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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the characteristics of 134 teachers of the mentally retarded in Taiwan, and surveyed 321 teachers of the retarded concerning desirable teacher characteristics and competencies. Four main conclusions were drawn: (1) outstanding teachers of the retarded were highly rated for such characteristics as "flexibility of instructional methods," "physical stamina," "accepting minimal progress by students," "self confidence," and "willingness to assume responsibility"; (2) all 74 items on the "Competency Inventory for Teachers of the Mentally Retarded" were considered necessary with "understanding the development of retarded students" identified as the most important teacher competency; (3) opinions of junior high teachers were similar to those of elementary teachers on ranking of competencies; and (4) no significant differences were found in rated competency needs between junior high and elementary school teachers of the retarded. Includes 13 references. (DB)

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A Study on Characteristics and Competencies Needed by Teachers of the Mentally Retarded

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A Study on Characteristics and Competencies Needed by Teachers of the Mentally Retarded

Hua-Kuo Ho

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate characteristics and competencies needed by teachers of the mentally retarded in Taiwan, China.

"Teacher Characteristics Questionnaire" and "Competency Inventory for Teachers of the Mentally Retarded" developed in the study were used to assess the characteristics of 134 teachers of the mentally retarded and to conduct opinion survey of 321 teachers of the mentally retarded, respectively. The data analysis approaches employed were *t* test, mean scores ranking, and Spearman rank correlation.

The conclusions drawn from the study are as follows:

1. The outstanding teachers of the mentally retarded tended to have more significant and positive characteristics than the ordinary teachers in "willingness to educate the mentally retarded", "flexibility of instructional methods", "physical stamina", "sympathy", "educational ideal", "friendliness", "multiplicity of talents", "accepting minimal progress by the students", "work enthusiasm", "intellectual excellence", "maturity and dependability", "self confidence", and "willingness to assume responsibility.

2. All 74 competency items on "Competency Inventory for Teachers of the Mentally Retarded" were considered necessary by teachers of the mentally retarded. Of these items, "understanding the development of retarded students" was identified as the most important teacher competency; 66 items were rated as "considerably required"; the other 7 items were in the level of "moderately required".

3. The opinions of junior high school teachers were quite consistent with those of elementary teachers of the mentally retarded on the importance ranking of competencies listed on "Competency Inventory for Teachers of the Mentally Retarded."

4. No significant differences were found in the needs of competency areas such as "general competencies", "assessment and records", "curriculum and instruction", "guidance ability", and "interpersonal communication" between junior high and elementary school teachers of the mentally retarded.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, mandatory education provisions for the mentally retarded have caused the increasing needs of teacher supply in Taiwan. In the process of teacher preparation, we should not only attend to quantity need, but we should also promote the teacher quality in order to provide appropriate education for mentally retarded students. In addition, the professional quality of teachers for retarded students also has been emphasized owing to individualized education required by the Special Education Act.

In the consideration of promoting teacher quality, competency-based teacher education and teacher accountability are two important concepts. Understanding of characteristics and competencies accountable for adequate performance of teacher seems to become a focal point of many educational studies. Shores, Burney, and Wiegerink (1976) pointed out that special education teacher should have a series of characteristics such as self-esteem, initiative, sensitive, high tolerance to frustration, intelligent, emotional stability, energetic, responsible, positive attitude toward children, and open-minded. Smith (1974) indicated that the teacher of the mentally retarded should exhibit the following personal traits: (1) satisfied with demonstrations of minimal change by the children; and (2) flexibility in teaching procedure. Younie and Clark (1969) reported that the personal characteristics which are commonly considered essential or highly desirable in secondary school teachers of the retarded are the following; (1) employment experience, preferably in the service occupations; (2) teaching experience, preferably in special education, vocational-technical education, or trade training; (3) a sincere interest in working with the academically less able student; (4) personal characteristics that

will elicit respect and confidence with less able students; and (5) a desire or willingness to expand the classroom into the community. From the above mentioned literature, we could find that several personal traits seem essential for teachers of retarded students.

