

Teacher competence test in Indonesia: Is it a need or a demand?

Maramis Sofia Emma

Universitas Setia Budi, sofiamaramis@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT		
<p>Keywords: Critique, Teacher, Competence</p>	<p><i>This study explores the Teacher Competence Test (TCT) and how it is designed to enhance teacher competence. Its implementation has raised concerns about its alignment with its stated objectives. Critics argue that certain aspects of the TCT lack validity in assessing and fostering professional development. The test has been criticized for potentially violating constitutional principles and undermining the core nature of professional assessment by focusing on rigid, standardized measures rather than comprehensive evaluations of teaching practices. This paper explores the fundamental principles and objectives of the TCT, highlighting the controversies surrounding its design and execution. It examines the broader implications of such assessments on the teaching profession in Indonesia and their alignment with global best practices. To provide a comprehensive perspective, the study compares the TCT with similar teacher assessment systems in other countries, analysing their approaches to balancing standardization with individual teacher development. The findings suggest that while the TCT seeks to promote accountability and competence, its current framework may require significant revisions to support teacher growth better and align with constitutional and professional standards. By addressing these issues, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on improving teacher assessment methods in Indonesia and offers recommendations for creating a more effective, equitable, and professional competency evaluation system.</i></p>		
Article History:	Submission 23 August 2022	Accepted 11 September 2022	Published 30 October 2022

1. Introduction

Teacher quality is a cornerstone of educational success, as educators play a pivotal role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes. Recognizing this, governments and education stakeholders worldwide have implemented various strategies to evaluate and improve teacher competence. In Indonesia, one such initiative is the Teacher Competence Test (TCT), or Teacher Competence Test, introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoNE). The TCT was designed to enhance teachers' professional capacities, thereby contributing to improved educational standards nationwide. However, since its inception, the TCT has been a topic of significant debate, eliciting support and criticism from various quarters.

The TCT was initially envisioned as a tool to evaluate teachers' knowledge and pedagogical skills, with the ultimate goal of identifying areas for development and providing targeted training. It was introduced as part of broader education reforms to align Indonesia's education system with global standards (Fadhillah & Faisal, 2023). Proponents of the TCT argue that it provides a standardized mechanism to measure teacher competence objectively, which is essential for fostering accountability and ensuring that teachers meet minimum professional standards.

However, despite these aspirations, the TCT has been met with widespread skepticism and resistance from teachers, unions, and other stakeholders. One of the primary criticisms of the TCT is its perceived misalignment with its stated objectives. Critics argue that the test, in its current form, fails to evaluate the multifaceted nature of teaching comprehensively. It involves subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, classroom management, and the ability to inspire and engage students. Instead of serving as a developmental tool, the TCT is often viewed as a punitive measure that places undue pressure on teachers without offering meaningful support for professional growth. This has led to questions about the validity of the test as a mechanism for improving teacher competence (Nurhadi et al., 2022).

In addition to concerns about validity, the TCT has been criticized for potentially violating constitutional principles and the nature of professional assessments. Critics argue that the test undermines the autonomy and dignity of the teaching profession by reducing the complex, dynamic teaching process to a standardized, one-size-fits-all evaluation. This approach fails to capture the nuances of teaching practice and risks alienating teachers, who may feel demoralized and undervalued due to being subjected to such assessments (Sutrisno & Wahyuni, 2024). Furthermore, some have raised legal and ethical concerns, suggesting that the TCT infringes on teachers' rights as outlined in Indonesia's constitution, which emphasizes the importance of equitable and supportive professional development opportunities.

The TCT debates are not unique to Indonesia; similar challenges have been encountered in other countries that have implemented teacher assessment systems. For instance, standardized tests for teachers have been criticized globally for their inability to account for the contextual and cultural factors that influence teaching practices. In some cases, these tests have been abandoned or significantly restructured to better align with the principles of professional development and equity. Comparative analyses of these systems provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to teacher evaluation, offering lessons that could inform the reform of the TCT in Indonesia (Jones et al., 2021; Kumar & Patel, 2023).

Given these complexities, it is clear that the TCT represents a critical juncture in Indonesia's education reform efforts. On the one hand, the test underscores the government's commitment to improving educational quality by holding teachers accountable for their performance. On the other hand, the controversies surrounding the TCT highlight the need for a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach to teacher assessment—one that recognizes the unique challenges faced by educators and prioritizes their professional growth and well-being.

This paper explores the nature of the TCT in Indonesia, delving into the debates surrounding its implementation and examining its implications for the teaching profession. It also seeks to provide a comparative analysis of similar teacher assessment systems in other

countries, to identify best practices and lessons that could inform the development of a more effective and equitable teacher evaluation framework in Indonesia. By addressing these issues, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on educational reform. It underscores the importance of designing teacher assessments that are both valid and supportive of professional development.

