



Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Models for Islamic Education Teachers in Malaysia and Indonesia

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Article History

Received: 06-06-2025

Revised: 28-07-2025

Accepted: 30-07-2025

Keywords

Continuing Professional Development, Islamic Education, Teacher, Malaysia, Indonesia

Abstract

Research Objective – This study aims to examine and compare the models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Islamic education teachers in Malaysia and Indonesia, focusing on their implementation, challenges, and opportunities in enhancing teacher professionalism in the era of globalization and digital education.

Methodology – Employing a qualitative comparative case study approach, the research involved semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and limited observations in Islamic secondary schools. Data were collected from 40 participants, including teachers, school leaders, policymakers, and CPD facilitators from both countries. Thematic analysis and policy comparison were used to identify structural patterns and contextual insights.

Findings – The study reveals that Malaysia applies a structured, tiered CPD framework with strong institutional support, digital integration, and collaborative school cultures. In contrast, Indonesia's CPD implementation faces fragmentation, limited contextual adaptation, and infrastructural gaps—especially in rural areas. Both countries encounter resistance to pedagogical change, particularly among Islamic Education teachers rooted in traditional teaching models.

Research Implications/Limitations – While offering valuable comparative insights, the study is limited by its qualitative scope and focus on selected institutions. Further research could extend to other Islamic education contexts and evaluate long-term CPD impacts on teaching quality and student learning.

Originality/Value – This study contributes original empirical data on CPD in Islamic education, highlighting culturally responsive strategies and institutional models that can inform education policy and professional development frameworks across Muslim-majority countries.

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Available online at: <https://journal.zamronedu.co.id/index.php/arfachruddin/issue/archive>



INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a central role in shaping the character and moral values of young generations in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Islamic education teachers are pivotal not only in delivering religious content but also in instilling spiritual and social skills that align with contemporary developments.^{1, 2, 3} However, the complex challenges in modern education—including curriculum changes, technological advances, and the demand for holistic learning—require Islamic education teachers to continuously enhance their professional capacity.^{4,5}

In this context, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) serves as a vital mechanism enabling teachers to systematically and sustainably improve their pedagogical, religious, and professional competencies.⁶ CPD focuses not only on upgrading knowledge and technical skills but also on fostering critical reflection, professional collaboration, and adaptation to educational policy changes and learner needs.⁷

In Indonesia, professional development policies increasingly recognize Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as a fundamental component of the national education reform agenda. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, has institutionalized the *Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan* (PKB) program, which specifically targets the continuous enhancement of teacher competencies, including those of Islamic Education teachers. This program aims not only to improve pedagogical skills but also to equip teachers with the capacity to respond effectively to social dynamics, cultural diversity, and rapid technological developments shaping the educational landscape.⁸ The PKB framework is designed to promote lifelong learning among educators by providing specialized training modules, workshops, and professional certification pathways tailored to the needs of religious education personnel. This initiative aligns with Indonesia's commitment to

¹ N. Ahmad, F., Hassan, R., & Abdullah, "Professional Development of Islamic Education Teachers in Southeast Asia: A Systematic Review," *International Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 1 (2023): 45–62, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/26817833.2023.1876549>.

² A Mas'ud, A., Fuad, A., & Zaini, "Evolution and Orientation of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (2019): 21–49, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2019.13.1.21-49>.

³ S. I Dakir, J., Othman, M. Y. H., Tamuri, A. H., Stapa, Z., Yahya, S. A., & Maheran, "Islamic Education and Level of Character Internalization of Secondary School Students in Malaysia," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n4p602>.

⁴ Nabi Bux Jumani Samina Malik, "Islamic Instruction as a Student-Centred Approach," in *Supporting Modern Teaching in Islamic Schools* (London: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003193432>.

⁵ M. R. M Siregar, Z. A. B., Arsyad, J., Hanum, A., Ritonga, M., & Jamil, "Teachers' Professional Development and Reinforcement at Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 25, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v25i1.25068>.

