The Potential of Situational Judgment Test for Pre-service Teacher Selection

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Abstract

Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs) are a psychological measurement instrument that promotes ideas and knowledge to enable decision making among stakeholders and measure decisions based on test candidates' responses, specifically in pre-service fields. The SJTs have become progressively popular instruments utilized in various areas, particularly for personnel selection, promotion, and recruitment. Nonetheless, limited practice and discussions are found in teacher selection using the SJT instrument. The concept study examined selection methods using the SJTs instrument to assess the quality of pre-service teacher candidates or future trainee teachers in teacher education institutions mainly based on the Teacher Standard Framework. The ideas and discussions in the study could enhance theoretical and practical values in measuring the quality of teacher candidates and promote further research in the area.

Keywords: Pre-service Teachers, Potential, Selection, Situational Judgment Tests, Teacher Standard Framework.

INTRODUCTION

The constantly evolving personnel selection procedures require cultural suitability and organisational needs comprising multiple procedures that depend on the organisational strategy, measurement tools, and offered jobs. Each procedure holds unique and specific characteristics according to three situations: application exceeds supply, vacancies, and organisational consolidation (Klassen & Kim, 2019). Personnel selection entails several factors that consider applicant factors according to background information, academic achievement, competence and other attributes (Al Hashmi & Klassen, 2019) to suit the offered employment field.

Teacher selection uses a mechanism similar to the personnel selection procedure involving other professions. The adopted selection procedure collects applicants' data and information to form predictions on future outcomes (Klassen & Kim, 2019), thus enabling stakeholders to make suitable and accurate choices to achieve the selection process objectives in the short and long term. Nonetheless, hiring the right and appropriate personnel is complicated for stakeholders as distinct recruitment requirements present different challenges. The mechanism practised in teacher recruitment ensures that the selected personnel could become quality teachers that conform to quality standards.

Caena (2020) stated that the European Commission drafted the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications (CEPTCQ), stipulating those teachers must be able to work with others, with knowledge, technology and information and work with and in society. Thus, the selection procedure should be performed holistically and transparently, including each candidate's numerous aspects and potentials. The selection procedure for the ideal teacher candidate is the most effective method of enhancing the teacher education quality (Chao et al., 2019), which enhances students' achievement (Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017). Therefore, the selection procedure should be executed holistically and transparently based on each candidate's numerous aspects and potentials.

The SJT is highly popular and broadly used in various fields, such as medicine and defence (Nadmilail & Mohd Matore, 2021). Generally, SJTs are used in selection, recruitment and promotion (Whetzel et al., 2020). The selection methods used by stakeholders in the medical field are robust as selection is the first assessment to enter medical education and training (Patterson et al., 2016). Additionally, admissions to international medical colleges are highly competitive. Moreover, the Armed Forces encounter high competition among newly appointed officers (Lievens et al., 2008). The SJTs were implemented where potential officers had to select a response according to the options provided, indicating that SJTs are also implemented to inform of promotions. The SJTs were designed to assess 'leadership judgment' in the Armed Forces Qualification Test, highlighting significant response discrepancies (Whetzel et al., 2020).

The study discusses the SJTs instrument in selecting pre-service teachers and explores how the instrument can be implemented based on the teacher education philosophy in Malaysia. The study of personnel selection methods to promote effective teacher education programmes ensures the quality of selected candidates. Selecting or training candidates with greater potential to produce good teachers could be an effective method to improve the teacher education (Chao et al., 2019). Furthermore, the method facilitates users to ensure that the education philosophy can be realised according to the standards.

UNDERSTANDING SJTs

The SJTs are a measurement method for respondents' opinions or interpretations in a job-related environment reflecting actual work situations (Lievens & Coetsier, 2002), and measures non-academic attributes of a job (Patterson & Driver, 2018). Essentially, SJTs are psychological measurement instruments that promote ideas and knowledge to allow decision making among researchers and assess results based on the test candidates' responses. The SJTs are the best predictor measurement method and strategy due to the different and specific test structures. Moreover, SJTs are performed with a technological approach using videos concerning situations that illustrate relevant work situations. For each situation, the test candidate must select the appropriateness of an aspect based on the reaction options.

