THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS IN IMPROVING EDUCATION

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Abstract

Professional teachers play a fundamental role in implementing an effective and meaningful learning process. Teacher professionalism is not solely determined by pedagogical competence and mastery of material, but also by reflective, innovative abilities, and integrity in carrying out educational duties. This study aims to comprehensively describe the role of professional teachers in learning and their contribution to improving the quality of the process and student learning outcomes. This study uses a literature review method with a descriptive-qualitative approach. The findings indicate that professional teachers act as learning designers, facilitators of educational interactions, managers of learning environments, and evaluators of learning outcomes. Teachers with high professional competence are able to develop contextual learning strategies, utilize technology adaptively, and implement a student-centered approach. These roles have direct implications for the growth of learning motivation, active student involvement, and improved academic achievement.

Keywords: *Role of Teachers, Professional Competence, Quality of Education.*

A. Introduction

Advanced Indonesia is Indonesia's vision for 2045. Indonesia is projected to become the fourth largest economic power in the world. To achieve this vision, one of the main pillars is the development of superior human resources. This mission will be achieved if education in Indonesia is good. According to Bintari, H.R. (2016:16), education is a determining factor for a nation's progress. However, education in Indonesia currently still needs improvement, both in terms of quality and the facilities and infrastructure that support the implementation of quality education.

The Indonesian government has taken steps to improve the quality of education by focusing on enhancing the quality of educators and education personnel, who play a key role in the overall education system (Kartowagiran, B. 2016:2). These steps include efforts to improve teacher professionalism and competence. Teacher competence encompasses not only the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate learning, but also mastery of the material being taught and the use of various media in the teaching process for students. Teachers must also continuously improve their abilities and capabilities.

A professional in the field of education must possess four core competencies as stipulated in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Article 10, which is further regulated in Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 16 of 2007 concerning Academic Qualification Standards and Teacher Competencies: pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies (Yunita et al., 2022). Pedagogical competencies involve a teacher's ability to organize the learning process and interact with students. Key aspects and indicators of pedagogical competency cover seven areas: 1) understanding student characteristics, 2) mastery of learning theories and principles, 3) curriculum development, 4) application of effective teaching methods, 5) development of student potential, 6) communication skills, and 7) assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes.

Teacher professional competence plays a crucial role in ensuring that a teacher can effectively carry out their teaching duties. Several aspects reflecting this professional competence include: a) The ability to master the learning material being taught, including its conceptual structure and scientific rationale. b) The ability to understand the Competency Standards (SK), Basic Competencies (KD), and learning objectives of the subjects being taught. c) The ability to creatively develop learning materials to convey a comprehensive understanding to students. d) The ability to reflect on teaching practices to continuously improve professionalism. e) Skills in using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the learning process and personal development. Meanwhile, social competence involves the teacher's ability to communicate, interact, and behave effectively with various parties, including students, fellow teachers, educational staff, parents, and the general public. However, many teachers still teach not in accordance with the professional competence that teachers are required to possess.

Learning is not designed systematically, comprehensively, and collaboratively with students (Dudung, 2018). Teachers also lack motivation in teaching. Teachers do not prepare teaching materials. The lack of academic quality of teachers that aligns with the subject areas of study. Suboptimal teacher performance is demonstrated by, among other things, teachers not preparing lesson plans (RPP), neglecting teacher administrative completeness, a lack of engaging teaching materials, the use of monotonous models and methods, and suboptimal learning evaluation. Many factors influence the quality of education, such as human resources and adequate educational facilities and infrastructure (Alifah, 2021). Teacher quality is one of the primary concerns in improving the quality of education, as teachers are considered a determining factor in the success or failure of a learning process and the future outlook of students.

The teaching profession plays a strategic role in shaping the character and intellectual development of students. As agents of social and moral transformation, educators are not only required to possess academic competence but also high ethical integrity. Ethics in education encompasses moral principles

that govern teachers' behavior in carrying out their duties with dignity, both in interactions with students. Ethics, morals, character, ethics, and values are closely related to human life. These are the things that regulate a person's daily life, both within the family, community, work, and school environments. Ethics and morals, which should be taught and exemplified from a young age, are sometimes not taken seriously in practice. The victims are today's young generation.

Based on the description above, the researcher found a problem that can be researched regarding "The Role of Professional Teachers in Improving Education" with the following problem formulation: 1) What is the role of professional teachers? 2) What is teacher competence? 3) How can teacher professionalism improve the quality of education? The purpose of writing this article is to investigate the importance of teacher professionalism in improving the quality of education. It is hoped that the results and discussions contained in this article can provide useful information and become a basis for writing subsequent relevant articles.

