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ABSTRACT

Competency-based education is a scientific management strategy for separating learning materials into parts and sequencing academic content effectively, determining competency criteria for students, and adjusting and carrying out systematically instruction procedures based on stated standards. The primary goal of this research is to look at how educators and students view teacher training activities in the context of competency-based education. This study polled 845 Vietnamese from five institutions in Southeast Vietnam (66 university administrators, 104 lecturers, 23 university officials, and 652 students). According to the findings of this study, these participants comprehended and had knowledge about the qualities of competency-based education to build, administer, manage educational curriculum and competency-based education programs, or participate in these courses.

Keywords: competency-based education, curriculum, perception, students, educators.

INTRODUCTION

Human resource development is one of the essential factors influencing the change of the economy. With the digital revolution and the trend towards automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies, the global economy, which is constantly growing, requires the improvement of human resources with not only fundamental professional knowledge, adequate training but also essential personal skills (Raybould & Sheedy, 2005; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). In a competitive and dynamic business world, employees have to be trained and demonstrate their competency to meet the requirements of employers. In Vietnam, to meet the requirements of the growing economic development, graduate students have to be equipped adequately with professional knowledge and skills. Such as the ability to learn and adapt at a high level, communication, critical and creative thinking, planning/organizational skills, computer/technical literacy skills and so forth, which depend on characteristics of jobs and working environment. These requirements pose challenges for the educators in building, changing, and developing educational curriculum and teaching methods to enhance students' quality and human resource development. The teaching process and quality of education are influenced by many factors such as national governance (Gerged & Elheddad, 2020), working conditions of the educational institutes (Budiharso & Tarman, 2020), instructive authority (Ashraf, 2019), teachers guide and quality of textbooks (King, 2013). Besides, the teaching method is one of the most important factors affecting learners' outcomes, so it has to be changed and developed appropriately.

Competency-based education emphasizes the required competencies indispensable to future work and life, including life-long learning, problem-solving abilities, access and process information related to career, critical and analytical thinking, building and sustaining cooperative networks and good work relationships, using foreign languages (Lobanova & Shunin, 2008). Besides, competency-based education also focuses on integrated curriculum (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009), experiential learning, metacognition learning, and the controlling strong and adverse emotional reaction to learning's requirements (Hill & Houghton, 2001), student-centred learning and academic achievement (Chuenjitwongsa, Oliver, & Bullock, 2018).

Competency-based education has been studied and published first time as a behaviour focused approach to increase workplace efficiency (Taylor, 1911). From the 1940s, scientific management methods have been developed and applied in education to separate learning materials into sections and sequence academic contents appropriately. Determine competency standards for students; adjust and carry out systematically instruction process based on defined standards (Schilling & Koetting, 2010). Besides, the criteria for graduate quality (quality of education) which is the reputation of teachers/lecturers and institutions, is replaced with classroom facilities; academic materials; models of a set of problems, actual activity created for training purposes; work performance indicators (Curry & Docherty, 2017). Competency-based education has been adopted in many fields of education,

such as teacher training (Serdenciuc, 2013), athletic training education programs (Schilling & Koetting, 2010), pharmacy programs (Katoue & Schwinghammer, 2020), dental education (Chuenjitwongsa et al., 2018), medical education (Weinberger, Pereira, Iobst, Mechaber, & Bronze, 2010). With competency-based education, students are provided sufficient professional knowledge, attitudes, and necessary skills to accept, analyze, and solve problems regarding the learning process or future work (Keen, 1992). Through competency-based education programs, individuals can develop their competencies at an individualized pace and be supported to stay motivated and study effectively (Johnstone & Soares, 2014). Johnstone and Soares (2014) mentioned the principles that educator or institutional leaders should be notice when creating competency-based education programs and educational curriculum: (i) focus on competencies showing enough essential skills, general and professional knowledge that individuals need to pursuing their next stages of education or achieving goals in the workplace; (ii) consider requirements/demands of society and marketplace; learners' expectations and reactions to competency-based education model; (iii) assist students in the study process, boost students progress at an individualized pace and reasonable rate; (iv) provide sufficient high-quality academic materials (educational resources) which can track students' learning quality; (v) ensure the reliability and validity of the assessments. All competency-based education programs and educational curriculum need to focus on the evidence and learning outcomes which are the amount of general and professional knowledge students accumulate, and the ability to apply competencies and knowledge in work and life, instead of the time how long the programs take. Crawford, Cofie, McEwen, Dagnone, and Taylor (2020) surveyed program leaders, residents in postgraduate medical education, program directors in Canada and reported that they had a positive perception of competency-based education.

