



## Competency Requirements for Tahfiz Teachers Enrolled in Tahfiz Curriculum in Malaysian Teacher Education Institute

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### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT:

In the context of Tahfiz education, teacher competence plays a vital role in developing human resources and fostering competent and competitive students. Tahfiz educators bear the responsibility of imparting Islamic education in line with the principles of human excellence and the National Education Philosophy. However, student achievements in Tahfiz education often fall short of expectations, particularly mastery in Quran memorization. The success of teaching and learning process in classroom setting is intrinsically tied to teacher competence. This research explores dimensions of Tahfiz teacher competence and analyze their relationship with the Tahfiz curriculum in Malaysian Teacher Education Institute (IPGM). The research findings reveal the critical role of Tahfiz teacher competency, encompassing emotional, sociocultural, communication, ICT, and curriculum competencies, in fulfilling the teaching requirements in Malaysia.

### Introduction

Teachers are the pillar in education and are the most crucial asset in shaping students. The national education policy has provided various incentives in the field of education to ensure the quality of teachers from Teacher Education Institutions. Therefore, competent teachers are needed to deliver the curriculum content to students while also shaping the students' identities.

Individual transformation should be a focus, along with developing human skills related to culture, values, and identity that are in line with existing societal norms (Norziah, Effandi, & Zanaton, Nilai dalam pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Matematik di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi, 2017). Hence, excellence does not solely depend on the education system but also on the development of learners by adhering to the concept of human excellence and the National Education Philosophy.

In learning the Islamic religion, Quranic education is one of the core areas required, and it begins with the most basic learning about the Quran, including recognizing the Arabic alphabet (hijaiyah), mastering the ability to spell, read, and learn the rules of tajwid (Quranic recitation), and ultimately completing the recitation (khatam) of the Quran. According to Ismail and Mohd Poad (2021), this initial stage of Quranic education forms the fundamental basis for their methods of educating children, incorporating various exemplary aspects, including beliefs (akidah), morals (akhlak), worship (ibadah), and many more. As stated by Ashraf Ismail (2018), memorizing the Quran is essentially the highest level of authenticity in the transmission of its contents.

Recognizing its importance, Quranic memorization education has been established as one of the branches of Quranic education. Beginning in the 15th to the 17th century, the Malay community started to learn some



fundamental aspects of Islam, including learning how to write the Quranic script (Jawi script), the obligations of an individual Muslim (Fardu 'Ain), the Five Pillars of Islam, and the Six Articles of Faith. Education about the fundamentals of Islam further developed in the 18th century with the arrival of scholars and preachers from the Middle East to the Malay Peninsula (Embong, 2020).

The development of Tahfiz education in most states of Malaysia has been rapidly progressing, marked by the increasing number of private and public Tahfiz schools day by day (Nawi, Omar, & Nor, 2021). Currently, Tahfiz education stands as one of the swiftly growing fields of study in Malaysia due to heightened awareness and strong demand from the community.

This achievement is the outcome of the foundational efforts in formal Tahfiz education initiated by the Central Government since 1966. It commenced with the establishment of Quranic Memorization and Qiraat Studies Classes at the National Mosque, known as the Quranic Memorization and Qiraat Studies Unit, recognized as Ma'had Tahfiz al-Quran wal Qiraat (MTQ), and now referred to as Darul Quran. This institution has remained actively involved in promoting the teaching and learning of Tahfiz and Quranic sciences within society until today (Darul Quran, 2023).

This development has demonstrated that the inclination and level of awareness among Muslim parents are increasingly on the rise over time, even though some of them need to allocate significant funds to cover the education fees.

The enthusiastic response from parents towards Tahfiz education has prompted them to opt for private Tahfiz institutions to seize the opportunities available in the premier Tahfiz education stream (Ashraf, Amalan pengajaran pensyarah tahfiz di maahad tahfiz al-Quran kelolaan JAKIM, 2018).

According to Haron, Othman, and Awan (2019), parents have chosen Tahfiz madrasahs because they are more inclined toward the 'Hadaf Ukhrawi,' which prioritizes and focuses on the ultimate goal (spiritual provision) in the hereafter, Quran memorization, alongside practicing other branches of knowledge.

## Problem Statement

The establishment of these Tahfiz institutions undoubtedly aims to nurture proficient Huffaz in the recitation and study of the Quran, while simultaneously preserving the sanctity and authenticity of the Quran al-Karim. This endeavor is geared towards shaping a generation of Quranic scholars who are pious, knowledgeable, and contribute to the development of the nation and the Ummah (Darul, 2006).