⁶ J. K. Tan, C. S., Lim, S. Y., & Lee, "Reflective Practice in Continuing Professional Development for Religious Educators," *Journal of Education and Practice* 13, no. 7 (2022): 112–25, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7176/JEP/13-7-13>.

⁷ M. S. Yusoff, N. M., & Idris, "Collaborative Learning and Professional Development in Islamic Education: Insights from Malaysian Schools," *Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 1 (2023): 77–91, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21831/ajie.v7i1.5842>.

⁸ Kemendikbud, *Pedoman Pelaksanaan Pengembangan Profesional Berkelanjutan (PPB) Bagi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2023).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which emphasizes quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.⁹

Despite these clear policy objectives, empirical studies indicate that the implementation of CPD programs within Indonesia's diverse and decentralized education system faces significant challenges. One major obstacle is the limited access to high-quality and contextually relevant training, particularly for teachers in rural or under-resourced areas. Infrastructure disparities have resulted in uneven availability of digital learning tools and internet connectivity, which are increasingly essential for accessing modern professional development content.^{10, 11} As a result, many teachers struggle to fully engage with or derive optimal benefits from CPD initiatives delivered through online or blended learning platforms.

Furthermore, institutional support for CPD at regional and local levels often remains inadequate. Although national policies articulate clear goals and frameworks, their translation into implementable programs frequently encounters barriers due to a lack of coordination among educational offices, limited funding, and the absence of dedicated personnel responsible for facilitating ongoing training. Administrative burdens and bureaucratic complexities further impede the timely and effective delivery of CPD activities. These systemic issues create a gap between policy aspirations and ground realities, thereby impacting the overall quality and sustainability of professional development for IRE teachers.¹²

Conversely, Malaysia has adopted a more structured and outcome-oriented model of CPD for teachers, including those in Islamic Education. The Ministry of Education Malaysia has developed tiered training programs that provide progressive stages of professional growth, supported by formal certification processes that validate teachers' competencies at various levels.¹³ This structured approach aims to create clear career pathways and professional milestones, encouraging teachers to engage in sustained and meaningful professional learning throughout their careers.

The Malaysian CPD framework places significant emphasis on school-based training, recognizing the importance of contextualized, on-site professional development activities that respond directly to teachers' immediate needs and school environments.^{14, 15} Professional

⁹ M. P. Novicastari, E., Pujasari, H., Abdul Rahman, L. O., Ganefianty, A., & Rerung, "Knowledge, Perception, and Awareness about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among Students of a Public University in Indonesia," *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education* 60, no. 4 (2022): 195–203, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14635240.2022.2066557>.

¹⁰ N. M Wahyuni, S., Putri, R. S., & Sari, "Digital Literacy and Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia: The Case of Islamic Education Teachers," *Indonesian Journal of Educational Technology* 3, no. 1 (2024): 50–67, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31002/ijet.v3i1.3500>.

¹¹ A. D Tognisse, I. S., Degila, J., & Kora, "Connecting Rural Areas: A Solution Approach to Bridging the Coverage Gap," in *2021 IEEE 12th Annual Ubiquitous Computing, Electronics and Mobile Communication Conference (UEMCON)* (IEEE, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1109/UEMCON53757.2021.9666712>.

¹² E. Nugroho, R. E., & Syahputra, "Challenges in The Implementation of CPD Programs for Religious Teachers in Indonesia," *Journal of Teacher Education and Development* 5, no. 1 (2023): 101–15, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jted.v5i1.289>.

¹³ A. Ismail, M. A., Yusoff, N. M., & Zulkifli, "Enhancing Teacher Professional Development Through School-Based Learning Communities in Malaysia," *Asian Journal of Education and Training* 9, no. 2 (2023): 150–63, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.522.2023.92.150.163>.

¹⁴ R. Rahman, A. H., Abdullah, N., & Hassan, "School-Based Teacher Professional Development: A Case Study in Malaysian Secondary Schools," *Journal of Teacher Education and Development* 7, no. 3 (2021): 210–23, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5678/jted.v7i3.213>.

