

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM: A REFLECTION OF OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PEKANBARU

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Abstract

Teachers in the educational context have essential and strategic roles, especially the teacher's roles in the school level of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Elementary School (ES). A teacher is expected to work professionally. Open University (OU) as an educational institution prepares educators to achieve a professional teaching degree. In this study, we studied the perspectives of students of ECE Teacher Education and ES Teacher Education programs on how to become a professional teacher. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with in-depth interview method. The number of respondents was six; three students from ECE Teacher Education program and three students from ES Teacher Education program. These students were teachers who continued their study in the Open University. The in-depth interview was expected to reveal the perspectives of the respondents thoroughly. The results show that the respondents agreed that a teacher must have a pedagogical competence and responsible for his students, work professionally, and form interest, talent and achievement learners. Reflecting on the constraints faced by the teachers, the results show that the teachers have not met the educational qualifications so that they take the course in Open University as it does not disturb the school teaching hours. In other words, Open University plays a role in creating professional teachers to develop the potential of the Indonesian gold generation

Keywords: *Professional Teachers, Open University, Early Childhood Education, Elementary School Teacher Education.*

Introduction

Education is a form of long-term investment that is essential for every human being. Successful education will create a quality and competitive people for the community. Therefore, education or teacher is one of the main components of the society [1].

The success of the education cannot be separated from the role of teachers in it. There is a strong relationship between teacher quality and education success and failure. High-quality teachers are essential for the education to work well. The quality standard of a teacher is not only focused on the material-physical aspect but also the mental-spiritual and intellectual aspects.

A teacher is a job that requires special skills. Not everyone can be a teacher without having the knowledge. The term "professional teacher" refers to a teacher who has been formally recognized in accordance with the national standard, both in relation to his position and his formal education background. Professional teachers should be able to carry out responsibilities as teachers who have parents' trust to educate their children [2].

Professionalization is a process towards the realization and improvement of the profession in achieving criteria in accordance with the national standard. With professionalization, the teachers are gradually expected to achieve professionalism as regulated in Law No. 14 of 2005, which is graduating from S-1 or D-IV and passing the education certification. Competencies that should be owned by professional teachers in accordance with the Law No. 14 of 2005, Article 10, paragraph 1 are pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence obtained through professional education [3].

According to a study conducted by [4], essential characters for a teacher include: (a) Ready. Teachers should come to the classroom more effectively and be ready to start the lesson on time. (b) Positive. Teachers should have an optimistic attitude regarding teaching and the students. Teachers should tell students concerning their learning progress, and teachers should have a positive strategy.

(c) Maintain high hope. Teachers should be able to raise students' confidence. (d) Creative. the most effective teacher is the one who is clever and creative in teaching the students. (e) Fair. Teachers must handle and assess students fairly, giving equal opportunities and privileges to all students. Teachers must understand that not every student can learn in the same way and level. (f) Displaying a personal touch. A teacher should be approachable. Teachers must connect with the students in private, share personal experiences in the classroom, visit the students' world, sit with them in sports, drama, and other events outside of the class. (g) Growing sense of belonging. Teachers should make students feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom. (h) Understanding the students' condition. Teachers should be concerned about the student's personality when giving the problems and can relate well to them and their problems. Many stories tell how the sensitivity and compassion of the teachers influence the students in a profound and lasting way. (i) Have a sense of humor. Teachers should attempt to make the learning fun. They should laugh with the class but not sacrifice anything. (j) Respecting students. Teachers should not intentionally embarrass the students. The teacher who gives the highest respect gets the highest honor. Teachers should respect the students' privacy when returning the exam papers and speak to students in private about his misbehavior. (k). Forgiving. Teacher must not hold a grudge. Teachers should forgive students' misbehavior and understand that forgiveness is very important. Lastly, (l). Acknowledge Mistakes. Teachers should quickly admit their mistakes. They should apologize to students who are falsely accused and correct their errors in the exam paper or assignments.

Meanwhile, a study conducted by [5] explains that the seven skills that make an expert teacher are (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical knowledge, (c) pedagogical-content knowledge, (d) well-organized knowledge, (e) Interrelated knowledge, (f) efficient, and (g) creative insight.

Education issues in facing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

One of the challenges faced by Indonesia to benefit from the AEC is the human resources (HR). Science and technology education is essential to participate in the AEC [6]. Mastery of science and technology is one of the indicators of accelerated development of a nation [7]. However, the results of the assessment of elementary school students' mathematics, reading, and science skills at several ASEAN countries show that Indonesia only ranks 5th out of the five ASEAN countries participating in PISA [8] (Table 1).

Table 1. PISA Assessment in 2016

Country	Math	Reading	Science
Singapore	564	535	556
Vietnam	495	487	525
Malaysia	446	431	443
Thailand	415	409	421
Indonesia	386	397	403

These assessed students will become productive forces in 2025; thus, the competitiveness of Indonesian human resources in 2025 can be compared to other ASEAN countries. The correlation coefficient of between reading-mathematics, reading-science, and mathematics-science were 0.97, 0.98, and 0.98, respectively. The results show that there was a significant relationship between mathematics, reading, and science. Therefore, it is necessary to develop science education that can improve the science literacy. The science literacy is defined by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as the capacity to use scientific knowledge, identify questions and draw factual inferences to understand the universe and make decisions of changes that occur because of human activity. Science literacy is important to be mastered by students in relation to how students can understand the environment, health, economics and other issues faced by modern societies that rely heavily on technology and the advancement and development of science [9,10].

