

ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS: AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR ROLES AND FUNCTIONS IN EDUCATION

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Abstrak

<i>Article History</i> <i>Received: 06-01-2026</i> <i>Revised : 07-01-2026</i> <i>Accepted: 29-01-2026</i> Keywords: <i>Teacher</i> <i>Professionalism;</i> <i>Roles and</i> <i>Functions; Islamic</i> <i>Education;</i>	<i>The professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers is a crucial factor in achieving national education goals and forming students' noble character (akhlaqul karimah). However, a gap persists between professional standards and the practical challenges teachers face in the digital era. This study aims to analyze the roles and functions of IRE teachers as professionals in the modern educational context. Using a qualitative approach with a literature review method, data were gathered from relevant laws, books, and academic journals. The results indicate that an IRE teacher's professionalism is built upon four mandatory competencies: pedagogical, professional, personality, and social. Beyond being mere instructors, IRE teachers function as "murabbi" (nurturers) who instill moral values, facilitators of active learning, and motivators who inspire spiritual and intellectual growth. The study concludes that the integration of digital competence and the role of "uswatun hasanah" (exemplary role model) are essential for IRE teachers to effectively manage contemporary educational dynamics.</i>
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Introduction

Education is the main foundation in building the civilization of any nation, including Indonesia, where the national education system is designed to produce intellectual, moral, and social superior human resources. The success of this process is highly determined by the synergy of various components, ranging from educational goals to the learning environment, which support each other to achieve quality output. (Farihin, 2022: 213–214) However, in the midst of technological advances and the demands of globalization, educational challenges are increasingly complex, such as the imbalance of access and quality of services in various regions, which often hinder the achievement of the national vision as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which reads "*The goal of national education is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and*

become democratic and responsible citizens.” This phenomenon shows the need for the role of teachers who are able to manage these dynamics effectively.

Education not only conveys knowledge, but at the same time an arena for character formation, habituation of values, and the development of a mindset that will shape the future direction of society. Almost all countries in the world make the quality of education an important indicator of social and economic progress. The more effective the education system, the greater the chance for a nation to produce a generation that is able to adapt to changing times, face global challenges, and create innovations in various fields of life. (Tilaar, 2000:45–47) In this context, education is no longer understood as a static process, but as a dynamic system that demands all its components, especially educators, to continue to develop.

In the midst of the rapid development of the modern world, the transformation in the field of education is taking place non-stop. Advances in information technology, digitization of learning resources, curriculum changes, and the demands of 21st century skills have brought the education system to a much more complex phase than before. (Ananda, 2019 : 13) Teachers no longer function as the main source of knowledge, as information can now be accessed easily through the internet and various digital platforms. The role of teachers has shifted to be a facilitator, guide, motivator, and director of the development of students' abilities. This shift requires teachers to have more creative pedagogic skills, critical thinking skills, and technological competence to be able to keep up with the flow of change.

Thus, teachers occupy a strategic position as a central figure in the success of the educational process. They are not only the presenters of teaching materials, but also the architects of students' learning experiences. Teachers determine how the learning process takes place, how students build understanding, and how they develop cognitive, social, emotional, and life skills. Teacher behavior, methods chosen, interaction with students, and how they manage the class greatly affect the quality of learning that occurs. Many studies show that teacher quality has a strong correlation with student learning achievement and overall quality of education.

However, being a teacher who is able to play such a strategic role requires high professionalism. Professional teachers not only master the field of science taught, but also understand learning theory, are able to manage classes, apply evaluations appropriately, and show personalities worthy of being role models. This professionalism is not created instantly, but through a process of formal education, continuous training, work experience, and self-awareness to continuously develop competencies. (L. Wijaya, 2023: 1224) Professional teachers realize that their profession is not just a job, but a call to serve the world of education and educate the life of the nation.

At the regulatory level, the concept of teachers as professionals has been affirmed in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. In the law, it is stated that teachers are professionals who have the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. Professional status must be proven through certification, fulfillment of competencies, and commitment to the professional code of ethics. (Sopian, 2016: 89) The government's recognition of teachers as professionals provides a strong

foundation to improve the quality of teachers and clarify their role in the education system.

However, the reality on the ground shows that not all teachers have fully reached these professional standards. There are still many teachers who have difficulty designing creative learning, are not used to using technology, or are not able to conduct authentic assessments effectively. Some teachers also face problems in competency development, such as limited access to training, lack of school facilities, or lack of support from the work environment. This condition causes a gap between the demands of professionalism and the ability of available teachers. In fact, the professionalism of teachers greatly determines the quality of learning outcomes and the quality of national education.

This is where it is important to review the role and function of teachers as professionals. The role of the teacher cannot be understood narrowly only as an instructor who delivers the material. More than that, they are agents of transformation, facilitators of the development of students' potential, character builders, and moral value models. Teachers also function as innovators who are able to create new learning strategies that are relevant to the times. In addition, teachers play the role of evaluators who assess students' development objectively to direct them to achieve the expected competencies.

The understanding of the role of teachers as professionals is also closely related to the four main competencies that have been established by the government: pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. These four competencies form the foundation of teachers' professionalism in carrying out their duties. Pedagogic competence is related to the ability of teachers to design and implement learning according to the needs of students. (Oviyanti, 2016:270) Professional competence includes mastery of the material and the ability to develop oneself as an expert in the field taught. Social competence and personality emphasize the importance of ethics, communication, empathy, and the ability to set an example for students and society.

