



Teacher Professional Development in Multicultural and Religious Contexts: Challenges and Opportunities in Indonesian Education

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's education system operates within a uniquely multicultural and multireligious context that presents both challenges and opportunities for teacher professional development (TPD). Teachers are expected not only to master pedagogical and subject-matter competencies but also to foster tolerance, inclusivity, and social cohesion among learners from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This article examines teacher professional development in Indonesian education, focusing on how multiculturalism and religious diversity shape teachers' professional learning experiences in the post-reform and post-pandemic era. Using a qualitative literature-based research design, this study synthesizes findings from recent empirical and theoretical studies on teacher development, multicultural education, and religious values in schooling. The results indicate that while Indonesian teachers face structural challenges such as limited training access, curriculum standardization, and ideological tensions, there are significant opportunities through culturally responsive pedagogy, faith-based ethical frameworks, and community-oriented professional learning. The study argues that effective TPD in Indonesia must integrate pedagogical competence, multicultural sensitivity, and religious moderation. This article contributes to the discourse on teacher education by offering a contextualized framework for professional development in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: *Teacher Professional Development, Multicultural Education, Religious Diversity, Indonesian Education, Teacher Competence.*



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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development (TPD) is widely recognized as a critical factor in improving educational quality and student learning outcomes. In increasingly diverse societies, the role of teachers extends beyond delivering subject content; they also act as cultural mediators who must navigate complex social, cultural, and religious dynamics (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This expanded role requires teachers to possess not only pedagogical competence but also intercultural sensitivity, ethical awareness, and the ability to foster inclusive learning environments. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country with more than 300 ethnic groups and six officially recognized religions, offers a unique and complex setting for examining TPD in multicultural and religious contexts.

The Indonesian education system is deeply rooted in the national ideology of Pancasila, which emphasizes belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. These foundational principles influence educational goals and define the moral responsibilities of teachers. Educators are expected to promote religious tolerance, national cohesion, and ethical values while simultaneously ensuring academic excellence (Tilaar, 2019). As a result, teachers must integrate cognitive, social, and moral dimensions into their professional practices.

In multicultural classrooms, diversity manifests in various forms, including differences in religion, language, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. Teachers are often required to manage classrooms where students hold different belief systems and cultural practices. This diversity can enrich the learning process but also presents significant challenges, particularly when teachers lack adequate training in culturally responsive pedagogy. These challenges are illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the key areas affecting teacher professional development in Indonesia.

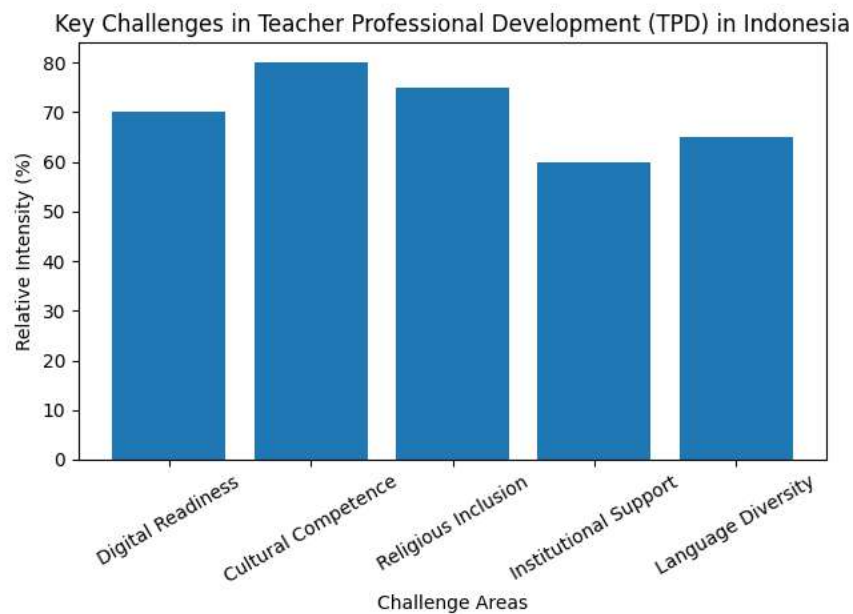


Figure 1. Key Challenges in Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in Indonesia

As shown in Figure 1, cultural competence emerges as the most prominent challenge, with the highest relative intensity compared to other factors. This indicates that teachers often struggle to understand and respond effectively to diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom. Religious inclusion also represents a significant challenge, reflecting the complexity of addressing different belief systems while maintaining harmony and respect among students. Digital readiness appears as another major concern, particularly in the context of post-pandemic education. The transition to online and blended learning has required teachers to adopt new technologies rapidly. However, many educators still face difficulties in integrating digital tools in ways that are inclusive and sensitive to students' diverse needs (König et al., 2020).

