

## Professional Competency of Pre-Service English Teachers and ICT during Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

Professional competence of pre-service English teachers needs to be done to find effective ways in improving their teaching performance, which requires the proper implementation of ICT during online learning. This study aims at investigating the level of professional competence of pre-service English teachers in vocational high school in applying ICT in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. It adopts a quantitative approach. It is a type of survey research because it only describes the condition of the research respondents without any treatment being carried out. The respondents of this study were 83 pre-service English teachers of the IKIP Siliwangi who were undergoing teaching training subjects at various vocational schools. This research was conducted by distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews. The results showed that the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in implementing ICT is at a very good level, which means that pre-service teachers have performed excellent competence. This can be proven from the preferences of the three assessors (in-service teachers, supervisors, and students) to state that almost all aspects of pre-service teachers are at a very good competency level. These aspects are teaching and learning activities, teaching administration management, assignments, implementation of evaluation, and using the right tools. Only on the delivery of information aspect, pre-service teachers get a good competency level.

*Keywords: ICT, Pre-service Teacher, Professional Competence*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the factors that influence the success of the teaching and learning process in schools is competent teachers following national education standards. In education, teachers play a significant and strategic role in shaping students to become mature, autonomous, and independent individuals. In other words, the role of the teacher can determine the success of the educational process.

Teachers have strategic functions and tasks in the success of the learning process, starting from curriculum updating to implementing new teaching methods. No matter how good a curriculum is, if it is not supported by the ability of teachers to implement it, then the meaning of the curriculum will not mean much for the effectiveness of the education process (Achruh, 2016). For this reason, for the learning process to be effective, teachers are required to have high competence. Of course, with the competence of the teacher, a conducive and effective learning atmosphere can be created.

Competence is a synchronization formed from knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes which are implemented in habits of thought and action (Yamin in Mas, 2012). In the Law of

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the Republic of Indonesia No. 14, competence is stated as a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that must be lived and controlled by a teacher or lecturer in carrying out their professional duties. Thus, competence can be interpreted as an effective tool and method, to direct a person in shaping himself toward maturity and independence.

In the National Education Standards of Indonesia, there are four competencies that a teacher must have, personal, professional, pedagogical, and social competencies. This then makes the teacher a professional. Teacher professional competence is the ability to design and implement learning with the mastery of learning material widely and deeply to guide students in achieving learning targets. Personal competence is the teacher's ability to become a person who is mature, stable, authoritative, and is a role model for students. Pedagogic competence is the ability to manage to learn such as understanding students in developing their various potentials and talents. Meanwhile, social competence is the ability to behave and communicate with school members or the community.

Without any regard to the role of other competencies, this study focuses only on professional competencies which include the ability to apply ICT in online learning during the pandemic period. It is well known that controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus has shifted technical learning from face-to-face to online learning. This is of course a concern where a teacher is not only expected to be competent professionally when teaching in class using face-to-face methods but also reliable in the use of ICT so that learning remains effective and is not technically constrained. Professional competence is considered essential since it has turned out to be one of the fundamental formulation for learning materials (Apriliyanti, 2020).

Teacher professional competence is a series of abilities that teachers need to have to be able to carry out successful teaching assignments (Hermadi, 2016). In other words, professional teachers are teachers who can design and implement learning programs. Professionally competent teachers will be more capable to create effective and optimal learning as an effort to achieve the learning targets of their students. More comprehensively, a teacher has demanded in carrying out his professional competence. This is stated in the Law of Teacher and Lecturer 2005 (Undang-Undang Guru dan Dosen tahun 2015). First, a teacher is required to be able to plan lessons, carry out a quality learning process, and evaluate learning outcomes. Second, teachers are expected to be able to improve and develop academic qualifications and competencies on an ongoing basis in line with the development of technology and science. Third, teachers are also required to be able to act objectively and not to discriminate based on considerations of gender, religion, ethnicity, race, and certain physical conditions, or family background, and the economic status of students in learning. Fourth, teachers are asked to uphold regulations, laws, and teacher codes of ethics, as well as religious and ethical values. Finally, teachers are expected to be able to maintain and cultivate national unity and integrity. Tobing (2016) stated that leadership structure, school culture, and management strategy of primary and secondary schools in West Indonesia influence teachers' working and teaching performance positively, significantly, and very strongly.

