



## Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing National Standards for English Teacher Professional Growth in Pontianak

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### Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of an experiential, practice-based Online Professional Development (OPD) program in supporting English teachers' professional growth during the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Pontianak. The program was designed to help teachers translate curriculum policy into practical classroom strategies through sustained, contextualized professional learning. Using a qualitative exploratory design, the study involved 28 participants, including English teachers, school leaders, and local education stakeholders. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and post-OPD questionnaires to triangulate findings. Results indicate substantial improvements in teachers' perceptions of OPD relevance, clarity, and practical applicability, with mean scores increasing from 2.70–3.00 before the program to 4.20–4.55 afterwards. Teachers' pedagogical confidence and autonomy also improved from 2.60–2.70 to 4.10–4.20 following participation in experiential learning cycles involving micro-teaching, modelling, guided reflection, and classroom experimentation. These activities encouraged the adoption of reflective journals, project-based learning, and culturally responsive teaching materials aligned with local contexts. Despite these gains, challenges such as heavy workloads, limited planning time, and uneven digital access constrained sustained implementation. Overall, the findings demonstrate that experiential OPD can bridge the gap between curriculum policy and classroom practice by strengthening teacher agency, reflective practice, and contextualized pedagogy.

**Keywords:** *Online professional development, experiential learning, teacher autonomy, English language teaching, Kurikulum Merdeka, Indonesia.*

### INTRODUCTION

National teacher quality remains a central priority within Indonesia's education reforms. The Standar Nasional Pendidikan (SNP) mandates that teachers demonstrate pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies as the foundation for effective learning and holistic student

development (BSNP, 2020). Under the Kurikulum Merdeka, teachers are further encouraged to implement student-centred learning, promote higher-order thinking, and provide meaningful learning experiences that nurture communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. These expectations require teachers to strengthen their pedagogical capacity through sustainable professional development continually.

However, despite ongoing reform efforts, numerous studies reveal persistent challenges faced by Indonesian English teachers. Recent empirical studies reveal that Indonesian English teachers continue to face persistent challenges in implementing student-centred, 21st-century oriented instruction. Research by Efendi & Kristanto (2024) found that English teaching practices in many Indonesian secondary schools remain dominated by traditional, teacher-centred approaches, with limited integration of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Their study highlights that classroom activities often focus narrowly on linguistic accuracy rather than meaningful, competency-based learning. Similarly, Setyaningsih et al (2020) reported that although teachers hold positive attitudes toward modern pedagogy and technology integration, actual classroom practices tend to remain at the level of substitution or augmentation, indicating that deeper pedagogical transformation has yet to occur. These findings align with broader concerns regarding limited access to sustained, practice-based professional development, especially opportunities that help teachers translate policy expectations into concrete classroom strategies.

Together, these studies suggest that despite ongoing educational reforms, many Indonesian English teachers continue to face difficulties in translating student-centred curriculum principles into classroom practice. Although current curriculum policies emphasize active learning, critical thinking, collaboration, and learner autonomy, classroom instruction often remains dominated by teacher-centred practices and a focus on content transmission (Efendi & Kristanto, 2024; Setyaningsih et al., 2020). This mismatch between policy expectations and classroom realities has also been observed in broader research on teacher professional development, which highlights that meaningful instructional change requires sustained learning opportunities, active participation, and practical classroom application rather than one-off training sessions (Garet et al., 2001; Desimone et al., 2002). Furthermore, effective professional development should provide opportunities for collaboration, modelling of instructional practices, feedback, and reflection to support lasting pedagogical transformation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, Indonesian teachers frequently encounter contextual barriers such as heavy administrative workloads, limited access to continuous professional learning, and insufficient support for implementing innovative teaching approaches (Ayuningtiyas et al., 2024; Herlina et al., 2023). Consequently, a significant gap remains between curriculum aspirations and classroom implementation, highlighting the need for professional development initiatives that offer practical, context-sensitive support for adopting student-centred pedagogies effectively. These approaches encourage students to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills while using English meaningfully in real or simulated contexts. Teachers in urban public schools often face overcrowded classrooms, limited access to training, and high administrative workloads that reduce opportunities for reflective teaching.

In response to the growing demand for accessible and scalable teacher learning opportunities, the Indonesian government has increasingly promoted online professional development (OPD) initiatives through digital platforms and virtual training programs. The adoption of OPD expanded significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued thereafter due to its flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and ability to reach teachers across geographically diverse regions (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Previous studies suggest that well-designed OPD can enhance teacher engagement, professional autonomy, reflective practice, and pedagogical innovation, particularly when it incorporates collaboration, active learning, and opportunities for classroom application (Hampel & Stickler, 2022; Rahimi & Fathi, 2021).

