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Professional Development of English Language Teachers in Ecuador: Teachers' Digital Competences for the Hybrid Education

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Abstract

This work aims to socialize an educational intervention to strengthen the digital skills of primary education teachers in the province of Manabí in Ecuador. It resorts to the socio-criticism paradigm and a mixed research approach to study the variable digital competencies of English language teachers from Manabí, Ecuador. The main instrument used is the European Digital Competences Framework, adjusted to the cultural conditions of Ecuador in formats of interviews and contextualized observation. The results show the participants' self-assessment of digital competence, the presentation of an educational intervention aimed at strengthening digital competence, and the observations of the changes in the participants' performance in digital competencies. It concludes that the participants managed to improve digital competence through a training process using educational platforms and computer applications for the planning and execution of school activities.

Keywords: Digital Competencies, Professional Development, Education Innovation, English Language Instruction

1. Introduction

Teachers have the necessity to strengthen their digital competences to improve their work in the current era. However, the exploration of instructors' capabilities living in the province of Manabí in Ecuador, shows a poor level in the development of digital competences, situation that should be research deeper to determine the key routes for helping instructors to change such situation.

Quiroz et al. (2016, p. 55) affirm that "it is necessary that teachers develop digital competences for improving teaching and learning experiences, besides promoting learners' digital competences' development." However,

Valdivieso et al. (2016) stated that "students, as teachers, are far from taking advantage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in educational process. They relegate the use of ICT to social or entertainment activities" (p. 58).

In addition, digital Literacy in the educational context "involves digital media, open digital sources, digital communication, and critical thinking" (Tejedor et al., 2020, p.12). Thus, Björk et al. (2020) argued that Information and Communication Technology became a critical component for the permanent professional development of English language teachers. Nevertheless, Vázquez et al. (2021) argued that, despite the efforts made by educational institutions to improve the digital competencies in the English language teaching practice, such adoption is often not well achieved. In consequence, it is essential to promote the teachers' digital competencies improvement.

Therefore, this paper is part of the results of the research project titled: "*Desarrollo profesional de docentes de los idiomas nacionales y extranjeros de la zona 4 de Ecuador 2022-2024*" of the University Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí – Ecuador. It focused on a case study of a group of English teachers from the province of Manabí in Ecuador. In addition, this research was supported by the ULEAM research team: "*Innovación de las Pedagogías para el Desarrollo Sostenible*" and the "Research network for studying topics related to reaching comprehension and academic writing" (Red-LEA).

The authors' main expectation is to contribute to improving English language instruction in Ecuador, determining a route for strengthening teachers' digital competencies, and introducing an educational intervention focused on the efficient use of ICT. The research begins with a literature review describing concepts, definitions, and previous experiences related to developing digital competencies. The research methodology used is mixed and takes the opinions of 21 English language teachers with different levels of digital competencies domain. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What is the participants' self-perception of their digital competency level?
2. What are the progress and difficulties participants reported during the educational intervention?
3. What are the changes reported in participants' digital competencies?

This research aim is to socialize an educational intervention to strengthen the digital competencies of English teachers for hybrid education.

2. Literature review

2.1. Information and communication technology and Digital Competences

Technology can provide education with aggregate communication, learning resources, and entertainment services. Thus, information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are elements inserted into people's daily life; part of them is in one of the essential socialization agents, the school. Even though information technologies have yet to start being directed toward education, little by little, they have become an effective solution to several delimitations that we had before. Thus, Ratheeswari (2018) indicates that "ICT use in the classroom is important for giving students opportunities to learn and apply the required 21st-century skills" (p.45). Also, Liesa-Orús et al. (2020) remark that "some quality teaching-learning processes in Education is practically unthinkable without the use of technology, especially because of its impact in developing the necessary skills and abilities for the 21st century" (p.1).

Thus Area-Moreira et al. (2016, p.21) stated "incorporation (ICTs) into the classroom has been done under an instrumental use of the same and, therefore, maintaining a conventional type of educational culture." Because ICTs not only help to know the manipulation of technology, but it also provides a large field of information for learners and teachers. In this way the contribution in cultural backgrounds is massive and necessary for a globalized world, Liesa-Orús et al. (2020) adds "from a practical viewpoint, this must be seen in the acquisition of skills that consolidate significant learning that in turn allows inclusion of science, innovation and technology into education." (p.2).

