Navigating Policy Silos: A Comparative Analysis of Teacher Competency Frameworks in Malaysia's Education Blueprints

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia's pursuit of high-income nation status is intrinsically linked to ambitious educational reforms, driven by a suite of parallel national policy documents. Foundational texts such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) [MEB (HE)] and the more recent Digital Education Policy [DEP] articulate a vision for a transformed education system capable of navigating the complexities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0). This policy landscape necessitates a new profile of teacher competencies, yet there remains a significant lack of scholarly analysis that comparatively examines how these key policies conceptualize the 'ideal teacher'. The concurrent and often overlapping nature of these documents' risks creating implementation silos for teacher education institutions. This study addresses this gap by employing a qualitative comparative document analysis that interrogates the conceptualization of the 'ideal teacher' across Malaysia's core education policy and standards documents, revealing both strategic alignment and significant structural dissonance. Utilizing a macro-meso-micro analytical framework, the study systematically compares the national policy vision, institutional implementation requirements, and expected pedagogical practices articulated within each document. The article's primary contribution is the development of a synthesized model that identifies critical areas of convergence and divergence. By mapping these policy intersections, this analysis offers a pathway toward a more coherent and integrated national teacher competency framework, providing actionable insights for policymakers and teacher education providers.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Digital Competencies, Education Policy Analysis, Malaysian Teacher Education, Document Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The global education paradigm is undergoing a massive shift, shaped in response to the demands of the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions (IR4.0/IR5.0) and the ubiquitous embedding of digital technology into all realms of society (Schwab, 2016; World Economic Forum [WEF], 2020). Countries are looking at their education systems as if they are trying once again to ensure they are preparing people who are adaptable, competent with technology, and capable of coping with increasingly complex and unpredictable scenarios. In this regard, Malaysia has committed long-term and strategically to a reform of their education system, which is therefore very much part of the country's vision to become a developed high-income country. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) articulates this national agenda in detail. It demands a radical reorganization of the higher education system so that its graduates are prepared for the future, creative and competitive with the world (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015). The Blueprint recognizes that reform in higher education is critical to promote national economic development, social mobility, and competitiveness in the world economy and that the education sector is an important driver of these goals. Malaysia's commitment has spawned a complex and multi-layered education policy program. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) is the core element of the plan. It is a reform plan for the next decade based on ten "Shifts" that aim to upgrade governance, teaching quality, and innovation in learning (MOHE, 2015). The latest Digital Education Policy builds on this and focuses on developing a digitally savvy generation in which digital skills are integrated into education—education, curriculum, leadership and institutional practice (MOE, 2023). The COVID-19 epidemic accelerated the digitalization of higher education, exposing systemic weaknesses and different patterns of digital readiness that made this approach even more

critical. The study argues that it is vital that a more holistic comparison should be made between the teacher competency expectations specified in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education), the Digital Education Policy and the Education Programme Standards. While all documents mentioned in their respective documents defined expectations of teachers, scholars have been less inclined to explore in what ways these policies converge, overlap, or diverge in their conceptualization regarding future teachers in Malaysia. It is imperative to understand this collective policy narrative as a way to discover misalignments and policy silos that may complicate the implementation, by examining this policy context at the level of teacher education institutions. This article intends to examine and integrate both these simultaneously implemented policy recommendations to better capture a more comprehensive and cohesive voice of teacher quality in the context of Malaysia.

The Problem Statement:

In order for the multi-billion ringgit investment in Malaysia's education reform to yield successful outcomes, it is essential to establish a clear and unified vision of what constitutes an effective teacher. This guiding vision is pivotal for the domains of teacher education, professional development, and accountability. It serves as a strategic framework that ensures alignment between policy objectives and the realities encountered in schools and classrooms. However, a thorough analysis of Malaysia's core education policy documents and national performance indicators reveals a persistent gap between the idealized notions of teacher competency and their actual implementation within the Malaysian education system.

National policy documents portray the ideal Malaysian educator as versatile and forward-thinking. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) characterizes teachers as "holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced individuals, embodying the interplay of knowledge (ilmu) and moral character (akhlak)" (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015). This vision is further articulated in the Digital Education Policy, which asserts that teachers should be confident, critical, responsible, and ethical users of digital technology (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2023). Conversely, the Education Programme Standards stipulate that a "scholar-teacher" must possess strong subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and professional values (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2017). Collectively, these policy documents construct an aspirational image of educators who are technologically adept, skilled in pedagogy, and grounded in moral integrity.

