



Continuous Professional Development and Teacher Quality in Indonesia: Implications for Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.c

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ABSTRACT

Teacher quality remains a fundamental determinant of educational effectiveness and a central priority in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.c, which calls for expanding the supply of qualified and competent teachers. This review synthesizes contemporary evidence on the contribution of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) initiatives to strengthening teacher competence in Indonesia. Guided by Guskey's framework of teacher change, the study examines how structured professional learning influences instructional knowledge, classroom implementation, and educational outcomes. Evidence from recent scholarship indicates that sustained, practice-oriented professional development encourages the adoption of learner-centered pedagogies, enhances instructional confidence, and supports continuous professional growth. These improvements are associated with greater student participation, improved classroom engagement, and more effective learning environments when supported by institutional leadership and policy alignment. The review further identifies that the long-term success of TPD depends on continuous mentoring, collaborative learning communities, systematic evaluation, and equitable access to professional learning opportunities across diverse educational contexts. As the analysis is based exclusively on published literature, the findings provide a conceptual synthesis rather than direct causal evidence. Future empirical investigations employing longitudinal and mixed-method approaches are recommended to evaluate the sustained effects of professional development on teacher performance and student achievement. The review contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational reform by demonstrating the strategic role of continuous teacher professional development in advancing teacher quality and supporting Indonesia's progress toward the objectives of SDG 4.c.

KEYWORDS: Teacher Professional Development (TPD); Teacher Quality; Sustainable Development Goal 4.c (SDG 4.c); Continuous Professional Learning; Teacher Competency.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable social and economic development because it strengthens human capital, promotes innovation, and supports inclusive growth. International commitments to educational improvement gained renewed momentum with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, where SDG 4 emphasizes ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Among its targets, SDG 4.c highlights the need to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers through effective preparation, professional development, and international cooperation, particularly in developing countries. This target reflects the understanding that educational reforms cannot succeed without a competent teaching workforce capable of responding to

evolving curriculum demands, technological advancements, and increasingly diverse student populations. Consequently, strengthening teacher quality has become a strategic priority for governments seeking long-term improvements in learning outcomes and educational equity [1].

Teacher quality extends beyond academic qualifications or certification and encompasses pedagogical expertise, subject knowledge, instructional decision-making, classroom management, assessment literacy, and the ability to create inclusive learning environments. Research conducted before 2025 consistently demonstrated that teachers exert one of the strongest school-based influences on student achievement, motivation, and educational attainment. Effective teachers continuously adapt their instructional practices to meet changing learner needs, integrate innovative teaching approaches, and participate

in reflective professional learning. As educational systems become increasingly knowledge-driven, continuous professional growth is regarded as an essential component of maintaining instructional effectiveness rather than a supplementary activity undertaken only at specific stages of a teaching career [2].

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) has therefore emerged as a critical mechanism for strengthening teacher competence and improving instructional quality. Contemporary professional development emphasizes continuous learning through collaborative activities, mentoring, classroom reflection, lesson study, peer observation, and evidence-based instructional improvement instead of relying solely on traditional workshop-based training. Sustainable professional learning encourages teachers to connect theoretical knowledge with classroom practice while fostering professional collaboration and reflective teaching. Studies published before 2025 suggest that well-designed TPD programmes contribute to improved pedagogical competence, greater instructional confidence, stronger classroom management, and increased use of learner-centered teaching strategies. These improvements ultimately enhance student engagement and academic performance when supported by conducive institutional environments [3].

Indonesia has made considerable progress in expanding educational access over the past two decades; however, disparities in educational quality remain evident across provinces, urban and rural communities, and socio-economic groups. Differences in infrastructure, teacher distribution, access to professional learning opportunities, and school resources continue to influence educational outcomes. To address these challenges, the Indonesian government has introduced multiple initiatives aimed at improving teacher professionalism and instructional quality. Programmes such as Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG), Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP), teacher certification policies, competency assessments, and continuous professional learning activities have been implemented to strengthen teacher capacity and align teaching practices with national education standards. These initiatives represent important investments in improving the quality of education while supporting the country's commitment to sustainable development [4].

