

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN LOCAL APPLICATION-ORIENTED UNIVERSITIES: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Teacher professional development has become a critical issue in higher education in the context of increasing demands for teaching quality, research productivity, and innovation. While previous studies have primarily focused on individual factors influencing teacher development, the role of organizational support has received comparatively less attention. This study adopts a semi-systematic literature review approach to examine the relationship between organizational support and teacher professional development in local application-oriented universities. Drawing on organizational support theory and recent empirical research, the study analyzes how institutional support mechanisms—including leadership support, policy frameworks, professional development opportunities, and organizational culture—contribute to enhancing teacher motivation, work engagement, and professional competence. The findings suggest that perceived organizational support plays a significant role in facilitating sustainable teacher development. The study also highlights the importance of establishing comprehensive institutional support systems, particularly in application-oriented universities where practice-based teaching and industry collaboration are emphasized. These findings provide theoretical and practical implications for improving educational management and supporting teacher development in higher education.

Keywords: Organizational Support, Teacher Professional Development, Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development has become an increasingly important issue in higher education as universities face growing demands for teaching quality, research productivity, and social service. With the rapid expansion of higher education systems worldwide, institutions are expected to enhance both educational effectiveness and academic performance. As a result, supporting teachers' professional growth has become a central concern for educational administrators and policymakers. In the context of global educational transformation and technological advancement, university teachers are required to continuously update their professional knowledge and improve their teaching practices. They must adapt to evolving academic environments and respond to diverse student needs. Consequently, promoting effective teacher professional development has become a key priority in higher education institutions. Teacher professional development is generally understood as a continuous process through which teachers enhance their professional knowledge, pedagogical competence, and professional identity throughout their careers (Avalos, 2011). Effective professional development enables teachers to improve instructional quality, adopt innovative teaching strategies, and respond to diverse learning needs. In higher education, professional development also involves strengthening research capacity, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and engaging with emerging educational technologies. However, teacher professional development does not occur in isolation. Increasing evidence suggests that teachers' professional growth is significantly influenced by the organizational environment in which they work. Institutional policies, leadership practices, and resource allocation play important roles in shaping teachers' opportunities for professional learning. Desimone and Garet (2015) argue that professional development should be understood not only as an individual learning process but also as an organizational activity embedded within institutional structures. Among various organizational factors, organizational support has attracted growing attention in educational management research. Organizational support refers to employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Studies have shown that strong organizational support enhances teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and professional commitment (McElhosh & Ryan, 2021). Recent research further indicates that perceived organizational support is closely related to teachers' work engagement and professional identity (Liu & Hallinger, 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2024). The importance of organizational support is particularly evident in local application-oriented universities. These institutions emphasize practice-based education and play a key role in cultivating applied talents for regional development. However, teachers in such institutions often face challenges such as heavy teaching workloads, limited research resources, and insufficient professional development opportunities. In this context, effective organizational support becomes crucial for facilitating teacher development and improving institutional competitiveness. Despite the growing body of research, existing studies on organizational support and teacher professional development remain fragmented and lack comprehensive synthesis, particularly in the context of application-oriented universities. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between organizational support and teacher professional development through a structured review of existing literature. This study adopts a semi-systematic literature review approach to examine the relationship between organizational support and teacher professional development in higher education. This approach enables a structured synthesis of existing research while allowing flexibility in integrating diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives. Relevant literature was identified through major academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected to ensure comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed studies in educational management and higher education. The search was conducted using combinations of keywords such as "organizational support," "teacher professional development," "faculty development," and "higher education," with Boolean operators applied

