

# Challenges and Supports for Enhancing Teacher Professionalism in Private High Schools of Malang: A Qualitative Study

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the key constraints that undermine teacher professionalism in private high schools in Malang, as well as the supports provided by school foundations to address these issues. This study uses a descriptive-qualitative method and involves 18 teachers from three private high schools in Malang. Data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed in two phases: individual and cross-case analysis, ensuring validation through a member check stage. Findings reveal that teacher constraints include issues related to school policies, bureaucracy, learning process inefficiencies, and inadequate welfare. Conversely, support mechanisms from school foundations include enhanced learning facilities, professional development opportunities, scholarship provisions, and improved social welfare benefits. These findings suggest that addressing both institutional constraints and support systems is crucial in fostering an environment conducive to professional development and efficacy among teachers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession attracts many people because it offers the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others, contribute to society, and inspire future generations (Liu, 2018). Teachers have the chance to foster intellectual curiosity, ignite a passion for learning, and shape the minds of learners (Tatto, 2021). Additionally, teaching often provides job stability, opportunities for professional development, and a sense of fulfillment derived from helping others achieve their full potential. Teachers play a crucial role as agents of change in students' learning methods by introducing innovative teaching techniques, adapting to diverse learning styles, fostering critical thinking, and cultivating a growth mindset (Prachagool, Nuangchalerm, Subramaniam, & Dostál, 2016). Teachers inspire curiosity, facilitate exploration, and empower students to take ownership of their learning

journey (Savitri, Degeng, & Akbar, 2016). Therefore, continuous learning and development are essential for teachers to stay effective in their profession (Duță, Pânișoară, & Pânișoară, 2014). Teachers must keep abreast of advancements in their subject areas, pedagogical techniques, and educational technology. Additionally, ongoing professional development enables teachers to adapt to diverse student needs, incorporate innovative teaching methods, and refine their classroom management skills (Mayer & Mills, 2021). By continually improving their capacity, teachers can enhance student engagement, promote academic success, and create a dynamic learning environment (Horden & Brooks, 2023).

The vast majority of people want to become teachers since they are passionate about making a positive difference in the lives of learners. Teaching offers a rewarding career where individuals can inspire, mentor, and guide students toward academic success and personal growth (Deng, 2020). Additionally, the desire to share knowledge, foster curiosity, and contribute to society often motivates people to pursue careers in education.

To optimize teachers' performance on the job, several factors should be considered. These factors are providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills, stay updated on educational trend, and learn new teaching strategies (Brass & Holloway, 2021). Additionally, foster a positive and supportive work environment where teachers feel valued, respected, and supported by colleagues, administrators, and the border school community. Moreover, ensuring that teachers have access to necessary resources, materials, and technology to effectively plan and deliver engaging lessons (Horden, Muller & Deng, 2021). And promoting work-life balance by offering support for managing workload, providing adequate planning time, and implementing policies that prioritize teacher well-being.

In undergoing the teaching profession, Indonesian teachers typically expect social security benefits such as health insurance, pension plans, and access to government-run social welfare programs. These benefits are important for providing financial security and support for teachers and their families, especially during retirement or in times of illness or injury (Helgetun & Menter, 2022). In Indonesia, there are various programs in place to provide social security benefits to teachers, although the specific details and coverage may vary depending on factors such as employment status and type of educational institution (Goodwin, 2021). Based on the results of preliminary studies in the field at the stage of research observation, the following quantitative explanation is the employment status at St. Albert Catholic Senior High School, Seventh-day Adventist Senior High School, and Shalahuddin Senior High School in Malang.

