



Unraveling Intrinsic Motivation: The Key to Empowering Teacher Professional Growth

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This study explores the pivotal role of intrinsic motivation in driving the professional development of early childhood education (ECE) and kindergarten teachers, focusing on how it influences their teaching practices, adaptability, and overall job satisfaction.

Methodology: A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, involving purposively selected ECE and kindergarten teachers from multiple schools. Participants had at least five years of teaching experience and demonstrated active engagement in professional skill development. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and participatory observations and then analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover recurring patterns and insights.

Main Findings: The study reveals that intrinsic motivation significantly shapes the professional growth of ECE teachers. Motivated teachers are likelier to adopt innovative teaching methods, integrate new technologies into their classrooms, and demonstrate resilience in managing challenges. They display a heightened sense of responsibility for their students' holistic development and report greater job satisfaction. Moreover, intrinsic motivation fosters creativity and adaptability, enabling teachers to craft engaging learning experiences. This, in turn, positively impacts student outcomes, as intrinsically motivated teachers create dynamic, supportive environments that enhance student engagement and facilitate social-emotional growth.

Novelty/Originality of the Study: Underexplored connection between intrinsic motivation and professional development in early childhood education. The study underscores the need for fostering intrinsic motivation in teacher training programs by linking teacher motivation to innovation, resilience, and student engagement. Furthermore, it provides actionable insights into designing interventions and policies prioritizing intrinsic drivers, contributing to sustainable teacher development and improved educational quality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education and influencing the overall development of students. In the face of rapid changes in education systems, such as advancements in technology, evolving student needs, and global demands for new skills, the professional development of teachers has become an essential factor in improving teaching effectiveness and overall educational outcomes [1]-[5]. Professional development ensures that teachers are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to meet these

challenges, innovate in their practices, and inspire student success. However, while many professional development initiatives focus on external factors such as new teaching strategies, curriculum updates, and technology integration, one often overlooked but highly influential factor is intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive that prompts individuals to engage in activities for their inherent satisfaction, enjoyment, and sense of personal fulfillment. According to Bartik, intrinsic motivation, defined as the inner drive to engage in activities for their inherent satisfaction and personal fulfillment [6]. Intrinsic motivation is a strong driving force that shapes behavior, learning, and performance, prompting us to participate in activities with enthusiasm, intention, and perseverance [7]-[10]. Intrinsic motivation is an internal drive that originates from factors such as curiosity, passion, and a sense of purpose. It plays a key role in how individuals approach learning, challenges, and personal growth. In the context of teachers, intrinsic motivation is especially important for their professional development, as it fuels their desire to grow, innovate, and continuously improve their teaching practices. This motivation helps teachers take ownership of their professional growth, making them more likely to engage in self-directed learning, remain resilient in the face of challenges, and commit to lifelong improvement.

This importance of intrinsic motivation extends beyond early childhood education to all educational levels. For kindergarten teachers, intrinsic motivation is particularly significant because their role in early childhood education goes beyond simply teaching academic content. They are instrumental in shaping young learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development [11]-[14]. Their work requires not just technical knowledge and pedagogical skills but also a deep, intrinsic commitment to creating a positive, nurturing environment. Motivated by passion and a sense of purpose, these teachers are often driven to exceed the minimum expectations and continually refine their teaching strategies. This can involve adapting to the individual needs of each child, being creative in the classroom, and staying enthusiastic about their work, all of which contribute to a rich learning environment that encourages young learners to thrive. As Sennen highlight, kindergarten teachers are also key in supporting the development of social-emotional skills in children, such as self-control and the ability to interact with others [15]. These skills are foundational to the holistic development of young children, and intrinsic motivation in teachers helps foster a nurturing and supportive atmosphere where these skills can flourish. At the high school level, teachers serve as role models, especially when their gender aligns with that of their students, and their influence can significantly impact academic performance [16]-[18]. This demonstrates that teachers at the elementary level play an essential role in developing and guiding young learners through foundational skills, promoting good citizenship, and using technology effectively. At the secondary level, however, the focus shifts to providing students with exemplary behavior and motivation to achieve academic success, emphasizing the need for both leadership and mentorship in shaping students' attitudes and accomplishments.

