

STRATEGIES FOR RESOLUTING ETHICAL DILEMMA IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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Abstrak

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Professional ethics constitutes a fundamental foundation in shaping teachers' professional conduct, particularly when faced with ethical dilemmas in educational practice. Teachers are not only required to master pedagogical and academic competencies, but also to uphold moral integrity, responsibility, and ethical awareness in every decision-making process. This article aims to analyze strategies for resolving ethical dilemmas in teachers' professional practice by emphasizing ethical principles, professional codes of conduct, and moral reasoning. This study employs a literature review method by examining relevant articles, books, and regulatory documents related to ethical dilemmas, teacher professionalism, and ethical decision-making. The findings indicate that ethical dilemmas in education often arise from conflicts between equally important moral values, requiring systematic and reflective decision-making. The nine-step ethical decision-making framework proposed by Rushworth M. Kidder provides a comprehensive analytical tool for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers to evaluate values, stakeholders, facts, and consequences objectively. The application of ethical principles—namely outcome-based thinking, rule-based thinking, and care-based thinking—supports the development of sound moral judgment. This study concludes that strengthening ethical understanding and applying structured ethical decision-making strategies can enhance teachers' professionalism, prevent conflicts of interest, and promote ethical leadership in educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is a noble calling, one that not only requires mastery of the subject matter to be taught but also plays a crucial role in shaping and developing human resources for the advancement of the nation. Educator professionalism is a fundamental element in determining the quality of education. This aspect encompasses not only academic and pedagogical competence but also adherence to moral and ethical principles in carrying out the profession. Complete professionalism requires the alignment of cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and psychomotor (practice) competencies, all of which are framed by moral integrity.

Teachers play a crucial role in education. They are central figures with a strategic position in instilling character values, broadening knowledge, and shaping the skills of students as the nation's next generation. The teaching profession is not only considered a noble and honorable profession, but also a significant responsibility in building the foundations of a developed and sustainable civilization. The importance of a teacher's role is reflected in Japanese history following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when the Emperor of Japan first inquired about the number of remaining teachers. This demonstrates that teachers are not merely educators, but also guardians of civilization and determinants of a nation's future. Quality education cannot be achieved without competent and dedicated teachers.

Professional ethics can be understood as a foundation of values that guide an individual in carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities with dignity. In today's organizations, professional ethics serves not merely as normative rules but also as the spirit that shapes a work culture of honesty, responsibility, and integrity. The application of ethics requires a balance between personal interests, institutional demands, and concern for the wider community. Especially for individuals in strategic positions as decision-makers, ethical values serve as the primary compass in determining policies that impact the social and economic lives of many parties.

In the context of Indonesian education, teacher professionalism is reflected not only in their mastery of knowledge, teaching skills, and classroom management abilities, but also in their ethical attitudes and behaviors demonstrated in their daily lives. The Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics, formulated by the Indonesian Teachers' Association and affirmed in Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, serves as a moral guideline for teachers in carrying out their roles. This code not only regulates the technical aspects of the profession but also provides a value guideline for how a teacher should behave, both within the school environment and in social life. By adhering to this code of ethics, teachers are expected to maintain their integrity, respect the dignity of students, and uphold the honor of their profession. This attitude is an important foundation in creating a safe and humane learning environment and supporting the growth of positive character in students.

In Indonesia, teacher professionalism is often associated with various efforts to improve the quality of education through training, certification, and competency development. However, the essence of professionalism should go beyond that. It can also include a commitment to professional ethics, or the ability to build mutually respectful relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. By upholding moral values, teachers are expected to maintain integrity in every attitude and action they demonstrate. Therefore, the existence of a teacher code of ethics plays a crucial role, not only in regulating the technical aspects of the profession, but also in guiding fair behavior,