**Table 1.** Teachers' Data Based on Employment Status

Private High School	St. Albertus Catholic High School	Seven-Day Adventist High School	Shalahuddin High School
Permanent Teacher of the Foundation	38	12	5
Prospective Permanent Foundation Employees	16	0	0
Honorary Teacher of the Foundation	12	8	14
Contractual Teachers	17	4	0
Total	83	24	19

In Indonesian private schools, teachers' employment status can vary depending on the school's policies and regulations. Generally, teachers in private schools have different employment arrangements compared to those in public schools. As we see in the above table, there are those teachers who have a permanent employment status at the foundation. Permanent teachers, often referred to simply as certified teachers, are individuals who hold permanent positions in educational institution. These teachers have typically completed formal education and training requirements, including obtaining relevant degrees or certifications, and have met the criteria established by educational authorities or institutions for permanent employment. Second, there are those who are prospective

permanent employee (Sachs, 2016). The prospective permanent employment status is identified in the policies and regulations of Catholic high school, it is given to these teachers that are considered as candidate of permanency employment status in the nearer future. Third, there are also those who are honorary teacher status, known as “Guru Honorer”. They are non-permanent teachers that are often employed to fill temporary teaching positions due to shortages of qualified teachers or to meet specific educational needs. Honorary teachers typically do not receive the same benefits and job security as regular, certified teachers. Their employment status may be less stable, and they may not have access to government-provided social security benefits or pension plans. And finally, those who are contractual status, they are hired on a contractual basis, where they sign fixed-term contracts specifying their roles, responsibilities, and compensation. They may be employed for a specific duration, such as one academic year, and their contracts may be renewed based on performance and the school’s needs.

With regard to teacher employment status, the table above shows that the majority of teachers in Malang are still honorary and contractual ones. In the term of job security and motivation, permanent teachers typically have greater job security and stability, which may provide them with a sense of commitment and motivation to excel in their roles. On the other hand, honorary and contractual teachers may experience uncertainty regarding their employment status, which can affect their morale and performance. In the term of support and resources, permanent teachers may have access to more support, resources, and professional development opportunities provided by educational foundation or government. This additional support can contribute to their effectiveness in the classroom. Honorary teachers may have limited access to such resources, which can impact their ability to perform optimally.

## 2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative approach with a multi-case study design. Three private high schools in Malang, namely St. Albert Catholic Senior High School, Seventh-day Adventist Senior High School, and Shalahuddin Senior High School were selected for the following criteria, they are the oldest private high schools under the leadership of foundations from each religion, including Sancta Maria Foundation (Catholic), Adventist Foundation (Christian), and LP Maarif Foundation (Islam). In terms of age at which the schools were founded, the three high schools have quite a lot of experience and can fulfill the requirement about the key constraints that undermine teacher professionalism in private high schools in Malang. Additionally, it is also known that each religion has different ethics, culture and values. Therefore, the three high schools used as cases in this study are not just ordinary private high schools owned by individuals but are institutions that provide education according to the norms, ethics, values and beliefs of each religion. The professionalism of teachers from the three high schools means that they cannot be separated from the rules and norms set by each religion.

In terms of the recruitment process and appointment of honorary teachers to become permanent employees of the Foundation, the uniqueness of the three research cases is, among others, according to the Adventist High School case, to become a permanent teacher at the Adventist Foundation, teachers are required to take 12 credits of doctrinal subjects at UNAI (Universitas Advent Indonesia), in Bandung. Meanwhile, for Sancta Maria Foundation, religious issues are not the main criteria for the recruitment and appointment of an honorary teacher to become a permanent employee of the foundation. However, there are several things that are the obligation of permanent employees of the Foundation, namely participating in a recollection, retreat and Catholic spiritual activities. In other hand, for LP Maarif Foundation, an assessment and evaluation test regarding personality development are required by the Foundation regulations for teachers who wish to become permanent employees of the Foundation.

In this study, reasons of choosing teaching profession, ethical behavior, teaching efficacy, and motivation to continue further education are the aspects of professionalism that are examined. However, to get the maximum and accurate data, the key informants were chosen according to their

specific employment status, work experiences and background of teaching subjects. They were chosen based on the recommendations given by each school head master.

