-31 FY. According to the plan, the government will set priority areas in basic education. One of these emphasizes teacher education (Process 4). In 2001, the MOE's 30-year long-term plan reported 6 areas of implementation for improving the quality of teacher education.

- (1) Opening the pre-service teacher training course
- (2) Reduction of in-service uncertified teachers
- (3) Appointing pre-service trained teachers

- (4) Ensuring the full strength of teaching staff for basic education schools in border areas
- (5) Improving the quality of teacher education
- (6) Accomplished and on-going activities

### 3. Teacher Competency Framework in Myanmar

To transform the national education system, Myanmar is undertaking a number of interrelated national policy reforms which aim to vastly and rapidly improve the quality of teachers. One of them is *Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF)*: The TCSF is being developed to outline nationally accepted profiles of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do at different stages of their careers. It aims to establish an agreed set of teacher competency standards to support improvement in the quality of teachers in Myanmar. A group of national teacher education specialists have been collaborating with international teacher education technical advisers and experts from UNESCO. The aim of the TCSF framework is to increase the capacity of teachers to Know, Think, Feel and Act, so that their skills enable effective teaching and learning.

The Framework can be used as a guidance document for policy makers and curriculum developers responsible for teacher education (pre- and in-service) and basic education. It is also a tool for teachers in their continuing professional development and achievement of quality in their professional practice. It can be used in assessing pre-service teacher training graduates to ensure they meet minimum standards for accreditation. It will help to strengthen peer mentoring and instructional supervision by teacher educators, education supervisors, school heads and classroom teachers. Ultimately, it is designed for establishing a clear path for merit-based teacher placement and career advancement, shifting performance evaluations from educational background and years of teaching to observable performance and competency to support students' learning. (TCSF, 2017)

The framework is built on a theory of professional learning and development designed to clarify and elaborate the core capabilities expected of teachers and what they should get better at, at different stages of their development and in their specialist fields of teaching.

The teacher competency standards refer to the expectations of teachers' knowledge, skills, attributes and required levels of performance at various stages of their teaching career and is organized in four *domains*: professional knowledge and understanding, professional skills and practices, professional values and dispositions, professional growth and development. Each domain refers to "a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world, in a particular domain" (European Commission, 2013). Each domain is organized by *areas of competence* for which the *competency standard* is expressed as a concise statement

with accompanying descriptors of the expected minimum requirements to be achieved by all teachers. Competency standards are the expected professional abilities and skills a teacher should develop through their initial training and as they continue to grow and develop in their professional service and practice, such as participation in induction and on-going in-service education and training. There are competency standards and minimum requirements for teachers' professional development in each domain.

The complete set of competency standards includes:

- Teaching competence – the role of the teacher in the classroom, directly linked to the act of teaching (pedagogical content knowledge)
- Teacher competence – the wider systemic view of teacher professionalism; this includes the role and responsibility of the teacher as an individual, within the school, the local community, and as a participant in professional networks.

The areas of competence in the four domains are the following:

**Domain A: Professional knowledge and understanding:** This domain encompasses the knowledge required for teaching different stages and level-appropriate subject content competency. Under this domain, areas of competence are educational science, instructional technology, students, families, schools and communities curriculum, and subject matter.

**Domain B: Professional skills and practices:** This domain deals with what teachers can do. Under this domain, areas of competence are pedagogy, assessment, classroom management and learner-centered values.

**Domain C: Professional values and dispositions:** This domain refers to the ideas, values, and beliefs that teachers hold about education, teaching and learning. The areas of competence specific to this domain are professional ethics, service to profession and community and community leadership.

**Domain D: Professional growth and development:** This domain incorporates teachers' habits, motivation, and actions related to their on-going learning and professional improvement. It highlights the need for research to support teachers' classroom performance and continuing professional development. The areas of competence specific to this domain relate to reflective practices, collaborative learning, and initiative for research culture.

TCSF will be widely used for the establishment of a teacher quality assurance system. The Framework will be used as the benchmark for teacher and teaching quality in Myanmar. From this, qualitative instruments will be developed and tested to support appraisal of teachers' competencies for the different stages of professional development. The use of the Framework as a tool for assessment of teachers and their teaching performance will require the development of instruments with validated and levelled quality criterion to describe expected levels of proficiency for each of the stages of teachers' professional development. Important training and professional development of the different users (mentors, supervisors, principals) will be necessary to develop a common level of

understanding about the interpretation of the different descriptors and what they mean.

It will be useful for the implementation of teacher related policy, teacher education curriculum development and in the monitoring and appraisal of teachers' teaching practice and training needs analysis.