Despite the consistency of these policy aspirations, there are notable discrepancies when juxtaposed with empirical data regarding instructional practices, institutional characteristics, and ethical considerations in education. A significant disparity persists between the proclamations of policymakers and the realities of classroom instruction. The Digital Education Policy references findings from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019, which indicate that a substantial proportion of Malaysian teachers utilized computers only sporadically—82% for Science and 90% for Mathematics (Mullis et al., 2020; MOE, 2023). This observation leads to the conclusion that the implementation of digital pedagogy has not been systematically integrated into existing teaching practices, although there is ongoing policy attention directed toward the incorporation of technology in education.

Further corroborating this concern, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) highlights employer dissatisfaction with graduates' critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills, suggesting a divergence between the educational objectives espoused by policy and the actual teaching-learning outcomes achieved (MOHE, 2015). Institutional deficiencies exacerbate the challenges associated with realizing the envisioned teacher profile. The Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) advocates for a transition from uniform academic career models to more flexible and tailored pathways (MOHE, 2015); however, the structural frameworks within teacher education institutions have seen limited adaptation. National statistics from the Digital Education Policy indicate that in 2021, more than half of teachers (57.9%) and educational leaders (52.9%) possessed only "Basic" digital skills (MOE, 2023), underscoring the stagnation of systemic change.

These findings reflect significant weaknesses in institutional capacity, including limited professional development opportunities, inadequate leadership preparedness, and insufficient infrastructural support for the

integration of digital technology in teaching. These challenges present substantial barriers to cultivating digitally proficient educators as articulated in national policy documents. Addressing pedagogical and institutional challenges necessitates a concurrent focus on ethical and dispositional dilemmas, which undermine the effectiveness of current teacher preparation methodologies. Both the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) and the Digital Education Policy underscore the importance of ethics, responsibility, and professional values in shaping the teaching profession (MOHE, 2015; MOE, 2023). The persistent emphasis on professional character and ethical conduct in policy documents indicates that these qualities have not yet been effectively integrated into existing training programs. The reiteration of these principles highlights ongoing difficulties in translating normative policy expectations into practice among educators.

When considering these various gaps collectively, it becomes evident that fragmentation exists within the policy-to-practice landscape; different policy texts articulate similar, yet not fully interconnected, visions of teacher competency. In the absence of a coherent national framework that integrates pedagogical needs, institutional support structures, and ethical standards, such policies risk perpetuating silos or introducing inconsistencies across various teacher education institutions nationwide. This fragmentation necessitates a critical examination of both the selective translation and integration of foreign benchmarks and models into the Malaysian education policy framework, as well as the potential for more effective implementation of such benchmarking. Ultimately, these efforts could collectively foster the development of a coherent, contextually situated teacher competency framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to effectively contextualize the definition of teacher competency within Malaysia, it is imperative to examine the international models that have significantly influenced national education policy. Comparative education research consistently demonstrates that national teacher competency frameworks are often constructed in alignment with international standards, as governments strive for global coherence and credibility in their educational reforms (Caena, 2014; Ochieng, 2024). Malaysia exemplifies this trend. As articulated by Caena and Redecker (2019), contemporary teacher competency frameworks have evolved beyond basic ICT literacy, advocating for a comprehensive integration of digital, pedagogical, and professional competencies. Furthermore, Ferrari (2020) emphasizes that effective digital competence encompasses not only the technical ability to utilize technology but also a pedagogical acumen that facilitates the meaningful incorporation of technology into teaching and learning practices.

These conceptual transformations are evident in the global frameworks referenced in Malaysia's core policy documents. The Digital Education Policy (DEP) explicitly states that its Digital Competencies Standard for Educators (DCS-E) was developed with reference to the European Commission's Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu) and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2023). As Redecker (2017) observes, DigCompEdu frames digital competence as an evolving spectrum of skills that can be cultivated over time, encompassing competencies such as professional engagement, digital resource management, teaching and learning, assessment, learner empowerment, and the facilitation of individual learners' digital competence. Ferrari (2020) notes that this approach underscores the importance of flexibility and reflective practice, positioning teachers as lifelong learners in an ever-evolving digital landscape. Concurrently, the ISTE Standards portray digitally competent educators as architects of learner-centered experiences, innovative facilitators, and advocates for ethical digital citizenship (International Society for Technology in Education [ISTE], 2017).

