# The Implementation of the Myanmar Teacher Competency Standards Framework

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## Abstract

As Myanmar raises the quality of education system, it needs teachers with the right values, skills, and knowledge to be effective practitioners. The Myanmar Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF) has been developed. The main objective of this framework is to establish an agreed set of teacher competency standards to support improvement in the quality of teachers and teaching in Myanmar. To implement this framework, the core working group was organized. The framework consists of four main areas. Each domain has competency standards and minimum requirements for teachers' professional development. To ensure that the frame is useful for Myanmar's education system, the draft of the framework was field-tested. Such research tools as classroom observation, teacher self-appraisal, and interviews were used for the field-testing. A sample of 76 schools was included in this field testing. This framework will help to raise the quality of education system in Myanmar.

## Authors' Notes

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## Introduction

Myanmar has commenced a process of significant changes in political, social and economic affairs. So has in education. The role of education is expected to play in the nations' social and economic development. As Myanmar raises the quality of education system, it needs teachers with the right values, skills, and knowledge to be effective practitioners. Therefore, Myanmar needs a strong system of teacher education, with programmes that provide the theoretical foundations to produce graduates with the kinds of professional knowledge, understanding, and skills associated with the role of the teacher and the process of teaching. The National Education Law of Myanmar also legislates that all teachers need

to be qualified. The government of Myanmar has prioritized teacher education in its education reform efforts, recognizing that improvement in quality of teachers is essential to quality education and positive student learning outcomes. The 30 -Year Long -Term Education Development Plan (2001-2031) also aims to uplift national education through a series of reform programmes, including the teacher education system. For these reasons, it is necessary to have a competency standard framework for Myanmar teachers.

The Myanmar Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF) has been developed by a group of national professional education experts and UNESCO education specialists over a period of eight months in 2015-2016.UNESCO through the Australian aid funded Strengthening Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) project, provided technical assistance in developing the framework. The main objective for the development of this framework is to establish an agreed set of teacher competency standards to support improvement in the quality of teachers and teaching in Myanmar. To implement this framework, the core working group which consists of 14 members was organized. The members were teacher educators from Yangon University of Education (YUOE), Sagaing University of Education (SUOE), the University for the Development of National Races (UDNR) and representatives from some Education Colleges (EC) out of 22 Education Colleges, that produce primary and junior teachers in Myanmar.

Inclusive in this study are specific terms such as:

**Competency standards:** It is defined as the expectations of teachers' knowledge, skills and attributes and required levels of performance at various stages of their teaching carrier.

**Educational sciences:** It refers to the theoretical foundations of education and includes intercultural, philosophical, psychological and sociological knowledge as it relates to and informs teaching practice.

***The Myanmar teacher competency standard framework***

Processes described in the literature for framework development and implementation usually involve the following nine main steps: (UNESCO, 2016)

1. Establishment of representative commissions, authorities or centres to provide oversight to the process

2. Situation and needs assessment analysis commissioned and or conducted via taskforces, working groups or committees

3. Planning and iterative approach to the design and development involving multiple drafts, informed by broad consultation with stakeholders for contributions and review

4. An initial draft for implementation testing and pilots

5. Implementation tests and trials – internal validity of frameworks in terms of use, relevance and preparedness and standards validation of the draft implementation version addressing perceived attainment difficulty of the indicators/descriptors of each competency standards and for each career stage.

6. Implementation planning - development of knowledge products (manuals, guidelines, tools) aligned to the specific uses and applications of the framework associated with implementation

7. Capacity development – targeted for teacher educators, principals, teachers, education managers and supervisors

8. Alignment with national qualifications frameworks – with systems and processes developed for accreditation of teacher education courses, teacher registration and certification

9. Monitoring and evaluation of implementation – identifying success factors for implementation and change in teachers teaching and their effectiveness

10. These steps were followed in carrying out the Myanmar teacher competency standard framework. The teacher competency standards framework explains what are the key characteristics and attributes of good teaching and what is expected of teachers' professional practices at various stages in their professional development. It is a guide for policy makers and curriculum developers responsible for teacher education (pre and in-service) and basic education. The teacher competency standards refer to the expectations of teachers' knowledge, skills and attributes and required levels of performance at various stages of their teaching career and are organized in **four domains**: (a) professional knowledge and understanding; (b) professional skills and practice; (c) professional values and dispositions; and (d) professional growth .

