



TEACHING COMPETENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Teaching competency is one of the most critical characteristics that influence student learning outcomes, engagement and overall educational achievement in higher education. The review aims to contribute to the on-going conservation on pedagogical improvement and the professionalization of teaching in higher education by synthesizing current findings and suggesting avenues for further research. This review paper systematically surveys the existing literature on teaching competency and identifies the core skills, knowledge and attributes that instructors need to successfully create a supportive and effective learning environment. This review highlights some gaps in the research, such as the impact of professional development programmes, the role of mentorship in improving teaching skills of faculty, and the need to better understand the relationships between teaching skills and student engagement. In addition, researcher explore the effect of different educational context such as online, hybrid and non-traditional learning environment on the development of proficient instructors. It seeks to inform policy, practice and faculty development initiatives.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Teaching Competency, Teaching Ability, Learning Environment, Professional Development, Pedagogical Improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities play a vital role in shaping society and the labour market. Teaching is the act of transferring values, information and skills to others. Competency employed in a distinct approach for working efficiency widely. This competency means mastery of one or more abilities and attitude of teaching performance. Teacher context the phrase employed, 'Teaching Competency' relates to the behaviour of a teacher when interaction in classroom teaching environment. A creative attitude based on demands of teaching competency for specified objectives and assessment the criteria have a significant potential to improve the quality of education (Rajalakshmi and Saila, 2024). Competency in education is the teacher's ability to apply knowledge and abilities in real teaching situations. It is not simply about gaining theoretical knowledge but about purposeful use of knowledge in real classroom settings (Eben and Sebastian, 2007; Sivakumar, 2025). A commonly accepted definition of competence in teaching in higher education is the capacity to effectively encourage student engagement, foster learning and contribute to student success. This includes subject area expertise, pedagogical skills, emotional intelligence, and the capacity for innovation and adaptation to changing educational situations. With rising enrolment rates, diverse student bodies and rapid technological advances, teaching competency is becoming more acknowledged as a significant concern in improving educational standards and student results. Ultimately, we need effective teaching in higher education to educate students for the complexity of the modern world. Its goals are to spark intellectual curiosity, inspire lifelong learning, and offer students with the resources they need to thrive personally and professionally. Considering the various aspects of teaching competency, it becomes apparent that it is vital in forming the future of the teachers and students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a systematic literature review design to investigate the concept, dimensions, assessment approaches and drivers of teaching competency in the setting of higher education. A qualitative descriptive method is used to summarize existing scholarship and identify important patterns, gaps, and implications for future research.

Data Sources

The literature is obtained from reputable academic resources such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science and ResearchGate for the sake of dependability and academic rigor.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE IN INDIA

Mandal (2018) studied the teaching competencies of the current teachers. The researcher in this study identified nine different dimensions; field, social and cultural, investigation, curricula, lifelong learning, emotional, communication, information and communication technology, and environmental competency.

Nayak and Pani (2019) did a literature review on teacher skills and preservice and in-service teacher education. This study suggested that critical teaching qualities are strongly sought outcomes. Ramesh and Krishnan (2020) studied many aspects of teaching skills in the higher education scenario. The research advises the construction of a relevant competency framework to assess the effectiveness of teachers, identify and



rank areas for professional development and assist their personal and professional development goals.

Chinliansima and Fanai (2022) examined to find out the level of teaching competency of the pre-service student teacher based on their educational background and location. The results showed no statistically significant differences between teaching proficiency and location or educational background.

Bala and Nivedita (2024) want to discuss the place of teaching competency in the teaching-learning nexus. The study concluded that teachers need to have high level of competence and ability to accommodate the different learning styles of their students and to improve their learning. The readiness and ability of higher education to educate online were explored by Senapati and Malakar (2024). The results indicated that technologies, time management, communication, and course design had no significant effect on perceived readiness for online teaching.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURES IN ABROAD

Tigelaar et al. (2004) led the development and validation of a framework for teaching competence in higher education. This investigation established and validated a teaching competency framework for use as a basis for teacher assessment in higher education.

