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## **FACTORS AFFECTING THE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' COMPETENCE AT PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL IN YANGON, MYANAMR DURING PANDEMIC COVID-19**

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### **Abstract**

Teachers are the key implementers of the education system so their competence to teach during pandemic Covid-19 will contribute to continuing the quality education for the students. The aim of this research is to identify the factors affecting the high school teachers' competence at private schools in Yangon, Myanmar during pandemic Covid-19. 261 private high school teachers from a total of 1,777 from the 4 districts of Yangon were selected using multi-stage random sampling. Sequential mixed-method was employed for the research. First phase was the qualitative study. 9 in-depth interviews were done at national level, school level and individual level stakeholders to find out the factors that may have impact on the private high school teachers' competence during pandemic Covid-19. Second phase, the quantitative questionnaire was built based on the content analysis of the responses. Among the various factors learnt from the previous researches and qualitative interviews, stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that the factors of (1) teachers' motivation (2) preparation for the teachers (3) professional environment (4) teachers' attitudes and (5) compensation are the predictive ones for the teachers' competence. This paper explains the relation of the predictive factors as well as the relation between the motivation and the teachers' competence employing the motivational theories.

**Keywords:** teachers' competence, Covid-19, affecting factors, Myanmar

### **Introduction**

Since the Covid-19 pandemic started in December 2019, it has spread momentarily in a few months across the regions that World Health Organization (WHO) announced the pandemic alert in March 2020. The best preventive

measures to protect the transmission is to keep the social/physical distancing and staying home, wearing masks and face shields (WHO)<sup>1</sup>. This pandemic impacts on different aspects of the education sector too. Because of its rapid infection rate, it is not safe for the students to

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-](https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic)

[19news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic](https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic)



attend schools in the class as well. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed the schools to contain the spread of the contagion. According to UNESCO, this closure of schools national wide impacts on over 72% of students' population around the world adding millions more in some countries for localized closure<sup>2</sup>. Many scholars pointed out that students especially the disadvantaged students are affected from losing of learning opportunities as well as other social well-being. In United States, researchers documented even loss of learning in summer lead to losing the skills and knowledge the students already gain. This disruption in education has impacted on the individual and prospects of the communities (OECD, a framework to guide for education response to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020)<sup>3</sup>.

USAID (2005) defined crisis in education as the circumstances in which children's access to education is in jeopardy<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the country government and the world's educational organizations attempt to response immediately to this situation. A possible recommended solution was to employ the online platforms to continue teaching learning. However, there are a lot of obstacles to use online especially for the disadvantaged children, it is not an accessible way to learning as well as it cannot be widely and immediately used in the underdeveloped regions. As soon as the pandemic

situation is contained, the governments put every effort to reopen the schools for the children. Nevertheless, teaching during the Covid-19 situation will not be the same from teaching in normal situation. Everyone has to adapt to new normal life style as well as teachers have to perform their tasks in the new normal lifestyles.

Due to these changes, the teacher's competence to perform their tasks and responsibilities may also be impacted by some factors. Teachers are the key drivers of the education system and their ability and competency to perform teaching learning is the heart of the quality of education. Hence, it is crucial that they are supported as necessary to keep their competency in performing their responsibilities during the pandemic situation and in new normal teaching. By knowing the factors that can affect the teachers' competence, policy makers and school managers can provide the necessary support and care for the teachers to carry out their tasks competently.

