



## Professionalism on teacher's perception

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### Abstract

Regarding the phenomenon of teacher's professionalism in Yogyakarta that is considered to be low, this study aims to explore the perceptions of teacher related to that matter. This research uses quantitative and qualitative approach with descriptive research type. Data were collected through open-questionnaires and interviews. The subject in this study consists of 74 teachers in Yogyakarta that includes public elementary school teachers, junior high school teachers and high school teachers. It is found that, based on teacher perceptions: (1) Professionalism includes expertise, social ability, self-integrity and productive behavior. (2) Teacher understands the term professional teacher better than teacher professionalism.

**Keywords:** *professionalism, teacher, perception*

### Introduction

In current professional world, quality of work is a must for everyone with certain profession. The rapid development of knowledge, technology and information provide great consequences for creating transformation across various sectors of life. These changes become inevitable so that in adjusting to that demands, everyone with profession needs to improve his quality of work. The demands of work professionalism cannot be halted anymore, especially for professionals. Professionals are expected to fulfill the best quality of work in accordance with the standard of professional practice.

The demands of work professionalism are also felt by teachers. Teacher, as a profession and a resource, is very central in educational sector. Currently, as one of the professions under the spotlight, it is impossible for teacher not to meet that expectation. Teachers are expected to perform their duties professionally. They play a significant role in student's growth and psychological development; even they are the key in determining quality education. Therefore, professionally, the task of teacher is not only related to intellectual ability, but also social and moral ones (Smylie et al., in Good, 2008). With their profession, teachers are expected to perform

their duties professionally. A person will be regarded as a professional if he is generally able to demonstrate expertise in accordance with the field of his profession. Regarding the responsibilities, professional teachers have personal, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual responsibilities. The personal responsibility of the teachers is demonstrated by the ability to understand, accept, manage and develop themselves. Social responsibility is demonstrated by the ability to understand that they are a part of the social environment and required to interact within it effectively. Intellectual responsibility is manifested in the ability to gain thorough understanding in knowledge and to utilize it objectively. Moral responsibility includes the ability of teachers to understand and to conform to moral rules that exist in environment. The responsibility of spirituality can be manifested in the behavior of the teacher as a spiritual being. These demands are essential in teaching profession today. However, in the field, there are still many teachers considered behaving unprofessionally, or even unable to portray themselves as a professional one.

There are several studies that prove that teacher professionalism in Indonesia is somehow still low. This is demonstrated in a study conducted by the Ministry of National Education (Kemdiknas) and presented by the

Head of BPSDMP and PMP. It is found that a post-grant certification program through portfolio assessment since 2005 has not brought a major impact on teachers' ability to teach in the classroom (Burhani, 2011). It can unveil the fact that some teachers, who have been assessed professional in the profession, in reality, are not that professional.

The lack of professionalism of teachers is also coupled with the findings of some violations in professional ethics. Suharjono (2006), with his experience as a member of a team of reviewers of scientific papers of teachers and supervisors, finds that not a few scientific papers which are submitted by the teacher are the work of others or generally taken (plagiarized) from thesis or research report. This can provide an illustration of teachers' behavior which is still not in accordance with norms. Meanwhile, according to Carr (2000), professionalism in the teaching profession is inseparable from the ethical function as a moral reference in providing practice services.

Another study was conducted by Ujang Fahmi from Yogyakarta Education Research Network (JP2KY) in early 2010, who reviewed Portrait of Yogyakarta Teacher Professionalism in Learning Activities. The result shows that 75% of the participants were not using teaching media in teaching (Latief, 2010). This fact shows that some teachers in Yogyakarta have not been able to demonstrate the professionalism, especially in terms of expertise. Teachers are expected to be able to manage problems in classroom that require solutions in the use of technology and appropriate learning methods. However, the reality is still far from it. The phenomena described above show that there are some problems in their efforts needed to become a professional. Teachers have not been able to meet the standards of professionalism that is expected. This of course provides consequences on the quality of teacher resources.

Teacher as a human resource becomes the main resource of education and a crucial one. As regard how significant teacher resource is, they have now come under the spotlight with problems concerning their quality. This is related to the status of teachers

as a profession that has an enormous role in education. Education is expected to show quality, not only in producing the quality of young generation, but also broadly able to meet the economic and political demands of a nation. Education becomes an important force. It will even become a strategic industry in the century of knowledge-based economy (Cai-Feng, 2010). The quality of education will determine the competitiveness of a nation, which is largely defined by the quality of various factors and resources. One of those is teacher resources. In term of profession, they are expected to perform their duties professionally. A person will be considered a professional if he is generally able to demonstrate certain characteristics and meet the professionalism.

To be a professional, teacher needs to go through a process of self-development. Self-development is a personal one, in which a person takes responsibility for self-study and to choose meaning in achieving it (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 2007). This is based on the idea that humans basically have a unique psychological ability to perform self-reflection (Hartung & Subich, 2010). It means, to be professional, potentially, teachers responsible to develop themselves through self-reflection. Self-reflection will become the basis for teachers in instituting themselves to become professional.