According to Benali and Mak (2022), the implementation of the DigCompEdu and ISTE frameworks reflects a global transition toward competency-based digital teaching standards that prioritize innovation, agency, and pedagogical flexibility, rather than mere technical compliance. In contrast, the Educational Policy Standards (EPS), which govern the accreditation of teacher preparation programs in Malaysia, are primarily informed by a different international framework. The EPS is largely derived from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) model from the United States (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2017). As Darling-Hammond (2017) points out, NCATE-based standards emphasize

measurable criteria, including content knowledge, pedagogical competence, clinical practice, and professional dispositions, promoting a systematic and compliance-oriented approach to teacher preparation.

This juxtaposition of influences reveals a significant philosophical tension within Malaysia's teacher competency ecosystem. While DigCompEdu and ISTE advocate for fluid, evolving competencies (Redecker, 2017; Ferrari, 2020), NCATE-based standards prioritize stability, accountability, and standardization (Darling-Hammond, 2017). It is essential to address this dichotomy, as Caena (2014) warns that the simultaneous application of competency-based and standards-based frameworks without a coherent integrative strategy can lead to fragmentation in expectations from teacher education institutions. Numerous scholars have cautioned that selectively adopting global frameworks without contextual adaptation risks creating policy silos within national education systems (Owo, 2025; Ochieng, 2024). In the Malaysian context, this risk is further exacerbated by the presence of global digital competency models and national philosophies that promote a holistic educational approach, as articulated in the National Education Philosophy (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015).

Despite the significance of these interactions, there is a paucity of research that systematically examines the relationships among DigCompEdu, ISTE, and NCATE within the broader context of national teacher education policymaking in Malaysia. Most existing studies do not analyze these frameworks independently or consider their emergence from distinct cultural contexts (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2017), resulting in a lack of inquiry into how to understand the coherence of these frameworks from a non-Western perspective. Consequently, the policy fragmentation observed in Malaysia's teacher competency landscape can be attributed to the divergences in theories and concepts prevalent in the international literature. Ferrari (2020) asserts that, in the absence of a synthesized model that reconciles these polarized paradigms, national systems may perpetuate the disconnect between policy intent and institutional behavior. This unresolved tension highlights a critical gap in research and necessitates a comparative examination of global teacher competency frameworks as they are operationalized within Malaysian education policy.

Research Gap and Contribution

While individual Malaysian education policies have been the subject of scholarly review, a significant research gap exists in the comparative analysis of their underlying conceptual frameworks. Specifically, no study to date has performed a rigorous qualitative comparative analysis of the teacher competency frameworks embedded within the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) [MEB (HE)], the Digital Education Policy [DEP], and the Education Programme Standards (EPS). This lack of a synthesized, cross-policy examination obscures potential misalignments and synergies that are crucial for effective implementation by teacher education institutions.

This study makes an original contribution to theory, policy, and practice by directly addressing this gap. Its contribution can be detailed across three key dimensions:

To Theory: The study moves beyond a single-document analysis to construct a synthesized, multi-policy model of teacher competency. By mapping the intersections of the "Talent Excellence" framework (MEB HE), the "Digitally Competent Educator" framework (DEP), and the "Scholar-Teacher" framework (EPS), this research provides a richer theoretical construct of the 'ideal' Malaysian teacher than can be derived from any single policy document.

To Policy: This analysis offers actionable insights for Malaysian policymakers. By systematically identifying areas of policy coherence and divergence, the findings provide an evidence base to inform future policy revisions and promote greater integration, highlighting where strategic alignment is strong and where "policy silos" may be creating conflicting signals.

To Teacher Education Practice: The findings serve as a critical resource for teacher education institutions and curriculum developers. By providing a clear, comparative map of the demands articulated across multiple national policies, this study helps these institutions design more coherent pre-service and in-service training programs that prepare educators to meet the holistic, digital, and professional standards set by the nation.

The potential of this contribution to key stakeholders provides the core justification for undertaking this comparative analysis.

Justification

This research is strategically important for a wide range of stakeholders within Malaysia's education ecosystem, from national-level policymakers to the curriculum developers creating on-the-ground training materials. The study's comparative analysis provides a critical lens for understanding, aligning, and implementing the multifaceted vision for teacher excellence that is currently dispersed across several key national documents.