However, evidence also indicates that the effectiveness of OPD depends largely on its design and implementation. Many online professional development programs continue to rely on passive knowledge transmission through webinars and lecture-based formats, providing limited opportunities for practice, feedback, reflection, and sustained professional support (Philipsen et al., 2019; Powell & Bodur, 2019). As a result, teachers often report difficulties transferring newly acquired knowledge into meaningful classroom practice, particularly when professional learning is disconnected from local teaching contexts and everyday instructional challenges (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). These concerns suggest that simply increasing access to online training is insufficient. Rather, OPD must be designed as an experiential and practice-based learning process that enables teachers to experiment with new pedagogical approaches, reflect on their experiences, and adapt innovations to their classroom realities. Despite growing interest in OPD, relatively little research has examined how such approaches can support English teachers in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka within urban Indonesian contexts such as Pontianak.

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Within Indonesian EFL settings, there is still limited research exploring OPD as a structured pathway for teachers to design, practice, and refine classroom strategies particularly those aligned with humanistic and constructivist philosophies. Approaches such as Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984) and culturally responsive pedagogy have been shown to enhance student engagement, reflective practice, and contextualised learning (Gay, 2018; Mahendra, 2021). Yet empirical studies focusing on teacher empowerment through OPD in urban Indonesian classrooms remain scarce.

This issue is particularly relevant in Pontianak, the capital city of West Kalimantan, where English teachers work in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Students often come from different ethnic backgrounds, including Malay, Dayak, Chinese, and Madurese communities, and may use Indonesian alongside local languages in their daily interactions. Such diversity requires teachers to adopt flexible and context-sensitive instructional approaches that can accommodate varying linguistic experiences and learning needs.

Despite ongoing curriculum reforms, English teachers in Pontianak continue to face challenges in implementing student-centred learning practices aligned with Kurikulum Merdeka. Preliminary observations and informal discussions with teachers in several SMA Negeri schools indicated a need for professional development that goes beyond theoretical explanations of curriculum policy and provides practical guidance for classroom implementation. Teachers frequently expressed difficulties in designing authentic learning activities, facilitating collaborative learning, and integrating higher-order thinking skills into English lessons. Although many teachers participate in online workshops and training programs, these activities are often short-term in nature and provide limited opportunities for follow-up mentoring, peer collaboration, classroom experimentation, or reflective practice. Consequently, teachers may acquire new knowledge from training but receive insufficient support to translate that knowledge into sustained instructional change. These contextual challenges highlight the importance of investigating how structured Online Professional Development (OPD) can support English teachers in Pontianak in implementing innovative and student-centred pedagogical practices.

Given this gap, there is a pressing need to explore how OPD can empower English teachers through experiential, reflective, and humanistic approaches to improve their confidence, autonomy, and instructional practice. Therefore, this study investigates how structured Online Professional Development can support English teachers in Pontianak in adopting experiential, student-centred pedagogies that align with national curriculum reforms and 4C skill expectations.

### **Research Questions:**

1. How do teachers perceive the relevance and usefulness of the OPD program?
2. To what extent does OPD improve teachers' pedagogical confidence and autonomy?

3. How do teachers implement experiential and reflective strategies in their English classrooms after participating in OPD?
4. What challenges and enabling factors affect teachers' use of OPD-based strategies?

### **Literature Review**

#### *National Standards and Teacher Professional Growth in Indonesia*

Indonesia's national education standards (Standar Nasional Pendidikan / SNP) establish the minimum expectations for teacher competence and professional qualifications across the country. These standards are primarily regulated through Permendikbud No. 16/2007, which outlines four core domains of teacher competence: pedagogical, professional, personal, and social (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007). Within this framework, teachers are expected not only to demonstrate subject-matter knowledge and effective instructional practices but also to exhibit professional responsibility and ethical conduct in their interactions with students and colleagues.

Teacher professional growth is further institutionalized through the program of Pengembangan Keprofesional Berkelanjutan (PKB), which emphasizes continuous professional development as a key mechanism for improving national teacher quality. PKB encourages teachers to engage in ongoing learning activities such as training, classroom research, and professional collaboration. Recent discussions of curriculum reforms and educational policy highlight that national standards remain central to shaping both classroom practices and professional development initiatives across Indonesian schools (Magdalena et al., 2021; Mahyuddin, 2023). These standards provide a common framework that guides teacher training, evaluation, and career progression, while also influencing how teachers interpret and implement curriculum policies at the classroom level.

#### *Teacher Professional Development (TPD): Global Concepts and Indonesian Implementation*

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) refers to structured learning opportunities designed to enhance teachers' knowledge, pedagogical skills, and instructional effectiveness. International research consistently emphasizes that effective professional development should be sustained over time, collaborative in nature, and closely connected to teachers' classroom practices and curriculum demands. According to Guskey, meaningful teacher change occurs when professional development initiatives influence teachers' classroom practices and lead to observable improvements in student learning outcomes (as applied in Rahmawati & Sofyan, 2020).

