



# Teaching competency of Secondary School Teachers: Practical Survey in The North Mountainous Area of Vietnam

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## **Teaching competency of Secondary School Teachers: Practical Survey in The North Mountainous Area of Vietnam**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Education is the foundation of science and technology development, human resource development to meet the needs of socio-economic development. The teacher is the one who organizes, guides and controls the teaching process and the teaching capacity of teachers determines the quality of education. Teacher training is a key task of schools and the education and training sector. There have been many domestic and foreign studies on teacher training, fostering teaching competence for teachers and management in order to improve the quality of fostering teaching competence for teachers. The paper uses survey method and analyses the results of other research in order to clarify the related issues. The sample has 240 teachers from 6 mountainous provinces in the North of Vietnam, the interview as well as some questions have been designed in the form of both online and paper forms. The results showed that we need to pay more attention to the assessment of teachers' teaching capacity, especially teachers of Northern mountainous areas. The question mentioned in the article is that although the orientation of teaching towards student capacity development has been applied by many schools and is quite effective, however, the problem of designing and organizing teaching according to the direction of capacity development is a big problem, which means that the teaching capacity of teachers needs to be paid more attention, especially teachers in remote areas.

**Keywords:** Teaching competency, lower secondary school teachers, capacity assessment, northern mountainous region of Vietnam

### **INTRODUCTION**

Clause 2, Article 66 of the Law on Education of Vietnam has affirmed that teachers have a decisive role in ensuring the quality of education, have an important position in society and are honored by society (National Assembly of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2019). To ensure the quality of teaching requires teachers to meet the requirements of quality and capacity. Teaching competence is a very important part of a teacher's capacity structure, ensuring success in teaching. Vietnam is renovating the general education curriculum from grade 1 to grade 12 (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, 2018b), shifting from a content-based educational program to approaching development of learner's quality and capacity. Therefore, the requirements for the teaching capacity of teachers have new points compared compared to the past.

There have been many studies in Vietnam on the teaching capacity of teachers. The research focuses on clarifying the position of teaching competence in the structure of the teacher's competence, according to which teachers need to have many different competencies to be able to perform their duties well such as: teaching competence, educational capacity, counseling capacity, student support, capacity to coordinate with other educational forces in educating students, etc. Teaching capacity is one of the parts of that structure (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a; Phan Trong Ngo, 2017; MG Son, 2021; V.T. Son, 2012; Thong Nhat et al., 2021). Other studies delve deeper into the structure of teaching competence and show that at each level and different teaching content, teaching competence is specifically described as: teaching competence of elementary school teachers, high school teachers, integrated teaching capacity, experimental teaching capacity, etc. (Giao, 2018; Hong et al., 2016; Phan Trong Ngo, Le Minh Nguyet, 2017; Thao, 2020).

Regarding the assessment of teachers' competency, there are researches that give general suggestions on capacity assessment such as assessment methods and assessment processes (Binh, 2015; Ha, 2014), there are researches to conduct surveys and evaluate assess teachers' competence in specific assessment contents such as: building a framework for assessing teaching capacity, assessing teachers' pedagogical capacity, assessing and evaluating factors affecting pedagogical competence, etc. (Minh & Bieu, 2016; N.T.H. & V.H., 2015; Phan Trong Ngo, Le Minh Nguyet, 2017; Thao, 2020; Thong Nhat et al., 2021). Although the research is quite comprehensive and covers the issue of teaching capacity, assessing the teaching capacity of teachers at all levels from primary school

(grade 1 to grade 5), lower secondary school (grade 6 to grade 9), to upper secondary school (grades 10 to 12), in the context of reforming the current general education program, special attention should be paid to the teaching capacity of junior high school teachers because starting from implement a new education program in grade 6 from the school year 2021 – 2022. It is necessary to have more research to determine the exact level of teaching competence of teachers, thereby making suggestions for principals from lower secondary schools in building capacity in building programs for teachers.

## CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH

### Research Methods and questions

The research question for this issue is: What is the teaching capacity of lower secondary school teachers in the northern mountainous area of Vietnam? Facing the requirements of the new educational program, can the teaching capacity of lower secondary school teachers in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam be met? Since then, there have been a number of ideas to discuss, as a basis for the compensation and improvement of teaching capacity for teachers in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

Research content: Surveying the current situation of teaching competency of lower secondary school teachers according to the four component competencies described above (Section 2.2). Evaluation results according to parameters can affect the teaching competence of teachers: number of years of work and training qualifications. The survey sample is 240 teachers from 6 mountainous provinces in the North of Vietnam: Thai Nguyen, Bac Kan, Cao Bang, Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai, and Lao Cai.