Interestingly, institutional support is shown as the lowest factor in the graph, suggesting that systemic backing for teacher professional development remains insufficient. This lack of institutional support may limit teachers' access to high-quality training and reduce the effectiveness of TPD programs. Language diversity also presents a moderate challenge, highlighting the need for teachers to accommodate students from different linguistic backgrounds. One of the major limitations of existing TPD programs in Indonesia is their strong focus on technical competencies, such as curriculum implementation and digital literacy (Suryani et al., 2021). While these skills are

undoubtedly important, they do not fully address the complexities of teaching in multicultural and religiously diverse environments. Many programs overlook the importance of developing teachers' intercultural competence, reflective practice, and ethical decision-making.

To address these gaps, a more holistic approach to TPD is required. Such an approach should integrate three key dimensions: pedagogical competence, cultural understanding, and ethical awareness. Pedagogical competence involves the ability to design and deliver effective instruction that meets diverse learning needs. Cultural understanding requires teachers to be aware of their own biases and to appreciate the perspectives of students from different backgrounds. Ethical awareness involves making fair and respectful decisions that uphold the values of inclusivity and social justice. In addition to these dimensions, collaborative and reflective practices should be emphasized in TPD programs. Teachers benefit from opportunities to share experiences, discuss challenges, and learn from one another. Professional learning communities, peer mentoring, and action research are effective strategies for fostering continuous professional growth.

Policy and institutional support also play a crucial role in strengthening TPD. Government initiatives should ensure that professional development programs are relevant, accessible, and sustainable. Schools must provide supportive environments where teachers feel encouraged to innovate and address issues related to diversity and inclusion. Technology offers significant opportunities for enhancing TPD in multicultural contexts. Online platforms can facilitate access to training resources and enable collaboration among teachers from different regions. However, the use of technology must be accompanied by training that emphasizes inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices.

Furthermore, integrating local wisdom into TPD programs can enhance their relevance. Indonesia's rich cultural heritage provides valuable insights into promoting tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect. By incorporating local values into teaching practices, educators can create more meaningful and inclusive learning experiences. In conclusion, teacher professional development in Indonesia must evolve to address the complex realities of multicultural and religious diversity. Figure 1 highlights that cultural competence, religious inclusion, and digital readiness are the most pressing challenges, while institutional support remains relatively weak. These findings underscore the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to TPD. By adopting holistic and context-sensitive strategies, Indonesia can better prepare its teachers to foster inclusive and effective learning environments, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and tolerant society.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative literature-based research design, emphasizing a systematic and critical examination of existing scholarly works rather than the collection of primary field data. Such an approach is particularly suitable for exploring conceptual frameworks, theoretical developments, and empirical findings related to teacher professional development within multicultural and religious educational contexts in Indonesia. By relying on secondary data, the study is able to synthesize diverse perspectives and generate a comprehensive understanding of how professional development practices intersect with the socio-cultural and religious dynamics of Indonesian education.

The research process involved a structured review of academic literature to ensure rigor, relevance, and credibility. Data sources were derived from reputable international and national databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and accredited Indonesian journals. These platforms were selected due to their wide coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed publications and their relevance to educational research. The inclusion of both global and local sources allows for a balanced analysis that reflects international discourse while remaining grounded in the Indonesian context.

To maintain methodological consistency, specific inclusion criteria were applied in selecting the literature. First, only publications published between 2016 and 2024 were considered, ensuring that the analysis reflects recent developments and contemporary debates in the field. Second, the study prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books to guarantee the scholarly validity and reliability of the data. Third, all selected sources were required to have direct relevance to key themes, namely teacher professional development, multicultural education, religious education, and the broader context of Indonesian schooling. These criteria were essential in filtering out irrelevant or less rigorous materials, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the review.