Data were collected through observation, documents, questionnaires, and interviews (Citriadin, 2020). The data collection process was carried out in three stages: first, the orientation phase where the researcher gave research permission from the campus, both formally and informally, made introductions and preliminary assessments at the three private high schools that were targeted for research. The main point in this stage is how researchers establish relationships and familiarize themselves with the school, especially with those who are key informants (Citriadin, 2020). Second, the exploration phase in which researchers are present and conduct interviews with key informants according to the schedule that has been decided in accordance with the time of the informant. In addition, researchers also conducted a study of documentation in order to obtain detailed and adequate data related to the research objectives. And the third stage is the member check stage. This was done so that the conclusions drawn in connection with the study were not biased.

Data analysis in this study was carried out in two stages: (1) individual case data analysis and (2) cross-case analysis, according to (Yin, 2013). Cross-case data analysis is a process of comparing findings obtained from each case, as well as a process of combining findings between research cases. Initially, the findings obtained from St. Albert Catholic Senior High School Malang as the first case were compiled into categories and themes, inductively and conceptually, then narrative explanations were made and arranged into propositions and developed into substantive theory I. The second step of the findings obtained from the Seventh-day Adventist Senior High School Malang as the second case, researchers compiled categories and themes, inductively and conceptually, and made narrative explanations that were later arranged into propositions and developed into temporary findings or substantive theory II. Furthermore, the findings obtained from Malang Shalahuddin Private High School as the third case were compiled into categories and themes, inductively and conceptually, and narrative explanations were then made into propositions and developed into temporary findings or subjective theories III. In the final step, a cross-case analysis was carried out simultaneously to reconstruct and conceptualize the differences in cases I, II, and III systematically. This final analysis is intended to compile a systematic conception based on the results of data analysis and narrative interpretation in the form of cross-case propositions, which are used as material to develop substantive theory findings.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 *The obstacles experienced by teachers in private high schools*

All teachers want to have an adequate standard of living, far from shortcomings. Therefore, almost all teachers after a few years of teaching want to become permanent employees of the foundation so that later they can get certification assistance from the government and obtain various social benefits from the foundation, such as child benefits, health benefits and retirement benefits at old age. Second, the process of becoming a permanent employee of the foundation is now more difficult than in the past. The total quota of permanent employees available at each foundation is not balanced with the number of teachers interested. Third, obstacles related to bureaucracy. There are some teachers who have permanent foundation status but are not yet certified because they do not yet have a Unique Educator and Education Personnel Number (NUPTK), which is one of the criteria in receiving certification assistance from the government. Fourth, obstacles are related to the learning process. The struggle and learning motivation of children is decreasing due to lack of school facilities and infrastructure. Fifth, lack of training, seminars and workshops provided by the foundation in certain subjects. Sixth, many teachers are hesitant to continue their studies despite opportunities such as scholarships for fear of losing employment status. Lastly, the location of the school is quite far or less strategic for teachers and students. Strategic location for a school is crucial for accessibility, visibility, and attracting students. A well-placed school can enhance enrollment, community engagement, and even partnership with other

local organizations. It also influences the school's reputation and overall success. For teachers, traveling long distances can significantly impact their energy levels and performance. Commuting takes time and can be physically and mentally draining, especially if it involves traffic or multiple modes of transportation. This can lead to fatigue, stress, and decreased concentration, ultimately affecting teaching quality, lesson preparation, and overall job satisfaction. To more understand the obstacles experienced by teachers in private high schools, the key points of the findings are highlighted at the following Table 2.