The increasing popularity of SJTs among various organisations worldwide to predict individual performance has increased its use as a psychological and job marketability measurement tool

(Weekley & Ployhart, 2013). The information acquired in the selection process assists in making accurate predictions of an individual and future job performance. The main challenge is accurately predicting a person's future work performance based on the findings using the limited information available during the selection process (Nadmilail et al., 2022). Additionally, the method or prediction technique provides educational institutions with crucial information to gain an actual picture of student success in Higher Education Institution (HEI), student psychology research (Breen & Lindsay, 2020) and their potential talents. The predictions also aid in obtaining information about students who might encounter problems to adapt and assimilate to the HEI environment and at risk of failing academics (Matošková & Kovářík, 2017).

The SJTs describe job-related situations and list relevant and appropriate actions to be taken (Whetzel & McDaniel, 2009). In certain cases, SJTs are designed to measure individual judgment contextually in a workplace environment (Ryan & Ployhart, 2014). Critical situations and various response options are adapted to describe a relationship with a specific work field. The combined two elements target a specific attribute and competency based on the job description analysis. Thus, the selected response presents a clear picture and prediction of the action to be taken. Golubovich et al. (2020) mentioned several situations depicting performance-related job scenarios that grant additional information and measure individual personality and personality contextually. Hence, SJTs are increasingly accepted globally by numerous careers with various purposes and attracted researchers' attention recently. Based on the description and explanation of SJT, its potential for application as a method of selecting trainee teachers to ITE should be identified and investigated.

TEACHER STANDARD FRAMEWORK

The Philosophy of Teacher Education (known as *Falsafah Pendidikan Guru*, FPG) is a foundation that forms the Malaysian Teacher Standard 2.0 Framework (known as Standard Guru Malaysia 2.0, SGM 2.0). The FPG and SGM 2.0 are also a part of the National Mission, National Education Philosophy, the Ministry of Education Malaysia Teaching Profession Code of Conduct and Work Ethics (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2009). The FPG was formulated to produce teachers who are professional, skilled, competitive, practice good morals and values, possess thinking skills and are technologically efficient (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2012). Consequently, parameters or instruments are needed to reach the minimum and ideal measurement standards based on the pre-determined descriptors. The FPG statements are detailed and categorised into three main components: intellectual, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The intellectual components are progressive and scientific. The interpersonal component ensures individual development and maintains a united, democratic, progressive, and disciplined society. Meanwhile, the intrapersonal component comprises noble character, upholding country aspirations and praising cultural heritage.

The SGM 2.0 Framework aims to identify the preparation and implementation level of training needs prepared by teacher training agencies and institutions to achieve the level of teacher competence and identify teacher professional competence, specifically professionalism, knowledge and understanding, and teaching skills and learning (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2020). The SGM 2.0 outlines teachers' professional competencies, the requirements the agencies should

provide and teacher training to facilitate teachers in achieving the prescribed competencies. The document acts as a guide and reference to teachers, teacher educators, agencies, and teacher training agencies to create and sustain teachers. Moreover, the document will be reviewed periodically for continuous improvement. The SGM 2.0 Framework's description of the theories underlying each of the domains of competence that serve as the framework's mainstays is limited. In fact, each domain lacks a precise description and only described through a limited number of constructs. However, the description needs to be improved for better understand as well as precise explanation of each domain and construct provided in the framework is required. Thus, this matter can explain every aspect that is highlighted.