In the Indonesian context, TPD programs have been implemented through various national and institutional initiatives aimed at improving teacher competence and aligning teaching practices with educational reforms. However, research suggests that significant challenges remain in ensuring that professional development programs are relevant to teachers' everyday classroom realities. For example, Setiyadi and Puspitasari (2019) report that many training programs still emphasize theoretical knowledge rather than practical classroom application. Similarly, Rahmawati and Sofyan (2020) highlight that short-term workshops often fail to produce lasting improvements in teaching practices because they do not provide sustained support or opportunities for reflection and practice. These

findings suggest that effective TPD requires not only access to training opportunities but also continuous engagement, collaboration, and contextualized learning experiences that enable teachers to integrate new pedagogical knowledge into their daily teaching practices.

Several theoretical perspectives provide important foundations for understanding teacher professional development and the implementation of national education standards. One influential perspective is Adult Learning Theory, proposed by Malcolm Knowles. Knowles emphasizes that adult learners are self-directed individuals who benefit from learning experiences that are relevant to their professional contexts and focused on solving real-world problems. Within the context of teacher development, this perspective suggests that professional learning opportunities should be practical, collaborative, and responsive to teachers' instructional needs (Rahmawati & Sofyan, 2020).

Another important framework is the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which highlights the role of collaborative inquiry and peer support in professional learning. PLCs encourage teachers to share experiences, reflect on instructional practices, and collectively address challenges in teaching and learning. Research in Indonesian schools suggests that collaborative learning environments such as teacher working groups (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran / MGMP) can support the implementation of national standards by facilitating shared reflection and professional dialogue (Rahmawati & Sofyan, 2020).

A third influential perspective is Guskey's Model of Teacher Change, which explains how professional development influences teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. According to Guskey, meaningful changes in teachers' attitudes often occur after they observe positive outcomes from new instructional practices in their classrooms. This model highlights the importance of practice-based professional learning that allows teachers to experiment with new teaching approaches and evaluate their impact on student learning (Nurlaila et al., 2023). Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for understanding how teachers learn, adapt to policy changes, and develop professionally within complex educational systems.

### *Teacher Autonomy in Professional Development*

Teacher autonomy is widely recognized as a key factor influencing the effectiveness of professional development and educational reform. Teacher autonomy refers to teachers' professional capacity to make informed decisions regarding instructional strategies, classroom management, and learning activities based on students' needs and contextual conditions. According to Phil Benson (2010), teacher autonomy involves the ability to exercise control over key aspects of teaching practice, including lesson planning, instructional implementation, and assessment. Similarly, Paulo Freire (1970) emphasizes that autonomy enables teachers to move beyond rigid instructional procedures and engage in more meaningful and responsive pedagogical practices.

Recent research further highlights the role of teacher autonomy in supporting the successful implementation of educational reforms. Teachers who have greater autonomy are more likely to interpret policy guidelines flexibly and adapt them to local classroom contexts (Nguyen & Bui, 2022; Smith & Erdoğan, 2021). In contrast, limited autonomy may constrain teachers' ability to innovate or respond effectively to diverse student needs. Consequently, fostering teacher

autonomy has become an important goal in many professional development programs, particularly those aimed at encouraging reflective and student-centered teaching practices.

### *Reflective and Experiential Strategies in Teacher Learning*

Reflective practice is another critical component of effective teacher professional development. Reflective strategies refer to systematic processes through which teachers critically examine their instructional practices in order to improve teaching effectiveness. Donald Schön (1983) introduced the concept of the *reflective practitioner*, arguing that professionals develop expertise by reflecting on their experiences during and after practice. Through reflection, teachers are able to evaluate instructional decisions, analyze student responses, and identify areas for improvement.

Subsequent research in teacher education has expanded this concept by emphasizing the role of structured reflection in professional learning. Kenneth M. Zeichner and Daniel P. Liston (2014) suggest that reflective practice helps teachers develop critical awareness of their pedagogical choices and classroom interactions. Common reflective strategies used in teacher professional development include reflective journals, peer discussions, classroom observation, and feedback sessions.

Closely related to reflective practice is the concept of experiential learning. Experiential strategies emphasize learning through direct experience, active participation, and practical application rather than passive reception of theoretical knowledge. According to David A. Kolb (1984), experiential learning occurs through a cyclical process consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This learning cycle highlights the importance of integrating experience and reflection to promote deeper understanding.

