



Digital Teachers from the Perspective of Applied Ethics

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the world of education, particularly in how teachers deliver content and interact with students. The emergence of various digital platforms, social media, and educational content creators has made learning resources increasingly diverse and easily accessible to students. This situation requires teachers to be able to adapt to technological developments while upholding the ethical values of the teaching profession. This study aims to examine the role of digital teachers from the perspective of applied ethics and to explain how ethical principles can serve as a foundation for teachers to utilize technology wisely and professionally. This study employs a qualitative method using a literature review approach, drawing from books, scientific journals, research articles, and various relevant literature on professional teaching ethics and the use of digital technology in education. The study's findings indicate that teachers' use of technology must be grounded in the principles of responsibility, academic integrity, privacy protection, equitable access to technology, and professionalism in interacting with students. Furthermore, teachers serve as knowledge curators who select and evaluate digital content before it is used in instruction. From an applied ethics perspective, digital teachers function not only as technology users but also as moral agents who ensure that the integration of technology remains aligned with educational goals, character development, and the cultivation of students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, an adaptive, critical, and responsible attitude is key for teachers in utilizing digital technology ethically and professionally within the educational process.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in the world of education, including in the ways teachers deliver material and interact with students (Hidayat, 2021). Currently, various social media platforms and digital content created by content creators often serve as new sources of reference in learning (Arsanti et al., 2024). Many teachers have begun to follow this trend by utilizing digital content and engaging students more actively in the learning process (Sari & Munir, 2024). However, this phenomenon also raises questions about how

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teachers should respond to these developments wisely and professionally (Kurniawati et al., 2025).

From the perspective of applied ethics, digital teachers discuss how teachers' use of digital technology (in teaching, communication, and information management) should be guided by principles of practical ethics (Sedek et al., 2024). Applied ethics is a branch of moral philosophy that applies ethical theories to real-world situations in professional settings or daily life, including education (Traczykowski, 2024). Digital teachers are educators who utilize digital technology in the learning process, such as: online learning platforms (LMS), social media, educational applications, artificial intelligence, video conferencing, and digital learning resources such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and Moodle (Sembiring, 2024). Digital teachers not only use technology but are also ethically responsible for its use (Rohili, 2025).

The actions of digital teachers, viewed from the perspective of applied ethics, are evaluated based on moral principles in actual educational practice (Jeli et al., 2025). Some key principles: a) Ethics of Responsibility: Teachers must ensure technology is used for educational purposes, not merely as a trend; for example, avoiding excessive digital assignments, selecting valid learning resources, and ensuring students understand the material rather than simply copying from the internet (Marni et al., 2024). b) Ethics of Academic Integrity: Digital teachers must uphold academic integrity, for example: avoiding plagiarism, teaching proper citation methods, and not manipulating grades. This is particularly important when students use AI tools like ChatGPT or search engines (Ma'soem University, 2026). c) Ethics of Privacy and Data: Digital technology often involves students' personal data. Teachers must protect data confidentiality, not share students' photos or videos without permission, and use secure platforms (Cahyanto, 2023). d) Ethics of Justice, Digital teachers must ensure equitable access to technology. Common issues include not all students having devices and uneven internet connectivity. Teachers should seek solutions such as: offline materials, and flexibility in assignment submission (Panggabean & Naibaho, 2025). e) Professional Ethics: Digital teachers must maintain professional boundaries; for example, communication with students via social media should remain formal and should not involve building relationships that violate educational norms (Manik et al., 2024).

As educators, teachers are not only expected to adapt to technological advancements but must also remain committed to the ethical values of the teaching profession. The use of digital media, the influence of content creators, and student engagement in various technology-based activities must be approached critically to avoid blurring the lines between professionalism, moral responsibility, and educational objectives (Lestari, 2018; Hashim et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to examine how applied ethics or professional ethics can provide a foundation for teachers to utilize technology and digital trends appropriately, so that they remain aligned with educational values and professional responsibilities as educators.

Teachers are not only required to adapt to the rapid development of information and communication technology, but must also remain steadfast in upholding the ethical values of the teaching profession, which serve as the foundation for carrying out their educational duties (Situmorang & Naibaho, 2025). The digital transformation occurring in the world of education has introduced various technology-based learning media, such as online learning platforms, social media, educational applications, and various forms of digital content that can be utilized in the teaching and learning process. The presence of this technology provides a great opportunity for teachers to create learning experiences that are more creative, interactive, and relevant to students' lives in the digital age (Asyikin & Rafeliani, 2025).

