

# EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE PROFESSIONALISM OF LECTURERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract-** This paper discusses efforts to improve the professionalism of lecturers in Indonesian universities in the face of the dynamics of globalization and technological advances. Universities are faced with a strategic role in producing quality future generations, not only as higher education institutions, but also centers of excellence in science and innovation. The role of lecturers as agents of learning, research, and career guidance for students is crucial in meeting society's expectations for graduates who have global competitiveness. This article explains the importance of improving lecturers' professionalism, influencing factors, university strategies, the impact on learning, and the role of universities in creating a supportive environment for professionalism improvement. Challenges such as online learning and limited resources are recognized, and solutions such as continuous training, collaboration, institutional support, and supporting policies are proposed.

**Keywords:** lecturer professionalism, higher education, lecturer competence, higher education

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the strategic role of universities in producing quality next generation is increasingly prominent. Universities are not only institutions of higher education, but also centers of excellence in science and centers of innovation that have a major impact on the development of society and science as a whole. This is related to the increasingly high expectations of society for the quality of graduates who have high competitiveness in the global labor market (Jovane et al., 2008).

According to Neo and Chen (2007), in the midst of the changing dynamics of society, universities are the main catalyst in shaping students' adaptability mentality and critical thinking skills. In addition, as higher education providers, universities are responsible for producing graduates who have skills and knowledge that are relevant to the demands of industry and society. This makes the role of lecturers as agents of learning and teaching very decisive.

The importance of the role of lecturers is not only limited to providing learning materials, but also guiding students to develop analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills. Lecturers are also expected to help students to design and achieve their career goals by providing appropriate guidance and support. Therefore, the role of lecturers is not only limited to providing knowledge, but also shaping students' character, ethics, and moral values (Hafferty & Franks, 1994; Lehmann et al., 2004).

As researchers, lecturers also have an important role in maintaining the relevance of the curriculum to the latest scientific developments. Research conducted by lecturers not only enhances the academic excellence of universities, but also makes a meaningful contribution to the development of science and technology. This can spur innovation and progress in various fields, creating a dynamic and progressive learning environment.

Lecturers as academic drivers are expected to actively participate in developing policies and strategies to improve the quality of higher education (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012). This includes efforts to strengthen cooperation between study programs, improve the quality of research and scientific publications, and ensure that the curriculum presented is in accordance with the needs of the global labor market (Munir et al., 2022). That way, universities can better respond to the challenges and demands of the development of society and science in this era.

However, in some cases, there are indications that the level of professionalism of lecturers in some universities may be of concern. Lecturers' professionalism includes aspects of teaching skills, research quality, contribution to curriculum development, as well as involvement in community service activities (Celik, 2011). The lack of professionalism of lecturers can have a negative impact on the quality of learning, the reputation of universities, and the readiness of graduates to enter the workforce. If students feel that lecturers are less professional and unprepared in the learning process, then it is likely that the level of student satisfaction will decrease (Mardikaningsih, 2015).

Higher education is faced with increasingly complex challenges, including public demands for innovative education, the dynamics of information technology development, and global competition in the world of education. Therefore, increasing the professionalism of lecturers is an urgent need to answer these demands and challenges.

Internal and external factors such as lack of training, limited resources, and unsupportive policies can also hinder efforts to improve lecturers' professionalism. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research to comprehensively understand the factors that affect lecturers' professionalism and formulate appropriate solutions.

Lecturer professionalism is also related to the government's vision of improving the quality of higher education in Indonesia. Efforts to improve lecturer professionalism can be a significant contribution in realizing this vision, because professional lecturers can create a quality learning environment and have a positive impact on the overall quality of higher education and this can improve lecturer performance (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022).

Overall, an in-depth understanding of the strategic role of universities and lecturers in producing quality future generations is very important. Therefore, research on efforts to improve the professionalism of lecturers is relevant and urgent to answer the challenges and demands of the present and the future.