Each **domain** refers to a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes, and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world in a particular domain. Each domain is organized by **areas of competence** for which the competency standard is expressed as a concise statement with accompanying descriptors of the expected minimum requirements to be achieved by all teachers.

**Competency standards** are the expected professional abilities and skills a teacher should develop through their initial training and as they continue to grow and develop in their professional service and practice (i.e. through participation in induction and on-going in-service education and training).

**Minimum requirements** explain how knowledge, skills, actions, and desired types of behaviours may be expressed. These requirements refer to all teachers' professional development and cover all phases of their professional development. They also cover teachers teaching in different stages of schooling from kindergarten to grade 12 and all systems (public and private) of education in Myanmar.

*Domain A: Professional knowledge and understanding*

This domain encompasses the knowledge required for teaching different stages and level-appropriate subject content competency. It is necessary to understand how students learn and how they can be effectively taught in the key learning areas. Underpinning all competency standards in this domain is knowledge of educational policy, school curricula for Myanmar, its aims and objectives and developments. Under this domain, areas of competence are educational science, instructional technology, curriculum, and subject matter.

*Domain B: Professional skills and practices*

This domain deals with what teachers are able to do. The teachers' professional knowledge and understanding (domain A) is complemented by possession of a repertoire of teaching strategies for different educational contexts to meet the needs of individual students as appropriate to different subject areas and stages of schooling. Under this domain, areas of competence are pedagogy, assessment, classroom management and learner-centered values.

*Domain C: Professional values and dispositions*

This domain refers to the ideas, values, and beliefs that teachers hold about education, teaching and learning. It is underpinned by the values expressed in the Myanmar National Education Laws and reflects the mutual understanding by teachers and the community about Myanmar teachers. The areas of competence specific to this domain are professional ethics, service to profession and community and community leadership.

*Domain D: Professional growth and development*

This domain deals with teachers continuing professional growth and development. It incorporates teachers' habits, motivation, and actions related to their on-going learning and professional improvement. It advocates the importance of all teachers being aware of their role as leaders within the community and highlights the need for active research to support teachers' classroom performance and continuing professional development. The areas of competence specific to this domain relate

to reflective practices, collaborative learning, and initiative for research culture.

The framework is designed for use in: 1) supporting teacher quality related policy design and implementation; 2) developing teacher education curriculum, training and professional development programs; and 3) guiding teachers in self-appraisal and training needs analysis, and assisting education supervisors/ managers at various levels of the system to monitor and support teachers (pre and in-service) to develop in their profession and improve their practice.

### Field testing

Field-testing is an important stage in an iterative approach to systems development. It provides the opportunity for the intended users to apply the framework within an authentic context and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. The data collected is used to identify areas for improvement prior to wider consultation and implementation planning. To ensure that the frame is useful for Myanmar's system of education, the draft of the framework was field-tested from July to September 2016. UNESCO education specialists and working group team leaders worked together to plan the methodology, design the data collection tools for the field testing of the draft framework.

### Objectives of field test

The objective of field test of the draft Teacher Competency Standards Framework was to ensure that the framework fits the purpose and is useful for Myanmar's system of education.

### Sub objectives

1. To apply the framework within authentic educational contexts;

2. To gather evidence of fit for purpose and relevance of the framework in these contexts;

3. To determine the nature of the tools and instruments required for field implementation of the TCSF by primary users; and

4. To identify teacher evaluation capacity building needs within system.

## Methodology

### Field test questions

1. Do the key stakeholders/primary users understand the intent of the content and terminology used? Feedback on what to rephrase and simplify (Myanmar and English versions)

2. Are the key stakeholders/primary users able to use the Framework for its intended purpose? Feedback on what to rephrase and simplify (Myanmar and English versions); input to implementation capacity development planning.

3. How do the length, number of competency standards, minimum requirements and indicators work in practice? Is the framework easily understood as a whole? Is the format user-friendly? Feedback on what can be merged or removed.

4. Is the Framework relevant – reflecting education policy and legislation and responsive to the cultural diversity of Myanmar and appropriate for the differing contexts in which teaching takes place? Collect practice examples from teachers and teacher educators for each competency standard and minimum requirement indicators.