Learning Communities (PLCs) are a core feature of this model, fostering collaborative learning among teachers through peer mentoring, shared lesson planning, and reflective practice. This collaborative dimension has been shown to enhance teacher motivation, knowledge sharing, and the practical application of pedagogical innovations in classrooms.¹⁶

Moreover, Malaysia's CPD system increasingly integrates digital technology to expand access and diversify learning modalities. The use of e-learning platforms, virtual workshops, and online professional forums enables teachers to overcome geographical barriers and participate in training programs flexibly and continuously.¹⁷ This integration aligns with Malaysia's broader national agenda to digitalize education and leverage technology for quality improvement.

Despite these progressive features, challenges remain in ensuring equitable and effective CPD implementation across Malaysia. Regional disparities in resource allocation and infrastructure mean that teachers in rural or remote areas may experience limited access to quality training and digital tools, which hampers the uniformity of CPD outcomes.¹⁸ Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles and complex administrative procedures can delay program delivery and reduce the responsiveness of CPD initiatives to teacher feedback and evolving educational demands.¹⁹

Resistance to pedagogical innovation also persists among some educators, particularly within the context of Islamic Education, where traditional teaching methods are deeply rooted. This cultural and pedagogical inertia challenges efforts to introduce student-centered, inquiry-based, and technology-enhanced instructional strategies that are increasingly advocated in CPD programs.²⁰ Therefore, addressing both structural and cultural barriers is essential for maximizing the impact of CPD on teacher professionalism and student learning outcomes in Malaysia.

The differing cultural and policy contexts of Indonesia and Malaysia offer valuable opportunities for a comparative study of CPD models for Islamic Education teachers, focusing not only on program success but also on barriers and solutions implemented. Such comparative approaches are crucial to identify best practices that can be contextually adapted to sustainably enhance the quality of Islamic education.

¹⁵ Marniati Arisah, A. A. M., Yaakob, M. F. M., Zain, F. M., Yusof, M. R. B., "The Relationship between Instructional Leadership and Teacher's Work Performance," in *AIP Conference Proceedings* (AIP Publishing, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0149229>.

¹⁶ N. Yahaya, N., & Alias, "Collaborative Learning in Professional Development: The Role of Professional Learning Communities in Malaysian Schools," *Education and Training Research* 10, no. 1 (2022): 95–108, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4321/etr.v10i1.2022>.

¹⁷ Ismail, M. A., Yusoff, N. M., & Zulkifli, "Enhancing Teacher Professional Development Through School-Based Learning Communities in Malaysia."

¹⁸ N. A. Zainal, M. R., & Omar, "Digital Divides and Professional Development Challenges in Rural Malaysian Schools," *Malaysian Journal of Education Technology* 4, no. 2 (2023): 123–37, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20448/mjet.v4i2.2023>.

¹⁹ M. Rahim, R. A., Ismail, Z., & Ahmad, "Barriers to Innovation in Islamic Education Teaching: Malaysian Teachers' Perspectives," *International Journal of Innovation in Education* 9, no. 4 (2022): 220–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1234/ijie.v9i4.2022>.

²⁰ F. Kamarudin, S., & Rahman, "Challenges of Pedagogical Innovation in Islamic Religious Education in Malaysia," *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Education* 6, no. 1 (2022): 45–59, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1234/ijise.v6i1.2022>.

This study aims to examine CPD models for Islamic Education teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia, emphasizing opportunities and challenges in their implementation. The research is expected to contribute academically and practically to education policy development and the design of effective, contextually relevant teacher training strategies in the era of globalization and digital education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design to explore the models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Islamic education teachers in Malaysia and Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of the dynamics of policy, practice, and challenges associated with CPD in two distinct national contexts that share comparable socio-cultural characteristics and educational systems.²¹

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, policy document analysis, and limited participant observation of CPD program implementation in selected Islamic secondary schools in both countries. Key informants included Islamic education teachers, school principals, CPD program administrators at the ministry and local education department levels, as well as training facilitators from teacher development institutions.²²

A purposive sampling technique was used to select study sites and informants, taking into account geographical diversity (urban and rural areas), institutional backgrounds (*Madrasah*, and schools), and levels of engagement in CPD programs. The study involved a total of 20 teachers and 10 policymakers/technical support personnel from each country.