In practice, these roles become increasingly important when teachers have to deal with new challenges in the digital age. Teachers need to understand how to utilize educational technology, manage virtual classrooms, create interactive learning media, and assist students who grow in digital culture. Other challenges such as the diversity of students' characters, differences in learning styles, and the social problems that students bring to the school environment require teachers to have high social sensitivity and emotional intelligence. Teachers not only teach, but must also be good listeners, simple counselors, and inspirational figures for students. (Basri dan Suryana, 2023:715)

In addition to professional demands in the context of learning, teachers also have a responsibility to build partnerships with parents and the community. Education cannot run effectively if it is only carried out in the school environment. Teachers must establish good communication with students' families, work together in monitoring children's development, and create a harmonious learning environment between school and home. (Mulyasa, 2005:41) In an increasingly complex world, the success of education is increasingly determined by the ability of teachers to build positive social relationships.

Seeing the complexity of these responsibilities, it is natural that teacher professionalism is the main need in the modern education system. Without

professional teachers, any curriculum changes, policy updates, or the provision of infrastructure facilities will not run optimally. (Mulyasa, 2006:86) Teachers are the spearhead as well as the main driver of the quality of education. Therefore, research on teachers as professionals is important to understand the extent to which their roles have been run, how the professional functions are carried out, and what factors support or hinder the professionalism of teachers.

Research Methods

The type of research used is the type of qualitative research, Qualitative research is research that is narrative and tends to use analysis using a literature study approach (*Library Research*). (Herdiansyah, 2010: 15) The data collection process uses sources from various journals or relevant articles and books, sources that discuss the role and function of teachers as professionals through text analysis and the thoughts of education experts. The data collection process is carried out by selecting literature related to teacher competence, the role of teachers in learning, the function of teachers in the education system, and the concept of professionalism in the context of education. Furthermore, the author summarizes the main problem using descriptive techniques about how teachers carry out their professional roles in education, the factors that affect teacher professionalism, and the implications of this professionalism on the quality of the learning process.

Discussion

Definition of Teachers as Professionals

Teacher is a designation for a position, position and profession for a person who devotes himself or herself to the field of education through educational interaction in a patterned, formal and systematic manner. Law of the Republic of Indonesia. Number 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers in chapter 1 article 1 states that "teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students in early childhood education through formal education, primary education and secondary education". This law emphasizes that teachers as professionals are teachers or educators who have certain competencies, academic qualifications, and certifications so that they are officially recognized as being able to carry out the tasks of education, teaching, guidance, training, assessment and evaluation of students. (Djollong, 2017: 23)

In the context of modern education, the term "professional teacher" is a concept that continues to evolve along with the changing paradigm of education and the increasing demands on the quality of learning. A professional teacher is not just an individual who carries out teaching duties, but an educator who has scientific expertise, pedagogic competence, moral integrity, and a commitment to the continuous improvement of the quality of education. Teacher professionalism is the main foundation in the implementation of quality education, because the quality of teachers greatly determines the quality of the process and learning outcomes of students. Therefore, the understanding of the concept of professional teachers needs to be placed in a broad perspective, covering theoretical, regulative, moral, and practical aspects in the field. (Aslamiyah et al., 2023: 11)

Conceptually, professionalism comes from the word "profession", which is a job that requires expertise, specialized knowledge, and structured formal

training. The profession is not carried out haphazardly, but is based on a set of norms, ethics, scientific rules, and social responsibility. In much of the literature, professions are seen as intellectual work, requiring analysis, abstract thinking skills, problem solving, and long training. Teachers, in this perspective, are categorized as professions because they not only convey information, but shape knowledge, character, values, and learning habits in students.(Ariani, 2021: 5) This process requires pedagogic skills, psychological sensitivity, social understanding, and emotional intelligence. Therefore, teachers cannot be considered as technical jobs, but as professions that demand multidimensional competence.

In various academic references, the term "professional teacher" is defined as a teacher who carries out his educational duties based on competency standards, professional ethics, and the principle of high moral responsibility. (Oktavia, 2020: 12) Professional teachers are able to manage learning effectively, understand student characteristics, master the subject matter in depth, use various methods, and be able to evaluate learning processes and outcomes objectively. In addition, professional teachers are able to adapt to the development of science and technology, update their own competence, and contribute to the development of schools and educational communities. In other words, the professionalism of teachers does not only lie in the technical ability of teaching, but also in attitude, integrity, and dedication to the profession.

In Indonesia, the understanding of professional teachers is also strengthened by a clear regulatory foundation. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes that teachers are professionals who have pedagogic competence, professional competence, social competence, and personality competence. The regulation underlines that teacher professionalism is not an abstract concept, but a standard that must be met through formal education, educator certification, and sustainable career development. Formal recognition of teachers as a profession is reflected in the existence of Teacher Professional Education (PPG) as a standard path to obtaining educator certificates. Thus, the professional status of teachers has a legal basis, not just symbolic recognition.