However, Mohamed's study (2021) on the assessment of Tahfiz students' achievements has affirmed that their performance has yet to reach the set objectives of Tahfiz education, particularly in achieving fluent Quranic memorization. Tahfiz students were also found to struggle with comprehending the meanings of verses, memorizing the Quran with knowledge of its historical context (asbab al-nuzul), and memorizing the Quran with understanding of the verses' teachings. The fluency in Quranic memorization also remains weak, as evidenced by the findings from the Syafawi test.

Zaini et al. (2020), in their study, found that the level of teacher competency indeed plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful attainment of all educational objectives set by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The significance of competency factors is evident in both the implementation of existing policies and the latest educational practices. This aligns with the viewpoint expressed by Rizkita and Supriyanto (2020), where the success of the teaching and learning process within classrooms is entirely contingent upon the level of teacher competency.

## Objective and Research Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to examine the competence of Tahfiz teachers at the Malaysian Teacher Education Institute, as stated in the research objectives below:

1. To determine the competency dimensions among Tahfiz educators enrolled in the Tahfiz curriculum in Malaysian Teacher Education Institute.
2. To investigate the correlations between competency dimensions among Tahfiz teachers participating in the Tahfiz curriculum in Malaysian Teacher Education Institute.



According to Sulaiman Masri (2005), data collection is the process of gathering variables, and the researcher will determine the procedures, techniques, and aspects of data collection appropriate for their study. This research adopts a quantitative approach. A Likert scale with a five-point rating (5) is used to measure the level of agreement among respondents in the Google Form questionnaire distributed to the 215 Tahfiz teachers involved in the study.

The research also utilizes descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis to examine the relationship between teacher competence and correlation tests between the two variables.

### Concept and Components of Competence

Competence, as viewed by Zaini et al. (2020), represents the standard requirement for an individual to perform a specific task accurately. This implies that competence is the ability to possess relevant and sufficient skills, knowledge, and experience to carry out a particular task. Additionally, competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and considerations necessary for an individual to achieve success in specific skills within any given job (Charles & Akpomi, 2021).

Bansal and Tanwar (2021) also define competence as an individual's ability to demonstrate a functionally related system in achieving performance goals. The word 'skills,' often referred to as competence, is a group of knowledge related to attitudes and skills that affect an individual's tasks, related to job performance and measured according to specific standards.

Palupi et al. (2022) have proposed the 'Iceberg' Model, which states that knowledge and skills are easier to develop and identify compared to personalities, which are more difficult to identify. However, personality is an important factor in creating excellent employees who possess the necessary knowledge and skills.

Competence is seen as an individual's ability, capability, and skill in performing tasks within the scope of a job effectively and efficiently (Rahmatova, 2021). Competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics or personality of an individual needed to perform a task or responsibility. According to the Kamus Dewan, competence is an English term which means qualification, ability, willingness, and capability to perform a task (Pustaka, 2007).

### ICEBERG MODEL OF COMPETENCIES

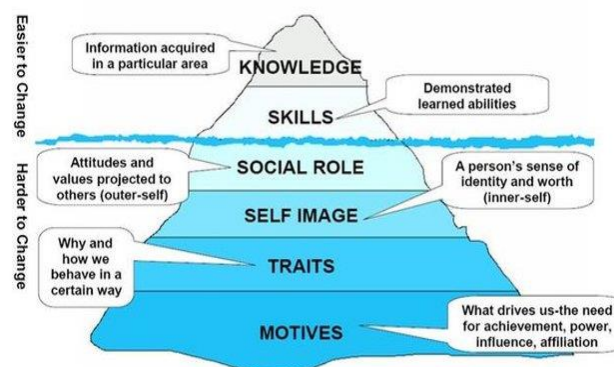


Figure 1: Iceberg Competency Model by Lyle & Segne (1993)

Hongyan He et al.'s (2021) study emphasizes that professional teachers need to possess specific knowledge and skills in their respective fields. These findings are in line with Husamah et al.'s (2022) research, which also asserts that the responsibilities of modern-day teachers extend beyond mere instruction. They encompass management aspects such as student record-keeping, fee collection, textbook loan schemes, student attendance, and student performance reporting. Furthermore, teachers have duties within subject committees to disseminate and monitor curriculum implementation and syllabus content. Additionally, teachers are involved in school co-curricular activities, attend courses, engage in research, and more. These numerous responsibilities compel teachers to allocate their time and energy to various commitments, which may affect teaching and professional development.

