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Review Article

Teacher Motivation and Engagement in Continuous Professional Development

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Abstract
Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is widely recognized as a key mechanism for enhancing teachers' competencies and improving educational quality. Teacher motivation and engagement play a central role in determining the effectiveness of CPD, influencing both participation in professional learning activities and the transfer of acquired knowledge into classroom practice. This systematic literature review aims to identify and synthesize the factors that influence teacher engagement in CPD programs and to explore their implications for the Albanian educational context. The review also seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives on teacher professional development and their practical implementation in schools. A systematic literature review approach was employed to examine empirical and theoretical studies addressing teacher motivation, engagement, and professional learning. Relevant literature was identified and analyzed using predefined selection criteria, and recurring themes were synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting teacher engagement in CPD. The findings reveal that teacher engagement is enhanced when CPD programs are aligned with teachers' professional goals, incorporate collaborative learning opportunities, recognize professional achievements, and are supported by effective school leadership. Furthermore, reflective practices and continuous feedback mechanisms were identified as essential elements for sustaining long-term engagement and promoting meaningful professional growth. The review also highlights several context-specific challenges, including disparities between educational policies and implementation practices, as well as unequal access to high-quality professional development opportunities. These challenges are particularly evident in educational systems undergoing reform and transition. The study concludes that sustained teacher engagement in CPD is shaped by the interaction of individual motivation, collaborative learning structures, digital learning opportunities, and organizational support. The findings provide practical implications for educators, school leaders, professional development providers, researchers, and policymakers seeking to design more effective, inclusive, and context-responsive CPD initiatives that foster continuous professional learning and improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: Teacher Motivation, Teacher Engagement, Continuous Professional Development, Professional Learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' motivation and engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) have been recognized as pivotal factors influencing instructional quality and student achievement in contemporary educational research. Over the past decade, research has shifted from measuring mere participation in PD activities to understanding the quality, depth, and sustained engagement of teachers in professional learning (Akcaoglu et al., 2023). This shift reflects a broader understanding that engagement encompasses not only attendance but also behavioral, cognitive, and affective involvement in meaningful professional learning experiences that impact classroom practice.

Recent studies grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlight how autonomy, relatedness, and competence are central to teacher motivation for PD participation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). For example, PD programs that support teacher choice, relevance to classroom challenges, and collegial interaction are more likely to foster intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement (Fütterer et al., 2024). This alignment between teacher needs and PD design has been shown to contribute not only to immediate engagement but also to longer-term commitment to professional growth.

Empirical research also underscores the role of professional learning communities (PLCs) and collaborative networks as critical drivers of teacher engagement. PLCs facilitate shared reflection, collective inquiry, and collaborative problem solving, which enhance both individual and collective professional capacities (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Such collaborative structures help teachers integrate new strategies into daily practice and cultivate a culture of continuous learning.

Emerging evidence from digital and blended PD research illustrates that online professional learning environments, when designed with interactive elements and opportunities for dialogue, can significantly enhance teacher engagement compared to traditional one-way training formats (Trust et al., 2016). Additionally, micro-credentialing and digital badges have been introduced as potential motivators, providing teachers with recognition for specific competencies acquired through targeted PD experiences (Purmensky et al., 2020).

Despite substantial research in international contexts, there is a relative scarcity of studies focusing on teacher motivation and engagement in CPD within specific national education systems such as Albania. National and regional dynamics—including policy priorities, available PD infrastructure, and school leadership support—shape how teachers engage with professional learning (OECD, 2020). Understanding these contextual factors is essential for designing CPD strategies that not only attract participation but also foster meaningful, sustained engagement and support instructional improvement.

Taken together, this body of research highlights that teacher engagement in CPD is multifaceted and influenced by individual motivation, social and professional relationships, quality of learning design, and contextual supports. A targeted inquiry into these dynamics in the Albanian educational context can offer valuable insights for strengthening PD frameworks and enhancing educational outcomes. However, there is a lack of systematic evidence synthesizing these factors within the Albanian educational context, which this study aims to address.