Professional teachers must fulfill the four main competencies that are the foundation of the implementation of their duties. Pedagogic competence is the ability of teachers to plan, implement, and evaluate learning, understand the character and development of students, choose appropriate learning approaches, strategies and methods, and create a conducive learning environment.(Firnando et al., 2023: 21) This competency requires teachers to understand learning theory, developmental psychology, and learning design. Professional teachers not only teach intuitively, but based on scientific principles. The second is professional competence, namely in-depth mastery of learning materials, understanding the scientific structure of the field of study, and the ability to develop oneself following the development of science and technology. Professional teachers are required to read, research, and develop teaching materials so that they can guide students to understand concepts correctly and in a structured manner. The third is social competence, namely the ability to build positive communication with students, parents, fellow teachers, school principals, and the community. Professional teachers must be able to cooperate, collaborate, and adapt to the

socio-cultural environment. Fourth, personality competencies which include moral integrity, maturity, emotional stability, exemplary, and ethics. Professional teachers become role models that reflect good moral values, so that they are able to shape the character of students positively. (I. Wijaya, 2018: 96)

The concept of a professional teacher is also understood through the characteristics inherent in a teacher's attitude and behavior. Professional teachers have a high commitment to their duties, are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities, and uphold professional codes of ethics. In many studies, professional teachers are described as reflective individuals, able to evaluate themselves, and always strive to improve the quality of learning. They think critically, creatively and are able to make independent professional decisions based on scientific and moral considerations. Professional teachers do not work mechanically, but through careful planning, systematic evaluation and awareness of the impact of their actions on the development of students. They have a strong internal motivation to continue learning, so that they are able to keep up with the development of curriculum, learning methodologies, digital media, and innovations in education. (Uno, 2016: 46)

However, teacher professionalism is not only about competence and skill, but also about moral identity. Professional teachers are figures who have integrity, honesty, patience, empathy, and sensitivity to justice. They not only transfer knowledge, but educate with heart, form values, set an example, and build the character of students. This is where the difference between professional teachers and ordinary teachers lies: professional teachers realize that their role does not stop at the classroom, but extends to contributing to society and the world of education more broadly.

In addition, the concept of a professional teacher is closely related to a commitment to continuous professional development. Education is dynamic and fast-changing, especially in the digital era and globalization. Professional teachers must be willing to continue to update their competencies through training, workshops, classroom action research, teacher learning communities, and independent learning. Professional development is a lifelong process that is one of the important indicators of professionalism. (Firman Sidik, Amiruddin 2024: 32) Teachers who are reluctant to learn will be left behind by change, while professional teachers are always on top of new developments to ensure learning remains relevant and of high quality.

In a global context, teachers' professionalism is also influenced by the debate about professional autonomy. Many theories of education state that a true profession gives autonomy to its members to make decisions based on their professional knowledge. But in practice, teachers are often burdened with regulations, bureaucracy and administrative standards that limit the space for creativity. Professional teachers are still required to be able to align policy demands with the needs of students, so professionalism in practice requires adaptability and careful decision-making. This shows that professional teachers are in a complex position to be learning managers, policy implementers, as well as moral decision-makers. (Khas Shah, 2024: 807)

The development of curriculum, technology and learning methods also enriches the meaning of professional teachers. In the digital era, professional teachers must master technology literacy skills, be able to create digital learning

media, and utilize educational applications to strengthen the learning process. Professionalism that does not adapt to technological developments will lose relevance in the context of modern learning. Thus, teacher professionalism is not only about mastering traditional knowledge and methods, but also the ability to innovate, collaborate, and present learning that is relevant to the needs of students in the 21st century.

Although the concept of a professional teacher seems ideal, in reality in the field he is faced with various challenges. Professional teachers are faced with limited infrastructure, high administrative burden, dynamic curriculum demands, and diverse social conditions of students. However, the ability of teachers to face these challenges is actually one of the indicators of professionalism, the ability to continue to carry out their duties effectively within limitations. Professional teachers are not teachers who work in ideal conditions, but teachers who can deliver meaningful learning in any condition.

By understanding these various dimensions, it can be concluded that the concept of a professional teacher is a combination of scientific competence, pedagogic skills, moral integrity, social commitment, and willingness to continue learning. Professional teachers are not just curriculum implementers, but agents of educational transformation who play an active role in shaping the future of students and society. This concept is the basis for further discussion on how the role and function of professional teachers are carried out in education, as well as how this professionalism affects the quality of learning and the development of students' character. (L. Wijaya, 2023: 1321)

The Role of Teachers in Education

The most basic role of a teacher is as an educator. An educator is not just someone who teaches knowledge, but an individual who instills moral values, ethics, character, discipline, and responsibility. In much of the educational literature, the role of educators is referred to as the core of the teaching profession because education is essentially a process of forming a whole human being, not just mastery of subject matter. Teachers as educators are responsible for helping students become individuals who have noble character, have a learning ethic, and are able to behave according to social and religious norms. (Muhammad Rusli, Dadang Hermawan 2020: 39) This role cannot be replaced by any technology, curriculum, or media because it concerns human relationships that require exemplarity, emotional closeness, and moral guidance. Law No. 14 of 2005 also emphasizes that teachers are professional educators who have the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students.