In the context of teacher professional development, experiential learning strategies often include activities such as microteaching, teaching simulations, lesson design workshops, and classroom-based practice. These activities allow teachers to experiment with new instructional strategies and observe their effects in real teaching situations. More recent studies also emphasize that experiential learning helps bridge the gap between theoretical training and classroom implementation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Morris, 2020).

### *National Initiatives for Teacher Professional Growth*

In recent years, the Indonesian government has introduced several national initiatives aimed at strengthening teacher capacity and supporting the implementation of curriculum reforms. One of the most prominent initiatives is the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), which provides teachers with access to online training materials, teaching resources, and assessment tools. Studies indicate that digital platforms such as PMM have the potential to expand access to professional development opportunities and support teacher autonomy, although differences in digital literacy and technological infrastructure can influence their effectiveness (Agustina et al., 2023; Erihadiana et al., 2023).

Another important program is the Guru Penggerak initiative, which aims to develop teacher leadership and promote school transformation. Early studies suggest that participation in this program can strengthen teacher agency and

encourage collaborative school cultures, although implementation remains uneven across different regions (Hariyati & Saputri, 2022; Pratama, 2022). In addition, the Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG) program continues to play a crucial role in preparing and certifying teachers through competency-based professional training aligned with national standards (Putri & Pratiwi, 2022). Together, these initiatives demonstrate the government's commitment to strengthening teacher professionalism and improving educational quality through comprehensive professional development programs.

### *Challenges in Implementing National Standards*

Despite the presence of national standards and various professional development initiatives, numerous studies indicate that significant challenges continue to affect the implementation of these policies in Indonesian schools. Teachers often face heavy workloads, limited time for professional development activities, and inadequate infrastructure or access to training opportunities (Lestari, 2018; Suhanto & Yuliani, 2023). These challenges are particularly pronounced in remote or under-resourced areas, where access to mentoring, training programs, and digital platforms may be limited.

Research on the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka also reveals difficulties related to insufficient training, limited teaching resources, and high administrative demands. Teachers frequently report challenges in designing differentiated instruction, developing appropriate learning materials, and adapting teaching strategies to diverse student needs. Furthermore, short-term workshops often fail to produce sustainable changes in classroom practice because they lack ongoing support mechanisms such as mentoring, peer observation, and professional learning communities (Rahmawati & Sofyan, 2020; Nurlaila et al., 2023). These structural and contextual barriers suggest that many Indonesian teachers may struggle to fully meet national standards, even when they are committed to improving their professional practices.

### *Opportunities and Regional Context*

Despite these challenges, the literature also identifies several opportunities that support teacher professional growth. Digital platforms such as PMM provide broader access to professional development resources, particularly when supported by school-level facilitation and mentoring (Agustina et al., 2023; Mahyuddin, 2023). Collaborative teacher networks, including MGMP and professional learning communities, have also been shown to foster shared reflection and support the implementation of national standards (Rahmawati & Sofyan, 2020). Additionally, partnerships between schools and universities have proven beneficial in providing targeted training and research-based support for teachers (Sukardi & Hadi, 2021).

Regional studies in West Kalimantan offer further insights into the local context of teacher development. Research indicates that schools in the region experience uneven access to resources and training opportunities, even within urban areas such as Pontianak (Lestari, 2018). At the same time, local initiatives and collaborations have demonstrated promising results in supporting teacher learning and encouraging the development of context-based English teaching materials (Sukardi & Hadi, 2021). These findings suggest that Pontianak presents

a unique combination of challenges and opportunities for examining how national standards are interpreted and implemented at the local level.

Although extensive research has examined teacher professional development in Indonesia, relatively few studies focus specifically on English teachers in Pontianak. Existing studies also tend to examine either challenges or opportunities separately rather than analyzing them in an integrated manner. Furthermore, limited research connects national teacher standards directly with classroom implementation in urban schools in West Kalimantan. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to explore how English teachers in Pontianak experience and respond to national teacher standards within their professional development context.

## **METHODS OF THE STUDY**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory design grounded in the assumption that the implementation of national teacher standards is a context-dependent, socially constructed process. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to analyse how English teachers, school leaders, and education authorities interpret, negotiate, and enact professional standards within their institutional realities. As Creswell and Poth (2018) argue, qualitative inquiry is instrumental in capturing the depth, complexity, and meaning-making processes embedded in human experiences, particularly in educational policy implementation, where variability across contexts is expected.

The exploratory nature of the study is justified by the limited body of research specifically analyzing the enactment of national teacher standards in Pontianak. Exploratory qualitative designs are functional when existing frameworks are insufficient or fragmented, and when the goal is to identify emerging themes, patterns, or contextual factors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The design enables the researcher to investigate stakeholder perspectives while examining systemic and school-level dynamics that influence teacher professional growth.