• **For Policymakers**: The comparative findings offer an evidence base for harmonizing national education policies. In a landscape where multiple ministries contribute to the education agenda, this analysis provides a tool for identifying and resolving potential contradictions, ensuring that national resources are allocated more efficiently and that governmental bodies are working toward a unified vision of teacher excellence.

• **For Teacher Education Institutions:** Universities and Institutes of Teacher Education (IPGs) are at the frontline of implementing national policy. This analysis offers a roadmap for aligning their curricula and professional development programs with the multifaceted expectations of national policy, from the holistic "scholar-teacher" ideal of the EPS to the digital fluency mandates of the DEP.

• **For Curriculum Developers:** The study provides a critical lens for designing training modules and educational materials that are not only compliant with individual standards but are also integrated, addressing the holistic, digital, and pedagogical dimensions of modern teaching simultaneously. This enables developers to create more relevant and impactful training programs that prepare educators for the real-world complexities of the 21st-century classroom.

This comprehensive justification underpins the necessity of the study's analytical approach, which is grounded in a robust theoretical framework.

Theoretical

In order to facilitate a systematic comparison, this study examines the fundamental conceptual frameworks of teacher competency as articulated in Malaysia's core education policy documents. These frameworks serve as the primary units of analysis and embody distinct assumptions concerning the roles, skills, and professional responsibilities of teachers at various levels of policy and practice. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) delineates its conception of teacher and academic competency within the Talent Excellence framework, which is embedded in Shift 2. Central to this framework is the notion of a "New Academia," which expands the definition of academic excellence beyond conventional teaching and research roles to include entrepreneurship, industry engagement, and institutional leadership (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015). The framework advocates for "diversified career pathways" aimed at fostering the development and retention of experienced professionals through four distinct professional models: inspirational teachers, accomplished researchers, experienced practitioners (which encompasses industry experts such as entrepreneurs-in-residence and senior executives), and transformational leaders (MOHE, 2015). This conceptualization is intended to educate higher education practitioners and align strategically with local economic and innovation objectives.

In contrast, the Digital Education Policy (DEP) presents a more technology-centric perspective on teacher competency, articulated through the Digitally Competent Educator framework as outlined in Thrust 2. This policy framework predominantly operates at the school level and implements digital competence via the Digital Competencies Standard for Educators (DCS-E) (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2023). The DCS-E delineates three tiers of advancement in educators' digital skills: Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced, encompassing the dimensions of digital pedagogy, assessment, professional practice, and ethical technology use (MOE, 2023). Notably, the DEP explicitly states that the DCS-E was developed with reference to various international standards, including the ISTE Standards for Educators (ISTE, 2017) and the European Digital

Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu), both of which emphasize pedagogically grounded, adaptable, and ethically responsible applications of technology in education (Redecker, 2017; ISTE, 2017).

The Education Programme Standards (EPS) outline the framework through which the accreditation and quality assurance of teacher education programs are conducted in Malaysia. Within this context, the ideal graduate is characterized as a scholar-teacher possessing experience in lifelong learning, professional ethics, and evidence-informed practice (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2017). The EPS framework is predicated upon mastery of essential core competencies in educational understanding, including foundational educational principles, professional practice, and subject-matter expertise. Furthermore, all accredited programs are mandated to demonstrate alignment with the eight domains of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF), namely knowledge, practical skills, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, professionalism, and ethical responsibility (MQA, 2017). This framework adopts a standards-based, structured approach to teacher preparation, drawing influence from international accreditation traditions.

The comparative analysis of these three frameworks is guided by a policy coherence analysis. According to Carbone (2018), policy coherence analysis examines the extent to which policies systematically address common goals, the instruments utilized, and the target groups across relevant policy texts within the same system. This methodological approach is employed in this study to systematically investigate how the Talent Excellence, Digitally Competent Educator, and Scholar-Teacher frameworks articulate teacher competency, identify their primary target audiences, and operationalize professional expectations. Consequently, this analytic lens serves to illuminate points of convergence, overlap, and divergence among the frameworks, thereby providing a structured means to address the study's principal research design objective: to identify coherence, fragmentation, and disjunction within the landscape of teacher competency policies in Malaysia.

Research Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the conceptualizations of teacher competency across Malaysia's key education policies and standards. This inquiry is guided by the following overarching research question:

How do Malaysia's key education policies—the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education), the Digital Education Policy, and the Education Programme Standards—conceptualize and structure the ideal teacher competency profile, and what are the implications of their convergences and divergences for teacher education reform?

