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Preliminary Insight of Professional Competencies for Library and Media Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Professional competence is the ability to demonstrate, in a variety of practice situations, possession of the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Many of these concerns arise from the way professional competence has been conceptualised. The role of Library and Media Teachers (LMT) and the professional competencies need order to succeed, have changed and expanded over the years. Professional competencies as LMT 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. LMT challenges as to become professionally competent. Previous studies reported that teachers appointed as LMT 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 LMT cannot fully integrate any one of the above characteristics, then they are not yet competent. The professional preparation and constant training of LMTs should help them to develop resource programs, and provided them with professional competencies needed for the management and services of the school resource centre, especially towards student academic excellence. The study aims to explore the challenges of LMT to become professional competencies in managing school resource centre in Malaysia.

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INTRODUCTION

Professional competencies research has been extensively conducted in many developed countries, remarkably in the United States, United Kingdom and Western Europe (Cheetham and Chivers, Epstein and Hundert). In Malaysia, Abrizah (1998) recommended that there was a need to investigate the level or skills of Library and Media Teachers (LMT) at professional work. Studies on LMT's training development revealed that constantly training needed by LMT to become knowledgeable and skillful manager (Raja Abdullah and Saidina Omar, 2003; Kamal M.A and Normah, 2012). Surprisingly, a study done by Fatimah (2002) revealed that there are no standard method by which LMTs attained their training and there is also a lack of uniformity in terms of training and the syllabus. Hence, due to the limited research on LMT in Malaysia, this research is intended to investigate LMTs in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities managing SRCs, to determine professional library training needed by LMT, to determine the best characteristics of professional competencies required by LMTs and to determine LMTs serve the best reading activities practice in heightening reading habits among students.

Library and Media Teacher:

Azman (2005) described Library and Media Teacher as a person who develops learning and information resources for the school resource centre. They are responsible to identify and obtain library materials, organize and maintain the library collection in order to promote independent reading and lifelong learning. Nowadays, SRCs are managed by Library and Media Teachers, the new certified term used in Malaysia replacing teacher librarians. Beginning in 2006, the Ministry Education of Malaysia has started assigning teachers as LMT in all schools, and these teachers are given minimum teaching load (6-8 periods) so as to enable them to manage the

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school resource centres. They are expected to function as library and information managers, so as to encourage and nurture reading activities in schools (Kamal M.A & Normah, 2012; Norna'ilah, 2007).

Ministry Education of Malaysia has always given due emphasis in the implementation of various programmes related to SRCs. Therefore, in order to strengthen the educational system (KP /008/2 dated July 18, 2005), each school has allocated LMT. The appointment is expected to help improve management capabilities and leadership in managing school resource centre effectively (Ministry of Education, 2006). Basically, a list of eighteen Library and Media teachers' duties listed on this circular are 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.
- Submitting 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.

Studies by (Kamal MA & Normah, 2012; Raja Abdullah and Saidina Omar, 2003; Abrizah, 1998) described that the roles and functions of LMT have undergone changes regularly, continually development of duties and responsibilities, advancement of information management, learning behaviours and users need. Therefore, LMT required to be advanced in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies to be able to work in the changing circumstances.

Professional Competencies:

Professional competencies are 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) describe professional competencies are ability to perform the duties of one's profession to an acceptable quality. Professional competencies skills one acquires by going through training and participating in activities to be a competent professional.

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 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 must possess elements such as building relationship, assessing needs and service measurement.

Cheetam and Chiver (1998) in their model of professional competence highlighted four key elements of competence:

- a) Knowledge / cognitive competence which relates to "the profession 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) were conceptualising professionals competence 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) brought 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,

Hughes (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 were 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.

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.

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 are centrally place 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 areas. However, the facilities provided by the schools differ, usually based on several factors such as the enrolment of students, locality, LMT 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).

Significance of Study:

This study is expected to provide benefits to many parties such as researchers, Library & Information Science Department and Ministry of Education who interested in fostering professional competencies and organizing school resource centre programs. It will provide evidence and supporting information to assist LMTs 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 model based on the job: the competency required to have an efficient performance. (Taylor, 1980).
- Competency model based on behavioural 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)
- 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., behaviours, skills, knowledge, strategic and ethical issues) (IPMA, 2006).
- Competency model of professional approach: based on professional at work (i.e. Knowledge / cognitive, Functional, Personal/behavioural, Value/ethics competence. (Cheetham and Chivers, 1998)

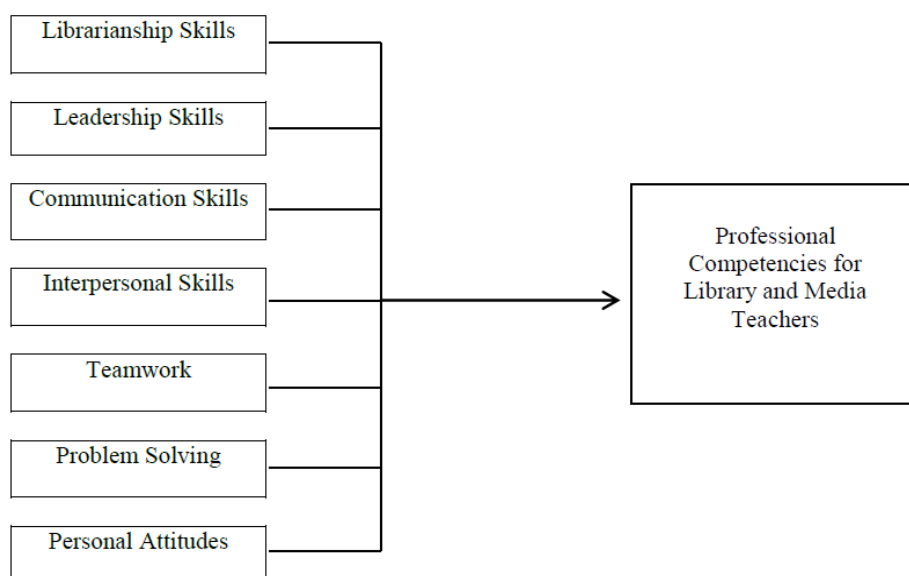


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework for Professional Competencies for Library and Media Teachers

The framework used in this study (Figure 1) is developed to study on the variables that will influence professional competencies for LMTs and relationship between them. The dependent variable is professional competencies for LMTs, and there are seven independent variables identified, and those are librarianship skills, leadership skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, problem solving and personal attitudes.

Research Methodology:

A mixed method research design will be adopted, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Semi-structured, face-to-face interview and questionnaire will be used respectively. Participants will be selected 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 LMTs as well.

Qualitative method on the other hand, the researcher will be used purposive sampling. Semi-structured and face-to-face interview will be used to obtain the information. There are 10 respondents will be identified:

- i) Library and Media Teachers - 6 respondents
- ii) Officers of Education Technology Division (ETD) – 2 respondents
- iii) Principals - 2 respondents

They will be given questions to investigate LMTs in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, to determine professional library training needed by LMT, to determine the best characteristics of professional competencies required by LMTs and to determine LMTs serve the best reading activities practice in heightening reading habits among students.

Delimitation:

The delimitation of this study will be the geographical location and respondent. The researcher will choose Selangor because the state can be considered as well established, developed and sophisticated area. Secondary schools will be chosen as research site because the schools 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. The results of the study, will address the multifaceted sets of professional competencies, advantage both to schools and students.

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