Enhancing Teacher Professionalism through Character Education as an Effort to Combat **Demoralization**

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengeksplorasi peran pendidikan karakter di LPTK dalam menciptakan guru profesional sesuai dengan Undang-Undang Guru dan Dosen. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi karakteristik guru profesional dan nilai-nilai yang dapat ditanamkan melalui pendidikan karakter di LPTK. Metode yang digunakan adalah tinjauan pustaka komprehensif dari artikel ilmiah, makalah penelitian, laporan pemerintah, dan kebijakan pendidikan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter di LPTK dapat membentuk karakter guru profesional dengan menanamkan sikap dan nilai yang sesuai dengan standar kompetensi. Nilai-nilai penting yang ditemukan termasuk keimanan, keterbukaan, kejujuran, semangat belajar sepanjang hayat, disiplin, dan tanggung jawab. Kesimpulannya, pendidikan karakter di LPTK efektif dalam menciptakan guru yang kompeten secara akademik dan berkarakter baik, mampu menularkan nilainilai positif kepada peserta didik.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Professionalisme, Demoralisasi

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the role of character education in Teacher Education Institutions (LPTK) in creating professional teachers in accordance with the Teacher and Lecturer Law. This research also identifies the characteristics of professional teachers and the values that can be instilled through character education in LPTK. The method used is a comprehensive literature review of scientific articles, research papers, government reports, and existing education policies. The findings show that character education in LPTK can shape the professional character of teachers by instilling attitudes and values that align with competency standards. Important values identified include faith, openness, honesty, lifelong learning, discipline, and responsibility. The conclusion is that character education in LPTK is effective in creating teachers who are academically competent and possess good character, capable of imparting positive values to students.

Keyword: Character Education, Professionalism, Demoralization.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as the cornerstone of a nation's progress. It shapes the future generation's ability to contribute to their society and nation (Malik, 2018). Previous studies have shown that quality education significantly impacts national development (Smith, 2016; Garcia, 2017). However, the question arises: what defines quality education, and has Indonesia achieved this standard? Evaluating the success of education involves various factors, including the behavior of the youth during and after their schooling and comparing the quality of education nationally and internationally (Niazov, 2018). Unfortunately, Indonesia seems to fall short of this benchmark.

The current state of education in Indonesia raises significant concerns, particularly regarding the behavioral changes observed in school-aged youth. These changes signal a notable shift in moral values, resulting in a decline in moral resilience among the younger generation (Westheimer, 2019). This demoralization manifests in several ways, such as increased violence, promiscuity, gaming addiction, exposure to pornography, disrespect towards authority, declining work ethic, and a decrease in social responsibility (Andhyka, 2023).

In response to these pressing issues, this research aims to provide insights into the state of education in Indonesia and propose solutions to address the moral decline among youth. A particular focus is placed on cultivating professional teachers through character education. The objective is to equip teachers with the necessary skills and values to instill positive character traits in their students. By fostering strong character education among teachers, it is hoped that they can effectively impart these values to their students, thus contributing to the restoration of moral integrity and resilience in Indonesian youth. This research aims to bridge the gap in existing literature by emphasizing the importance of character education in combating the moral decline of youth in Indonesia's education system. Studies by Junaedi & Syukur (2017) and Susilo, Dewantoro, and Yuningsih (2022) have highlighted the role of character education in improving student behavior and ethical standards, reinforcing the need for such initiatives in Indonesian schools.

Research Method

This paper aimed to examine several key aspects related to education in Indonesia, focusing specifically on the condition of education, the role of professional teachers, the attitudes expected of professional teachers, and the values that could be imparted through character education for teachers in LPTKs (Teacher Education and Training Institutes). To achieve this objective, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather relevant information, data, and insights from existing scholarly articles, research papers, governmental reports, and educational policies.