Through this selection process, a total of 20 academic sources were identified and analyzed. The chosen literature represents a diverse range of perspectives, methodologies, and findings, enabling the study to capture both theoretical insights and practical implications. The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, whereby key concepts, patterns, and relationships across the literature were identified, categorized, and interpreted. This method allows for a nuanced understanding of how teacher professional development is conceptualized and implemented in multicultural and religiously diverse educational settings.

Overall, this qualitative literature-based methodology provides a robust foundation for examining complex educational phenomena. It not only facilitates a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge but also contributes to the development of informed and contextually relevant insights that can support future research and educational practice in Indonesia. The collected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis. Key themes were identified, including professional competence, multicultural pedagogy, religious values, institutional support, and policy frameworks. This method allows for an interpretive understanding of how teacher development is shaped by sociocultural and religious contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges In Teacher Professional Development

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in Indonesia is situated within a highly complex educational landscape shaped by structural disparities, sociocultural diversity, and evolving policy frameworks. While the Indonesian government has made significant efforts to improve the quality of education through curriculum reform and teacher training initiatives, persistent challenges continue to hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of TPD. These challenges are not merely technical in nature but are deeply embedded in broader systemic, cultural, and ideological contexts that influence how professional development is accessed, implemented, and experienced by teachers. One of the most prominent challenges in Indonesian TPD is structural inequality, particularly in relation to access to professional learning opportunities. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that teachers in urban and semi-urban areas enjoy greater access to a wide range of professional development resources, including workshops, certification programs, mentoring systems, and digital platforms. These teachers are more likely to benefit from institutional support, professional networks, and technological infrastructure that facilitate continuous learning. In contrast, teachers working in rural, remote, and underdeveloped regions often face significant barriers, such as limited internet connectivity, inadequate school facilities, and geographical isolation (Suryani et al., 2021; OECD, 2020).

This unequal distribution of resources creates a substantial gap in teacher competence and professional growth across regions. Teachers in underserved areas may struggle to keep up with new pedagogical approaches, curriculum changes, and technological advancements, thereby affecting the quality of instruction delivered to students. Moreover, this disparity has implications for educational equity, as students in rural areas may receive lower-quality education compared to their urban counterparts. The challenge, therefore, extends beyond individual teachers to encompass broader issues of social justice and national development. In addition to structural

inequality, curriculum standardization presents another significant challenge in the implementation of effective TPD. Indonesia's national curriculum is designed to promote core values such as character education, tolerance, and national unity. While these objectives are commendable, the standardized nature of the curriculum may inadvertently limit teachers' autonomy in adapting instructional content to local contexts. Indonesia is characterized by a high degree of cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, and a one-size-fits-all curriculum may not adequately address the unique needs and realities of different communities (Tilaar, 2019).

Teachers often find themselves in a difficult position, having to reconcile national curriculum mandates with local expectations and cultural norms. For example, in regions with strong religious or ethnic identities, certain topics or teaching approaches may require careful adaptation to avoid conflict or misunderstanding. This situation demands a high level of pedagogical flexibility, cultural competence, and contextual awareness. However, existing TPD programs may not sufficiently prepare teachers to navigate these complexities, as they tend to focus more on content delivery and assessment standards rather than on contextual adaptation and critical pedagogy. Another critical challenge relates to ideological tensions within multicultural classrooms. Indonesia's rich diversity, encompassing a wide range of religions, ethnicities, and cultural traditions, presents both opportunities and challenges for education. In the classroom, teachers frequently encounter sensitive issues related to religious differences, minority rights, gender equality, and social justice. These topics require careful handling, as they have the potential to generate conflict or reinforce existing prejudices if not addressed appropriately.

Without adequate training in multicultural education and critical pedagogy, teachers may feel ill-equipped to facilitate discussions on such sensitive issues. As a result, they may choose to avoid these topics altogether or approach them in a superficial manner. In some cases, teachers may unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes or biases, particularly if they lack awareness of their own assumptions and perspectives (Banks, 2019; Nieto, 2017). This highlights a significant gap in TPD programs, which often prioritize technical competencies such as lesson planning and classroom management over the development of critical, reflective, and intercultural skills.