In addition, ICTs have become indispensable tools for dealing with different societal needs through a transformation of educational practices (Del Cerro Velasquez et al., 2018). Thus, educational institutions continue their reinvention process in this new area. Aguiar et al. (2019) argued that ICT integration, such as competence, proactive incorporation, and motivation, also pointed out that these are essential aspects that allow advanced students to acquire educational quality in a new way of learning through ICTs.

Concerning the teachers' digital competencies, Seufert & Meier (2016) stated that "Digital transformation currently is one of the major challenges in all industries. It embraces the realignment of technologies and business models to engage customers more effectively at every touchpoint in the customer experience lifecycle" (p.27). Its use can be among casual or everyday conversations or even in educational processes, intercommunication, or new inventions; after its evolution, there are currently scales and ways to know people's skills in this field and other sciences, such as education.

In addition, Lawrence et al. (2018) affirmed that the adoption and integration of ICT into the teaching and learning process provides teachers and students with better opportunities for working, expanding the educational field, facilitating teaching processes, innovating learning paths, and incorporating the thinking of digital natives.

The European Council (2018) stated that the digital era has managed to "involve a safe and critical use of information society technologies for work, leisure, and communication purposes" (p. 9). As well as Tomczyk (2018) argued that "digital competencies are one of the most basic skills required in current times […] Life quality is being better, owing to data access thanks to digital and technology services which provide many useful online activities" (p.1).

The immersion of ICT in the educational panorama walks side by side with the new generations of teachers and students, considering the educational community in a time of change from the old paradigms to the future. The ICT and teachers' digital competences in combination can support the learning process adapting the contains, screens, and learning speeds to the students' necessities (Villafuerte, 2022).

2.2. Digital Competence and hybrid education

Digital Competence Framework for Educators (educational context) or DigCompuEdu was published at the end of 2017 by Redecker & Punie (2017), to know in a practical way the skills that teachers have to be able to efficiently use digital tools considering the fact of the new generation of digital natives, that is, the current and future students. Innovation and skill development are constantly on the agenda of this digital competency scale, since the inclusion of ICTs in the curriculum is a complex issue because it involves multi-literacy; specific training is required, which implies enabling teachers to take advantage of the potential of ICTs for teacher management (Valdivieso et al., 2016, p. 58).

The "result of DigCompuEdu is a consensus on the main areas and elements of digital teaching competence, which follows a progressive logic in each competence area. It is a model of digital competence for trainers" (Cabero-Almenara et al., 2020, p.218). It is developed through standardized tests where they are evaluated in competence areas such as professional commitment, using digital technologies for communication, collaboration and professional development; digital resources, sourcing, creating and sharing digital resources; teaching and learning, managing and orchestrating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning; assessment, using digital technologies and strategies to enhance assessment; empowering learners, using digital technologies to enhance inclusion, personalization and learners' active engagement; facilitating learners' digital competence, enabling learners to creatively and responsibly use digital technologies for information, communication, content creation, wellbeing and problem-solving (Muammar, 2022).

In addition, the qualifications handled by this framework are: A1 for *newcomer* who has very little experience and contact with educational technology; A2 for explorer who has little contact with educational technology; B1 for *explorer* who experiments with educational technology and reflect on its suitability for different educational contexts; B2 for *expert* who uses a wide range of educational technologies with safety, confidence and creativity; C1 for *leader* who is able to adapt to your needs the different resources, strategies and knowledge at your disposal; C2 for *pioneer* where questions contemporary digital and pedagogical practices, of which they themselves are experts.

2.3. Digital Competencies of English language Teachers.

The knowledge and use of digital competencies in education has a wide panorama and path to follow, understanding that, technology is not static, teaching and application will be progressive.