**Table 2.** Identification of the obstacles faced by the private high school teachers

<b>The obstacles experienced by teachers in private high schools in Malang</b>	
	• The process of becoming a permanent employee of the foundation is increasingly difficult
	• The quota of permanent employees available at each foundation is limited
	• Constraints related to school policy
	• Constraints related to school bureaucracy
	• Constraints related to the learning process
	• There is an additional task to make use of the foundation's permanent staff time which is not relevant to the teacher's educational background
	• Teachers are afraid of losing employment status if they continue their studies
	• Lack of seminar, training, and workshop facilities in certain subjects
	• The location of the school is less strategic

### 3.2 Support provided by the school to enhance teachers' professionalism

Each school has a clear policy on teacher employment status. However, there are differences between the rights and obligations of each teacher based on employment status. Teachers who have permanent foundation status have many opportunities in terms of benefits and social security compared to teachers who have honorary staff status. In addition to the basic salary, permanent employees of the foundation will get health benefits, child education benefits, holiday benefits, old age benefits and other social benefits. While honorary employees only get their basic salary, which is calculated per teaching hour. To reduce the burden on teachers, schools also try to provide gas money as a transportation allowance for teachers who live far from school locations. In addition, the school also provides lunch money in the form of vouchers to all foundation employees. Furthermore, schools provide support for boarding houses or temporary accommodation facilities for teachers who come from outside the city. The teachers were happy with the help of the temporary housing facilities, although the time to stay at the boarding house was not long, nor was it free.

Learning facilities in the three schools strongly support teaching activities. However, there are some media, school facilities and infrastructure that should be optimized. In addition, the three schools also have sufficient work discipline to support learning activities. There are disciplinary actions from the school administration towards students who tend to come late to school. There is also additional tutoring support for specific students who do not master the materials taught during the class. Furthermore, in determining the schedule of learning activities, teachers are free to choose teaching hours in accordance with their desired time, especially those teachers who have honorary and contractual employment status.

To increase teacher professionalism and effectiveness in the classroom, schools invest in continuous professional development programs, provide resources for ongoing learning and skill development, holding various activities such as creating opportunities for teachers to participate in conferences, seminars, workshops, and networking events. Schools also foster a culture of collaboration and mentorship, encourage reflective practice, and recognize and reward excellence in teaching. Additionally, schools also invest in the professional growth and development of teachers by offering scholarships. By providing financial assistance, schools demonstrate their commitment to the ongoing improvement of their teachers, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students through enhanced skills, knowledge, and teaching effectiveness. Finally, there is also support among colleagues through

MGMP activities. In Indonesia, MGMP stands for “Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran”, which translates to “Subject Teachers Forum” in English. These are groups of teachers who teach the same subject at the same educational level. MGMPs are organized at the regional level and serve as platforms for teachers to collaborate, share resources, discuss teaching strategies, and address common challenges. They play a crucial role in fostering professional development among teachers and improving the quality of education. To more understand the support provided by the school to enhance teachers’ professionalism, the key points of the findings are highlighted at the following Table 3.

**Table 3.** Identification of School Support to Improve Professionalism of Private High School Teachers  
Support provided by the school to enhance teachers’ professionalism

- School facilities support teaching activities
- School discipline supports learning activities
- Support of seminar, training and workshop facilities
- Scholarship rewards for outstanding teachers
- The teacher is flexible in choosing teaching hours
- Support of colleagues’ work through MGMP activities
- Gas money assistance for honorary teachers who live far from school locations

### Discussion

In carrying out their teaching assignments, private high school teachers experience many obstacles so they are unable to provide optimal results as expected by schools and the government. These constraints include issues relating to welfare, the learning process, school policies, and government support.

The lack of allowances and welfare received by teachers from schools’ foundation and the government has caused a loss of focus and concentration in overcoming teaching assignments. The problem is, how can a teacher improve their academic ability, innovate in the use of instructional media, master a variety of learning methods with minimal income received by them. Although within themselves there is an interest in developing one’s abilities through formal or non-formal education, financial ability has not yet supported that interest. Logically, the lack of welfare received by these teachers will encourage them to try harder to look for the welfare of their family’s life needs so that the quality improvement of the academics will be marginalized. This fact can certainly cause moral problems affecting the teacher himself. As stated by (Teng, Chen, Poon, Zhang, & Jiang, 2016), money or welfare is a very important element everywhere in modern society, shaping the way people see themselves and influence how they behave. Not surprisingly, it is said that money and welfare have a bond in human psychology. People who have a lot of money can be said to have a lot of positive emotions than people who lack money or welfare. Spending money on others can promote happiness (Aknin, Dunn, Proulx, Lok, & Norton, 2020); (Teng et al., 2016). Furthermore, these moral problems will widen into structural problems. It is known that a teacher who has a high social value in front of the community, but with the low level of welfare and materialistic abilities of a teacher, will reduce the social position.