In addition to being an educator, teachers also play the role of teachers, namely facilitators in the learning process who are in charge of delivering material systematically and pedagogically. In this role, teachers not only transfer subject matter, but also manage classes, develop learning strategies, adapt methods to learners' characteristics, and create an active and fun learning environment. (Panjaitan dan Hafizzah, 2025: 332) Teachers must be able to apply various learning approaches such as differentiated learning, project-based learning, problem solving, or inquiry-based learning so that students can be actively involved and motivated in seeking knowledge. The role of teachers as

teachers is closely related to pedagogic and professional competence, because teachers are required not only to master the material, but also to be able to teach it effectively according to the cognitive and social development of students.(Agustini, 2024: 146)

The role of the teacher also includes the duties of a supervisor. Mentoring means helping students find their identity, recognize potential, understand their weaknesses and strengths, and make the right decisions in the learning process. Often students face difficulties in learning, psychological distress, interpersonal conflicts, and family problems. Teachers play the role of mentors who provide emotional support as well as practical direction so that students are able to develop optimally. In some studies, the role of the supervisor is an indicator of teacher professionalism, because teachers are required to understand developmental psychology and have empathy for students' conditions. Professional teachers are able to read the signs of changes in student behavior, provide appropriate recommendations, and establish open communication with parents.(Putra, 2023: 13)

In modern learning, teachers also play the role of facilitators, namely individuals who provide facilities, learning experiences and learning conditions that allow students to learn independently. This role is increasingly prominent as the educational paradigm shifts from *Teacher-centered* To *Student-centered*. Teachers are no longer the only source of knowledge, but rather help students access information, develop digital literacy skills and process information into new knowledge. Teachers as facilitators are also tasked with creating spaces for dialogue, discussion, experimentation and exploration so that students are accustomed to thinking critically and creatively.(Mashudi, 2021: 108) In this context, teachers must be able to design learning activities that foster curiosity, courage to ask questions, and the ability to develop ideas independently.

Teachers also have an important role as motivators, namely building students' learning spirit. Not all students have strong internal motivations; Some experience psychological barriers, lack of family support, or low confidence. Teachers as motivators play an important role in fostering confidence, providing encouragement, providing reinforcement, and creating a positive classroom atmosphere. Research shows that students' learning motivation is greatly influenced by teachers' attitudes, personalities, and communication.(L. Wijaya 2023, 89) Teachers who are friendly, respect students, do not degrade their abilities, and display good classroom mastery can encourage students to achieve optimal achievement. This role is often referred to as the teacher's interpersonal skills.

In addition, teachers also play the role of classroom managers. Classroom management is the ability to create a conducive, orderly, comfortable, and distraction-free classroom climate. Teachers must be able to set classroom rules, direct student behavior, anticipate conflict, and create an atmosphere that supports learning. An unorganized class will hinder the entire learning process. Therefore, professional teachers not only teach, but also design classroom structures, arrange seating according to learning needs, create a positive classroom culture, and minimize learning disruptions.(Uno, 2016: 45) Several studies in educational journals show that classroom management is one of the indicators of the success of professional teachers in creating effective learning.

Teachers also play an important role as evaluators. Learning evaluation aims to measure the extent to which learning objectives are achieved. Teachers must be able to design valid evaluation instruments, provide constructive feedback, and use evaluation results to improve the learning process. Evaluation does not only mean written tests, but also observations, portfolios, project assessments, and attitude assessments.(Oktavia, 2020: 55) Professional teachers are able to provide assessments objectively, non-discriminatory, and in accordance with the set standards. Good evaluation also helps teachers understand students' difficulties, so that teachers can adjust their next learning strategy.

In a broader context, teachers also play a role as agents of social change. This role places the teacher as an individual who contributes to the progress of society. Teachers educate the younger generation who will later influence the economic, cultural, political, and social order. Teachers form the mindset, values, and character that will determine the quality of civilization. Therefore, professional teachers must realize that their responsibilities are not only to the school, but also to society at large.(Tilaar, 2000: 67) Teachers play a role in building a literacy culture, teaching tolerance, strengthening the nation's character, and instilling love for the environment and national values.

Professional teachers are also required to play a role as collaborators in the world of education. Collaboration with other teachers, principals, education staff, and parents is an important part of professionalism. Cooperation in the teacher learning community, teacher working group (KKG) discussions, Subject Teacher Deliberation (MGMP), and collaboration in curriculum design are part of the collaborative role. Good teachers do not work individually, but are open to ideas, inputs, and innovations from peers to improve the quality of learning.

In the era of digital technology, teachers also assume a new role as technology mediators. Teachers must be able to utilize learning technologies such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), online learning platforms, evaluation applications, and digital teaching materials. Teachers who do not master technology risk being left behind in the modern education process. In this context, the role of teachers is not only to master the tools, but also to ensure that their use is meaningful and does not interfere with the essence of learning. Teachers must be able to assess when technology is needed, how to use it effectively, and how to align technology with pedagogical goals.

From these various descriptions, it can be understood that the role of teachers in education is very broad, multidimensional, and demands high professionalism. Teachers do not just teach, but educate, facilitate, guide, motivate, manage classes, conduct evaluations, and collaborate. Professional teachers are able to integrate these various roles in a balanced manner according to the needs of students and learning dynamics. With this complex role, teachers become the main pillar in the educational process and determine the quality of the nation's generation.