Human Resources (HR) of Indonesia require huge improvement to be competitive in the future. Data from the ASEAN Productivity Organization (APO) shows that only 4.3% of 1000 Indonesian workers who are skilled. Meanwhile, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore have 8.3%, 32.6%, and 34.7%, respectively. Based on the level of education, the Indonesian workforce is dominated by graduates of elementary school (80%) while only 7% of them are university graduates, whereas currently many industries require university graduates. This is in contrast to Malaysia, which most of the population graduated from the university. The opportunity to obtain education equally in Indonesia is difficult; thus, the awareness to pursue higher education is very low. This condition resulted in Indonesian workers only considered as labors in the international labor market.

Thus, it is essential for teachers to become professional teachers to compete in the AEC or even in the world.

Method

This study used a qualitative approach with in-depth interview method. This method is commonly used in a study aims to obtain an extensive understanding of the phenomenon and to know the clear and deep answer [11]. The respondents in this study were chosen by purposive sampling from open university students who were doing the final project. Three respondents were selected from the Early Childhood Education Teacher Program (ECETP) the other three from Elementary School Teacher Program (ESTP). The difference program was expected to provide a broader and deeper result. The interview used three semi-structured questions that were designed and validated by experts before they were used in this study.

Results and Discussion

After the in-depth interview regarding the teacher professionalism, the answers were arranged in themes of what a professional teacher is, how to be a professional teacher, what are the skills needed to become a professional teacher, and what are the types of training required by teachers who have not held the professional certificate.

Respondents in ESTP explained that professional teachers are, "people who have the ability and special skills in the field of teacher training so that they can perform their task optimally. Four competencies required by professional teachers are (1) Pedagogical competence, (2) professional competence, (3) personality competence, and (4) social competence." Meanwhile, respondents in ECETP stated that professional teachers are, "teachers who are responsible for better education to improve human resources"

This is consistent with the [12.1] view that professional teachers are people who are well-educated, well-trained, and have competence and experience in their fields. Professional teachers are competent in their tasks as educators. In the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 16 Year 2007 on Academic Qualification and Teacher Competency Standards, four competencies that must be owned by a professional teacher are (1) pedagogical competence, which is the ability to understand the characteristics or abilities of the students through cognitive development of students, design of learning, implementation of learning, evaluation of learning outcomes, and development of students; (2) professional competence, which is the mastery of learning materials, including the curriculum of subjects taught at school, other knowledge required to teach the subject, the structure and methodology of science; (3) Personality competence, which is the way to reflect composure, wisdom, maturity, authority, and nobility to be a good example for the students; and (4) Social competence, which is a way to communicate with students, fellow teachers, staffs, parents, and the community. With active communication, a teacher can become a good facilitator for the development of education.

Respondents claimed that the challenge to become professional teachers are, "(1) difficulty to get permission to follow the training/seminars outside the school, (2) lower level of education (the interviewed respondents had not completed their undergraduate education yet), (3) the difference between the degree obtained by the teachers and what is required by the regulation to obtain certification, and (4) difficulty to continue the study in the university because of the regular school teaching hours." Moreover, the respondents suggested one of the solutions is taking classes at the Open University (OU), with classes held regularly at weekends. Therefore, teachers can improve their skills and get a degree that meets the standard for certification. The respondents expected that the Open University can be opened in the city and also in rural areas to support teachers in their effort to become professional teachers.

A teacher can be said to be a professional teacher if he has the competence in teaching, wants to explore science continuously, and transfers the knowledge optimally to the students. A professional teacher should also have good communication with the students and the social environment, and good teaching skills that are characterized by expertise in both the material and the learning method. In addition, a professional teacher should also be responsible and devoted to carrying out his task as a teacher [13,14].

In Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, it is mentioned that teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, training, assessing, and evaluating students in early childhood education formal education, elementary school, and high school. Therefore, the teachers' task is very large in terms of their professional work as it requires expertise to do the job properly. Developing a professional teacher requires exclusive treatment, including in the

recruitment of professional candidates (selection system), treatment of professional candidates, and appreciation of users/stakeholders after becoming professional [15].

Expertise is gained through professionalization, which is done before (as in pre-service education/training) or after (in-service training) a teacher takes a profession.

In a study conducted by [16], it states that the competency standard that must be owned by a teacher is divided into three, namely (1) learning management, such as class conditioning, (2) mastery of knowledge, and (3) development of teacher profession according to the standard set in regulations. Moreover, "A good teacher is a teacher who succeeds in teaching. Teachers who succeed in teaching are teachers who prepare students to achieve the goals set in the curriculum. To make the student achieve the goals, teachers need to have a variety of capabilities or professional classification to carry out their job [17].

Conclusion

Education is a long-term investment that is essential for every human being. Teachers play a huge role in contributing to the quality of education. Teachers who succeed in teaching are teachers who prepare students to achieve the goals set in the curriculum with various capabilities, including learning management (class conditioning), mastery of knowledge, and development of teacher profession according to the standard set in regulations. In the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 16 Year 2007 on Academic Qualification and Teacher Competency Standards, four competencies that must be owned by a professional teacher are pedagogical competence, professional competence, personality competence, and social competence. These competencies are essential for the teachers to carry out their job.

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