

**Professional Competencies: Challenges for
Library and Media Teachers**

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Abstract: Competence is the ability to demonstrate, in a variety of practice situations, possession of the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes and the ability to use these in a variety of combinations to undertake occupational tasks. Many of these concerns arise from the way competence has been conceptualised. The role of library and media teachers and the professional competencies they need in order to succeed have changed and expanded over many years. Professional competencies as library and media teacher challenges to develop their capability, to integrate the skills, knowledge and behaviours associated with each of these characteristics to the point where the characteristics and their skills and knowledge are fully integrated. A library and media teacher challenges as to become professionally competent. Previous studies reported that teachers appointed as library and media teacher did not have appropriate qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the task. This scenario causes ineffective management and less so on the services, activities, library promotion and information skills programme. If a library and media teacher cannot fully integrate any one of the characteristics, then they are not yet competent. The professional preparation and constant training of library and media teachers should help them to develop resource programs, and provided them with professional competencies needed for management and services of the school resource centre, especially towards student academic excellence. The study aims to explore the challenges of library and media teachers to become professional in managing school resource centre in Malaysia.

Keywords: professional competencies, duties and responsibilities, Library and Media Teacher, school resource centre (SRCs), reading activities

INTRODUCTION

Professional competencies research has been tremendously conducted in developed countries, remarkably the United States, United Kingdom and Western Europe (e.g. Cheetham and Chivers, Epstein and Hundert). In Malaysia, Abrizah (1998) recommended that there is a need to investigate the level or skills of Library and Media Teachers at professional of work. Related studies are on Training Development by Raja Abdullah and Saidina Omar (2003), the study revealed that constantly training needed by Library and Media Teachers to become knowledgeable and skillful manager. Similarly, a study conducted by Kamal M.A and Normah (2012) on Training Development, revealed that good school resource centre services totally depend on trained and competent Library and Media Teachers. However, Tan and Diljit S. (2008) argued that there were no standard practices are using in library courses or library training.. Hence, due to the limited research on Library and Media Teachers in Malaysia that need new survey, this research is done with the objectives of to investigate Library and Media Teachers in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities in managing school resource centres, to identify the best characteristics of professional competencies required by Library and Media Teachers and to identify Library and Media Teachers serve the best reading activities practice in heighten reading habits among students.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

Professional competency is habitual and judicious use of the communication, knowledge, technical skills, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual or community being served (Epstein and Hundert, 2002). Similarly, Cheetam and Chivers (1998) describes professional competencies are the ability to perform the duties of one's profession to an acceptable quality. This are a skill one acquires by going through training in the relevant field and participate in activities that promotes one's ability to be a competent professional. Such activities include mentorship, career development forums and coaching which provides different experiences to learn from.

Professional competencies are becoming one of the key building blocks of success to achieve both the mission and vision in creating added value and improve performance (Cheetam and Chiver, 1998; Madden and Mitchell, 1993, Ghani, 2002). Curtis and McKenzie (2002) defined the eight employability skills as follows:

- *Communication skills* that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers;
- *Teamwork skills* that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes;
- *Problem solving skills* that contribute to productive outcomes;
- *Initiative and enterprise skills* that contribute to innovative outcomes;
- *Planning and organizing skills* that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning;
- *Self-management skills* that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth;
- *Learning skills* that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes

Stern (2009) indicated that professional competencies elements include such as time management, critical thinking, evidence-based decision making, service quality improvement, interest based problem solving, communication skills, maintaining teamwork orientation, and understanding of organization's mission and priorities. Similarly, Libby (2009) described, that professional competencies elements must possess such as building relationship, assessing needs and service measurement. Cheetam and Chiver (1998) in their model of professional competence highlight four key elements of competence:

- a) Knowledge / cognitive competence which relates to "the possession of appropriate work-related knowledge and the ability to put this to effective use;
- b) Functional competence which describes the ability to perform a range of work based tasks effectively to produce specific outcomes;
- c) Personal/behavioural competence which they define as the ability to adopt appropriate, observable behaviours in work-related situations; and
- d) Value/ethics, which they define as the possession of appropriate personal and professional values and the ability to make sound judgement based upon work related situations.