Regarding teacher competence, in terms of theory, the knowledge possessed by all teachers can be said to be sufficient but in terms of practice, there are still many things that need to be improved. Currently using technology has become an obligation, not a privilege (Alkan & Koçak Altundağ, 2015). However, there are still many teachers who have not been able to take advantage of the learning media available in schools, so special support is needed through training, seminars and workshops. In addition, they lack the support for laboratory facilities in each subject in each school. The school principals stated that according to government regulations, what is compulsory is to have a laboratory in Physics, Chemistry and Biology, others are not required. In our opinion, schools do not have to be satisfied with government regulations, if there are opportunities and abilities, it is better to try to have a laboratory for other subjects, such as the History, Economics or else. This will help teachers and

students better understand the material being taught, and of course will have a positive impact on learning outcomes.

Related to the learning process, the first is the lack of coordination between the teacher, the administration, and the sellers in the school canteen. Teachers often meet students going to the canteen to buy snacks or buy food during study hours. The teachers cannot take strict action to solve the problem, so they hope that there will be cooperation with relevant school parties. Second, limited field facilities in Physical Education. Almost all schools do not have big fields, especially ones for football and badminton, so they must borrow fields from other institutes. This is not a big obstacle to the smooth learning process, but it is a bit of disruption regarding time for the teacher and students because after exercising from a large field which is quite far from the school location, they must move quickly when returning to school so that they do not end up late for the next subject. In addition, one drawback is that schools themselves cannot determine the schedule of sports activities, with many schools requiring large fields, then all schedules of sports activities must be arranged together with the field owner.

Regarding school policy, almost all private education foundations require all teachers who are permanent employees of the foundation to remain in the school environment throughout the school's operational hours for one week. The obstacle in this policy is that the additional tasks given by the school to utilize the time of teachers who are permanent employees of the foundation have no relationship with the educational background of the teacher so that the impact on teacher professionalism cannot be felt. All teachers hope for a filter in the distribution of additional tasks from the school so that it is at least in accordance with their respective fields of study.

Constraints related to certification assistance from the government: teaching 24 hours per week has been made as one of the requirements in provision of assistance for teacher's certification and it has become a major obstacle for teachers in certain subjects, especially teachers in Arts and Culture. With the small hours provided by the government for these subjects, the headmasters of the private high schools do not plan to recruit Arts and Culture teachers to become permanent employees of the foundation. The problem of teaching 24 hours per week might be resolved if the teacher teaches in several schools but getting a foundation's permanent employee decree which is also one of the requirements for granting certification, which is impossible, unless the teacher is recruited by the government itself.

Overall, the process of becoming a permanent employee of the foundation in a private institution is increasingly difficult year after year. In addition, the amount of quota available at each of the private education foundations is also so small that honorary teachers cannot survive in one school, but must look for opportunities in several schools. To become a permanent employee in a foundation, an honorary teacher must teach a minimum of three to five years at the same foundation. If you change foundations, teaching experience from the previous school will not be counted.

Related to school support to improve teacher professionalism, researchers and education experts both agree that having excellent teachers is one of the keys to students' academic success (Vagi, Pivovarov, & Barnard, 2019). Effective teachers are teachers who have intellectual abilities and verbal skills (Deng, 2020). Effective teachers are teachers who are able to master their fields of study, and are also able to use various learning methods when teaching (Vagi et al., 2019). They develop positive relationships with students and provide motivation for them to learn (Tatto, 2021). However, to produce a superior or professional teacher, support needs to be provided by the work environment. As stated (Budianto & Katini, 2015), the work environment is a measuring tool that will affect employee performance. A pleasant work environment can enhance harmonious relationships with superiors, coworkers, and subordinates. Furthermore, the support of adequate facilities and infrastructure will have a positive impact on employees that will later improve the performances of employees.