In Vietnam, competency-based education is considered a new teaching method to enhance the quality of education and closely link education with changing societal needs and the labour market in recent years. Competency-Based Education is a developmental process of organizing activities based on the cooperation between teachers and learners in universities. In addition, this approach is the unification between the two aspects of teaching and learning implementing in universities. Educational curriculum and competency-based education programs in Vietnam focusing on equipping students with professional knowledge, essential skills and attitudes toward the future career; researching and applying several theories about training activities based on competency-based education according to objectives, principles, appropriate contents and methods into training activities to assist students in building essential competencies. However, there is no scientific research on the perception of teacher training activities according to the competency-based education at Vietnam universities. To create, implement, and manage competency-based education programs, educators have to understand the characteristics of competency-based education fully. The above issue needs to be further studied comprehensively and systematically from various angles and aspects to clarify the awareness of educators and institutional leaders about this approach and enhance the quality of their management. The primary purpose of this current study is to examine the educators and students' perception of teacher training activities according to competency-based education. The recent scientific research will review the definitions and characteristics of competency-based education.

METHODS

Participants

A group of 845 Vietnamese from five universities in Southeast Vietnam participated in the survey. All participants provided informed consent after receiving an explanation of the purpose of the research. There were more females (52.7%) than males (47.3%) among the 845 participants who were surveyed. There were 66 university administrators (rectors, vice-rectors, academic deans, directors, associate deans, and department chairs), 104 lecturers, 23 university officials, and 652 students.

Measure

Questionnaires were designed to survey university administrators, lecturers, university officials, and students from five universities in Southeast Vietnam. This research started from November to December 2020. First, social-demographic items were introduced in the questionnaire. Then, Vietnamese perception of competency-based education was measured by a total of four questions. The participants' responses are provided in five different levels based on a 5-point Likert scale (Croasmun and Ostrom 2011).

Analyses

All participants were provided informed consent before participation and receiving an explanation of the purpose of the research. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for data analyses. The coding procedure was performed as follow: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. According to Malhotra & Birks (2007), the interval width of the 5-Likert scale should be computed to set up the group boundary value for result discussions. Interval Width = (Upper value – Lower value)/n = (5-1)/5 = 0.8. Group boundary values are built that help to discuss research results based on the above interval width, which is pointed in 1.00 – 1.80 means Strongly disagree, 1.81 – 2.60 mean Disagree, 2.61 – 3.40 mean Neutral, 3.41 – 4.20 mean Agree, 4.21 – 5.00 mean Strongly agree.

RESULTS

The mean scores of four items about university administrators, lecturers, and university officials' perception of competency-based education are presented in Table 1. The mean score on the levels of the agreement was 4.25 (SD = 0.80).

Among the four items of university administrators, lecturers, and university officials' perception of competency-based education, the top two indicators, which are listed from the highest to the lowest average points, are as below: Competency-Based Education is the process of researching and applying several theories about training activities based on Competency-Based Education according to objectives, principles, appropriate contents and methods into training activities to assist students in building essential competencies (M = 4.33, SD = 0.704) and Focusing on equipping students with professional knowledge, essential skills and attitudes toward the future career according to standards of Competency-Based Education (M = 4.27, SD = 0.761).