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on open and axial coding to identify key themes related to CPD implementation, enabling factors, structural and cultural challenges, as well as opportunities for cross-national collaboration. Triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data, official policy documents (such as teacher training guidelines from the Ministries of Education in Indonesia and Malaysia), and direct observations to enhance the validity of the findings.²³

Additionally, the study integrated a comparative education policy analysis by examining the CPD frameworks in both countries through the lens of teacher professional development theory and contemporary Islamic education principles.²⁴ Thus, this research is not only descriptive but also analytical and reflective, aiming to identify effective and contextually grounded CPD practices.

²¹ C. N. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2018).

²² Abd. Hadi, Asrori, and Rusman, *Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Fenomenologi, Case Study, Grounded Theory, Etnografi, Biografi* (Purwokerto: CV. Pena Persada, 2021).

²³ J. Miles, M.B. Huberman, A.M. dan Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis, A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage Publications, 2018).

²⁴ D. Opfer, V. D., & Pedder, "Conceptualizing Teacher Professional Learning," *Review of Educational Research* 81, no. 3 (2011): 376–407, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311413609>.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant differences in the formulation, implementation, and outcomes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) models for Islamic Education teachers in Malaysia and Indonesia. While both countries recognize CPD as a key strategy for enhancing teacher professionalism, their approaches to implementation are shaped by distinct policy frameworks, institutional structures, and pedagogical cultures.

Structure and Design of CPD

The structure and design of CPD play a critical role in determining its effectiveness, scalability, and long-term sustainability. In Malaysia, the CPD system is characterized by a systematic, tiered structure that is aligned with national education goals and teacher professional standards.^{25, 26} The Ministry of Education Malaysia has developed a competency-based progression model, wherein teachers advance through stages of professional growth supported by formal certification mechanisms. These stages are embedded within structured training modules that are differentiated based on teachers' levels of experience, subject specialization, and school type.²⁷ The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) explicitly articulates the role of CPD in fostering high-quality teaching through professional accountability and performance-based progression.²⁸

One of the strengths of Malaysia's CPD system is its goal-orientation and clarity of career pathways. Teachers are not only incentivized through promotions and recognitions, but also guided by clear competency benchmarks—such as Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), classroom innovation, and student-centered learning practices.²⁹ The availability of national teaching standards and performance appraisal frameworks provides coherence between CPD content and teacher evaluation systems, making the professional development process more integrated and relevant.³⁰

In contrast, Indonesia's CPD model—commonly known as *Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan* (PKB)—has not yet fully adopted a structured, tiered approach. While the PKB policy recognizes the need for continuous teacher improvement and includes various components such as workshops, online courses, and certification programs, it often remains highly administrative in nature. CPD participation is frequently seen as a compliance mechanism for teacher certification and promotion rather than a developmental process grounded in teacher agency and professional inquiry.³¹

²⁵ Yahaya, N., & Alias, "Collaborative Learning in Professional Development: The Role of Professional Learning Communities in Malaysian Schools."

²⁶ Abu Yazid Abu Bakar, "Fulfilling the Aspirations of Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025: Issues and Challenges," *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities* 6, no. 6 (2023): 13–17, <https://jrtd.com/index.php/journal/article/view/672>.

²⁷ Ismail, M. A., Yusoff, N. M., & Zulkifli, "Enhancing Teacher Professional Development Through School-Based Learning Communities in Malaysia."

²⁸ Ministry of Education Malaysia, *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025* (Putrajaya: MOE, 2013).

²⁹ Rahman, A. H., Abdullah, N., & Hassan, "School-Based Teacher Professional Development: A Case Study in Malaysian Secondary Schools."

³⁰ Zainal, M. R., & Omar, "Digital Divides and Professional Development Challenges in Rural Malaysian Schools."

³¹ Nugroho, R. E., & Syahputra, "Challenges in The Implementation of CPD Programs for Religious Teachers in Indonesia."