Myanmar is also one of the pandemic affected countries. The usual school year starts at the beginning of June. Because of the pandemic transmission locally, the school opening was delayed in 2020. In July 2020, the first wave local transmission was contained and the government opened the public and private high school levels first. However, the schools have to follow and prepare the criteria from the guidelines instructed

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/framework\\_guide\\_v1\\_002\\_harward.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/framework_guide_v1_002_harward.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.columbia.edu/~dsb33/Assests/BurdeEdCrisis11-11-05%5B2%5D.pdf>

by the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Ministry of Education.<sup>5</sup>

The changes and adaptation to the Covid-19 situation may include teaching in the new normal styles and situation. In the classroom, the students and teachers have to stay six feet away from one another. Everyone has to wear masks and face shields at schools. The teachers have to take extra responsibilities to check the students' temperature, and monitor when the students come to the schools. Moreover, the school timetable is shorter during COVID-19 situation. The Ministry asked the school time to be not more than 50 minutes per period and not more than 4 periods per school day as students should not stay in masks so long<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, teaching time may be a different factor to consider in the COVID-19 context. In addition, new curriculum is launched for Grade-10 that focus on development of 5Cs: collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking and citizenship. Therefore, the lessons include the activities and projects. The students need to work together in pairs and groups as well as to interact with each other. Hence, teachers may feel challenging to teach interactive lessons in social distancing situation. These new normal conditions may have impact on the teachers' performance in one way or the other.

In addition, it is important that the teachers feel willing or feel positive to taking

responsibilities of students' learning and some necessary duties in this situation. The teachers may also need extra allowance and compensation for their efforts and motivation. There may also be other factors which can support the teachers to be motivated or perform better for the situation. It would be crucial to learn which factors impact on the teachers' competence in this Covid-19 situation so that the teachers are supported as necessary.

Therefore, this research was conducted with the aim of identifying the COVID-19 impact factors on high school teachers' competence in education response to the pandemic crisis and how to support the teachers from the perspectives of key stakeholders and teachers. The research focuses on the private schools as there are limited number of researches and literature related to private school teachers' competence and support yet in Myanmar. Moreover, during COVID-19 period, high schools are actively continuing the education through teaching online or reopening the schools with preventive measures. Hence, it would be more interesting to research the high school teachers' competence at private schools which are operating during the new normal situation.

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## Materials and Methods

### Teachers' competence and its dimensions to assess

Competence was defined as the ability of an individual which refers to the ability based on knowledge, skills and attitude to perform a task that is entrusted with good and excellently (Sandberg, 2000). Hence it can be assumed that teacher's competence is the set of skills, knowledge, values and behaviours. In a broader way, teachers' competence is how well the teachers perform and response to the situation in and outside the classroom as a professional. Coherence between elements of knowledge and skills inside and outside of the classroom will be able to produce teachers with good communication skills, wise in adapting to the environment and capable to interpret its ability to give a meaningful contribution especially to school and to the world of education. The constructs of a teachers' competence can contain many different aspects depending on the functions he or she has to perform (Olaleye & Oluremi, 2013). Moreover, it can also be said that the teachers' competence has various dimensions, which include curriculum competence, research, life-long learning, social-cultural, emotional, communication, information technology and environmental competencies are generally included in a teachers' competencies framework (Selvi, 2010). According to Kalra (1997) as in Aziz (2010), teachers' competence can be categorized broadly into two. The first one includes those involving the teachers' mental abilities and skills, understanding of

psychological and educational principles and his knowledge of the general and specific subject matter to be taught. The second one includes those linking with the teachers' personality, interest, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and working relationship with pupils, and other individuals. In addition, the study conducted by Wang Pei and Chen Shujuan (2008) revealed that the model of features of teachers' competence comprises eight components: the teachers' professional knowledge, his cognitive capability, his ability to monitor and control his teaching process, his career motivation, his career management, ability to cooperate and communicate with others, views of his students, and being worthy of the name of a good teacher.

According to Shavelson et al., (2002) a person might form a response to a situation by calling on a complex set of skills; those skills might change as the task changes over the course of the assessment. Therefore, competence is a complex set of abilities a person may use to response to a situation. In the other word, competence is a observable behavior of a teacher. Hartig, et.al. (2008) defined competencies for educational context as "complex ability constructs that are closely related to performance in real-life situations." Therefore, the competence can be known through a person's behavior or response in a real-life like situation.

