

## Challenges to professional teacher development through workplace culture management

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Oct 9, 2022

Revised Nov 16, 2023

Accepted Nov 22, 2023

#### Keywords:

Digital literacy

Education quality

Teacher competencies

Teacher professionalism

Workplace culture management

### ABSTRACT

The implementation of professional teacher development in Indonesia has been lacking. Many teachers continue to underperform, as evidenced by their workplace behaviors that violate the ethics of their profession. Workplace culture has contributed significantly to, and been detrimentally affected by, this lack of professionalism. Using a qualitative approach, this study seeks to explore the forms, factors, and implications of these challenges for the management of workplace culture. Teachers are simultaneously the objects and key informants of this research, which was conducted through observation of secondary-level madrasahs spread throughout Bengkulu Province, Indonesia, as well as interviews with 15 teachers. This study identifies three main challenges: i) teachers have difficulty accessing professional training; ii) teachers cannot readily continue their educations; and iii) teachers have trouble writing and publishing academic works. These challenges are caused by a multitude of factors, primarily the lack of the funding, facilities, and infrastructure for professional development, as well as teachers limited digital literacy, and result in a workplace culture where initiative goes unrewarded, discipline is lacking, and teachers are unmotivated. As such, this study recommends significant improvements to the structure, culture, and infrastructure of educational institutions, thereby allowing teachers to overcome the challenges that hinder their professional development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Professionalism is a cornerstone of competent teaching. However, the level of professionalism exhibited by Indonesia's teachers remains inadequate for providing an adequate education. Per Law No. 14 of 2005, teachers in Indonesia are required to have completed an undergraduate education (minimum D4/S1), to follow a professional code of ethics, to meet high teaching standards, and to be capable of producing academic works [1]. An undergraduate education in Indonesian higher education, degrees are divided between diploma

(D1, D2, D3, and D4), bachelor (S1), master (S2), doctoral (S3). Both diploma (D4) and bachelor degree are equivalent to an undergraduate degree; however, D4 is oriented more toward vocation/application, while bachelor degree is oriented more toward theory. Also detrimental to teachers' professionalism have been a lack of motivation and professional commitment as well as an inability to manage workplace culture [2], [3]. This is reflected in teachers' early competency test (initial competency test results) scores; in 2012, the average score was 42.22, far below the national standard (55). Furthermore, according to data from the Ministry of Religion Republic Indonesia, 24.4% of teachers had yet to complete an undergraduate education at the requisite level; 25% of madrasa teachers, meanwhile, were teaching outside their field [4], [5]. This has further hindered teachers' professional development, which has in turn only exacerbated the ongoing problems with workplace culture management [6].

To date, studies of teachers' professional development have focused on three issues. First is the professional evaluations and identities of teachers [7]–[9]; for example, Florida and Mbato found that the professionalism of teachers tends to be evaluated based on their teaching experience, and that teachers are categorized and classified based on this experience [10]. Second is the implementation of professional development through training programs [11]–[13], which is often done by requiring teachers to participate in coaching, mentoring, self-study, and/or action research activities. Third is the passage and implementation of policies to facilitate teachers' professional development [14], [15]. According to Kafu-Quvane and Chikoko, policies must emphasize willingness, motivation, and anticipation, and focus particularly on teachers' experiences [16].

None of the aforementioned studies have considered the causal link between teacher professionalism and workplace culture management, and it is to fill this gap that the current article was written. More specifically, this article seeks to understand the obstacles to teachers' professional development vis-à-vis the structures of their institutions and their professional performance. It answers three questions: i) what obstacles are faced during teachers' professional development?; ii) what factors hinder teachers' professional development?; iii) what are the implications of these obstacles to teachers' professional development for their workplace culture? By answering these questions, this article seeks to provide a conceptual basis for future policies regarding the subject.