Madden and Mitchell (1993) conceptualising this views profession and professionals as:

"A discreet body of individuals applying advanced learning or scientific knowledge and expertise to provide a service to clients and bound together by membership of a professional body which assumes responsibility for monitoring professional standards and which confer benefits and may impose sanctions on members "

Houle (1980) bring to fore the traits of professions can be determined by identifying:

- a) The conceptual i.e. the understanding of functions
- b) Performance which relates to the mastery of knowledge, capacity to solve problems and the use of knowledge
- c) Collective identity characteristics, which includes formal training, subculture,

Huges (1963) viewed professionals as *"the individual who know better than others certain matters"*. Goodland's (1984) interpreted that the professional as emanating from the term profession which means *"control of knowledge"*.

Hayes Committee described that professional competencies is a high level of distinctive competence, reflecting the skillful application of specialized education, training and experience. This should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility and an acceptance of recognized standards. (HMSO 1972)

Etzioni (1988) described professional competencies are more than technical work of a very complex type. There is a considerable amount of creative activity involved, not only in applying specialized knowledge and techniques to resolve problems, but also in framing or setting the problems in the first place.

Based on the literature, professional competency can be identified as the ability to perform the duties of one's profession to an acceptable quality. This are a skill one acquires by going through training in the relevant filled and participate in activities, that promotes one's ability to be a competent professional. Such activities include mentorship, career development forums and coaching which provides different experiences to learn from. While skills and knowledge are a part of a competency that can be measured fairly easily, intangible assets like effective communication and teamwork. While essential, are harder to pin down and evaluate.

LIBRARY AND MEDIA TEACHER DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The school resource centres in Malaysia today is managed by Library and Media Teachers, the new certified term used in Malaysia for teacher librarians. Beginning in 2006, the Ministry of Education of Malaysia has started assigning teachers as Library and Media Teachers in all schools, and these teachers are given a reduced teaching load (6-8 periods) so as to enable them to manage the school resource centres. They are expected to function as library managers, as well as information managers to encourage and nurturing reading activities in schools (Norna'ilah, 2007; Kamal M.A and Normah, 2012).

In order to strengthen the educational system (KP /008/2 dated July 18, 2005) Ministry of Education Malaysia has always given due emphasis in the implementation of various programmes related to school resource centres. Consequently, each school was allocated Library and Media Teacher or a school resource centre coordinator (Ministry of Education, 2006). The appointment is expected to help improve management capabilities and leadership in managing school resource centre effectively. Basically a list of eighteen Library and Media teachers' duties listed on this circular as follows:

- Planning and teaching subjects ranging from six to eight hours a week.
- Planning and implementing policies and annual programmes for school resource centre along with principal, school resource centre staff, teachers and students.
- Planning and managing the school resource centre annual budget together with school curriculum committee.
- Planning resource acquisition and building comprehensive, balanced and up-to date collection.
- Planning and implementing information literacy programme and services to support teaching and learning process.
- Planning and managing the reading programme (NILAM programme) and acculturation of knowledge.
- Planning, implementing and coordinating staff development programmes and in-house training programmes related to the school resource centre.
- Planning and managing the school resource centre promotional programmes.
- Collaborating with teachers in the implementation of resource-based learning.
- Liaise and cooperate with State Educational Resource Centre/ Teachers Activity Centre/ public library to enhance services and programmes of the school resource centre.
- Supervising and managing school resource centre's collection.
- Preparing and circulating the minutes of meeting of school resource centre.
- Regulating and monitoring the implementation of the school resource centre programmes.
- Performing the inventory stock checking of school resource centre equipment.
- Promoting and being a member of the library association.
- Conduct research/action research in relation to school resource centre services.
- Providing reports and analysis of the school resource centre implementation development, management and finance programmes.
- Submit annual data and report of school resource centre programmes to Department of Educational Technology through Teachers Activity centre and State Educational Department in October.
- Carrying out other duties as directed by school management from time to time.

The Library and Media teachers has undergone changes regularly and at high level due to the continually development duties and responsibilities, advancement of information management, and the ever-changing learning behaviors and needs of users. Consequently, Library and Media Teachers need to be developed in terms of knowledge and competencies to be able to work in the changing conditions.

SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRES

The school resource centre (SRCs) provides information and ideas that are fundamental to operate successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The SRCs equip students with information literacy skills and help them develop life-long learning habits, enabling them to be knowledgeable and responsible citizens. There are 10,132 SRCs in Malaysia with a total student population of 5.1 million (2.9 million primary school students and 2.2 million secondary school students) (Ministry of Education, 2014).