Therefore, digital competences as a whole to ICT must be analyzed, examined and chosen according to the context of each area of knowledge, that is, the area of Spanish literature should get applications, software or others that fit its reality and need, as could the area of Mathematics, or the area of foreign language: English, the latter must be analyzed in a dual way since the more non-linguistic information contents are interconnected with the other subjects according to the level or sublevel, without forgetting the importance of reliable and safe software for a good teaching of English as a second language

However, Rodriguez et al. (2017) argued that "ICT in the English classroom brings many benefits for the development of language skills, and the development of higher thinking skills, as well as contributes to the motivation of students in the meaningful learning of a second language." (p.54), since, the interaction with digital natives, the teaching-learning process of a non-native language must be innovative and interesting, Hatlevik (2018) affirmed that ICTs have "integrated and central element of modern life, and its rapid emergence is changing the execution and organization of work and learning" (p.1). Also, Hatlevik (2018) states "digital technology is also important for schools, and hence for teachers' working days." (p.1).

The English teacher must have among his ideals a new way of teaching, innovative and inspiring for his students, using the contemporary language that is technology at its best, Martinez (2018) stated that it is necessary to know and analyze the continuing education of teachers and their interests regarding innovation in the classroom. Furthermore, that this process is synthesized in the following three objectives: 1) Analyze teachers' conceptions about methodological innovation from their professional experience; 2) Identify the main resources and materials they use for their teacher training; 3) Detect the difficulties to implement innovations in the classrooms" (p. 21), therefore, the contemporary educational environment demands that the level of digital competencies of English teachers increase and evolve.

At this point, Tomczyk (2018) remarked "Today's generation of young Internet users are mainly digital natives who do not know life without new technologies." (p.1), thus most of English teachers have to reinvent the language learning process using ICTs and demonstrating their knowledge to apply those digital and technological tools.

Among the previous studies related to this research, Hockly (2016) argued that an umbrella term for these skills and competencies, digital literacies, and the concept of being digitally literate refers to our ability to effectively make use of the technologies at people's disposal technical skills, but perhaps more importantly, an awareness of the social practices that surround the appropriate use of new technologies. In addition, Tang & Chaw (2016) stated there are possibilities of poor training in digital competencies or teachers´ technology poor knowledge, locating teachers´ competencies and skills at a critical point in present and future education. This barrier of poor knowledge of digital competencies became a crucial factor in determining the success of the blended learning environment."

On the other hand, teachers need more support for learning to develop digital competencies in some cases, especially in countries that do not have complete or partial development. It involves disadvantages in the learning process of students. Pegrum in Akayoğlu et al. (2020) argued that the lack of appropriate literacies barely exists in digital culture. At the same time, Guzman and Nussbaum in Falloon (2020) emphasized the need to prepare teachers to work effectively and productively in current schools.

Finally, according to Mynaˇríková et al. (2020), teachers' training fails to support the integration of ICTs into schools, create digital infrastructure, and support digital literacy and competencies of students and teachers. Thus, supporting teachers' practices and learning in technology fields should be a priority to improve the educational system in the real sense.

3. Methodology

This work used the criticism paradigm and a mixed research approach to study the variable digital competencies of English language teachers from Manabí, Ecuador. In addition, the nature of this research was exploratory, allowing contextual observation, surveying, and interviews.

The participant's sample consisted of 21 EFL teachers (40% male and 60% female, ages between 27 to 42 years) who worked in six high schools.

The techniques and instruments for the collection of data were:
The main instrument used in this research was the European Digital Competences Framework (EU Science HUB, 2021), which consists of 13 questions divided into four categories (a) Communication and Collaboration, (b) Information and Literacy, (3) Digital Content Creation, and (4) Problem Resolution. The research team used the EU Science HUB survey, observation checklist, and interview formats.

Survey questionnaire. – The questionnaire consisted in 10 questions associated with the participants' digital competences and their use of electronic platforms and applications for instruction. The instrument was examined by a panel of experts with more than 5 years of experience on the fields of EFL instruction, educational research, and psychology. All they affiliated to the University Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí in Ecuador. The panel of experts y recommended to reduce the number of questions from 15 to 10. To revise the questions' language structure and writing style to warranty the participants understanding. The survey was executed using a google form.