As to the professional competencies needed by teachers of the mentally retarded, Smith (1974) suggested that the following types of competencies should be stressed in teacher training programs: (1) a stable and comprehensive philosophical point of view in relation to mental retardation; (2) a firm understanding of appropriate objectives and goals for all mentally retarded children; (3) a complete understanding of some basic theory for educational programming; (4) skills in educational diagnostic procedures and instructional planning according to each child's pattern of strengths and weaknesses; (5) skills in appropriately manipulating a child's environment in order to provide the most propitious conditions for learning; (6) basic skills in interpreting and translating research findings from various disciplines into practical classroom activities; and (7) serving as consultants to other teachers on issues related to possible ways for dealing with complex problems in learning and classroom management. Davis (1982) investigated the perceptions of 420 special education resource teachers working mainly with retarded pupils, he found that the most important ten competency areas are as follows: (1) individual pupil counseling skills; (2) ability to interpret formal pupil psychoeducational tests; (3) knowledge of and skill in employing a variety of methods for teaching reading; (4) ability to deal effectively with personal/professional frustrations related to position; (5) knowledge of and skill in employing methods for teaching math; (6) ability to administer formal pupil psychoeducational tests; (7) knowledge of and skill in employing a variety of pupil behavior management techniques; (8) group

counseling skills; (9) developing and monitoring of IEP's; and (10) knowledge of instructional materials. Younie and Clark (1969) pointed out that the following competencies are essential for secondary school teachers of the retarded: (1) a knowledge of vocational aptitude and potential; (2) a knowledge of the academic demands of the jobs typically performed by the mentally subnormal; (3) an understanding of adolescent personality and the ramifications of mental retardation on personality development and social adjustment; (4) competency in education and/or vocational diagnosis and remediation; (5) skill in counseling on personal and social problems; (6) an ability to elicit and maintain cooperative relationships with school and community resources. Shotick (1971) maintained that secondary teachers of the retarded should have competencies related to the areas of human development, learning tasks, and modes of learning. In addition, Russo and Stark (1976) reported that the following competency areas for teachers of the severely/profoundly handicapped are emphasized in some states for the purpose of teacher certification: (1) knowledge of growth and development stages and the ability to pinpoint deviation from these stages; (2) behavior management skills; (3) diagnostic and prescriptive skills; (4) educational planning and curriculum development in the areas of language, self-help, and motor development; (5) planning and coordinating programs with parents and the full-service team within the school or community. From the above mentioned competencies, we could find that different emphases may be revealed among the researchers, however, in essence they seem closely related to such areas as general competencies, assessment and records, curriculum and instruction implementation, guidance ability, interpersonal communication and resource usage, etc.

In Taiwan, although we could find some literature discussing characteristics or competencies needed by special education teachers (Jia, 1970; Kuo, 1975), two competency investigations associated with teachers of the physically handicapped (Sheu, 1974) and teachers of special education (Lin, 1979), and one comparative study on the attitudes between regular classroom teachers and special classroom teachers toward the roles of special classroom teachers (Huang, 1984), few empirical studies are reported that attempt to make a comprehensive investigation into characteristics and competencies specifically needed by teachers of the mentally retarded. On the other hand, the importance of characteristics and competencies needed by teachers may vary with special education student categories. The study of Carri (1985) indicated that teachers of the learning disabled and teachers of the mentally retarded shared similar views concerning competencies needed, while teachers of the behaviorally disordered differed in their ratings of competencies when compared to teachers of the mentally retarded and learning disabled. Therefore, it is necessary to further understand the characteristics and competencies needed by teachers of the mentally retarded in Taiwan in order to design an effective teacher preparation program. The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions through opinion survey:

1. Are there significant differences in the selected characteristics between excellent and general teachers of the mentally retarded?

2. What is the relative importance of specific competencies needed by teachers of the mentally retarded?

3. Is it consistent in the importance ranks of competencies as perceived by junior high and elementary school teachers of the mentally retarded?

4. Are there significant differences in various competency areas needed between junior high and elementary school teachers of the mentally retarded?

METHOD

Subjects

A group of 67 excellent teachers of the mentally retarded were recommended by all prefectures and municipalities in Taiwan according to its proportion of the number of junior high and elementary special classes for the mentally retarded. In the meanwhile another 67 general teachers of the mentally retarded were randomly selected from the schools which excellent teachers come from in order to make comparison in characteristics between these two groups.

On the other hand, the names of 348 teacher coordinators for education of the mentally retarded listed on Directory of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Welfare Services in Taiwan (Wu and Chang, 1987) were used as the subjects to give opinions on competency issues. Three hundred and twenty-one subjects completed and returned the questionnaire of this study for a return rate of 92.24%.