The SRCs is a central located base from which the library and media centre service are delivered to the school. The SRCs is a central place that provide a range of information resources, services, space and facilities in support the curriculum, students' personal and social development. Teachers and students have the right to access the SRCs quality resources and information equally (Library Association, 1992).

As a rule of thumb, where there is a school, there will be a school resource centre; be it in the urban, rural or remote area. However, the facilities provided by the schools differ, usually based on several factors such as the enrolment of students, locality, library and media teachers competencies, availability of space, financial support (grant) and the school administration's supports towards SRCs and SRCs programs (Fadzliaton, 2010). In this regard, the school resource centre is an important aspect in an educational institution (Siti Hajar, 1998; Fatimah, 2002; Fadzliaton, 2010).

THE ROLE OF SRCs IN PROMOTING READING PROGRAM

Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca (NILAM) is a reading program established to recognise and award good reading habits among students in school. The NILAM program started in 1999, primary and secondary schools have implemented it for pupils in Year One to students in Form Five. The NILAM Program is an integration of all reading activities in schools with the aim of encouraging continuous reading and to inculcate the reading habit. It is a program that gives recognition to those who read. It is mandatory for all primary and secondary schools to conduct this program (Education Technology Division, 2004).

According to Azman (2005), this programme emerged from the combination or integration of all activities to inculcate the love for knowledge in schools. The NILAM Programme includes plans to inculcate reading habits continuously through systematic management of reading activities in schools. This reading programme is continuously monitored throughout the year. The aim of the NILAM programme is to inculcate good reading habits among school students in Malaysia. The objectives of this programme are:

- To produce students who are avid readers of quality materials from various fields; and
- To encourage school to continuously generate creative and innovative ideas in instilling good reading habits among students.

The NILAM programme is divided into two levels;

a) Level One - Jauhari

The objective of this level is to develop interest in reading and reading skill that is inculcated as habit. This level requires pupils to participate in activities which encourage reading planned by the School Resource Centre (SRC) throughout the year.

b) Level Two – Reading Peer (RP)

The objective of this level is to increase pupils' participation and usage of materials in promoting reading activities. This level places emphasis on pupils' ability to guide and attract others' interest in reading.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is expected to provide benefits to many parties in fostering professional competencies and organizing school resource centre programs. It also can be referred by anyone who is interested in this topic. Through this study, it will provide evidence and supporting information to assist the library and media teachers to implement effective strategies to enhance their professional competencies.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to the different approaches to the concept of professional competence, the researcher distinguishes the following competency models to establish conceptual framework.

COMPETENCY MODELS	DESCRIPTIONS
Competency model based on the job	The competency required to have an efficient performance. (Taylor,1980, Frank, 1991)
Competency model based on behavioral theory	Based in skills such as personal items away from specific functions, but actually allowed (Weinert, 2004, McClelland and Boyatzis, 1980).
Competency models based on business strategy	Based on the principle that the competences are competing elements that are linked to corporate strategy. Therefore, the sum of individual skills can be transformed into the company's competitive advantage (Cameron and Neal, 2001), (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990).
Competency models based on cognitive and motivational model	Supported in the process of learning and competence development. (Foss, 2003, Duysters, 2000)
Competency model of holistic approach	Expanding the concept of competences integrating all aspects of people that allow them to have a performance at work (i.e., behaviors, skills, knowledge, motivation, strategic and ethical issues) (IPMA, 2006, Cheetham and Chivers, 1996).
Competency model of professional approach	Based on professional at work (i.e. Knowledge / cognitive, Functional, Personal/behavioural, Value/ethics competence. (Cheetham and Chivers, 1998)

