



# UMT Education Review (UER)

Volume 4 Issue 1, Spring 2021

ISSN(P): 2616-9738 ISSN(E): 2616-9746

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/uer>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/uer.41>

Homepage: <https://journals.ugt.edu.pk/index.php/uer>

Article: **Analyzing Teacher Competency: Knowledge, Skills, Aptitude of Secondary School Teachers**

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Pub. Online: Spring 2021

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/uer.41.04>

Article History: Received: 6-07-2020  
Revised: 24-8-2020  
Accepted: 29-6-2021

To cite this article: Parveen, F., Nazir, N., & Zamir, S. (2021). Analyzing teacher competency: Knowledge, skills, aptitude of secondary school teachers. *UMT Education Review*, 4(1), 58–79.  
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A publication of the  
Department of Education, School of Social Sciences and Humanities,  
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan



# Analyzing Teacher Competency: Knowledge, Skills, and Aptitude of Secondary School Teachers of Islamabad, Pakistan

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## Abstract

Teacher competency is the key to effective and quality teaching. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, competency denotes the ability, skill, and strength of an individual used to perform a given task. In order to ascertain the efficacy of the learning outcomes of any education system, teacher competency is measured using knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) model. The current study used the same model to assess teacher competency of the secondary school teachers of Islamabad. Stratified random sampling technique was used to choose the desired sample comprising 100 male and 100 female secondary school teachers teaching in Islamabad. Data were collected through personal visits of the selected schools. A self-developed questionnaire consisting of 20 items was used to collect the data. Data were analyzed using various statistical techniques such as ANOVA and the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient were also calculated. The findings revealed that there is a strong and positive association among all the determinants of teacher competency, that is, knowledge, skills and attitude. The study also found that female teachers have better teaching competency as compared to male teachers. Moreover, private school teachers showed better teaching competency than public school teachers. The study also revealed that teachers with less than 5 years of experience performed better than their seniors.

**Keywords:** attitude, knowledge, skills, teacher competency

## Introduction

Human capital is rendered as the most potent internal resource for an organization to achieve stability and sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; teachers are that resource for schools. Every effort is made to hire the best-qualified resource for teaching in public and private schools in Pakistan. Nevertheless, we have been unable to reach the educational goals set by any educational policy so far (Saad, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to know what has gone wrong and where. The performance of any organization depends upon the potential capability or competence of its workers. Punjab Education Department has set National Professional Standards for teachers describing teacher competencies required to achieve Sustainable Education Goals

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(Batool et al., [2021](#)). However, it is not clear how much teachers themselves are aware of developing these competencies in themselves. If that had been the case, better teacher training and professional development would have been followed.

If a nation desires to achieve high education standards, then teacher competencies should be developed under a specified portfolio of professional development identified by proper needs analysis (Lakshminarayanan et al., [2016](#)). The academic standards and quality of education can be improved by enhancing teacher competencies (Celik, [2011](#); Day, [2013](#)). Competency is a high-quality standard of effort of a worker to achieve any objective or goal Chouhan and Srivastava ([2014](#)) therefore school teachers must develop teaching competencies according to changes occurring rapidly, especially about the use of technology. Teacher competencies may be enhanced in teaching such as methodology, classroom management, and other performance leading to achievement by focusing on planned training of these skills.

The quality, standard, and effectiveness of any education program mainly depend upon the standards of teachers, the role and responsibilities, while the effectiveness of teachers relies on realizing educational objectives and excel in the process of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, [2002](#); Stronge, [2018](#); Capel et al., [2019](#)). The role and importance of teachers in the scholastic system of education and cognitive abilities development are vital. Adetayo ([2016](#)) postulated that quality in teaching does not occur merely by teachers' qualifications, knowledge, or skills; teacher competency is developed through their enthusiasm to learn, high morale, and commitment to teaching.

Teachers' role in the education system is considered a significant element. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ([2005](#)) reiterated time and again that "teacher quality is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement. Multiple studies have affirmed this stance, emphasizing the role, responsibilities, values, and involvement of teachers in accomplishing educational objectives (Barry, [2020](#); Harris & Sass, [2011](#); Viinikka & Ubani, [2019](#)).