To address this question, the study pursues the following aligned research objectives:

1. To analyze the distinct competency domains, philosophical underpinnings, and intended outcomes for educators as articulated in each of the three core policy and standards documents.

2. To compare these frameworks to identify critical areas of convergence, divergence, and potential tension in their conceptualization of the 'ideal' Malaysian teacher.

3. To synthesize the findings using a macro-meso-micro analytical framework to map the relationship between national policy vision, institutional implementation requirements, and expected pedagogical practices.

4. To propose a conceptual model for an integrated teacher competency framework that harmonizes the holistic, digital, and professional standards for pre-service and in-service teacher education in Malaysia.

These objectives are centered on a multi-dimensional understanding of the core construct of teacher competency.

Conceptual understanding and Core Construct

The core construct of this study is "Teacher Competency." This is not a monolithic concept but is rather a

multi-dimensional idea constructed differently across Malaysia's policy landscape. Based on the source texts, Teacher Competency can be understood through the following three interconnected dimensions:

1. The Holistic and Entrepreneurial Dimension (MEB HE): The Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) defines competency through a holistic lens that directly translates the National Education Philosophy's goal to produce individuals who are "intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious." This is operationalized through the six national student aspirations, which are mirrored for educators: ethics and spirituality, leadership skills, national identity, language proficiency, thinking skills, and knowledge. This dimension emphasizes the development of balanced individuals who possess both ilmu (knowledge) and akhlak (ethics), and frames competency through an entrepreneurial mindset, calling for a shift from producing "job seekers" to "job creators."

2. The Digital Competency Dimension (DEP): The Digital Education Policy introduces a specific and measurable definition of competency centered on the concept of the "digitally competent educator." This involves the confident, critical, responsible, and ethical use of digital technologies for a range of professional tasks, including teaching, assessment, and continuous professional development. Competency in this dimension is benchmarked against different proficiency levels (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced).

3. The Professional Knowledge Dimension (EPS): The Education Programme Standards defines competency through the ideal of the "scholar-teacher," which emphasizes mastery of a core body of professional knowledge structured into key components: educational foundations, professional practice, and school subject content. A competent teacher must demonstrate learning outcomes across the eight domains of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF), which include practical skills, social skills, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills.

This multi-faceted understanding of the core construct will be applied within the study's structured analytical framework.

Analytical Framework

To systematically compare the competency frameworks, this study employs a multi-level analytical framework. This approach is justified by the need for an analysis that connects high-level national policy visions to the concrete institutional realities and on-the-ground pedagogical expectations they generate. The framework is structured into three interconnected levels: Macro, Meso, and Micro.

- Macro-Level (National Policy and Vision): This level of analysis examines the overarching national goals, philosophical underpinnings, and aspirational targets articulated in the policy documents. It focuses on the "why" behind the reforms. This includes analyzing the MEB (HE)'s vision to create a "globally prominent" higher education system and the DEP's vision of fostering a "competitive, digitally fluent generation." This level assesses the high-level strategic direction that shapes the definition of teacher competency.

- Meso-Level (Institutional Capacity and Implementation): This level focuses on the implications and requirements for institutions, particularly teacher education institutions (IPGs and universities). The analysis at this level investigates the "how." This includes examining the MEB (HE)'s call for institutional autonomy, the DEP's requirements for digital infrastructure, and the EPS's detailed curriculum and credit-hour mandates for programme accreditation. This level highlights the different, and sometimes conflicting, demands placed upon the organizations that prepare teachers.

- Micro-Level (Pedagogical Practice and Teacher Profile): This level distills the specific, expected competencies, attributes, and practices of the individual teacher. It focuses on the "who"—the ideal educator profile defined by each policy. The analysis at this level involves a direct comparison of the distinct attributes of the "holistic" academic from the MEB (HE), the "digitally competent" classroom educator from the DEP, and the professionally grounded "scholar-teacher" from the EPS.

By applying this three-tiered framework, the study can effectively map the flow of policy from abstract national vision down to the concrete expectations placed on individual educators, revealing areas of coherence and disjuncture along the way. This framework guides the application of the research methodology.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative comparative document analysis methodology, which is particularly well-suited for scholarly and policy research aimed at exploring how official documents generate meanings, preferences, and normative standards within a given system (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003). Comparative document research within the field of education facilitates a systematic examination of policy intentions, institutional mandates, and professional expectations articulated in authoritative policy documents (Cardno, 2018). Given that this study seeks to investigate, compare, and synthesize the conceptions of teacher competency as represented in national policy and standards documents in Malaysia, a qualitative document-based approach is deemed methodologically valid and analytically appropriate for achieving the study's objectives.