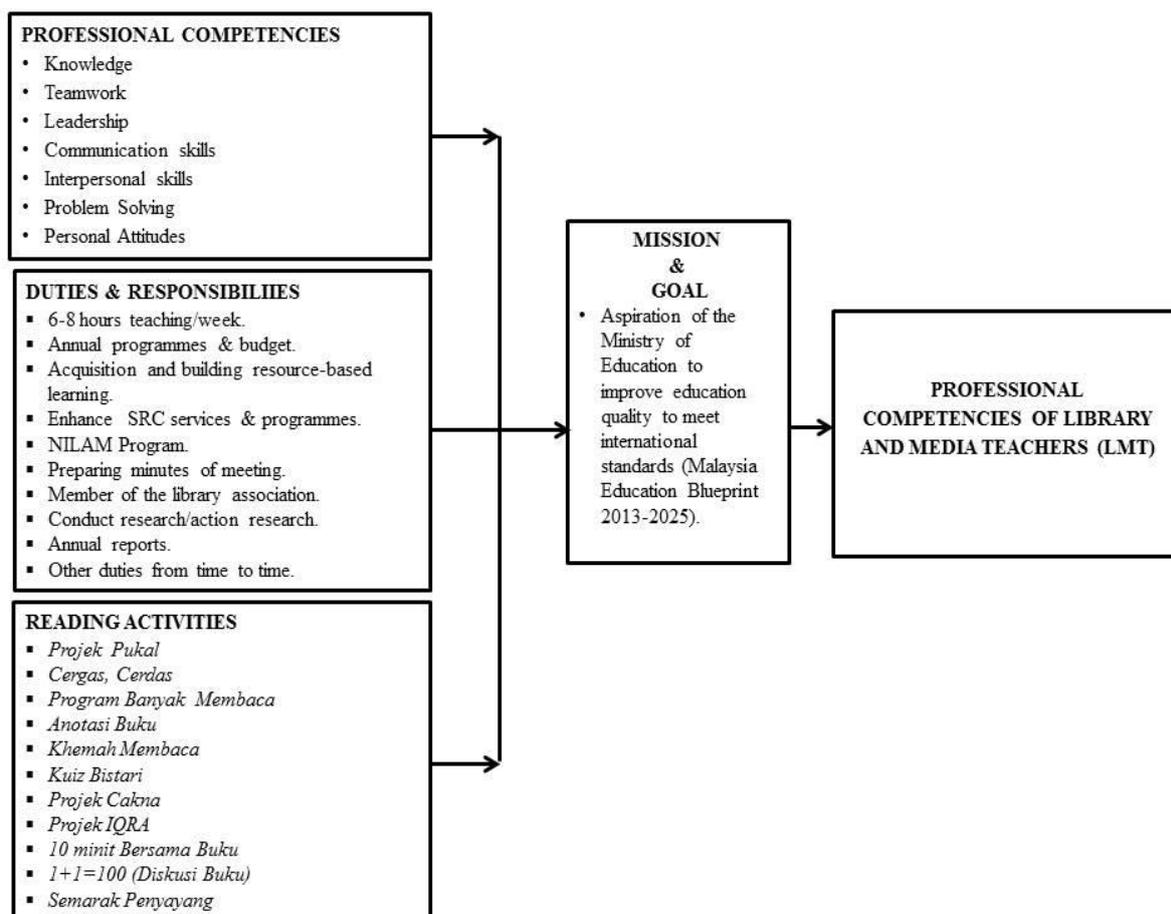


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Professional Competencies for Library and Media Teachers

METHODOLOGY

The methodology will be use is mixed design methods. The researcher will use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Semi-structured and face-to-face interview will be used to represent qualitative and questionnaires represent quantitative methods. Participants will be from Selangor Secondary Schools.

There are 275 secondary schools in Selangor (<http://www.emisportal.moe.gov.my>). Total sampling will be used in the survey. The researcher will send questionnaires via email and meeting/courses attended by Library and Media Teachers as well. They will be given questions to identify the best characteristics of professional competencies required by library and media teachers.

Qualitative method on the other hand, the researcher will used purposive sampling. Semi-structured and face to face interview will be used to obtain the information. There are 6 respondents will be involved:

- i) Senior Library and Media Teachers,
- ii) Officers of Education Technology Division (ETD),
- iii) Headmasters/Principals,

They will be given questions to investigate Library and Media Teachers in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities in managing school resource centres, to identify the best characteristics of professional competencies required by Library and Media Teachers and to identify Library and Media Teachers serve the best reading activities practice in heighten reading habits among students.

DELIMITATION

The delimitation of this study is location and respondent. The researcher chose Selangor because the state can be considered well established, developed and sophisticated. Secondary schools on the other hand, received more grant per capita from government than primary schools.

CONCLUSION

The current role of Library and Media Teacher has evolved over many years. The professional competencies for Library and Media Teacher needed for better education quality. Results of the study, will address the multifaceted sets of professional competencies, advantage both to schools and students.

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