Instruments

Two instruments employed in the study were Teacher Characteristics Questionnaire (TCQ) and Competency Inventory for Teachers of the Mentally Retarded (CITMR). The TCQ consisted mainly of a 9-point rating scale format. The higher score, the more

characteristics a teacher may have. It was developed upon (a) information contained in the literature, (b) input from practicing teachers of the mentally retarded, (c) input from expert evaluations, and (d) a pilot study. The final instrument included 25 items of characteristics. A reliability coefficient (r=.96) was determined by use of the Guttman split-half formula for 134 excellent and general teachers of the mentally retarded.

The CITMR Consisted of 74 competency items with a 5-point Likert scale. The subjects were asked to indicate each competency's degree of importance according to the following levels: extensively required, considerably required, moderately required, seldom required, and not required. It was developed upon the similar procedure as the TCQ. Five competency areas such as general competencies, assessment and records, curriculum and instruction, guidance ability, and interpersonal communication were included in the CITMR. The reliability coefficients of the inventory were determined and shown in Table 1. The entire study sample of 321 teacher coordinators who returned the CITMR was included in the instrument's reliability determination.

Table 1
Reliabilities of the CITMR

Areas	No. of Items	Guttman Split-half Reliabilities
General Competencies	13	.8201
Assessment and Records	13	.8997
Curriculum and Instruction	25	.8708
Guidance Ability	9	.8861
Interpersonal Communication	14	.9632
Total CITMR	74	.9882

Data Collection and Treatment

For collecting the data of characteristics needed by teachers of the mentally retarded, the TCQ was distributed to all principals of 134 excellent and general teachers of the mentally retarded and returned by postage-paid mail. The principals were asked to assess the degree of characteristics the excellent and general teachers have, respectively. The *t* test was employed to compare the characteristic differences between excellent and general teachers.

On the other hand, the CITMR was also distributed to all teacher coordinators for education of the mentally retarded in Taiwan and returned by postage-paid mail. The subjects were asked to indicate, based upon experience as a teacher of the mentally retarded, their perceptions of the relative importance of 74 competency items that would be currently helpful to them in the process of education for the mentally retarded. The data analysis approaches used were mean scores ranking, spearman rank correlation, and *t* test for answering the research questions 2-4, respectively.

RESULTS

Characteristics Needed by Teachers of the Mentally Retarded

An inspection of the data contained in Table 2 indicates that the excellent teacher group had significant higher mean scores in chararacteristics assessed by the principals than the general teacher group in the following 13 items: Willingness to educate the

mentally retarded, flexibility of instructional methods, physical stamina, sympathy, educational ideal, friendliness, multiplicity of talents, accepting minimal progress by the students, work enthusiam, intellectual excellence, maturity and dependability, self confidence, and willingness to assume responsibility. These 13 characteristics seem important to become a good teacher of retarded children. Although the differences in other 12 characteristics did not reach the statistically significant level, the tendency was shown that the scores of the excellent group were still higher than the general group. In other words, the 12 characteristics which may be less important than the above mentioned 13 ones are also needed by teachers of the mentally retarded.

Table 2.
Comparison of the Excellent and General Teachers on the Characteristics

Characteristics	Excellent(n=67)		General(n=67)		t Value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.Willingness to educate the mentally retarded	7.96	1.16	7.10	1.38	3.86***
2.Flexibility of instructional methods	7.61	1.13	6.73	1.61	3.67***
3.Emotional Stability	7.42	1.59	7.15	1.26	1.09
4.Physical Stamina	7.70	1.22	6.78	1.52	3.89***
5.Stoicism	7.54	1.60	7.34	1.66	.69
6.Sympathy	8.12	.99	7.73	1.02	2.23*
7.Tolerance to different opinions	7.18	1.55	7.07	1.37	.41
8. Humorous	6.88	1.39	6.67	1.41	.87

(Continued)

Characteristics	Excellent(n=67)		General(n=67)		t Value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
9.Educational ideal	7.69	1.28	6.97	1.57	2.90**
10.Tolerance to complexity	7.25	1.64	6.76	1.59	1.77
11.Tolerance to frustration	7.25	1.48	7.01	1.40	.96
12.Democratic attitudes	7.42	1.36	7.34	1.27	.33
13.Cooperative	7.73	1.52	7.66	1.27	.31
14.Optimistic	7.63	1.17	7.24	1.40	1.74
15.Willing to help	7.91	1.18	7.69	1.25	1.07
16.Friendliness	7.99	1.15	7.55	1.27	2.07*
17.Open-minded	7.42	1.57	7.03	1.54	1.45
18.Multiplicity of talents	7.63	1.19	6.81	1.65	3.30***
19.Sensitivity to human relations	7.55	1.17	7.22	1.34	1.51
20.Accepting minimal progress by the students	7.96	.99	7.39	1.29	2.85**
21.Work enthusiasm	7.97	1.07	7.15	1.42	3.78***
22.Intellectual excellence	7.54	1.21	6.96	1.48	2.49*
23.Maturity and dependability	7.70	1.33	7.21	1.43	2.07*
24.Self confidence	7.58	1.22	6.90	1.53	2.87**
25.Willingness to assume responsibility	7.84	1.30	7.07	1.41	3.26***