Data Sources and Document Selection

The key data sources were purposefully selected to align with the central policy pillars that delineate teacher education and teacher competency in Malaysia. Purposeful sampling is recommended in qualitative policy research, as the selected documents should be information-rich and closely related to the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). The documents chosen for analysis include:

1. Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education)
2. Digital Education Policy
3. Education Programme Standards (Education)
4. Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 Annual Report 2023

Collectively, these documents illustrate the strategic, operational, and accountability dimensions of the educational policy landscape in Malaysia. The Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education articulates the national vision for higher education and talent development aimed at academic excellence (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015). The Digital Education Policy establishes national expectations concerning educators' digital competencies across various educational contexts (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2023). The Education Programme Standards delineate the requirements for educational accreditation and the anticipated learning outcomes for teacher education programs (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2017), while the Annual Report presents performance indicators and evidence of actions undertaken by policymakers (MOE, 2023). Together, these documents provide a coherent and authoritative framework for addressing the conceptualization of teacher competency within the policy context.

Analytical Process

The analytical process was conducted in two parallel yet interrelated stages, situated within a macro–meso–micro analytical framework typically employed in policy and institutional analysis to evaluate system-level correlations (Matland, 1995; Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Stage 1: Framework Mapping

All documents were systematically coded and mapped across the three analytical levels. This process identified national vision statements, overarching goals, and policy rationales pertaining to teacher competency at the macro level. At the meso level, institutional expectations, governance mechanisms, curriculum architectures, and professional development needs were coded. At the micro level, descriptive measures of teachers' roles, competencies, skills, and professional dispositions were abstracted. This three-tiered approach facilitates an

examination of the vertical alignment between national aspirations, institutional responsibilities, and the demands of professional practice (Honig, 2006).

Stage 2: Thematic Synthesis

A cross-document thematic synthesis was conducted, informed by the framework mapping, to identify recurring and contrasting thematic elements related to teacher competency. Thematic analysis is appropriate for discerning patterns of meaning across qualitative data, provided that contextual nuances are preserved (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The primary aim of the synthesis was to pinpoint areas of overlap—such as a common emphasis on lifelong education, innovation, and ethical professionalism—as well as areas of divergence, including differences in targeted educator groups, competency focus, and underlying structures (e.g., institutional autonomy versus standardization).

METHODOLOGICAL RIGOR AND RELIABILITY

A systematic and rigorous coding approach was employed to establish qualitative methods that adhered to a well-defined analytical framework. This framework was sufficiently robust to ensure that only primary policy documents contributed to the data set. Transparency in document selection, coding logic, and comparative synthesis enhances the credibility and dependability of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By grounding all interpretations in the policy texts and applying uniform analytical criteria across documents, researchers can mitigate bias and produce analyses that are directly traceable to the source material. The outcomes derived from this methodological approach will be presented in the subsequent section.

Findings

The comparative analysis of the policy documents reveals both a strong national commitment to teacher excellence and significant differences in conceptualization and strategic focus. The findings, presented according to the macro, meso, and micro levels of the analytical framework, illuminate areas of both coherence and tension within Malaysia's policy ecosystem for teacher competency.

Findings at the Macro-Level: A Convergent National Vision

At the macro-level, the policies demonstrate a remarkable convergence in their overarching vision for Malaysia's future. Both the MEB (HE) and the DEP share a common goal: to develop globally competitive human capital that can adapt to rapid technological change and drive the nation's economic growth.

Table 1: Comparison of Overarching Policy Goals

Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education)	Digital Education Policy
To create a higher education system that "enables Malaysia to compete in the global economy."	To foster a "competitive, digitally fluent generation."
To produce "holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates" who are "job creators, rather than to only seek jobs."	To produce "digitally literate students who can apply knowledge and skills in solving problems and creating something novel."
To build a system that is "globally prominent" and ranks among the "world's leading education systems."	To transform the digital education landscape to "increase the competitiveness and progress of the country's educational landscape."