The literature review encompassed studies and documents related to the state of education in Indonesia, the qualifications and responsibilities of professional teachers as outlined in educational laws and regulations, the attitudes and behaviors expected of professional teachers, and the importance of character education in teacher training institutions. Furthermore, this paper analyzed and synthesized the gathered information to provide a comprehensive overview of the current condition of education in Indonesia, the significance of professional teachers in shaping educational outcomes, the essential attitudes of professional teachers, and the values that could be effectively instilled through character education programs in LPTKs. The research method employed in this paper primarily relied on qualitative analysis, utilizing descriptive and interpretive approaches to examine the selected topics in depth. Additionally, quantitative data, such as statistical figures and survey results, were incorporated where applicable to support the qualitative findings and enhance the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Overall, this research method aims to provide valuable insights into the condition of education in Indonesia and offer recommendations for enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness of teachers through character education initiatives in LPTKs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Condition of Education in Indonesia

It is an established fact that the quality of education in Indonesia lags significantly behind that of developed countries. This situation was directly reported by the Ministry of National Education (Indrawati & Kuncoro, 2021). Experts have identified several causes for the educational backwardness in Indonesia through various educational seminars. These causes include: (1)

education being organized for the benefit of the organizers rather than the students; (2) the nature of education being focused on content transfer, with teachers acting merely as topic presenters. The quality of teaching becomes unclear because assessment only measures short-term retention through artificial evaluation processes. Teaching does not engage students in a participatory manner that would allow them to fully internalize the knowledge; (3) the affective aspect is often neglected; (4) there is discrimination in the dissemination of knowledge due to the perception that those at the center know more than those in the regions, those in the regions know more than those in branches, and those in branches know more than those in the local offices. This systematic discrimination arises from a subject-object learning pattern; (5) teachers often reduce the existing text content to avoid making mistakes. Reference texts or books are considered everything, and completing them is seen as the teacher's success.

Not all these issues are necessarily true. This is because: (1) each student is unique, with individual strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, standardization and uniformity processes stifle this uniqueness. Individual uniqueness should be recognized and given opportunities to develop; (2) children are not miniature adults. Children's thinking does not always align with that of adults. Adults must understand children's feelings and thought processes. However, educators often deliver lessons through lectures, replicating the methods they experienced in their schooling; (3) children's world is one of play, but many lessons are not delivered through playful methods. This is because lesson delivery rarely incorporates play that includes educational philosophy elements; (4) childhood is the most creative phase in human life, yet the education system does not provide opportunities for children's creativity.

In line with these points, regional autonomy is being implemented. Currently and in the future, there is expected to be a shift in the educational paradigm concerning education management. One of the pressing issues is the effort to return education to the community (Suarno & Suryono, 2021). In this context, teachers, especially those directly involved in education, must be courageous and committed to changing the long-held paradigms.

Professional Teachers

In general, a teacher is an educator who provides both academic and non-academic knowledge to students. A professional teacher is one who has the authority and responsibility for the education of students (Ibeng, 2024). Several aspects need to be understood and observed when discussing the professionalism of a teacher. The discussion about teacher professionalism is closely related to the Law on Teachers and Lecturers (UUGD). The UUGD regulates all matters related to the tasks and requirements that must be met by a professional teacher. Below are some articles in the UUGD that are pertinent to understanding the duties and requirements of becoming a professional teacher according to the UUGD.

Article 1, point 1 of the UUGD states that a teacher is a professional educator with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in early childhood education, formal education, primary education, and secondary education. Therefore, Article 8 of the UUGD requires that teachers must have academic qualifications, competencies, and a teaching certificate. The academic qualifications are further explained in Article 9, which requires a relevant S-1 or D-4 educational background. According to Article 29 of Government Regulation 19, to teach in kindergarten and elementary schools, teachers must have an S-1/D-4 in psychology or PGTK/PGSD or other relevant education. For subject teachers in junior high and high schools, they must be graduates of S-1 or D-4 in the field of study or pure study related to the subject being taught. Therefore, a Mathematics or Indonesian Language teacher must be an S-1 or D-4 graduate in Mathematics Education or Indonesian Language Education from a Teacher Education Institution (LPTK) or a university.

The question then arises: how do teachers obtain a teaching certificate to be considered professional? The UUSPN and UUGD do not clearly specify this. However, Article 1, point 11 of the UUGD states that certification is the process of granting a teaching certificate to teachers and lecturers. Article 11 (1) states that a teaching certificate is granted to teachers who meet the requirements. Thus, the certificate is awarded once the individual is deemed to have met the educational and competency qualifications as a learning agent. Therefore, an evaluation mechanism is required to prove that someone meets these two conditions. This mechanism is called certification, which should be a form of comprehensive evaluation. If qualifications can be demonstrated with a certificate, then the mastery of competencies as a learning agent is developed through certification. From the above description, it can be concluded that the requirements for becoming a teacher according to the UUGD are essentially twofold: an S-1/D-4 educational background in the subject being taught and the mastery of competencies as a learning agent. A teaching certificate is fundamentally a recognition of possessing these two requirements.