To address this gap, the present systematic literature review aims to identify and synthesize the key factors that influence teacher engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs and to explore their implications for the Albanian educational context. The review focuses on understanding how individual, organizational, and contextual factors contribute to teachers' sustained participation in professional learning activities.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What individual, organizational, and contextual factors influence teacher engagement in CPD programs?

RQ2: How do CPD design features, including collaborative learning opportunities, reflective practices, feedback mechanisms, and professional recognition, contribute to teacher engagement?

RQ3: What challenges and barriers affect teachers' sustained participation in CPD activities?

RQ4: What implications do the identified factors have for the design and implementation of effective CPD programs in the Albanian educational context?

1.1. Literature Review

Building on these considerations, the present study adopts a systematic approach to reviewing the existing literature in order to synthesize key findings related to teacher motivation and engagement in CPD. The literature review focuses on identifying recurring themes, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence that explain how and why teachers engage in professional learning across different contexts. Particular attention is given to studies that explore the interplay between individual, collaborative, and

organizational factors, as well as those that provide insights relevant to the Albanian educational setting. Through this structured analysis, the review aims to establish a comprehensive foundation for understanding current knowledge gaps and to inform the methodological and analytical direction of the study.

1.1.1. Teacher Motivation in Professional Development

Teacher motivation is a critical predictor of engagement in professional development (PD) activities. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Research shows that teachers who perceive PD activities as meaningful and aligned with their professional goals are more likely to engage actively and sustain long-term participation (Akcaoglu et al., 2023). Moreover, the growth mindset framework demonstrates that teachers who view abilities as improvable are more resilient and persistent in PD participation (Dweck, 2016; Fütterer et al., 2024).

Individual factors, including personal interest, self-efficacy, and career aspirations, strongly influence motivation. For example, teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to apply new instructional strategies and integrate learning from PD into classroom practice (Ji, 2023). Motivation is also affected by perceived value and relevance of PD programs, as posited in Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020), indicating that teachers prioritize participation in activities that promise tangible instructional benefits.

1.1.2. Collaborative Professional Learning

Collaboration among teachers enhances engagement in PD by providing opportunities for shared reflection and collective problem-solving. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been widely recognized as effective mechanisms to foster sustained teacher development (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). PLCs encourage peer observation, co-planning, and collaborative inquiry, which strengthen instructional practices and professional growth.

Mentorship and coaching programs also play a crucial role. Teachers who receive individualized support through mentoring demonstrate higher engagement and better transfer of PD learning into classroom practice. These approaches create a supportive professional culture, where feedback and reflection enhance motivation and self-efficacy.

1.1.3. Digital and Blended Professional Development

Recent studies emphasize the role of digital and blended PD programs in increasing teacher engagement. Online and blended learning environments provide flexibility, interactive learning opportunities, and access to wider professional networks (Trust et al., 2016; Fütterer et al., 2024). In addition, technology-focused teacher education can support teachers' development of knowledge and skills for integrating technology with content and pedagogy. Mouza et al. (2017), for example, found that a computational thinking-oriented educational technology course supported pre-service teachers' development of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), although some participants experienced difficulties in achieving meaningful integration of computational thinking with disciplinary content and pedagogy.

Teachers participating in digital professional development that incorporates interactive features, such as discussion forums, webinars, peer collaboration, and collaborative assignments, may experience greater opportunities for active participation and engagement than in more passive forms of professional learning (Philipsen et al., 2019).

1.1.4. Organizational Context and School Leadership

School-level factors significantly influence teacher engagement in PD. Leadership styles, resource allocation, and organizational culture affect the extent to which teachers participate and remain engaged in learning activities (García & Weiss, 2019). Principals who provide autonomy-supportive environments, recognize teacher achievements, and allocate time for PD foster higher engagement levels (Fütterer et al., 2024; OECD, 2020).

Conversely, systemic barriers such as high workloads, limited time, and inadequate resources can reduce teachers' motivation and hinder active participation in professional development. Establishing a school culture that values continuous learning and encourages experimentation is critical for embedding professional development into routine practice.