to refine the results. The review focused on studies published between 2010 and 2025, with particular emphasis on recent research to capture current developments. To ensure relevance and quality, inclusion criteria were applied, including studies conducted in higher education contexts and those addressing organizational support or teacher professional development. Publications lacking clear theoretical or empirical contributions were excluded. After screening, the selected studies were analyzed to identify key themes and theoretical relationships. The findings were synthesized to provide a conceptual understanding of how organizational support influences teacher motivation, work engagement, and professional competence in higher education institutions.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Teacher professional development (TPD) is widely recognized as a critical factor in improving teaching quality and institutional effectiveness in higher education. It refers to the continuous process through which teachers enhance their professional knowledge, pedagogical competence, and professional identity throughout their careers (Avalos, 2011). Early studies conceptualize TPD as a lifelong learning process grounded in continuous learning and reflective practice (Day, 1999). In this view, professional development enables teachers to adapt to evolving educational environments and respond to changing pedagogical demands. In higher education contexts, teacher professional development is inherently multidimensional due to the diverse roles of university faculty. In addition to teaching, academics are expected to engage in research, student supervision, and institutional service. Consequently, TPD extends beyond pedagogical improvement to include disciplinary expertise, research capability, and academic collaboration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Recent research further highlights that effective professional development programs should integrate teaching innovation with research development, reflecting the complex professional expectations placed on university teachers (Postareff et al., 2021). A key dimension of teacher professional development is reflective practice. Schön (1983) argues that professional learning is constructed through reflection on experience. In higher education, reflective practice enables teachers to critically evaluate their teaching strategies, assess student learning outcomes, and refine their instructional approaches. However, recent studies suggest that reflection alone may not be sufficient for sustained professional growth. Instead, structured institutional support and collaborative environments are increasingly recognized as essential complements to individual reflection (Xu & Sun, 2023). Collaborative professional learning has also emerged as a central component of teacher development. Professional learning communities and peer collaboration provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and collective problem-solving. Vangrieken et al. (2017) demonstrate that collaborative environments can enhance instructional innovation and support continuous improvement in teaching practices. More recent research extends this perspective by emphasizing the role of professional learning networks in facilitating cross-institutional collaboration and knowledge exchange (Trust et al., 2022). These findings suggest that teacher development is not only an individual process but also a socially embedded activity. Importantly, the role of institutional context has gained increasing attention in recent literature. Desimone and Garet (2015) argue that professional development should be understood as an activity embedded within organizational structures rather than an isolated individual process. Recent empirical studies support this view, showing that institutional policies, leadership practices, and professional development systems significantly influence teachers' participation in learning activities and their professional outcomes (Liu & Hallinger, 2023; Li et al., 2024). These studies indicate that organizational conditions play a critical role in shaping the effectiveness of teacher development initiatives. The importance of these factors is particularly evident in local application-oriented universities. These institutions emphasize practice-based education and aim to cultivate applied

talents for regional economic development. As a result, teachers are required to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical industry experience. However, research indicates that teachers in such institutions often face constraints such as heavy teaching workloads, limited research resources, and insufficient access to professional development opportunities (Zhang & Li, 2022). These challenges may hinder the effectiveness of teacher development efforts. Overall, the literature suggests that teacher professional development in higher education is a complex and context-dependent process influenced by both individual and institutional factors. While earlier studies focused primarily on individual learning and reflection, recent research increasingly emphasizes the importance of organizational contexts and institutional support. This shift highlights the need to examine teacher development from a broader educational management perspective. In this regard, understanding the role of organizational support becomes essential for explaining how universities can effectively promote teacher professional development.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Organizational support is a central concept in organizational behavior and has increasingly gained attention in educational management research. The concept of perceived organizational support (POS), introduced by Eisenberger et al. (1986), refers to employees' beliefs that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Rooted in Organizational Support Theory (OST), this perspective emphasizes that supportive organizational environments foster positive employee attitudes and behaviors, including commitment, motivation, and engagement. In the context of higher education, organizational support extends beyond general workplace support to include institutional structures and practices that facilitate teacher development. Universities provide support through leadership guidance, professional development programs, mentoring systems, and access to academic resources. These forms of support are particularly important given the complex roles of university teachers, who are required to balance teaching, research, and service responsibilities. Recent studies suggest that institutional support systems are critical for enhancing both teacher performance and professional growth (Postareff et al., 2021). A key theoretical mechanism underlying organizational support is the principle of reciprocity. According to OST, when employees perceive that their organization supports them, they are more likely to reciprocate through increased commitment and proactive behavior (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In higher education settings, this reciprocity is reflected in teachers' willingness to engage in teaching innovation, participate in professional learning activities, and contribute to institutional development. However, recent research indicates that the effects of organizational support are not uniform and may vary depending on contextual factors such as leadership style and institutional culture (Chen & Tang, 2023). Scholars have increasingly conceptualized organizational support in higher education as a multidimensional construct. One important dimension is leadership support, which includes the guidance, encouragement, and strategic direction provided by institutional leaders. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been shown to positively influence teachers' professional motivation and engagement (Liu & Hallinger, 2023). Another key dimension is professional development support, which involves structured programs such as workshops, training sessions, and mentoring initiatives designed to enhance teachers' pedagogical and research capabilities. Resource support represents a further critical dimension. Access to research funding, teaching facilities, and technological infrastructure enables teachers to implement innovative teaching practices and participate in scholarly activities. In addition, organizational culture plays an important role in shaping the effectiveness of support mechanisms. A collaborative culture that encourages knowledge sharing and professional interaction has been found to strengthen teacher learning and instructional