Besides, when talking about competence, there should be a standardization or the framework to know the level or the development. Shavelson (2010) again claimed that competence involves: (1) a physical or

intellectual ability, skill or both; (2) a performance capacity to do as well as to know; (3) standardization of the conditions under which performance is observed; (4) some level or standard of performance as "adequate," "sufficient," "proper," "suitable" or "qualified"; and (5) improvement. The standardized framework for the behaviour or performance is also necessary for measuring the competence.

Having reviewed the definitions, and characteristics of the teachers' competence, this study employed the standard framework and its described set of behaviours to assess the teachers' competence. It is the country standard framework for the teachers' competence so it is contextualized and localized. It covers both the teaching competence which is the role of the teacher in the classroom, directly linked to the act of teaching (pedagogical content knowledge) and teachers' competence which is 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.

#### **Factors affected the teachers' competence**

Tambunan (2014) mentions the factors that affect the competence of teachers are school leadership, school culture, school facilities, motivation, achievement motivation, compensation, job satisfaction, the interest of teachers, teacher attitudes, and creativity of teachers. Moreover, Kane (1992) also claimed that teachers' professional competence is positively affected by teaching environment, and

teachers' personal competence which is only revealed in a corresponding teaching environment. Teachers' relationship with colleagues is also part of the teaching environment. Zwart (2007) pointed out that the relevance of relationship among colleagues, especially the collegial co-operation and friendly relationship. Clement and Vandenberghe (2000), Slegers et al. (2002) mentioned that the dependence of the extent of collaboration and studying on the creation level of professional learning opportunities. Through this literature, it can be seen that teachers' own motivation and attitudes matters for the competence as well as the environment and external factors.

In another study, it was shown that personality trait like anxiety, mental adjustment, extroversion, job satisfaction and teaching attitude were found to be significantly affecting on teachers' effectiveness (Mutha, 1980). Linking with the teachers' attitude and interest, motivation to learn is also an important factor for teachers' competence. Evanciew and Rojewsky (1999) stated that competency can be established through effective communication and continuous learning efforts that are part repair. Adult learning theory includes intrinsic motivation, problem-solving task, and the value of approaching learning activities (Heerman, 1986, pp. 117-124). Hence, competency development of the teachers may be central to teachers' motivation to learn and improve themselves.

Through the previous literature and studies, factors affected to teachers' competence can be seen in two different categories of factors .



They are intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors come from the teachers' own personality, motivation and attitudes while the extrinsic factors are the school management and leadership, compensation, facilities and professional environment. In this study, the relevant factors are adapted to research context Covid-19 conditions and are being employed in the analysis.

### **Research Methods**

Sequential mixed-method was employed to identify the most affected Covid-19 factors on the teachers' competences. Firstly, the qualitative research was conducted to find out the situation of the Covid-19 and to adapt the factors in the context. This included interviews to the 9 respondents from national, school and grass root levels through face-to-face, on phone and zoom communications. Secondly, the cross-sectional survey of teachers' competences with Covid-19 factors (from first phase) and analysing the competence affecting factors of high school teachers were done. Stratified random sampling method was used to select sample from the total population of private high school teachers 1,777. According to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, the sample size should be 317. However, there were some limitations during the pandemic and the quantitative survey could be conducted to only 261 private high school teachers in Yangon.

### **Variable tested**

The variables tested are altogether 13 after the bivariate analysis. They include the personal information of the teachers ((1) age, (2)

*experience (3) salary (4) housekeeping), teachers' intrinsic factors ((5) motivation to teach,, (6) teachers' attitude towards adapting the changes) and extrinsic factors ((7) professional environment (8) leadership and management, (9) facilities provided for the teachers, (10) preparation for the teachers before the schools open, (11) compensation) and new normal situation factors ((12) school time and schedules, (13) teaching in the new normal situation.)*