Furthermore, the presence of ideological tensions is not limited to the classroom but is also influenced by broader societal dynamics. Issues such as religious conservatism, political polarization, and social inequality can shape teachers' beliefs and attitudes, which in turn affect their teaching practices. Addressing these challenges requires TPD programs that are not only pedagogically sound but also socially and culturally responsive. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions اللازمة to engage with diversity in a constructive and inclusive manner. In addition to these pedagogical and ideological challenges, bureaucratic constraints and policy fragmentation further complicate the implementation of effective TPD in Indonesia. Professional development initiatives are often designed and implemented in a top-down manner, with limited input from teachers themselves. These programs may be driven by administrative requirements or policy directives rather than by the actual needs and contexts of teachers. As a result, TPD activities are sometimes perceived as formalities or compliance mechanisms rather than as meaningful opportunities for professional growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Moreover, many TPD programs are short-term and episodic in nature, lacking continuity and follow-up support. Teachers may attend workshops or training sessions without receiving ongoing mentoring or opportunities to apply what they have learned in their classrooms. This limits the long-term impact of such programs and reduces their effectiveness in improving teaching practices. The lack of coherence and coordination among different TPD initiatives also contributes to inefficiencies and duplication of efforts, further undermining their effectiveness.

Another dimension of this challenge is the administrative burden placed on teachers. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, teachers are often required to complete various administrative tasks, attend meetings, and fulfill reporting requirements. These demands can

reduce the time and energy available for meaningful professional development. As a result, teachers may experience professional fatigue or disengagement, which negatively affects their motivation to participate in TPD activities.

The rapid advancement of technology and the shift towards digital learning environments, particularly in the post-pandemic era, have introduced additional challenges for TPD. While digital platforms offer new opportunities for professional learning, they also require teachers to develop new competencies in digital literacy and online pedagogy. For many teachers, especially those in rural areas, this transition can be difficult due to limited access to technology and lack of training. The digital divide thus exacerbates existing inequalities in access to professional development and further complicates the implementation of effective TPD. Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize that they also present opportunities for reflection and reform. Addressing structural inequality requires targeted policy interventions aimed at improving infrastructure, expanding access to digital resources, and providing additional support for teachers in underserved areas. Enhancing curriculum flexibility necessitates a shift towards more decentralized and context-sensitive approaches to education. Similarly, addressing ideological tensions calls for the integration of multicultural education and critical pedagogy into TPD programs.

In conclusion, the challenges facing Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia are multifaceted and deeply interconnected. Structural inequality, curriculum standardization, ideological tensions, and bureaucratic constraints all contribute to the complexity of TPD implementation. These challenges highlight the need for a more holistic, inclusive, and context-sensitive approach to professional development one that not only addresses technical competencies but also fosters critical thinking, cultural awareness, and reflective practice. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, Indonesia can move towards a more equitable and effective system of teacher professional development that supports both teacher growth and student learning outcomes.

Opportunities for Multicultural and Religious-Based Professional Development

Despite these challenges, Indonesia's multicultural and religious diversity offers significant opportunities for the development of contextually relevant and meaningful TPD programs. One of the most promising approaches is culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the integration of students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process. By recognizing students' identities, experiences, and values as assets, teachers can foster more inclusive and engaging classroom environments (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015).

In the Indonesian context, where cultural and linguistic diversity is highly pronounced, culturally responsive teaching can serve as a bridge between formal education and local knowledge systems. This approach not only enhances students' academic engagement but also promotes mutual respect and intercultural understanding. TPD programs that incorporate training in culturally responsive pedagogy can therefore play a crucial role in addressing issues of inequality and exclusion.

Religious values also constitute an important dimension of teacher professional development in Indonesia. As a country with strong religious traditions, Indonesia provides a unique context in which faith-based perspectives can be integrated into educational practices. Concepts such as *wasatiyyah* (moderation), compassion, tolerance, and social harmony are deeply embedded in religious teachings and can serve as ethical foundations for inclusive pedagogy (Hefner, 2020; Azra, 2018).