With the highest score indicator, a large proportion of survey participants assessed Strongly agree (45.3%), around forty-three percent of survey participants assessed Agree (43.8%), 10.4% of survey participants assessed Neutral and an insignificant minority of participants assessed Strongly disagree (0.5%). With the second indicator, more than two-fifths of survey participants Strongly agree (43.7%), around forty-one percent of survey participants assessed Agree (41.1%), a small number of survey participants assessed Neutral (14.2%), and just an insignificant minority assessed Strongly disagree and Disagree (0.5% for each level).

Table 1. University administrators, lecturers, and university officials' perception of competency-based education

| | % | | | | | M | SD | Rank |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| Competency-Based Education is a developmental process of organizing activities based on the cooperation between teachers and learners in universities. | 1.6 | 0 | 19.4 | 28.8 | 50.3 | 4.26 | 0.88 | 3 |
| Competency-Based Education is the unification between the two aspects of teaching and learning implementing in universities. | 0.5 | 1.6 | 23.6 | 31.9 | 42.4 | 4.14 | 0,87 | 4 |
| Focusing on equipping students with professional knowledge, essential skills and attitudes toward the future career according to standards of Competency-Based Education. | 0.5 | 0.5 | 14.2 | 41.1 | 43.7 | 4.27 | 0.76 | 2 |
| Competency-Based Education is the process of researching and applying several theories about training activities based on Competency-Based Education according to objectives, principles, appropriate contents and methods into training activities to assist students in building essential competencies. | 0.5 | 0 | 10.4 | 43.8 | 45.3 | 4.33 | 0.70 | 1 |
| Total score | | | | | | 4.25 | 0.80 | |
| M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation | | | | | | | | |

The mean scores of four items about students' perception of competency-based education are presented in Table 2. The mean score on the levels of the agreement was 4.23 (SD = 0.79).

Among the four items of students' perception of competency-based education, the top two indicators, which are listed from the highest to the lowest average points, are as below: Competency-Based Education is the process of researching and applying several theories about training activities based on Competency-Based Education according to objectives, principles, appropriate contents and methods into training activities to assist students in building essential competencies (M = 4.35, SD = 0.729) and Competency-Based Education is a developmental process of organizing activities based on the cooperation between teachers and learners in universities (M = 4.27, SD = 0.837).

Table 2: Students' perception of competency-based education

| | % | | | | | M | SD | Rank |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| Competency-Based Education is a developmental process of organizing activities based on the | 0.9 | 1.1 | 16.0 | 33.5 | 48.4 | 4.27 | 0.84 | 2 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| cooperation between teachers and learners in universities. | | | | | | | | |
| Competency-Based Education is the unification between the two aspects of teaching and learning implementing in universities. | 0.6 | 1.1 | 20.9 | 39.8 | 37.6 | 4.13 | 0.82 | 4 |
| Focusing on equipping students with professional knowledge, essential skills and attitudes toward the future career according to standards of Competency-Based Education. | 0.9 | 1.4 | 11.9 | 49.9 | 35.9 | 4.18 | 0.77 | 3 |
| Competency-Based Education is the process of researching and applying several theories about training activities based on Competency-Based Education according to objectives, principles, appropriate contents and methods into training activities to assist students in building essential competencies. | 0.9 | 0.8 | 7.2 | 44.5 | 46.6 | 4.35 | 0,73 | 1 |
| Total score | | | | | | 4.23 | 0.79 | |

M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

With the highest score indicator, a large proportion of survey participants assessed Strongly agree (46.6%), more than two-fifths of survey participants assessed Agree (44.5%), a small number of participants assessed Neutral (7.2%) and just an insignificant minority of survey participants assessed Strongly disagree and Disagree (0.9% and 0.8%, respectively). With the second indicator, just under a half of survey participants assessed Strongly agree (48.4%), nearly a third of survey participants assessed Agree (33.5%), 16% of participants assessed Neutral just an insignificant minority of survey participants assessed Strongly disagree and Disagree (0.9% and 1.1%, respectively).