### **Participants**

The study involves three respondent categories to ensure multi-layered representative. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy commonly employed in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant experience and knowledge related to the research topic (Patton, 2015). This approach allows the researcher to intentionally recruit participants who are directly involved in teacher professional development and the implementation of national education standards.

The selection process was conducted in several stages. First, a preliminary list of schools in Pontianak was identified through publicly available information from the local education authority. Schools representing different levels (elementary and secondary) and management types (public and private) were considered in order to capture diverse institutional contexts. After identifying potential schools, the researcher contacted school administrators to request permission to invite teachers and school leaders to participate in the study.

Second, English teachers who met the selection criteria were invited to participate voluntarily. The inclusion criteria included: (1) having a minimum of

two years of teaching experience, (2) familiarity with or involvement in national teacher standards or professional development initiatives such as Standar Nasional Pendidikan, Kurikulum Merdeka, or the Guru Penggerak program, and (3) willingness to share their experiences regarding professional growth, challenges, and opportunities.

Third, school leaders were included to provide institutional perspectives on teacher development. These participants consisted of school principals, vice principals responsible for curriculum, or academic supervisors who oversee teacher professional development activities within their schools. School leaders were selected based on their roles in supporting or managing teacher development programs and curriculum implementation.

Finally, local educational stakeholders were recruited to provide policy-level insights. These participants included representatives from the Pontianak City Education Office and individuals involved in teacher development initiatives or policy implementation. Their inclusion enabled the study to triangulate perspectives between classroom practitioners, school leadership, and policy actors.

Overall, the study involved approximately 23–32 participants, including English teachers, school leaders, and local education stakeholders. This range was considered sufficient for generating rich qualitative data while allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives.

## **Techniques in Data Collection and Analysis**

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The primary data source consists of semi-structured interviews conducted with all participant groups. This method allows for probing of individual interpretations, personal experiences, and school-level conditions related to implementing national standards. Semi-structured interviews also provide flexibility for emergent themes, critical when exploring under-researched contexts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021).

Sample guiding questions include:

1. "How do you understand and interpret the national standards for teacher professional growth?"
2. "What institutional supports or constraints influence your professional development?"
3. "What opportunities exist in Pontianak to strengthen professional learning for English teachers?"

Each interview lasts approximately 45–60 minutes and is audio recorded with consent.

### *Document Analysis*

Complementary data are gathered through the analysis of school-based professional development plans, teacher evaluation reports, CPD program materials, and local education office documentation. Document analysis is essential for understanding the structural and policy frameworks affecting teacher professional growth (Bowen, 2009). It also provides non-reactive data that validates or challenges interview findings.

### 3. Observational Field Notes (Optional Enhancement)

Non-intrusive observations of school meetings, teacher workshops, or professional learning communities may be conducted. While not mandatory, observational data strengthen contextual understanding and ensure ecological validity.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

Data analysis follows thematic analysis, a rigorous, systematic approach suitable for identifying patterns of meaning across participant narratives. Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework guides the analytical process:

1. Familiarization: Transcribed interviews and collected documents are read repeatedly to identify initial insights and contextual cues.
2. Initial Coding: Line-by-line coding is conducted to generate descriptive and conceptual codes. Coding prioritises both explicit statements (semantic content) and underlying assumptions (latent meanings).
3. Theme Development: Codes are clustered into potential themes reflecting major issues such as policy interpretation, structural challenges, school leadership, digital readiness, or professional learning opportunities.
4. Theme Review: Themes are compared against the whole dataset to ensure coherence, internal consistency, and empirical grounding.
5. Theme Definition and Naming: Each theme is clearly defined with analytic descriptions, supported by representative quotations.
6. Interpretation and Synthesis: Themes are interpreted in relation to existing literature, national teacher standards, and the local context of Pontianak.

#### *Trustworthiness*

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed following the qualitative research criteria proposed by Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba (1985), including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Data triangulation was applied by collecting information from multiple sources, including English teachers, school leaders, and local educational stakeholders. In addition to semi-structured interviews, relevant policy documents and institutional materials related to teacher professional development were examined. Comparing perspectives from different participant groups and documentary sources allowed the researcher to identify consistent patterns as well as contrasting viewpoints regarding the implementation of national teacher standards.

To enhance credibility, member checking was conducted after the initial data analysis. Selected participants were provided with summaries of their interview responses and the researcher's preliminary interpretations. Participants were invited to review the summaries and confirm whether the interpretations accurately reflected their perspectives. Feedback from participants was incorporated into the final analysis to ensure that the findings remained faithful to their intended meanings.

An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process to ensure transparency and dependability. This documentation included records of interview protocols, field notes, coding procedures, analytic memos, and decisions made during data interpretation. Maintaining these records allowed the

research process to be clearly traced and provided evidence of how conclusions were developed from the data.

