

CONTRIBUTION AREA: HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

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**THE STUDENTS VOICE IN AFRICA HARMONIZATION
PROCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**It is my pleasure to share the selection criteria: Explanation on
Competence: Ability to translate knowledge in to practice**

Hence, I've presented my answers in essay form for the questions provided.

OVERVIEW

It is obvious that education has multidimensional benefits for individuals, families, communities and nations as a whole. According to UNESCO (2005), education improves self esteem, empowerment, creativity and critical reflection of individuals. Education can imbue people with the knowledge, the sense of purpose and the confidence essential for building a dynamic vibrant and cohesive nation as well as for creating better, fuller and purposeful life (Talesra, 2007). In line with this MoE(1994) states that education enables individuals and society to make all rounded personality in the development process by acquiring knowledge , skill and attitude .The role of education therefore, is not just to impart knowledge and skill that enables the beneficiaries to function as economic and social change agents in society, but also to impact on the values, idea attitude and aspirations important for natural development. Hence, globally educating a nation remains the most vital strategy for development of society throughout the developing world (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005).

In the process of education, effective management systems are crucial in sustaining quality teaching and learning. Since education is a one of the most important service, to understand the management of educational organizations one has to be aware of the specialties of the management of services. Educational institutions are a training ground for the production of qualified human power needed by all organizations. And hence, to contribute to development effectively, it needs to enable us to constructively and creatively address present and future global challenges and create more sustainable and resilient societies. Giving attention to education and playing our own role for the efficiency and effective functioning of educational institutions is what is expected of educational expertise and professionals.

Competence: Ability to translate knowledge into practice

1. Which course was the most effective in helping you to develop this competence? Explain why?

The most important course which helps me develop competence in translating knowledge into practice while I was attending Higher Education Management is 'Leadership in Education'. Because before I have taken the course, I didn't have knowledge, skill, and competence of how to lead in general and schools in particular. But, while attending the course I was exposed to different activities which directly and indirectly contribute to the competence I have gained. To gain knowledge about leadership I have gone through theories of leadership, complete assignments and takes exams. To develop my practical skills and competence I have involved in a project that help me practically work with school leaders at workplace. Practically while writing book review and conducting research reviews at schools I have gained experience of the authors and good practices leading educational institutions those in turn develops my competence for instance in being visible presence, effective communicator, and resource provider.

2. List the course-related activities which have helped you to develop this competence outside the class, either working on your own or with other students.

❖ Course related activities which helped me in developing my competence are:

- Observation of schools' practices and document analysis for conducting research;
- Visiting schools to collect data on school activities, analysis and presentation in the class;

- Conducting sector analysis on schools, identifying their problem, and prioritizing these problems especially of the poor infrastructure and presenting it to Jimma University CBTP (Community Based Training Program) for intervention.
- Processing information and data on computers that is much develops my competency of computer application.
- Reading assignments on different practices of educational leaders: Book reviews, reviewing current research findings to understand local, national, and international experiences;
- Interacting, sharing experience and working with teams while attending the course.

Which of these activities were the most effective in helping you to develop the competence? Explain why.

All of the above mentioned activities helped me a lot in developing my competence. Because they are interrelated i.e. by reading different sources I understood the experiences of others and internalize what literatures say. And by looking the practices of others and analysis I developed my ability of applying knowledge gained in specific situations. **But the very effective are:**

- ✚ Conducting sector analysis that contributed much on my ability of critically analyzing schools and societal problems and intervening.
- ✚ Visiting schools, making observation, data collecting, data analysis are much contributed to my practical ability of conducting research in education i.e. carrying out research by applying statistics supported by technologies with appropriate research designs and methods.

3. Which aspects of the competence have you developed through being a member of a club/ an association / a social group? Give some details.

The competences I have developed by being in association are:

Communication competence: writing and speaking effectively, using conventions proper to the situation; stating own opinions clearly and concisely; demonstrating openness and honesty; listening well during meetings and feedback sessions; explaining reasoning behind own opinions; asking others for their opinions and feedback; asking questions to ensure understanding of others.

