



Educational Stewardship: Cultivating Career Excellence and Professionalism for Teachers

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received March 21, 2024

Accepted August 13, 2024

Available online August 25, 2024

Kata Kunci :

Pembelajaran dan Pelayanan,
Pengembangan Guru,
Peningkatan Pendidikan,
Perencanaan Karir,
Pertumbuhan Profesional

Keywords:

Career Planning,
Educational Improvement,
Professional Growth,
Service-Learning
Teacher Development



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ABSTRAK

Guru menghadapi tantangan yang signifikan dalam pengembangan karier, termasuk kurangnya visi, beban kerja yang berlebihan, pengembangan profesional yang tidak memadai, dan jam kerja yang panjang ditambah dengan tugas-tugas administratif. Proyek pengabdian masyarakat ini menerapkan konsep pembelajaran berbasis layanan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan profesional dan perencanaan karier guru. Inisiatif yang dilaksanakan pada bulan Maret 2024 di Yayasan Pendidikan Pride di Pematangsiantar, Sumatera Utara, mencakup seminar dan sesi pelatihan yang dirancang untuk membekali para pendidik dengan strategi pengajaran yang inovatif, teknik manajemen kelas yang efektif, dan metode untuk menumbuhkan lingkungan belajar yang positif. Program ini menggunakan seminar, pendampingan, dan diskusi interaktif untuk menyampaikan kontennya. Langkah-langkah evaluatif, termasuk penilaian pra dan pasca seminar dan umpan balik peserta, digunakan untuk mengukur dampak kegiatan terhadap pertumbuhan profesional guru. Hasil evaluasi menunjukkan bahwa inisiatif pengabdian masyarakat secara signifikan mendukung guru dalam perencanaan karier dan meningkatkan pengetahuan mengajar mereka. Temuan-temuan ini menggarisbawahi nilai inisiatif tersebut dalam memajukan pengembangan profesional pendidik, meningkatkan kemampuan mereka untuk memenuhi berbagai kebutuhan siswa dan menavigasi tantangan pendidikan. Disarankan agar sekolah melaksanakan evaluasi rutin dan memantau secara ketat pengembangan karier guru untuk mempertahankan dan mengembangkan pencapaian ini.

ABSTRACT

Teachers face significant challenges in career development, including lack of vision, excessive workload, inadequate professional development, and long hours coupled with administrative tasks. This community service project applies the concept of service learning to improve teachers' professional knowledge and career planning. The initiative, implemented in March 2024 at the Pride Education Foundation in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra, includes seminars and training sessions designed to equip educators with innovative teaching strategies, effective classroom management techniques, and methods to foster a positive learning environment. The program uses seminars, mentoring, and interactive discussions to deliver its content. Evaluative measures, including pre- and post-seminar assessments and participant feedback, were used to measure the impact of activities on teachers' professional growth. The results of the evaluation show that community service initiatives significantly support teachers in career planning and increase their teaching knowledge. These findings underscore the value of such initiatives in advancing educators' professional development, enhancing their ability to meet diverse student needs and navigate educational challenges. It is recommended that schools implement regular evaluations and closely monitor teacher career development to maintain and develop these achievements.

1. INTRODUCTION

Career development for teachers is an important aspect that significantly influences individual educators and the overall quality of education. Teachers play a fundamental role in shaping the future through guidance and teaching. Research has shown that teacher career development includes various components such as career planning, competency development, increased motivation, and continuous professional growth (Klaniené et al., 2022; Tukiran et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of