Rather than being viewed as a source of division, religion can function as a unifying force that supports moral and character education. Teachers who are able to align their professional practices with these values are more likely to develop a strong sense of purpose and ethical responsibility. TPD programs that incorporate reflective and dialogical approaches to religious

education can therefore contribute to the development of teachers who are not only competent but also morally grounded.

Another important opportunity lies in the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs provide a collaborative platform for teachers to share experiences, reflect on their practices, and collectively address challenges. Research indicates that sustained collaboration among teachers can significantly enhance professional learning and student outcomes (Vescio et al., 2018; Stoll et al., 2016).

In Indonesia, both formal and informal teacher networks including community-based and faith-based organizations have demonstrated considerable potential in supporting teacher development. These networks enable teachers to engage in context-specific discussions, exchange culturally relevant teaching strategies, and build professional solidarity. Moreover, PLCs can serve as a space for critical dialogue on sensitive issues related to diversity, thereby strengthening teachers' capacity to manage multicultural classrooms effectively.

The integration of digital technology also presents new opportunities for TPD. The post-pandemic era has accelerated the adoption of online learning platforms, webinars, and virtual communities of practice. These digital tools enable teachers to access a wide range of resources, participate in global professional networks, and engage in intercultural exchanges (Trust et al., 2020; Redecker, 2017). For teachers in remote areas, digital platforms can help bridge the gap in access to professional development opportunities, although challenges related to digital literacy and infrastructure remain.

Teacher Identity and Professional Growth

Teacher professional development (TPD) extends beyond the acquisition of pedagogical skills and subject-matter knowledge; it fundamentally involves the ongoing construction and negotiation of teacher identity. In contemporary educational discourse, teacher identity is understood as a dynamic, multifaceted construct shaped by personal experiences, institutional expectations, socio-cultural contexts, and professional interactions. Particularly within multicultural and religious contexts such as Indonesia, the formation of teacher identity becomes increasingly complex, as educators are required to navigate overlapping roles as knowledge transmitters, cultural mediators, and moral agents. This dynamic process of identity negotiation significantly influences how teachers interpret their professional responsibilities, engage with diverse learners, and respond to sociocultural differences in the classroom (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2019; Beijaard et al., 2016).

In this regard, TPD should not be narrowly conceptualized as a technical or instrumental process. Instead, it must incorporate reflective and transformative dimensions that enable teachers to critically examine their beliefs, values, and practices. Reflective practice plays a central role in this process, as it allows teachers to engage in continuous self-evaluation and professional learning. Through reflection, teachers can identify implicit biases, question taken-for-granted assumptions, and develop a deeper understanding of how their identities shape their pedagogical decisions. This is particularly important in multicultural settings, where unexamined biases may inadvertently lead to exclusionary practices or reinforce social inequalities. Therefore, TPD programs that prioritize critical self-awareness and reflective inquiry are essential for fostering inclusive and equitable teaching practices.

Moreover, dialogical engagement constitutes another key component of professional growth. Teachers benefit from opportunities to participate in meaningful dialogue with peers, mentors, and diverse communities. Such interactions facilitate the exchange of perspectives, encourage critical thinking, and promote mutual understanding. In multicultural and religiously diverse classrooms, dialogical approaches are especially valuable, as they enable teachers to address sensitive issues related to identity, belief systems, and cultural differences in a constructive and

respectful manner. By engaging in dialogue, teachers can develop the communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity necessary to create inclusive learning environments that honor diversity while fostering social cohesion.

Within the Indonesian context, the integration of religious values into teacher identity introduces an additional layer of complexity. Indonesia's educational system is deeply influenced by religious and cultural traditions, which shape both the content and practice of teaching. For many educators, teaching is not merely a profession but also a moral and spiritual vocation. This perspective imbues teaching with a sense of purpose and ethical responsibility, motivating teachers to contribute to the holistic development of their students. Religious values such as compassion, justice, tolerance, and social harmony often serve as guiding principles in teachers' professional lives.