This article's discussion of the challenges to teachers' professional development and their reciprocal relationship with the management of workplace culture departs from the argument that teachers' difficulties with professional development highlight a deeper issue with teacher competencies. Challenges to professional development, be they structural, cultural, or infrastructural, have a causal and reciprocal relationship with poor workplace culture management. This can be seen, for instance, in teachers' limited motivation to develop themselves as professionals, as well as their difficulty meeting the standards established by the government. Many teachers have been unable to advance to class IV/B because they lack experience with and information on academic research and publication; they have difficulty accessing training and workshops; and they have not completed an undergraduate degree at the D4/S1 level. Because of these difficulties, many teachers are unwilling to continue their professional development. There is thus a causal and reciprocal relationship between teachers' professional development and the management of their workplace culture.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Teacher professionalism

In education, professional development is realized when teachers participate in training activities/workshops, conduct action research, and/or study independently [17]. Teachers' professional development is closely intertwined with their ability to improve the cognitive and creative skills necessary to effectively carry out their duties [18], [19]. Consequently, successful professional development not only improves teachers' abilities, but also the academic performance and achievements of their students [20]. Professional development involves sociological, ideological, and educational aspects, all of which are designed to ensure that teachers can achieve the highest professional standards for behavior, knowledge, and performance. It thus demands that teachers continually strive to improve themselves and their teaching abilities [21].

Teachers, being the ones who manage the learning process, are determinant factors in education quality [22]. Professional teachers, thus, must seek to create a learning environment that challenges and motivates students while cultivating their creativity and activeness [23]. Professional teachers must consider three points. First, they must instill their students with intellectual prowess, including the concepts and experiences necessary to succeed in the globalization era [24]. Second, they must help students develop the emotional and spiritual intelligence necessary to ensure good attitudes and behaviors [25]. Third, teachers must maintain their own professional qualifications, remain knowledgeable of recent developments in their field, and be committed to their profession, even as strive to communicate well and use creative approaches to learning [26], [27]. Through a combination of these factors, teachers can ensure both the success of their students and their own continued growth.

## 2.2. Workplace culture management

Workplace culture is correlated positively with teachers' competencies, its management is inexorably intertwined with teachers' professional development [28]. Workplace culture strongly influences the approaches used by teachers in carrying out their duties [29]. A good workplace environment enables educators to teach optimally while remaining happy, healthy, and comfortable [30]. A good workplace environment also correlates positively with teacher motivation and satisfaction. However, many of Indonesia's schools have workplace cultures that limit teachers' ability to effectively convey their knowledge—let alone realize their professional goals [31]. Teachers perform best in workplaces that promote initiative, ability, and communication, with a wealth of knowledge and support available to them. As such, a consistent and conducive workplace culture is necessary to ensure effectiveness.

Workplace culture management has three functions. First, workplace culture management serves to distinguish between institutions [32] as it provides a foundation/substructure upon which the work community can grow and develop dynamically. Second, workplace culture management serves to instill members of the community with a shared identity [33], one that reflects the beliefs and philosophies of the institution and its founders. This culture is continually observed in the workplace activities of community members, and thus becomes deeply rooted through the process of habituation [34]. Third, workplace culture management serves to improve the maturity of the social system within the community; only with a well-developed system can the well-being and prosperity of the community and its members be ensured [35]. These functions underscore the importance of workplace culture management for communities and their members.

## 2.3. Teacher competencies

Competency refers to the collected knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are used by individuals for their professional activities [36]. For teachers, specific sets of competencies are used for training, professional development, evaluation, and advancement [37]: i) interpersonal competencies; ii) pedagogic competencies; iii) subject matter/method competencies; iv) organizational competencies; v) collaborative competencies (teamwork); vi) social competencies; and vii) competitive, reflective, and development competencies [38]. Such competencies are necessary to ensure that teachers can exercise their agency while simultaneously accommodating and reflecting their cultural and social contexts [39]. Cultivating these competencies has a positive effect on teaching quality, which in turn improves students' academic performance [40].

Consequently, teacher competencies are necessary for the success of the learning process [41], as they enable teachers to conduct their duties in accordance with applicable standards and ensure that students can grow and develop optimally [42], [43]. To develop and maintain teachers' competencies, three activities are necessary: training programs, with a focus on teaching [44]; education programs, through which teachers can improve the efficiency and quality of their professional activities [45]; and certification programs, through which teachers' competencies are recognized and appreciated [46]. In this manner, the quality of the learning process can be improved [47].