1.1.5. Context-Specific Considerations: Albania

Despite the global research, few studies focus on teacher engagement in PD within Albania. Challenges include misalignment between national PD policies and school-level implementation, inconsistent access to high-quality resources, and regional disparities in professional development opportunities (OECD, 2020). Teachers' engagement is influenced by leadership support, collegial networks, and relevance of PD content to local classroom realities.

Understanding these local factors is essential for developing context-specific PD programs that not only attract participation but also promote sustained engagement and meaningful instructional change (Ji, 2023; Akcaoglu et al., 2023). Research suggests that integrating international best practices with local educational policies can enhance teacher motivation and improve overall teaching quality.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine factors influencing teacher motivation and engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), with a particular focus on the Albanian educational context. The SLR approach ensures a transparent, replicable, and comprehensive synthesis of recent empirical and theoretical studies over the last ten years.

2.1. Literature Search Strategy

Peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and reports were collected from major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, and SpringerLink. Relevant journals included Teaching and Teacher Education, International Journal of Inclusive Education, Educational Research Review, and European Journal of Teacher Education.

Search terms combined keywords related to teacher motivation, engagement, professional development, and Albania, for example:

- "Teacher motivation" AND "professional development"
- "Teacher engagement" AND "continuous professional learning"
- "Albania" OR "Eastern Europe"

The search was limited to publications in English or Albanian published between 2014 and 2024 to ensure inclusion of recent empirical evidence and contemporary developments in teacher professional development practices.

2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria

- Empirical studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses examining teacher motivation and engagement in CPD.

- Studies using teacher surveys, questionnaires, or structured assessments.
- Research conducted in general or inclusive education contexts relevant to Albania.

Exclusion criteria

- Publications before 2014 (unless seminal theoretical works).
- Non-peer-reviewed studies or studies lacking methodological transparency.
- Research focusing solely on student outcomes without reporting teacher engagement.

Studies published prior to 2014 were excluded to ensure that the review reflects contemporary developments in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), including the increasing use of digital learning environments, collaborative professional learning models, and updated educational policy frameworks. This timeframe was selected to maintain relevance to current educational reforms and to ensure methodological and contextual consistency across included studies.

Following the systematic search across multiple databases, a total of 652 records were identified. After removing duplicate records (n = 112), 540 records remained for title and abstract screening. At this stage, 460 records were excluded due to irrelevance to the research topic. The remaining 80 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Following full-text review, 40 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. A PRISMA flow diagram was used to illustrate the study selection process. (Figure 1).