At all educational levels, teachers are responsible for enhancing their students' skills, implementing appropriate teaching strategies, and continuously developing themselves to meet the changing needs of their learners. As teachers move into elementary and high school education, their responsibilities evolve to include promoting good citizenship, integrating technology effectively into the classroom, and employing strategies that support cognitive development and academic achievement [19]-[21]. At these stages, teachers are expected to model positive behaviors and guide students in achieving academic success. Intrinsic motivation continues to drive teachers to seek innovative approaches, motivate their students, and refine their teaching practices to meet diverse student needs. Despite intrinsic motivation being widely acknowledged as a key driver of human behavior, its specific influence on teacher professional development remains underexplored. Existing research on professional growth tends to focus heavily on external factors, such as institutional support, structured training programs, and policy frameworks, while often neglecting the internal psychological processes that inspire teachers to engage deeply in their own growth. Studies by Mayangsari, Meacham, suggest that these external factors, although important, do not fully account for what drives sustained, meaningful professional development [22], [23]. Understanding the role of intrinsic motivation is increasingly critical in today's educational landscape, where teachers face a multitude of challenges [24]-[26].

Teachers face multiple challenges, including the rapid integration of new technologies, the need to address increasingly diverse student populations, and the rising expectations for accountability in terms of student performance [26], [27]. These challenges require teachers to go beyond traditional teaching methods and constantly adapt to new educational demands. Intrinsic motivation plays a pivotal role in enabling teachers to rise to these challenges. Unlike external motivators such as rewards, mandates, or evaluations, intrinsic motivation is driven by internal desires such as a passion for teaching, a curiosity to explore new methods, and a sense of purpose in shaping students' lives. Intrinsically motivated teachers are more likely to be proactive in seeking out new teaching practices, embracing technological innovations, and refining their skills to meet the ever-evolving demands of their classrooms. For example, teachers who are driven by intrinsic motivation may be more open to experimenting with new digital tools in the classroom, adjusting their instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students, or engaging in professional development opportunities to improve their skills. Moreover, intrinsic motivation fosters resilience in teachers. The demands of modern education, from

meeting standardized testing requirements to managing classroom dynamics, can be overwhelming. However, teachers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to persist through these challenges [28]-[31]. Their motivation stems from an inner belief in the importance of their work and a commitment to personal and professional growth, which sustains their enthusiasm and commitment even during difficult times. This resilience is essential for maintaining a long-term career in education and for continuing to deliver high-quality instruction despite external pressures. While external rewards like salary increases or bonuses may provide short-term motivation, they do not support long-term growth or genuine engagement in teaching. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation, fueled by passion for teaching, curiosity, and a sense of purpose, can significantly alter a teacher's approach to their profession. This type of motivation encourages continuous self-improvement and strengthens the connection between educators and their students' learning experiences. By recognizing and cultivating these internal drivers, educators can develop a stronger professional identity, sustained motivation, and a sense of personal growth that transcends the need for external validation.