The SGM 2.0 Framework comprises the Competence Dimension and Teaching Ethics Dimension. The Competency Dimension includes four primary domains: Knowledge Orientation, Instructional, Community Engagement and Personal Quality. The Competency Dimension describes the competencies required for teachers at various levels of professional development to perform teaching and learning effectively. Meanwhile, the Teaching Ethics Dimension involves four primary thrusts: Responsibility Towards the Profession, Responsibility Towards Students, Responsibility Towards Parents and Responsibility Towards Society and the Nation. Teaching Ethics is a moral principle and moral value that should be instilled and practised by Malaysian teachers to ensure the professionalism of the teaching career and is esteemed by society.
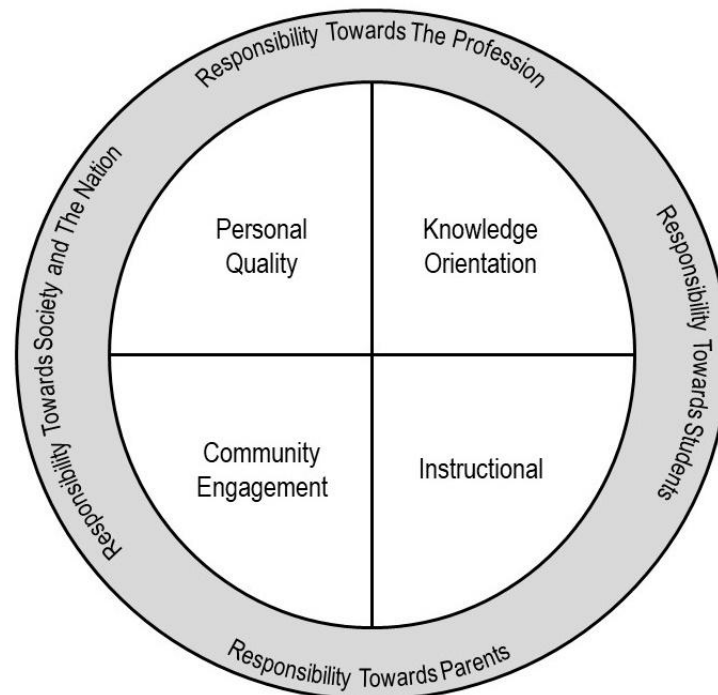

Figure 1 The SGM 2.0 Framework

The intellectual component clarifies that teachers must possess knowledge in line with current developments to build competency and skills. Furthermore, teachers need to have professional skills in creating teaching and learning materials to constantly develop and improve the teaching quality.

The intellectual component in the SGM 2.0 Framework involves two domains: the Knowledge Orientation and Instructional domains. Three constructs in the Knowledge Orientation domain measures intellectual competence: deepening and expanding the knowledge of teaching and learning, understanding the latest educational philosophies, policies, curricula, and trends, and progressively increasing knowledge about the latest educational trends and developments. The Instructional domain lists four constructs that emphasise the development of students' potential, planning teaching and learning, implementing teaching, and learning and performing learning assessments.

The interpersonal component ensures individual development and maintains a united, democratic, progressive, and disciplined society. Teachers must act as agents of change to ascertain the positive direction of student development. Teachers' role as agents of change is through disseminating knowledge to the community, forming a personality following community norms and values, forming a caring society, being a role model and providing services to the local community (Ishak et al., 2018). The interpersonal component is included in the community engagement domain in the SGM 2.0 Framework, comprising three constructs: celebrating community diversity, engaging the community to aid student learning, and forming relationships and networks between parents and the outside community to support student learning.

The intrapersonal component includes noble character and upholding the country aspirations and praising the cultural heritage. Gardner (1983) defines intrapersonal skills as the individual ability to form a sustainable model of self and practice to live a more progressive life. Teachers regarded as role models in schools should embody the figure of politeness, disciplined, visionary and principled. Teachers in society must display an honest, sincere, and law-abiding personality. The intrapersonal component is linked with the Personal Quality domain in the SGM 2.0 Framework, encompassing four constructs: accepting cultural diversity, adopting a gentle educator leadership style, animating teaching practice, and practising self-improvement and reflection.