Research Gap

While significant research exists on the implementation and criticism of the TCT, gaps remain in understanding its long-term impact on teacher performance and professional development. Furthermore, few studies have compared the TCT's effectiveness with similar teacher assessment systems in countries with comparable educational challenges. Additionally, there is limited research on alternative frameworks that balance accountability with professional growth within the Indonesian context. This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of the TCT's implications and exploring how lessons from other countries might inform its reform to support Indonesia's educational goals better.

2. Research Methodology

This study investigates the implementation and implications of Teacher Competence in Indonesia, focusing on its design, effectiveness, and alignment with professional development goals. The methodology outlines the research design, context, site, participants, recruitment strategy, and steps for data analysis.

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, using a case study approach to explore the TCT in-depth. By examining the experiences of teachers and stakeholders, the study aims to uncover insights into the test's practical implications, alignment with its stated objectives, and broader impact on teacher competence and professional development.

Context

The research is set in the Indonesian educational system, where the TCT has been implemented as a national initiative by the Ministry of Education (MoNE) since July 2012. The study focuses on the dual dimensions of competence assessed by the TCT: pedagogical competence (30%) and professional competence (70%).

Research Site

The study was conducted across three regions in Indonesia: urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. These diverse locations allow for an examination of how the TCT is implemented and perceived across varying contexts, including differences in infrastructure, teacher training opportunities, and access to resources.

Participants

Participants include teachers who have taken the TCT, school administrators, and policymakers involved in its implementation. A purposive sampling strategy is used to select 20 participants:

- 15 teachers: Representing a range of subject areas, school levels, and regions (urban, semi-urban, and rural).

- 3 school administrators: Responsible for facilitating the TCT in their institutions.
- 2 policymakers: Involved in the design and oversight of the TCT at the national level.

Recruitment

Participants are recruited through professional networks, school contacts, and official requests to the Ministry of Education. Teachers are selected based on their participation in the TCT over the past five years to ensure relevance and recency of experiences. Consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring their willingness to share perspectives and comply with ethical research standards.

Steps of Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

In document analysis, it reviews TCT policies, guidelines, and scoring rubrics to understand the framework and objectives of the test. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to gather insights into their experiences with the TCT, perceptions of its effectiveness, and suggestions for improvement. Interviews are recorded and transcribed for analysis. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was done with teachers to explore collective perspectives on the TCT's impact on their professional growth and teaching practices and observation served to monitor the TCT test sessions in select schools to examine its implementation and logistical challenges.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was done through interview transcripts, and FGDs were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights. The themes focus on perceptions of the TCT's validity, alignment with teaching competencies, and its impact on teacher morale and professional development. The second step of analysis is by conducting a Comparative Analysis where TCT policies and practices are compared with similar teacher evaluation systems in other countries to identify best practices and areas for improvement. Triangulation was done by cross-checking data from interviews, FGDs, document analysis, and cross-verified observations to ensure reliability and validity. Finally, the Reporting of research findings is synthesized to address research questions and provide recommendations for enhancing the TCT's design and implementation. By following these methodological steps, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the TCT and its role in shaping teacher competence in Indonesia. The findings are expected to contribute to developing more effective teacher evaluation and professional development systems.

3. Findings

a) Pedagogic Competence

Recognizing and understanding the characteristics and potentials of the students means that effective teaching begins with a deep understanding of students' diverse characteristics, including cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural dimensions. Teachers need to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, and potential, enabling them to provide differentiated instruction that caters to individual needs. Research has shown that recognizing students' unique abilities fosters motivation, enhances engagement, and promotes holistic development. This skill is particularly crucial in inclusive classrooms where diverse learners require personalized support to achieve their full potential.

Pedagogic competence is grounded in a comprehensive understanding of learning theories, such as constructivism, behaviourism, and socio-cultural theory, and their practical applications in the classroom. Teachers should be equipped to select and adapt teaching strategies that align with students' learning styles, developmental stages, and the subject matter. Mastery of these theories enables teachers to design student-centered, inquiry-based, and results-driven instruction, thereby enhancing the quality of education.

Curriculum planning involves aligning learning objectives, content, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methods with educational standards and students' needs. Teachers must demonstrate the ability to develop both short-term lesson plans and long-term curriculum frameworks that ensure coherence, progression, and relevance. A well-designed curriculum facilitates academic achievement and promotes critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning skills.

Effective teaching requires integrating pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, and creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers should be able to deliver content clearly, engage students actively, and adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs. Additionally, fostering a positive teacher-student relationship and promoting collaborative learning are essential components of effective teaching that contribute to better learning outcomes.