Cooperation/team work competence: working harmoniously with others to get a job done; responding positively to instructions and procedures; able to work well with co-workers, peers and managers; sharing critical information with everyone involved in accomplishing tasks; working effectively and helping to set a tone of cooperation within the work group and across groups; coordinating own work with others; seeking opinion; valuing working relationships; when appropriate facilitating discussion before decision-making process is complete.

Problem solving: anticipating problems; thinking how a problem and its solution will affect other units; gathers information before making decisions; weighing alternatives against objectives and arriving at reasonable decisions; adapting well to changing priorities; analyzing current procedures for possible improvements; notifying supervisor of problems in a timely manner.

Customer Service: listening and responding effectively to customer questions; resolving customer problems to the customer's satisfaction; respecting all internal and external customers; following up to evaluate customer satisfaction; measuring customer satisfaction effectively; committing to exceeding customer expectations.

Reliability: personally responsible; completing work in a timely, consistent manner; working necessary to complete assigned work; arriving prepared for work; doing the best job possible; keeping commitments.

Job/Technical Knowledge: demonstrating knowledge of techniques, skills, equipment, procedures and materials. Applying knowledge to identify issues and internal problems; working to develop additional technical knowledge and skills.

Support Diversity: treating all people with respect; valuing diverse perspectives; participating in diversity training opportunities; providing a supportive work environment for the multicultural work; treating others fairly without regard to race, sex, color, religion, or sexual orientation; recognizing differences as opportunities to learn and gain by working together; valuing and encouraging unique skills and talents; seeking and considering diverse perspectives and ideas.

Quality of Work: maintaining high standards despite pressing deadlines; doing work right the first time; correcting own errors; regularly producing accurate, thorough, professional work.

Quantity of Work: producing an appropriate quantity of work; being able to determine tasks urgency in a meaningful and practical way; organizing and scheduling people and tasks.

Team development: working to improve the performance of oneself and others by pursuing opportunities for continuous learning/feedback; constructively helping and coaching others in their professional development; exhibiting a “can-do” approach developing a team spirit.

Judgments: making sound decisions; bases decisions on fact rather than emotion; analyzing problems skillfully; being logical to reach solutions.

Innovation: being able to challenge conventional practices; adapting established methods for new uses; pursuing ongoing system improvement; creating novel solutions to problems; evaluating new technology as potential solutions to existing problems.

4. In the course guide or in class presentations was there any reference to this competence if so give further information.

Definitely, there was the guide of the course which expose us to analysis of schools context, identify their problems, prioritize the problem, designing project on the issue prioritized and giving intervention which enriched our technical, reliability, communicative and problem solving competence.

Was the competence assessed in any of your units or modules- if so give further information.

Yes, the competence we have developed from the above activity is assessed in the Module of “Project Management and Program Evaluation” to check our competence in project design.

Will you be able to present evidence of achievement in this competence to an employer?

Yes, while attending the course “Project Management and Program Evaluation” in the second semester we have assessed schools around Jimma University to identify area of focus for analysis and conduct sector analysis and identified the problems, then prioritized the problems in those schools and designed project proposal for fund raising. Finally we presented our proposal for the community, Jimma University CBTP coordinators and NGO .i.e FLM Ethiopia. Then the proposal is approved with these stakeholders and for funding the project. Finally, shortage of seat at the school was improved after the intervention.

5. Outside the university which aspects of the competence have you developed? Give some details.

Outside the University I have developed competences such as:

Organization: being able to manage multiple tasks; being able to determine urgency in a practical way; using goals to guide actions; creating detailed action plans; organizing and scheduling people and tasks effectively.

Initiative and Creativity: planning work and carrying out tasks without detailed instructions; making constructive suggestions; preparing for problems or opportunities in

advance; undertaking additional responsibilities; responding to situations as they arise; creating novel solutions to problems; evaluating new technology as potential solutions to existing problems.