Findings at the Meso-Level: Divergent Institutional Frameworks

While the macro-level vision is aligned, the meso-level analysis reveals divergent demands placed upon teacher education institutions. Each document prescribes a different set of mechanisms for institutional

operation. The MEB (HE) champions a model of empowered governance and autonomy. It advocates for granting Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) greater decision-making power in return for accountability against "five-year (3+2) outcome-based performance contracts." In contrast, the EPS represents a framework of standardization and compliance, mandating a detailed and uniform structure for all teacher education programs, including credit hour distributions and professional practice requirements. The DEP adds a third layer of institutional requirements focused on digital readiness, mandating that institutions provide necessary infrastructure, leadership training, and support for the development of digital content.

Findings at the Micro-Level: Three Profiles of the Ideal Teacher

At the micro-level, the analysis distills three distinct, though partially overlapping, profiles of the ideal Malaysian educator.

Table 2: Comparative Profiles of the Ideal Malaysian Educator

MEB (HE)'s "Talent Excellence"	DEP's "Digitally Competent Educator"	EPS's "Scholar-Teacher"
Primary Role: Academic in Higher Education (Lecturer, Researcher, Leader)	Primary Role: Educator in Schools (Preschool to Post-Secondary)	Primary Role: Professional Teacher (Pre-service focus)
Core Competencies: Specialization in one of four pathways: Inspiring Educator, Accomplished Researcher, Experienced Practitioner, or Transformational Institutional Leader.	Core Competencies: Confident, critical, responsible, and ethical use of digital technologies for teaching, assessment, and professional development.	Core Competencies: Mastery of a core body of knowledge (foundations, practice, content); demonstration of MQF learning outcomes.
Key Attributes: Entrepreneurial mindset, part of a "New Academia," relevant, referred, and respected locally and internationally.	Key Attributes: Proficiency at Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced levels; able to foster digital citizenship and deep learning.	Key Attributes: Engaged in lifelong and life-wide learning; upholds professional ethics; reflective practitioner.
Focus: High-level talent development, institutional excellence, research, and leadership within universities.	Focus: Digital pedagogy, integration of technology into classroom practice, and ethical use of digital tools.	Focus: Foundational professional knowledge and pedagogical skills for initial teacher qualification.

This comparison reveals that the bifurcation between higher education and school-level educators is the primary structural flaw in Malaysia's educator development ecosystem. By creating separate conceptual frameworks for university academics [MEB (HE)] and school teachers [DEP/EPS], the policies create a chasm in the professional lifecycle of an educator. Instead of a cohesive continuum from pre-service teacher to expert academic, the landscape is defined by parallel, disconnected pathways. The implications of these findings will now be discussed.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this comparative analysis reveal a fundamental paradox within Malaysia's education reform agenda. While the national education policy is grounded in a robust vision aimed at cultivating globally competitive, innovative, and socially and ethically reflective citizens, the frameworks governing teacher preparation and professional development exhibit fragmentation and operate within isolated spheres. This duality has been recognized as a critical issue in educational systems, wherein coherence at the strategic policy level does not necessarily translate to coherence at the implementation level (Viennet and Pont, 2017). The macro-level alignment of policy documents represents a significant strength, as it underscores the consensus amongst these documents. Notably, there is a consistent emphasis on lifelong learning, innovation,

professionalism, and ethical standards articulated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education), Digital Education Policy, and the Education Programme Standards. Such alignment engenders a clear normative coherence, suggesting that policymakers in Malaysia possess a shared understanding of the underlying motivations driving educational reform (Carbone, 2018). This pattern is similarly observed in high-performing educational systems, where aligned philosophical traditions serve as a robust foundation for systemic integration that promotes the sustainability of reform initiatives (OECD, 2020).

Nevertheless, this shared foundation also legitimizes the necessity for an integrated teachers' competency framework, which would provide a cohesive structure for educators to acquire knowledge by integrating technical capabilities with ethical and professional accountability. However, at the meso and micro levels, the analysis reveals significant implementation challenges arising from policy disunity. The coexistence of divergent operational logics exemplifies what scholars refer to as the "policy silo" effect, wherein parallel policies pursue analogous objectives but in uncoordinated manners (Peters, 2015). In the Malaysian context, teacher education institutions find themselves at the intersection of competing demands. The Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) advocates for institutional autonomy, differentiation, and entrepreneurial academic identities (Ministry of Higher Education [MOHE], 2015), whereas the Education Programme Standards impose a standardized accreditation structure predicated on compliance and program homogeneity (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2017). Furthermore, the Digital Education Policy intensifies these pressures by introducing urgent, externally benchmarked digital competency requirements (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2023). Such tensions have been criticized for precipitating strategic drift and implementation fatigue within institutions, a phenomenon frequently observed in systems characterized by multiple reform mandates with overlapping aims and functions (Honig, 2006; Matland, 1995). It is conceivable that, rather than fostering innovation driven by intentionality, institutions may prioritize administrative adherence over instructional coherence, thereby undermining the transformative potential of these policies.