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empowering teachers to excel in their current roles and advance their careers through strategic planning and upskilling. Apart from that, the importance of career development for teachers also covers the wider field of education, because the professionalism and quality of teachers has a direct impact on the success of educational institutions and the implementation of higher education as a whole. Teacher expectations often include efforts to follow modern pedagogical practices, integrate technology into learning effectively, foster inclusive learning environments, and meet the diverse needs of students (Bernarto et al., 2020; Sudibjo & Manihuruk, 2019). However, conditions in many educational settings may not fully support these expectations. These gaps indicate that teachers face challenges such as limited access to professional development opportunities, outdated resources, large class sizes, and a lack of support to meet students' individual needs. This gap between expectations and conditions creates an urgent need for community service initiatives such as teacher seminars. Without adequate support and resources, educators will struggle to meet growing demands, causing stagnation in professional growth and potentially reducing the quality of education provided to students. By offering customized seminars, communities can bridge this gap by providing professionals with the tools, strategies and support they need to succeed in their roles (Kaban & Edward, 2020; Khong et al., 2022; Kotamena et al., 2024).

Additionally, teacher career development is critical to ensuring effective teaching practices and positive student outcomes. Teachers who participate in continuous professional development are better prepared to adapt to the ever-evolving educational environment and implement innovative teaching strategies (Sudibjo & Prameswari, 2021; Weinberg et al., 2021). By investing in teacher career advancement, educational institutions can foster a culture of lifelong learning and teaching excellence. Additionally, offering career guidance and development opportunities can increase job satisfaction among organizational members. For schools, this ultimately improves students' learning experiences. Therefore, encouraging career development for teachers not only serves to enhance individual professional growth but also as a strategy to raise educational standards and support holistic student development.

Professionalism in teaching is very important for educators because it directly affects the quality of teaching and student outcomes. Engaging in reform-focused professional development has provided significant benefits for teachers by improving their teaching methods and assessment practices (Desimone et al., 2022; Edward & Kaban, 2021). This type of professional development emphasizes high-level teaching strategies, which are important for improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement. A collaborative approach to professional development has been emphasized as critical to the continued growth and development of teachers. By participating in collaborative capacity building activities, teachers can enhance their professional learning and adapt more effectively to changes in curriculum and teaching methodology.

The effectiveness of professional development for teachers is closely related to its long-term nature, collaboration, and alignment with existing teacher knowledge and experience. Research shows that professional development is most successful when it is sustained over time, school-based, and tailored to teachers' daily practices (Christie & Menter, 2009; Wei & Chen, 2022). Additionally, engaging researchers through close collaboration with school districts, providing support aligned with curriculum standards, and offering ongoing coaching and mentoring to teachers are critical elements for successful professional development. By taking ownership of their professional growth and engaging in ongoing learning opportunities, teachers can improve their teaching practices and contribute to improved student learning outcomes. Therefore, teaching professionalism involves the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the development of practical, ethical, and behavioral skills that are essential for effective teaching. Teachers who engage in ongoing professional development, collaborate with colleagues, and take ownership of their growth as educators will be better prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students and adapt to the ever-evolving educational landscape. Investing in high-quality professional development that is aligned with best practices and focuses on continuous growth can help teachers increase the effectiveness of their teaching, improve student outcomes, and make positive contributions to the field of education (Diéguez-Soto, 2019; Gozal & Tukiran, 2023; Klingner, 2024).

The status of teacher performance, quality, competency and professionalism in Indonesia is a big challenge in various educational institutions. Despite these challenges, there has been a marked increase in scientific publications related to professional teachers in Indonesia, with a peak occurring between 2020 and 2023 (Kaban & Khong, 2020; Setianingrum & Costa, 2023). The surge in research results shows increasing interest and focus on understanding and improving teacher professional development in the world of Indonesian education. Professional identity frameworks among teachers, such as the integration of accounting and teacher professionalism, have been identified as important concepts to be implemented in the Indonesian education system. In addition, the need for teacher competency in Indonesia, as outlined in the 2013 Curriculum, underlines the importance of continuous professional development and training for educators (Daga et al., 2023; Syah et al., 2020) The importance of effective teaching is because the quality

of teachers in teaching English has been recognized as an important factor influencing proficiency achievement in Indonesia. These findings highlight the need for ongoing support and development opportunities to increase teacher competency and improve educational outcomes in the country.