Another term for competence is generic skills, basic skills, core skills, and personal skills, which refer to the knowledge and skills as well as attitudes that form the basis for the tasks or job performance that are accountable across all fields (Rahmatova, 2021). According to Shidiq, Promkaew, and Faikhamta (2022), competence is a combination of knowledge, abilities, and experiences that enable an individual to perform a task perfectly. There are five minimum competency components for a competent teacher: curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, contribution to the educational institution, and contribution to the profession.

1. Curriculum: Teachers should have knowledge of the course content they teach (subject expertise) and keep it updated.



2. Pedagogy: Teachers must know how to teach, manage classrooms using appropriate learning models and teaching methods, and use suitable teaching technologies.

3. Assessment: Teachers should know how to evaluate students' work, how to assess students' progress, report progress to students and parents, maintain learning progress records, and set progress levels.

4. Contribution to the Educational Institution: As educational institution staff, every teacher should provide constructive contributions to the school at large, formally take on a broad functional responsibility for the school, informally show concern for tasks and culture, maintain good student relationships, reputation, and community standing, as well as parent and community relations.

5. Professional Contribution: Every teacher is expected to practice the teaching profession by engaging in professional development, being active in professional activities, contributing to the development of the teaching profession, possessing fundamental skills, and being ready to assist colleagues professionally. Every teacher should think and behave as a professional.

Based on the definition and 'iceberg' model of competence, it can be formulated that the competence of teachers in teaching is a combination of domains of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and the teacher's personality in effectively implementing teaching practices.

## Dimensions of Teacher Competence

Isyanov et al. (2020) elucidate that ICT competence is a contemporary competence required by educators. Such controversies clearly indicate that there is no established standard for the number of teacher competencies. Given the diversity of competency elements, it is evident that the enhancement of teacher professional standards needs to be carried out periodically.

Subject competence is the primary domain of teacher competence that encompasses academic knowledge of content. Subject competence is essential for teachers to carry out their profession. It refers to a teacher's competence in the subjects they will teach or that students will learn.

In the past, subject competence was considered the most crucial competency domain based on the concept that

teachers alone were responsible for delivering content. The concept of the "sage on the stage," where the teacher was solely responsible for content delivery in the classroom, has evolved over time. In this changing context, the importance given to teachers' subject competence has declined as teachers' roles have shifted from content delivery to becoming facilitators who enable students to interact with the content.

Research competence encompasses the proficiency in research methods and techniques, the ability to design and conduct research in the field of teaching, and support collaboration with colleagues and other experts or individuals interested in curriculum and education research. Research competence has a significant impact on teachers as it allows them to stay current in their field and develop themselves based on these advancements.

Moreover, teachers' research competence is crucial for students to acquire scientific thinking and scientific process skills. Research competence helps enhance all aspects of teacher competence and supports research-based teacher education, which is a new approach in teacher education (Hongyan He, 2021)

Lifelong learning activities throughout one's continuous interaction with the world necessitate educators to look ahead to determine what needs to be done to remain relevant and serve the community in the future (Ally, Competency Profile of the Digital and Online Teacher in Future Education, 2019).

Lifelong learning competence includes the ability to learn to learn and teachers' responsibility for their own professional development. Lifelong learning competence is related to the capacity to learn and the skills to utilize learning methods or tools to enhance lifelong learning for individuals.

Lifelong learning pertains to teachers' responsibility for their own learning and the development of lifelong learning skills for students. This implies that lifelong learning encompasses two key abilities: the first relates to teachers' capacity for lifelong learning, and the second relates to teachers' responsibility for fostering lifelong learning abilities in students.

Emotional competence comprises values, morals, beliefs, attitudes, concerns, motivation, empathy, and more, both in teachers and students. It relates to the implementation of psychological counseling and



guidance curriculum in schools. Teacher's emotional competence can assist students in their learning, and students' readiness to learn can be enhanced if teachers know how to improve the emotional dimensions of student learning.

Emotional competence also helps teachers become effective educators while monitoring student learning. Learning requires emotional support that fosters positive feelings throughout the teaching-learning process. Teachers become learning consultants and mentors for their students.

Socio-cultural competence encompasses knowledge about the socio-cultural backgrounds of students and teachers, local, national, and international values, issues related to democracy and human rights, teamwork, collaboration with others, and social studies. All of these aspects provide freedom for both students and teachers in the teaching-learning process and encourage learning.