This study is particularly important because it shifts the focus of professional development away from external rewards and towards a more personal and transformative journey for teachers. In contrast to traditional methods that primarily concentrate on external motivators, this research delves into the often-overlooked potential of intrinsic motivation as a powerful force for sustained professional growth. This study seeks to unravel the role of intrinsic motivation in empowering teacher professional growth, with a particular emphasis on its relevance to kindergarten teachers. By exploring how intrinsic motivation influences teachers' willingness to pursue continuous learning, embrace new pedagogical strategies, and adapt to changing educational landscapes, this research aims to provide valuable insights for designing more effective and sustainable professional development programs. The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of how intrinsic motivators such as a passion for teaching, curiosity, and a sense of purpose can positively influence and enhance teaching practices. By identifying and analyzing the ways these internal factors shape teachers' professional development, the study provides new insights into how professional development programs can be structured to better align with and support teachers' intrinsic motivations. The findings of this study are expected to provide important guidance for policymakers, educational leaders, and those involved in creating teacher training programs. By recognizing the vital role of intrinsic motivation in professional development, these stakeholders can implement strategies that not only cultivate teachers' internal drives but also support their continuous learning and growth. This approach could result in more sustainable and effective professional development, particularly in early childhood education, where teachers play a crucial role in shaping the foundational development of young learners. The research aims to provide valuable insights on how to create a more supportive, engaging, and motivating environment for teachers, ultimately enhancing the long-term success of teacher development programs.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of intrinsic motivation in the professional development of teachers, with a particular focus on those in early childhood education. Qualitative research is suitable for understanding underlying factors and gaining deep insights into personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes [32]-[34]. The sample for this study consists of 20-25 kindergarten teachers from various schools, selected using purposive sampling. This technique ensures that participants are actively engaged in professional development and are willing to reflect on their experiences related to intrinsic motivation. The data then collected using a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews allow for in-depth exploration of teachers' personal motivations, professional development experiences, and how intrinsic factors influence their teaching practices. Focus group discussions, consisting of 5-7 teachers per session, foster a collective sharing of experiences, while classroom observations help triangulate the data by documenting teachers' interactions with students and classroom dynamics. The data analysis is conducted through thematic analysis, which involves coding the interview and focus group transcripts to identify key themes related to intrinsic motivation. These themes then developed by grouping similar codes, and the data are cross-referenced to ensure validity. By combining these methods, the research aims to provide valuable insights into how intrinsic motivation drives professional growth among teachers, offering guidance for the development of more effective and sustainable teacher training programs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews with kindergarten teachers in Indonesia, the study found that teachers continue to struggle with understanding and transferring knowledge to students, have difficulties comprehending children's needs, and face challenges with classroom management, leading to less effective teaching. This is due to the fact that many kindergarten teachers do not possess adequate knowledge, comprehension, or experience necessary for

teaching young children effectively. Field data reveals that kindergarten teachers come from a variety of educational backgrounds, age groups, and ranges of teaching experience. Kindergarten teachers come from diverse educational backgrounds, such as high school/vocational school, associate degree (D2), diploma (D3), bachelor's degrees in various fields, bachelor's degrees with a teaching profession, and master's degrees. The ages of these teachers range from 21 to 67 years, with teaching experience spanning from 1 to 28 years. This diversity influences the professionalism of kindergarten teachers in the classroom. The interviews also indicated that kindergarten teachers face challenges in understanding and implementing the curriculum, struggle with low self-confidence, and have not fully grasped what constitutes effective teaching. The number of teachers in early childhood education and kindergarten is significantly lower than those in other education levels, such as elementary, middle, and high school [35]-[37]. Moreover, the quality of interest in pursuing a career as a kindergarten teacher due to the profession's low pay. Many kindergarten teachers, particularly those in non-formal or private schools, earn wages that are insufficient, which affects their motivation to improve their skills and professionalism due to economic pressures. Many kindergarten teachers in Indonesia also lack formal education that meets the competency standards required for the profession [38]. Most of them have only received brief training or qualifications that are not focused on early childhood development. As a result, they lack understanding of essential pedagogical methods, child development psychology, and holistic teaching strategies required at this educational level. Furthermore, there remains a societal stigma that views kindergarten teachers as “babysitters” rather than professional educators, which hinders efforts to elevate their professional status. These factors weaken the internal drive or motivation to engage in teaching activities, ultimately reducing their professionalism and teaching effectiveness.