The introduction of digital literacy training for rural teachers in Indonesia and the use of online learning platforms reflects the evolving educational landscape in the country (Sinaga et al., 2022; Soekamto et al., 2022). Apply Freedom to Learn plan, a recent policy in Indonesia, presents new challenges for all teachers, emphasizing the importance of readiness and adaptability in responding to changes in educational paradigms. As Indonesia faces the complexities of inclusive education and the integration of technology in learning, teachers play an important role in cultivating students' interest, autonomy and conceptual knowledge (Aprianti et al., 2023; Sanjaya et al., 2022). By addressing emerging trends and challenges in education, teachers in Indonesia can better equip themselves to meet the diverse needs of students and contribute to the improvement of the country's education system as a whole.

Existing research Teacher professional development has expanded significantly, with increasing emphasis on the importance of tailored and hands-on approaches to meet the specific needs of educators in each context. Traditional professional development models, characterized by universal workshops and lectures, are less effective in supporting meaningful teacher growth (Aypay & Ertem, 2022; Sudibjo et al., 2022; Sudibjo & Manihuruk, 2019). The specialty of this seminar lies in its tailored approach and community-based nature. Unlike conventional professional development initiatives, these seminars are designed collaboratively with input from local educational institutions, stakeholders, and experienced professionals. This collaborative effort ensures that seminar content is relevant, practical, and aligned with the needs of teachers in the community.

This community service took place at the Pride Education Foundation (YP) in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra. According to William K., who serves as a YP Pride representative, these schools face several problems related to educator career development and teaching professionalism. Teachers commonly face challenges that impact their job satisfaction, well-being, and effectiveness in the classroom. These challenges include burnout, praxis shock, the need for ongoing professional development, and the integration of technology in education. Burnout, a common problem among educators, can reduce job satisfaction and motivation, thereby impacting the quality of teaching and student outcomes. Practical shocks, which are commonly experienced by new career teachers, emphasize the importance of adequately preparing teachers for the realities of classroom teaching.

COVID-19 and the post-pandemic have further complicated the situation for teachers, especially in adapting to online and on-site teaching environments. (Francisco, 2019; Putri & Amran, 2022). Serving as Principal, challenges related to facilities, technical expertise, and the transition to distance learning have created significant obstacles for educators in providing quality education. Additionally, the demand for teachers to improve STEM PCK (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Pedagogical Content Knowledge) competencies through online professional development highlights the need for continuous learning to meet modern educational requirements. These difficulties underscore the need for ongoing support, training, and resources to enable teachers to effectively navigate the educational landscape. As teachers seek to adapt to new educational concepts, technologies and approaches, addressing systemic issues that impact their career progress and job satisfaction is critical (Francisco, 2019; Sinaga et al., 2022).

After realizing the problem above, a group of lecturers and students at Pelita Harapan University (UPH) Medan Campus carried out community service in the form of KKN for all teachers at YP Pride. The goal is to provide adequate support and resources and foster a culture of continuous professional development where YP Pride can empower its teachers to excel in their roles, improve student learning outcomes, and make positive contributions to the education system in Indonesia. The novelty in this research lies in the holistic approach used to integrate professional development with technology-based educational innovation and the demands of the 21st century. This research not only explores efforts to increase teachers' technical and pedagogical competence, but also emphasizes the importance of adaptability to global change and digital technology. This research aims to identify effective strategies that can support increasing the capacity of teachers in carrying out their roles more optimally, both in the classroom and in the school environment as a whole. With this increase in competency, it is hoped that teachers will not only be able to meet established professional standards, but also be able to innovate, adapt to changes in technology and continuously developing educational methods, and become inspiring role models for students.