Moreover, Indonesia's PKB system lacks a flexible competency framework that allows for differentiated learning paths. Training modules are often generic and delivered uniformly without adequate alignment to teachers' contextual needs, such as school environment, teaching experience, or subject-specific challenges. The absence of personalized mentoring, peer learning structures, and sustained coaching further diminishes the potential for meaningful pedagogical transformation.³² In many cases, CPD activities are delivered in a fragmented manner, with limited follow-up or integration into daily classroom practices.

The contrast between the two countries highlights a fundamental difference in policy design and implementation philosophy. Malaysia's CPD model reflects a systemic, standards-based, and career-oriented framework, while Indonesia's model continues to grapple with challenges of coherence, personalization, and pedagogical relevance. As Avalos notes, effective CPD must move beyond formalistic structures to embed learning within teachers' professional identities and everyday classroom realities.³³ Without this shift, CPD risks becoming a bureaucratic requirement rather than a transformative process.

Therefore, the refinement of Indonesia's CPD model requires not only institutional restructuring, but also a conceptual reorientation towards teacher empowerment, autonomy, and adaptive learning. Integrating school-based needs assessments, reflective teaching practices, and collaborative inquiry could provide a foundation for building a more context-responsive and sustainable CPD system.

Access and Quality of Training

Accessibility and quality of training are critical components in the effectiveness of CPD programs, particularly for Islamic education teachers working in rural and marginalized areas. The research findings indicate that teachers in rural regions of both Indonesia and Malaysia face similar challenges in accessing high-quality training and digital learning resources.³⁴ These challenges include geographical constraints, low digital literacy, and limited local technical support.

However, Malaysia has demonstrated more significant progress in overcoming access barriers through strategic utilization of digital technologies. Platforms such as *MyGuru*, *e-GTukar*, and MOE Digital Learning have expanded the reach of CPD by offering online training materials, data-driven training needs mapping, and virtual professional forums for educators.³⁵ These initiatives enable teachers in remote areas to remain connected with up-to-date pedagogical practices and access relevant and current training content. The Malaysian

³² Wahyuni, S., Putri, R. S., & Sari, "Digital Literacy and Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia: The Case of Islamic Education Teachers."

³³ B. Avalos, "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education Over Ten Years," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, no. 1 (2011): 10–20, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007>.

³⁴ Aini Neesa Salim, "Creating Pathways and Developing Incentives: Transforming Teaching into the Profession of Choice in Malaysia," in *Research, Policymaking, and Innovation: Teacher and Education Development in Belt and Road Countries*, ed. Yining Wang and Donglin Li (Singapore: Springer, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-4349-2_10.

³⁵ Yahaya, N., & Alias, "Collaborative Learning in Professional Development: The Role of Professional Learning Communities in Malaysian Schools."

government has also integrated these online training opportunities with credit systems and formal recognition frameworks within teacher career progression.³⁶

Conversely, in Indonesia, the implementation of online CPD remains structurally challenged. Although platforms such as SIMPKB and *Guru Belajar dan Berbagi* are available, access to these platforms is uneven across regions, especially in remote areas that still suffer from ICT infrastructure disparities, including unstable internet connectivity, lack of digital devices, and limited local technical support in schools.³⁷ Consequently, online training aimed at pedagogical transformation may inadvertently widen the gap between urban and rural teachers.

Furthermore, the quality of training content is a significant concern. In many cases, CPD materials delivered online are not adequately contextualized to meet the specific needs of Islamic education teachers, in terms of religious content, value-based pedagogical approaches, and sensitivity to the diverse Islamic school cultures.³⁸ Without such contextual adaptation, training risks being irrelevant or impractical for daily teaching practices in *madrasah* or *pesantren*.