Although numerous studies have examined professional development, teacher competency, and educational reform in Indonesia, the available evidence remains dispersed across different research domains. Many investigations focus primarily on evaluating individual training programmes or measuring improvements in teacher competence without examining how professional development contributes to broader educational objectives associated with SDG 4.c. Likewise, research addressing SDG 4 generally concentrates on policy implementation, educational access, financing, or

governance while giving comparatively less attention to the mechanisms through which professional learning transforms classroom instruction and student learning. This separation between teacher development research and sustainability-focused educational research has limited the development of an integrated understanding of how continuous professional learning contributes to national and global educational goals.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of TPD depends not only on programmer participation but also on factors such as school leadership, organizational support, collaborative culture, teacher motivation, follow-up mentoring, and opportunities to implement newly acquired knowledge in classroom settings. Professional development that is disconnected from teachers' instructional contexts often produces limited and short-lived improvements. Conversely, sustained professional learning supported by reflective practice and institutional commitment has been associated with meaningful changes in instructional behaviour and continuous professional growth. Understanding these contextual influences is therefore essential for evaluating the long-term contribution of TPD to teacher quality enhancement [4].

METHOS AND MATERIALS

Theoretical Framework: Guskey's Model of Teacher Professional Development

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) has become an indispensable element of educational reform because teachers are expected to continuously update their professional knowledge, instructional strategies, and assessment practices in response to changing curriculum requirements and learner needs. Professional learning is no longer viewed as an isolated event but as an ongoing process that enables educators to refine their instructional competence throughout their careers. Continuous professional development equips teachers with opportunities to integrate research-informed pedagogical practices, reflect critically on classroom experiences, and collaborate with colleagues to improve teaching effectiveness. Consequently, the quality of professional development directly influences the capacity of teachers to create engaging learning environments and improve student achievement [5].

Early professional development initiatives frequently emphasized short-term workshops that primarily transmitted theoretical knowledge. Although these activities increased teachers' awareness of educational innovations, many failed to generate lasting improvements in classroom instruction because limited attention was given to classroom implementation, mentoring, and reflective practice. Research conducted before 2025 consistently suggested that effective professional development should be continuous, collaborative, context-specific, and directly connected to teachers' instructional responsibilities. Sustainable learning

opportunities encourage teachers to experiment with new instructional approaches, evaluate their effectiveness, and adapt their practices according to student learning needs rather than merely completing mandatory training requirements.

Among the theoretical perspectives explaining teacher change, Guskey's (2002) model remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding how professional development contributes to instructional improvement. Unlike traditional assumptions that teachers first modify their beliefs before changing classroom practice, Guskey proposed the reverse sequence. According to this framework, teachers are more likely to alter their beliefs after they implement new instructional practices and observe positive improvements in student learning. The model therefore places classroom experience and evidence of student success at the centre of professional growth [6].

The framework consists of a progressive sequence of interconnected stages. Professional development introduces teachers to new instructional knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and practical skills that can be applied within authentic classroom settings. Teachers subsequently implement these approaches during instruction, allowing them to evaluate their effectiveness through direct classroom experience. When these instructional modifications contribute to higher student participation, stronger engagement, improved academic performance, or better classroom interaction, teachers gain confidence in the value of the newly adopted practices. Positive classroom outcomes reinforce teachers' professional beliefs, increase motivation for continuous learning, and encourage sustained instructional improvement. In this way, teacher beliefs evolve because of successful implementation rather than as a prerequisite for change.

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant for examining teacher professional development in Indonesia because many national initiatives seek not only to improve teacher qualifications but also to strengthen classroom

effectiveness. Programmes such as professional certification, mentoring activities, subject-based teacher associations, and continuous professional learning communities ultimately aim to improve instructional quality through practical application. Guskey's framework provides a useful analytical lens for understanding how these initiatives influence teacher competence by connecting professional learning with classroom implementation and student outcomes. Rather than evaluating professional development solely through participation rates or certification completion, the framework emphasizes observable improvements in instructional practice and educational quality.