International research consistently cautions against the detrimental effects of policy overload, which can inhibit institutional agency and compromise reform outcomes (OECD, 2019; Viennet & Pont, 2017) in the absence of explicit alignment mechanisms. The results of this study underscore the necessity for a more integrated perspective on teacher competency. A coherent framework could position the Scholar-Teacher, as articulated within the Education Programme Standards, as the foundational professional identity, reflecting mastery in disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical competence, and ethical practice (MQA, 2017). This identity could be progressively enhanced by the competencies of the Digitally Competent Educator, as delineated in the Digital Education Policy, and informed by internationally recognized frameworks such as DigCompEdu and the ISTE Standards (Redecker, 2017; ISTE, 2017). From this unified foundation, the various career pathways proposed in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) could be interpreted through the lens of advanced professional trajectories rather than as parallel or competing identities (MOHE, 2015). This layered model aligns with international standards in conceptualizing teacher development as a continuum, rather than as discrete categories (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2017), thereby reflecting global best practices.

If the academic, digital, and professional dimensions of teacher competency were consolidated and organized within a singular developmental trajectory, teacher education systems would be better equipped to integrate and harmonize policy demands, plan coherent services, and prioritize strategic capacity building. This integrated approach would facilitate the achievement of research quality, digital readiness, and professional accountability without overwhelming institutions with conflicting expectations, thereby supporting research excellence. Consequently, the paramount challenge for Malaysia's teacher education reform in the immediate term lies not in the articulation of an ambitious vision but rather in the translation of that vision into a consistent and feasible implementation strategy in practice. This paper argues that the fragmentation identified in this study necessitates a deliberate alignment of policymaking between strategic objectives and institutional execution. Absent this coherence, Malaysia's education reforms risk dilution precisely at the juncture when they are most critically needed—namely, in teacher preparation and professional formation.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis has systematically deconstructed the competency frameworks for educators embedded within Malaysia's principal education policies. The primary contribution of this study resides in the identification of both a robust foundational alignment with the national vision and significant structural divergences in implementation. The collective commitment to fostering holistic, innovative, and ethically grounded talent establishes a compelling basis for reform. However, the simultaneous presence of distinct frameworks—the "Talent Excellence" model for higher education academics, the "Digitally Competent Educator" for school practitioners, and the foundational "Scholar-Teacher"—creates policy silos that present challenges for teacher education institutions, which must navigate competing priorities.

The principal implication of this study is the pressing necessity for enhanced policy coherence. To effectively steer teacher education reform and ensure the successful realization of Malaysia's educational aspirations, a more integrated national teacher competency framework is imperative. Such a framework would harmonize the holistic, digital, and professional standards, thereby providing a clear and unified roadmap for the development of educators capable of leading Malaysia's next generation. In the absence of this synthesis, the nation risks undermining its own ambitious vision through a fragmented implementation approach.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation of this study warrants careful consideration. The scope of the analysis is exclusively documentary-based, relying solely on the information provided by official texts pertaining to the selected policy and standards documents. As a conceptual analysis, this study lacks empirical evidence regarding the implementation or perceived impact of these policies within teacher education institutions. While the study delineates the frameworks for teacher competency that are to be pursued, it does not address how these frameworks are interpreted, negotiated, or enacted in practice. This documentary-centric limitation underscores critical areas that necessitate empirical investigation. Such limitations indicate significant opportunities for future research endeavors. To thoroughly analyze the competing policy pressures in real-world contexts, it is essential to conduct empirical validation studies. Qualitative case studies of teacher education institutions, encompassing both initial professional graduate programs (IPGs) and universities, would be instrumental in exploring the lived experiences of educators as they strive to reconcile the demands for autonomy, standardization, and digital integration. Furthermore, quantitative analyses could be systematically designed to measure the correlation between training practices—aligned differently with these policies—and the performance of graduate educators in terms of their subsequent digital fluency.

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