The teaching profession according to Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers, must have professional principles. This is stated in article 5 paragraph 1, stated that the profession of teachers and lecturers is a field of calling and idealism, a special job that requires professional principles, namely having talents, interests, calling and idealism, having educational qualifications and educational background by their respective fields of work, having the necessary competencies under their duties, comply with the professional code of ethics, have the rights and obligations in carrying out their duties, receive an income determined according to their work performance on an ongoing basis, obtain legal protection in carrying out their professional duties, and have a professional organization that is a legal entity.

In particular, attachment of Permenristekdikti Law no. 55, the year 2017 states the Formulation of Learning Outcomes for Graduates of the Teacher Professional Education

Program. They are: master the subject matter broadly and deeply (analyzing competencies (learning outcomes) as a basis for material selection; and implementing and evaluating the material, structure, concepts, and supporting scientific mindsets development of science, technology, and art), mastering theory, application, approach, technique, or relevant scientific, technological or artistic methods; and discovering a concept, approach, technique, or method new in science, technology, or the arts relevant; disseminating academic work or other forms equivalent to an accredited national journal or reputable international journals and/or works of which presented or exhibited; applying technical knowledge and skills Information in the context of scientific development and implementation of areas of expertise; and able to use at least one language international in listening, reading, speaking, and write.

As previously explained, this research focuses on professional competence. The professional competence in question is the ability to apply 4.0 teaching patterns where the use of digital media and ICT must be juxtaposed in every lesson, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic where every learning must be done online. This becomes important because, in the end, professional competence in online learning has a significant effect on the success of the teaching and learning process.

In detail, the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in the use of ICT in online learning is discussed. Professional teachers in online learning are teachers who have broad knowledge and competent abilities in ICT, social media, and various applications (Galeshi & Taimoory, 2019). Moreover, Philipsen, et.al (2019) mentioned the aspect that a professional teacher should master in online learning. This includes:

1. Teaching and Learning Activities. A teacher is said to be a professional in online learning if s/he has the knowledge and ability in virtual teaching and learning activities. The learning strategy referred to includes teaching activities, such as discussions, reading, assignments, presentations, and evaluations. In general, its implementation depends on one or more of three basic modes: communication between teachers and students, communication between students and learning resources, and communication among students.
2. Learning Administration Management. In this case, the management of learning administration can be interpreted as the efforts made by the teacher in organizing, recording, storing, and serving various things related to learning activities, such as student attendance lists, curriculum and syllabus, lists of daily, weekly, monthly and semester, exam questions, teaching materials, and so on. All of these things are stored using digital technology, some of which can be accessed by students.
3. Assignments. The assignment can mean everything that is designed and prepared by the teacher to be done by students. The implementation of these tasks is then reported to the teacher. The reporting uses ICT. In this case, a teacher not only should master the material but also ICT.
4. Delivery of Information. One of the competencies of a professional teacher is having the ability to build communication with students. In this communication, one another provides information to each other, so that various ideas, messages, and ideas are shared. In delivering this information, digital technology equipment can be used. In relation to this, a teacher can convey materials that must be read by the students or they could worked on by answering questions or doing their tasks on it.
5. Implementation of Evaluation. The implementation of various evaluations is one of the duties of a professional teacher. The evaluation is carried out in an objective, transparent, fair, and accountable manner. To achieve this goal, accuracy and strict supervision are needed, so that there is no cheating or plagiarism. Through the digital system, it is hoped that a system can be created that can easily track out, whether the

answers in the evaluation given by the students are original of their work or the results of cheating or plagiarism.

6. The Right Tools. Teachers in the digital age must have high quality to become inspiring educators. However, such teacher qualifications will not work if they are not accompanied by the right educational technology tools. To educate students in the digital era, internet-based tools are needed that can be easily accessed and used by them. Of course, this access does not only contain a base of information and material regarding the knowledge being studied. Besides, it must also have other features that fit students more freedom to experiment in mastering a certain branch of knowledge.