Nevertheless, the application of Guskey's model should acknowledge the complexity of educational systems. Teacher learning rarely follows a perfectly linear pathway, particularly in diverse educational environments characterized by differences in school leadership, resource availability, institutional culture, teacher motivation, and policy implementation. Classroom change is often influenced by interactions among organizational support, peer collaboration, curriculum demands, and community expectations. Consequently, professional development outcomes may vary considerably across schools and regions despite similar training experiences [7].

For this reason, the present study adopts Guskey's framework as a conceptual guide rather than a rigid explanatory model. The framework is employed to examine how professional development contributes to improvements in instructional practice, teacher competence, and educational quality while recognizing that these relationships are shaped by contextual conditions operating at both school and system levels. This balanced perspective enables a more comprehensive understanding of how continuous professional learning supports teacher quality enhancement and contributes to the broader objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4.c, which emphasizes increasing the availability of qualified and competent teachers through effective professional development (Table 1).

Table 1: Components of Guskey's Teacher Professional Development Framework and Their Educational Implications.

Stage of the Framework	Description	Expected Outcome
Professional Development Activities	Teachers participate in structured learning, workshops, mentoring, and collaborative learning opportunities.	Acquisition of new pedagogical knowledge and instructional skills.
Classroom Implementation	Teachers apply newly learned strategies during classroom instruction.	Improvement in instructional delivery and classroom management.
Student Learning Outcomes	Changes in teaching practices enhance student participation, engagement, and academic achievement.	Observable improvements in learning performance and classroom interaction.
Teacher Reflection	Teachers evaluate instructional outcomes using classroom evidence and student feedback.	Increased professional confidence and reflective practice.
Change in Beliefs and Attitudes	Positive teaching experiences reshape teachers' professional beliefs toward continuous improvement.	Sustained professional growth and long-term instructional effectiveness.

Research Design

This study adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize existing evidence regarding the contribution of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) to teacher quality and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.c in Indonesia. A systematic review was selected because it provides a transparent [8], reproducible, and evidence-based approach for identifying, evaluating, and integrating findings from previously published studies. Compared with conventional narrative reviews, the SLR approach minimizes subjective interpretation by following predefined search, screening, and selection procedures. The methodology also enables researchers to identify research trends, knowledge gaps, and areas requiring further investigation while ensuring methodological consistency throughout the review process.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using two internationally recognized academic databases: Scopus and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). These databases were selected because they index high-quality, peer-reviewed publications covering education, teacher development, educational policy, and social sciences. Their broad disciplinary coverage ensured access to relevant empirical and conceptual studies concerning teacher professional learning and educational quality [8].

A structured search strategy employing Boolean operators was developed to maximize retrieval accuracy. The search combined keywords associated with teacher professional development, teacher quality, sustainable development, and Indonesia. The principal search terms included combinations of “teacher professional development,” “professional learning,” “teacher training,” “teacher quality,” “qualified teachers,” “Sustainable Development Goal 4,” “SDG 4.c,” and “Indonesia.” The search strategy was refined iteratively to improve relevance while reducing duplicate and unrelated records.

Eligibility Criteria

To ensure the quality and relevance of the evidence, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before the screening process. Only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2016 and 2024 were considered eligible because this period reflects research conducted following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Studies were required to investigate teacher professional development, teacher competence, instructional improvement, or educational quality within the Indonesian educational context. Publications that focused exclusively on higher education without teacher development components, conference proceedings, dissertations, book chapters, editorials, and studies conducted outside Indonesia were excluded from the review.

Study Selection Process

The selection process followed internationally accepted systematic review procedures. Retrieved records from both databases were first exported into a reference management system, where duplicate publications were removed. Subsequently, titles and abstracts were independently examined to determine their relevance to the research objectives. Articles satisfying the preliminary screening criteria underwent full-text assessment to confirm eligibility.

To improve methodological reliability, two reviewers independently evaluated each publication throughout the screening stages. Any differences in article selection were resolved through discussion until agreement was reached. This independent review process reduced selection bias and strengthened the credibility of the review findings.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Relevant information from the selected studies was extracted using a standardized data extraction form. The extracted variables included publication year, research objectives, study design, participant characteristics, professional development interventions, outcome measures, and principal findings. Organizing the evidence in a structured format facilitated comparison across studies and enabled the identification of recurring research patterns.