Contextual observation checking list. – The observations process allowed to collect data about participants level of knowledge of the digital competences for educational planning and teaching in online English classes. The contextual observation checking list consisted of 4 categories (1) denote competence in the field of virtual community, (2) digital culture, (3) digital identity, and (4) interactive knowledge. The items concerning the participants use of ICT and digital competences during their routines at school. The instrument was examined by a panel of experts in the fields of EFL instruction and educational management. All they were affiliated to the University Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí in Ecuador. They recommended to revise the language expressions considering the idiomatic differences between Spanish language of the original version of the EU Science HUB to castellan language used in Ecuador. The process of observation was executed by the research team during the educational intervention for 8 weeks.

Interview guide. – The interview was applied to English language teachers to collect data concerning to their self-knowledge about their digital competences, the contribution of digital competences to their professional development in the classroom, and their personal perceptions about the educational intervention executed in this research project.

4. Process:

This research process consisted of the following stages:
Stage 1: Selection of participants
Stage 2: Adaptation of the instrument EU DigCompe to local context
Stage 3: Execution of instruments for data collection.
The observation form was used during the English teachers interactions
Stage 4: Statistic analysis and categories analysis
Stage 5: Writing of the research inform

Educational Intervention:
This project had an educational intervention that lasted three months, which ended in 2021. The project had 16 teachers who actively participated in the entire process, they had many doubts and difficulties about the learning platforms to teach online. These classes were taught from a basic level that had as topics how to enter each website, how to register, even how to activate the tools.

5. Results

The results presentation follows the logic of the research questions.
*5.1. Participants' self-perception of their digital competency level*

The graphic 1 shows the participants' competences level results obtained in the survey.
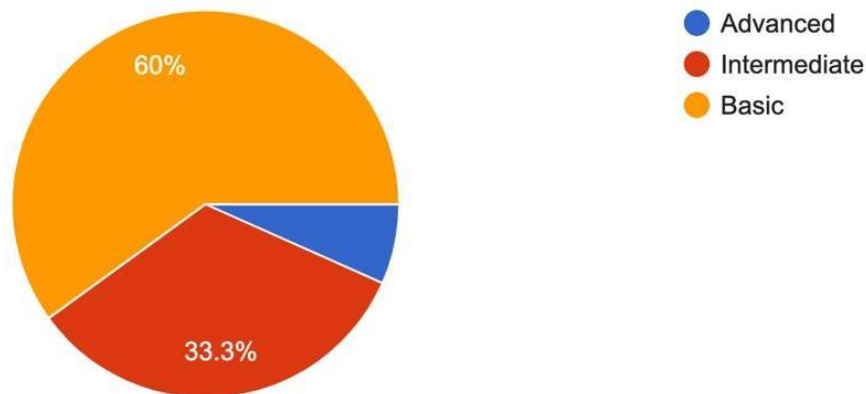
Graphic 1: EFL teachers' level of digital competencies

Results show that the 60% of participants considers having a basic level of digital competence development. The 33.3% declared having intermediate level thus, they can moderately produce at a digital level, finally a minority of 6.7% of those surveyed indicate that they have an advanced level of digital competences development. Thus, they can create their own resources in digital media.

The graphic 2 shows how empowered the participants feel to contribute their knowledge through digital tools results obtained in the survey.
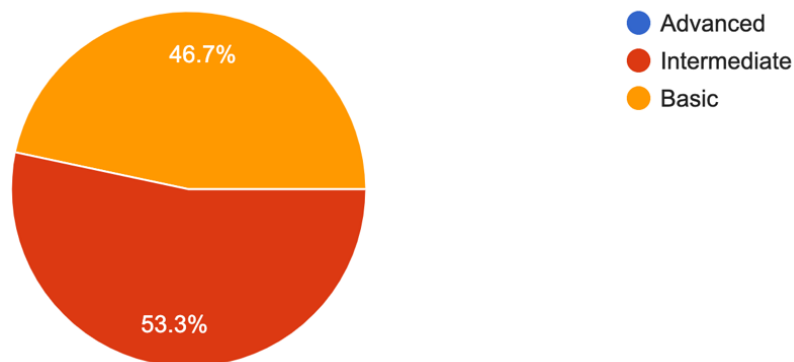
Graphic 2: EFL teachers empowered to contribute their knowledge through digital tools level.

Results show that 53.3% of participants consider being able at an intermediate level to contribute their knowledge through digital tools to students. 46.7% of participants declared having a fundamental level. Finally, 0% of those surveyed indicate that they have an advanced level of empowerment to accomplish this task.