2. METHOD

This type of research uses a qualitative approach, the subjects involved are teachers. The methods used are seminars, mentoring, and question-and-answer discussions. The community service carried out at

YP Pride was initiated by the school principal after realizing the problems and challenges faced by teachers regarding career development and professionalism in teaching. To understand the current situation better, a survey was delivered to all teachers before an internal seminar at YP Pride. 41 teachers filled out the questionnaire, and pre-tests showed that many of them felt they had insufficient knowledge about the teaching profession. Only less than 10% of teachers have an adequate understanding of how to improve their career development. Some respondents felt they had sufficient skills to become professional teachers and less than 10% of respondents strongly believed that the teaching profession was respected by society. However, almost all teachers realize the importance of improving their skills to develop their careers as teachers.

After receiving the survey results and interviewing the school principal, the next stage is to determine the method of delivering seminars and training as well as the day/date of the activity. Five lecturers and three students from the Faculty of Economics and Business, UPH Medan Campus were selected to deliver and assist with community service at YP Pride on Saturday, March 9 2024. Figure 1 below depicts the systematic implementation of the activities. The Community Service Plan is presented in Figure 1.

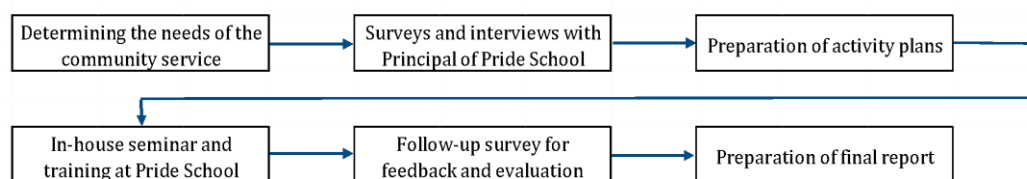


Figure 1. Community Service Plan

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of community service at YP Pride takes the form of in-house training and field seminars. Activities take place in the school multipurpose room from 09.00 until the afternoon. 41 teachers accompanied the Foundation representatives at the event. The demographics of teachers who took part in this KKN are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data

Information	Frequency	Percent	
Gender	Man	2	4.9
	Woman	39	95.1
Age (years)	21 - 30	29	70.7
	31 - 40	12	29.3
Length of work (years)	< 1	5	12.2
	1 - 3	12	29.3
	> 3	24	58.5

As seen in Table 1, most of the teachers working at YP Pride are women, this is very expected because YP Pride offers education from kindergarten to elementary school. About 70 percent of teachers are between 21 and 30 years old, and the rest are between 31 and 40 years old. More than half of the teachers have served at YP Pride for more than 3 years, and only 5 respondents have worked for less than a year. Therefore, the characteristics of the teaching staff at YP Pride are young women and show loyalty to the organization.

To achieve the KKN objectives, five lecturers were assigned to deliver seminars and training on the topics of career development and teaching professionalism. Coverage includes the subjects Collaborative Learning, Peer Coaching and Observation, National Board Certification, Financial Management, and Leadership Skills. Collaborative Learning fosters professional learning communities where teachers can share expertise and best practices, often organized by subject area or grade level. Peer Coaching and Observation aims to help teachers plan lessons, observe classrooms, and provide feedback to students. National Board Certification allows teachers to pass an assessment to receive advanced certification, which can lead to salary increases. Financial Management functions to assist teachers in planning and controlling

income and expenses as well as basic knowledge in investing money. Leadership Skills aims to develop self-confidence and credibility to encourage teachers to seek school leadership opportunities (Wanasida et al., 2021). This community service ended with a sharing session, question and answer session, school tour, and lunch with all teachers and school staff. Figures 2, Figures 3, and Figures 4 below show the activities carried out during community service at Pride School.