5. Can the instruments and tools for implementation be easily developed and readily used? E.g. for classroom observation of teachers, for teacher self-appraisal or for supervisor monitoring of teaching practice? Preparation and conduct of the field-testing provides the first test of instrument development and evaluation capacity building.

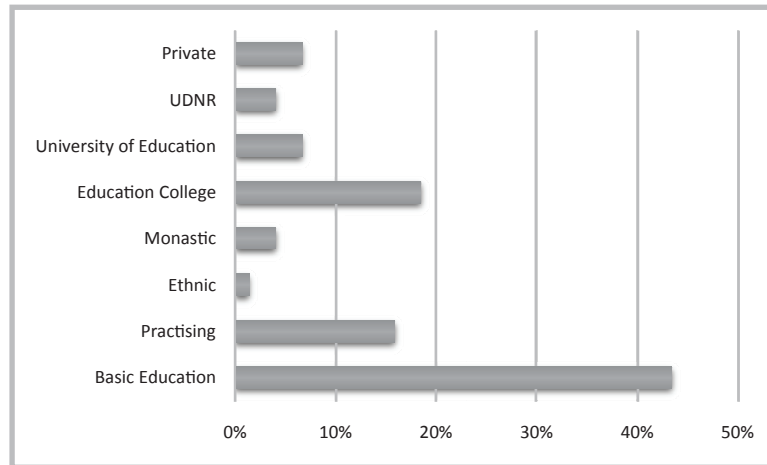6. Do the stakeholders/users perceive the framework to be of use for teacher

**Figure 1. Type of school**

education, improving the quality of teaching and teachers continuing professional development? Input to implementation capacity development planning.

*Instruments*

To be able to answer the field test questions, such research tools as **classroom observation, teacher self-appraisal, focus group discussion, key informant interview** and **case study** were used in this field testing.

*Participants*

The field-test involved seventy-six (76) test case sites, each selected purposively and for convenience to include participants from all states and regions, teacher education institutions and basic education school providers - government, non-government, monastic, ethnic, private and secular education. The sample also covers all stages of schooling - Kindergarten, Primary, Lower and Upper Secondary (see Figure 1). Participants from each case site included graduating student teachers or in-service teachers with formal teacher training ranging from 1 month to 5 + years and with up to 5 years experience (see Figure 2). The school, college or university principal or head of department was also interviewed at each site. As is consistent with the overly feminized nature of the profession, 78 % of the sample were female.

Cases for the field test were purposively selected to ensure coverage of all states and regions, school types (government and non-government) and stages of schooling (see Figure 3). It was also important to include in the sample both graduating and in-service teachers reflecting the various pathways to teaching in Myanmar. Additionally, field test observers needed to be able to visit the school within a day, reducing both cost and imposition on their other personal commitments and professional duties.