However, technological advancements also present various ethical challenges

that educators must address wisely. The rise of educational content creators on social media, the use of digital platforms as a means of communication between teachers and students, and student engagement in various digital activities such as content creation, online discussions, and the use of social media in learning can raise issues regarding the boundaries of teacher professionalism (Dewi et al., 2023; Lestari, 2018; Suwanto et al., 2021). In some cases, the use of technology without ethical consideration has the potential to blur the line between personal and professional spaces, pose risks of digital media misuse, and undermine the educational values that should be instilled in students (Meilinda Xanderina et al., 2024).

In addition, the influence of digital trends and popular culture on social media often affects how teachers interact with students and how they deliver instructional content. If not managed properly, this can shift the focus of education away from its primary goals, which are to build character, develop critical thinking skills, and instill moral values in students. Therefore, teachers need to possess a strong sense of ethical awareness so they can utilize technology in a balanced and responsible manner while upholding the dignity of the teaching profession.

Given these circumstances, it is important to examine how the principles of applied ethics or professional ethics in teaching can serve as a normative foundation for teachers in navigating the evolving landscape of technology and digital trends within the educational environment. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the ethical boundaries in teachers' use of technology, while also helping educators utilize digital media appropriately, thereby remaining aligned with educational values, principles of professionalism, and moral responsibilities as educators.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method using a literature review approach. This approach was chosen because the study aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the concept of professional ethics in teaching in the face of technological developments and digital trends in the field of education, based on various relevant sources of literature. The data sources in this study consist of secondary data, namely books, scientific journals, research articles, educational policy documents, and various literature discussing professional ethics in teaching, applied ethics, and the use of digital technology in education. Through this method, it is hoped that a clear picture can be obtained of how professional ethics in teaching can serve as a normative foundation for teachers in utilizing digital technology wisely, professionally, and responsibly in the learning process (Akem et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2018, 2025, 2026; Iskandar et al., 2023; Khusna et al., 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development of digital technology has brought about major changes in the world of education. Teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge, as students can access a wide range of information through the internet, social media, and various content platforms. The emergence of educational content creators has also influenced the way students learn. Therefore, teachers are required to adapt to technological developments without compromising the ethical principles of their profession.

Teachers have a moral responsibility not only to convey knowledge from the perspective of applied ethics but also to guide students intellectually, morally, and socially. The professional ethics of teachers emphasize that a teacher must uphold the values of professionalism, responsibility, academic integrity, and a commitment to student development. Therefore, technological change should not be viewed as a threat but rather as a means to improve the quality of learning.

Key considerations regarding the development of technology and digital content in relation to professional ethics for teachers are as follows: First, from a professional ethics perspective, teachers have a duty to continuously develop their competencies. In the context of the digital age, these competencies include technological literacy and digital literacy. Teachers who resist technological advancements risk falling behind and being unable to meet students' increasingly dynamic learning needs. Therefore, from an ethical standpoint, teachers must remain open to technological innovations, familiarize themselves with digital learning platforms, and utilize social media and digital content as supplementary learning resources.

Second, the phenomenon of educational content creators on social media must be addressed wisely by teachers. In professional ethics, teachers retain their role as curators and guarantors of knowledge quality. This means that teachers should not merely follow digital content trends but must be able to critically select, evaluate, and integrate such content into the learning process. Teachers must ensure that the materials used are scientifically sound and aligned with educational objectives.

Third, student engagement in technology-based learning processes should also be understood as part of a more participatory pedagogical approach. Within the framework of educational ethics, teachers have a responsibility to create an inclusive, creative, and collaborative learning environment. Involving students in the creation of educational content, digital discussions, or media-based projects can enhance learning motivation as well as 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. However, teachers must still uphold ethical boundaries, such as protecting student privacy, avoiding the exploitation of social media, and ensuring that such activities remain focused on educational objectives.

Fourth, from a professional ethics perspective, teachers need to maintain integrity and moral authority amidst a highly open digital culture. Teachers should not lose their role due to the presence of content creators but rather use them as partners or learning references. Teachers remain educational figures who guide students in critically evaluating information and distinguishing between valid knowledge and misleading information.

Conceptually, professional ethics for teachers pertain to their moral responsibility to carry out their educational duties professionally, fairly, and with integrity. Teachers are not merely conveyors of knowledge, but also educators who guide the intellectual and moral development of their students. Educational theory emphasizes that teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' character and ways of thinking. Therefore, in the face of technological advancements and the rise of content creators, teachers must adopt an ethical and reflective stance.