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is driven by three motivations to investigate the link between teachers' professional development and workplace culture management. First, workplace culture is a major factor in teachers' professional development (or lack thereof) and performance, and thus contributes to the goal of providing all Indonesians with a quality education. Second, few studies have investigated the link between teachers' professional development and their workplace culture; existing studies have simply identified issues, without indicating how these issues are affected by workplace culture. Third, workplace culture management is integral to producing professional teachers, and as such professionalism cannot emerge where such management is lacking. Given the significant effect of professional development and workplace culture on teacher competencies, understanding the reciprocal relationship between these two elements is foundational and crucial for ameliorating education policy and management in Indonesia.

This study is a qualitative one, deriving its data from observation of secondary-level madrasas spread throughout Bengkulu Province, Indonesia, and interviews with teachers at said institutions. Teachers were selected as informants because their experiences with professional development were deemed best suited to answering the research questions. Data collection focused on the forms, factors (causes), and implications (effects) of the challenges experienced by teachers in their professional development. This was necessary to understand the types of challenges experienced by teachers, the conditions underpinning these challenges, and the consequences of these challenges for teachers' professional development and institutions' workplace culture management. Given the reciprocal relationship between professional development and workplace culture, as discussed, any problems with the former had a detrimental effect on the latter.

Research began with observation of several madrasas in Bengkulu, which was conducted either directly or via the internet. Afterward, the researcher interviewed fifteen teachers at these institutions; interviews were conducted either in person (face-to-face) or mediated through telecommunication technology. This collection process enabled the researchers to obtain relevant and comprehensive data. Data analysis, meanwhile, was conducted in three stages: reduction, during which the collected data was organized systematically pursuant to the purposes of the research; display, during which the data were summarized in table format to ease reading and interpretation; and verification, during which trends were identified and conclusions were drawn. Analysis was conducted using two techniques: description and content analysis (which was conducted using Leximancer) [48], [49].

#### 4. RESULTS

Teachers continue to experience obstacles to their professional development, and this limits their ability to improve their capabilities. This is further exacerbated by the lack of workplace culture management. The link between teachers' professional development and their workplace culture management can be identified by answering three questions: i) what obstacles are faced during teachers' professional development?; ii) what factors hinder teachers' professional development?; iii) what are the implications of these obstacles to teachers' professional development for their workplace culture? These questions will be answered detail in subsection.

##### 4.1. Challenges to teachers' professional development

Professional development is of paramount importance for teachers, as it affects their ability to carry out their duties as well as the quality of the learning process. All teachers must seek to improve their competencies so that they can better educate their students. However, such professional development has not been fully realized, and interviews identified numerous obstacles that hinder teachers' professional development. The examples are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Challenges to teachers' professional development

Informant (field)	Teacher experience	Code
I1 (Citizenship)	I rarely get the opportunity to participate in coaching or training. In my 22 years of teaching, I have only participated in such activities once, at LPMP. I have never had the chance to learn at the Ministry of Religion. I have never partaken in anything where I could learn or practice academic writing.	Difficulty accessing training
I2 (Quran/Hadiths)		
I3 (Fikh)		
I4 (Aqidah/Akhlak)	The school has never made funds available for improving my competencies. Teachers must pay for their own post-graduate education, without any school support, to ensure they can meet professional development standards such as research and publication—all of which are necessary for advancement.	Difficulty continuing studies
I5 (Physics)		
I6 (Chemistry)	It is very difficult for me to advance to class IV/B, because there is a professional development component: academic research and publication. I have been stuck at class IV/A for ten years now. The requirements for advancement are so difficult now, very hard for me to realize.	Difficulty with academic writing and publication
I7 (Sociology)		
I8 (Arabic language)	I have not been able to do any academic research and publication, and so it is difficult to advance to class IV/B. Now I am stuck at class IV/A, because I do not have any academic publications.	Difficulty with academic writing and publication

Table 1 shows that the challenges to teachers' professional development fall into three categories. First, teachers have trouble accessing training. Many teachers cannot easily participate in training activities, and some have never partaken in such activities throughout their careers. Consequently, they cannot develop the writing and teaching skills that are increasingly required of them. Second, teachers cannot readily continue their studies. Per applicable law, all teachers must hold an undergraduate degree (minimum D4/S1). However, administrative hurdles and high tuition fees make it difficult for teachers who do not already hold such degrees to pursue one. Third, teachers have trouble with academic writing and publication. Writing skills are crucial for teachers' professional development, but few have the knowledge necessary to improve their skills. Owing to these obstacles, teachers cannot readily improve their competencies or ensure their continued professional development.