*Data Collection*

The field test was conducted by the TCSF Working Group with support from the UNESCO Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) programme. Adopting a case study approach, the field test involved 76 case sites purposively selected to reflect the heterogeneity of teacher education and school teaching contexts in Myanmar. Conducted from July to September 2016, the field test used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from 212 primary stakeholders on the relevance and use of the framework for improving the quality of pre-service education and in-service teaching in Myanmar. The design, data collection methodology, and data collection tools are aligned with the core purpose of the field test. Review of the research-based literature pertaining to similar tests and implementation trials was used to inform the methodological approach and provided examples of field-testing instruments on which to base the design of data collection instruments for this field test. All field-testing documents were developed in English and translated into Myanmar for use in the field. Field test observers/data collectors attended two days of field test training.
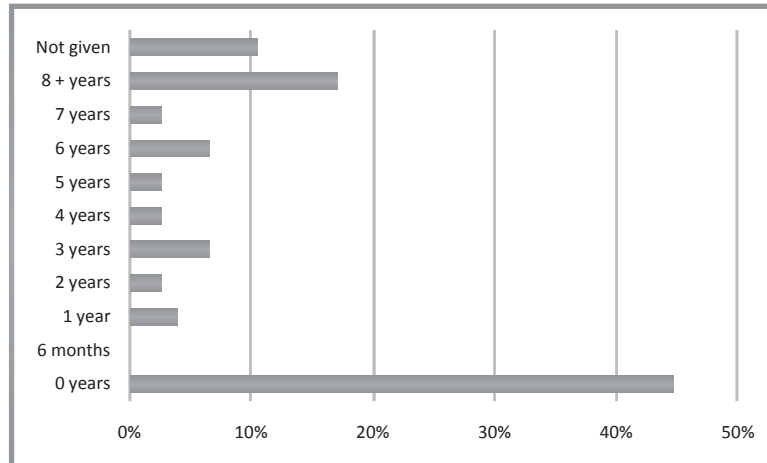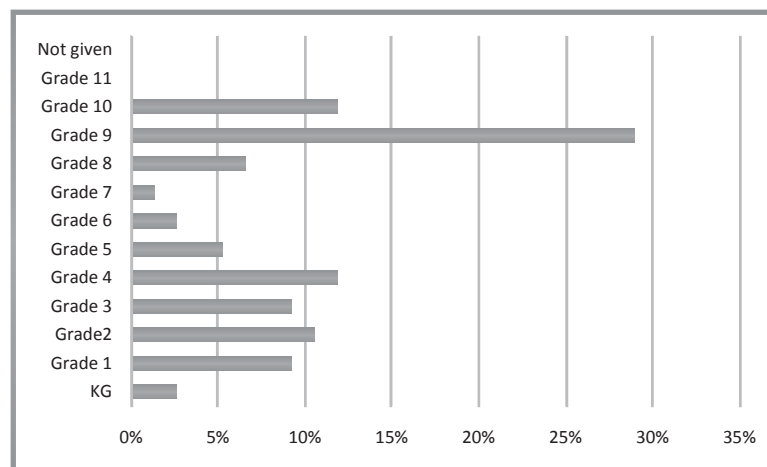
**Figure 2. Teacher's years of experience**



**Figure 3. Grade observed**

## Data Analysis

Hardcopies of the raw data were collected from all field test observers by courier, labelled by case site and entered into an Excel spread sheet or Word document; each respondent and case was given a unique identification code. Respondents included teachers, principals, student teachers, EC principals, teacher educators, and heads of department. Coding sheets were developed for each of the data collection tools. Preset codes categories and themes were developed from the field test questions for use in the initial analysis of the qualitative data - case studies and interview data. Emergent codes as required were added during the analysis of the English versions and cross checked with Myanmar data set to ensure equivalence of meaning and to enhance validity of the emerging codes, categories and themes. Classroom

observation video data (not collected for all cases) on CD was also given a case code to link it to the classroom observation data.

### *Summary of findings in relation to field test questions*

The intent of the framework is reportedly well understood by the majority of respondents as determined through interviews with school principals, teachers, student teachers and teacher educators. The intent of much of the content is also generally understood, however, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the current version uses too much technical language and needs to be simplified.

The use of the self-appraisal tool and classroom observation demonstrated that the framework can be used to support teacher professional learning and

development. However, the capacity to explain how it may be use is at best emergent.

When interviewees were asked content format and structure, many interviewees could not provide informed suggestions. The framework contains too many new and technical terms with terminology that need to be reviewed and expressed in plain language.

When asked how well the four domains and competency standards of the framework cover all aspects of what a teacher needs to know and to be able to do,76% responded positively and proposed that it was comprehensive with the four domains covering all the relevant aspects of teachers' knowledge, skills, roles and functions. But, with some concern expressed in relation to implementation and the need for support if it is to be effective in implementation.

Concerning with capacity development, there are significant components of the framework content that is less well understood primarily because it has not previously been expressed or of concern to teachers, principals or teacher educators. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive and strategic plan to support implementation across all sectors and at all levels for the system of education.

In response to the questions relating to relevance including policy, legislation, differing contexts, most respondents expressed concerns in relation to the level of experience of teachers. The finding suggest that the minimum requirements or indicators are a little advanced for teachers, especially for those with less formal training and experience.

## Recommendations

The preliminary findings from the field test provide evidence that the intent of the framework is appropriate and acknowledged by many stakeholders. However, the current version requires revisions to simplify the content and language to make it more useful and meaningful. Broader consultation and discussion should be conducted to develop an understanding of how the framework may be implemented within Myanmar's system of education and the capacity development requirements for on-going implementation. As the framework is to be implemented for use as a professional developmental tool, more extensive implementation trials and validation surveys are required.

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