Barth (2007) undertook a study to investigate the possibilities of formal and informal learning in relation to the development of teaching skills in higher education. The research indicated that the development of crucial competences is based on cognitive and non-cognitive dispositions and requires a variety of scenarios.

Schaeper (2009) investigated the evolution of competences and teaching learning arrangements in higher education. The analysis of the results by linear regression demonstrated that new bachelor programs provide better conditions for competence development.

Selvi (2010) investigated the teaching competencies. The researcher in this study covered and explained the important topic, the basic framework of teacher's competences to improve the teaching-learning process in education.

Lozano (2012) provided a critical analysis of the concept of competences in higher education, emphasizing its weaknesses and limitations. Finally, the implications of applying the capabilities approach to instruction and learning in higher education were discussed. Vila et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between the production function and the practice of higher education, and the development of innovation-related abilities among university instructors. The development of specific competencies by graduates and the styles of teaching and learning are considered to have important marginal impacts.

Arinto (2013) examined a framework for the development of open and distance learning capabilities and minimum competency for teaching online distance education all capabilities indicated for each of the four basic categories.

According to Munoz Carril et al. (2013), higher education institutions should clearly specify the roles and competencies of faculty members who teach in virtual environments. The results showed that the area where

participants claim the most expertise, as compared to evaluation, is content authoring.

Aziz and Akhtar (2014) studied the impact of training on the competencies of higher education teachers. In this survey study the question was discussed whether or not training programs should be kept standard boost the abilities of the teacher.

Duta and Rafaila (2014) explored a study on the development of relational competencies of university teachers, and finally they published a set of recommendations on the system of professional training and development.

Research on the development of competencies in higher education was studied by Velasco et al. (2014). The results indicated that 90% of the respondents consider the development of competencies in higher education important or very important and 73% consider that they have received good or very good training in the development and evaluation of competencies, mainly in the areas of teamwork, skills of oral and written communication and practical use of theoretical knowledge.

The influence of instructor's proficiency on work performance was studied by Xu and Ye (2014) in a research institution with industry characteristics. In research institutes with industrial characteristics, they found a significant positive correlation between the teachers' competency level, four dimensions and work performance, especially between research capacity, teaching ability and industry awareness.

Abilio (2016) sought to examine, based on the students' perceptions, the qualifications of the higher education teachers in the state institution in East Timor. The data suggested that the pupils had a favourable impression of it.

Farmer and Ramsdale (2016) examined competences for teaching online. The study also intends to provide a framework that can support professional growth and self-assessment and determine essential skill area that contribute to success in online education.

Malechwanz et al. (2016) investigated student views and faculty measured competencies in higher education. Students' impressions are shaped by four dimensions of faculty competency: teaching, research, additional service, and advising, the survey found.

Niwas (2018) has studied the relationship between trainee teacher's attitude toward creative teaching and their level of teaching competency in the Himalayan area. The results of the study revealed that the attitudes of the trainee teachers regarding creative teaching and teaching competence are different in percentage. The differences in the teaching competence of the trainee teacher in the pedagogical group are considerable.

Ally (2019). studied on the future digital teacher for training and guidance: The competency profile for digital teacher. The researcher looked at essential contributions to education in the future, identifying elements impacting education and constructing a competence profile for the future digital teacher

Augskalne and Garjane (2019) evaluated the educational skills obtained by the instructors during the course in an effort to identify and explain them. The findings of the study showed that the teacher's competencies are still in their nascent stage. There is a need for an authoritative method, and



the attitude toward the needs of the student's personality is wrong.

In the study of Mallillin and Mallillin (2019) to examined the responder profile as well as the performance level and competency skills of the faculty member in higher education institutions. The findings show that there is no significant relationship between the respondent's profile and their level of performance and competency skills.

Smolikevych (2019) studied the main competences of the instructor of modern higher education. In this research, the main competences of teachers have been defined and explained based on the educational philosophy.

Raitskaya and Tikhonova (2019) they researched on competencies, talents, features and skills of higher education professors. This study has great impact on the prospects of successful employability of teachers of universities.