##### 4.2. Factors that hinder teachers' professional development

The challenges are for the professional development of teachers. Professional teachers originate from and are exacerbated by a variety of factors. As explained in Table 2, teachers identified three factors as most commonly contributing to the challenges they face.

Table 2 shows that the challenges to teachers' professional development are rooted in three factors. First, teachers have a low level of digital literacy. Although digital literacy is paramount in an information age that relies heavily on digital technology, few teachers have a working knowledge of the technology necessary to participate in training, teaching, and academic writing/publication activities. Second, teachers lack the facilities and infrastructure (computers, laptops, and internet access) necessary for their professional development. Third, no funding is available, be it from schools or teachers themselves. Together, these three factors limit teachers' ability to improve their competencies.

Table 2. Factors hindering teachers' professional development

Informant (field)	Teacher experience	Code
I9 (History of Islamic Culture) I8 (Arabic Language) I10 (English Language) I11 (Geography) I12 (History) I3 (Physical Education)	I have been working for almost twenty-five years, and I am not used to the internet, let alone all of these online professional development programs... academic research and publication, those are difficult for me.	Lack of digital literacy
I5 (Physics)	Certification funds, I have used those for my own needs. But for the internet, a computer/laptop, or other learning materials, I am asking/waiting for help from the school.	Lack of facilities and infrastructure
I14 (History)	The funding available, much of it is for staff needs, such as subsidizing teacher certification. Rarely is it used for improving teachers' competencies, such as training in academic writing, because such needs are not in the budget.	Lack of funds/budget
I15 (Chemistry)	Our teachers have trouble with academic writing, as the madrasa has never budgeted for academic publication. It is not in our budget, nor is it in our funding standards.	Lack of funds/budget
	I have difficulty teaching my chemistry materials, as all I have are the books provided by the school. Laptops and computers, none of those are available for classroom learning.	Lack of facilities and infrastructure

#### 4.3. Implications of teachers' professional development for workplace culture management

The obstacles to professional development experienced by teachers have significant implications for teachers' performance and workplace culture management. With teachers unable to develop themselves as professionals, education quality suffers and teachers cannot seek advancement. Teachers' experiences are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that obstacles to teachers' professional development have several implications for their performance. First, due to a lack of facilities and institutional support, teachers lack the motivation to continue their professional growth. Second, discipline is lacking, as teachers respond negatively to the challenges they face; this can lead, for example, to teachers being unwilling to participate in scheduled training activities. Third, there is a lack of initiative. Despite recognizing that many of their challenges are rooted in structural and infrastructural shortcomings, teachers are unwilling to take the initiative to seek alternative solutions. Ultimately, their professional development is stunted and they have no means of honing their competencies.

Table 3. Implications for workplace culture

Informant (field)	Teacher experience	Code
I1 (Citizenship)	I am not really motivated to participate in teacher conferences, because I do not have a laptop, so all I can do is sit and watch people work.	Lack of motivation
I2 (Qur'an/Hadiths)	I am not very motivated to join the minimum curricular activities, as there are frequently gaps; people join others who are skilled, so people me, with all our shortcomings, are often brushed aside.	Lack of motivation
I5 (Physics)	I feel as though the environment created by teacher conferences is inconducive, as teachers normally just meet and chat, while the substance of their field is ignored.	Lack of discipline
I3 (Fikh)	I lack the motivation to join teacher conferences because they never accommodate our proposals, like workshops for teaching academic writing, and so our professional development is stymied.	Lack of initiative
I9 (History of Islamic culture)	Sometimes, I do not really join teacher conferences, as I do not have the time. My time is used teaching, and my teaching schedule at school is full.	Lack of discipline
I10 (English Language)	I cannot yet write academic works. If I lack data, I cannot continue. That is it. I cannot finish my writing.	Lack of initiative
I11 (Geography)	When writing, I often have trouble finding references, as I do not understand the internet and I cannot use Google Scholar	Lack of initiative
I7 (Sociology)	I still have trouble with academic writing as I do not know how to write (as an academic).	Lack of initiative
I6 (Chemistry)	I have lots of trouble writing, as I do not have any reference books, do not have any data, and I do not have time to go to the library.	Lack of initiative