The competencies as a learning agent, as detailed in the UUGD and Government Regulation 19, include personal, pedagogical, professional, and social competencies. Personal competence encompasses a stable personality, noble character, wisdom, and authority, and the ability to serve as a role model for students. Pedagogical competence is the ability to manage learning. Professional competence is the mastery of subject matter broadly and deeply. Social competence is the ability to communicate and interact effectively and efficiently with students, fellow teachers, parents/guardians, and the surrounding community. From this description, it is evident that personal competence is directed as the fundamental asset for teachers, especially in daily behavior. The sub-competency "becoming a role model for students" is the pinnacle of previous subcompetencies because one becomes a role model for students by having a stable personality, noble character, wisdom, and authority. Theoretically, a teacher who can be a role model for students will easily guide and motivate students to learn. Conversely, a teacher with poor personality traits will not be trusted by students and will find it difficult to mentor them. Therefore, although it is challenging to measure personality, personal competence must still be a requirement in teacher certification.

For pedagogical competence, the description provided by the UUGD is quite clear. This competence is what later becomes the hallmark of the teaching profession. It is very likely that the other three competencies-personal, professional, and social-are also requirements for other professions, but not so with pedagogical competence. Pedagogical competence is only required for the teaching profession. The ultimate goal of pedagogical competence is the ability to manage educational learning. To achieve this capability, one must understand the characteristics of students, the characteristics of the material being taught, and the direction (philosophy) of the education being implemented.

Professional competence, defined by the UUGD as the mastery of subject matter broadly and deeply, has sparked considerable debate. Many argue that what is described as professional competence by the UUGD is actually academic competence, specifically for subject content. Professional competence should encompass the comprehensive competencies of a teacher, including the other competencies. A teacher is considered professional if they can perform their duties well (professionally) (Danijela, 2018).

Social competence is aimed at equipping teachers as social beings, both within the school environment and the broader community. Teachers must have the ability to communicate and cooperate effectively with students, colleagues, and the wider community. There is no doubt about the importance of social competence for teachers, as they are also members of society, both within the school community and the general community where they live. The interpretation of these four

competencies should not be done separately but as a unified whole. The division into four competencies should be understood as a simplification method rather than a conceptual separation. Why? Because, in essence, a teacher's competence is a holistic entity, with interconnected parts that are conceptually integrated into one whole.

If we adopt the paradigm that the teacher's competencies form a cohesive whole, then the integration of these four competencies can be viewed from another perspective as follows. When a teacher performs their duties as a professional, it is not done routinely but is based on a solid concept/theory. In other words, the actions of a professional teacher are grounded in strong academic mastery, making it an art based on science. This means that although teaching involves many artistic elements, it is underpinned by solid theoretical mastery. From this perspective, a professional teacher must at least master academic competencies, which include:

Philosophy and Goals of Education: These serve as the compass for every educational activity. A teacher must understand and internalize the philosophical underpinnings and objectives of education, ensuring that their actions and teaching methods are aligned with these guiding principles. In-depth Knowledge of Student Characteristics: A teacher must deeply understand the characteristics of the students they serve. This includes recognizing the diverse learning needs, abilities, and backgrounds of students to tailor their teaching methods effectively.

Mastery of Subject Matter: A teacher must have a thorough understanding of the subject matter they teach. This involves not only knowing the content but also understanding its applications and relevance, allowing them to convey it effectively to students. Mastery of Various Teaching Models/Approaches: A teacher must be proficient in different teaching models and approaches that can be used to facilitate student learning. This includes being able to choose and implement the most appropriate methods to engage students and enhance their learning experiences. By mastering these academic competencies, a teacher can integrate personal, pedagogical, professional, and social competencies into a seamless whole, thereby functioning effectively and creatively in their professional role. This integration ensures that teaching is not only a routine task but an intellectually and artistically enriched profession, driven by both theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Attitudes of a Professional Teacher

As previously explained, the qualifications for being a professional teacher are linked to the Teachers and Lecturers Law (UUGD). A professional teacher should embody attitudes and actions that reflect their professionalism. As an educator, a professional teacher maintains a good image in the community by demonstrating that they are worthy role models. This involves how a teacher improves their service, knowledge, provides guidance and encouragement to students, and how they dress, speak, and interact with students and the community. This is related to the teacher's behavior in understanding, internalizing, and practicing their professional attitudes and abilities. The attitudes that a professional teacher should possess are detailed below (Baan, Gaikhorst, & Volman, 2020).