B. Research Method

This research is a descriptive-qualitative study because it is more descriptive in nature. Qualitative research is conducted based on paradigms, strategies, and qualitative model implementation (Basrowi and Suwandi, 2008). Furthermore, in terms of data collection methods or techniques, it can be done through observation, interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2010). Data validity is checked using triangulation techniques, which combine various existing data collection techniques and sources. When researchers collect data through triangulation, they are actually collecting data while simultaneously testing the credibility of the data, namely checking the credibility of the data using various data collection methods and various sources. Furthermore, the data is analyzed using techniques according to Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

C. Results And Discussion

1. The role of teachers/educators

The definition of a teacher in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Article 1, paragraph (1), describes a teacher as a professional whose primary responsibility is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students at all levels of education, including formal, primary, and secondary education. Conversely, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 39, paragraph 2, defines an educator as a professional responsible for planning and implementing the learning process, conducting assessments during the learning process, providing guidance, organizing training, conducting research, and contributing to society. As an educator, a teacher not only transfers knowledge

to students but also strives to shape their morals and personalities. This allows them to develop into more mature individuals intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, with a strong sense of responsibility.

Teachers play a strategic role in the learning process. They are not only responsible for delivering material but also for shaping the character, skills, and personality of students, enabling them to become intelligent, noble individuals, and ready to face future challenges. The role of teachers in learning can be broken down into at least four main dimensions: educator, manager, administrator, and supervisor. First, teachers, as educators, have the task of educating students in various aspects of life, not only in the cognitive domain but also in the affective and psychomotor domains. According to Yestiyani, teachers not only deliver subject matter but also guide students in instilling moral values, ethics, and noble character. In this role, teachers act as role models for students in their attitudes, speech, and behavior in everyday life (Buchari: 2018). Second, teachers, as learning managers, are responsible for managing all learning resources, such as time, materials, methods, media, and students.

Teachers are required to be able to create a conducive, enjoyable, and effective learning atmosphere so that the learning process can run according to the established objectives. The teacher's ability to manage the class is one of the main keys to successful learning. Third, teachers as administrators play a role in carrying out administrative tasks that support the smooth running of the learning process. This task includes preparing learning tools, such as syllabi, Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), learning activity schedules, and other class administrative management, such as attendance lists, student progress notes, and learning outcome reports. These administrative tasks are important so that the learning process can run in an orderly, planned, and well-documented manner. Fourth, teachers as supervisors are tasked with supervising and monitoring the learning process to ensure it is in accordance with the established plans and objectives. Teachers also provide guidance to students who experience learning difficulties and evaluate the learning process and outcomes. In addition, teachers conduct reflections as a basis for improving the learning process in the future, so that the quality of learning continues to improve over time.

With these diverse roles, teachers are expected to be the driving force in creating meaningful, relevant, and contextual learning. Education experts suggest that as the world of education develops, the role of teachers in the learning process in schools is not only limited to their primary duties as educators, but also includes several additional roles: 1) As a demonstrator and motivator: As a demonstrator, teachers have the responsibility to guide students in developing or improving their abilities so that they achieve optimal levels of success. As a motivator, teachers provide encouragement to students to activate their potential, increase independence, and creativity, so that the

teaching and learning process becomes dynamic. 2) As a mediator and facilitator: As a mediator, teachers act as intermediaries in the student learning process. This includes providing and organizing learning media that are appropriate to the needs of students. As a facilitator, teachers ensure that the learning process runs smoothly and in accordance with the development of students, supporting effective learning interactions. This approach illustrates the principle of "Tut Wuri Handayani". 3) As an evaluator and class manager: As an evaluator, teachers assess students' learning achievements.

This evaluation helps teachers gauge students' understanding of the subject matter. When necessary, teachers also act as classroom managers or learning managers, organizing the classroom environment and directing learning activities to optimally achieve educational goals.

2. Teacher Competence

Competence can be defined as a person's ability to accomplish something in accordance with assigned tasks. A person is considered competent if their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work results meet standards or are recognized by an institution or government. As defined in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, competence can be defined as a basic characteristic that identifies a person's way of thinking, behaving, and acting, as well as drawing conclusions that can be implemented and defended.

To achieve the status of a professional teacher, four main competencies are required as follows: 1) Pedagogical Competence includes the ability to understand the nature and characteristics of students and organize the learning process to be effective and facilitate good communication, including: a) understanding students, b) planning and delivering learning, c) assessing learning, and d) assessing various aspects of student learning achievement including developing self-potential. 2) Personality competency includes the personal behavior of a teacher that must reflect ethical values in every action. Psychologically, the teacher's personality competency includes his/her personal abilities that influence his/her overall personality, such as: a) being steady and stable and acting according to applicable norms, b) being an independent educator and having a work ethic as a teacher, c) being wise and prudent, d) having a positive influence on students through authoritative or respected teacher behavior, and e) having high moral standards and contributing to students, schools, and society. Behavior that can be emulated by students, behaving according to religious norms, being honest and sincere, and willing to help. 3) Social competence refers to a teacher's ability to interact with others as part of a community. As an individual who is active in the school and community environment, a teacher is expected to demonstrate polite behavior, have effective communication skills, and be able to interact well in his/her environment. In addition, a teacher is expected to have the ability to demonstrate empathy towards others. This involves the ability to communicate and interact with all members of the school community in

educational activities. 4) Professional competence is a very important element for a teacher. Sanjaya (2008) explains that professional competence encompasses the skills and abilities necessary to carry out teaching duties.