The main research method is self-assessment of lower secondary school teachers on teaching competence through questionnaires combined with in-depth interviews with teachers, principals and teachers' attendance. The content of the questionnaire focuses on the existing level of component competencies. The items expressing survey capacity are determined according to 5 levels, from high to low, corresponding to scores from 5 to 1.

To determine the distance between the levels of the scale, the author calculates the scale score using the formula: (Maximum score - minimum score) : Number of levels. Therefore, the scale distance is: (5-1) : 5 = 0.8 point. Level 1 (Poor): 1 – 1,8; Level 2 (Weak): 1,81 – 2,6; Level 3 (Medium): 2,61 – 3,4; Level 4 (Good): 3,41 – 4,2; Level 5 (Very good): 4,21 – 5.

- The average score for each entry in the tables is calculated by the formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x_i k_i}{n}$$

Formula explanation:  $\bar{x}$  is the average value of each criterion of a problem;  $x_i$  is the score for each criterion ( $x_1 = 3, x_2 = 2, x_3 = 1$ );  $k_i$  is the number of people scoring in each criterion;  $n$  is total number of people who participated in the assessment ( $n = k_1 + k_2 + k_3$ ).

- The overall mean for each questionnaire is calculated using the formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum \bar{x}_i}{N}$$

Formula explanation:  $\bar{X}$  is the average value for a problem;  $\bar{x}$  is the mean value of each criterion;  $N$  is the total number of criteria for a problem.

### The concept of competence and teaching competence of teachers

The concept of competence is approached from many different perspectives. There is a research on the concept that competence is identical with ability. Kaur & Talwar (2014). says that competence is an ability to act effectively with efforts based on many resources (source). see Kim & Kim (2016). defines competence as the ability to act, succeed, and progress based on the effective mobilization and use of combined resources to face life situations. In the current trend of educational development, there are a lot of opinions that disagree with this concept because of the possibility that what exists in the form of potential can turn into reality but also may not turn into reality while referring to a competent person is the expectation that they can do and be effective at a certain job (Binh, 2015). The concept of competence is agreed by many opinions and is defined in Vietnam's legal documents as a personal attribute formed and developed by the inherent qualities and the process of learning, training, allowing people mobilize the synthesis of knowledge, skills and other personal attributes such as interest, belief, will, etc. to successfully perform a certain type of activity, achieve the desired results in the specific conditions (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2018b). Competence is not only innate characteristics but also characteristics formed and developed through the process of learning and training of people.

Teaching is a social function that transforms knowledge and social experiences into individual qualities and abilities of students. Teaching is the central activity that governs all other activities in the school, which is the main task of the teacher. In essence, teaching is the process by which teachers make students master scientific knowledge in a systematic way, and have necessary skills and techniques in study, work and life. This activity

develops independent and creative thinking, forms the basic competencies of students' perception and action, forms in students the scientific worldview, patriotism and other human qualities. To achieve high quality in teaching, teachers need to have the appropriate competencies to carry out the teaching process. Continuing the above analysis of competence, it is believed that teacher's teaching capacity is the quality implementation of teaching activities based on the general mobilization of knowledge, skills, own values and apply them to different teaching conditions to effectively solve problems arising in the teaching process in order to achieve the set teaching goals. The teaching competence of teachers is based on inherent qualities, formed from the process of studying in high schools, receiving basic training in pedagogical schools and developing through practical professional activities (Nguyen, & Huynh,2020).

### The framework of teaching competence of teachers

Each author has a different approach when building the teacher's teaching competency framework. Based on the functions and duties of the teacher and the basic stages of the teaching process, the teaching competence includes (Tuyen, 2019): competence to research learners and teaching programs, competence to lead learners and learning behavior management, teaching design competence, direct teaching competence (communication and behavior in class to create cooperative relationships, instructing, controlling, adjusting learning behavior, monitoring, testing, evaluating the learning process and results, using teaching methods, means and technology). Based on the psychological structure of competence, it includes (Thao, 2020): professional competence, skills and pedagogy, behavior and attitude. According to the professional standard for teachers of general education institutions, teaching competence includes the following components (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2018a): capacity to develop teaching plans towards quality development, student capacity; ability to use teaching methods in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity; ability to test and evaluate in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity; ability to advise and support students in learning (Bruder et al, 2011). We base on the professional standards of teachers of general education institutions and current educational practices in Vietnam to determine the teaching competency framework of lower secondary teachers in the context of general educational program innovation as follows (Table 1):