5.2. Participants' use of digital competency in the instructional process

In the table 2 appears the results of the contextual observation executed.

Table 1: Participants' digital competences observed in instructional process

Category 1: Digital competence in the field of virtual community				
Nº	Parameters	Yes	No	Sometimes
01	Does he/she write and send emails.	9	1	2
02	Does he/she chat through any kind of app.	8	0	4
03	Does he/she participate in any kind of virtual educative forum.	5	3	4
04	Participate in any kind of social media.	7	1	4
05	Design pedagogical activities through forums, blogs, wikis, etc..	8	2	2
Category 2: Digital competence in the field of digital culture				
01	Does he/she look for information using keywords.	6	2	4
02	Does he/she use different search engines.	2	1	9
03	Distinguish between scientific information and ordinary information.	11	0	1
04	Select information according to your specific needs (filter information)	1	0	11
05	Organize "favorites" by educational topics.	0	8	4
06	Stores the information in folders.	11	1	0
07	Save files and information in the cloud.	6	4	1
08	Use productivity apps like word processors, spreadsheets, and presentation tools.	8	0	4
Category 3: Digital competence and digital identity				
01	Make use of social networks or other virtual communication media according to your interests and needs. (Build a profile that meets your needs).	8	0	4
02	Constantly update and review the publications made and made by others on social networks, taking care of their digital image.	2	1	9
03	It publishes documents, images, videos, or other messages, its own or of others, identifying the author and respecting the licenses of use.	6	0	6
Category 4: Digital competence for interactive knowledge management				
01	It proposes the development of collaborative projects with the use of ICT.	2	2	8
02	Use simulators, videos, audios, or other digital resources to represent the real world.	3	5	4

Source: Contextual observation (2021).

The items declared most frequently by the participants are:
Category 1, Digital competence in the virtual community, is writing and sending emails. Category 2 Digital competence in digital culture are: 3. Distinguish between scientific and ordinary information, and 6. Store the information in folders. Category 3: Digital competence and digital identity. Use social networks or other virtual communication media according to personal interests and needs; and category 4. Digital competence for interactive knowledge management.

5.3. Participants' progress and difficulties in improving digital competences
According to the information collected in the contextual observation during the educational intervention in this research project, teachers reported the following progress and difficulties in improving their digital competencies in using informatics applications.

Table 2: Participants` progress and difficulties on the digital competences

Topics of educational intervention	Participants achievement				Observations
	100-75%	*74-51%*	*50-26%*	*25-0%*	
Using of **PADLET**	X				Teachers did not have difficulties to understand the tools that Padlet provides, they were easy to manage.

Tool				Observation
Using of **CANVA**		X		Teachers had difficulties to understand how Canva allows to add pictures and videos.
Using of **WORDWALL**	X			Teachers did not have difficulties to understand the tools and options that word wall provides to have interactive lessons.
Using of **EDUCAPLAY**			X	Teachers had difficulties to generate ¨Lavels¨ to Educaplay platform allows to success their activities.
Using of **KAHOOT**		X		Teachers had difficulties to log in to Kahoot through their email.
Using of **QUIZLET**	X			Teachers did not have difficulties to log in and understand the options that Quilezt provides.

Source: Contextual observations (2021)

5.4. Changes in the participants' digital competences

Table 3 shows the participants' voices concerning the changes in their digital competency levels compared to before and after the educational intervention.

Table 3: Changes in the participants' competences before and after the educational competence