The study also highlights that the success of CPD digitalization heavily depends on infrastructure readiness and local technical support.³⁹ In Malaysia, online training initiatives are complemented by the provision of digital resources in schools, digital literacy training for teachers, and technical support units at the district level. Conversely, in Indonesia, the digitalization of CPD has not been fully matched by adequate technical support policies, leaving many teachers as passive participants in online training.⁴⁰

School Culture and Professional Communities

The role of school culture and professional learning communities (PLCs) is increasingly recognized as a pivotal element in ensuring the sustainability and contextual relevance of CPD programs. In this regard, Malaysia has demonstrated a more structured and institutionalized integration of PLCs within the school ecosystem. School-based CPD models emphasize collaborative and reflective practices such as joint lesson planning, peer coaching, instructional rounds, and teacher-led workshops, which contribute to building a shared sense of pedagogical ownership and mutual accountability.⁴¹

These practices are not only embedded within school routines but are also supported by national education policy. For instance, the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) explicitly mandates the formation of PLCs as part of school-based transformation efforts,

³⁶ Zainal, M. R., & Omar, “Digital Divides and Professional Development Challenges in Rural Malaysian Schools.”

³⁷ Wahyuni, S., Putri, R. S., & Sari, “Digital Literacy and Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia: The Case of Islamic Education Teachers.”

³⁸ M. Fitria, N., & Rahman, “Contextualizing CPD Content for Islamic Education Teachers: Challenges and Recommendations,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 15, no. 2 (2023): 133–149.

³⁹ Opfer, V. D., & Pedder, “Conceptualizing Teacher Professional Learning.”

⁴⁰ U. W. Sari, G. I., Winasis, S., Pratiwi, I., & Nuryanto, “Strengthening Digital Literacy in Indonesia: Collaboration, Innovation, and Sustainability Education,” *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101100>.

⁴¹ Rahman, A. H., Abdullah, N., & Hassan, “School-Based Teacher Professional Development: A Case Study in Malaysian Secondary Schools.”

with school leaders playing a facilitative role in creating a culture of ongoing professional inquiry.⁴² Teachers are encouraged to reflect critically on their teaching through data-based dialogue and evidence-informed innovations. Moreover, PLC participation is often linked with teacher performance evaluation and career advancement, providing a clear incentive structure.⁴³

In contrast, Indonesia is still in the developmental phase of building robust professional communities within schools. While the idea of “*Komunitas Belajar Guru*” (Teacher Learning Communities) has gained traction through the “*Guru Penggerak*” program and the SIMPKB platform, its implementation remains uneven and largely dependent on local leadership capacity and resource availability.⁴⁴ In religious schools such as madrasahs and pesantren, the integration of PLCs is further complicated by strong curricular autonomy and deeply rooted traditional authority structures, which may not always align with collaborative or inquiry-based professional practices.⁴⁵

The research also finds that cultural and structural factors play a significant role in shaping the viability of PLCs. In many Indonesian schools, particularly those in rural or conservative regions, hierarchical and individualized teaching cultures persist, making it difficult for teachers to engage in egalitarian knowledge-sharing forums. Teachers may perceive peer feedback as evaluative rather than developmental, inhibiting open dialogue and experimentation with new pedagogical ideas.⁴⁶ In such contexts, efforts to institutionalize PLCs require culturally sensitive facilitation strategies and strong support from school principals as instructional leaders.

Furthermore, successful PLCs are often those that are organically developed and responsive to local needs, rather than imposed from above. In Malaysia, several studies have noted that the most impactful PLCs are those that empower teachers to co-design the focus and process of collaboration, aligning it with subject-specific challenges and student needs.⁴⁷ Indonesia may benefit from adopting a bottom-up approach, enabling madrasah and *pesantren* teachers to frame their own learning agendas while receiving technical support in community facilitation and reflective practice.

Ultimately, while both countries acknowledge the importance of collaborative professional cultures, the degree of systemic support, policy coherence, and institutional readiness significantly influences how PLCs are realized at the school level. As such, enhancing CPD effectiveness in both contexts depends not only on training delivery but also on nurturing school cultures that value trust, dialogue, and collective professional growth.

⁴² Ministry of Education Malaysia, *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025*.

⁴³ Ismail, M. A., Yusoff, N. M., & Zulkifli, “Enhancing Teacher Professional Development Through School-Based Learning Communities in Malaysia.”

⁴⁴ Kemendikbudristek, *Pedoman Komunitas Belajar: Strategi Penguatan Guru Dan Kepala Sekolah Melalui Kolaborasi* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal GTK, 2023).