Hartung and Subich (2010) emphasize that for the present life, workers are required to be able to self-directed by adjusting and managing the work life with its major changes and uncertainties, rather than relying only on the organizations to direct and support them. With this, a person will engage consciously to learn continuously and reflect on how to acquire skills, skills and knowledge (Hartung & Subich, 2010). Finally, self-development is something related to increasing capacity and willingness to take control and accountability (Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 2007).

Regarding the demands of professionalism in work, teachers must develop themselves according to the criteria of these demands. A question arises afterward, 'What is teacher's understanding and perceptions concerning professionalism?'. Understanding and

perception will grow into their benchmark to develop into a professional. But in reality, the term professionalism is not simple for some people, even teachers. In its daily use, the term professionalism is often associated with others. Those are 'profession' and 'professional'. The terms profession, professionalism, and professional are terms that are often used side by side to describe conditions relating to quality of work.

In APA Dictionary Psychology, the term 'profession' is defined as a job requiring specialized knowledge in which guidelines and rules of conduct have been built to influence issues such as minimum criterions to enter professional training, performance criterion, fees, general practice, and also ethical relation among members of the profession and clients. According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Dictionary for Indonesian Language), the profession is a field of work based on certain skill-education (skills, vocational, and so on). Based on this understanding, profession is a field of work that requires expertise and background of particular education, with criterion that must be met, and also code of ethics according to field of work.

While professionalism generally includes five criteria: (a) providing public services; (b) involves expertise both theoretically and practically; (c) has an ethical dimension; (d) requires management and regulation for the purpose of direction and order; (e) as for professional practitioners, it requires high autonomy, especially in decision-making related to practice (Carr, 2000). Whereas Robson (2006) states that professionalism includes autonomy, professional knowledge and responsibility. The opinions of the aforementioned two experts emphasize the different aspects of professionalism, even there are also similarities in several aspects, related to one another. Carr's concept has a wider scope compared to Robson. Responsibility is closely related to something that needs to be accounted for and this leads to autonomy (Robson, 2006). With autonomy, teacher has the opportunity to make decisions and make choices about the best behavior in providing practice services.

Professionalism is closely related to the use of the term 'professional'. The term professional can be divided into two meanings: 'being a professional' or 'behaving professionally' (Englund, in Frelin, 2013; Day, 1999). Being a professional refers to a person who has a membership in a particular profession and has the ability to meet professionalism, while behaving professionally is to success in performing a job that requires skill, although sometimes one possesses no membership in that particular profession. In this case, having a certain profession does not guarantee a person will be able to finish the job professionally. Otherwise, someone who does not have that profession is likely show success in completing the work professionally. This is in line with the opinion of Kanes (2011) that professionalism refers to the quality of professional work. The statement can be interpreted as fulfilling the standard of professionalism, one will be judged to have quality professional work. The professionalism of the teacher will be seen in his behavior in performing the duties so as to distinguish himself from the non-professional.

Currently, these three terms are very closely related to the world of education, especially the quality of teacher's work. Associated with the existence of teachers as a profession, being professional is an appropriate term that meets the demands of current professionalism of teachers, those who have profession as teachers and able to meet the criterions of teacher professionalism. Being professional, it is assumed that the responsibility of providing professional services in preparing students as human beings to develop, both physiologically and psychologically.

Given the importance of teacher resources, even it is the key in determining the quality of education, it is essential to do study concerning the professionalism of teachers. In this regard, it is necessary to conduct research to explore how teachers' perceptions of professionalism as criterions needs to be met in order to fulfill professional service practice standards. The research findings are expected to provide a perception concerning teachers' understanding of professionalism.

## Method

This research uses quantitative and qualitative approach. The types of research include descriptive research, which aims to obtain data on the results of exploration of teachers' perceptions of professionalism.

The study involved 74 teachers in Yogyakarta that includes public elementary school teachers, junior high school teachers and high school teachers. Data collection was conducted through open-questionnaire and interview. Respondents were asked to answer questions about teachers' perceptions related to the criterion of professionalism. Based on questionnaire results data, it is then performed the process of coding (coding). Data are tabulated through identification and grouping by specific category. Furthermore, the data were analyzed by quantitative analysis of descriptive technique percentage. While interview data is used to confirm the questionnaire data. Based on the answers of questionnaire and interview, we recognize how far the understanding and perception of teachers about professionalism.

## Findings and Discussion

Based on open questionnaire answers, this exploratory study find that there are four professionalism criteria which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Perceptions of professionalism

No	Professionalism Criterion	Percentage
1	teacher expertise	43%
2	social ability	18%
3	self-integrity	17%
4	productive behavior	22%
		100%

That study provides an illustration that professionalism is in accordance with teacher perceptions includes criteria such as teacher expertise, social skills, personal integrity and productive behavior. Overall, the result of this exploration finds three criteria of appropriate professionalism, and is related to the concept of Carr (2000), namely expertise, social skills and self-integrity. The explanation of each of these criteria is as follows:

### Teacher's Expertise

Expertise is the form of teacher behavior in mastering the learning strategy and the field of science he teaches. The answers such as designing the learning process, carrying out learning activities, managing the class, and how broad and deep the material presented is.