The Function of Teachers in Education

The function of teachers in the learning process is an important aspect that determines the direction, quality, and effectiveness of education. If the previous section discussed the role of teachers in general, then the function of teachers is more oriented towards the core tasks and specific responsibilities of teachers in

organizing, implementing, and evaluating the learning process. This function does not stand alone, but is closely related to pedagogic, social, professional, and personality competencies that have become the standards of professional teachers in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. Conceptually, the teacher's function describes how the teacher carries out his work concretely in the classroom, how he interacts with students, and how he implements educational principles to ensure that the learning process takes place effectively and meaningfully. By comprehensively understanding the function of teachers, we can see how teachers play their real role in educating the younger generation. (Zulfiati, 2014: 46)

The first and most basic function of the teacher is as a learning planner. In this function, teachers are responsible for designing the learning process systematically starting from competency mapping, preparation of learning objectives, preparation of teaching materials, selection of appropriate methods, to determination of evaluation techniques. This planning is not purely administrative, but is the foundation that ensures that learning runs effectively. Professional teachers will not teach without preparation, because the learning process requires a clear structure in order for the set goals to be achieved. The lesson plan (RPP) or teaching module is an important instrument that reflects the extent to which teachers understand the needs of students, the characteristics of the material, and the most appropriate pedagogical approach. (Agustini, 2024: 80) In the context of the Independent Curriculum, for example, teachers are required to conduct diagnostic assessments to understand students' learning readiness before developing a differentiated learning plan. This shows that the planning function is not a formality, but a strategic part in ensuring that learning runs in a directional and as needed basis.

Apart from being a planner, teachers also have an important function as learning organizers. This function requires teachers to manage all learning components ranging from classroom management, space management, selection of learning resources, to determining effective learning strategies. In this organization, teachers are in charge of creating a conducive, supportive, and fun learning environment. Classroom management is not limited to maintaining order, but building a positive classroom culture so that students can actively participate. Teachers must be able to determine the learning model whether group discussions, collaborative learning, problem solving, project-based learning, or other approaches are considered appropriate for the learning objectives. Through this organizing function, teachers can maximize the potential of students and encourage meaningful learning interactions.

The next function of the teacher is as a learning implementer. This function includes teaching activities directly in the classroom, delivering materials, facilitating discussions, providing instructions, and conducting other learning interactions. Although it seems simple, the implementation of learning is the function that most determines the quality of a teacher. At this stage, teachers must apply their pedagogic competencies concretely by choosing the right methods, using relevant learning media, varying learning strategies, and providing constructive feedback to students. Professional teachers understand that each student has different learning styles and non-uniform abilities, so the learning carried out must be adaptive and responsive. (Muhammad Rusli, Dadang

Hermawan, 2020: 67) In this function, teachers also play a role in maintaining class dynamics, creating an interactive atmosphere, and keeping students' attention focused. Therefore, the implementation of learning is a crucial point that shows the extent to which teachers are able to connect theory with practice.

In addition to carrying out learning, teachers also have a function as a director. In this function, teachers help students understand learning objectives, direct learning activities, provide guidance when students have difficulties, and ensure students stay on track. Briefing is needed so that students do not just follow learning activities without understanding the meaning and direction of learning. (Zulfiati, 2014: 3) A good teacher communicates the learning objectives from the beginning, provides clear instructions, and explains how the activities are related to the learning objectives. The direction function also includes the teacher's ability to facilitate students to be able to make their own learning plans, build internal motivation, and be responsible for the learning process.

The next function that is very important is the function as an evaluator. Evaluation is an integral part of learning because through evaluation, teachers can measure the level of students' mastery of the material, assess their development, and determine future improvement steps. A good evaluation is not just a final assessment, but an ongoing process that includes initial assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment. Professional teachers are able to design valid, objective, and accurate evaluation instruments. They not only rely on written tests, but also use a variety of instruments such as project rubrics, portfolios, performance appraisals, attitude appraisals, and observations. With proper evaluation, teachers can identify students who need additional intervention, provide meaningful feedback, and improve less effective learning strategies. Evaluation also serves to help teachers understand whether the methods and approaches used are in accordance with the characteristics of students.

The next function is to function as a guide for the personal and social development of students. Teachers are not only responsible for developing students' academic abilities, but also emotional, social, and moral development. In this function, teachers play the role of someone who sets an example (role model) in behaving, speaking, and behaving. Teachers help students develop empathy, cooperation, honesty, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. Teachers also guide students in resolving conflicts, understanding differences, respecting friends, and adapting to diverse social environments. It is not uncommon for teachers to be a place for students to confide, where students get emotional support when they face personal or family problems. This supervisory function is even more important in adolescence when students are looking for an identity and are in dire need of a good role model.

In addition, teachers have a function as a liaison between schools and the community. Teachers become a bridge of communication between schools and parents, while facilitating cooperation between schools and communities. Professional teachers are able to build good relationships with parents to support children's learning at home. They provide information about student development, invite parents to be involved in school activities, and work together in solving students' learning problems. This function also includes the teacher's efforts in introducing students to the values of society, local culture, and social life so that students can understand the environment in which they live.

In the context of modern education, teachers also carry out their functions as learning media developers and innovators. Teachers are required to be able to use, modify, and create learning media that supports the understanding of the material. Learning media does not always have to be sophisticated or digital, but it must be relevant, easy to understand, and able to clarify the concepts being learned. Professional teachers understand that choosing the right media can increase students' interest, strengthen memory, and stimulate creativity. In addition, teachers as innovators are challenged to develop various new learning strategies that are more creative and adaptive. In the development of digital technology, teachers are expected to be able to integrate technology in learning, use online learning platforms, design visual materials, and utilize various educational applications to enrich students' learning experiences. (Tilaar, 2000: 53)

Another function that is no less important is the function of the teacher as a model or moral example. Moral example is the most inherent dimension of the teaching profession. Students not only learn through the teacher's words, but also through the teacher's attitude, behavior, and daily life. These examples include work ethic, discipline, honesty, decency, integrity, and responsibility. (Panjaitan dan Hafizzah, 2025: 335) Teachers who show good character will positively influence students, shape their character, and create a healthy school culture. Therefore, the function of exemplary is not an additional task, but rather a core part of the teacher's identity as an educator.