## 5. DISCUSSION

This article has shown that a causal relationship exists between teachers' professional development and the management of workplace culture. This link is evident in the three major obstacles to teachers' professional development: limited access to training activities, difficulty seeking opportunities for further education, and trouble writing and publishing academic texts. These obstacles are rooted in teachers' poor levels of digital literacy as well as schools' lack of funding, facilities, and infrastructure. Over time, these challenges are detrimental to workplace culture management, leading to teachers becoming undisciplined, unmotivated, and uninitiated, and ultimately stunting their professional growth. This situation has resulted in a lasting gap between teachers' competencies and the professional standards expected of them [50].

The afore-discussed obstacles to teachers' professional development have several implications. First, the structure that regulates professional development is unclear, even though teachers' problems are inexorably intertwined with the institutional structures that stymie their professional growth. Second, the dominant workplace culture does not support teachers' professional development, as teachers—despite being individuals with the agency to make their own decisions—have little motivation or ability to advance their competencies. Third, infrastructural support is lack, and there is no sense of ownership with regards to existing infrastructure.

Teachers' experiences with the challenges facing them highlight two important points. First, to facilitate the process of professional development, structural, cultural, and infrastructural changes must be considered as potential means of overcoming the challenges. Without such evaluation and transformation, teachers will continue to face obstacles to their professional development. Second, teachers' difficulty with their professional development underscores the importance of involving diverse stakeholders at various levels, as this is necessary to improve teachers' management of their workplace culture.

Studies of the challenges faced by teachers during their professional development have generally ignored the role of workplace culture management. Such studies have focused instead on management and commitment [51], arguing that these must be improved to ensure teachers' optimal development [52]. Institutions' managerial ideology and commitment, thus, have been misunderstood [53]. Teachers' professional development is necessary to improve the management of workplace culture and ensure that teachers fulfill their professional duties [54]. In good workplace culture management, teachers are positioned as professionals who seek to improve themselves and their professional abilities.

An action plan is necessary to overcome the challenges experienced by teachers during their professional development. Teachers' professionalism and competencies must be supported entirely by the education system, including institutions and their members. At the same time, teachers must be actively involved in education, training, and publication activities. However, in reality, teachers face many problems that can be traced back to the policies that regulate teachers' professional development. Change is necessary. First, teachers must have access to institutional funding, as the current system (in which teachers' professional development is self-funded) is prohibitively expensive. Second, to ensure that teachers can better adapt to societal changes, training activities must focus on improving teachers' digital literacy. Third, educational institutions and organizations must be actively involved in mobilizing resources towards addressing this shared problem. These three approaches are necessary to ensure that the problems and challenges experienced by teachers when seeking to develop their professional abilities.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has found a clear link between teachers' professional development and their workplace culture management, wherein teachers have limited capacity to act as subjects in their professional activities. Teachers' inability to overcome these challenges has implications for their performance and their continued ability to develop their professional abilities. Teachers cannot readily access the few training activities made available to them, and as such they have difficulty adapting to the demands of the changing times. Internal and external factors have further complicated this situation. Ultimately, teachers have been unable to overcome these obstacles.

This analysis of the link between the obstacles to teachers' professional development has made two important findings. First, the obstacles to teachers' professional development are dynamic, coming not only from teachers themselves but also from their institutions. Second, this study has also provided a new perspective for understanding the workplace culture of teachers. Workplace culture, long considered from an objective perspective, has been investigated in this study subjectively, and this has provided a new paradigm for understanding teachers' professionalism.

This study has limited its analysis to the perspectives of informants from one part of Indonesia. As such, these findings cannot be generalized to understand the correlation between teachers' professional development and their management of workplace culture elsewhere. Likewise, informants' understandings may not be comprehensive, as other factors may be found in other contexts. Owing to these limitations, another study should compare trends elsewhere, thereby providing the necessary knowledge for improving the current policy framework for teachers' professional development.




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