Pretest	Posttest	Subcategories
Category 1: Communication and collaboration		
P1_00: 01: 20 *"ICTs are very important in the learning process and the use of ICTs also helps us at this stage of the pandemic not only to make them known but also to generate knowledge."*	P1_00: 01: 00 *"Nowadays, ICTs are the most important thing that teachers need to know to apply in their lessons, students ask for teachers more ability to manage this technology. The pandemic helped us to understand the educational process needed to transcend."*	Good to communicate in digital environments
P2_00:01:52 *"Everything is a teaching and learning process, both for the teacher and the student, especially for taking into account a topic we will look for and this allows us to gain information."*	P2_00: 01: 22 *"Using digital resources that communication between teacher and students have been getting better, this generation understand concepts and things in a different way."*	Sharing resources through online tools
P3_00: 01: 11 *"The ICT within performing the teacher helps us too much, if we had not had this tool as important as we were now at the moment, it could not advance what education is."* *"It is a great ally of the teacher."*	P3_00: 0: 45 *"Education became in a digital process that we as teacher have to be conscious of ICTs are the key in our teaching job."*	Evaluate its purpose and relevance
P2_00: 08: 30 *"I like self-training, I have tried to investigate, ask, practice, make mistakes and learn to use them with the same students ... I do not feel disabled in the use, I try to adapt it as a teaching tool."*	P2_00: 08: 30 *After researching for a long time, I have been able to realize that self-training is a great way to focus on teaching tools.*	Communicate in digital environments
Category 2: Information and literacy		

P1_00: 06: 22 "Google form presents many more possibilities so that one can play much more with the question and how he wants to know the learning of the students."	P1_00: 02: 31 *It's obviously that Google form presents many more possibilities so that one can play much more with the question and how he wants to know the learning of the students."*	Integrate and rework previous knowledge and content
P2_00: 08: 10 "I have not done a test yet, in the time that we worked in person either, but we test every day by observation we are already testing the boys." "But the evaluation through observation has been done through our Canvas platform, but not yet written."	P2_00: 03: 00 *I already have done a test, in the time that we worked in person either, but we test every day by observation we are already testing the boys."* *We can use another platform like Edmodo, worldwide and Educaplay for our ss.*	Analyse digital informational
P3_00: 06: 37 *"I have not had the opportunity yet, but I am already training to test, however I would like that someone helps me to understand better the process of using digital resources"*	P3_00: 03: 27 *"Nowadays I already have the opportunity to create tests and put in practice with my ss and observe the washback at the end of the lesson, nonetheless I would like that someone helps me to understand better the process of using digital resources"*	Identify digital information
P1_00: 07: 15 *"Not that ICT favors research, but that it teaches students what research is and what the steps are to find something."*	P3_00: 07: 54 *Although it is true, it has been confirmed that tics are a great support for the investigation.*	Identify digital information
Category 3: Problem resolution		
P1_00:07: 15 *"Totally, because not all the skills and content that one wants to develop with the students with any ICT and TAC ... everything will depend on the subject with which one goes to work."*	P1_00:07:15 *Each subject has a way of being taught, that is why you must investigate the different tics that could be used.*	Identify digital needs and resources
P2_00: 08: 30 *"Yes, you need help from your parents, but there are kids who are batteries because they already know which application will tell them the answers."* *"But be on the lookout because it usually opens pages that are not."*	P4_00: 06: 04 *With the passing of the weeks, I was able to realize that to do something well using ITC, you should always practice having experience.*	Make decisions when choosing the appropriate digital tool
Category 4: Digital content creation.		
P3_00: 07: 36 "I do. Looking for videos to project to them, using PowerPoint. *"Remember that children are very visual and even colors, we must put vivid colors, videos with a good resolution."*	*P3_00: 06: 25 "Of course. Currently I use them more than time ago. Even I can work with some video games or interactive games online, in this way children are focused more time"*	Integrate and rework previous knowledge and content

P3_00: 8: 26 "They catch their attention, I leave a task to check a link, but it does not leave them with just that but look for extra and updated information. Yes, I consider it is very successful."	*P3_00: 9: 12 "All the time! Every resource in education is good, and ICTs are being the best in this time, students know how to use these tools, and they are interested."*	Integrate and rework previous knowledge and content

Source: Participants' interview (2022)

6. Discussion

Based on the literature review, the authors ratify that the practical use of digital competencies in the educational process is relevant to improve education in Ecuador. Thus, to progress in teaching, therefore, Björk et al. (2020) argue that "Information and communication technology has become an essential component of initial teacher education in the continuous professional development of practicing teachers. The development of professional digital competence is emerging as an essential part of teacher education. In this way, the thesis is that education is progressive and must prevail in its fundamental values, quality, and warm learning environments.