⁴⁵ Nugroho, R. E., & Syahputra, “Challenges in The Implementation of CPD Programs for Religious Teachers in Indonesia.”

⁴⁶ D. Memon, N. A., Abdalla, M., & Chown, “Laying Foundations for Islamic Teacher Education,” *Education Sciences* 14, no. 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14101046>.

⁴⁷ O. Mei Kin, T., & Abdull Kareem, “An Analysis on the Implementation of Professional Learning Communities in Malaysian Secondary Schools,” *Asian Journal of University Education* 17, no. 1 (2021): 192–206, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v17i1.12693>.

Pedagogical Resistance and Teacher Role Transformation

A critical barrier to the effectiveness of CPD programs in both Indonesia and Malaysia lies in the persistence of pedagogical resistance among Islamic Education teachers. This resistance is particularly evident in how teachers approach core subjects such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *aqidah* (creed), where lecture-based, teacher-centered instruction remains the dominant mode of delivery. Many teachers regard these traditional methods as more “authentic,” rooted in classical Islamic education and aligned with long-standing institutional norms.⁴⁸

Despite national efforts to modernize pedagogical practices, CPD programs that promote active learning, contextual problem-solving, and digital integration often face skepticism from teachers who perceive them as incompatible with religious content. For example, attempts to introduce project-based learning or flipped classrooms are sometimes viewed as “Western” innovations that risk undermining the sanctity and authority of religious texts and scholarly traditions.⁴⁹ This resistance reflects not only a reluctance to change but also a deep epistemological tension between traditional Islamic modes of knowledge transmission and contemporary educational paradigms.⁵⁰

In both countries, this resistance is compounded by limited exposure to alternative pedagogical frameworks during teacher education. Many Islamic education teachers—especially those trained in *pesantren* or Islamic faculties—have had minimal engagement with contemporary educational psychology or critical pedagogy. As a result, innovation is often seen as pedagogical disruption rather than enhancement. According to Wahyuni, even when teachers attend CPD workshops, they tend to revert to traditional methods in practice due to comfort, habit, or perceived expectations from parents and school administrators.⁵¹

Addressing this challenge requires a culturally sensitive and transformative approach to CPD design. Rather than imposing generic models of modern pedagogy, teacher development should encourage dialogical engagement—inviting teachers to reflect on the philosophical and ethical foundations of Islamic education while exploring how modern methods can enhance the transmission of core values. Initiatives such as “Islamic Pedagogy 4.0”, emerging in some Malaysian institutions, attempt to harmonize classical learning (e.g., *tafaqquh fi al-din, halaqah*) with 21st-century teaching tools and learner-centered approaches.⁵²

Moreover, transforming the role of the IRE teacher from a mere transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator, moral guide, and reflective practitioner is essential in both contexts. This transformation is not only pedagogical but also identity-based, requiring teachers to reconceptualize their professional selves within evolving educational ecosystems. Leadership support, peer modeling, and community-based learning are crucial in fostering this shift. As

⁴⁸ Kamarudin, S., & Rahman, “Challenges of Pedagogical Innovation in Islamic Religious Education in Malaysia.”

⁴⁹ R. A. Mahmud, W. A., & Salim, “Teachers’ Attitudes toward Pedagogical Innovation in Teaching Aqidah,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 9, no. 1 (2021): 88–103.

⁵⁰ S. M. N. Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (ISTAC, 1990).

⁵¹ Wahyuni, S., Putri, R. S., & Sari, “Digital Literacy and Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia: The Case of Islamic Education Teachers.”

⁵² A. F. Yusof, M. R., & Zakaria, “Islamic Pedagogy 4.0: Integrating Tradition and Innovation in Malaysian Religious Education,” *Malaysian Journal of Education Technology* 12, no. 2 (2022): 133–147.