DISCUSSION
The SJTs Application and Potential
The use of SJT instruments has the ability to clarify the research gaps highlighted further answering the research question which are the potential of SJT that can be implemented for the purpose of selecting trainee teachers to ITE and a limited description of the theories underlying each domain and construct. The SJTs are suitable and can realise the nation aspiration as the method are the best predictor and measurement tool. Lievens et al. (2008) stated that SJTs measure individual competence in performing an act and assess the individual job-related skill level. Based on the described competencies and domains, SJTs measure competencies through the constructs in the aforementioned domains. Feranchak and Deiger (2017) demonstrated that the intellectual component could be evaluated to present excellent and updated mathematical content and pedagogical knowledge and skills in the classroom, engage in ever-challenging professional development in the area and reflect the teaching practices. Nonetheless, the intellectual component

is measurable if individuals possess existing knowledge and have undergone training to develop intellectual competence.

Durksen and Klassen (2018) employed the SJTs instrument among teachers in rural Australia by assessing personality attributes, including interpersonal components: organisation, planning, empathy, and communication. The study components are adapted by including elements that suit the locality and environment of an area. Meanwhile, Aldrup et al. (2020) measured teachers' socioemotional competencies, emphasising teachers' ability to control emotions inside and outside the classroom by employing the SJT measurement instrument. The teachers' ability to control emotions competently is a constant source of guidance, particularly to the school and the outside community in general.

Numerous studies worldwide examined teacher education for various purposes, such as selection, recruitment, promotion, and professional development. The SJTs are applied for multiple purposes as the method enables psychological measurement that hypothetically outlines various situations to test candidates, describing constructs that are intellectual (technical knowledge and continuous learning), interpersonal (communication and teamwork) or intrapersonal (emotional stability and adaptability) (National Research Council, 2015). Therefore, research on the SJT application in education and as a psychological measurement tool attracts interest and attention due to the mentioned diversity. The main significance of international education policy is to produce quality teachers and quality teaching (Beauchamp et al., 2013). Studies on the selection and recruitment of personnel emphasise the teacher recruitment policy to attract many candidates and produce the best teacher candidates (Feuer et al., 2013; Schleicher, 2014).

Increasing studies worldwide investigate the selection of potential teachers in pre-service education. The first study using SJTs in teacher selection was in England (Klassen et al., 2014), which measured the reactions of pre-service teacher candidates according to interpersonal (organisation and planning and empathy and communication) and intrapersonal (adaptation and resilience). Studies continued in 2016 to construct and form the concept of pre-service teacher selection following similar psychological measurements (Klassen et al., 2016). In 2019, two studies were conducted in the Asian continent: Oman (Al Hashmi & Klassen, 2019) and Taiwan (Chao et al., 2019). The Oman study aimed to construct the SJTs instrument using the same competencies as in England with the addition of several constructs: interpersonal (organisation and planning and communication) and intrapersonal (adaptation and resilience and professional ethics, enthusiasm, and motivation).

The researchers in Taiwan developed a new construct of pre-service teacher selection according to interpersonal (classroom management, teaching, peer relations and communication with parents). In England, Klassen et al. (2020) aimed to improve screening and selection methods in teacher education programmes. The study extends the 2014 and 2016 research by adding intrapersonal constructs (adaptation, determination, thought development and emotional control). Another quasi-experimental study in Australia (Bardach et al., 2020) explored the relationship between instrument

format, group differences and tested candidates' reactions. The measured competency skills coincided with Klassen et al. (2020). Considering that SJTs are the best predictor, the method holds great potential to be linked with selection methods in teacher education programmes.