### **3.1. Competences and stages of teacher career in Myanmar**

The competency standards are interconnected and related and not just increasing or expanding the work of teachers by adding bits on. All teachers are expected to progress towards the following stages of professional growth and development.

It is stated that there are four stages of professional development for all teachers in TCSF Draft 2.0 as follows.

#### **1. Beginning teachers**

Beginning teachers have successfully completed the accredited pre-service teacher education programme. They can teach the prescribed curriculum to students at the specified stage of schooling and to assess levels of student achievement. Expected minimum capacities include subject knowledge and skills, pedagogical knowledge, a positive attitude towards children and youth, and a commitment to education and teaching.

#### **2. Experienced teachers**

Experienced teachers demonstrate capacity to use both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in the design of lessons. They can describe and discuss the learning expectations for all students, drawing on their interests, experiences and backgrounds, to ensure connections with learning activities. They align assessment strategies to learning goals, and they adapt learning tasks to student readiness.

#### **3. Expert teachers**

Teachers at the level of expert demonstrate leadership and coordination skills. They are comfortable working in new and challenging teaching or management roles and are willing to support the professional development of peers. Their classroom practice and pedagogical style exemplify a sound understanding of learners' different needs with methods of teaching perfected to smoothly transition from manager, to facilitator, to evaluator, to guide and counsellor. They have well-developed personal and interactive skills, are open to critique and value working with others.

#### **4. Leader teachers**

Teachers at this level are experts that hold positions of responsibility and provide advice and direction to colleagues for the implementation of the basic education curriculum. They are mentors and coaches for new teachers during their

induction; they supervise or provide oversight of student teachers undertaking practicum experience in schools.

#### **4. Teacher Competency Frameworks in Hungary**

In Hungary, the establishment of teacher competency framework(s) was induced by two motives of the educational government: the first is the guidance of teacher education by defining its expected learning outcomes, and the second is to ground a teacher career promotion and appraisal system.

##### **4.1. Teacher competencies as learning outcomes of teacher training**

Since the launch of the European Qualification Framework in 2008, the notion of competence has been linked to the learning outcomes approach (Symeonidis 2019:2), meaning that competences are often articulated as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. (Cedefop Glossary). Competences, formulated as learning outcomes, have found widespread applications among European countries in the design and delivery of initial teacher education programs (Halász, 2017).

Hungary followed path: the first comprehensive list of teacher competences was defined in 2006 to guide the teacher education programs. Government Decree 15/2006 defined the training and outcome requirements for teacher training with nine competences, indicating what teachers must be capable of:

1. Developing student's personality;
2. Fostering and developing student groups, communities;
- 3- Designing the pedagogical process;
4. Developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of students;
5. Effectively developing competencies that ground lifelong learning;
6. Organizing and managing the learning process;
7. Applying a rich set of pedagogical assessment;
8. Professional cooperation and communication;
9. Commitment for and self-improvement in professional development.

The regulation defined three dimensions of the competencies:

1. Professional knowledge: the deep knowledge of students, of the mechanisms of teaching and learning; disciplinary knowledge, subject-specific and curriculum-specific knowledge
2. Professional skills: getting familiar with the students and the internal dynamics of student groups; organizing educational materials and designing the teaching process; organizing classroom activities, applying the different methods of teaching, educating, assessment and control

3. Professional engagement and commitment: undertaking the different professional roles, proper values and attitudes.

As we see, these three dimensions are fairly in line with the concept of Cedefop: learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence (this third one later interpreted in the European Qualification Framework as attitude and autonomy).

The outcome requirements for teacher training were slightly modified in Government Decree 8/2013:

1. Developing student's personality, individual treatment
2. Fostering and developing student groups, communities;
3. Having knowledge of the discipline and of the disciplinary methodology;
4. Designing the pedagogical process;
5. Supporting, organizing and managing the learning process;
6. Assessing the pedagogical processes and the students;
7. Communication, professional cooperation and job identity;
8. Autonomy and taking responsibility.

Newly added competencies are: individual treatment for students, knowledge of disciplinary knowledge and methodology, supporting the learning process, job identity, autonomy and responsibility, suggesting a shift towards the paradigm of differentiated, student-centered teaching with higher teacher responsibility and autonomy. At the same time, some competencies were left behind with no apparent reason. „Developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of the students” may seem a rather evident task for a teacher, but Hungarian education is still unbalanced regarding the development of knowledge, skills and abilities: more focused on transferring lexical knowledge than developing skills and abilities. Grounding lifelong learning is also missing from the new list, although knowledge becoming obsolete in a very short time and thus, continuous learning is more relevant than ever. Commitment for and self-improvement in professional development were also omitted, although it is a vital attitude for students to obtain in higher education. But it must be added, that the new regulation defined knowledge, skills and attitudes for each of the competences as learning outcomes, moving closer to EQF (Symeonidis 2019), and the skills and attitudes refer to those competences that are not explicitly listed any more.