Individuals become social and cultural beings in social life. Hence, there is a strong relationship between learning and the socio-cultural backgrounds of students. Several learning theories discuss learning as a socio-cultural context, and the socio-cultural competence of teachers can promote student learning. Humanistic approaches and social theories can be applied in the classroom through the socio-cultural competence of teachers.

Communication competence includes communication models, interactions among teachers, students, the social environment, and the topics of learning. Teachers also possess competence in using oral, body, and professional language within their field. Communication competence involves skills in intra-personal and interpersonal communication, such as listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. It encompasses various forms of communication, including verbal communication, singing, vocal tone, sign language, paralinguistic, touch, eye contact, or written communication.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competence is based on the use of technical tools and

equipment to access, develop, and transmit knowledge. It includes any technology that aids in generating, manipulating, storing, communicating, and/or disseminating information (Ally, Competency Profile of the Digital and Online Teacher in Future Education, 2019). ICT competence relates to the use of technology in managing and processing information, encompassing all technologies for information manipulation and communication. This means that ICT competence is highly important for enhancing communication in the teaching and learning process.

Environmental competence can be defined as the competence for ecological and environmental safety. Husamah et al. (2022) explain that the ecological/environmental aspect is a dimension of sustainable teacher development. Knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to ecological systems and the environment, such as maintaining cleanliness and the existing environment, managing ecological resources, understanding ecosystems, practicing sustainable resource use, and the availability of natural resources, constitute environmental competence.

## Finding Analysis

The demographic characteristics of the study participants encompass five (5) key aspects: gender, age, teaching experience, academic qualifications, and specialization. Among the respondents, 129 (60.0%) were male, while 86 (40.0%) were female. In terms of age distribution, 115 respondents (53.5%) were under 25 years old, 94 respondents (43.7%) fell between the ages of 25 and 35, and only 6 respondents (2.8%) were aged between 35 and 45. Regarding teaching experience, 93 respondents (43.3%) had 1 to 3 years of teaching experience, while 122 respondents (56.7%) had 4 to 6 years of experience.

As for academic qualifications, 125 respondents (58.1%) held a Certificate/STPM/Diploma, and 90 respondents (41.9%) possessed a Bachelor's Degree. Lastly, in terms of specialization, 130 respondents (60.5%) held a Diploma in Education, followed by 50 (23.3%) with Teacher's Training Course (KPLI), and 35 (16.3%) with a Teaching Certificate. Further details are presented in Table 1.



Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the study participants

Variable		No (N)	Percentage (%)	
1.	Gender	Male	12 9	60.0%
		Female	86	40.0%
2.	Age	Less than 25 years	11 5	53.5%
		25 to 35 years	94	43.7%
		35 to 45 years	6	2.8%
3.	Teaching Experience	1 to 3 years	93	43.3%
		4 to 6 years	12 2	56.7%
4.	Academic	Certificate/STPM/Diploma	12 5	58.1%
		Bachelor Degree	90	41.9%
5.	Specialization	Diploma in Education	13 0	60.5%
		KPLI	50	23.3%
		Teaching Certificate	35	16.3%

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Tahfiz Teachers' Competency

To determine through descriptive statistics, interpretation is carried out by defining levels based on the mean and standard deviation. The study's results are categorized into the high range (5.00-3.67), moderate range (2.67-3.66), and low range (1.00-2.66) based on these measurements.

Mean Value	Level
5.00-3.67	High
2.67-3.66	Moderate
1.00-2.66	Low

(Pallant, 2010)

The findings presented in Table 2 reveal that there are five dimensions within the competency of Tahfiz teachers under study. These dimensions include curriculum competency, emotional competence, sociocultural proficiency, communication competence, and ICT competence. The study's findings revealed that within this dimension, Emotional Competence exhibited the highest minimum score, with a mean value (M) of 4.29 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.525. Following

closely were Sociocultural Proficiency  $M=4.11$  and  $SD=0.477$ , Communication Competence  $M=4.03$  and  $SD=0.531$ , ICT Competence  $M=3.90$  and  $SD=0.611$ , and Curriculum Competence  $M=3.84$  and  $SD=0.658$ . Consequently, the findings suggest that Emotional Competence stands out as particularly high among the various competency dimensions, revealing its significant role in contributing to overall teacher competence.