Figure 2. In-house Training and Onsite Seminars



Figure 3. Question and answer session



Figure 4. Closing Documentation

After the community service was delivered, an online survey was sent to all participants to find out more about their responses. The results of community service activities to foster professionalism and teaching careers for Pride School teachers are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Pre and Post Questionnaire Results

Statement Items	Before Service to the Community	After Community Service
1. I feel I have adequate knowledge about the teaching profession.	22 Neutral answers, 14 Agree answers, 5 Strongly Agree answers	17 Neutral answers, 20 Agree answers, 4 Strongly Agree answers
2. I am interested in a teaching career and am serious about carrying out my teaching profession.	10 Neutral answers, 21 Agree answers, 10 Strongly Agree answers	6 Neutral answers, 17 Agree answers, 18 Strongly Agree answers
3. I have sufficient professional skills to be a good teacher.	5 answers Strongly Disagree, 16 answers Neutral, 15 answers Agree, 5 answers Strongly Agree	1 answer Strongly Disagree, 12 answers Neutral, 22 answers Agree, 6 answers Strongly Agree
4. I always try to improve my competence and professionalism as a teacher.	12 Neutral answers, 23 Agree answers, 6 Strongly Agree answers	6 Neutral answers, 21 Agree answers, 14 Strongly Agree answers
5. I believe that the application of ethics and professional behavior is very important in teaching.	10 Neutral answers, 25 Agree answers, 6 Strongly Agree answers	2 Neutral answers, 16 Agree answers, 23 Strongly Agree answers
6. I feel professional development is important in improving the quality of learning in the classroom.	8 Neutral answers, 26 Agree answers, 7 Strongly Agree answers	3 Neutral answers, 18 Agree answers, 20 Strongly Agree answers
7. I believe teaching is a blessed and noble profession.	4 answers Disagree, 4 answers Neutral, 18 answers Agree, 15 answers Strongly Agree	2 answers Disagree, 1 answer Neutral, 12 answers Agree, 26 answers Strongly Agree
8. I am sure that being a teacher will be respected by society.	3 answers Strongly Disagree, 10 answers Disagree, 22 answers Neutral, 5 answers Agree, 1 answer Strongly Agree	1 answer Strongly Disagree, 5 answers Disagree, 19 answers Neutral, 12 answers Agree, 4 answers Strongly Agree
9. I have a high motivation to become a professional teacher.	10 Neutral answers, 20 Agree answers, 11 Strongly Agree answers	8 Neutral answers, 18 Agree answers, 15 Strongly Agree answers
10. I am ready to accept the commitment and consequences as a teacher.	5 answers Disagree, 15 answers Neutral, 13 answers Agree, 8 answers Strongly Agree	1 answer Disagree, 9 answers Neutral, 17 answers Agree, 14 answers Strongly Agree

Discussion

This can be seen from the survey results before and after community service, there is a substantial increase in understanding of the importance of professionalism as a teacher. From Statement 1 it can be seen that more than half of the teachers feel they have adequate knowledge about the teaching profession. More than 85% of teachers feel interested in a career as a teacher and are serious about carrying out their teaching profession, as shown in Statement 2. In addition, almost 70% of teachers feel they have sufficient professional skills to become good teachers, as shown in Statement 3. More many teachers are committed to improving their competence and professionalism as teachers, compared to the results of the pre-questionnaire in Statement 4. Statement 5 shows that the majority of teachers agree that teaching ethics and professional behavior are very important.

Furthermore, almost all teachers agree that professional development is important in improving the quality of learning in the classroom, as shown in Statement 6. It is also important to note that after community service was implemented, fewer teachers answered Disagree and Neutral to Statement 7, namely belief that the teaching profession is a blessing and noble. Likewise, fewer teachers answered Strongly Disagree, Disagree, and Neutral when given Statement 8, where being a teacher will be respected by society. More than 80% stated they are very motivated to become professional teachers in Statement 9.

Finally, Statement 10 shows that more and more teachers are ready to accept the commitment and consequences of their careers. All the findings above show that teachers have gained increased self-confidence, competence, job satisfaction, positive impact on students, and commitment to continue to grow and develop.