Table 1. Interview Data Results

Question	Respondent Answers
What is your educational background before becoming a kindergarten teacher?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I graduated from high school with a short certification training for early childhood education teachers. - I graduated from high school and helped my aunt work here. - I have an associate degree (D2) in Informatics. - I have a bachelor's degree, but it is not in education. - I graduated with a bachelor's degree in teaching. - I am a housewife, but I hold a bachelor's degree in Islamic Religious Education - I am 25 years old and have only been teaching for 2 years. - I am 42 years old and have 15 years of teaching experience.
How old are you, and how long have you been teaching in kindergarten?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am 23 years old, recently graduated with a bachelor's degree, and have been teaching for 1 year. - I am 21 years old, graduated from high school, and have been teaching for 3 years. - I am 60 years old and have been working as a kindergarten teacher for the past 5 years..
What is the biggest challenge you face when teaching children in kindergarten?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I struggle to understand the developmental needs of each child. - Implementing the appropriate curriculum is challenging for me due to a lack of training. - Sometimes the children are very mischievous, and I find it difficult to manage them in the classroom. - Classroom management is my biggest challenge. - The school lacks sufficient toys and teaching aids. - Sometimes I feel undervalued because of the low salary.
What is your view on how the kindergarten teaching profession is perceived in society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kindergarten teachers don't need higher education; what's important is loving children. - Kindergarten teachers are only needed to teach singing and drawing. - Many people consider kindergarten teachers just as babysitters. - Kindergarten teachers must be patient and loving. - I enjoy being with little children.
What motivates you to continue teaching in kindergarten?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I need extra money. - I like teaching children and seeing them learn new things. - I feel that this job is meaningful because I can make a positive impact.

Based on the data in the table above, we can see that kindergarten teachers in Indonesia have diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from high school graduates to those holding bachelor's degrees. However, many do not have specialized education in Early Childhood Education (PAUD), which means they lack

understanding of the pedagogical methods and child psychology needed to teach at this level. The age range and teaching experience also vary widely, coming from various age groups, from those who are still young to those nearing retirement. Their teaching experience is also quite varied, from those who have taught for a few years to those with decades of experience. This indicates that their level of professionalism and competence can differ significantly. Many teachers face difficulties in understanding children's developmental needs, classroom management, and curriculum implementation. This points to a lack of adequate training or professional support to help them overcome these challenges. Furthermore, the interview results also revealed the societal stigma that views kindergarten teachers as caregivers rather than professional educators, which is why their salaries are still below the standard for teachers in general. This data shows that the kindergarten teacher profession still faces significant challenges, both in terms of education, professional support, and economic factors.

Additionally, the interview results also revealed that many teachers have strong intrinsic motivation. They have a deep love for children and want to help them learn better. This is encouraging news for the development of children's education, as intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing teaching practices. It can influence a teacher's commitment, creativity, and willingness to engage with students in meaningful ways. With strong intrinsic motivation, teachers can improve their teaching and learning methods. Below is data from teachers' responses to semi-structured interviews about their intrinsic motivation. The data reveals recurring themes, their frequencies, and representative quotes that highlight key motivational drivers among teachers..

Table 2. Teachers's Intrinsic Motivation

Theme	Frequency (%)	Significance
Sense of Purpose	95%	The most prevalent theme, indicating that teachers derive motivation from their work's meaning and impact.
Passion for Teaching	90%	Highlights the intrinsic joy and satisfaction teachers experience in their profession.
Commitment to Student Growth	85%	Reflects teachers' focus on fostering student success and their emotional connection to students.
Interest in Professional Growth	75%	While slightly lower, it emphasizes the importance of learning and self-improvement as motivators.

Based on the analysis, "Sense of Purpose" (95%) and "Passion for Teaching" (90%) emerge as the strongest drivers, suggesting that most teachers are intrinsically motivated by the meaningfulness of their work and the joy it brings. From this data, 95% of teachers highlighted a strong sense of purpose as the primary driver of their intrinsic motivation. This reflects how teaching aligns with teachers' personal values and their desire to make a broader societal impact. Teachers see their work as a meaningful contribution to shaping future generations and improving society. Furthermore, teachers view teaching children not merely as a job but as something they truly enjoy. While professional growth (75%) is slightly less prominent, it remains a critical factor for sustaining long-term engagement and effectiveness. The high frequency of "Commitment to Student Growth" (85%) indicates that teachers are deeply invested in their students' outcomes, reinforcing their emotional satisfaction and dedication to the profession. This analysis shows that the passion for teaching and the inner desire to work remain strong, serving as the foundation for improving teachers' intrinsic motivation in their professionalism and teaching effectiveness. This interview result is also supported by statistical data on teachers' intrinsic motivation, measured using the Teachers' Motivation for Teaching Scale [39]. This scale is used to measure the strength of kindergarten teachers' internal motivation in carrying out their duties. The instrument consists of six questions measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "very inconsistent" and 5 indicating "very consistent".