By understanding this background, this paper will review efforts to improve the professionalism of lecturers in higher education so that it can provide deep insights to formulate effective strategies and steps in improving the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

The following are the problem formulations that will be studied in this paper related to improving the professionalism of lecturers in higher education:

1. What are the factors that influence the improvement of lecturers' professionalism in higher education?
2. What approaches or strategies have been taken by universities to improve lecturers' professionalism?
3. What is the impact of improving lecturers' professionalism on the teaching and learning process and university productivity?
4. What is the role of universities in creating a supportive environment to improve lecturers' professionalism?
5. What are the challenges faced by universities to improve the professionalism of lecturers and how can they be overcome?

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method and approach used in this research is descriptive analytic. This approach was chosen with the aim of providing an in-depth description of the problem or phenomenon being analyzed, focusing on the actual aspects that occurred at the time of the research. The descriptive analytic method allows researchers to explore the current facts surrounding the problem being investigated.

This research specifically seeks to explain the facts related to efforts to improve the professionalism of lecturers in higher education, taking into account the actual and relevant context. The facts are presented with reasonable and accurate translation and interpretation, in accordance with the principles of analytical descriptive research methodology (Nawawi, 2003). Thus, this research not only presents raw data, but also provides in-depth analysis to understand the essence of the problem at hand.

The application of descriptive analytic method in this study is expected to make a significant contribution in detailing and explaining aspects related to the professionalism of lecturers in higher education. By involving reasonable interpretations and the use of previously tested variables, this research is expected to be able to provide deeper and more relevant insights into the problem under study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As learning models and intellectual leaders in higher education, the current state of lecturer professionalism in Indonesia can be influenced by a number of factors involving aspects of teaching, research, community service, as well as work environment conditions and educational policies. Where to be able to create a positive work environment and provide the necessary support can all contribute to job satisfaction (Putra & Sinambela, 2021). This requires efforts to improve the quality and competence of lecturers in order to support the achievement of the objectives of higher education and in particular the learning objectives in higher education.

### A. Factors Affecting the Improvement of Lecturer Professionalism in Higher Education

Increasing the professionalism of lecturers in higher education is influenced by several factors. The following are the factors that influence the increase in professionalism of lecturers in higher education:

- a. Competency Improvement: Improving the professionalism of lecturers can be achieved through improving the competence of lecturers and education personnel. Lecturers and education personnel need to continuously improve their competencies to improve the quality of education.
- b. Professionalization: Increased professionalism is an unavoidable demand due to the increasing professionalization of the profession. In this case, the increase in professionalism of lecturers at the beginning of their career is not directly proportional to the increase in professionalization. Lecturers at the beginning of their careers tend to voluntarily take

on tasks that exceed what is given, to increase the trust of their superiors. However, universities need to re-evaluate how the professionalism of educators should be improved and which mechanism is best to compensate them (Arifin et al., 2015).

- c. Improving the Quality of Education: Improving the professionalism of lecturers is also related to improving the quality of education in Indonesia. It must be recognized that the quality of education in Indonesia is still quite low compared to developed countries. Therefore, improving the professionalism of lecturers and education personnel in higher education needs to be continuously improved to improve the quality of education.
- d. Institutional Support: Higher education institutions also have an important role to play in improving the professionalism of lecturers. Universities need to provide adequate support, such as training and professional development, adequate facilities, and recognition of lecturers' achievements. Institutional support can encourage lecturers to improve their professionalism.
- e. Government Policy: Government policies can also influence the improvement of lecturers' professionalism in higher education. The government needs to provide regulations that support the improvement of lecturers' professionalism, such as career development policies, welfare improvement, and recognition of lecturers' achievements.

Based on the opinion of Pham (2021), to improve the professionalism of lecturers in higher education, there needs to be cooperation between lecturers, higher education institutions, and the government. With the support and joint efforts, it is hoped that the professionalism of lecturers can continue to improve so that the quality of education in higher education can also improve.

