

Elementary School English Teachers' Self-assessment on their Teaching Competence: Challenges and Development Needs

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ABSTRACT

Teacher competence is vital for improving the quality of education. However, many English teachers encounter challenges in developing their teaching competence. This study examined how elementary school English teachers evaluate their teaching competence. The main goal was to find out about the pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies that would require further development, as well as professional development strategies. The study participants were teachers from Christian primary schools in Semarang and Salatiga. Data were collected using self-assessment questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that social competence was given the highest assessment, while the lowest assessment was given to pedagogical competence. Therefore, this study suggested organizing further training programs to equip teachers with better pedagogical and professional competence in order to cope with the current demand of 21st-century education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education and the attainment of national objectives hinge on the competence of the teacher. Salinan Perdirjen (2023) defines the competence of the teacher as being composed of the pedagogical, professional, social, and personal. Teachers would be faculties with these competencies to plan lessons, know their subject content, communicate with students, and maintain ethical standards. Burns and Richards (2009) insist upon understanding the learners, their teaching context, and educational goals. In addition, Sulaiman and Ismail (2020) list skills such as technology utilization, collaboration, and innovation as 21st-century skills.

Previous studies have indicated that teacher competencies significantly influence students' achievement positively (Desmita et al., 2021; Canuto et al., 2024). Nevertheless, lesson planning, assessment, and subject mastery still pose challenges (Andayani et al., 2022; Jayen et al., 2022; Ragawanti, 2016). This study seeks to assess the competencies and professional development needs of elementary school English teachers. Study findings will serve as the basis for implementing strategies to improve teacher performance in instructional processes.

1.1 Teacher Competence in Educational Settings

Teacher competence contributes immensely to student learning and general educational quality (Shulman, 1987). Teacher competencies are typically classified into four broad areas: pedagogy, profession, sociology, and personal competence (Richards & Farrell, 2005). All these competencies affect the teaching strategies, use of students, and professional development in education.

1.2 Pedagogical Competency and Its Challenges

The capacity of a teacher to design and apply instructional strategies that consider the learning needs of students finds expression in the term pedagogical competence (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Achieving pedagogical competence is still a challenge for many teachers in their early careers because real classroom dynamics, which offer a powerful context for learning, may not have yet been experienced, and in doing so, the lack of experiences can be said to practically limit the growth of their pedagogical competence during these early years (Blömeke, Suhl, & Kaiser, 2012). On the other hand, notions regarding effective teaching, classroom management, and differentiation become more elaborate through experiential learning for competent teachers (Ball & Forzani, 2009).

1.3 The Impact of Professional Competency on Teaching Effectiveness

Professional competency entails the teacher's expertise in content, knowledge of policies governing their profession, and competence to translate innovations into appropriate teaching practice (Borko, 2004). Studies have shown that the teachers who participate in extensive professional development are much better at delivering instruction and student engagement (Guskey, 2002). In addition, a strong professional background helps teachers cope with adaptations in the curriculum and integrate technology into teaching-learning (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

1.4 Social and Personal Competencies in Teaching

Social competence is important thing for creating good relationships with students, other staff, and the wider school community (Hattie, 2009). Research points to the fact that interpersonal skills among teachers promote the creation of supportive learning environments, which in turn enhance student motivation and participation (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Moreover, personal competence including self-reflection, emotional resilience, and being ethical can all have a significant effect on a teacher's ability to manage stress as well as act with professionalism (Day & Gu, 2010).

1.5 Relationship between Teaching Experience and Competence Development

Research evidence shows that teaching experience is positively associated with improvement in pedagogical and professional competencies (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008). This positive correlation changes slightly since some less experienced teachers excel in social competencies such as adaptability and communication skills, as stated by Kelchtermans (2009). The findings indicate a continued need for continuous professional training, especially for beginning teachers who need mentoring and training to address their competency gaps (Avalos, 2011).

2. METHODOLOGY

The research aims to assess elementary school English teachers' teaching competence, to identify the challenges that the teachers face in applying their competencies, and to suggest areas for professional development based on the findings. Therefore, to achieve these purpose the researchers proposed three questions:

- a. What are the current competency levels of elementary school English teachers in pedagogical, professional, social, and personal areas?
- b. What challenges do teachers face when applying their competencies in classroom settings?
- c. What recommendations can be made to improve teacher competencies through professional, development programs?

The current study was conducted at two private primary schools in Semarang and Salatiga. These schools were chosen because they are located in two different cities and considered to represent schools in different cities. The participants are English teachers from both schools involving novice teachers and experienced teachers. The data are collected using self-assessment questionnaire and interviews with teachers. The questionnaire was adapted from Salinan Perdirjen (2023) to assess teachers' competencies reflecting on their teaching practices, challenges, and areas of improvements using Likert-scale questionnaire. After the data from the questionnaire was taken, the participants with lower competency level were interviewed to explore struggles and experiences. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with results represented in percentages. The scores were then categorized and compared across participants to identify trends and variations in competency levels.

3. DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study show a significant difference between the levels of competency of elementary school English teachers. Social competence was rated highest among the competencies, followed by pedagogical competence rated lower. These results are informative about what the teachers are good at or need to struggle with and could inform the professional development provided to teachers.