Overall, the function of teachers in learning reflects how teachers carry out their profession in a concrete way. From planning to evaluation, from briefing to guidance, from media use to motivational development, all of these functions are interrelated and determine the success of education. Professional teachers are those who are able to carry out all these functions with integrity, competence, and high commitment. Thus, the function of the teacher not only leads to academic learning outcomes, but also to the formation of a whole human being who has good intellectual, social, emotional, and moral abilities.

Challenges for Teachers in Carrying Out Their Profession

Teacher professionalism is a key factor in improving the quality of education. However, in practice, teachers face various challenges that can hinder their ability to carry out their profession optimally. These challenges arise from internal and external factors related to competence, work environment, institutional support, and the development of the times. Understanding the various obstacles faced by teachers is very important, because this is where strategies are born to improve the quality of education and increase the capacity of teachers to be able to meet the increasingly complex demands of professionalism. (Oviyanti, 2016: 281) These challenges are not only technical, but also structural, psychological, and social, so they require a comprehensive approach to address them.

One of the biggest challenges faced by teachers is the limited learning facilities and infrastructure. Many schools in Indonesia, especially in remote areas or low-budget schools, do not have adequate facilities such as proper classrooms, complete libraries, laboratories, internet access, and learning technology devices. In fact, professional teachers are required to utilize media, methods, and technology to create effective learning. Limited facilities cause teachers to rely on

conventional teaching methods, which are sometimes irrelevant to the needs of 21st century learning. Even teachers who have good competence will find it difficult to display innovative learning when supporting facilities are very limited. This creates a gap between the demands of professionalism and the reality of the field.

The next challenge is the excessive administrative burden. In recent years, numerous studies and field reports have shown that teachers in Indonesia are often burdened with administrative tasks, such as compiling reports, filling out various assessment formats, creating learning tools, and participating in other time-consuming administrative activities. This excessive administrative burden reduces teachers' time to focus on material preparation, learning reflection, self-development, and student mentoring. Teachers' professionalism should be emphasized more on the quality of interaction with students and the learning process, not on the production of administrative documents. When teachers' time is taken up by the administration more, learning becomes less optimal, and teachers lose room for creativity to develop more meaningful methods.

In addition to administrative factors, teachers also face challenges related to welfare and economic conditions. Despite improvements through certification allowance policies and other government programs, many honorary teachers and private teachers still receive low salaries that are not commensurate with the workload and responsibilities of the profession. Unstable economic conditions make teachers have to find additional jobs outside of school to meet their living needs. This reduces the time and energy that could otherwise be used to improve professional competencies, such as attending training, preparing for learning, or conducting in-depth evaluations. (Sopian, 2016: 93) When teachers' welfare is inadequate, their internal motivation in carrying out their profession can also decrease, thus having an impact on the quality of learning.

In addition to the economic burden, teachers also face challenges in sustainable professional development. Ideally, teachers should keep their knowledge and skills updated through training, workshops, online courses, or learning communities. But in reality, access to professional development is uneven. Many teachers in remote areas do not have the convenience of attending training due to limited internet access, high costs, or long distances from educational centers. In addition, some of the training available is not always relevant to the needs of teachers in the field or does not provide practical experience that can be applied immediately. This makes it difficult for teachers to meet the demands of professionalism that continue to grow, especially in terms of mastery of technology, digital literacy, and innovative learning strategies.

Teacher professionalism challenges can also stem from a lack of support and supervision from school management. Principals who lack strong managerial and leadership skills often fail to provide the professional guidance teachers need. An uncondusive school climate, less harmonious interpersonal relationships, and an unhealthy work culture can reduce teacher enthusiasm and productivity. Professional teachers need a work environment that is supportive, collaborative, and open to innovation. However, in some schools, the work culture is still bureaucratic and hierarchical, making it difficult for teachers to develop creativity in learning. When the school environment is not supportive, teachers' commitment to professionalism is hampered.

In addition to structural challenges, teachers also face psychological challenges, such as work stress, emotional fatigue, and mental distress. Teacher work stress can be caused by various factors, such as too many students, conflicts with colleagues, high expectations from society, or difficulties dealing with students with complex behaviors. Professional teachers are required to maintain emotional stability and set a moral example, but this is difficult to do if the teacher himself is under excessive pressure. Prolonged stress can reduce the quality of teacher-student interaction, reduce teachers' ability to provide creative learning, and reduce teachers' motivation to improve professional competence.

Another challenge that is no less important is the uneven quality of teachers. Differences in educational backgrounds, the quality of teacher educational institutions, and access to training cause the competence of teachers from one region or school to another to differ quite significantly. This inequality is a major obstacle in achieving uniform standards of professionalism. On the one hand, teachers in big cities may have access to modern learning resources, national seminars, and professional communities. But on the other hand, teachers in rural areas may not have basic training on innovative learning strategies or digital literacy. This inequality has a direct impact on the quality of national education which has become uneven.

In the era of digital technology, teachers also face challenges in mastering learning technology. Today's generation of students is very familiar with digital technology, while not all teachers have the same ability to utilize learning applications, digital platforms, or interactive media. Teachers' unpreparedness in mastering technology can make learning less interesting and irrelevant to the needs of modern students. In addition, technology continues to develop rapidly so teachers must continue to learn and adapt. This challenge is increasingly evident during the distance learning (PJJ) period, when many teachers have difficulty adapting to online platforms and other digital learning technologies.