Ayeni ([2005](#)) stated that teachers' competence could be determined by teaching methodology, visualization, and concern in sharing knowledge. Harris and Muijs ([2005](#)) also focused on the importance of sharing of knowledge of a teacher. The excellence and presentation of teachers has always remained a point of attention in research (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, [2002](#); Lee et al., [2011](#); Shah & Abualrob, [2012](#); Nabi et al., [2018](#)). According to Darling-Hammond et al. ([2017](#)), the standard of teaching depends on the information and expertise of the teacher. However,

passion and knowledge of a teacher's subject, determination, and commitment also play a significant role.

The classic writer of management literature Ayeni (2005) defined competence as a capability to achieve all that an individual demands to be capable of carrying out when proved experientially. A worker can show a high standard of determination and effort in any assigned activity. Competence is an essential and a primary trait and ability of a person to use in any assigned task (Boyatzis, 2008).

### Objectives

- i. To investigate the teaching competencies among secondary school teachers in secondary schools Islamabad.
- ii. To assess the demographic variations of gender, sector, and teaching experience regarding a teacher's competency among secondary school teachers of Islamabad.

### Hypotheses

- i. There is no association between various determinants of teacher competency scores of secondary school teachers in Islamabad.
- ii. There is no significant statistical difference regarding teaching competencies between male and female teachers of secondary schools Islamabad.
- iii. There is no significant statistical difference regarding teaching competencies between public and private sector teachers of secondary schools Islamabad.
- iv. There is no significant difference among teaching competencies regarding teaching experience of the secondary school teachers Islamabad.

### Literature Review

Teacher competency is associated with effective quality teaching. Competency is the ability, skill, and strength of an individual to perform any given task. Weinert (2001) postulated that competence is multifactorial. Chouhan and Srivastava (2014) defined competence as a "personal trait or set of habits leading to effective or superior job performance." Researchers advocated essential competencies needed for effective performance on a specific job, and these competencies would be measured using a variety of tests (Barry, 2020). Foss et al. (2021) observed that competencies are the abilities, which add "clear economic value" to on-job personal efforts that intelligence scores may not predict and hence does not calculate professional success anymore; henceforth, he proposed that alternative measures of capability must be developed.

However, the dramatic rise in using the term 'competency' in organizational dynamics was resounded by Boyatzis (1982) in his book —The Competent Manager. According to Boyatzis (2008), competency could be a trait or skill, a motive, or may include an exclusive aspect of one's self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge. Competencies include the collective success factors necessary for achieving significant results in a specific job or work role in a particular organization. Success factors are combinations of knowledge, skills, and abilities (more historically called — KSAs) described in specific behaviors and demonstrated by superior performers in those jobs or work roles (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Recently, the term competence was elucidated by Haddouchane et al. (2017) as a certified ability in a particular subject area acquired through learning in a career that can be evaluated. Wongnaa and Boachie (2018) advocated using the KSA model to define professional competencies as a foundational step for making job descriptions, designing career-oriented training, and teacher appraisals.

Teachers' core competencies are professional capabilities essential to instruction. These involve knowledge, skills, attitude, among other attributes (Tigelaar et al. 2004). In secondary school education, teachers have a direct and significant influence on students. A lack of core competencies will negatively affect the teachers' confidence and attitude and influence students' learning process (Rohaani et al., 2012). Caena (2011) argued that core competencies should be treated as an integrated concept, a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, and skills that allows teachers to use inner and external resources to meet comprehensive demand. Teachers' knowledge generally consists of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge (Shulman, 1987).

Skills entail creating a favorable learning environment, producing and adjusting instruction design, and applying appropriate instruction, strategies, and instructional evaluation methods. Attitude covers teachers' commitment to and responsibilities in teaching, tutoring, and administrative work. Teachers well-equipped with core competencies can reasonably plan consistent curricula and activities in all circumstances (Koster & Dengerink, 2008). Good teachers can draw from experiences and overcome discrepancies between pedagogical theories, professional knowledge, and practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hagger & McIntyre, 2006).