maintaining the confidentiality of students' personal information, and fostering mutual respect for all parties involved in the educational process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a literature review approach by reviewing several articles with the keywords ethical dilemma, teacher professionalism, and decision making. By definition, literature review research focuses on an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in this case, professional ethics by collecting descriptive data and interpreting the meaning behind it. The research subjects in this context are the principles in the Code of Ethics for Teachers' Professions as well as various ethical and spiritual foundations that support teacher professionalism. The articles used in this research were obtained from Google Scholar, and also books.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ethics, often referred to as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that discusses human actions in achieving life goals. Therefore, in this sense, ethics discusses the rightness or wrongness of human behavior and goals, or in other words, it discusses how humans act and do things. Turnip and Siahaan also explain the same thing, namely that ethics is a reference to procedures, rules, guidelines, and norms in carrying out an action, with the aim of ensuring that an action that occurs is not viewed negatively by the surrounding community. Ethics is also interpreted as a pattern of behavior or rules derived from human reason, as an effort to determine good and bad actions. Based on this opinion, it was found that ethics is a standard of behavior derived from human reason to determine the rightness or goodness of something.

Franz Magnis-Suseno defines ethics into three parts. First, ethics consists of values and moral norms that can regulate the behavior of an individual and society. Then, second is the code of ethics, which explains that there is a basic set or moral values. And finally, ethics includes an understanding of what is good and bad, so that ethics functions as a way to answer various questions about what is good and bad (Magnis-Suseno, 2006). Vardiansyah in Kurniawan then explains that there are three things that can be understood from the definition of ethics, namely: first, the existence of an object that discusses human actions. Second, from its source, which is derived from philosophy and common sense. Third, from its function, namely as a determinant and also an assessment related to human actions (Kurniawan & et al., 2023).

The word profession comes from the Latin word *professio*, meaning statement or recognition, which is equivalent to *accupation* in English, *accupation* in Latin, and *occupation* in Indonesian, meaning a job, activity, or activity (Arif, 2020). In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, profession is defined as a field of work based on certain expertise (vocational, skills, etc.) education (Amin, 2017).

As explained previously, if a profession is a job that has the requirement of skills and knowledge by following a level of education, then from that meaning there are terms related to the profession depending on the aspects being assessed, as will be explained below: a. Profession, is a job that can be pursued after gaining knowledge and skills from a long training or education process with certain standards (Nurhardi, 2016). b. Professional, is a person who has a job or profession based on ability and can also adhere to moral values that will be a basis and direction of his actions (Marzuki, 2017). c. Professionalism, as explained by Wignjosoebroto by explaining that professionalism is

an understanding that wants an activity that can be present in the community environment with the provision of expertise and a calling to serve, and also help in the midst of the darkness of life (Hasibuan, 2017). d. Professionalism is a combination of two things: the members' attitudes toward their profession. And the second is the degree of expertise and knowledge they possess in carrying out their work. Therefore, a professional who possesses professionalism will not want to undertake work outside their field (Nurhardi, 2016). e. Professionalization is a process to improve the competence, qualifications, expertise, and knowledge of professional members through education, both in-service and pre-service (Yorman & et al., 2023). Based on this explanation, it can be interpreted that a profession has several word developments that indicate a job, a subject or someone who carries out a job, and understands work attitudes, as well as activities in improving competence. This is done so that the concept of profession does not overlap and also facilitates in-depth analysis.

Furthermore, when discussing teachers, the person who comes to mind is someone who provides knowledge in school and outside of school. Suriansyah explains that the term teacher is associated with *digugu* (Gu) and *ditiru* (Ru), which indicates that a teacher is someone who has perfection in a moral aspect. Furthermore, the explanation describes a teacher from two perspectives, the first is to view teachers as scientists who have an obligation to teach knowledge. And the second is that a teacher has moral perfection (Suriansyah et al., 2015). In the law, the definition of a teacher as stated in National Education Article 39 paragraph 2, Law No. 20 of 2003, namely: "Educators are professional staff whose duties include planning and implementing the learning process, assessing learning outcomes, providing guidance and training, and conducting research and community service." Then continued in Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers with the explanation: "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, basic education and also secondary education."