Albrahim (2020), discussed the skills and capabilities of online training. This study analysed and defined the six areas of online teaching abilities and competencies; pedagogical skills, content skills, design skills, technological skills, management, institutional and social and communication skills.

Esteve-Mon et al. (2020) systematically reviewed the literature about the ability of university instructors in digital instruction. The results revealed that university teachers should be prepared to cope with the changing requirements of the contemporary digital environment. This includes digital competency in both technical and pedagogical aspects. The function and ability of instructors in higher education have been discussed by Krstic and Radulovic (2020). The real findings show that good teachers can give sensible, intelligible lectures and point out the most important things.

Lavina et al. (2020) studied professional competences of higher education instructor. It was concluded that the specialized training in the area of communication technology leads to the generation of high-level cognitive components, which enables independent knowledge acquisition.

Sozo and Keptyimer (2020) sought to analyse the ability of instructors as judged by Arab Minch University pupils. According to the study, the student rated the subject-matter expertise, professional qualities and time management skills of the instructor as mediocre.

Colas-Bravo et al. (2021) studied the link between digital teaching competence and sustainability in higher education through a qualitative systematic review. The results allowed to know the state of research on sustainability and digital competence, the evolution of scientific production in the last decade, and the methodology utilized in these studies.

Holmes et al. (2021) Intended to provide a brief overview of the main obstacles and conflicts of clearly defining teaching competency in higher education programs and assessing competence, and two particular practical solutions.

Masdoki et al. (2021) explored the most significant research related to 4.0 competency instruction in higher education. The outcomes of the review showed that literature did not fulfill all the pre-determined standards for teaching 4.0 skills. Therefore, it is vital to develop a conceptual assessment framework for education 4.0 competence among instructors at higher education institutions.

Yousuf and Al-Abdulqader (2021) studied on teacher competency in teaching. This article shows the extent of competence in teaching innovation integration.

Dervenis et al. (2022) conducted a review of teaching competencies in higher education. Until recently, some competencies, like teacher's digital competency, were considered in the educational process, which was surprising in the study.

Gumanova and Sukolova (2022) lead on the teaching competence of university professors. The study is to provide an overview of the research on the abilities of university professors. Their study shows that instruction has largely concentrated on digital competences within the last ten years. Most of the research are quantitative and use unique questionnaires, because there are no standardized evaluation instruments in the field.

Mehrotra et al. (2022) reviewed and distilled the abilities and competencies needed by instructors to effectively teach in online training environments. Six skill and competency groups have been identified: instructional abilities, subject-matter skills, technological skills, administrative.

Pablos et al. (2022) reviewed teachers' digital competencies in higher education. Findings showed that most of the study is on analysing teacher's thoughts and self-assessment of their digital competencies.

Pera and Hajdukiewicz (2022) studied the current level of teachers' ICT skills in universities and high schools and if teachers' digital skills are related to their previous teaching experience. The results of the research show that the general level of competence is intermedium, with knowledge and abilities in ICT being somewhat higher.

Pereira and Felicetti (2022) carried out a study on the teaching and learning of professional skills at undergraduate institutions. This study investigated the relationship between classroom activities that contribute to the development of particular professional abilities in higher education classrooms and educational theories that are based on competencies.

Rogele et al. (2022) explored the role of professors in disciplinary study programs as gatekeepers for sustainable development capabilities (SDC). So, they thought that student-centred teaching approaches were particularly suitable for teaching abilities for interpersonal and systems thinking.

Cuzcano-Huarcaya et al. (2023) analysed the teaching skills of the virtual learning environment of higher education. The results indicated that growing teaching competences in virtual education should be accompanied by developing disciplinary, pedagogical, technological, and research competency that would lead to authentic growth of teaching and learning process.

Dias-Trindade et al. (2023) conducted a study to identify which areas of university instructor's digital competencies in Spain and Portugal are stronger and more vulnerable. The results emphasize the importance of designing public policies that can prepare teachers for a higher level of digital education and the importance of improving teacher training, adapted to the demands of their institution, to increase their level of digital competence.

Howard and Tondeur (2023) studied the idea of digital competences in higher education throughout the move to online learning, and the implications and recommendations for further research are discussed.