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study is to investigate the university administrators, lecturers, university officials, and students' perception of teacher training activities according to competency-based education. The main finding indicated that both university administrators, lecturers, university officials, and students understood and had knowledge about the characteristics of competency-based education to create, implement, manage educational curriculum and competency-based education programs or participate in these courses. This finding showed that initial strategies of applying a new approach, competency-based education, in teacher training activities have been successful when educators and learners were introduced, trained, and had a positive perception of competency-based education. The result supported previous research conducted by Crawford et al. (2020). They reported that most survey participants, including university program directors, program leads and residents in postgraduate medical education, had positive perceptions of competency-based education and believed that this new approach could increase the quality of training programs.

The survey's evaluation scores showed no significant difference in scores of the perception of competency-based education between students and university administrators, lecturers, and university officials. Specifically, they agreed that competency-based education is the process of researching and applying several theories about training activities based on competency-based education according to objectives, principles, appropriate contents, and methods. In Vietnam, teacher training activities and programs are the main goals and central tasks of schools in general and universities. Training programs cover six important factors: training objectives, training content, training methods, teachers/lecturers, learners, and training facilities. Each of these factors has its properties and characteristics that significantly affect the training process results. Competency-based education has been considered a new approach and adopted in many training programs to enhance teacher training programs. Teacher training activities based on competency-based education are well-organized processes that form a system of essential knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes to assist learners in adapting to the workplace environment and the abilities to undertake teaching and knowledge transmission activities.

The achieved finding showed that university administrators, lecturers, and university officials had general knowledge about the most important training activities based on competency-based education. Training programs in Vietnam focus on equipping students with professional knowledge, essential skills, and attitudes toward the future career according to competency-based education standards to meet employers' requirements about the quality of human resources (Raybould & Sheedy, 2005; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). This finding is directly in line with the suggestion of Lobanova and Shunin (2008), who suggest that competency-based education emphasizes the required competencies which is indispensable to future work and life, including life-long learning, problem-solving abilities, access and process information related to career, critical and analytical thinking, build and sustain cooperative networks and good work relationships, using foreign languages. By participating in competency-

based education programs, students can develop their competencies at an individualized pace and be supported to stay motivated and study effectively (Johnstone & Soares, 2014).

The analyzed data showed that university administrators, lecturers, university officials, and students agreed that competency-based education is a developmental process of organizing activities based on the cooperation between teachers and learners in universities. The learning outcomes or quality of education could be affected by students' motivation and engagement which are improved by positive teacher-student relationships in the learning process. A positive relationship between teacher and student may promote positive students' behavior during learning and encourage students to cope with the demands in an educational context (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). Maulana, Opdenakker, Stroet, and Bosker (2013) indicated that students' interest and engagement in learning would be built and maintained with a sufficient foundation for favorable relationships between teachers and students. This result of the recent study showed that Vietnamese educators and learners have paid much attention to the cooperation between teachers and learners when building and improving training activities/programs based on competency-based education to ensure the quality of education.

CONCLUSION

Competency-based education is considered a scientific management method that has been developed and applied in education. This new approach emphasizes the required competencies which are indispensable to future work and life, integrated curriculum, experiential learning, the controlling strong and adverse emotional reaction to learning's requirements, student-centred learning and academic achievement. The main finding showed that university administrators, lecturers, university officials, and students understood and had knowledge about the characteristics of competency-based education to create, implement, manage educational curriculum and competency-based education programs or participate in these courses. Competency-based education should be further studied comprehensively and systematically from various angles and aspects to clarify the awareness of educators and institutional leaders about this approach. Future studies could aim to (i) examine the effectiveness of implementing training activities based on competency-based education in Vietnam; (ii) study barriers to competency-based education implementation and (iii) discover factors affecting the quality of training activities based on competency-based education, especially in Vietnam educational context.

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