Peer debriefing was conducted through regular discussions with academic colleagues who have experience in qualitative research and teacher education. During these discussions, the researcher presented emerging themes, coding decisions, and interpretations of the data. Feedback from peers helped challenge potential researcher bias and strengthened the analytical rigor of the study. Together, these strategies contributed to the credibility and rigor of the research by ensuring that the findings were grounded in participants' experiences and supported by systematic analytical procedures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 28 participants purposively sampled from Pontianak city schools: 18 English teachers (junior and senior secondary), 6 school leaders (heads or vice principals for curriculum), and 4 local education office stakeholders. Data sources comprised semi-structured interviews (n=28), document analysis of school PD plans and PMM utilization reports (n=12 documents), and optional observations of two PLC meetings. Quantitative summary items reported below derive from post-hoc Likert-scale questionnaires administered to participating teachers to triangulate qualitative claims (scale 1–5).

### Results

#### 1. Teachers' Perceptions of the Relevance and Usefulness of the OPD Program

The findings indicate a strong positive shift in teachers' perceptions regarding the usefulness and relevance of the Online Professional Development (OPD) program. Table 1 presents the mean scores for four key dimensions: usefulness, relevance, clarity, and applicability. The findings indicate a substantial improvement in teachers' perceptions of the Online Professional Development (OPD) program across all measured dimensions.

Table 1. Teachers' perceptions of the Online Professional Development (OPD) program

Dimension	Mean (Before)	Mean (After)	Mean Change	Interpretation
Usefulness	3.00	4.40	+1.40	Moderate - Very High
Relevance	2.80	4.55	+1.75	Moderate -Very High
Clarity	2.90	4.30	+1.40	Moderate - Very High
Applicability	2.70	4.20	+1.50	Moderate - High

Prior to participation, mean scores ranged from 2.70 to 3.00, suggesting that teachers held only moderate perceptions regarding the usefulness, relevance, clarity, and applicability of professional development activities. Following the program, all dimensions exceeded a mean score of 4.20, indicating highly positive evaluations of the OPD experience. The largest improvement was observed in the

relevance dimension (+1.75), increasing from 2.80 to 4.55. This finding suggests that teachers perceived the program as closely aligned with their instructional needs and the requirements of Kurikulum Merdeka. Participants reported that the training addressed practical classroom challenges rather than focusing solely on theoretical concepts, making the content more meaningful and immediately applicable to their teaching contexts.

Similarly, applicability showed a substantial increase (+1.50), rising from 2.70 to 4.20. This result indicates that teachers felt more capable of transferring knowledge gained from the OPD program into classroom practice. Many participants reported implementing instructional strategies introduced during the program, including project-based learning activities, reflective tasks, and authentic assessment techniques.

The dimensions of usefulness and clarity both increased by 1.40 points. The increase in usefulness suggests that teachers viewed the program as a valuable resource for enhancing their professional competence, while the improvement in clarity indicates that the training materials, modelling videos, demonstration lessons, and instructional guides were presented in an understandable and accessible manner.

Interview data further support these quantitative findings. Many teachers reported that the OPD program helped them better understand how to implement Kurikulum Merdeka in practical classroom contexts. Participants particularly valued the use of modelling videos, demonstration lessons, and structured instructional guides. One teacher explained that the program helped them “visualize how curriculum expectations could be translated into real classroom activities.” Document analysis also revealed that several participating schools incorporated OPD recommendations into their internal professional development agendas, particularly in designing higher-order thinking activities and authentic assessments. Taken together, these findings suggest that the OPD program successfully bridged the gap between curriculum policy and classroom practice by providing teachers with relevant, understandable, and applicable professional learning experiences.

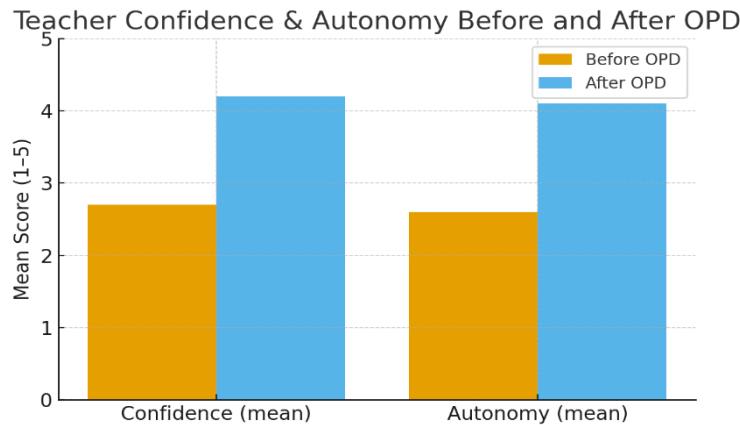
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## *2. The Extent to Which OPD Improves Teachers' Pedagogical Confidence and Autonomy*

The findings also demonstrate notable improvements in teachers' pedagogical confidence and professional autonomy following their participation in the OPD program. As shown in Figure 1, teachers' confidence increased from a mean score of 2.70 to 4.20, while perceived autonomy increased from 2.60 to 4.10.