Through the support provided by the school, teachers will understand effective ways to overcome daily challenges, especially matters relating to teaching assignments. Any help and support are needed to create changes in teachers' practices (Shafee, Ghavifekr, & Abdullah, 2019). Support provided by schools will help teachers, especially young/junior teachers, understand the right path so that they

become effective educators (Mayer & Mills, 2021). School support can be categorized in the form of efforts made by the school in optimizing facilities and learning media according to the needs of each field of learning, supporting facilities such as seminars, training, workshops or further study assistance that can enhance the professional abilities of teachers and other supports related to teachers socially.

Adequate school facilities are not only a benefit for teachers but also one of the educational requirements because they contribute to influencing parents' reasons for choosing the right school for their children (Ibrahim, Osman, Bachok, & Mohamed, 2016). Schools, as educational institutions must strive to provide quality services to customers. Efforts to improve education services continue to meet customer satisfaction (Liana, Benty, & Supriyanto, 2016). Similarly, according to (Degeng, 2017), the purpose of environmental support and learning facilities is to help students be willing and easy to learn. However, school support is not enough if it only comes to the matter of facilities and infrastructure. There is also a need for action from schools in developing teacher professionalism through continuing education. Schools must provide motivation for teachers to always learn so that their pedagogical abilities increase. Support from the school can be seen from direct assistance in the form of scholarships to teachers to continue their studies, or at least support in managing time (learning schedules) adjusted to the teacher's time so that they have the opportunity to continue their studies during teaching.

To increase teacher motivation and involvement in continuing professional development, several countries have developed attractive teacher promotion schemes, which are usually linked to salary levels (Tengku Ariffin, Bush, & Nordin, 2018). The lack of welfare given to teachers will cause a loss of focus and concentration of teaching within the teacher himself. To optimize academic capacity and other professional competencies, a teacher must feel financially capable. Looking at the situation of teachers in private high schools, especially honorary teachers, this is still far from reality. Teachers often spend a lot of time with personal effort to meet family needs. The lack of welfare given to teachers will have a negative impact on their performance and morale.

The effectiveness of support provided by schools can be assessed through the optimal performance of all teachers in their professional duties. This effectiveness is measurable by evaluating and assessing teacher performance. According to Ardana, Mujiati, and Utama (2013), a safe and healthy work environment significantly contributes to employee productivity. Ardana further emphasized that adequate work support involves the availability of comprehensive workplace facilities that aid employees in completing their tasks efficiently. This support is intrinsically linked to the responsibilities of the principal. As Agustina and Huda (2016) noted, "effective principals must continuously develop their subordinates to achieve the highest level of performance in specific goals or tasks."

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Several systemic issues undermine teacher professionalism and affect the quality of education in private high schools in Malang. Key constraints include inadequate compensation and benefits, which lead to low morale and job satisfaction among teachers. This low compensation also limits teachers' ability to pursue professional development and advanced degrees. Additionally, the lack of training, support, and resources, such as teaching materials and technology, further hinders teachers' ability to engage students effectively. Administrative burdens add to the problem by diverting teachers' focus from instructional duties.

To enhance teacher professionalism, schools must provide professional development opportunities, mentoring, and greater autonomy for teachers. Creating a supportive work environment that values teachers' contributions and offers competitive salaries and benefits is essential. Effective resource allocation, including access to instructional materials and technology, is crucial. Policymakers should increase funding for professional development, improve teacher compensation, and implement supportive policies. School administrators should prioritize ongoing professional development and



foster supportive environments, while teachers' associations and community stakeholders should advocate for fair compensation, reduced workloads, and recognition of teacher excellence.

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