Summing up: since the definition of the first set of teacher competencies as learning outcomes for teacher education in 2006, there have been only minor modifications, and the competencies are interpreted in the three dimensions of knowledge, skills and attitudes.



## 4.2. Competencies as a framework for teacher appraisal

As far as the other framework is concerned, a teacher career model was introduced with Government Decree 326/2013 which established a new career ladder and a new wage scale, linking teachers' salaries to teacher appraisal. Teacher competences played an essential role in this career model, since teachers advanced in the career ladder according to a competence-based evaluation. (Symeonidis 2019)

The list of competences included in the teacher appraisal system was not a brand new and different one: basically the competence list for teacher education was transferred to the competence framework for the teacher appraisal with some new expectations added and some old ones complemented or specified. Teacher competences in Government Decree 326/2013 and its 122/2018 amendment are:

1. Professional tasks, scientific, subject-specific and curriculum-specific knowledge
2. Designing pedagogical process, activities, and self-reflection on their implementation
3. Supporting learning
4. Developing students' personality, individual treatment, appropriate methodological preparation for the successful education of disadvantaged students, students with special needs, with integration, learning and behavior difficulties together with the other students
5. Facilitating and developing student groups and communities, creating opportunities, openness to sociocultural diversity, integration activities, classroom activities
6. Continuous assessment and analysis of pedagogical processes and personality development of students
7. Proficiency in environmental education, authentic representation of the value of sustainability, transferring attitudes related to environmental awareness.
8. Communication, professional cooperation, problem-solving
9. Commitment for and self-improvement in professional development.

New elements are: self-reflection, the proper treatment of students with disadvantages or special needs, diversity, integration and environmental education – reflecting the mainstream approaches in educational thinking. The competences are broken down into 62 indicators of knowledge, skills and attitudes for teacher appraisal.

Although the design of the two frameworks aimed to address different needs, they can be used for initial preparation, induction and professional development, as well as for teacher appraisal and career promotion. (Symeonidis 2019)

## 5. Competences and stages of teacher career in Hungary

A few countries have identified teacher career stages from novice to expert status; in Europe, Belgium (Flemish-speaking community), Estonia, Latvia and the UK (Scotland) (European Commission, 2018). Hungary did the same: the new model for the promotion of teachers introduced in 2013 classifies teachers as

- Novice Teacher,
- Teacher I,
- Teacher II,
- Master Teacher and
- Researcher Teacher. (Government Decree 326/2013)

Teachers can step up on the ladder via an appraisal-promotion procedure. In the procedure, the level of the different competences (the so-called *standards*) are evaluated.

The abovementioned 5 career levels do not differ from each other in the expected competencies – they are the same for every teacher – but in the expected levels of the competencies, i.e. in the standards. The standards of the higher career levels include the expectations of the lower levels and are supplemented with new ones. (Oktatási Hivatal 2019) Generally speaking, on Novice level, basic knowledge and skills are expected, on Teacher I. level, comprehensive knowledge, conscious planning and activities, on Teacher II. level, interpretation and initiation, on Master level understanding the wider context and mentoring younger colleagues, on Researcher level, scientific and developmental activities are also expected.

To ensure the objective evaluation of the standards, different *indicators* were defined. Indicators are behavior descriptors to grab the level or quality of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the teachers. A given indicator can belong to more than one competences, since competences do not present themselves separately in the professional activity of teachers, but in an integrated way. (Oktatási Hivatal 2019)

The standards and indicators are defined in the Guidelines for Teacher Appraisal-Procedure published and regularly revised by the Education Authority (Oktatási Hivatal). Till 2019, 6 editions of the Guidelines were published.

## 6. Comparison

In Hungary, teacher competencies in a comprehensive way were first defined in 2006, in Myanmar, a decade later. Thus, in Hungary they are already institutionalized, used as practical tools, while in Myanmar the framework's implementation is yet an intention on the part of the government. TCFs were established with international inspiration and

support in both countries. In Hungary it was the European Union, in Myanmar, the UNESCO.