### **Results and Discussion**

The responses from the qualitative semi-structured interviews were analysed using the content analysis. It was found out that (1) teachers' motivation, (2) teachers' attitudes (3) professional environment (4) facilities provided by the schools (5) compensation for the teachers (6) leadership and management (7) preparation for the teachers (8) time limitation and school schedule (9) teaching in new normal conditions are the important components that may contribute to the teachers' competence. Therefore, those factors were added to the components to test in the multiple regression analysis in addition to the teachers' demographic and personal information, and school information. Moreover, from the interviews, it was also showed that the teachers and the school leaders usually have supportive relationships to each other. Some of the schools still give salary even during the school closure due to Covid-19 transmission. The teachers consider for the school and willing to perform the extra duties. In terms of facilities, the schools cannot provide the necessary equipment



sufficiently as well as for the transportation except from small arrangement for the teachers such as providing hand gels, masks, refreshments etc. However, the teachers' do not mind about it. They are happy as long as they still have the jobs and they can teach during the crisis. The teachers also talked with one another to share the teaching experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, in this crisis situation, it is vital that both school leadership and the teachers work hand in hand to face and overcome the challenges. The teachers' competence level is found out to be in high level yet not the highest level. Therefore, it can be assumed that the private high schools in Myanmar are supporting the teachers in these factors to a certain extend yet there may be more they can support to the teachers to perform better

In quantitative analysis, the respondents' demographic and personal data were analysed using the descriptive statistics. The respondents were age-ranged from 19-75 years old with the experience range between 1 and 50 years. 57.9% were females and 42.1% were males. Most of the respondents (61.3%) are bachelor degree holders and (28%) are Master degree holders. A few other undergraduates and other certificate holders (10.7%). The salary range is from 20~ to 1500~ USD. 47.1% earn salary under 300~ USD while 43.7% earn between 601-900~ USD Around 9% earn over 901~ USD. Most of the teachers go the household chores themselves which is 60.9% and 35.2% responded to get help from other family members and a few (3.8%) hire maids.

The level of the teacher's competence was found to be high level in average. There are altogether 15 components of competence in the framework. It was found that the teachers have highest standard of competence in almost half of the components (7 components) while they have the high level of competence in other 8 components. (1) Know the subject content, (2) teach curriculum content, (3) assess, monitor and support on students learning, (4) service to community leadership, (5) promote quality and equity, (6) reflect on own teaching, (7) practices in professional learning have the highest level of average. (1) know how students learn, (2) know appropriate use of technology (3) know the process for communication (4) know the curriculum (5) create supportive safe learning environment (6) work together with others, (7) service to professional (8) engage with colleagues are found to be in the high level of competence.

Table 1. Overall Mean and Standard deviation of teacher's competence

Teachers' competence	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of competence
1. Know how students learn	4.13	.561	High
2. Know appropriate use of technology	3.94	.631	High
3. Know the process for communication	3.90	.695	High
4. Know the curriculum	3.69	.593	High



5. Know the subject content	4.32	.566	Highest
6. Teach curriculum content	4.25	.573	Highest
7. Create a supportive safe learning environment	4.17	.525	High
8. Work together with others	4.12	.609	High
9. Assess, monitor and support on students learning	4.22	.595	Highest
10. Service to professional	4.19	.529	High
11. Service to community leadership	4.34	.589	Highest
12. Promote quality and equity	4.35	.573	Highest
13. Reflect on own teaching	4.36	.610	Highest
14. Engage with colleague	4.10	.600	High
15. Practices in professional learning	4.25	.584	Highest
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>.442</b>	<b>High</b>

The level and situation of the components associated to teacher's competence were also analysed using descriptive statistics. The teachers seem to have the highest level of motivation to teach during Covid-19 new normal

situation. They also have the excellent attitudes towards adapting to the situation. The teachers also received the sufficient preparation time and programs for teaching before the schools reopen. The professional environment, facilities provided by the schools, compensation for the teachers, and leadership and school management were found to be in the high level so it can be assumed these are in the good conditions. Then, the teachers do not seem to find the time limitation and school schedule to be burdensome much for them as the survey shows the level is only moderate.