improvement (Trust et al., 2022). These dimensions suggest that organizational support is not a single factor but a complex system of interrelated institutional elements. Recent empirical studies have further emphasized the importance of organizational support in higher education. For example, Li et al. (2024) found that institutional support significantly enhances teachers' work engagement and professional development outcomes. Similarly, Wang and Zhang (2024) reported that perceived organizational support positively influences job satisfaction and professional identity among university teachers. However, some studies also highlight that insufficient or unevenly distributed support may limit teachers' participation in development activities, particularly in resource-constrained institutions. The relevance of organizational support is especially pronounced in local application-oriented universities. These institutions often operate under conditions of limited resources and heavy teaching workloads, which may restrict opportunities for teacher development. In such contexts, effective organizational support becomes a key mechanism for addressing these constraints. Research suggests that targeted support strategies—such as industry collaboration programs, mentoring systems, and flexible professional development opportunities—can significantly enhance teachers' capacity to integrate theory and practice (Zhang & Li, 2022). Overall, the literature indicates that organizational support plays a critical role in shaping teacher development in higher education. While early studies focused primarily on general employee attitudes, recent research highlights the importance of context-specific support mechanisms in educational settings. This shift underscores the need to examine how different dimensions of organizational support interact to influence teacher outcomes. Building on this perspective, the next section explores the specific mechanisms through which organizational support contributes to teacher professional development.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between organizational support and teacher professional development has become an important focus in educational management research. While teacher professional development has traditionally been viewed as an individual learning process, recent studies increasingly emphasize its dependence on organizational contexts. Organizational support provides the structural conditions and institutional resources that enable teachers to engage in continuous learning and professional growth. As such, it functions as a key contextual driver shaping the effectiveness of teacher development in higher education. One important mechanism through which organizational support influences teacher professional development is teacher motivation. According to Organizational Support Theory, employees who perceive strong organizational support are more likely to develop a sense of obligation and commitment toward their work (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In higher education, this translates into increased professional motivation among teachers when they perceive supportive leadership and institutional policies. However, recent studies suggest that the impact of organizational support on motivation may vary across institutional contexts. For example, Liu and Hallinger (2023) emphasize the role of leadership support in enhancing motivation, whereas Li et al. (2024) highlight the importance of institutional policy frameworks, indicating that different forms of support may influence motivation through distinct pathways. Organizational support also contributes to teacher professional development by enhancing work engagement. Work engagement refers to a positive psychological state characterized by dedication, vigor, and active involvement in professional activities. Previous research has consistently shown that perceived organizational support is positively associated with employee engagement and job satisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In higher education contexts, supportive environments—such as mentoring systems, professional learning communities, and accessible training opportunities—encourage teachers to invest more effort in professional learning and

instructional improvement. Nevertheless, recent research suggests that engagement is not solely driven by organizational support but is also moderated by factors such as workload and institutional culture (Chen & Tang, 2023), highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of this relationship. Another key pathway linking organizational support and teacher professional development is the enhancement of professional competence. Organizational support provides teachers with access to professional development programs, research opportunities, and academic collaboration. These resources enable teachers to strengthen their pedagogical knowledge, research skills, and practical expertise. Empirical evidence indicates that institutions with well-structured professional development systems are more effective in promoting teaching innovation and improving instructional quality (OECD, 2021; Postareff et al., 2021). However, disparities in resource allocation across institutions may lead to uneven development outcomes, particularly in resource-constrained settings. In addition to these immediate effects, organizational support plays a critical role in sustaining long-term professional development. Sustainable teacher development requires continuous access to learning opportunities and supportive professional environments. Institutional mechanisms such as faculty development centers, mentoring programs, and collaborative learning networks create conditions that facilitate ongoing professional growth. Xu and Sun (2023) argue that sustained institutional support is essential for maintaining teachers' long-term engagement in professional learning. Similarly, Liu and Hallinger (2023) found that supportive policies not only increase participation in professional development activities but also strengthen teachers' professional identity. Taken together, the literature suggests that organizational support influences teacher professional development through multiple interconnected pathways, including motivation, work engagement, professional competence, and long-term sustainability. Rather than functioning as a single factor, organizational support operates as a multidimensional system that shapes both individual and institutional aspects of teacher development. This perspective highlights the importance of examining organizational support as a comprehensive framework within educational management. Understanding these mechanisms provides a foundation for developing effective strategies to promote teacher professional development in higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

Teacher professional development is a critical factor in improving teaching quality and institutional effectiveness in higher education. This study demonstrates that teacher development is not only an individual learning process but also a context-dependent phenomenon shaped by organizational environments. By synthesizing existing literature, this study highlights the important role of organizational support in facilitating teacher professional development. The findings indicate that organizational support influences teacher development through multiple interconnected mechanisms, including motivation, work engagement, professional competence, and long-term sustainability. Supportive leadership, institutional policies, professional development programs, and collaborative environments collectively contribute to creating conditions that enable teachers to engage in continuous learning and professional growth. These findings reinforce the view that teacher professional development should be understood within a broader organizational and managerial framework. This study makes a theoretical contribution by providing an integrated perspective on the relationship between organizational support and teacher professional development, particularly within the context of local application-oriented universities. It extends existing research by emphasizing the multidimensional nature of organizational support and its role as a key institutional driver of teacher development. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that educational administrators should prioritize the development of comprehensive organizational support systems. This includes strengthening leadership support, improving access to professional development resources, and fostering

collaborative professional cultures. Such strategies are especially important in application-oriented universities, where teachers often face heavy workloads and limited resources. Despite these contributions, this study is based on a literature review and does not include empirical validation. Future research could employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to examine the proposed relationships and further explore contextual variations across different institutional settings.

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