In order to get an idea about the efficacy of learning outcomes in any education system, teachers' performance is one of the critical factors to determine it. John Dewey always considered teaching and learning process as an incredibly admirable

and accountable profession where the teachers must undergo monitoring and evaluation to be held accountable for their professional growth and development to maintain high standards of teaching (Reeves, 2004). Mohanty (2000) viewed teachers' competency and performance as the most critical input in an education system. Teachers' competency and performance depends on various factors like qualification, experience, enthusiasm, training, skills, and the environmental and management structure of the institution. Based on such a definition, expert competence is not an inborn phenomenon but can be gathered via learning. Many studies share the opinion about teachers' professional competence as a collection of understanding diverse teaching philosophies, exercising them in various ways, and recognizing their ethical significance (Kaiser & König, 2019).

Miller et al. (2017) illustrated that inner influences have an implausible influence on the educator's opinion of achievement and the exterior dynamics capable of creating complications in accomplishing instructional purposes. Okwilagwe (2017) expressed four categories of competencies which are as follows:

Functional competencies are essential to carry out tasks. Managerial competencies are essential for knowledge, expertise, and abilities to organize different resources of an organization. Human competencies need to develop knowledge, approach, and abilities to motivate and encourage human capital. Conceptual competencies are based on abstract ideas. The need and arrangements of these competencies depend on the level and structure of the institution.

### **Importance of Teaching Competency**

It refers to the capability of a teacher to display on-the-job expertise and information extended as a consequence of exercise (Adodo, 2014). These abilities and data arranged in the preparation of teaching courses are planned by the curriculum planners to share to contribute to attain the anticipated education purposes unluckily not. Much consideration is compensated by teacher expertise, and hence of all the competencies a teacher wants, perhaps none is ignored as that of assessing student developments. Adodo (2013) further explained that it is not unfamiliar to find instructors/teachers who lack a grip of basic moralities of measuring or who lack the aptitude or abilities necessary to produce a classroom test in assessing students' knowledge.

### **Teachers' Professional Competence**

The impression of professional competence is defined as the interactive and elaborative practice of considerations, ability, behavioral variables, and motivating

variables for employing a specific duty or work (Epstein & Hundert, [2002](#)). Before professional competence is measured, there are two principal components of collected works and studies on teachers' competency skills. The first one is called Bright Person Hypothesis (BPH); it gave the understanding of overall perceptive features, including intellect or reflection (Kennedy et al., [2008](#); Kunter et al., [2013](#)). Based on this point of view, the individuals who are resilient, they have the intellectual aptitude, are easy to change, flexible, and understanding problem-solvers. That is an essential trait and quality for dealing with intricate and surprising errands in teaching and learning (Riasat & Arif, [2018](#)). The research on this feature emphasizes the strategies to encourage teachers to continue with the profession instead of leaving it in a hard way (OECD, [2005](#)).

Blomeke and Delaney ([2012](#)) have recommended a model of professional competency of teachers with two main elements of profession-specific knowledge and affective-motivational characteristics. The specialized knowledge comprises general pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. The elements relating to emotional and motivational characteristics are motivation, self-regulation, professional beliefs about instructional and learning process, and subject content knowledge. Others (Adetayo et al., [2016](#); Yang et al., [2020](#)) have recommended a comparable model.

### **Factors affecting Teachers' Professional Competence**

Many studies had already been conducted to get an idea about teachers' competency and the factors that can increase or decrease teachers' professional competency at various levels of educational settings. In order to achieve the aims, goals, and objectives of the educational organization and the accomplishment of teaching objectives, thorough knowledge of the subject-based content is necessary for the teacher. In this way, the desired target can be achieved with tremendous success. Professional knowledge of the subject and various other factors associated with the teaching-learning process demands the teachers' enhancement and development (Sleegers et al., [2005](#); Beverborg et al., [2020](#)). Similarly, the study conducted by OECD ([2005](#)) analyzed numerous issues that affect the knowledge and understanding of teachers. Furthermore, it affects the encouragement and motivation of the teachers for grooming, professional development, self-understanding, self-respect, attention, and freedom to do something on their own. Mahler et al. ([2018](#)) pointed out various fundamental elements for boosting teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm in working environment. The techniques for enhancing teachers' enthusiasm in working atmosphere and during assessment

strategies would improve the productive learning environment and the teachers' ability and skills.