A deductive thematic analysis guided the synthesis of findings. The analysis was informed by Guskey’s Teacher Professional Development Model, which provided the conceptual structure for interpreting the evidence. The selected studies were examined to determine how professional development influenced instructional practices, teacher competence, student learning outcomes, and professional beliefs. Similar findings were grouped into broader themes, allowing consistent interpretation across diverse research designs while maintaining alignment with the study objectives (Figure 1).

Quality Assurance

Methodological quality was strengthened through systematic documentation of every stage of the review process. Transparent reporting of search strategies, screening decisions, eligibility criteria, and thematic synthesis enhanced the reproducibility of the review. Furthermore, adopting established systematic review procedures reduced the likelihood of publication bias and increased confidence in the overall findings. Although the review relied exclusively on published literature, the structured methodology provided a comprehensive synthesis of available evidence concerning teacher professional development in Indonesia [9].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Change in Teachers’ Classroom Practices

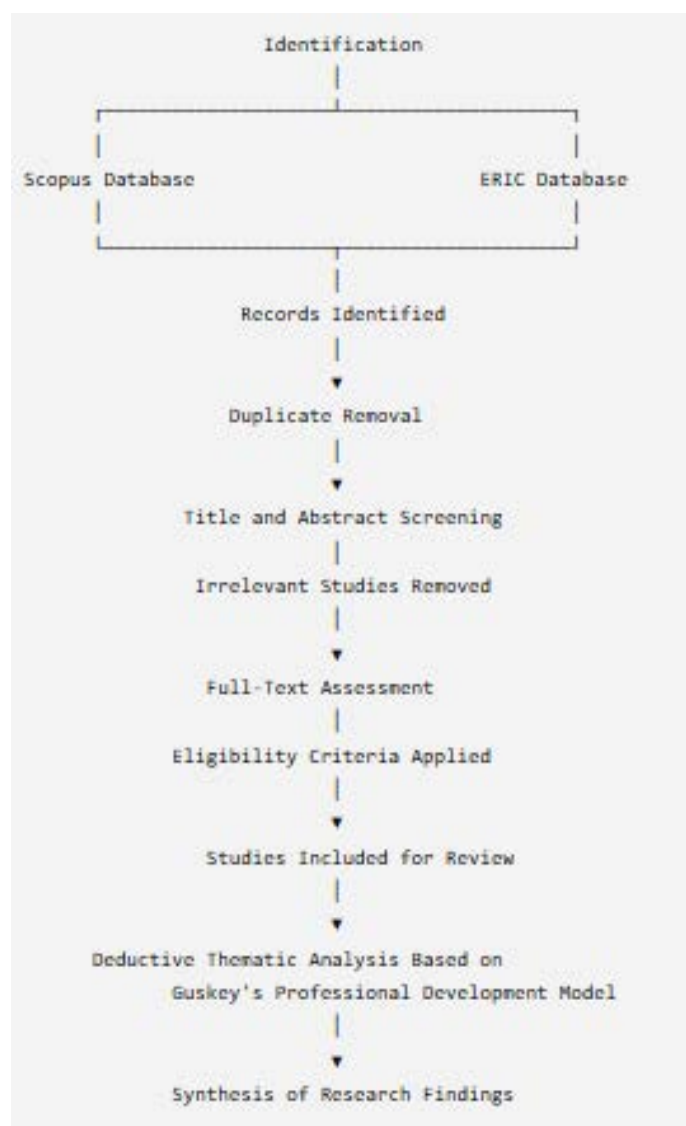


Figure 1: Systematic Literature Review Process.