**Table 1: The framework of teaching competence of teachers**

Component competency	Expression
Ability to develop teaching plans in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity;	analyze the objectives and requirements to be achieved in terms of quality, competence, content, teaching methods, and teaching plans of the subject at the lower secondary level according to the 2018 general education program; develop a teaching plan (school education plan/local education plan) and individual education in the school year; develop a teaching plan of a topic/lesson in the direction of developing students' qualities and abilities;analyze and evaluate the teaching plan of a topic/lesson.
Ability to use teaching methods in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity;	select and use teaching forms and methods, teaching techniques and strategies to develop the quality and competence of students by subject in the 2018 National Curriculum, suitable for students: differentiated teaching, integrated teaching, teaching through active activities of learners.
Ability to test and evaluate learning results in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity;	build testing and evaluation tools; select and use forms, methods and techniques of testing and assessment suitable to students' characteristics and analyze assessment results in the direction of developing students' ability to record progress
Ability to advise and support students in learning.	understand the psycho-physiological characteristics of students, develop a plan and implement counseling and support for each student and student group, have an information channel to support students

### 2.3.2. Research results and discussion

**Table 2: Results of the survey on the capacity to develop teaching plans in the direction of developing students' qualities and competencies**

No.	Expression	Evaluation level										Average
		5		4		3		2		1		
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	
1	Analysis of the objectives and requirements to be achieved in terms of quality, competence, content, teaching methods, and teaching plans of the subject.	54	22,5	79	32,9	74	30,8	22	9,2	11	4,6	3,60

2	Develop individual teaching and educational plans for the school year.	66	27,5	87	36,3	80	33,3	7	2,9	0	0,0	3,88
3	Develop a teaching plan of a topic/lesson in the direction of developing students' qualities and abilities.	70	29,2	85	35,4	74	30,8	11	4,6	0	0,0	3,89
4	Analyze and evaluate the teaching plan of a topic/lesson.	65	27,1	92	38,3	73	30,4	10	4,2	0	0,0	3,88
<b>Average score</b>												<b>3,81</b>

According to the data, it can be seen that the overall assessment of the teacher's ability to develop a teaching plan is at Good (average score of 3,81), and each item is also rated at a good level with an average score of 3,6 to 3,89. However, the level of assessment is uneven, about 60% to 70% of teachers rate themselves as good and very good while there are still more than 30% of teachers who rate themselves as medium (Table 1). A small number of teachers rated themselves as below medium. The results of in-depth interviews with some teachers show that the new general education program requires teachers to analyze the requirements to be met and identify the content and methods corresponding teaching methods to form the quality and capacity of students. This is different from the way of analyzing the goals and teaching content of the current program, which makes it difficult for teachers. The content of developing the teaching plan of the subject, the lesson plan that teachers still do every year, but facing the new requirements of the implementation of the sixth grade program in the 2021-2022 school year, many teachers still show awkwardness. Although the Ministry of Education and Training has implemented training activities for all teachers in the form of online, for some teachers who are old and slow to innovate, the training activities have not been really effective.

**Table 3: Results of competence survey using teaching methods in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity.**

No.	Expression	Evaluation level										Average
		5		4		3		2		1		
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	
1	Select and use teaching forms and methods, teaching techniques and strategies in order to develop students' quality and competence according to subject.	68	28,3	104	43,3	62	25,8	5	2,1	1	0,4	3,97
2	The force to choose and use forms, methods, and teaching techniques suitable for students.	68	28,3	111	46,3	56	23,3	5	2,1	0	0,0	4,01
3	Promote the activeness of students in teaching.	89	37,1	107	44,6	44	18,3	0	0,0	0	0,0	4,19
<b>Average score</b>												<b>4,06</b>

The ability to use teaching methods in the direction of quality development, the student's ability is also self-assessed at Good with the average score of 4,06. Over 70% rated at good and very good, the average rate is from 18% to 25.8%, and especially just over 2% rated below average. In fact, the movement to innovate teaching methods in the direction of promoting the positivity of students, launched by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training for many years, has created a significant change in teaching methods and forms (Table 3). However, the selection of teaching methods to achieve the goal of systematically developing students' quality and capacity as required by the program, most teachers self-assessed at Good.