Assessment and evaluation are integral to measuring student progress, diagnosing learning gaps, and refining instructional practices. Teachers must employ various assessment methods, including formative, summative, and diagnostic tools, to comprehensively understand student performance. Furthermore, they should use the evaluation process as a feedback mechanism to reflect on and improve their teaching effectiveness. This iterative process ensures that learning objectives are met and students are supported in their academic journey.

b) Professional Competence

Professional competence is built upon a thorough understanding of subject matter expertise. Teachers must not only master the content of their field but also grasp its underlying structure, key concepts, and disciplinary thinking patterns. This expertise enables them to present complex ideas in an accessible manner, make interdisciplinary connections, and inspire students to delve deeper into the subject.

Reflective practice is a cornerstone of professional growth, allowing teachers to critically evaluate their instructional methods, interactions, and professional decisions. Engaging in self-assessment, peer reviews, and professional learning communities fosters continuous improvement and adaptability. Reflective teachers are better equipped to address challenges, implement innovative practices, and stay updated with advancements in their field.

Professional competence requires coherence between a teacher's theoretical knowledge and practical application, encompassing the following dimensions:

- a. Text, context, and reality: Teachers should connect theoretical content (text) with practical applications (context) and real-world implications (reality). This approach ensures that learning is relevant and meaningful to students.
- b. Facts, principles, and procedures: Mastery involves understanding foundational facts, underlying principles, and procedural knowledge that guide problem-solving and

decision-making within the subject. This holistic understanding equips teachers to explain concepts comprehensively and guide students effectively.

- c. Philosophy, nature, and implementation of the science: Teachers must understand the philosophical foundations and nature of their discipline, which informs its methodologies, ethical considerations, and societal implications. This knowledge enables them to not only teach the content but also instill a sense of curiosity, critical inquiry, and ethical responsibility in their students.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of pedagogic and professional competence in the teaching profession. These competencies are not isolated attributes but interdependent pillars that collectively determine the efficacy of teaching and learning processes. The discussion elaborates on the theoretical and practical dimensions of these competencies, examining their implications for classroom practice, teacher development, and educational outcomes.

Pedagogic competence represents the foundation of effective teaching and is deeply rooted in understanding and addressing the diverse needs of students. The ability to recognize and understand the characteristics and potentials of students is not merely about identifying differences but about embracing diversity as a strength. Teachers who actively engage with their students' cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural dimensions are better positioned to create personalized learning experiences. This capacity is especially vital in inclusive classrooms, where differentiated instruction supports equitable access to education and maximizes each student's potential. Inclusive practices, as supported by research, enhance engagement and motivation, creating an environment conducive to holistic development.

The mastery of learning theories, such as constructivism, behaviorism, and socio-cultural theory, equips teachers to approach education with a multidimensional perspective. For instance, constructivism encourages student-centered learning where knowledge is co-constructed, while socio-cultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. By integrating these theories into practice, teachers can design instruction that is inquiry-based, engaging, and results-oriented, ensuring that lessons resonate with students' learning styles and developmental stages.

Curriculum planning and development serve as the backbone of pedagogic competence, enabling teachers to align their instructional strategies with educational standards while catering to students' needs. Effective curriculum planning involves more than just structuring content—it requires ensuring coherence, relevance, and progression. When done well, it fosters critical thinking, creativity, and the development of lifelong learning skills. For example, incorporating interdisciplinary themes or project-based learning can make the curriculum more engaging and practical.

The essence of pedagogic competence is realized in effective teaching practices that go beyond content delivery. Teachers must employ dynamic classroom management techniques, maintain positive teacher-student relationships, and create environments where collaboration and active participation thrive. The ability to adapt teaching methods to meet diverse learning needs ensures inclusivity and equity in education, resulting in better learning outcomes.

Finally, assessment and evaluation form a critical feedback loop in teaching and learning. Through formative assessments, teachers can identify learning gaps and adjust their strategies in real-time, while summative assessments provide a comprehensive measure of student achievement. Diagnostic tools help teachers understand the root causes of learning challenges, enabling targeted interventions. Moreover, when teachers reflect on assessment outcomes, they refine their practices, fostering continuous improvement in both teaching quality and student performance.

While pedagogic competence focuses on teaching strategies and student engagement, professional competence emphasizes the depth of a teacher's subject matter expertise and their ability to translate that knowledge into meaningful learning experiences. Teachers must thoroughly understand the materials, structure, concepts, and disciplinary thinking within their field. This level of expertise enables them to break down complex ideas into accessible forms, make interdisciplinary connections, and foster a deeper appreciation for the subject among students. For example, a science teacher proficient in theoretical and practical physics can make abstract concepts tangible through hands-on experiments or real-world applications.