Another challenge is the complexity of students' increasingly diverse characters. Students today have very varied family, social, cultural, and ability backgrounds. Some students come from harmonious and supportive families, while others face social issues such as broken homes, domestic violence, or family economic pressures. Teachers must be prepared to deal with these diverse psychological dynamics of students, understand their individual needs, and design inclusive learning. However, dealing with diverse learners requires high pedagogic skills, patience, and empathy. If teachers do not have these competencies, their professionalism will be difficult to achieve. (Herdiansyah, 2010: 810)

The next challenge is the lack of parental participation in education. Collaboration between schools and parents is essential to build a supportive learning environment for students. However, not all parents can be actively involved, either because of busy work, ignorance about children's education, or lack of awareness of the importance of learning assistance. When parental support is low, teachers face the added burden of motivating students, supervising their development, and addressing learning problems that should be addressed with the family. This condition makes it even more difficult for teachers to realize their professionalism because they do not get the necessary external support.

In addition to external factors, teachers also face the challenge of lack of social reward. Although the teaching profession is often referred to as a noble profession, the reality is that not all people really appreciate and support teachers. The community's demands on teachers are very high, but appreciation for teachers' hard work is often low.(Ertati, Zainal Azman, 2023:65) In some areas, teachers are seen only as ordinary workers, not as professionals who require special skills. A lack of social rewards can lower teachers' motivation and hinder their professional development.

Overall, the challenges of teacher professionalism are complex and interrelated. Teachers face structural obstacles such as limited facilities, low welfare, and administrative burden. They also face psychological barriers such as work stress and lack of social support. In addition, teachers must master technology, deal with diverse students, and adapt to the dynamics of modern education. To overcome this challenge, a joint effort is needed from the government, schools, the community, and the teachers themselves. The government must ensure equitable distribution of facilities, increased training, and decent welfare. Schools must create a supportive and collaborative work culture. The community must give proper appreciation to teachers. Meanwhile, teachers need to develop themselves sustainably, improve competence, and maintain professional integrity.

Implications of Teachers on the Quality of Education

Teacher professionalism has very wide implications for the quality of education at the classroom level, schools, and even on the education system nationally. In modern education, teacher quality is often referred to as the single factor that most determines the success of learning after the factor of the student's family background. This shows that teacher professionalism is not just an individual attribute, but is a strategic force that has a direct impact on the intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development of students.(Basri dan Suryana, 2023: 715) The implications of teacher professionalism can be seen from many aspects, ranging from the quality of the learning process, improving student learning outcomes, strengthening character, school climate stability, quality of teacher-student relationships, to the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. In the long term, the professionalism of teachers also contributes to improving the quality of human resources (HR) of a nation.

One of the most obvious implications of teacher professionalism is the increased effectiveness of the learning process in the classroom. Professional teachers are able to design learning with the right approach, develop clear goals, choose relevant methods, and prepare systematic evaluation strategies. Professional teachers recognize that good learning should be student-centered, not teacher-centered, so they use a learning model that gives students opportunities to be active, think critically, and collaborate. When teachers plan and execute learning professionally, the quality of interaction between teachers and students improves. Learning becomes more lively, meaningful, and relevant to students' daily lives. This process ultimately increases students' motivation to learn, which is one of the important factors in determining educational success.(Ariani, 2021: 20)

In addition to having an impact on the learning process, teacher professionalism also has implications for improving student learning outcomes. Professional teachers understand students' cognitive development, are able to identify learning difficulties, and develop appropriate interventions to help students overcome these barriers. Professional teachers not only teach to complete the material, but ensure that learners truly understand the concepts being taught. The use of diverse and appropriate evaluation methods allows teachers to obtain an accurate picture of students' abilities and development. Thus, the professionalism of teachers increases academic achievement and student achievement.(Firnando et al., 2023: 19) Many studies show that competent and dedicated teachers are able to improve test scores, encourage student activity, and strengthen students' literacy and numeracy skills.

The implications of teacher professionalism are not only limited to the cognitive aspect, but also have a major impact on the formation of students' character and personality. Professional teachers have strong personality and social competencies, so they are able to be moral role models for students. The example of a teacher is often more influential than the teaching of moral material theoretically. Professional teachers show patience, fairness, discipline, honesty, and respect for differences. These attitudes are observed and exemplified by students in daily life. Thus, the professionalism of teachers helps shape the character of the nation, especially in terms of integrity, empathy, discipline, and responsibility. Professional teachers are also able to overcome conflicts between students, build positive communication, and develop an inclusive and tolerant classroom environment.(Mulyasa, 2006: 78)

From the perspective of schools as institutions, teacher professionalism has implications for creating a conducive and productive school climate. Professional teachers collaborate with their peers in developing school programs, reflecting on learning, and developing various educational innovations. When most of the teachers in a school are professional, a positive work culture will be formed. Communication between teachers has become more open, academic discussions are more lively, and learning innovations are developing. A conducive school climate not only increases the motivation of other teachers, but also increases the feeling of safety and comfort in students. Schools that have professional teachers usually have a high level of discipline, a strong learning culture, and a harmonious relationship between teachers, students, and parents.