First, Attitude towards Legislation. According to item nine of the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics, teachers implement all government policies in the field of education. In the context of educational development in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture issues regulations and policies to be implemented by its apparatus. Teachers, as state apparatus and public servants, must understand these government policies in the field of education. Second, Attitude towards Professional Organizations. Teachers collectively maintain and improve the quality of the PGRI (Indonesian Teachers Association) as a means of struggle and service. The PGRI is a system, and its components are the teachers. Therefore, teachers act in accordance with the system's objectives.

The organization refers to all members with all their administrators and apparatus. Improving the quality of the teaching profession can be achieved through various ways, such as training, workshops, continuing education, in-service training, comparative studies, and other academic activities. Professional development activities are not limited to pre-service or further education in universities but can also be conducted after the teacher graduates from pre-service education or while they are in service.

Third, Attitude towards Colleagues. The relationship between professional members can be seen from two aspects: formal and familial relationships. A formal relationship is a professional relationship that needs to be maintained both within the work environment and overall relationships. The success of a school depends on the individuals involved. To ensure every school personnel functions properly, there must be mutual relationships among personnel, such as between the principal and teachers, teachers with other teachers, and other school personnel. Professional attitudes that need to be fostered include cooperation, mutual respect, understanding, and responsibility.

Fourth, Attitude towards Students. In the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics, it is stated that teachers dedicate themselves to guiding students to form fully developed Indonesians with Pancasila spirit. This concept includes several principles that a teacher must understand, namely the national education goals, the principle of guidance, and the principle of forming a fully developed Indonesian. Fifth, Attitude towards Work Environment. To create a good working atmosphere, two aspects must be considered: the teacher themselves and the relationship between the teacher, parents, and the community. Teachers should strive to create the best possible school atmosphere to support the teaching and learning process. The necessity for teachers to foster good relationships with parents and the surrounding community is outlined in the fifth item of the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics, which states that teachers maintain good relations with the wider community for the benefit of students.

Sixth, Attitude towards Leaders. Leaders have policies and directions in leading their organizations, and members must cooperate in achieving the organization's goals. Cooperation as demanded by leaders can include adhering to the directions and instructions provided. Cooperation can also be in the form of constructive suggestions and criticisms for achieving common goals and advancing the organization. Therefore, a teacher's attitude towards leaders should be positive, meaning they should cooperate to succeed in agreed programs both in and out of school. Seventh, Attitude towards Work. Serving diverse individuals requires high patience and meticulousness. Those who choose a particular career typically succeed if they love their career wholeheartedly, meaning they will do anything to ensure their career succeeds. They must be willing and able to carry out their duties and serve their clients well. In the sixth item of the teachers' code of ethics, teachers, both individually and in groups, are required to continually improve the quality and dignity of the profession.

In addition to the seven professional attitudes mentioned above, there are other considerations for a professional teacher. These relate to issues faced by students today, such as the decline in moral values or the trend of demoralization in student life. This demoralization is evident in deviant behaviors that students exhibit in society, often departing from religious norms. Thus, adequate education for prospective teachers in LPTKs (Educational Institutions for Teacher Training) must be considered. Several attitudes previously mentioned need to be strengthened with other attitudes related to the character of a professional teacher, including integrity, discipline, responsibility, the ability to collaborate with others, and the ability to develop oneself (Kasiya, 2023).

Values that Can Be Instilled Through Character Education for Teachers in LPTKs

The teaching profession is one that continually evolves, maintaining continuity between LPTKs (Educational Institutions for Teacher Training) and educational practice (Mustofa, 2007). To create professional teachers, not only in terms of knowledge but also in handling issues related to student demoralization, it is essential to prepare prospective teachers. Education for prospective teachers in LPTKs should not only equip them with the skills to educate students and provide scientific knowledge but also instill positive attitudes and values throughout their education.