Competency frameworks can be used both to design and to evaluate. In Hungary, both functions are present, while in Myanmar, the evaluative intention seems to be more evident. In Myanmar, TCSF is planned to be used for improving the quality of teaching, as a quality assurance tool by assessing and monitoring teachers' professional growth. A draft Teacher Competency Standards Framework for basic education teachers has been developed and the intention is to use it primarily for teacher appraisal. Information and Communication Technology competency standards are also to be developed which are to be incorporated into the TCSF. In other ways, TCSF is also to be used for teacher education curriculum development by ensuring that the degree curriculum covers the same four domains as the TCSF. It can help in implementing competency-based teacher training programmes. In Hungary, two distinct, although very similar competence lists were composed, one for defining the expected learning outcomes in teacher education, and one for the assessment and promotion of teachers.

As far as the frameworks' design is concerned, the Hungarian frameworks are lists of competencies, supplemented with indicators in the three dimensions of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In the Myanmar framework, four professional domains are established (knowing and understanding, skills and practices, values and dispositions, growth and development), and areas of competences with competency standards are defined in each domain.

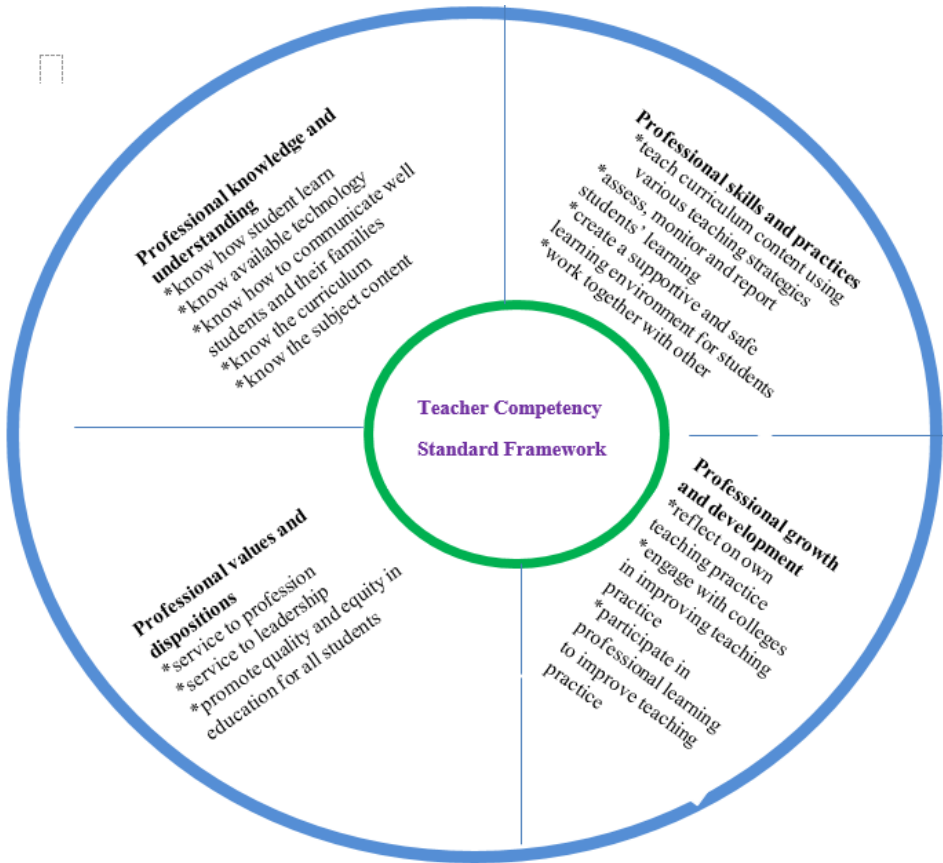
Comparing the competencies themselves in the two countries' frameworks, we find that -- besides disciplinary knowledge -- skills regarding methodology, assessment, management, communication, reflection, professional development, cooperation are the common elements. Families and communities, ethics, equality, student-centeredness and research culture is explicitly mentioned in the Myanmar framework and not so in the Hungarian ones; while individual treatment, special-needs students, personality development of students, environmental education, autonomy and responsibility are listed only in the Hungarian frameworks. (It must be noted that most of these competencies are added only in the later modifications of the original frameworks.)

The stages of teachers' career are defined similarly in the two countries. In Myanmar there are four stages, and the stages are different in the expected level of teaching-related activities on the one hand, and the

ability to mentor others on the other hand. In Hungary, there are five stages. The expected competences are the same in all stages, but the expected levels of them (the standards) are different: deepening and widening on each stage. Initiation, mentoring and research are expectations of the higher stages.

## APPENDIX

Figure 1: The Teacher Competency Standard Framework



Adapted from Teacher Competency Standard Framework Beginning Teacher Draft 2.0 (2017)

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