These findings suggest that the OPD program helped teachers feel more capable of designing lessons and making independent instructional decisions.

Figure 1. Teacher Confidence and Autonomy Before and After OPD



Qualitative interview data further illuminate these changes. Teachers frequently described feeling “more confident” in adapting teaching materials and designing learning activities that respond to students’ needs. Participants attributed these improvements to the experiential design of the OPD program, particularly the micro-teaching activities, peer feedback sessions, and guided reflection opportunities. School leaders also observed increased teacher initiative following the program. Several administrators noted that teachers became more proactive in experimenting with new teaching strategies and collaborating with colleagues in lesson planning.

### 3. Implementation of Experiential and Reflective Strategies in English Classrooms

Following participation in the OPD program, teachers reported increased use of experiential and reflective instructional strategies in their classrooms. Table 2 illustrates the percentage of teachers who regularly applied several strategies before and after the OPD program. Table 2 below showed substantial increases in teachers’ use of experiential and reflective teaching strategies following participation in the OPD program. Before the program, most strategies were categorized as either very low or low in terms of regular classroom implementation. Student reflection journals showed the lowest level of use (17%), indicating that reflective practices were rarely integrated into classroom instruction. Similarly, project-based learning (22%), culturally responsive materials (28%), micro-teaching and peer feedback (33%), and the use of PMM modules for lesson design (39%) were implemented only by a small proportion of teachers.

Table 2. Teachers who applied several strategies before and after the OPD program

Strategy	Regular Use Before	Regular Use After	Category
Micro-teaching / peer feedback	33%	83%	very high
Student reflection journals	17%	67%	high

Project-based / task-based learning	22%	72%	high
Culturally responsive materials	28%	61%	high
Use of PMM modules for lesson design	39%	78%	high

After participating in the OPD program, all strategies increased to the high or very high category. The most notable improvement occurred in micro-teaching and peer feedback, which increased from 33% (low) to 83% (very high). This suggests that teachers became more willing to engage in collaborative professional learning and reflective teaching practices. Student reflection journals increased from 17% (very low) to 67% (high), indicating a growing emphasis on learner reflection and metacognitive development. Likewise, project-based learning, culturally responsive materials, and the use of PMM modules all reached the high category after the intervention. These findings suggest that the OPD program successfully encouraged teachers to adopt more student-centred, experiential, and reflective approaches in their classroom practice.

#### 4. *Challenges and Enabling Factors in Implementing OPD-Based Strategies*

Although the OPD program produced substantial improvements in teachers' perceptions and practices, participants also reported several challenges that affected the implementation of new strategies. The most frequently mentioned challenge was workload pressure, particularly administrative responsibilities that limited teachers' time for lesson planning and reflection. Some teachers also reported difficulties sustaining reflective teaching routines due to competing professional obligations. Another challenge involved uneven digital access, particularly when accessing PMM resources or online training materials. Teachers in schools with limited technological infrastructure experienced greater difficulty maintaining engagement with online professional development platforms.

At the same time, several enabling factors supported the successful implementation of OPD strategies. School leadership support played a significant role, particularly when principals encouraged collaborative lesson planning and professional learning community meetings. Access to PMM resources and peer collaboration networks also helped teachers sustain the practices introduced through the OPD program. The coexistence of these enabling and constraining factors suggests that while OPD programs can effectively enhance teacher learning, their long-term impact depends on supportive institutional conditions and collaborative professional cultures.

Teachers described the OPD as increasingly practical and directly connected to classroom realities. Interview data reveal that participants valued the program's modelling videos, demonstration lessons, and structured guides that mapped directly onto Kurikulum Merdeka demands. Teachers commonly stated that the OPD helped them "visualize" and "translate" theoretical expectations into implementable instructional strategies. Document analysis echoed these sentiments, showing that several participating schools revised their

internal PD agendas to incorporate OPD recommendations, particularly in designing higher-order thinking activities and authentic assessments.

## **Discussion**

### *Teachers' Perceptions of the Relevance and Usefulness of the OPD Program*

The findings indicate that teachers perceived the Online Professional Development (OPD) program as highly useful and relevant to their professional practice. The substantial increase in teachers' ratings across usefulness, relevance, clarity, and applicability suggests that the program successfully addressed the gap between curriculum expectations and classroom implementation. These results highlight the importance of designing professional development that is responsive to teachers' instructional contexts and practical classroom needs.