Character education instills values that shape the character and traits of students (Dewi & Alam, 2020). It goes beyond providing knowledge or skills to students. In addition to imparting knowledge and skills, prospective teachers in LPTKs are instilled with positive values throughout their education. Character education here means holistic education that includes values, attitudes, enthusiasm, and spirit. It aims to instill good habits and attitudes (habituation) so that students act according to the values that become part of their personality (Yandri, 2022). Character is the foundation or soft skill that significantly supports one's success in life. Superior technical skills without good character are futile (Thabroni, 2022).

Several values can be instilled through character education. These values are embedded through teacher education in LPTKs and can be passed on to students when teachers begin their professional careers. These values include: Values of Faith and Devotion. These values can be instilled through religious education. The religious education provided in LPTKs should not only be theoretical or merely knowledge transfer but also positive application through real actions. Real actions that can cultivate values of faith and devotion to God can be drawn from the teachings of sacred texts. Values of Openness. Instilling openness values aims to ensure that students are open in expressing any issues they face. This openness is crucial because it helps alleviate and address the problems that students encounter. Values of Honesty. Instilling honesty is essential in developing positive traits within individuals. Honesty in all matters prevents a person from becoming a liar. Honesty is foundational for building moral individuals. Through honesty, future generations are expected to become moral individuals who are reluctant to lie, act selfishly, or harm others (Pinker, 2017). Honesty is also seen as a way to address issues like corruption in the nation. Values of Life Enthusiasm. Instilling the values of life enthusiasm enables students to face everyday challenges robustly. It fosters resilience, perseverance, and strength in dealing with life's challenges. High enthusiasm for life helps students become strong and resilient in the face of difficulties.

Values of Learning Enthusiasm. Instilling learning enthusiasm encourages students, especially prospective teachers in LPTKs, to continuously improve their abilities and knowledge. A high learning enthusiasm makes students eager to progress and develop, preventing them from being left behind by the times. This enthusiasm will eventually be passed on to their students when they enter the workforce. Self-awareness and Awareness of Others. Instilling self-awareness makes prospective teachers responsible for themselves. This responsibility ensures that they act in ways that do not harm themselves, particularly concerning their future. Awareness of others makes students respect others, feel a sense of community, and uphold social values, avoiding selfishness and egocentrism. Values of Unity. Unity values need to be instilled to prevent hostility and conflict among students. The spirit of unity and cohesion helps prospective teachers avoid the desire to isolate themselves from others. Fostering a sense of unity ensures that future teachers can instill this spirit in their students. Values of Positive Attitude and Positive Thinking. The spirit of fostering positive attitudes and thinking is crucial to avoid negative prejudice towards others. Negative thinking and prejudice can lead to mistrust and ultimately poor relationships with others. Instilling positive thinking helps prevent unfounded suspicion and promotes harmonious relationships.

Values of Self-discipline. Instilling self-discipline helps students achieve success and progress in life. High self-discipline ensures that prospective teachers can complete their tasks promptly, leading to the realization of their goals.

Values of Responsibility. Instilling responsibility towards oneself is key to success. Responsibility ensures that individuals do not shirk their duties. All tasks and actions must be accountable. Values of Togetherness. Togetherness values need to be nurtured to ensure that prospective teachers uphold a sense of community with others. These values help prevent selfcenteredness and egoism, fostering unity and cohesion. By instilling these values, it is hoped that prospective teachers will develop qualities of kindness and love towards their students. Indicators of students' character can include love for God, demonstrated through acts of worship, respect and obedience towards parents, and compassion towards others, shown through empathy and helping those in need. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology outlines values to be instilled in students, including religious values, self-love, social values, and love for the nation and country (national values) (Mawardi, 2022)...

CONCLUSION

To address the issues in the field of education, particularly those concerning students, professional teachers are needed. The preparation of professional teachers should ideally begin with teacher education in LPTKs. Through character education in LPTKs, positive attitudes are instilled in prospective teachers. The cultivation of positive attitudes and values is expected to shape positive character traits in prospective teachers. The values instilled in prospective teachers are hoped to be passed on to students as they enter the workforce. In essence, by focusing on character education in teacher training institutions, we aim to foster a generation of educators who not only possess academic knowledge but also exhibit integrity, responsibility, empathy, and a commitment to continuous self-improvement. These qualities are vital for creating a conducive learning environment and nurturing students who are not just academically competent but also morally upright and socially responsible individuals.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Universitas Wijaya Kusuma Surabaya for supporting this research.

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