However, the incorporation of religious identity into professional practice also requires careful negotiation. Teachers must balance their personal beliefs with the principles of inclusivity, neutrality, and respect for diversity that underpin modern educational systems. In multicultural classrooms, where students may come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, the uncritical imposition of personal beliefs can lead to exclusion or marginalization. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to develop a reflective and critical understanding of their religious identities, ensuring that these identities support rather than hinder inclusive educational practices. TPD programs that integrate ethical reflection and intercultural dialogue can play a crucial role in supporting teachers in this process. By providing spaces for critical engagement with religious and cultural issues, such programs enable teachers to align their moral commitments with professional standards of inclusivity and equity.

Furthermore, teacher identity is not static but evolves over time in response to changing educational contexts and professional experiences. The post-pandemic era, in particular, has highlighted the need for adaptability and resilience as core components of teacher identity. The sudden transition to online and hybrid learning environments during the COVID-19 pandemic required teachers to rapidly acquire new competencies, including digital literacy, technological pedagogical knowledge, and innovative instructional strategies. Many teachers were compelled to redesign their teaching practices, adopt new forms of assessment, and find creative ways to maintain student engagement in virtual settings.

This period of disruption also underscored the emotional dimensions of teaching. Teachers had to navigate increased workloads, technological challenges, and concerns about student well-being, all while managing their own stress and uncertainty. As a result, emotional resilience emerged as a critical aspect of professional identity. Teachers who were able to adapt to these challenges demonstrated not only technical competence but also flexibility, perseverance, and a commitment to continuous learning. These qualities are now recognized as essential components of effective teaching in the 21st century.

At the same time, the post-pandemic landscape has opened up new opportunities for professional growth and identity development. The increased use of digital technologies has facilitated access to a wide range of professional learning resources, including online courses, webinars, and virtual communities of practice. Teachers can now engage with global networks of educators, exchange ideas, and learn from diverse perspectives beyond their local contexts. This expanded access to professional learning opportunities has the potential to enrich teacher identity by exposing educators to new pedagogical approaches, cultural insights, and innovative practices (Trust et al., 2020).

In addition, the integration of technology into TPD has encouraged more personalized and self-directed forms of learning. Teachers can tailor their professional development experiences to their specific needs, interests, and contexts, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of TPD. This shift towards learner-centered professional development aligns with contemporary theories

of adult learning, which emphasize autonomy, reflection, and experiential learning. As teachers take greater ownership of their professional growth, they are more likely to develop a strong and coherent sense of professional identity.

Another important aspect of teacher identity and professional growth is the role of institutional support and policy frameworks. Educational institutions and policymakers play a crucial role in shaping the conditions under which teacher identity develops. Supportive leadership, collaborative school cultures, and well-designed TPD programs can create environments that foster professional learning and identity development. Conversely, rigid policies, excessive administrative demands, and lack of support can hinder teachers' ability to engage in reflective practice and professional growth.

In the Indonesian context, efforts to strengthen TPD should therefore focus on creating enabling environments that support both the technical and reflective dimensions of teaching. This includes providing opportunities for collaborative learning, promoting a culture of inquiry and reflection, and ensuring that TPD programs are responsive to the diverse needs of teachers. By adopting a holistic approach to TPD, educational stakeholders can support the development of teachers who are not only competent and knowledgeable but also reflective, ethical, and culturally responsive.

In conclusion, teacher identity is a central component of professional development, particularly in multicultural and religious contexts. The process of identity formation involves continuous negotiation between personal beliefs, professional roles, and sociocultural expectations. Effective TPD programs must therefore address the complex and dynamic nature of teacher identity, incorporating reflective practice, dialogical engagement, and ethical consideration. In the face of ongoing educational changes, including those brought about by the post-pandemic era, the ability of teachers to adapt, reflect, and grow becomes increasingly important. By supporting the development of inclusive, resilient, and reflective teacher identities, TPD can contribute to the creation of more equitable and socially cohesive educational systems.