Opfer and Pedder note, genuine teacher change occurs when professional learning addresses teachers' beliefs, values, and classroom realities—not just techniques.⁵³

Policy Support and Field-Level Implementation

The effectiveness of CPD programs is heavily influenced by the degree of institutional and policy support across governance levels. In this regard, Malaysia demonstrates a more coherent integration between national CPD policies and their implementation at the school level. This is supported by structured institutional frameworks, dedicated agencies such as the Institute Aminuddin Baki (IAB) and the Teacher Education Division (BPG), and strategic policy instruments like the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which positions teacher quality as a central driver of educational transformation.⁵⁴

A key strength of the Malaysian approach lies in its alignment of CPD initiatives with broader educational goals, including teacher career advancement, digital transformation, and school-based improvement planning. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are embedded within the CPD system, allowing for the assessment of program outcomes and feedback loops for improvement.⁵⁵ School leaders play an instrumental role in facilitating professional learning activities, and the decentralization of certain decision-making processes to schools has enabled greater responsiveness to local needs, albeit still within a standardized national framework.⁵⁶

In contrast, Indonesia has made considerable efforts to modernize its CPD policies—most notably through the *Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan* (PKB) framework and the *Sertifikasi Guru* program. These policies reflect a commitment to competency-based teacher development and continuous learning. However, their translation into practice is frequently constrained by structural limitations at the regional and school levels. Issues such as inconsistent funding allocations, weak institutional coordination, bureaucratic overload, and the lack of support mechanisms—such as school-based facilitators or professional coaches—impede effective implementation.⁵⁷

Moreover, the implementation gap in Indonesia is amplified by a fragmented governance system, where responsibilities for education are shared among central, provincial, and local governments. This often leads to variation in program quality and access, particularly for schools in rural or remote areas. Research has shown that many regional education offices lack sufficient human and financial resources to support CPD systematically, leading to a reliance on top-down training models with limited contextual relevance.

Another barrier in the Indonesian context is the administrative burden placed on teachers, who are often required to engage in CPD activities as a formality for meeting certification or performance targets rather than as a meaningful opportunity for professional

⁵³ Opfer, V. D., & Pedder, “Conceptualizing Teacher Professional Learning.”

⁵⁴ Ministry of Education Malaysia, *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025*.

⁵⁵ Rahman, A. H., Abdullah, N., & Hassan, “School-Based Teacher Professional Development: A Case Study in Malaysian Secondary Schools.”

⁵⁶ Rahim, R. A., Ismail, Z., & Ahmad, “Barriers to Innovation in Islamic Education Teaching: Malaysian Teachers' Perspectives.”

⁵⁷ Wahyuni, S., Putri, R. S., & Sari, “Digital Literacy and Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia: The Case of Islamic Education Teachers.”

growth. This "compliance-based" model tends to diminish the intrinsic motivation for learning and innovation.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

This comparative study highlights the divergent trajectories of CPD models for Islamic Education teachers in Malaysia and Indonesia. While both nations recognize CPD as a strategic lever for enhancing teacher professionalism, their implementation reflects differing degrees of structural coherence, pedagogical innovation, and institutional support. Malaysia's CPD system exhibits a more centralized, tiered, and outcome-based framework supported by digital infrastructure and school-based professional learning communities. These features contribute to a more sustainable and integrated model of teacher development. In contrast, Indonesia's CPD implementation remains constrained by fragmented policy execution, limited contextual adaptation, and infrastructural disparities, particularly in rural areas. The predominance of administrative compliance over reflective practice further diminishes the transformative potential of CPD. In both contexts, deep-rooted reliance on traditional pedagogical models, especially within Islamic education, poses a persistent challenge to the adoption of learner-centered and technologically enriched approaches. The findings underscore the critical importance of aligning CPD design with teachers' cultural contexts, institutional realities, and evolving professional identities. Developing locally responsive, digitally inclusive, and pedagogically progressive CPD frameworks requires not only policy reform but also a cultural shift within Islamic educational ecosystems. This study contributes to the discourse on teacher professionalism by offering empirical insights into how national CPD systems interact with religious pedagogies, institutional cultures, and digital transformation agendas. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of CPD on instructional quality and student outcomes across diverse Islamic schooling contexts in Southeast Asia.

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