*$P<.05$ **$P<.01$ ***$P\leq.001$

Importance Ranks of Competencies Needed by Teachers of the Mentally Retarded

Inspection of Table 3 reveals that the total group of teachers considered all 74 competency items included in the CITMR as needed (a mean score above 2.50). One competency considered "extensively required" (a mean score above 4.50) is "understanding

the development of retarded students". There are 66 competencies which were considered "considerably required" (a mean score between 3.50 and 4.50). In addition, seven items were supposed to be "moderately required" (a mean score between 2.50 and 3.50). Among the 74 items, the highest ranked 10 competencies needed are as the following:

1. Understanding the development of retarded students.
2. Planning and decision making for effective learning.
3. Effective behavior management.
4. Use of important assessment instruments.
5. Seeking in-service training for less competent areas.
6. Establishment of student's record.
7. Management of student's behavior problem.
8. Tolerating work pressure.
9. Implementation of life-centered education.
10. Seeking colleague's support to education of the mentally retarded.

Table 3.
Rank Order of the Importance of Competencies

Competency Items	Elementary Teacher		Junior High Teacher		Over-All	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
1.Familiarity of special education laws and regulations	3.734	47	3.635	57	3.709	49
2.Planning and decision making for effective learning	4.236	4	4.230	2	4.233	2
3.Understanding the development of retarded students	4.545	1	4.453	1	4.526	1

(Continued)

Competency Items	Elementary Teacher		Junior High Teacher		Over-All	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
4.Understanding of teaching methods for regular students	4.045	20	3.595	59	3.931	32
5.Development of educational philosophy to retarded students	4.046	19	3.960	27	4.025	20
6.Familiarity of social welfare services for the mentally retarded	3.901	36	3.853	37	3.884	36
7.Presentation of research report	3.440	70	3.351	69	3.411	70
8.Understanding of learning principles	4.074	17	4.000	22	4.056	17
9.Tolerating work pressure	4.156	6	4.000	21	4.119	8
10.Seeking In-service training for less competent areas	4.148	7	4.227	3	4.162	5
11.Study of clinical teaching	3.568	65	3.459	67	3.536	66
12.Interpretation and application of research findings for teaching	3.716	51	3.613	58	3.684	54
13.Use of student's dialect	3.492	69	3.320	70	3.449	69
14.Development of criterion-referenced tests based on teaching objectives	3.617	60	3.720	49	3.641	58
15.Recording and interpretation of interactions between teacher and student	3.541	68	3.640	55	3.555	64
16.Selection of assessment tools	3.918	33	3.907	32	3.909	33
17.Cotrol of variables affecting assessment results	3.709	52	3.667	52	3.695	51
18.Interpretation of assessment results	3.844	42	2.853	36	3.841	41
19.Developing IEP based on assessment results	3.971	31	4.093	9	4.000	24
20.Systematic self-evaluation to improve teaching	3.820	45	3.920	31	3.841	42

(Continued)