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is widely acknowledged as a critical mechanism for improving instructional quality because meaningful educational reform ultimately depends on changes in classroom practice. While teacher qualifications and certification provide evidence of formal competence, they do not automatically guarantee effective teaching. Professional development enables educators to continuously strengthen their pedagogical knowledge, instructional decision-making, classroom

management, and assessment practices. Within Guskey's model of teacher change, the first observable outcome of professional learning is the modification of classroom instruction. Rather than expecting teachers to change their beliefs immediately after participating in training programmes, the framework suggests that teachers first experiment with newly acquired knowledge in their daily teaching practices. As they gain practical experience with innovative instructional approaches, gradual improvements in classroom effectiveness become evident, laying the foundation for subsequent changes in student learning and professional beliefs [9].

Before 2025, studies conducted in Indonesia consistently demonstrated that structured professional development programmes contribute to noticeable improvements in teachers' instructional competence. National initiatives such as Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG), teacher certification programmes, mentoring schemes, and subject-based professional learning communities have expanded teachers' opportunities to strengthen both pedagogical and subject-specific expertise. These programmes encourage educators to move beyond traditional lecture-based instruction by adopting learner-centred pedagogies, inquiry-based learning, collaborative activities, authentic assessment techniques, and reflective teaching practices. Such instructional innovations allow teachers to respond more effectively to diverse learning needs while creating classrooms that encourage active student participation rather than passive knowledge acquisition [10].

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has further transformed professional development opportunities across Indonesia. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online professional learning, requiring teachers to develop digital competencies within a relatively short period. Virtual workshops, online mentoring sessions, learning management systems, webinars, and collaborative digital platforms enabled educators to continue professional learning despite movement restrictions. Although many teachers initially experienced uncertainty regarding the use of educational technologies, continuous participation in online professional development gradually increased

Table 1: Eligibility Criteria Used for Selecting Studies.

Criterion	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, books, book chapters, dissertations, reports
Research Focus	Teacher Professional Development, teacher quality, instructional improvement, SDG 4.c	Studies unrelated to teacher development or educational quality
Geographic Scope	Indonesia	Studies conducted outside Indonesia
Publication Period	2016–2024	Published before 2016
Language	English	Languages other than English
Database	Scopus and ERIC	Publications indexed elsewhere only

their confidence in integrating digital tools into classroom instruction. Consequently, technology-enhanced teaching became increasingly embedded within instructional practice, supporting interactive learning experiences through multimedia resources, online discussions, formative digital assessment, and virtual collaboration [11-13].

The effectiveness of technology-based professional development, however, extends beyond the acquisition of technical skills. Digital learning environments encourage teachers to reconsider lesson planning, student engagement strategies, and methods of monitoring learning progress. Teachers who actively participate in technology-focused professional learning frequently redesign classroom activities to promote collaboration, independent learning, and problem-solving. These instructional adaptations help create more flexible learning environments capable of accommodating diverse student abilities and learning preferences. Rather than replacing conventional teaching methods, digital technologies complement existing pedagogical practices by expanding opportunities for communication, feedback, and differentiated instruction [14].

Collaborative professional learning also represents an essential element of improving classroom practice. In Indonesia, Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP) has become one of the most significant professional learning forums supporting continuous teacher development. Unlike one-time training programmes, MGMP provides opportunities for teachers within the same subject area to exchange instructional experiences, discuss curriculum implementation, develop teaching materials, and collaboratively solve classroom challenges. Regular interaction among colleagues strengthens professional reflection and encourages teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional decisions. Through collaborative dialogue, educators become more willing to experiment with innovative teaching approaches while receiving constructive feedback from peers facing similar classroom situations [15].

Professional collaboration contributes to instructional improvement because teachers learn not only from formal training but also from practical experiences shared by colleagues. Peer observation, collaborative lesson planning, classroom reflection, and mentoring activities enable teachers to identify successful instructional strategies that can be adapted to their own classrooms. Such interactions promote collective responsibility for improving educational quality while reducing professional isolation, particularly among teachers working in geographically dispersed schools. Continuous collaboration therefore strengthens both individual competence and institutional capacity for sustainable educational improvement [16].