This research is focused on the professional competence of pre-service English teachers. A pre-service teacher is a student who is currently undergoing teacher education and is undergoing Teaching Practice Subject at schools. The consideration of focusing on pre-service because, in Indonesia, one of the problems of teacher professionalism is connected to pre-service education development (Kholis and Murwanti, 2019). The pre-service teachers referred to in this study are pre-service English teachers at SMK (Vocational High School).

Pre-service teachers are students who take part in various activities and courses in the field of teacher training and education. Pre-service teachers are expected to develop their skills and abilities as future teachers. These characters are formed during their learning period, especially from courses or activities related to pedagogy and teaching (Maulana & Rizkiani, 2019). This aims to train the abilities and competencies of pre-service teachers and improve the professional character of pre-service teachers. In a teacher training environment, competency can be a significant context. The competency in question is that as a language teacher, the scope of the learning process includes recognizing, selecting, and acting on phenomena that arise during their involvement with students (Jackson & Cho, 2018). To be able to work well (Samuda, 2015), pre-service teachers must be able to pay attention to various aspects of involvement, including cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional aspects during the learning process (Ivanova & Skara-Mincāne, 2016). In other words, pre-service teachers certainly have to practice teaching skills to achieve effective and successful learning.

Learning a language is a conscious process of every language component starting from understanding to its application (Krashen as stated in Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, Abdurakhman & Rusli (2017) suggests that if the target in learning English is to gain competence in communicating English, then communicating while learning is one of the most recommended ways. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers provide students with the opportunity to practice their English competencies.

Learning English in vocational schools is included in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) where English learning is specifically focused on the initial goal of learning English. This is because the orientation of English learning at vocational schools depends on the majors or vocations that students take. In defining ESP, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) explains that ESP is an approach to language teaching, where the materials and methods used throughout the learning process are entirely based on students' reasons for learning English. So, it can be concluded that ESP learning is carried out according to the needs of students. In other words, ESP learning focuses on students as the main consideration in the learning process learning English at SMK is different from SMA (Senior High School). Learning English at vocational schools is more focused on preparing students to enter the world of work and business. This prepares pre-service English teachers for vocational schools has its challenges because the teaching of English that is designed and implemented is the embodiment of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in which the English learning process depends on the department or vocational field that students are participating in.

Through direct observation, it was found that there are pre-service English teachers who still experience awkwardness and doubts in carrying out their duties as English teachers at the school where they practice. Some look less prepared personally or professionally, such as feeling insecure, uneasy about the various characters of students, lack of mastery of the material that must be provided, also do not have sufficient knowledge and experience in the use of ICT in which the learning is carried out. It was also found that the implementation of ICT can improve their teaching performance, as stated by Katemba (2020). She claims that despite the challenges faced in the online classroom setting, the application of technology remains accommodating. Further, it has become a popular teaching and learning tool for teachers both in and out of the classroom ( Katemba & Sinuhaji, 2021).

Based on the explanation above, it appears that further research on the professional competence of pre-service English teachers needs to be done to find effective ways for lecturers and pre-service teachers to improve their teaching performance, especially during the Covid19 pandemic, which requires learning to be done online. This is expected to be able to create more prepared and competent graduates professionally in the future, both through face-to-face and online learning. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the level of professional competence of pre-service English teachers in Vocational High School. Competency in terms of professional competent having the ability to apply ICT in their teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **METHODS**

This study aims to investigate the level of professional competence of pre-service English teachers in Vocational High School. Competency here is the ability to apply ICT in teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. In detail, the method conducted in this study is described in the following steps:

### **Research Design**

Seeing the objectives to be achieved, this study adopts a quantitative approach. This study is a type of survey study because it only describes the condition of the research respondents, without any treatment being carried out.

### **Research Participants and Sampling Procedures**

The respondents of this study were pre-service English teachers of the IKIP Siliwangi who were undergoing teaching training subjects at various vocational schools.

### **Sample Size, Power, and Precision**

The population of this study was 83 pre-service English teachers of IKIP Siliwangi. This study involved all pre-service English teachers mentioned to become the respondents.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection of this study began by reviewing various previous research results regarding the competence of teachers and pre-service English teachers. Furthermore, the instruments were compiled based on the results of those previous researches which then be validated by two experts in this field. After the questionnaire was validated, it was distributed and followed up through interviews to get more reliable results.