Synthesis of Challenges and Opportunities

To provide a clearer overview, the key challenges and opportunities in Indonesian TPD can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Synthesis of Challenges and Opportunities

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunities
Access and Equity	Unequal distribution of resources between urban and rural areas	Expansion of digital learning platforms and online training
Curriculum	Limited flexibility due to standardization	Contextual adaptation through culturally responsive pedagogy
Ideological Context	Sensitivity of religious and cultural issues	Integration of religious moderation and ethical values
Professional Learning	Fragmented and top-down programs	Development of PLCs and collaborative networks
Teacher Identity	Lack of reflective training	Strengthening reflective, ethical, and inclusive identities

The table presents a comprehensive synthesis of the key dimensions influencing Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in Indonesia, highlighting a dynamic interplay between persistent challenges and emerging opportunities. Each dimension reflects not only structural and pedagogical constraints but also potential pathways for transformative improvement within the Indonesian educational landscape. In the dimension of access and equity, the unequal distribution

of educational resources between urban and rural areas remains a critical issue. Teachers in urban settings tend to have greater access to training programs, technological infrastructure, and professional networks, whereas those in rural or remote regions often face significant limitations. This disparity contributes to gaps in instructional quality and professional growth. However, the rapid expansion of digital learning platforms and online training initiatives offers a promising solution. By leveraging technology, educational stakeholders can democratize access to professional development, enabling teachers across geographically diverse regions to participate in continuous learning. Nevertheless, this opportunity must be supported by improvements in digital infrastructure and digital literacy to ensure its effectiveness and inclusivity.

The curriculum dimension underscores the tension between standardization and contextual relevance. While a standardized national curriculum is essential for maintaining educational consistency and national identity, it may inadvertently constrain teachers' ability to adapt instructional content to local cultural and religious contexts. This rigidity can limit the effectiveness of teaching in diverse classrooms. On the other hand, the adoption of culturally responsive pedagogy provides a strategic opportunity to address this limitation. By allowing teachers to contextualize learning materials and incorporate students' cultural backgrounds, education becomes more meaningful, inclusive, and engaging. This approach not only enhances academic outcomes but also fosters respect for diversity.

Within the ideological context, the sensitivity surrounding religious and cultural issues poses a significant challenge. Teachers often encounter complex situations involving differences in belief systems, values, and identities, which require careful and informed handling. Without adequate preparation, such situations may lead to misunderstanding or avoidance of critical discussions. However, the integration of religious moderation and ethical values into TPD frameworks presents a valuable opportunity. Principles such as tolerance, compassion, and social harmony deeply rooted in Indonesia's religious traditions can serve as guiding frameworks for teachers in managing diversity constructively. This integration supports the development of inclusive classrooms that respect pluralism while maintaining social cohesion.

The dimension of professional learning reveals systemic issues related to the design and implementation of TPD programs. Many existing initiatives are characterized by top-down approaches, limited duration, and lack of contextual relevance, which reduce their impact on teachers' actual practices. In contrast, the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and collaborative networks offers a more sustainable and participatory model of professional development. Through collaboration, teachers can share experiences, reflect on challenges, and co-construct knowledge that is directly applicable to their teaching contexts. Such communities foster a culture of continuous improvement and collective responsibility.

Finally, the dimension of teacher identity emphasizes the importance of reflective and holistic professional growth. The lack of reflective training in many TPD programs limits teachers' ability to critically examine their beliefs, practices, and roles. This is particularly important in multicultural and religious contexts, where teachers must navigate complex social dynamics. Strengthening reflective, ethical, and inclusive identities represents a crucial opportunity for advancing TPD. By engaging in reflective practices, teachers can develop greater self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and professional commitment, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness as educators.

CONCLUSION

Teacher professional development in Indonesia is profoundly influenced by the country's multicultural and religious landscape. While significant challenges persist particularly in terms of access, curriculum rigidity, and ideological tensions these are accompanied by substantial opportunities for innovation and transformation. The integration of culturally responsive pedagogy, religious moderation, and collaborative learning models offers a promising pathway for

enhancing the quality and relevance of TPD programs. This study highlights the need for a holistic approach to teacher professional development, one that integrates pedagogical competence, multicultural sensitivity, and ethical reflection. Policymakers and educational institutions should prioritize the design of context-sensitive and sustainable TPD initiatives that are responsive to the diverse realities of Indonesian classrooms. Future research should focus on empirical investigations of teachers' lived experiences in multicultural settings, as well as the long-term impact of TPD programs that incorporate religious and cultural dimensions. Strengthening TPD in this direction is essential not only for improving educational outcomes but also for fostering social cohesion, inclusivity, and national unity in Indonesia.

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