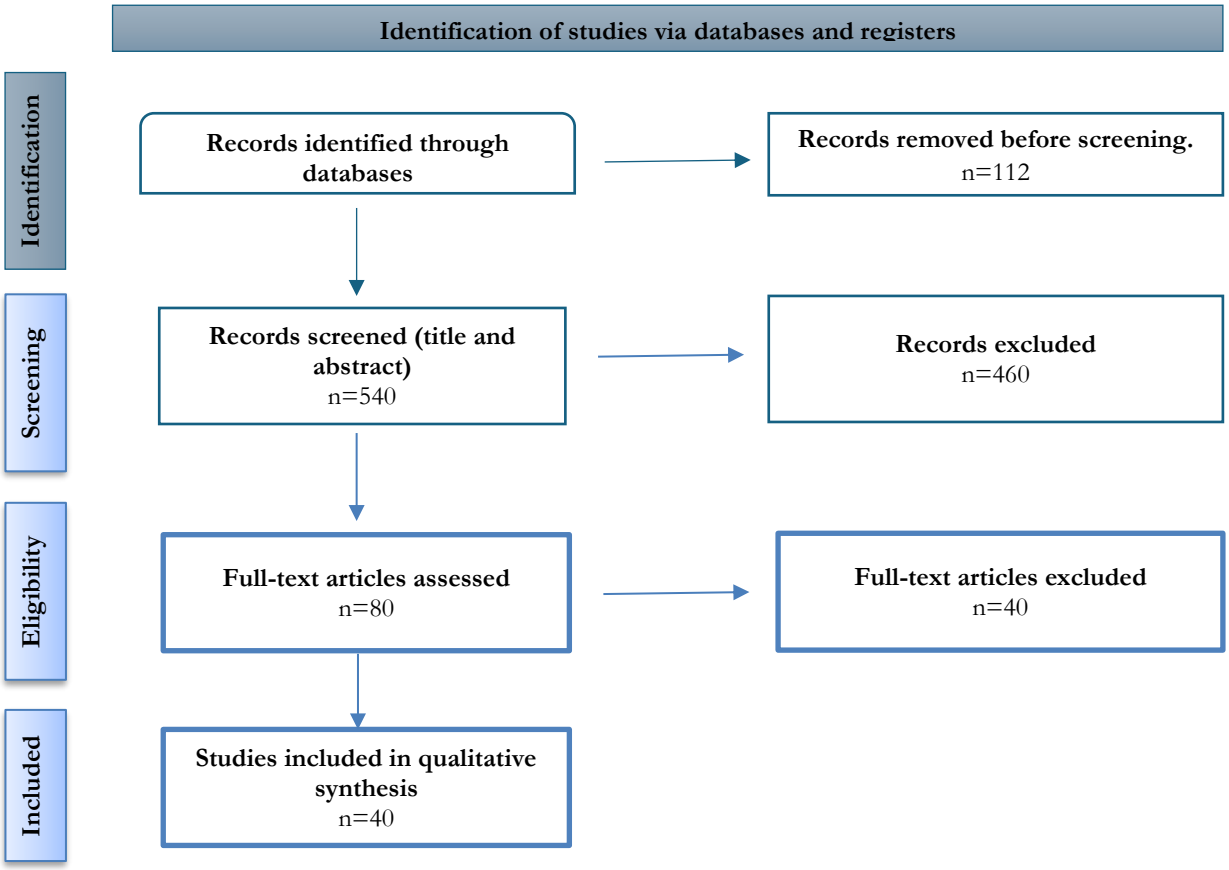


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The final inclusion of 40 studies ensured methodological consistency and relevance to the research objectives focusing on teacher motivation and engagement in Continuous Professional Development.

2.3. Time Frame and Rationale for Study Selection

The dataset for this systematic literature review was collected between March 2024 and April 2024 through a structured search of relevant academic databases. The review includes studies published from March 2014 to March 2024, ensuring a ten-year time frame that captures recent developments in teacher professional development and engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

The selection of this period was guided by the need to include contemporary empirical and theoretical research reflecting current educational reforms, policy developments, and evolving approaches to teacher professional learning. The period from 2014 onwards marks a significant shift in CPD practices, with increased emphasis on collaborative learning, digital and blended professional development, reflective practice, and evidence-based approaches to teacher engagement.

Studies published prior to March 2014 were excluded because they do not adequately reflect these recent transformations in educational policy and practice. Therefore, limiting the review to this timeframe ensures methodological consistency, relevance, and alignment with current international research trends in teacher professional development.

2.4. Data Extraction and Synthesis

A structured protocol was used to extract data on:

- Bibliographic details (authors, year, journal, DOI)
- Study design, sample size, and context
- Instruments measuring motivation, engagement, leadership support, or collaboration
- Key findings, barriers, enablers, and practical recommendations

Data were synthesized using thematic analysis, identifying major themes such as Teacher Motivation, Collaborative Learning, Digital and Blended CPD, Leadership Influence, and Context-Specific Factors in Albania. Themes were interpreted using Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, while contextualizing findings for Albanian schools.

The data extraction and thematic coding processes were conducted by the author. A structured coding framework was applied consistently across all included studies. To enhance the reliability of the analysis, the extracted data and identified themes were reviewed multiple times throughout the coding process, and coding decisions were systematically documented to ensure transparency and consistency.