## **RESULTS**

The professional competency criteria for pre-service English teachers in this study are based on the level of teacher competency indicators whose levels are obtained through empirically calculating the percentage of scores which are then compared with the ideal score. The following is a categorization guide in assessing the performance of pre-service teachers.

Table 1. Guide for Categorization of Teacher Candidate Professional Competency Assessment

No	Range of Percentage (%)	Level of Competency
1	81 – 100	Excellent
2	68 – 80.9	Very Good
3	56 – 67.9	Good
4	43 – 55.9	Fair
5	0 – 42.9	Poor

*Adapted from Mas (2012)*

The professional competence of pre-service teachers is assessed from the results of the total comparison of all aspects of the professional competence of pre-service English teachers from each assessor. The assessors in question consist of in-service teachers, supervisors, and students. The total overall professional competence is obtained from the combined score or the average score of the assessment results of the three assessors.

When viewed from the assessment of the in-service teacher, the achievement of professional competence of pre-service English teachers in the application of ICT showed the very good level of the three assessors even though the resulting percentage was different. According to in-service teachers, the competence of pre-service teachers was at the 76.9% level which meant very good. The same thing also happened to the competency achievement of pre-service teachers according to the supervisor, which showed 76.1%. Likewise, the professional competence of pre-service teachers was seen from the students' assessment showed achievement of 71.6%. A summary of the teacher competencies in terms of each assessor can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Description of Professional Competence Level

Aspects	Assessors	Result (%)	Level of Competency
<b>Teaching and Learning Activities</b>	In-service Teacher	83.3	Excellent
	Supervisor	80.7	Very good
	Students	76.7	Very good
<b>Learning Administration Management</b>	In-service Teacher	79.5	Very good
	Supervisor	76.7	Very good
	Students	63.3	Good
<b>Assignments</b>	In-service Teacher	75.5	Very good
	Supervisor	78.5	Very good
	Students	66.7	Good
<b>Delivery of Information</b>	In-service Teacher	56.7	Good
	Supervisor	60.2	Good
	Students	66.7	Good
<b>Implementation of Evaluation</b>	In-service Teacher	81.3	Excellent
	Supervisor	80.4	Very good
	Students	77.8	Very good
<b>Right Tools</b>	In-service Teacher	85.1	Excellent
	Supervisor	80.4	Very good

	Students	78.2	Very good
<b>Mean of Assessors' Judgment</b>	<b>In-service Teacher</b>	<b>76.9</b>	<b>Very good</b>
	<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>Very good</b>
	<b>Students</b>	<b>71.6</b>	<b>Very good</b>

From table 2 it can be seen that the level of professional competence is achieved in every aspect. In the aspect of teaching and learning activities, the assessment of in-service teachers showed excellent achievement, while according to supervisors and students, the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in implementing ICT was at a very good level. Similar results also appeared in the aspects of the implementation of evaluation and right tools. Unlike the case with the assignments aspect, in-service teachers and supervisors gave very good ratings. Meanwhile, students assessed that the level of professional competence of pre-service English teachers in implementing ICT in this aspect was good. Different results can also be seen in the delivery of information aspect. Although the percentage results obtained vary, the assessment of the three assessors in this aspect was the same, at the level of good competence.

Based on the descriptive analysis, the professional competency assessment of the pre-service teachers from every aspect was in the level of very good. Of the six aspects, only the Delivery of Information aspect is at the good competency level, while the Teaching and Learning Activities, Learning Administration Management, Assignments, Implementation of Evaluation, and Right Tools aspects are at the very good level. The assessments of the three assessors for each aspect can be seen in the following illustration.