In an ethical dilemma, according to Rusworth M. Kidder (1995) in the book *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*, there are at least 9 steps to testing decisions. The 9 steps include: 1) Recognizing conflicting values; 2) determining who is involved in the situation; 3) gathering facts; 4) testing right or wrong; 5) testing thoroughly; 6) implementing the resolution principle; 7) investigating trilemma options; 8) making a decision; 9) reviewing the decision and reflecting on it. The details will be explained in a subsequent explanation. In decision-making, there are several steps that will be explained; the first step, namely, the ethical dilemma, is an introduction to conflicting values. This is to avoid a subjective point of view on a decision-making. Then there is maturity in moral reasoning in understanding the conflict between values in an ethical dilemma, which is actually a learning space that forms maturity of thinking and wisdom in determining attitudes. This situation requires trained reasoning skills so that individuals are able to make decisions independently, consciously and responsibly.

The first step in addressing an ethical dilemma is identifying the parties affected by the decision to be made. At this stage, empathy and compassion, especially for teachers and principals, are crucial. Ethical issues are always linked to moral values inherent in social relationships, so resolving them requires collective involvement. Selfish attitudes can actually obscure empathy, which allows one to understand others' feelings and build

more humane interpersonal relationships. The next stage requires gathering facts that reflect the real situation. Wise ethical decisions cannot simply rely on conceptual understanding; they must be grounded in data and reality. Comprehensive information helps understand the background of the problem, the influencing factors, and the potential future impacts. Furthermore, decisions need to be tested through a multi-faceted analysis of right and wrong, encompassing legal aspects, professional standards, conscience, public policy, and the exemplary behavior of role models. This process yields three primary ways of thinking: rule-based thinking, consideration of the ultimate impact, and prioritizing compassion. If a decision fails to address any of these considerations, caution becomes the wisest option to avoid moral harm.

In ethical dilemmas, individuals are often confronted with situations where right and wrong are confronted, such as personal and collective interests, justice and compassion, loyalty and truth, and short-term and long-term considerations. Understanding these paradigms helps individuals see issues more holistically and deeply, not simply categorizing them but also weighing equally important virtues. Resolving ethical dilemmas can also be achieved through three main approaches: outcome orientation, adherence to rules, and concern for others. Furthermore, an openness to exploring alternatives beyond the two seemingly contradictory choices is necessary. This approach encourages creativity and wisdom in finding fairer and more humane solutions. Ethical decision-making is closely related to the development of moral reasoning. Moral thinking develops as individuals develop increasingly rational and universal reasons, as proposed by Jean Piaget and further developed by Lawrence Kohlberg. These universal values guide individuals to act beyond personal interests and prioritize the common good. The final stage of the ethical decision-making process is reflection. After a decision is made, individuals need to review the process and its impact, and draw lessons learned to prepare them for future ethical dilemmas. This reflection strengthens moral sensitivity and improves the quality of future decision-making. All these stages can serve as analytical references for teachers, principals, and policymakers in making decisions. While not rigid, this framework helps develop comprehensive and synthetic thinking skills. With a mature understanding of ethics, individuals are expected to be able to act based on moral obligations and universal principles, as Philip H. Phenix emphasized that ethics is oriented toward right actions based on universal obligations.

Based on the description, it can be concluded that the pattern of ethical dilemma decision-making aims to equip teachers and prospective school leaders to be able to make decisions wisely, morally, and based on human values, so that the policies taken can minimize conflicts of interest and violations of the code of ethics in the educational environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on this explanation, it can be understood that ethics plays a primary role in helping humans distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate actions, which are rooted in the ability to think, life values, and moral norms that exist within oneself and the social environment. In the professional realm, especially in the teaching profession, ethics serves as a compass that guides attitudes and behavior, not only in mastering knowledge and skills, but also in maintaining the integrity, sense of responsibility, and exemplary behavior in carrying out the role of educator.

As professional educators, teachers play a strategic role in making value-laden

decisions and are often faced with ethical dilemmas. Therefore, mature moral reasoning is required to wisely consider the impact of each decision. The nine-step framework for ethical decision-making serves as a reflective guide to help teachers, principals, and policymakers weigh various interests, values, and consequences fairly and objectively.

Through a deep understanding and application of ethics, it is hoped that every decision in educational practice will not only comply with formal regulations but also uphold the values of justice, concern for others, and universal moral principles. This will maintain professionalism in education while minimizing the potential for conflicts of interest in every policy and action taken.

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