The attainment assessment and development and productivity of teachers' highlights an encouraging aspect related to the teachers' competency, working attitude, training, and all other supporting materials that help in their competency building. This acknowledgment hints at encouraging teachers by their administrators. A study conducted by Baier et al. (2019) determined that the learners' academic results and their overall progress and development is directly related to the teachers' professional competency and linked with teachers' efficacy beliefs.

### **Methods of Enhancing Teachers' Competence**

Teaching experience is one of the indicators of teaching competence. Teaching experience somewhat contributes to the development of teachers' competence and skills in various teaching and learning environments. According to other researchers (Burroughs et al., 2019; Wayne & Youngs, 2003) the results related to teaching experience are challenging to understand for various reasons. A question is raised: whether the teacher was inducted when there was scarcity or a surplus? Some situations include varied teaching experience; for example, some teachers leave jobs due to complex social or psychological factors, while others want a break from work. Therefore, teacher experiences could not be the same, whereas the consequence would be the same: leaving teaching (Ladd & Sorenson, 2017). The reactions mentioned above could also be attributed to different factors like workforce in the market and traditional community trends.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Competence refers to a person's ability to perform a particular activity – quality, skills, and ability to do something competently. It is submitted as the intrinsic characteristic of a person to perform (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Prabawati, 2018). Competency is generally defined as the level of integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Stoof et al., 2002; Tigelaar et al., 2004). Teachers in this respect need to demonstrate mastery in the required knowledge, skills, attitudes according to professional demands (Zhu & Wang, 2014) and follow standards set by competent authorities, National Professional Standards for Teachers in the case of Pakistan. As knowledge, skills, and attitudes are fundamental tenets of competency, the researchers had used these fundamental constituents to determine the competency of secondary school teachers working in Islamabad. This study is a part of a pilot conducted for a PhD dissertation research. This research aims to verify the capacity



of secondary school teachers to identify their competencies and how the sense of identifying competencies differs across demographic variables, gender, experience, and sector (public and private).

### **Methodology**

The study employed a self-constructed questionnaire to collect data. The target sample of this study was 200 teachers. They were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The sample was equally divided among two strata, male and female, and public and private. Sectors F10 and F11 of Islamabad were selected as the sampling site. Public model schools were one venue and the other a private school system, which had maximum schools in the selected sectors. 20 schools (10 private and 10 public) were selected with 10 teachers teaching at the secondary level. Thus, the researchers collected the data from target sample, 100 male, and 100 female teachers teaching at secondary schools in Islamabad.

Teacher competency of the secondary school teachers was assessed through KSA Model, with three attributes, knowledge, skills, and attitude. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements categorized on a five-point Likert Scale. Three education experts validated the research questionnaire for content validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was executed by Cronbach's alpha (0.8). The questionnaire comprised of two parts, 1) Demographic information and 2) scale. Descriptive statistical techniques, mean and standard deviation, were applied, and inferential statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, t-test and ANOVA were calculated to test the hypotheses.

### **Results**

In the following section the results are discussed. The first hypothesis was tested through Product Moment Correlation Test to determine the association between knowledge, skills and attitude of secondary school teachers. Following that t-test was applied to test the hypotheses two and three. Lastly, ANOVA was applied to test hypothesis four.

The data shown in Table 1 rejects the null hypothesis; there is positive association among determinants of teacher competency. It also revealed that attitude has a stronger relationship with knowledge than skills. It means that schoolteachers rely more on content knowledge than delivery skills.