Statements	Mean Score (1-5)	Interpretation
I teach because I enjoy the process.	4.7	Most teachers feel happy and motivated by the teaching process itself.
Seeing my students learn something new is very satisfying.	4.8	Teachers are highly motivated by their students' success in learning.
Teaching gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.	4.6	Teachers feel that teaching is an important part of their personal satisfaction.
I teach because I care about the development of children.	4.9	empathy for students is a primary motivation for many teachers.
I feel that teaching is my calling in life.	4.5	Most teachers feel that they have intrinsic dedication to this profession.
I am motivated to continue teaching, even without additional incentives.	4.3	Teachers feel intrinsically motivated, even in the absence of external incentives.

Based on the measurement results, the overall average of the six questions is 4.63, indicating that the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers is at a very high level. Teachers feel that the teaching activities provide satisfaction and meaningful value, both personally and professionally. The question about caring for children's development received the highest score (4.9), suggesting that empathy for students is the primary driver of kindergarten teachers' motivation. This confirms that most teachers view their role as a significant form of social contribution. The question related to motivation without additional incentives received the lowest score (4.3), although it is still considered high. This indicates that some teachers still feel burdened by external factors, such as salary or workload, even though they are intrinsically motivated. Based on this data, it can be concluded that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in improving the competence and professionalism of kindergarten teachers. These results are also supported by previous studies that show intrinsic motivation has a significant influence on the teaching and learning process, both at the elementary and secondary levels.

Table 3. Description of the intrinsic motivation of teachers from various levels of education

Authors	Participant	The results of research on teacher intrinsic motivation
[39]	178 elementary school teachers Grades 3,4 and 5 in a metropolitan school, age 21-over 46 years, 80% female, 19% male, rest unspecified, race majority Caucasian-American, teaching experience less than 1 year to 37 years , average 9 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school teachers who have intrinsic motivation for creative work, enjoy their work in facilitating the development of students' creative thinking in learning practices, providing teaching that provides varied types of activities and materials in the classroom. • Elementary school teachers who are intrinsically motivated for challenging work show minimal effect on fostering creative thinking in students.
[40]	54 PAUD teachers and assistant teachers, gender 53 female and 1 male, educational background of 9 masters, 12 undergraduates, 9 people who have CDA (Child Development Associate) certification, 5 people who have attended college, & 24 high school students. The teaching experience of teachers varies, ranging from classes with economic status of middle class students, diverse, and lower social classes. Types of schools ranging from general classes, Head Star and classes in child care.	<p>Factors that influence the intrinsic motivation of teachers to engage in professional development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing positive feedback and support from supervisors or superiors, as well as teachers' perceptions of their supervisors or superiors • Independence in work, including job satisfaction. • Relationships with colleagues (significant predictor for teachers, but not for teacher assistants)
[41]	2580 middle-class students and teachers in Austria, average age 46 years. 54.4% female teachers and 45.6% male teachers. Teachers who teach in all types of secondary schools in Austria, lower track, vocational schools and other types of schools. The fields of study taught by the teacher include mathematics, science, and German.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a positive relationship between the fulfillment of basic needs with the teacher's intrinsic motivation. • The teacher's personality variable, namely self-regulation, can predict most of the teacher's intrinsic motivation. • Self-regulation is a mediator of teacher support needs and intrinsic motivation. • The quality of motivation can be seen from the function of the individual and the environment
[42]	62 PAUD teachers in Omani who participated in the SQU program. The participants are female, the average age is 22.17 years and the average GPA is 2.70.	<p>PAUD teachers in Omani as a whole have a high intrinsic motivation to teach, especially those who are over 22 years old and have a high GPA.</p>
[43]	58,513 teachers working in various public and private schools from 382 districts in Ankara, ranging from PAUD to SMA levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private school teachers are more intrinsically and creatively motivated than public school teachers. • Intrinsic motivation is predicted to be positively related to teacher creativity,