The coding process was conducted by the author of this study. All included studies were independently reviewed and coded based on predefined themes derived from the research questions, as well as emerging patterns identified during the analysis process. To ensure accuracy and consistency, the coding was carried out in multiple iterative rounds, with continuous comparison and refinement of categories.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, a systematic and transparent coding procedure was followed, including repeated checks of the assigned codes and careful cross-referencing of themes across studies. In cases of uncertainty in interpretation, the data were re-examined and discussed critically in relation to the study objectives until a consistent interpretation was achieved. Although inter-rater reliability was not applicable due to the single-researcher design, methodological rigor was ensured through a structured and transparent analytical process.

2.5. Quality Assessment

To ensure rigor, studies were appraised using the CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) checklist for quantitative studies, evaluating: clarity of aims, appropriateness of design, validity and reliability of instruments, and relevance to teacher engagement and motivation. High-quality studies were prioritized for synthesis.

3. RESULTS

RQ1: Individual, Organizational, and Contextual Factors Influencing Teacher Engagement in CPD

Findings indicate that teacher engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is primarily influenced by intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and professional confidence. Teachers are more likely to engage when CPD aligns with classroom needs, supports autonomy, and enhances competence (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Fütterer et al., 2024). Organizational factors such as leadership support, school culture, and access to resources further shape engagement levels (García & Weiss, 2019). Contextual conditions, including national policy frameworks and systemic constraints, also play a significant role in determining access and participation in CPD activities.

RQ2: Contribution of CPD Design Features to Teacher Engagement

The analysis shows that CPD programs incorporating collaborative learning, reflective practice, feedback mechanisms, and recognition systems significantly enhance teacher engagement. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), mentoring, and coaching foster shared reflection and collective problem-solving, strengthening both motivation and professional identity (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Digital and blended learning environments further improve engagement through flexibility and interaction, while micro-credentials and digital badges provide motivational recognition of professional learning achievements (Philipsen et al., 2019; Trust et al., 2016).

RQ3: Barriers and Challenges to Sustained Participation in CPD

The findings highlight several barriers to sustained engagement, including workload pressures, limited time, insufficient institutional support, and unequal access to quality professional development opportunities. Teacher burnout and stress also negatively affect participation and implementation of new practices (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). In many contexts, a gap between policy design and school-level implementation further limits the effectiveness of CPD initiatives.

RQ4: Implications for CPD in the Albanian Educational Context

In Albania, evidence suggests that teacher engagement increases when CPD is contextually relevant, practice-oriented, and supported by school leadership. However, disparities between national CPD policies and their implementation at the school level remain a challenge. Limited resources and uneven access to professional development opportunities further constrain engagement (OECD, 2020; Maghnouj et al., 2020). These findings highlight the need to align CPD programs with local educational needs while integrating international best practices.

Overall, the results demonstrate that teacher engagement in CPD is multidimensional and shaped by the interaction of individual motivation, self-efficacy, collaborative structures, digital learning opportunities, organizational support, and emotional well-being. Sustained engagement occurs when these factors are aligned in a coherent and supportive professional learning ecosystem.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that teacher motivation and engagement in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) are shaped by the interaction of individual, organizational, and contextual factors. Across the reviewed studies, teachers demonstrated higher levels of participation and commitment when professional development activities were closely aligned with their professional goals, instructional needs, and career aspirations. This finding supports the principles of Self-Determination Theory, which emphasize autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential drivers of sustained motivation. When teachers perceive CPD as relevant to their daily practice and professional growth, they are more likely to engage actively in learning activities and implement newly acquired knowledge in classroom settings. Similar conclusions have been reported in recent studies, which highlight relevance and contextual responsiveness

as critical characteristics of effective professional development programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Smith & Wyness, 2024).

Teacher self-efficacy emerged as both an outcome and a catalyst of engagement in CPD. The reviewed literature suggests that teachers with stronger beliefs in their professional capabilities are more willing to experiment with innovative teaching strategies, address instructional challenges, and persist in professional learning activities. At the same time, participation in high-quality CPD can strengthen teachers' confidence by expanding their pedagogical knowledge and instructional skills. This reciprocal relationship between self-efficacy and professional learning contributes to long-term engagement and continuous improvement in teaching practice (Ambon et al., 2024).