From a deontological perspective, which emphasizes moral obligations and professional responsibilities, teachers have a duty to continuously enhance their competencies, including in the field of educational technology. This principle aligns with the view that the teaching profession demands a commitment to ongoing professional development. In the digital age, technological literacy and information literacy have become essential components of a teacher's professional competencies. Therefore, from an ethical standpoint, teachers must remain open to technological innovations and utilize various digital media as learning tools. Resistance to technological advancements can hinder the learning process and potentially diminish the quality of education students receive.

From a utilitarian perspective, actions are evaluated based on their benefits or impact on the general public; the use of technology and content created by creators in learning can provide significant benefits if used appropriately. Digital content is often able to present material in a visual, interactive, and easily understandable way for students. By integrating these learning resources into the learning process,

teachers can enhance students' motivation to learn and expand access to knowledge. However, the utilitarian approach also requires teachers to consider potential negative consequences, such as the spread of inaccurate information, reliance on social media, or a reduction in meaningful pedagogical interaction between teachers and students.

Furthermore, within the framework of virtue ethics, the primary focus lies on the moral character possessed by a teacher. A professional teacher is not only expected to possess academic competence but also virtues such as wisdom, responsibility, honesty, and concern for students' development. In addressing the phenomenon of content creators, teachers need to demonstrate professional wisdom by not merely following digital trends but by being able to critically select and evaluate content. Teachers serve as curators of knowledge those who assess the validity and relevance of information before presenting it to students.

On the other hand, modern educational theory also emphasizes the importance of students' active engagement in the learning process. The ideas of educational figures such as John Dewey assert that effective learning occurs through experience and students' active participation in the learning process. Digital technology can be leveraged to create more participatory learning, for example through online discussions, digital media-based projects, or the creation of educational content by students. This approach aligns with the concept of democratic education, which encourages students to think critically and creatively in understanding knowledge.

Pedagogical thinking also emphasizes the importance of dialogue and participation in the educational process. Education should not be one-sided but rather involve active interaction between teachers and students. In the context of digital technology, this approach can be realized through collaborative learning that utilizes digital media as a means of communication and knowledge exploration. Student engagement in technology-based learning processes is also an important part of modern educational approaches. Constructivist educational theory emphasizes that effective learning occurs when students are actively engaged in constructing their own knowledge. Therefore, teachers can utilize technology to encourage student participation, for example through digital projects, online discussions, or even the production of simple educational content. This approach not only enhances learning motivation but also helps students develop 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

However, within the framework of professional ethics, student engagement in digital activities must also be accompanied by attention to moral and social responsibility. Teachers need to ensure that the use of technology does not violate educational ethical principles, such as the protection of student privacy, the responsible use of social media, and the avoidance of content that could be harmful to students. Teachers remain responsible for creating a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and focused on the development of students' character.

Thus, from the perspective of applied ethics, the attitude teachers should adopt toward technological advancements and the phenomenon of content creators is one that is adaptive, critical, and responsible. Teachers need to utilize technology as a pedagogical tool that enriches the learning process, while simultaneously upholding professional ethical values such as integrity, responsibility, and commitment to students' development. The integration of technology in education is not merely a technical issue, but also an ethical one. Teachers are required to balance technological innovation with professional values so that education remains focused on fostering students' knowledge, character, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the primary challenge for teachers in the digital age is how to integrate technology ethically and professionally so that education remains centered on the holistic development of the individual. From the perspective of applied ethics, digital teachers are not merely

users of technology but moral agents within the digital education ecosystem. The use of technology must always consider responsibility, honesty, fairness, privacy, and professionalism. Thus, digital technology not only enhances learning efficiency but also upholds moral values in education.

CONCLUSION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the world of education, particularly in how teachers teach, interact with students, and utilize various learning resources. The emergence of digital platforms, social media, and educational content creators provides opportunities for teachers to create learning experiences that are more innovative, interactive, and relevant to students' needs in the digital age. However, these developments also present various ethical challenges that educators must address wisely. From an applied ethics perspective, teachers' use of technology is not only about technical skills but also about moral and professional responsibility. Digital teachers are expected to use technology responsibly while upholding ethical principles such as accountability, academic integrity, fairness, protection of student privacy, and professionalism in digital interactions. Teachers also need to be critical in filtering information and digital content to ensure it remains aligned with educational objectives.

In addition, technology can be leveraged to foster more participatory and collaborative learning, enabling students to develop 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Nevertheless, teachers continue to play a central role as mentors, curators of knowledge, and guardians of moral values in the educational process. Therefore, the integration of technology into education must be carried out in an adaptive, critical, and ethical manner. Teachers do not merely act as users of technology but also as moral agents who ensure that the use of technology remains aligned with educational values, professionalism, and the primary goals of education namely, the holistic development of students' knowledge, character, and critical thinking skills.

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