#### **Table 1**

*Inter-correlation among Determinants of Teacher Competency*

Subscales	1	2	3
Knowledge	-		
Skills	.156	-	
Attitude	.493**	.297	-

**Table 2**

*T-test identifying Teacher Competency Differences regarding Gender*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	
Teaching	Male	100	112.52	7.643			
Competency	Female	100	113.16	8.782	99	21.00	.000

The data shown in Table 2 rejects the null hypothesis; there is significant difference regarding teaching competency between male and female teachers of secondary schools Islamabad. According to the mean scores, female teachers have shown higher level of teaching competency than male teachers.

**Table 3**

*t-test identifying Teacher Competency Differences regarding Sector*

Variable	Sector	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Teaching	Public	100	112.18	6.492			
Competency	Private	100	113.60	9.856	49	20.50	.000

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference between public and private school teachers regarding teaching competencies; private school teachers have better teaching competencies than public school teachers.

Table 4 indicates that the mean value of fewer than five years of teaching experience is higher than the other two values where there is an insignificant difference regarding teaching experience.

**Table 4**

*ANOVA for Teaching Competencies Regarding Tenure*

Variable	Experience	N	M	SD	df	f	p
Teaching	< 5 years	64	116.81	8.316			
Experience	5-10 years	86	110.421	6.318	49	2.257	.116
	More than 10 years	50	112.950	9.069			

### Discussion

This study was conducted to determine teacher competency of secondary schools Islamabad, regarding its key components, knowledge, skills and attitude. Teachers' scores on the survey were analyzed to assess the demographic variations regarding gender, sector, and teaching experience. Four hypotheses were postulated for this study, and the test results are described as follows:

According to the results of the first hypothesis testing, there is a positive association among the components of teacher competency. The attitude of teachers is bonded strongly with the knowledge, and not skills. Kunter et al. (2013) has shown the same findings in his research study that various teaching competencies have a strong association. Teachers in Pakistan have traditional mindset and rely more on content knowledge (Nadeem et al., 2020). Teacher training regarding expansion and development of teachers' skills is a common suggestion of research done in Pakistani context. Professional competency also depends more on skills, and it is the critical element to enhance instructional standards and teacher quality. On the other hand, such foundations are not harmonious for diverse institutes, countries, provinces, or principle territories (Mohanty, 2000; Nadeem et al., 2011).

It is, therefore, significant to recognize that teachers should also display interpersonal skills for teaching mastery; their attitude should reflect gratitude and appreciation towards teacher feedback and appraisal (Nadeem et al., 2020). Another skill mastery required by quality teachers is competency in assessment and evaluation. Teacher's attitude should not only reflect the value of assessment in education, they must show an aptitude to make tests and quizzes that could distinguish between high and low performers, and to what extent the students have materialized educational objectives. Last but not the least; the teachers could make meaning of the data gathered through student results and plan for future improvement in personal knowledge, skills and attitudes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Moreover, reporting of data to parents is also very important, so that the school reputation could be built. Mastering all these skillsets shall ensure that desired National Professional Standards of teacher competency have been achieved (Batool et al., 2021).

Results regarding second hypothesis inform that female teachers have better competencies than male teachers. There is a significant difference between male and female teachers regarding teaching competencies at Secondary level. This result contradicts the findings of Jang (2015) who found that male teachers have better competency scores as compared to female teachers. The third hypothesis results claimed that the private school teachers have shown better competencies scores than public school teachers. There is significant difference between public and private school teachers regarding teaching competencies at Secondary level. Similar study conducted in Indonesia also concluded that there is significant difference between male and female teachers regarding professional competency (Mustafa, 2013), whereas Bataineh and Anderson (2015) found that female teachers' professional competency is better than their male counterparts. This discrepancy is related to technology immersion in technology. The teachers failing to show competency in ICT skills shall fail in innovation and creative thinking and innovation (Mello & Matthee, 2019).

According to the results of the third hypothesis, mean value of less than five years teaching experience is higher than other two values where there is insignificant difference regarding teaching experience. Shanmugasundaram and Mohamad (2011) also found similar findings in their study that teachers having less than 5 years of teaching experience demonstrate better teaching competency. Other studies have shared similar results (Manullang, 2002; Mustafa, 2013). deTalanć (2017) have presented with surprising finding: contract teachers outperform the regular teachers in rural Pakistani schools.

## Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn:

- a. There is a positive association among various teaching competencies. Teachers show stronger dependence on content knowledge than delivery skills. Planning for teachers' professional skills development is needed
- b. Female teachers are more competent than their male counterparts in overall teacher competency. This conclusion should be further investigated to know whether this difference was data specific or there are some factors which make females better teachers than males
- c. Private school teachers are more competent than public teachers; this result also needs further investigation to pinpoint the factors contributing to this result. Although teachers' selection for public schools is merit based, there

is some flaw in teacher selection or teachers' professional development strategies, needing further research

- d. Junior teachers with more than five years of teaching experience exhibited better teaching competency; this competency might be attributed to mastery of younger generation of ICT skills.

## Implications

The competence of teachers in various teaching and learning processes is vital for the high standards of education and student learning. A teacher's competency can be determined through his/her behavior in the working environment and is also a key achievement indicator for any school. These days governments worldwide are focusing more on the competency development of teachers to attain desired educational outcomes in their institutions. Where working to enhance teachers' professional competency is the prime objective, Poonsook (2013) suggested that transformational leaders could work better for this mission. Moreover, an educational leader builds teacher morale and teachers' optimistic attitude at work to make best use of available resources. This idea is better understood by rural principals than the urban ones (Batool et al, 2021).

König et al. (2021) professes a strong link between pedagogical competence, instructional quality, and student achievement, which may not be discipline specific. However, it serves as a significant predictor for cognitive stimulation required to get desired knowledge, skills and attitude. The professional competence of teachers can be enhanced and developed with the help of different techniques and strategies (Sleegers et al., 2005; Beverborg et al., 2020). Different factors that create problems for the teachers in developing their skills and competency must be watched and researched before controlling. The factors affecting teachers learning and grooming could be extrinsic or extrinsically depending on various situational elements and must be dealt with accordingly (Barry, 2020).

Secondary schools can develop a competency model by analyzing the competencies exhibited by superior performers (Adetayo et al. 2016; Kaur et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2020). The changing society calls for a multidimensional role for today's teachers, such as teaching, demonstrating, guiding, facilitating, answering questions, managing classes, and initiating learning communities (Zhu & Wang, 2014). Blomeke and Delaney (2012) have recommended a model of professional competency of teachers with two main elements of profession-specific knowledge and affective-motivational characteristics. The specialized knowledge comprises general pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge and pedagogical content

knowledge. The elements relating to emotional motivational characteristics are motivation, self-regulation, professional beliefs about instructional and learning process and the knowledge of subject content (Adetayo et al. [2016](#); Beverborg et al., [2020](#)) recommended a comparable model.

Innovation and creativity is a core of human competency (Kampylis et al. [2009](#)). Innovative teaching is also necessary to meet the educational needs of diverse student populations and the changing needs of the modern society (Darling-Hammond et al, [2017](#); Hargreaves, [2003](#); Mahler et al., [2018](#)). Recent literature stresses that the innovation economy requires that schools facilitate deep learning and student creativity rather than mastering lower-order facts (Baier et al., [2019](#); Bereiter [2002](#); Burroughs et al., [2019](#)).

More specifically, innovative teaching can be displayed in the following five aspects according to the teaching processes: application of innovative thoughts in teaching, the innovative use of teaching content, the use of innovative teaching methods and teaching strategies, the innovative use of teaching resources, and innovative evaluation (Huang et al., [2019](#); Zhu et al., [2013](#)).

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on these findings, the researchers, therefore, recommended that:

- a. The study can be replicated on the large-scale sample by analyzing various other teaching competencies at any other academic level.
- b. There should be workshops and trainings for public school teachers to enhance their teaching competencies.
- c. There should be incentives and rewards for the teachers having more than 5 and 10 years of teaching experience so that these teachers can also keep focused on enhancing their teaching competencies.

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