Competency Items	Elementary Teacher		Junior High Teacher		Over-All	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
21.Systematic assessment of student's learning	3.868	39	3.933	30	3.878	37
22.Using evaluation results to decide objectives, materials, and methods	3.852	41	3.973	24	3.875	40
23.Evaluating the effectiveness of instructional program	3.701	53	3.640	56	3.685	53
24.Keeping assessment and teaching information	3.652	58	3.520	64	3.617	60
25.Establishment of student's record	4.143	8	4.107	8	4.131	6
26.Use of important assessment instruments	4.244	3	4.093	10	4.207	4
27.Using task analysis to develop the sequence of teaching objectives	3.825	44	3.760	44	3.811	45
28.Writing behavioral objectives	3.663	55	3.733	47	3.675	55
29.Planning teaching activities to meet the developmental needs of students	4.021	22	4.093	11	4.034	19
30.Implementing instructional plan	3.877	38	3.960	28	3.888	35
31.Teaching the basic academic skills	4.090	13	4.067	16	4.081	16
32.Science teaching	3.635	59	3.560	62	3.611	61
33.Teaching social studies	3.693	54	3.720	48	3.692	52
34.Teaching at least one subject among music, art, and craft	3.980	30	3.693	51	3.907	34
35.Effective behavior management	4.270	2	4.080	13	4.224	3
36.Guidance of learning transfer	4.012	25	3.973	25	4.003	23
37.Individual teaching and guidance	4.082	15	4.147	4	4.097	12
38.Selection and use of needed materials	4.016	24	4.027	19	4.019	21
39.Making instructional media	3.615	63	3.573	61	3.601	62
40.Use of instructional media	3.728	49	3.760	43	3.734	48
41.Planning recreational activities	3.541	67	3.493	66	3.523	67

(Continued)

Competency Items	Elementary Teacher		Junior High Teacher		Over-All	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
42.Implementing speech therapy	3.549	66	3.320	71	3.492	68
43.Use of incidental learning to achieve objectives	3.658	56	3.587	60	3.641	57
44.Arranging the classroom environment to meet teaching needs	3.615	62	3.547	63	3.595	63
45.Implementing physical therapy	2.855	74	2.467	74	2.762	74
46.Implementing occupational therapy	3.167	73	3.067	73	3.139	73
47.Implementing physical education	3.426	71	3.253	72	3.380	71
48.Implementing vocational guidance	3.242	72	3.693	50	3.346	72
49.Implementation of life-centered education	4.119	10	4.147	6	4.118	9
50.Writing needed teaching materials	3.918	34	4.080	15	3.947	31
51.Flexible use of various teaching methods	4.045	21	4.053	18	4.044	18
52.Prevention of student's inappropriate behaviors	4.082	16	4.133	7	4.090	14
53.Management of student's behavior problem	4.123	9	4.147	5	4.125	7
54.Using various reinforcements for getting student's response	4.115	11	4.080	14	4.109	11
55.Providing guidance and counseling services	3.971	32	3.987	23	3.972	27
56.Effective classroom management	4.087	14	4.093	12	4.088	15
57.Stimulating and maintaining student's interest in learning	4.095	12	4.067	17	4.091	13
58.Using activities to stimulate student to initiate learning behavior	3.992	28	3.946	29	3.981	26
59.Developing student's attention	3.988	29	3.813	39	3.947	30
60.Developing the attention of a class	4.008	27	3.853	35	3.969	28

(Continued)

Competency Items	Elementary Teacher		Junior High Teacher		Over-All	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
61.Communicating educational principles and goals with parents	3.724	50	3.653	53	3.697	50
62.Obtaining the information of family environment, goals and needs from parents	3.775	46	3.853	34	3.785	46
63.Using information from parents to develop the educational plan	3.734	48	3.760	45	3.738	47
64.Implementing continuing parent education based on individual family needs	3.587	64	3.427	68	3.549	65
65.Communicating children's learning needs with parents	3.902	35	3.813	41	3.875	39
66.Developing good human relations	4.045	18	3.813	40	3.991	25
67.Cooperation with colleague in teaching	4.020	23	3.973	26	4.009	22
68.Use and supervision of resource persons	3.617	61	3.649	54	3.621	59
69.Effective communication with others	3.885	37	3.865	33	3.878	38
70.Seeking colleague's support to education of the mentally retarded	4.164	5	4.013	20	4.115	10
71.Seeking the support from people out of school to education of the mentally retarded	4.008	26	3.827	38	3.953	29
72.Using related resources in curriculum planning	3.853	40	3.787	42	3.832	43
73.Seeking assistance from related resources for individual student with handicap	3.828	43	3.747	46	3.828	44
74.Providing consultation for other teachers about teaching problems	3.657	57	3.507	65	3.657	56

In the evaluation of all 74 items, seven competetencies were placed at the lowest ranks as follows:

1. Implementing speech therapy.
2. Use of student's dialect.
3. Presentation of research report.
4. Implementing physical education.
5. Implementing vocational guidance.
6. Implementing occupational therapy.
7. Implementing physical therapy.