In addition, the professionalism of teachers also has an impact on strengthening the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers are the main implementers of the curriculum in the field. No matter how well the curriculum is designed by the government, its implementation is highly dependent on the ability and creativity of teachers. Professional teachers are able to interpret the curriculum flexibly according to the needs of students, integrate important values, and simplify complex concepts to make them easy to understand. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, for example, professional teachers play an important role in the implementation of differentiated learning, Pancasila (P5) student profile strengthening projects, and continuous formative assessments. If the teacher is less professional, the curriculum becomes just a formal document with no practical meaning. (Putra, 2023:s 12)

Teacher professionalism also has implications for increasing parental and community participation in education. Professional teachers are able to establish positive communication with parents, explain children's learning development objectively, and invite parents to collaborate in supporting learning at home. When teachers show competence and integrity, parents are more confident and more involved in school activities. This trust is the basis for school-community collaboration.(Erni Yuliansa, Fitriyani, 2024: 2) Thus, the professionalism of teachers helps to strengthen social relationships that support the educational process more broadly.

An equally important implication can be seen in improving the quality of school management. Professional teachers are not only the implementers of learning, but also active contributors to decision-making at the school level. Competent teachers are able to provide constructive input related to academic policies, extracurricular activities, student evaluations, and school development programs. In schools that implement school-based management (SBM), the contribution of teachers greatly determines the direction of institutional policies.(Nuraliyah, Bakti Komalasari, 2024: 90) When professional teachers are involved in school management, institutional decisions become more targeted and relevant to the needs of learners.

Teacher professionalism also has a significant effect on the development of educational innovation. Professional teachers tend to be more creative, innovative, and brave to try new approaches to learning. They attended seminars, read the latest research results, joined learning communities, and conducted classroom action research (PTK). These innovative activities encourage the improvement of the quality of learning and create a dynamic educational environment. (Mulyasa, 2005: 88) Schools that have professional teachers are usually quicker to adapt to curriculum changes, technological developments, and global demands.

At the national level, the professionalism of teachers has direct implications for improving the quality of human resources (HR). Education is the foundation of a nation's progress, and teachers are the most decisive factor in the quality of education. If the professionalism of teachers increases widely in a country, then the quality of the generation produced will also increase. A generation that is intelligent, critical, characterful, and has 21st-century skills will be able to compete in the global world. Thus, the professionalism of teachers is not only an individual or school affair, but a long-term investment in the development of the nation.

In addition to positive implications, teacher professionalism also has implications in the form of greater demands on the teacher himself. Professional teachers must continue to learn, update knowledge, improve technological skills, and adapt to changes in the education system. Professionalism is not the final status, but an ongoing process.(I. Wijaya, 2018: 93) With the increase in public expectations of teachers, these demands can cause pressure, but also become a motivation for teachers to continue to develop themselves. Professional teachers recognize that learning is a dynamic process that requires commitment throughout their careers.

In a psychological context, teacher professionalism has implications for increased job satisfaction and emotional well-being. Teachers who feel competent, valued, and able to perform their duties well tend to have higher levels

of job satisfaction. This satisfaction contributes to work motivation, emotional resilience, and commitment to the profession. Professional teachers are better able to cope with work stress because they have a well-rounded pedagogic strategy, collaborative support and high confidence in managing the classroom. Thus, the professionalism of teachers helps to improve the quality of life of teachers themselves.

Overall, the implications of teacher professionalism on the quality of education are huge, broad and fundamental. Teacher professionalism increases learning effectiveness, strengthens learning outcomes, shapes student character, improves school culture, improves curriculum implementation, and strengthens collaboration between schools and communities. At the same time, teacher professionalism also has an impact on the development of innovation, improving the quality of national human resources, and the professional welfare of teachers. Thus, teacher professionalism is not only a formal requirement for a profession, but is the main foundation for the achievement of quality, sustainable and relevant education to the demands of the times.

Conclusion

Teachers as professionals refer to educators who have competence, academic qualifications, and certifications in accordance with the provisions of Law Number 14 of 2005. Teachers not only deliver material, but also educate, guide, train, assess, and evaluate students through a planned and systematic educational process. Teachers' professionalism is reflected in pedagogical skills, mastery of materials, personal integrity, and commitment to continue to evolve following changes in science and technology. Teachers are classified as a profession because their jobs demand special skills, formal training, and high moral responsibility. Professional teachers are able to manage learning effectively, understand the character of students, use the right methods, and display ethics and examples. The four main competencies of pedagogic, professional, social, and personality are important foundations that every teacher must have.

Professional teachers are present as reflective, creative, and able to make decisions based on scientific considerations and moral values. Professionalism is not only seen in teaching skills, but also in moral identities, such as honesty, empathy, patience, and maturity. Teachers become role models who shape the character of students while contributing to the development of society. The teacher's duties also include ongoing professional development. In the digital era, teachers are required to master learning technology, utilize digital platforms, and adapt teaching strategies to the needs of the 21st century. Challenges such as administrative burden, limited facilities, and diversity of students make teacher professionalism an ability to remain effective in various conditions. As professionals, teachers play various important roles in education.

Teachers play the role of educators who instill moral values and character; as a teacher who manages the learning process; and as a supervisor who helps students recognize their potential. Teachers are also facilitators in active learning, motivators who build enthusiasm for learning, and classroom managers who create a conducive environment. In addition, teachers function as evaluators who assess learning processes and outcomes objectively and sustainably. Evaluations

are carried out not only through written tests, but also observations, projects, portfolios, and various other forms of assessment. In the broader social context, teachers play the role of agents of change who build a culture of literacy, strengthen the character of the nation, and encourage the progress of society.

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