Commitment to Safety: understanding, encouraging and carrying out the principles of integrated safety management.

Responsiveness to requests for service: responding to requests for service in a timely and thorough manner; doing what is necessary to ensure customer satisfaction; prioritizing customer needs; following up and evaluating customer satisfaction.

Have you done anything else in your life which has helped you to develop this competence?

Yes, because before I come to University I have been Youth Association Chairperson at my district. At that time I've built the ability to speak in front of people by making a speech and leading a meeting. In addition, I've developed an ability to plan on the different tasks of the association, assigning tasks for the members, and monitoring and evaluating each activity with my colleagues in pair and in group which is more improved the above mentioned and my team work competences.

6. After reflecting on the different contexts in which you have developed this competence (in class, working on course-related activities outside the class, in clubs and associations, in real life, and any other contexts you have added in your response to question 5), write a short statement on how each of these contexts has contributed to your development of the competence and on their relative strengths.

✚ In the course related activities, through collecting data, processing the data, analyzing documents, observations, and from working in group with my classmate, I developed the skill of understanding school contexts and applying what I have gained through reading and class attendance in solving real school problems to improve schools. They helped

me better understand the environment.

✚ From being a member of an association and clubs, practically the tasks and activities helped me develop interpersonal skills such as effective communications. I also developed the skill of understanding others and working as a team. Moreover, it helped learn from others and work on my weaknesses. Thus, associations, clubs and the like are wonderful contexts which give chance for their members to play different roles for their associations those in turn laid base for the enhancement peoples' competences in different jobs.

7. Do you think that you have fully developed this competence?

No, I believe that I have developed the skill to some extent; because no one can be perfect at once and the situations are also dynamic. I strongly believe that through continuous exposure to capacity building trainings, workshops, symposiums practices etc will more develop my competence.

What else can you do to improve your level of competence while you are a student?

While I'm learning, I have been trying to more develop my theoretical knowledge especially by reviewing recent literature in the field, research findings and the reviews presented by different authors. Because such knowledge will enhance my understanding in the field so that I can play my role effectively in practical activities.

How do you 'think you will go on developing this competence when you are working?

✚ In doing the job, I believe that it will give me better opportunity to develop my competence. Because, it is a real world where I apply the knowledge I gained from the theories, experiences of the tasks and collegial expertise by:

- preparing participatory plan and implementing effectively;
- demonstrating openness and honesty;

- explaining my own opinions and asking others for their opinions and feedbacks;
- taking corrective actions of on my mistakes and misunderstanding; and
- Professionally communicate and collaborate with colleagues.

Additional Questions

Interview either two of your classmates or two graduates who are working and ask them questions 1-5 and question 7(NB for the graduate Question 7 will read: Do you think that you have fully developed this competence? How do you think you will go on developing this competence now that you are working?)

- ✚ The graduate answered for question 7 that he has fully developed the competences he has mentioned during the interview (communication, team work, organization, problem solving and the like).

He also stated that he developed the competences more while working. He justifies this actual work place has a great opportunity to deal with working conditions by identifying the strengths and weaknesses in daily activities. It is learning by doing and allows making mistakes and taking corrective actions for more improvement.

Finally, summarize any differences or new ideas that you have learned from your own reflections and your interviews.

In sum I have learned a lot from my reflections and interviews I have conducted. To mention one I learned that applying knowledge is not a one shot competence but it needs to continuously develop by keeping myself up to date. The dynamic and rapid changing environment and working conditions always calls to new ideas and abilities to deal with. Therefore, I believed that a professional needs to continuously develop his/her competences by keeping in touch with trainings, workshops and symposiums such as tuning project to remain effective. The difference I observed in both of the interviewees is that they would not

get chance of being in association and any other context to have some basic skills; hence, the competences they develop are only course related, in working the job and experiences gained from class mate during the teaching-learning process.