Table 2: Dimensions of teacher competence

Dimensions of Competence	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SP)
1. Curriculum Competence	3.84	.658
2. Emotional Competence	4.29	.525
3. Sociocultural Competence	4.11	.477
4. Communication Competence	4.03	.531
5. ICT competence	3.90	.611

Findings of this study were analyzed using the Davies Scale (1971) correlation coefficient measurement to



determine the strength of the correlation between variables. The estimation of the Davies Scale Correlation Coefficient was measured using the Pearson correlation test. Details are provided in Table 3.

**Table 3: The Davies Scale Correlation Coefficient**

No	Range mean	Strength level
1	0.70 to 1.00	Very High
2	0.50 to 0.69	High
3	0.30 to 0.49	Medium High
4	0.10 to 0.29	Low
5	0.01 to 0.09	Ignored

(Adapted from the Davies Scale (Elementary survey analysis, 1971) in *Teh & Embi* (Kolerasil Strategi dengan Motivasi dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, 2009)

#### Inferential Statistics of Tahfiz Teacher Competence

Moreover, the research outcomes revealed that the correlation between curriculum competence and emotional competence had a moderate to high

significance level with a correlation coefficient of  $r = .305^{**}$ , Sig  $p = .000$ . Conversely, the correlations between curriculum competence and socio-cultural competence ( $r = .104$ , Sig  $p = .128$ ), curriculum competence and communication competence ( $r = .077$ , Sig  $p = .260$ ), and curriculum competence and ICT competence ( $r = .027$ , Sig  $p = .692$ ) were found to be low and statistically insignificant.

The correlation analysis revealed that the correlation between Emotional Competence and Socio-Cultural Competence was highly significant, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = .699^{**}$  and Sig  $p = .000$ . Additionally, the correlation between Emotional Competence and Communication Competence was even stronger, with a highly significant correlation coefficient of  $.728^{**}$  and Sig  $p = .000$ .

The research findings indicate that the correlation between Socio-Cultural Competence and Communication Competence is highly significant, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = .917^{**}$  and Sig  $p = .000$ , demonstrating a very high level of significance. On the other hand, the relationship between Socio-Cultural Competence and ICT Competence is also significant but at a lower level, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = .202^{**}$  and Sig  $p = .000$ . Table 4 is presented below for further details.

**Table 4: Davies Scale Correlation Coefficient**

Correlations						
		Curriculum Competene	Emotional Competence	Socio-cultural Competence	Communication Competence	ICT Competence
Curriculum Competence	Pearson Correlation	1	.305**	.104	.077	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.128	.260	.692
	N	215	215	215	215	215
Emotional Competence	Pearson Correlation	.305**	1	.699**	.728**	-.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.226



	N	215	215	215	215	215
<b>Sociocultural Competence</b>	Pearson Correlation	.104	.699**	1	.917**	-.202**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.128	.000		.000	.003
	N	215	215	215	215	215
<b>Communication Competence</b>	Pearson Correlation	.077	.728**	.917**	1	-.306**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.260	.000	.000		.000
	N	215	215	215	215	215
<b>ICT Competence</b>	Pearson Correlation	.027	-.083	-.202**	-.306**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.692	.226	.003	.000	
	N	215	215	215	215	215
<b>**.</b> Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

## Conclusion

The analysis of this study reveals that the majority of respondents were males who participated. Most of these respondents were under 25 years old, had more than 4 years of experience, and possessed a teaching diploma. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The determination of the competence level for Tahfiz teachers was found to be high. The dimension that contributed the most to Tahfiz teacher competence was emotional competence, followed by sociocultural competence and communication competence. Furthermore, the highest correlation was found between ICT competence and curriculum competence. These findings were tested using the Davies Scale Correlation Coefficient (1971) as adapted by Teh & Embi (2009), indicating significant data at a high level, particularly between Emotional Competence and Communication Competence, while the relationship between Sociocultural Competence and ICT Competence was found to be significantly low.

Therefore, teachers play a pivotal role within the education system, serving as the executors of all curriculum policies and objectives outlined by the

government. Their active involvement is crucial in designing and implementing effective teaching and learning strategies for the nation's youth. Similarly, the support of Tahfiz teachers for the national education system is vital for the sustainability of education. Furthermore, the emotional state of Tahfiz teachers significantly influences their commitment. Beyond that, Tahfiz teachers must constantly immerse themselves in the national curriculum and education policies to produce highly knowledgeable students who can compete on the global stage, making a substantial impact on Malaysia's beloved education system.

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