The findings further indicate that recognition of professional achievements plays a significant role in sustaining engagement in CPD. Recognition may take different forms, including certification, career advancement opportunities, performance acknowledgment, and institutional appreciation of professional accomplishments. Such recognition reinforces teachers' perceptions that their efforts are valued and contributes to higher levels of professional commitment. In addition, motivation is strengthened when teachers can clearly identify the benefits of professional learning for their career progression and professional identity. These findings suggest that CPD initiatives should not only focus on knowledge acquisition but also include mechanisms that acknowledge and celebrate teachers' professional growth.

School leadership also emerged as a critical factor influencing teacher engagement. Effective school leaders create organizational conditions that facilitate professional learning by allocating adequate time, providing access to resources, encouraging collaboration, and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. Leadership support is particularly important because even highly motivated teachers may face barriers to participation when schools lack sufficient organizational structures or resources. Studies have shown that supportive leadership contributes to stronger professional learning cultures and increases teachers' willingness to engage in both formal and informal learning opportunities (Ambon et al., 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Another significant finding relates to the integration of reflective practice and continuous feedback mechanisms. Reflection enables teachers to critically evaluate their instructional practices, assess the effectiveness of teaching strategies, and identify areas requiring further development. Continuous feedback from peers, mentors, school leaders, and professional learning communities complements reflection by providing constructive guidance and opportunities for improvement. Recent research suggests that the combination of reflection and feedback promotes deeper professional learning because it encourages teachers to connect theoretical knowledge with practical experience and continuously adapt their instructional approaches (Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024; Li et al., 2024). Moreover, reflective and feedback-oriented practices contribute to sustaining engagement beyond isolated training events by embedding learning within everyday professional activities.

Another important factor identified in the reviewed literature is the integration of reflective practices and continuous feedback mechanisms. These elements contribute to sustaining long-term engagement because they transform professional development from a one-time activity into an ongoing learning process. Reflective practices encourage teachers to critically evaluate their instructional approaches, connect new knowledge with classroom experiences, and identify areas for improvement. At the same time, continuous feedback from peers, mentors, and school leaders provides guidance, reinforces progress, and supports professional growth. Research suggests that teachers who regularly engage in reflection and receive constructive feedback are more likely to maintain motivation, adapt their teaching practices, and remain committed to continuous professional learning over time (Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024; Li et al., 2024). Therefore, reflective and feedback-oriented approaches can be considered essential components of effective CPD programs that aim to foster sustainable teacher engagement.

The study also highlights the increasing importance of digital and blended learning environments in contemporary CPD. While technology-enhanced professional development offers flexibility, accessibility, and opportunities for personalized learning, the reviewed studies suggest that its effectiveness depends largely on instructional design. Interactive, collaborative, and practice-oriented digital learning experiences are more likely to support meaningful engagement than passive forms of content delivery. Therefore, digital CPD initiatives should incorporate opportunities for interaction, reflection, collaboration, and feedback to maximize their impact on teacher learning and engagement.

In the Albanian context, several challenges continue to influence teacher engagement in CPD. The reviewed evidence points to persistent gaps between policy intentions and implementation practices, as well as unequal access to high-quality professional development opportunities across schools and regions. These challenges suggest the need for context-sensitive approaches that balance international best practices with local educational realities. Policymakers and educational stakeholders should therefore focus on strengthening institutional support systems, ensuring equitable access to professional learning opportunities, and promoting school cultures that value continuous improvement.

Finally, the findings emphasize the importance of teacher well-being as an underlying condition for sustained engagement in professional learning. Positive working conditions, manageable workloads, supportive professional relationships, and opportunities for professional recognition contribute not only to teacher satisfaction but also to their willingness to participate in CPD over time. Consequently, effective professional development should be viewed as part of a broader strategy aimed at supporting teacher growth, well-being, and long-term professional commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

In the Albanian education system, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is formally positioned as a key reform instrument for improving teacher quality; however, its practical implementation reveals persistent structural and governance weaknesses that significantly limit its effectiveness. Despite policy efforts to establish mandatory and standardized training frameworks, CPD often operates in a fragmented and administratively driven manner, reflecting a persistent disconnect between policy design and classroom-level realities (OECD, 2020). This gap suggests that CPD in Albania remains largely compliance-oriented rather than genuinely learning-oriented, thereby constraining its transformative potential for teacher learning and instructional improvement (OECD, 2020; Kirsten, 2020).