Consistency in the Importance Ranks of Competencies as Perceived by Junior High and Elementary Teachers

Inspection of Table 4 indicates that the correlation coefficient between the importance ranks of competencies done by the junior high teacher group and those assessed by the elementary teacher group was .8951. This was statistically significant at the .001 level. The result reveals that the junior high and elementary teachers of the mentally retarded have consistent opinions with respect to the importance ranks of competencies. In other words, the responses of the over-all teacher group could seem to reflect the perceptions either from the junior high or elementary teacher group about the importance ranks of competencies.

Table 4.
Rank Correlation of the Importance of Competencies

	Junior High Teacher	Elementary Teacher
n of Subjects	75	244
n of Items	74	
Rank Correlation Coefficient	.8951	
t value	16.9206***	

***$P < .001$

Comparison of the Junior High and Elementary Teachers on the needs of Various Competency Areas

There are five competency areas in the CITMR. Table 5 contains a summary of the comparison of junior high and elementary teachers of the mentally retarded on the needs of various competency areas. No significant differences were noted between the junior high and elementary teacher groups. This result seems to be in accordance with that the junior high and elementary teachers have consistent perceptions for the importance ranks of competencies.

Table 5.

Comparison of the Junior High and Elementary Teachers on the Needs of Various Competency Areas

Competency Areas	Elementary(n=244)		Junior High(n=75)		t	P
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
General Competencies	50.94	7.24	49.45	7.22	1.55	.12
Assessment and Records	49.78	8.70	50.07	8.56	-.25	.80
Curriculum and Instruction	93.43	15.20	92.80	14.49	.32	.75
Guidance Ability	36.38	6.29	36.07	5.61	.38	.70
Interpersonal Communication	53.70	9.75	52.59	9.61	.87	.39
Over-All	284.22	42.23	280.97	41.57	.58	.56

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation suggest that the outstanding teachers who work with retarded students should have more significant and positive characteristics than the ordinary teachers in "willingness to educate the mentally retarded" "flexibility of instructional methods" "physical stamina", "sympathy", "educational ideal", "friendliness" "multiplicity of talents", "accepting minimal progress by the students", "work enthusiasm", "intellectual excellence" "maturity and dependability", "self confidence", and "willingness to assume responsibility". Such findings contradict the traditional myths that it is easy to be a teacher of retarded children and the longer a teacher works with retarded children, the lower his/her intelligence will become. From the findings of this study, we could find that to be a competent and satisfactory teacher of retarded

children is not easy. He/She not only should have "educational ideal", "willingness to educate the mentally retarded", "sympathy", "friendliness", "work enthusiasm", "maturity and dependability", "self confidence", "willingness to assume responsibility", and "accepting minimal progress by the students", but also he/she should have "physical stamina", "intellectual excellence", "multiplicity of talents", and "flexibility of instructional methods". Such much physical and mental exercise and experience should have positive effects on the development of teachers of the mentally retarded. In other words, it is possible that the longer a teacher works with retarded children, the higher his/her intelligence will become.

The findings of the study in teacher characteristics of retarded children should have implications for teacher trainers who are responsible for the development of appropriate training programs for teachers of the retarded. On the other hand, these findings are also useful and meaningful for screening in teachers to work with retarded children. In addition, due to the characteristic myths existing in the society, it is important to develop a correct image for teachers of the mentally retarded.

All 74 competency items were found to be needed for teachers of retarded students. The teachers of the retarded seem to need a comprehensive preparation program to provide such training areas as "general competencies", "assessment and records", "curriculum and instruction", "guidance ability", and "interpersonal communication". This sort of comprehensive program undoubtedly may take a long and formal education approach rather than a short training session. In addition, the curriculum planning should reflect the relative importance of various competencies in order to meet the needs of teachers to work with mentally retarded students.

Another notable finding in this investigation was the

consistency of opinions on the importance of competencies and the needs of various competency areas between the junior high and elementary teachers of the mentally retarded. Such finding has a significant implication that the combination of junior high and elementary teacher preparation program for retarded children might be a reasonable arrangement. However, at present, normal universities and teachers colleges are responsible for training high school and elementary school teachers, respectively, in Taiwan. The implementation of the "integrated approach" for training both junior high and elementary school teachers of the mentally retarded seems to need more support from administrators and teacher trainers.

In summary, the results obtained in this study, however, should be given consideration by individuals and agencies that are responsible for the delivery of preservice or inservice education programs for teachers of mentally retarded children. The findings of the study are also meaningful for those who are responsible for recruiting teachers for education of the mentally retarded. It should be believed that quality education of retarded children depends on quality teachers who are willing to work with this group of disadvantaged students!

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