Authors	Participant	The results of research on teacher intrinsic motivation
[44]	2,385 teachers of primary, secondary and vocational education in the Netherlands. 1130 male teachers and 1,255 female teachers aged from 20 to 67 years old.	<p>but not to the climate of innovation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term of office, does not affect the teacher's intrinsic motivation • The construction of motivation affects the innovative behavior of teachers. • Intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy at work serve as predictors of innovative behavior. • Teacher satisfaction with the fulfillment of basic psychological needs has an effect on intrinsic motivation but has a weak effect on self-efficacy at work. • Early-career kindergarten teachers are intrinsically motivated to work as teachers. • They take pride in their work because of the value of professionalism and can understand children's development. • Teachers who have intrinsic motivation and are committed to becoming teachers are willing to develop themselves professionally. • Extrinsic rewards have little impact on their decision to become a teacher.
[45]	12 kindergarten teachers with less than three years of service and working in public and private kindergartens in Beijing.	

Based on Table 3, it was found that intrinsic motivation has a strong influence on the professional development of teachers at all levels of education, including early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education. This shows that intrinsic motivation plays a critical role in shaping the professional development of educators. Teachers driven by intrinsic motivation, such as a passion for teaching, a commitment to student growth, or a desire for self-improvement, are more likely to engage in activities that enhance their professional skills and effectiveness. To enhance the intrinsic motivation of kindergarten teachers, several strategies have been implemented to create an environment that supports their internal development in teaching. One effective approach is to provide teachers with the opportunity to have autonomy in their work. Teachers who are given the freedom to make decisions about teaching methods and strategies tend to feel more ownership over their work, which strengthens their intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it is important to create space for teachers to experiment with new approaches or adapt lessons to meet the needs of their students. In addition, collaboration among peers can also boost intrinsic motivation. With learning groups or “learning circles,” teachers can share experiences, challenges, and solutions together. This helps teachers feel more supported and less isolated, as well as boosts their confidence in trying new things in teaching. Furthermore, celebrating small achievements by teachers, such as increased student engagement or the implementation of new methods, can also provide a significant boost to their motivation. Personalized professional development also plays a key role in enhancing intrinsic motivation. Training programs that align with the interests and specific needs of teachers will make them more motivated to develop further. Moreover, creating a positive school culture, where teachers feel valued and supported by their peers and leaders, can enhance their work morale. Overall, by creating an environment that supports intrinsic motivation, schools can help teachers continue to grow and feel more satisfied with their work. This will not only improve the quality of teaching but also enhance students' learning outcomes in the long term.

Based on field observation data, teachers with strong intrinsic motivation are naturally inclined to seek continuous learning opportunities. They actively pursue workshops, training, and self-directed study to improve their teaching practices. As many as 82% of kindergarten teachers with intrinsic motivation were reported to actively attend professional development training, even without any external pressure or direct incentives. This shows that their internal motivation drives them to continuously improve their competencies. Furthermore, 75% of teachers are more willing to try new learning approaches, such as technology-based methods or active learning. Intrinsically motivated kindergarten teachers are also more proactive in seeking teaching materials, new literature, or teaching methods that can enrich their professional competence. The teacher-student relationship, at 88%, also indicates a positive connection as one of the significant impacts of intrinsic motivation. Teachers who have a passion for teaching are more likely to create a supportive learning environment. Teachers are also more motivated to solve learning problems.