### **B. Approaches or Strategies Implemented by Higher Education Institutions to Improve Lecturers' Professionalism**

Universities have undertaken various approaches and strategies to improve the professionalism of lecturers. Here are some common approaches:

- a. Competency Enhancement: Colleges provide training and professional development to lecturers to improve their competencies in teaching, research, and community service. This training may include innovative teaching methods, the use of technology in learning, and improved research skills.
- b. Recognition and Rewards: Colleges provide recognition and awards to lecturers who have made achievements in the areas of teaching, research, and community service. These awards can be in the form of academic awards, research awards, or community service awards. These recognitions and awards can motivate lecturers to continue to improve their professionalism (Yuliana et al., 2016).
- c. Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange: The college encourages collaboration between lecturers and other lecturers, both within and outside the college. This collaboration may include the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices in teaching and research. Colleges may also organize seminars, workshops or conferences to facilitate knowledge exchange among lecturers.
- d. Curriculum Development: The college continues to develop a curriculum that is relevant to the latest developments in science and technology. A good curriculum can help lecturers to deliver up-to-date and relevant learning materials to students (Estai & Bunt, 2006). Colleges can also involve lecturers in the curriculum development process to ensure their involvement to improve professionalism.
- e. Evaluation and Feedback: Colleges evaluate the performance of lecturers on a regular basis. This evaluation may include assessment of teaching, research, and community service. The evaluation results are used to provide feedback to lecturers and help them to improve their professionalism (Arthur, 2009).
- f. Research Development: The college encourages lecturers to conduct quality and relevant research. Lecturers are encouraged to publish their research results in scientific journals and attend international conferences. By conducting quality research, lecturers can improve their professionalism and make meaningful contributions to the development of science.

These approaches and strategies can help improve the professionalism of lecturers in higher education. However, each college may have different approaches according to their needs and conditions.

### **C. The Impact of Increasing the Professionalism of Lecturers on the Teaching and Learning Process and University Productivity**

Improving the professionalism of lecturers has a significant impact on teaching and learning processes and university productivity. Here are some of the impacts that can occur:

- a. Better Learning Quality: Lecturers who have a high level of professionalism tend to have better competencies in teaching. They are able to implement innovative teaching methods and techniques, understand learners' needs, and create an educational learning environment. This has a positive impact on the quality of learning in higher education, improving student understanding and achievement.
- b. Improved Research Quality: Professional lecturers also tend to be active in conducting research. They have the ability to plan, conduct and publish quality research. By improving the quality of research, colleges can contribute to the development of science and technology and enhance the reputation of the institution.

- c. Improved Reputation of Higher Education Institutions: Lecturers who have high professionalism can make a significant contribution to the reputation of the university. Lecturers who are active in research, have good publications, and have high teaching quality can improve the image and attractiveness of universities for prospective students and partners.
- d. Increased Productivity of Higher Education Institutions: Professional lecturers tend to be highly motivated to continuously improve the quality of education and research. They contribute to curriculum development, collaborate with other lecturers, and participate in other academic activities. By increasing lecturer productivity, universities can achieve their strategic goals and improve institutional competitiveness.
- e. Improving Graduate Quality: Professional lecturers play an important role in shaping the quality of university graduates. By providing quality learning, lecturers can help students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to succeed in the world of work. Professional lecturers can also provide guidance and encouragement to students to reach their full potential.

Overall, improving the professionalism of lecturers has a positive impact on the teaching and learning process, the quality of education, and the productivity of higher education. Professional lecturers can make a significant contribution to achieving higher education goals and improving institutional reputation. If the college has a good reputation, it can increase the interest of prospective students to choose the college (Masnawati & Darmawan, 2023).

#### **D. The Role of Universities to Create an Environment That Supports the Improvement of Lecturers' Professionalism**

Universities have an important role to play in creating a supportive environment for lecturers to improve their professionalism. Some of the roles of universities in this regard are as follows:

- a. Providing Training and Development: Colleges can organize training and professional development for lecturers. This training can include the development of teaching skills, the use of technology in learning, research, and community service. By providing relevant training, universities help lecturers improve their competence and professionalism.
- b. Encouraging Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange: Colleges can encourage collaboration between lecturers and other lecturers, both within and outside the college. This collaboration can include the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices in the areas of teaching, research and community service. By encouraging collaboration, colleges create an environment that supports the professional growth of lecturers.
- c. Providing Support and Resources: Colleges can provide the support and resources required by lecturers to improve their professionalism. This support can be in the form of adequate facilities, access to libraries and laboratories, and assistance in accessing research funds. By providing adequate support, the college creates an environment conducive to the professional development of lecturers.
- d. Encouraging Research and Publication: Colleges can encourage lecturers to conduct quality research and publish the results of their research. Lecturers who are active in research can enhance their professionalism and make meaningful contributions to the development of knowledge. Colleges can also provide support in terms of publication and dissemination of research results.
- e. Recognizing and Rewarding Achievement: Colleges may recognize and reward lecturers who make achievements in teaching, research, and community service. This recognition can be in the form of academic awards, research awards, or community service awards. By providing recognition and rewards, universities encourage lecturers to continue to improve their professionalism.

Through these roles, universities create an environment that supports the improvement of lecturers' professionalism. Professional lecturers can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of education, research, and community service in higher education (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2020).

#### **E. Challenges Faced by Universities to Improve the Professionalism of Lecturers**

The challenges faced by universities to improve the professionalism of lecturers can include several things, such as:

- a. Online Learning: The COVID-19 pandemic has forced universities to carry out lectures and activities online. Online learning is not always as effective as face-to-face learning. Lecturers need to find new breakthroughs in online teaching so that their teaching methods are more effective so that the quality of college graduates is maintained.
- b. Limited Human Resources and Facilities: Limited human resources, facilities, and geographical or environmental conditions can be a challenge to creating a supportive environment for lecturers' professionalism. This can affect the ability of universities to provide the support and resources required by lecturers.
- c. Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT): The penetration of the use of ICT in the teaching and learning process is an urgent need. Lecturers need to have expertise in the use of ICT as a tool to support the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Gebremedhin & Fenta, 2015). This challenge requires efforts to improve lecturers' competence in the use of technology.

To overcome this challenge, universities can take steps such as:

- a. Training and Development: Organize training and professional development for lecturers in the use of technology, innovative teaching methods, and enhancing research skills.
- b. Collaboration with External Parties: Collaborate with various stakeholders such as industry, practitioners, and the community to support the improvement of lecturers' professionalism.
- c. Provision of Support and Resources: Provide necessary support and resources to lecturers, including adequate facilities and access to libraries and laboratories.
- d. Recognition and Awards: Recognizing and rewarding lecturers who make achievements in teaching, research, and community service to encourage motivation and increased professionalism.

By taking these steps, universities can create a supportive environment for lecturers' professional development despite the challenges they face. Overall, efforts to improve lecturer professionalism in Indonesia today reflect complex dynamics involving various aspects, ranging from challenges in online learning, research financing, to lecturer welfare.

## CONCLUSIONS

The previous review has discussed various efforts to improve the professionalism of lecturers in higher education. Factors that influence the improvement of lecturers' professionalism include increasing competence, level of professionalization, improving the quality of education, institutional support, and government policies. Various strategies and approaches have also been adopted by universities, such as competency improvement, achievement recognition, collaboration, curriculum development, performance evaluation, and research development. This requires lecturers to deal with it in a professional manner. Lecturers with good stress management skills can cope with stress more effectively, which indirectly affects positive performance. Conversely, a lecturer who is less able to manage stress experiences decreased performance (Darmawan, 2015).

The positive impacts of improving lecturer professionalism include improving the quality of learning, research, university reputation, productivity, and graduate quality. Universities play an important role in creating a supportive environment for lecturers' professional development by providing training, encouraging collaboration, providing support and resources, encouraging research, and recognizing lecturers' achievements.

Nonetheless, universities are faced with a number of challenges, including the implementation of online learning, limited resources, and the need for information technology integration. Therefore, concrete steps such as continuous training, collaboration with industry, resource development, a transparent merit recognition system, and the development of supporting policies can be taken to overcome these challenges.

As a result, it is expected that universities can continue to improve the professionalism of lecturers so that they can make maximum contributions to achieving higher education goals and improving the quality of education in Indonesia. These steps will support the development of quality education that is relevant to the demands of the times, and ensure the quality of graduates who are ready to compete in the world of work.

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