Teacher's capacity in the form of expertise, which Carr also classifies as one of the criterion of professionalism, is significant to be possessed by a professional. This criterion includes both theoretical and practical skills. Expertise that should be owned by teachers related to the comprehension of the material related to the process of implementation of learning, and the subject that is being taught. This criterion becomes principal in conducting professional practice services.

### Social Ability

The classification of this criterion consists of questionnaire answers that describe the behavior of teachers during the interaction with students, parents and his fellow teachers, especially in socializing and communicating effectively. The answers included in this criterion include socializing and efficient communication among students, parents and fellow teachers.

The social ability criterion, in the definition of Carr, has much to do with public service criterion. In accordance with professional elements, public services are performed by teachers to meet the needs of others whose orientation is satisfaction. According to Gastelaars (2009), a service is more oriented towards interaction to client. In the practical field, the services of teachers can not be separated from social interaction by educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. Associated with the service to the students, as the person who is responsible for them, teacher also serves as parents. This work is also applied to fellow teachers. Therefore, social skill is vital in professional services.

### Self-integrity

Self-integrity is the behavior of teachers that is based on noble and moral values,

which include the behavior of maintaining consistency, responsibility, and upholding the values of rules. The answers includes, for instance, maintaining trust, honest, keeping promises, consistency in stance, prioritizing the obligation as a teacher, accepting the results that have been done, and executing what has been agreed.

The integrity of the teacher, which in Carr (2000) concept close to the codes of ethics criterion, is a criterion of teacher's moral behavior. Based on the term, ethics is associated with the standard of ethics where ethics itself affects one's behavior (Dutelle, 2011). Furthermore, Dutelle also states that ethics is about wrong and right, good and bad, benefit and loss. As a professional, teacher is able to fulfill the true, good and beneficial traits such as being responsible, honest, disciplined, obedient to the rules, wise and trustworthy, which psychologically portrays the integrity of a teacher.

#### Productive Behavior

Productive behavior refers to constructive and imaginative teacher behavior, and also capability in making a tangible and significant contribution to the potential of oneself and the environment. These productive behaviors include self-development and adaptation to the environment. The answers included in this behavior are practicing training outcomes, conducting research and scientific work, developing learning aids, meeting new work demands and being directly involved in school development. This productive criterion is a criterion of findings in a preliminary study that is not found in the criterion of professionalism, neither in the concept of Carr (2000) nor Robson (2006).

Productive behavior becomes a characteristic of teacher's professionalism. With these criterion, teachers are able to develop themselves and the environment to produce innovations that support his profession as a teacher. Therefore, teachers actively participate in professional development activities, even encouraged to make changes to improve the quality of work and profession.

Two criteria of Carr (2000) and Robson (2006) which are not found in this study are

the need for organization, regulation and autonomy. The need for organization and regulation is a technical criterion aimed at direction and order. This is more relevant to professionalism criterion in the formal level of professional organizations and irrelevant as the psychological capacity that teachers need to have. The autonomous criterion is considered irrelevant as one of criterion of professionalism, based on teacher's experience in the field. Based on the interview that was conducted to three teachers in May 2015, so far decision-making that requires more autonomy is done by their leaders. The Carr's criterion of professionalism (2000) states that autonomy is not perceived as a criterion of professionalism by the teacher. This is because so far teacher does not feel the need for autonomy in his professional services so it can not be used as a reference to assess the professionalism of teachers. Therefore, the criteria for autonomy are not considered as criteria of professionalism.

The lack of relevance and the absence of some of these criterion do not mean that the particular criterion are not there whatsoever in the teaching profession, but it is understood that teachers appear in certain criterion as a result of environmental influence. Professionalism is seen as a social construction and as a matter of cultural and geographical differences in its interpretation (Townsend & Bates, 2007). In that view, teachers' understanding of professionalism is psychologically strongly influenced by the environment in which the profession is located, so that teachers interpret the professional characteristics in accordance with the surrounding environment. Environmental stimulation will determine how teachers perceive and understand the criterion of teacher professionalism.

This study also finds additional data indicating that there is an overlap of understanding between the professionalism of teachers and professional teachers. Based on the questionnaire results, teachers do not distinguish between the two criterion. It can be shown from the percentage of each criterion on the result of the same relative questionnaire. But on the basis of interviews,

the term professional is more understandable than professionalism. This is in accordance with the opinion of Kane (2011) which states that professionalism is difficult to interpret. Kane further states that this is because it is a challenging word with a variety of interrelated meanings. Thus, the use often overlaps to each other.

### Conclusion

There are three things that can be concluded from the results of this study. First, according to teacher's perception, professionalism includes teacher's expertise, social ability, self-integrity and productive behavior. The second, professionalism and professional are terms that are related to each other. A person who meets professionalism can be perceived as a professional. And the third, teachers understand the term professional better than teacher professionalism.

Based on this results, researchers gives suggestions: (1) This finding of teacher's perception of professionalism can be used in subsequent research that examines teacher work quality; (2) Researchers who are interested in teacher professionalism can develop the findings further into a bigger scope. It can also be applied to other research themes that have to do with teacher professionalism.

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