Table 4. The Relationship Between Intrinsic Motivation and the Professional Development of Kindergarten Teachers

Professional Development Aspects	Percentage of Intrinsically Motivated Kindergarten Teachers (%)	Impact on Teaching Effectiveness
Participation in Training and Workshops	82%	Teachers with intrinsic motivation are more likely to voluntarily attend training.
Application of New Methods in Teaching	75%	Teachers are more creative and proactive in adopting new technologies or methods in the classroom.
Ongoing Competency Development	85%	Teachers are motivated to continue learning even without direct external incentives.
High Job Satisfaction and Commitment	90%	Teachers feel satisfied with their profession and remain committed despite challenges.
Management of Teacher-Student Relationships	88%	Teachers are more effective in building positive relationships with students.
Independent Problem solving	70%	Teachers are more proactive in seeking creative solutions to challenges in the classroom.

Based on this data, it can be concluded that intrinsic motivation plays a key role as the main foundation in the professional development of kindergarten teachers. By prioritizing this aspect, educational institutions can create development programs that not only enhance teachers' competencies but also strengthen job satisfaction and their impact on student learning. Therefore, this study provides a model of kindergarten teacher professionalism based on intrinsic motivation as its main driving force.

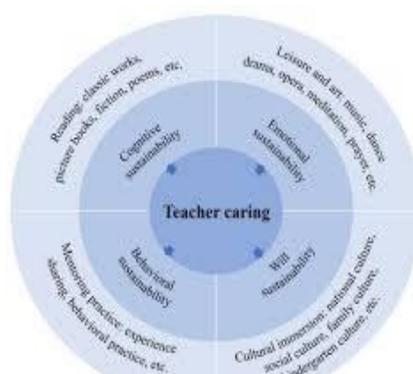


Figure 1. Professionalism Model Based on Intrinsic Motivation

This model of teacher professionalism based on intrinsic motivation offers a holistic and teacher-centered approach. By focusing on individual needs, creating a supportive environment, and providing opportunities for growth and development, we can maximize the potential of each teacher and ultimately improve the quality of education. This model does not stop at one stage; rather, it continues in a cycle. Each stage in this model is interconnected and mutually influential. For example, when a teacher identifies their professional development needs (Stage 1), the training provided (Stage 2) will be more relevant and impactful. A teacher will then reflect on their practices, identify new needs, and begin the next cycle. By focusing on intrinsic motivation, teachers will be more driven to learn and grow. They will feel more empowered and have a sense of ownership over their professional development process. After implementing this intrinsic motivation-based teacher professionalism model, it was found that teachers had higher enthusiasm and were more active in teaching. They also felt more satisfied with their work and were more open to collaborating with peers. Overall, the application of this model creates a positive, reinforcing cycle. When teachers feel motivated and fulfilled, they will deliver better learning experiences to their students. Successful students will provide satisfaction to the teachers, further enhancing their motivation. And so the cycle continues. Therefore, the intrinsic motivation-based teacher professionalism development model is a long-term investment that offers significant benefits. By paying attention to teachers' needs and aspirations, we can create a generation of teachers who are high-quality, innovative, and dedicated. This, in turn, will positively impact the quality of education for children in schools.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight the significant role of intrinsic motivation in the professional development of teachers, particularly in early childhood education. Teachers with high intrinsic motivation demonstrate strong commitment to teaching and a deep desire to support student development, despite facing challenges such as irrelevant formal education or heavy workloads. From interview data, “sense of purpose” (95%) and “passion for teaching” (90%) were identified as the primary drivers of teachers' intrinsic motivation. This indicates that most kindergarten teachers feel their work provides meaningful contributions to the development of children and society. Measurements using the teaching motivation scale by Zhong. Also show an average intrinsic motivation score of 4.63, confirming that kindergarten teachers in Indonesia tend to have high internal motivation. The study also revealed a strong link between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, with motivated teachers feeling more accomplished and purposeful in their roles. This sense of motivation also plays a role in improving teacher retention, as these individuals are less likely to experience burnout or fatigue. The findings emphasize the importance of designing professional development programs that nurture teachers' internal motivation rather than relying solely on external rewards such as financial incentives or recognition. Teachers who are given the autonomy to guide their own learning and growth are generally more engaged and driven. These insights offer valuable guidance for policymakers, educational leaders, and program designers to create supportive environments that foster intrinsic motivation in teachers and develop more effective and sustainable professional development programs.

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