Despite the positive influence of professional development, meaningful changes in classroom practice are rarely achieved through training alone. The successful implementation of newly acquired instructional strategies depends heavily on supportive organizational conditions. School leadership, availability of instructional resources, reasonable teaching workloads, opportunities for collaborative planning, and access to mentoring significantly influence teachers' willingness to implement innovative practices. Teachers working in supportive school environments generally experience greater confidence in experimenting with new instructional approaches because institutional leaders encourage reflective practice and continuous improvement. Conversely, inadequate administrative support, limited teaching resources, and excessive administrative responsibilities often reduce the long-term effectiveness of professional development programmes (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Teacher Professional Development and Changes in Classroom Practice.

Regional disparities remain another important challenge within Indonesia's teacher development system. Teachers in urban schools typically benefit from greater access to professional learning opportunities, experienced facilitators, digital infrastructure, and institutional support. In contrast,

educators working in remote and disadvantaged regions frequently encounter logistical barriers, limited internet connectivity, insufficient training opportunities, and reduced access to educational resources. These inequalities influence the extent to which teachers can implement innovative classroom practices following professional development. Consequently, strengthening educational equity requires expanding access to high-quality professional learning across all regions while ensuring that contextual differences are considered during programme design and implementation [11].

Sustainable changes in classroom practice also depend on continuous rather than isolated professional learning experiences. Short-term workshops may increase awareness of new teaching approaches; however, lasting instructional improvement requires ongoing mentoring, classroom observation, reflective practice, and opportunities for repeated application. Teachers gradually refine instructional strategies through cycles of implementation, feedback, adaptation, and reflection. This iterative learning process allows professional knowledge to become integrated into everyday classroom routines, increasing the likelihood that instructional innovations will be maintained over time rather than abandoned after initial implementation [12].

From the perspective of Guskey's framework, improvements in classroom practice represent the essential first stage of teacher change because they generate observable evidence of instructional effectiveness. As teachers recognize positive responses from students—including greater classroom participation, stronger engagement, improved interaction, and enhanced learning motivation—they become increasingly confident in the value of newly adopted teaching strategies. These practical experiences establish the foundation for subsequent improvements in student learning outcomes and contribute to gradual transformations in teachers' professional beliefs and attitudes. Thus, changes in instructional practice should be viewed not as isolated

events but as the starting point of a continuous cycle of professional growth that supports educational quality and strengthens progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4.c (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) represents a critical mechanism for strengthening teacher quality and advancing the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4.c in Indonesia. This review demonstrates that effective professional learning extends beyond short-term training and is most beneficial when it is continuous, practice-oriented, collaborative, and closely connected to teachers' classroom responsibilities. Guided by Guskey's model of teacher change, the evidence indicates that opportunities to implement newly acquired pedagogical knowledge, observe positive student responses, and reflect on classroom experiences can contribute to sustained improvements in instructional practice and professional confidence. Indonesian initiatives such as teacher certification, MGMP, mentoring, lesson study, and digital professional learning provide important mechanisms for supporting these processes. However, their effectiveness is influenced by school leadership, institutional support, resource availability, teacher motivation, and equitable access to professional learning, particularly across geographically and socioeconomically diverse regions. The review therefore highlights the importance of integrating continuous mentoring, collaborative professional learning communities, classroom-based application, and systematic evaluation into national TPD strategies. Since this study is based exclusively on published literature, its conclusions represent a conceptual synthesis rather than direct causal evidence. Future longitudinal and mixed-method research should examine how sustained TPD influences teacher competence, classroom practice, and student achievement over time. Strengthening these systems is essential for building a qualified, competent, and continuously developing teaching workforce in Indonesia.

Table 2: Major Components of Teacher Professional Development Supporting Changes in Classroom Practice.

Professional Development Component	Classroom-Level Change	Contribution to Teacher Quality
Professional certification (PPG)	Improved pedagogical planning and instructional delivery	Strengthens professional competence
Digital professional learning	Technology-integrated teaching and assessment	Enhances digital literacy and instructional innovation
MGMP collaborative learning	Exchange of instructional practices and peer reflection	Promotes continuous professional learning
Mentoring and coaching	Classroom observation and constructive feedback	Improves instructional confidence
Reflective teaching activities	Continuous refinement of teaching strategies	Supports lifelong professional growth
School leadership support	Encourages implementation of innovative practices	Sustains instructional improvement

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