Although the SGM 2.0 Framework mentions each competence component based on domain and construct, the study proposed that the pre-service teacher selection should emphasise the competencies to be measured as the candidates are considered not to receive specific education on teaching and learning. Additionally, the study suggested that the candidates have no sufficient understanding of national education philosophy, policy, and curriculum in the true sense. Thus, the study proposed that the competencies to be measured are intrapersonal competencies encompassing the Personal Quality domain and interpersonal competencies involving Community Engagement. The study proposed that the candidates possess the two competencies, and the stakeholders are only required to select candidates who fulfil the set standards.
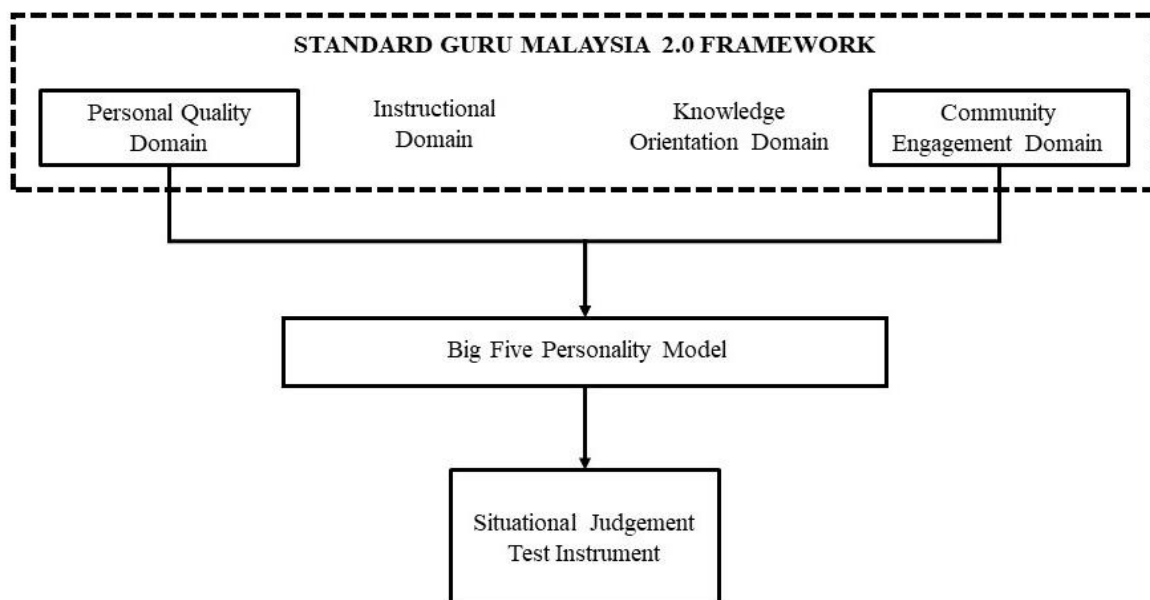

Figure 2 Proposed SJTs Model

The Big Five Personality Model underlies the new constructs for the Personal Quality Domain and Community Engagement Domain. The model was established by McCrae and John (1992) and known as the Big Five Personality Theory. The Big Five Personality Model explains individual personality traits categorised into five main components: Openness to Experience (openness to experience), Conscientiousness (awareness), Extraversion (social), Agreeableness (agreement) and Neuroticism (emotional disturbance). Furthermore, the model is employed by many researchers in performing personality tests. The model is also widely used to construct personality instruments to test individual personality traits. Hence, the study proposed that the Big Five Personality Model is suitable to assess the personal qualities of individuals using personality tests.

Personal quality forms the quality of intrapersonal competence that a teacher must possess. Intrapersonal competence is associated with internal communication skills. Intrapersonal communication is described as communication with oneself, including inner speech, actions of imagination and visualisation, flashbacks and memory (McLean et al., 2005). The situation illustrates that individuals can exhibit a superior personality and control internal emotions successfully. The traits align with the constructs in the SGM 2.0 Framework, namely cultural diversity, adopting a gentle educator leadership style, animated teaching practices and practise self-improvement and reflection. Hence, personal qualities in the study denote consistent and high-quality intrapersonal skills based on the internal monologue, thoughts and charisma and positive impact on the internal and external environment.