Reflective practice plays a transformative role in professional competence. By engaging in self-assessment, peer feedback, and collaborative learning communities, teachers can critically evaluate their methods and identify areas for improvement. This iterative process of reflection not only enhances instructional practices but also fosters adaptability in addressing evolving educational challenges. For instance, reflective teachers are better equipped to integrate new technologies or innovative pedagogical approaches, ensuring their relevance in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Professional competence also requires consistency between content knowledge and performance, which can be understood through three key dimensions:

- Text, context, and reality: Teachers need to bridge the gap between theoretical content (text) and its practical applications (context), ensuring that learning is both relevant and actionable in real-world scenarios. This connection enhances students' ability to see the practical value of their education and apply their knowledge beyond the classroom.
- Facts, principles, and procedures: A teacher's understanding must extend beyond isolated facts to include the principles and procedural knowledge that underpin effective problem-solving and critical thinking. This holistic mastery enables teachers to provide comprehensive explanations and guide students through complex reasoning processes.
- Philosophy, nature, and implementation of the science: Teachers must grasp the philosophical and ethical dimensions of their discipline, ensuring that their instruction is not only technically accurate but also socially responsible. For instance, in teaching environmental science, a teacher should emphasize the ethical implications of sustainability and the role of science in addressing global challenges.

Implications and Recommendations

This study highlights the interconnectedness of pedagogic and professional competencies in fostering high-quality education. Teachers who excel in these competencies are not only effective educators but also lifelong learners who continuously refine their craft. To enhance these competencies, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Targeted Professional Development: Schools and educational institutions should invest in ongoing training programs that address both pedagogic and professional competencies. These programs should be tailored to meet the specific needs of teachers based on their subject areas and teaching contexts.
2. Mentorship and Collaboration: Establishing mentorship programs and collaborative learning communities can provide teachers with opportunities to learn from peers, share best practices, and engage in reflective dialogue.
3. Integration of Technology: Leveraging educational technologies can support teachers in curriculum planning, instructional delivery, and assessment, particularly in addressing diverse student needs.
4. Policy Support: Policymakers should prioritize the development of teacher competencies through supportive policies, funding for professional development, and incentives for reflective and innovative practices.

By strengthening both pedagogic and professional competencies, teachers can create transformative learning experiences that empower students and contribute to a more equitable and effective education system.

5. Conclusion

The introduction of the only-teacher competence test as an innovative tool has been positioned as a strategic measure to assess comprehensively and map teacher competence. This approach provides a data-driven foundation for future teacher training and professional development programs. The innovation highlights the government's effort to enhance the quality of education by identifying specific areas where teachers require improvement, thereby enabling targeted interventions.

However, implementing the online system has revealed notable challenges, particularly in regions of Indonesia where infrastructure and technological readiness remain inadequate. The digital divide underscores disparities in teachers' access to reliable internet connections, technical support, and digital literacy. These factors have hindered smooth participation and raised questions about the equity and inclusivity of the assessment process.

Building on insights from previous studies, it becomes evident that addressing these challenges is imperative to ensure the intended objectives of the competence test are achieved. A phased implementation, supplemented by capacity-building initiatives, could better prepare teachers for the online system. Moreover, a hybrid testing model combining online and offline methods may offer a more equitable solution for areas with limited technological resources.

In conclusion, while the only-teacher competence test represents a commendable step towards enhancing teacher development, its effectiveness relies heavily on addressing systemic barriers. Policymakers and education stakeholders must prioritize creating supportive environments, improving infrastructure, and providing robust training programs. This holistic approach will ensure that such innovations contribute meaningfully to the overarching goal of improving education quality nationwide.

References

- Afsharrad, Mohammad & Nafchi, Asghar Moulavi. (2015). The Effect of Transcribing on Darling-Hammond, L. 2000. Authentic assessment of teaching in context. *Teaching and teacher education*, 16, 523-545.
- Darling-Hammonds, L. (2020). Evaluating teacher effectiveness: how teacher performance assessments can measure and improve teaching. *Center for American Progress*, 8(23), 22-36.
- Ingvarson, Land Rowe, K. (2017). Conceptualising and evaluating teacher quality: Substantive and methodological issues.
- Tellez, K. (2006). *Authentic Assessment*. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*. (pp.704-721). Macmillan.
- Western Australia Department of Education and Training. (2014). *Competency Framework for Teachers*.
- Paquet, S. 2003. Personal knowledge publishing and its uses in research.
- Tangpermpoon, Thanatkun. (2008). Integrated approaches to improve students writing skills for English major students. *ABAC Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2, May- August 2008.
- Yang, M., Badger, R., & Yu, Z. (2006). A comparative study of peer and teacher feedback in a Chinese EFL writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15, 179-200.