- a. Social Competence: A foundation for early career teachers

Social competence is rated highest domain, particularly for novice teachers. This skill highlights the capability of a teacher to socialize well with students, colleagues, and the school community. Teachers who scored high in this area are generally energetic, flexible and personable. Their willingness to work alongside their students' grounds them in this dimension is high. In order to ensure learning outcomes via effective teaching,

social competence should be balanced with pedagogical and professional competencies as it is the heart of a rewarding learning environment.

b. Pedagogical competence: Challenges among novice teachers

Pedagogical competence covers lesson planning, teaching strategies, classroom management, and assessment techniques was the lowest rated competence. Newer teachers struggle with this aspect because they have had less practice and lack confidence in how to apply the lessons in a relevant manner. Building up an ability to adjust learning material and control students' interactions and to toggle between different varieties of the teaching method comes only with years of practice. Thus, this finding suggests mentoring schemes and brief in-service teacher education workshops in pedagogy for beginning teachers.

c. Effect of experience on competency

Compared to teachers with little teaching experience, those with rich teaching experiences had comparatively stronger characteristics of pedagogical and professional competencies. Over the years, teachers improve their practice, mastery in the content they teach, and classroom management, and this trend supports that idea. How far this goes depends on the teacher's existing formal and informal training, the teacher's willingness to embrace new strategies, and the extent of support the school has offered. However, some experienced educators may refuse to utilize great technology and/or pedagogies, hence the importance of ongoing professional development for the changing needs of education.

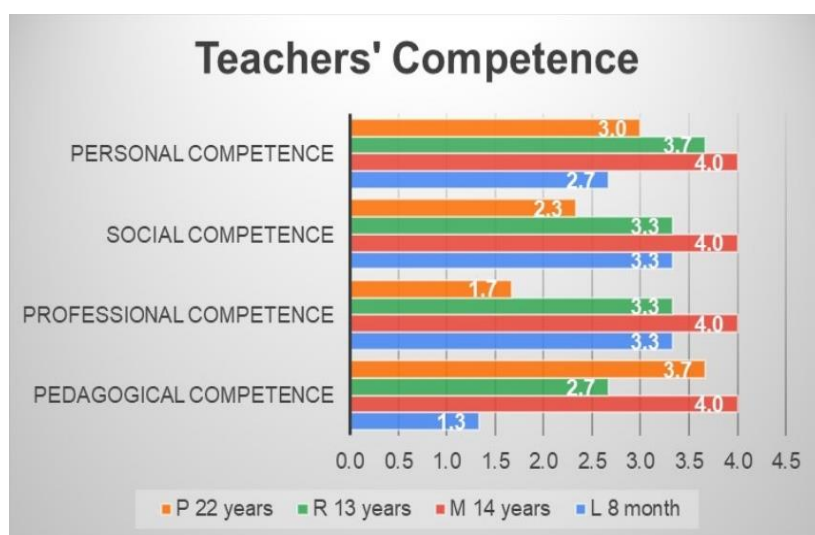


Figure 1. Teacher Competency Assessment of teachers from private primary schools in Semarang and Salatiga

3.1 An Analysis of the Trends of Teacher Competencies

a. Younger Teachers Rate Highest on Social Competence

Social competence scores were rated high in all teachers, placing with the highest score of 2.4. Teachers with very little experience, such as 8 months, received a 1.6 score for their interaction skills. This indicates that social competence could be born out of natural interpersonal adeptness or earlier experience unrelated to teaching.

b. Lowest in Competence, in Particular Where New Teachers Are Concerned

Pedagogical competence was rated the lowest, but it was newly qualified teachers who suffered the most. An eight-month-experienced teacher who earned 0.8 must be finding it challenging to execute good teaching strategies. Conversely, an experienced teacher with 22 years of actual practice got to the highest score (2.4) on pedagogical competency, thus again emphasizing growth in pedagogical skills through practice and training.

c. Experienced Teachers Sometimes Score High in their Competencies, They Are Still Sometimes Lower in Pedagogical and Professional Competencies

Teachers with further experience score much higher on professional competencies. The most experienced teacher (22 years) rated high across all competencies, particularly in professional (2.4) and pedagogical (2.4). Some discrepancies could be noted; for example, a teacher with 14 years of experience rated lower in professional competency (2.0) than the most experienced teacher. This signifies that her professional growth is not entirely dependent on experience but also on continuous training, adaptability, and self-improvement.

3.2 Comparative Analysis with Previous Research

The outcomes are in line with previous research as shown by Sulaiman & Ismail, 2020; Perdirjen, 2023 which disclose insufficiencies related to lesson planning, assessment skills, and subject mastery of teachers. It

also corroborates what has been identified in prior research that the domain of interpersonal communicative competence & ethical conduct is a quintessential, yet frequently undervalued asset in professional contexts. Once more, this is where the research becomes clear: develop your professional practice over time in a method that can plug gaps in competencies and increase instructional effectiveness. Based on the findings, the study demonstrates the importance of targeted professional development programs to enhance teaching competencies.

The following recommendations are proposed:

- a. Pedagogical Training
Conduct workshops on lesson planning, classroom management, and differentiated instruction.
 - b. Professional Development Programs
Encourage teacher participation in peer learning, research activities, and reflective practice.
 - c. Technology Integration
Provide training on using digital tools for effective and innovative teaching.
 - d. Collaboration with Educational Experts
Build partnerships with academic institutions and professional organizations for teacher training initiatives.
 - e. Continuous Support and Assessment
Implement regular competency assessments and mentorship programs to review teachers' progress and provide necessary support.
- By addressing these areas, schools and policymakers can enhance teachers' competencies, ultimately improving the quality of education and preparing teachers to meet the demands of 21st-century learning.

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