The authors found harmony with the position of Ratheeswari (2018) when he stated that "ICT use in the classroom is important for giving students opportunities to learn and apply the required 21st-century skills" (p.45); therefore, Pin et al. (2021) ratified that digital competencies are simple abilities but reference like English or mathematics, thus being a necessity in this century.

Consequently, the practice and training in using ICTs and digital skills are fundamental since they harmonize the teaching and learning process for the students of the new digital native generation. For their part, Mynaˇríková et al. (2020) stated that "teacher training and literacy in digital competencies and ICTs fail especially in supporting the integration of ICTs into schools, creating digital infrastructure and supporting digital literacy and competencies of students and teachers" (p. 2). Based on the results obtained in this research, the team ratified that digital competencies and access to technological devices are a priority throughout professional educational practice today.

Concerning the results obtained in this research, the four categories evaluated in the participants' digital competencies showed that teachers shared materials that collaborate with the learning of students online. Considering education's recent changes, digital competencies and technology access are two fundamental components in the new teaching profile.

The contextual observation allowed the researcher to understand that teachers use components of the digital field, projects, and didactic material and present adequate knowledge of using programs or informatics applications. Teachers do not present difficulties in solving problems that can lead the minimal troubles during virtual classes. Therefore, the teacher could continue the lessons through virtual means with no problem.

The author found that the PADLET, WORD WORLD, and QUIZLET were the most accepted application for the participants. They demonstrate an outstanding level for educational purposes. In addition, the EDUCAPLAY application reported the poorest level of acceptance for the participants. They needed help using the application for educational purposes.

Finally, the interview allowed the researchers to determine that teachers' ICT knowledge needed to be improved. Only some of the options offered by ICTs and their knowledge of them have been developed or explored by the participants, and emerging confidence in their knowledge of ICT usage. It is evident in the following participants' expressions:

> P4_00: 06: 04 *With the passing of the weeks, I was able to realize that to do something well using ITC, you should always practice having experience.*
>
> P3_00: 03: 27 *"Nowadays I already have the opportunity to create tests and put in practice with my ss and observe the washback at the end of the lesson, nonetheless I would like that someone helps me to understand better the process of using digital resources"*

In addition, it demonstrated that participants' digital skills are beginners according to the current needs in the educational context, becoming a determining factor in their professional development as English teachers.

With the rapid changes in the education paradigm, it is no secret that innovation within this field flows without precedent. Therefore, English teachers must delve into deepening their digital skills for use in the development of the lessons. The differences between times have caused a significant difference between what they offer and what the circumstances require; therefore, these skills will serve everywhere, as in their tutorials and English seminars.

This study of digital competencies in the educational landscape needs to show more use of digital resources and tools in education in Manta. Even though there is an environment of virtual classes, this causes the neglect of children and young people who seek, between the minutes of the lessons, something that connects them with their chronology. Therefore, digital natives are another fundamental and evident reason for English teachers to become involved in learning and developing digital competencies for using it. Their empowerment will place a change in educational practice that will add to the new era of teaching a foreign language in a Spanish-speaking country. The management of courses or seminars to help develop these competencies have been progressively increasing since the change from face-to-face to virtual classes. However, more is needed for the teachers of Ecuador to feel confident and capable of their professional development.

7. Conclusions

Based on the contrast of the specialized literature with the results of the empirical stage of this research, the authors declare that fulfilled 100% of the aim proposed for this study, which is: This work aims to socialize an educational intervention to strengthen the digital skills of primary education teachers in the province of Manabí in Ecuador. The research included an educational intervention to strengthen the digital skills of 21 participants, teachers from six different educational centers in the province of Manabí in Ecuador. It concluded that the most significant achievement is the increase in the participants' confidence in their knowledge of using Information and communication technologies in teaching activities, followed by the use of computer applications that have allowed participants to improve online learning environments. The changes in digital skills are significant at the discretion of the participants, managing to optimize Internet browsing, using electronic devices to produce content to support explanations in class, and doing language practice with students. The research team considers that the progress in improving the participants' digital skills is also due to the need to respond to the requirements of the environment in pandemic conditions. The study's weakness lies in the sample size, which does not allow for generalizations. However, the main contribution of this work lies in the introduction of a pertinent pedagogical proposal. Authors invite researchers to work on the research line: Strengthen the digital skills of primary education teachers worldwide.

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