**Table 4: Results of the capacity survey to test and evaluate learning outcomes in the direction of developing students' qualities and capacity.**

No.	Expression	Evaluation level					Average
		5	4	3	2	1	



		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	
1	Develop testing and evaluation tools suitable to assessment forms and methods.	76	31,7	105	43,8	43	17,9	16	6,7	0	0,0	4,00
2	Select and use forms, methods and techniques of testing and assessment suitable to students' characteristics.	63	26,3	120	50,0	51	21,3	6	2,5	0	0,0	4,00
3	Analyze assessment results in the direction of developing students' ability to record progress	44	18,3	89	37,1	75	31,3	22	9,2	10	4,2	3,56
<b>Average score</b>												<b>3,86</b>

Examination and assessment of learning results is an important component of teaching competence. The overall result is 3,86 at the Good level (more than 70% in Item 1 and 2, 55% rated good and very good in Item 3). There is a percentage of teachers who appreciate the fit between the test tools and the form and method of assessment (more than 75%); the concordance between assessment methods and techniques with student characteristics (more than 76%). However, with the new requirements of assessment in the direction of developing quality, capacity and recognizing students' progress, teachers self-evaluate lower. Assessment according to the current program that focuses on grades and the accumulation of knowledge of students is no longer relevant to the new educational program, this is a point to note in order to plan for capacity building for teachers (Table 4).

**Table 5: Results of survey on competence to advise and support students in learning.**

No.	Expression	Evaluation level										Average
		5		4		3		2		1		
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%	
1	Understanding the psychophysiological characteristics, learning characteristics of students.	115	47,9	81	33,8	44	18,3	0	0,0	0	0,0	4,30
2	Develop counseling and support plans for each student and student group.	52	21,7	76	31,7	87	36,3	19	7,9	4	1,7	3,61
3	Provide counseling and support for each student and student group.	88	36,7	96	40,0	47	19,6	9	3,8	0	0,0	4,10
4	There is an information channel to support students.	65	27,1	74	30,8	101	42,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	3,85
<b>Average score</b>												<b>3,96</b>

The results of the teacher's ability to advise and support students in learning are assessed at Good with an overall average score of 3,96. However, the level of evaluation was uneven among the items. Grasping the characteristics of students are highly appreciated with nearly 90% of teachers claiming to be at Good or Very good (average score of 4,30). In fact, teachers always have to master the characteristics of students, whether they are teaching organizations according to the content approach or approaching the development of students' qualities and abilities (Table 5). However, with the requirements of the new educational program, counseling and student support no longer happens spontaneously, but a scientific and feasible plan is needed. This has not been done well by many teachers. Previously, the plans to advise and support students in their studies were often integrated into the school year's task plan, so the content was quite sketchy and not highly appreciated (average score of 3,61). The main information channel to advise and support students in learning is through phone, social network Facebook, Zalo.

**Table 6: Results of summary of teaching competency of lower secondary school teachers in the northern mountainous area of Vietnam**

No.	Component competency	General Average	Level
1	Ability to develop teaching plans in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity;	3,81	4
2	Ability to use teaching methods in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity;	4,06	1
3	Ability to test and evaluate learning results in the direction of developing students' quality and capacity;	3,86	3
4	Ability to advise and support students in learning.	3,96	2

Although the teaching orientation towards developing student's capacity has been applied by schools and put into the teaching innovation process for many years and has also proven its preminent characteristics, by creating provide the best opportunities for student growth and development (Table 6). However, the problem of designing and organizing teaching in the direction of capacity development is not simple, requiring many specialized components such as: teaching planning, teaching organization, organization assessment according to the orientation of developing the quality and capacity of students. In which, the ability to develop teaching plans, the ability to test and evaluate learning results in the direction of quality development, and student's capacity are underestimated (average score: 3.81 and 3.86). This is the basis for determining the focus of teacher training in the following year.

### CONCLUSION

In order to successfully carry out the renovation of the general education program, it is necessary to pay due attention to the assessment of teachers' teaching capacity as a practical basis for setting goals and selecting content for retraining all teachers in general and lower secondary school teachers in particular. The survey results show that the teaching competency of lower secondary school teachers in the northern mountainous areas of Vietnam is quite good, but the results are not equal among the different competencies. From this point, it is confirmed that a large percentage of surveyed teachers have met the requirements of implementing the new educational program. However, the research results of the author conducted a small-scale survey with a number of 240 teachers randomly selected in lower secondary schools and randomly on the subject, so the conclusions are just preliminary. Large-scale studies are needed to further confirm the validity of these conclusions.

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