Previous studies have consistently shown that effective teacher professional development must be sustained, practice-oriented, and connected to teachers' daily instructional challenges. For example, Desimone and Garet (2015) emphasize that professional development programs that focus on active learning, modelling of instructional practices, and opportunities for feedback tend to produce stronger impacts on teachers' perceptions and instructional practices. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that professional learning experiences that integrate modelling, coaching, and collaboration are more likely to improve teacher engagement and instructional effectiveness. The positive perceptions reported in this study may therefore be attributed to the OPD program's emphasis on practical classroom strategies and contextualized learning materials aligned with the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

### *Improvement in Teachers' Pedagogical Confidence and Autonomy*

Another key finding of the study is the improvement in teachers' pedagogical confidence and professional autonomy following participation in the OPD program. Teachers reported feeling more capable of designing learning activities, adapting teaching materials, and making instructional decisions that respond to students' needs. This suggests that the OPD program not only enhanced teachers' knowledge but also strengthened their sense of professional agency. Research on teacher professional learning indicates that professional development can significantly influence teachers' beliefs about their instructional capabilities. Avalos (2011) notes that teacher professional development plays a critical role in shaping teachers' professional identities and confidence, particularly when it provides opportunities for reflection and collaborative learning. In addition, Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that effective professional development supports teachers' autonomy by encouraging experimentation and reflective practice in classroom instruction. These perspectives suggest that the experiential structure of the OPD program, which included peer feedback and reflective discussions, likely contributed to the observed improvements in teachers' pedagogical confidence and autonomy.

### *Implementation of Experiential and Reflective Strategies*

The findings also indicate that teachers increasingly implemented experiential and reflective instructional strategies in their classrooms after participating in the OPD program. Teachers reported greater use of project-based

learning, reflective journals, and collaborative classroom activities, suggesting a shift toward more student-centered instructional practices. This shift aligns with broader educational trends emphasizing active learning and learner engagement. Hattie (2009) highlights that instructional strategies that promote student participation, reflection, and collaborative learning have a strong positive impact on student achievement. Similarly, Borko (2004) emphasizes that teacher learning is most effective when educators have opportunities to engage in practice-based activities that allow them to test and refine instructional strategies in real classroom contexts. The increased implementation of experiential strategies observed in this study therefore reflects the potential of professional development programs to encourage teachers to move beyond traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more interactive and inquiry-based learning approaches.

#### *Challenges and Enabling Factors in Implementing OPD-Based Strategies*

Despite the positive outcomes, teachers reported several challenges in sustaining the implementation of OPD-based strategies. Administrative workload, limited time for lesson planning, and inconsistent access to digital resources were identified as key barriers affecting the continuity of innovative teaching practices. These findings are consistent with international research on teacher professional development, which indicates that structural constraints often limit the long-term impact of professional learning initiatives. Opfer and Pedder (2011) note that teachers' ability to implement new practices is influenced not only by individual motivation but also by the broader organizational environment in which they work.

Similarly, Avalos (2011) emphasizes that sustained institutional support is necessary to ensure that professional development initiatives lead to lasting changes in classroom practice. However, the findings also highlight several enabling factors that support the implementation of OPD strategies. Supportive school leadership, collaborative teacher networks, and access to digital learning platforms were identified as important facilitators of teacher professional learning. These findings suggest that professional development initiatives are most effective when they are embedded within supportive school cultures that encourage collaboration, reflection, and continuous improvement.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study offer several important implications for teacher professional development, educational policy, and future research. First, the results suggest that online professional development programs designed around experiential and practice-based learning can effectively support teachers in translating curriculum policies into classroom practice. By incorporating modelling, reflective activities, and opportunities for peer collaboration, OPD programs can help teachers move beyond theoretical understanding toward practical instructional innovation. For English teachers implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*, such professional learning opportunities may strengthen their ability to design student-centered learning experiences that foster critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of institutional support in sustaining professional learning. While the OPD program enhanced teachers'

pedagogical confidence and autonomy, participants also reported challenges related to workload, time constraints, and uneven digital access. These findings suggest that successful implementation of professional development initiatives requires supportive school leadership, structured time for collaborative learning, and improved access to digital resources. Educational policymakers and school administrators should therefore consider integrating OPD initiatives with school-based professional learning communities and institutional support systems to ensure long-term impact.

Finally, this study also provides implications for future research on teacher professional development in Indonesia. While the present study explored teachers' perceptions and instructional practices following participation in an OPD program, further research could examine the long-term impact of such programs on student learning outcomes and classroom engagement. In addition, future studies may investigate how different forms of professional development such as blended learning models or mentoring-based approaches can further support teachers in implementing the pedagogical principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Overall, the findings suggest that well-designed online professional development programs have the potential to play a significant role in supporting teacher professional growth and advancing student-centered learning practices in Indonesian schools.

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