Table 2. Overall of the mean, standard deviation and level of components of COVID-19 personal and school factors

<b>Components of COVID-19 factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Devia-tion</b>	<b>Level of compo-nents</b>
1. Teachers motivation	4.25	.557	Highest
2. Teachers attitudes	4.23	.526	Highest
3. Professional environment	4.17	.554	High
4. Facilities provided by the schools	3.97	.653	High
5. Compensation for the teachers	4.12	.584	High
6. Leadership and school 7. Management	4.14	.602	High
8. preparation for the teachers	4.21	.627	Highest



9. Time limitation and school schedule	3.32	1.033	Moderate
10. Teaching in new normal conditions	3.54	.799	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>.464</b>	<b>High</b>

Stepwise multiple regression was conducted to find out the predictive factors of teachers' competence. It was revealed that (1) teachers' motivation (2) preparation for the teachers (3) professional environment (4) teachers' attitudes (5) compensation are the most significant factors that have impact on the teachers' competence during the Covid-19.

Table.3 : Predictive factors to teachers' competence

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	Sig.
Teachers' motivation	.790	.624	.790	.000
Preparation for the teachers	.836	.699	.402	.000
Professional environment	.856	.733	.283	.000
Teachers' attitudes	.862	.742	.182	.004
Compensation	.865	.748	-.120	.021
(constant)				.000

In the study on Teachers' motivation to achieve and professional competence in the

performance of elementary school teachers by Sumantri and Whardani (2017), the findings suggest that there is a significant relationship between the teachers' motivation and performance as well as between the professional competence and performance of the elementary school teachers. Therefore, it can be assumed that motivation is the key factor for the teachers' performance or competence.

According to the motivational theories by Katzell and Thompson (1990), motivation comes from external and internal factors as well. This includes the personal and material resource provided as necessary so as to remove the limitation to perform the tasks. Therefore, preparation for the teachers can provide time for the teachers to be prepared and it removes the personal factor. Moreover, motivational incentive/reward theory explained that incentives consist of features of the work situation (e.g what the supervisor says and does) that lead the workers to associate certain forms of behaviours with a reward. Compensation is a kind of reward and appreciation for the teachers. This can, then, support for the teachers' motivation. Group and norm theory of motivation is in line with the assumption that professional environment is one of the key contributors in promoting teachers' motivation. Working in the presence of other group members is itself a source of arousal, especially if the other members are perceived as monitoring and evaluating one's performance. People are often prone to absorb the attitudes and behavioral dispositions of other group members. Good leadership and supportive colleagues will



positively contribute to enhancing the motivation. Motivation is also closely linked with the attitude of the teachers. Attitude theory suggests that people who have favorable attitudes towards their jobs, and/or organizations will be more highly motivated to remain in and perform their jobs. Hence, these factors – motivation, attitudes, compensation, preparation for the teachers, and professional environment are the closely related factors which contribute towards the teachers performance competence.

Furthermore, the study by Nhu Loi & Thao (2016) indicated that professional environment, building and facility, compensation policies and elements relating to teachers are influencing factors to the secondary and high school teachers' professional competence in the ethnic minority areas. Wenno (2016) also pointed out that motivation to work, attitudes, compensation, school culture, and facilities are the contributing factors to Physic Science teachers' competence. However, his study also indicates creativity, work interest, job satisfaction and principal leadership are also the contributing factor to the teachers' competence.

## Conclusions

Having considered all the research findings and consultation with the existing theories and previous studies, it can be concluded that teachers' competence can be impacted significantly by the teachers' own motivation, attitudes, as well as the external factors such as professional environment, compensation, preparation for the teachers. The study suggests

that teachers competence does not only depends on the teachers' own traits, but it also depends on these external factors. Therefore, especially during the crisis situation, the school leaders and policy makers should not neglect these factors in planning and decision making for the crisis situation as well.

It would also be interesting to further study the public schools and other education level to learn if the affected factors are similar or there are differences.

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