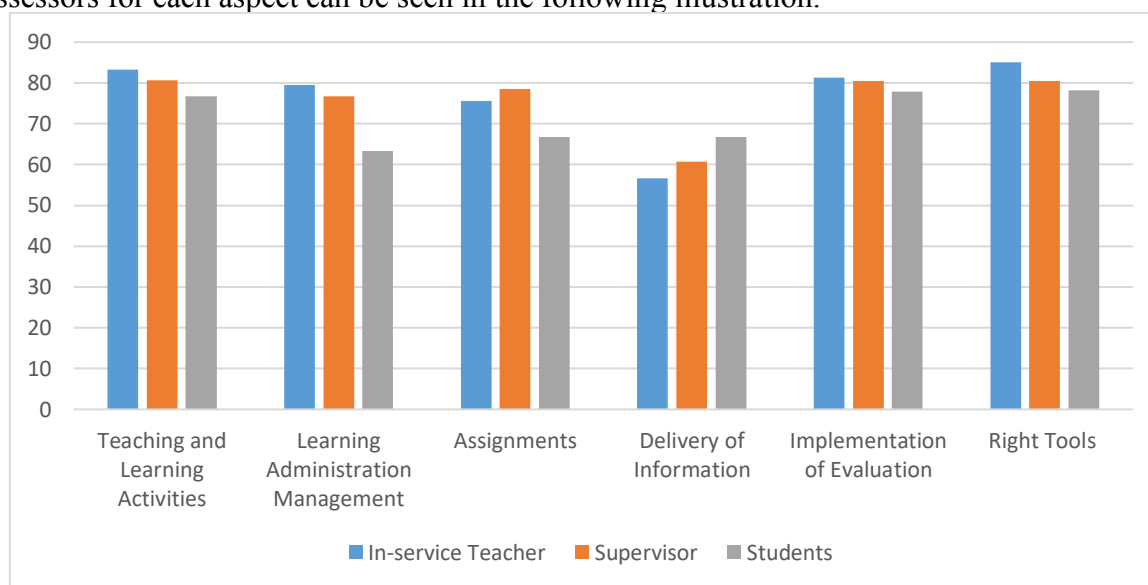


Chart 1: Assessors' Judgment on Every Aspect

## DISCUSSION

Based from the results, it can be interpreted that the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in the field of ICT still need improvement, especially in the aspect of Delivery of Information, where pre-service teachers were expected to be able to convey information well, correctly and clearly in English. This was not only in the delivery of information related to the material being taught but also in the conditions of online learning. This is in line with what was stated by Philipsen, et.al (2019) that a professional teacher should have the ability to build communication with students. In this case, a professional teacher should provide information

so that various ideas, messages, and ideas are shared properly. In delivering this information, various digital technology equipment can be used.

If viewed from the aspect that had the highest assessment of the three assessors, the aspects of right tools, teaching and learning activities, and the implementation of evaluation were the aspects that get the advantage of top three. However, the three assessors also agreed that the aspect of the delivery of information was the aspect that received the lowest assessment among them.

From the assessor's point of view, even though the results of the in-service teacher and student assessments are at different competency levels, both assessments have advantages in the aspects of teaching and learning activities, implementation of evaluation, and right tools. This is possible because in-service teachers and students both have an interest in new things in learning that are used by pre-service teachers, such as learning applications, software, social media, or other digital media. This is in line with Philipson, et.al (2019) who stated that professional teachers in online learning are teachers who have broad knowledge and competent abilities in ICT, social media, and various applications. This is different from the supervisor who gave a very good assessment in almost all aspects, except for the delivery of information. The similarity of the results of the assessment which is almost similar in all these aspects showed that supervisors were more consistent in providing assessments.

From the overall assessment, it can be said that the results found indicated that the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in implementing ICT had not shown optimal results. As stated earlier by Kholis & Murwanti (2019) that there are at least three skills a professional teacher must have: the skills to plan, implement, and evaluate learning. This is also stated in general by Mas (2012) that the picture of a professional teacher is not just a means of transmitting learning but can be a means of transforming mastery of knowledge and skills.

## CONCLUSION

Based from the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in implementing ICT is at a very good level, which means that pre-service teachers have not performed excellent competence. This can be proven from the consistency of the three evaluators stating that almost all aspects of pre-service teachers are at a very good competency level. These aspects are aspects of Teaching and Learning Activities, Learning Administration Management, Assignments, Implementation of Evaluation, and Right Tools. Only on the Delivery of Information aspect, pre-service teachers get a good competency level.

To improve the professional competence of pre-service English teachers in the application of ICT, it is hoped that the findings of this study can be used as a reference in decisions making on the teaching training subjects at IKIP Siliwangi, especially for the English Education study program. The results of this research are expected to be useful in the development of similar research on other teacher competencies.

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