After the survey, teachers were also asked to provide input on training, seminars and suggestions for future community service (Gozal & Tukiran, 2023; Hung, 2020; Kaban & Khong, 2020). Overall, the post-community service survey showed significant increases and improvements in teachers' understanding and knowledge in developing their professionalism and careers. Several teachers' responses regarding new knowledge and experience are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. New Knowledge and Experience

Teacher Response	
The knowledge I got from the seminar was how to become a professional teacher.	I came to know the ways or tips to become a professional teacher, and teaching comes from the heart.
Everything must start from ourselves so that what we give to students can work well.	It made me more aware of my role as a teacher and my goals as a teacher.
Add insight that teachers must also be professional.	Financial management is very important for teacher career development.
Will become a professional teacher for the betterment of the next generation, those around you, and yourself.	Gain knowledge about financial literacy and what you need to know about what needs to be done to build our professionalism as teachers.

Post-survey results show a significant increase in teachers' understanding of professionalism and the importance of professional development compared to previous research (Klaniené et al., 2022; Klingner, 2024; Soekamto et al., 2022). Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of professional development for educators, they often demonstrate a gap between teachers' awareness of the importance of professional development and their actual engagement in professional growth opportunities. In contrast, the findings of this post-community service survey indicate a major change in teacher attitudes and perceptions (Kotamena et al., 2024; Tukiran et al., 2022). The substantial increase in teachers' understanding of professionalism indicates that this seminar effectively conveys the importance of continuous learning and growth in teaching. This shows that this seminar was successful in increasing awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of the role of professional development in improving the quality of teaching.

Apart from that, increasing teachers' knowledge and understanding in developing their professionalism and careers also differentiates this research from previous research. Although many professional development initiatives focus on imparting specific skills or techniques (Dihang, 2011) (Aboramadan et al., 2022), this seminar appears to have provided teachers with a broader understanding of professionalism and its implications for their careers. This shows that the seminar goes beyond surface-level learning and encourages teachers to reflect on their professional identities and aspirations.

The implications of this research are very significant for teacher career development and professionalism. It is hoped that the research results can provide practical guidance for developing more effective training programs and increasing teacher competency. With a deeper understanding of strategies that support professional growth, stakeholders in the education sector, including government, schools and training institutions, can design policies and programs that are more focused on improving teacher quality. Apart from that, the implications of this research can also help teachers strengthen pedagogical skills, increase their ability to adapt to changes in technology and curriculum, and encourage innovation in teaching. Ultimately, the career excellence achieved by teachers will have an impact on improving the overall quality of education, which has the potential to increase student achievement and form a generation that is better prepared to face future challenges. Overall, the post-survey results of this community service seminar show a deeper impact on teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards professional development compared to previous research. By effectively conveying the importance of professionalism and facilitating meaningful reflection, this seminar has contributed to positive changes in teachers' understanding and knowledge, as well as setting new standards for future professional development initiatives. However, this community service also has several limitations. This study may be limited to teachers at YP Pride which only accommodates early childhood educators. It is possible that the results achieved may not be applicable to other circumstances. Limited time and resources can also affect the results of this community service.

4. CONCLUSION

This community service provides opportunities for teachers to learn new skills, update knowledge, and build networks with colleagues. Teachers learn new teaching methods and techniques that can help them become more effective educators. This will lead to improved student outcomes and a more engaging learning environment. Training and seminars also help teachers update their knowledge of the latest educational trends and research, which can help them stay current and relevant in their field. Lastly, seminars and training help teachers develop soft skills, such as communication, leadership, and problem solving, which are important for their career advancement. Understanding the importance of professional development and career growth for teachers, it is recommended that YP Pride and other schools offer several programs and activities to undertake in the future. First, teachers can attend conferences and workshops to learn about the latest educational trends, research, and best practices. These events can provide valuable opportunities to network and collaborate with other professionals in the education industry. Second, teachers can participate in professional development programs offered by their school, district, or educational organization

5. CONFESSION

This community service is supported and funded by the Faculty of Economics and Business, Pelita Harapan University, No. PM-038-L-FEB/III/2024.

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