In this context, a teacher is expected to have the ability to: (1) deeply understand the subject matter, conceptual structure, and scientific rationale that supports the learning process, (2) adhere to competency standards and basic skills in the field or subject being taught, (3) develop learning materials in innovative and creative ways, (4) enhance professionalism and continuity through reflection on teaching practice, and (5) communicate effectively and develop themselves by utilizing information technology.

3. Teacher Professionalism in Improving Education

Professionalism is the condition, direction, values, goals, and quality of expertise and authority related to a person's livelihood. Therefore, the definition of professionalism refers to the commitment of members of a profession to continuously improve their professional abilities. "Professional" comes from the word "profession," which means a field of work that someone wishes or will pursue. In other words, a profession is work that requires training and mastery of specialized knowledge. A profession typically has a professional association, a code of ethics, and a certification and licensing process specific to that field.

A professional attitude in the workplace is a mandatory requirement that must be maintained by individuals while working, as it reflects an individual's attitude, character, and integrity in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Professionalism is a state or condition, attitude, values, behavior, and work standards that emphasize quality, ethics, responsibility, and competence in carrying out tasks or work. This encompasses several aspects, such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, and commitment to achieving the best results in the workplace. Professionalism is crucial in the workplace, as it is in education.

Teachers are professional educators because the teaching profession is as competitive as any other profession. Teacher professionalism encompasses several aspects, including conditions, orientation, attitudes, values, behavior, as well as qualifications and authority in the educational context, related to the implementation of a teacher's duties and responsibilities, as explained in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. Article 1, paragraph 1 of Chapter I (General Provisions) outlines that a teacher is an educational expert primarily responsible for educating, directing, guiding, training, teaching, assessing, and evaluating students at all levels of education.

Nanang Fatah (as cited in Ilyas, 2022) explains that professional teachers are those who can master or apply the essence of the teaching profession, which includes: a) Teachers are expected to have a systematic understanding of the subject matter they teach, particularly the core substance of the subject. b) Teachers have the ability to understand and apply the principles of

educational developmental psychology, enabling them to develop learning materials appropriate to the level of difficulty and developmental stage of the students they teach. c) Teachers have the skills to design educational programs specifically tailored to the developmental level of the students they teach.

A professional teacher is essentially a teacher who possesses a collective and complete awareness of their position as an educator. Understanding being a teacher is not merely fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities of an educator in front of the class; rather, the calling of one's conscience as an educator should serve as a whip for a teacher to do better than simply fulfilling administrative obligations. According to Fitriana (2014), improving teacher professionalism can be done in various ways as follows: (1) implementing continuous improvement in supervision and supervisory discipline, (2) providing adequate facilities to support the learning process, (3) holding meetings between principals and teachers, (4) organizing training, seminars, and workshops. (5) conducting visits between schools to learn about the knowledge and experience of teachers in other schools, and (6) conducting research in the field of education. Teachers who have a high level of professionalism can create a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable learning process. This will encourage self-awareness to increase creativity in presenting varied learning activities in the classroom. A professional teacher has the ability to recognize and choose the right learning model and approach. This is very important because it helps in assessing students' interests and talents, which ultimately supports the achievement of the expected learning objectives.

Teacher professionalism also involves a deep mastery of subject matter and other academic skills. With a high level of professionalism, teachers can improve the quality of learning, which ultimately has a positive impact on improving the overall quality of education. Professional teachers can be trusted to fully commit to efforts to improve educational standards. Therefore, teachers need to continuously develop their professionalism to make a significant contribution to the advancement of education in Indonesia.

D. Conclusion

The role of teachers in education is significant. They not only act as instructors, trainers, and educators for students, but also participate in various aspects of the learning process, such as acting as demonstrators or motivators, mediators or facilitators, as well as evaluators and classroom managers. To carry out their duties effectively, a teacher needs several key qualifications, such as pedagogical skills, a positive personality, social skills, and professionalism. Professional competence, which includes a deep mastery of the subject matter, plays a significant role in improving the quality of a teacher's teaching, creatively developing material, developing professionalism through reflective action, and communicating using technology.

Professionalism plays a crucial role in the teaching profession, as they are responsible for the education and development of students. Teacher professionalism encompasses strong teaching competencies and skills, the application of sound teaching ethics, and a responsible attitude in carrying out their professional duties. By practicing professionalism, teachers can increase the effectiveness of the learning process, which will directly lead to an overall improvement in the quality of education and contribute to the advancement of education in Indonesia through the achievement of teacher competency standards.

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