Moreira et al. (2023) investigated the competence-based approach in higher education, arguing that a high standard of education requires teachers to process the pedagogical,



research, and personal competencies needed to perform their teaching obligations.

Sapargaliyeva et al. (2023) evaluated advanced instructional resources and competencies in higher education. The only group of students that demonstrated progress in their identification of interest in these activities were the students that observed teachers employing creative ways for teaching foreign languages.

Chaharbashloo et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive review on online teaching competencies in higher education environment. The objective of this systematic research was to identify and classify online teaching competencies in higher education and to offer a conceptual model for the development of professional learning opportunities in online contexts. In total, 106 competences were discovered across seven broad domains. The emergent dimensions of the identified competences inspired a three-level model for building professional development programme for HE institutions are provided and the consequences for HE instructors and institutions are examined.

Ren and Wu (2025) studied the intelligent Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) suggested to study the issues and competencies of AI integration in higher education. The research findings revealed four AI integration competencies and approaches.

Critical Note

A critical review of the extant literature on teaching competence in higher education shows that while the notion has been the focus of substantial academic interest, it is conceptually fragmented and unequal in its contextualization. Most studies accept teaching competence as a multidimensional notion comprising topic knowledge, pedagogical skills, communication ability, assessment literacy, technology proficiency, and professional ethics. However, there is no globally agreed framework, which leads to diverse definitions and measurement methods in different disciplines and localities. The literature demonstrates a dominance of pedagogical and content knowledge, with a tendency to sideline affective qualities such as empathy, inclusion and ethical responsibility. Digital and technological competence has been one of the most studied topics, especially in post-pandemic environments, but these competences are often seen as add-ons instead of being integrated into broader models of teaching ability. This points to the importance of integrative frameworks of pedagogical, technological and socio-emotional competences. Methodologically, a significant majority of the examined research lean primarily on self-reported questionnaires and student feedback surveys, which can raise questions about subjectivity and response bias. Empirical research is still limited in its use of classroom observations, peer evaluations, and longitudinal approaches. Moreover, cross-cultural and comparative research is still sparse, limiting the generalizability of findings to different higher education environments. Another important gap in the literature is the missing relationship between teaching ability and student learning results. While many studies find a positive association, empirical evidence on causal relationships is limited. The focus often is on teacher characteristics rather than on the translation of these competencies into heightened student involvement, critical thinking and academic accomplishment. The analysis

also suggests that professional development efforts aimed at improving the teaching competence are fragmented and short-term. Few studies critically examine the effectiveness of institutional policies, mentoring structures, or ongoing faculty development programs. This indicates the need for sustainable, context-sensitive and evidence-based approaches of professional learning in higher education.

In sum, the research on higher education teaching competency is conceptually rich, but methodologically limited. Future research should concentrate on the development of integrated competency frameworks, the application of mixed-method and longitudinal research designs, and the strengthening of the empirical link between teaching competency and educational results. Such initiatives would be of vital importance in increasing the quality of teaching and in the pursuit of excellence in higher education.

CONCLUSION

The teaching competency review in Higher Education generally ends with a statement highlighting the significance of evaluation and enhancement of teaching quality, continuous professional growth, and adoption of innovative pedagogies. It can emphasize that teaching competence is more than subject-matter expertise; it also involves pedagogical skills, methods for engaging students and flexibility in different learning contexts. Additionally, the conclusion may highlight the significance of institutional support, such as faculty training, mentorship programs, and the application of technology to enhance learning, in promoting a culture of teaching excellence. It may also require ongoing research to identify best practices and develop frameworks for assessing teaching effectiveness in diverse fields. At the end of the day, the assessment may merit a holistic strategy that weighs student learning outcomes against quality of instruction to ensure universities are able to effectively prepare students for the challenges of a dynamic world.

Research of this kind is extremely little in India. After reviewing the teaching competency in higher education some of the aspects that I believe still require further investigation are the impact of professional development, interdisciplinary teaching competencies, mentorship and peer learning, the influence of institutional culture on teaching competency, sustainable and ethical considerations, cultural competency and diversity, and a comparative study of teaching competency between India and other countries.

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