Community engagement builds cooperation between the school represented by teachers and the community in the internal and external environment of the school, such as parents and the local community. McCloskey et al. (2013) described community engagement as the process of working collaboratively with groups of people belonging to the same geographical distance and specific interests to outline problems that affect common well-being. The situation suggests that channelled cooperation can produce environmental and behavioural changes that enhance the quality of life of the surrounding community via interpersonal skills in forming relationships, effective communication, and good moral values. The collaborative process usually involves partnerships and alliances that mobilise resources and influence systems, change relationships between partners and act as a catalyst for policy and practice changes. Community engagement is defined as the consistent control of interpersonal skills to establish intelligent collaboration between teachers with the internal and external communities of the school to support and develop student learning performance holistically.

The SJTs Contribution
This study will contribute to the field of knowledge in terms of theoretical, practical, and existent educational policy. This study generally aims to delve into some of the key domains that are used to select trainee teachers to ITE. This study is crucial to carry out based on several reforms and improvements that can be done to select excellent and quality trainee teachers particularly in terms of improving existing practises and knowledge development.

The study fills the gap in the use of instruments to select pre-service teachers in the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) by presenting better alternative methods. Generally, this study will provide a detailed understanding of theoretical knowledge to the stakeholders. This is because the SGM 2.0 Framework developed does not explain in detail about the theories related to the domains and constructs contained therein. The Big Five Personality Model is a theory that can be linked to the components found in the domains of personal quality and community engagement. This theoretical knowledge is required to provide a thorough comprehension of the theory underlying a measurable component. A firm understanding in expressing personality and values in the teaching profession can be formed by having a comprehensive understanding of the theories and models behind the constructions.

Prospective trainee teachers can also utilise the theoretical knowledge to improve their capacity to acquire the quality of skills required to become a teacher according to the stakeholders' requirements. Theoretical knowledge is particularly important as a basis for any individual to assess the advantages of expressing a particular trait through behavior in a particular situation (Patterson et al. 2016). They can also obtain a broader understanding of real situations especially in schools as SJT is a simulation instrument that can provide a realistic depiction of job situations (Al Hashmi & Klassen 2019; Weekley & Ployhart 2013). This is due to SJT's high predictive validity in job simulations (Patterson et al. 2018). A good understanding through simulation can assist prospective trainee teachers comprehend well, so that they are always prepared for the challenges that will be faced if selected to become a teacher. As a result, this theoretical knowledge can improve their better understanding in animating the character and characteristic to become a teacher.

The fundamental design of this instrument can also be used by stakeholder to choose personnel based on their qualifications ans suitability for the positions. The SJT is a psychological measurement technique that hypothetically highlights various situations to test candidates who can describe various constructs as appropriate. The stakeholder can develope the SJT instrument according to the appropriateness of the task description set by listing the situations and responses that give the real of the task. As a result, this study will serve as a reference for any organisation using the SJT instrument to measure personnel selection, particularly those in the sector of education.

This study also is able to provide added value in the development of knowledge and aspects of the literature. This is with respect to the personality and character traits required for the selection of trainee teachers in ITE. This study also to minimize the gap regarding the study of personnel selection based on appropriate personality and character, especially involving non-cognitive attributes in the context of local studies. This study employs the non-cognitive domains in the SGM 2.0 Framework which serves as the primary reference in recruiting teachers and maintain quality during the service period, as well as in accordance with the latest changes from time to time. Measurement of non-cognitive attributes in personnel selection is critical in this study to understand and deepen the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that are given less attention in the field of education in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

The idea behind the concept paper discusses the development, role, and potential of SJTs as measurement instruments in selecting pre-service teachers. The discussions proposed two domains from the SGM 2.0 Framework (personal quality and community engagement) that positively impact and contribute to the three primary education areas: policy, theory, and education institutions. The discussions indicated that the SJTs measurement instrument plays a critical role in the education system, specifically to ensure quality teachers. Therefore, more in-depth research should be conducted in the future to understand and investigate the best way to recruit pre-service teachers into teacher education, particularly the appropriate method and strategy.

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