A critical issue concerns systemic inequities in access to high-quality professional learning opportunities. Evidence indicates that teachers in rural and economically disadvantaged areas face significantly reduced access to sustained, relevant, and high-quality CPD compared to their urban counterparts (OECD, 2020; García & Weiss, 2019). From a critical policy perspective, this reflects not only uneven resource distribution but also a lack of equity-oriented planning in CPD governance. Such disparities risk reinforcing structural inequalities within education systems, whereby access to professional development may become an additional advantage for already well-resourced schools rather than serving as a compensatory mechanism for disadvantaged contexts.

Furthermore, the role of school leadership and institutional culture remains insufficiently developed to support meaningful teacher engagement in CPD. In many cases, weak instructional leadership, limited professional autonomy, and high workload demands create an environment in which CPD is experienced as an external obligation rather than a professional learning opportunity (García & Weiss, 2019). This instrumental perception significantly undermines intrinsic motivation and weakens the potential of CPD to function as a sustained driver of professional growth (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The persistence of top-down implementation models further reinforces passive participation rather than reflective and inquiry-based engagement (Kennedy, 2016).

Another major limitation relates to the limited contextualization of CPD content. Training programs are often standardized, centrally designed, and insufficiently responsive to teachers' disciplinary needs and classroom realities. This lack of contextual fit reflects a broader policy assumption that uniform training can produce uniform improvement, an assumption that is increasingly questioned in international literature (Philipsen et al., 2019). When CPD lacks practical relevance and adaptability, teachers are less likely to internalize or transfer new knowledge into instructional practice, leading to low impact and superficial compliance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Despite these structural challenges, international and contextual evidence consistently shows that teacher engagement improves when CPD is embedded in collaborative professional cultures, supported by effective leadership, and directly linked to teachers' instructional needs (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, in the Albanian context, such approaches remain underdeveloped and often dependent on isolated school initiatives rather than systemic implementation (OECD, 2020). This

indicates a gap between evidence-based CPD models and their institutionalization within national policy frameworks (Kennedy, 2016).

A further critical dimension is teacher well-being, which is often underrepresented in CPD policy design. Teachers experiencing high levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, or burnout are less likely to engage meaningfully in professional learning processes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). In contexts where workload intensity is high and institutional support is limited, CPD risks becoming an additional pressure rather than a developmental opportunity. The absence of integrated well-being strategies within CPD systems therefore represents a significant policy blind spot with direct implications for engagement and sustainability (OECD, 2020).

Overall, the Albanian case illustrates that the effectiveness of CPD cannot be understood through policy presence or participation rates alone, but must be critically examined through implementation quality, institutional capacity, and systemic coherence. The current model reflects a tension between formal policy ambition and practical underdevelopment of school-level capacities. Without addressing structural inequities, strengthening instructional leadership, and ensuring genuine alignment between CPD content and classroom practice, existing reforms risk remaining symbolic rather than transformative (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). A shift toward a more coherent, evidence-based, equity-oriented, and context-sensitive CPD system is therefore essential to reposition professional development as a meaningful driver of teacher motivation, engagement, and educational quality rather than an administrative requirement.

This review confirms that teacher motivation and engagement constitute essential foundations for effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Motivation is particularly influential when professional learning is perceived as relevant, meaningful, and aligned with teachers' instructional goals, as well as when opportunities for autonomy are present (Kennedy, 2016; Akcaoglu, Özcan, & Dogan, 2023). In this context, teacher self-efficacy—especially confidence in applying new strategies—emerges as a key predictor of sustained engagement and instructional improvement (Ji, 2023).

The findings further highlight the importance of collaborative professional learning structures, including Professional Learning Communities, coaching, and peer mentoring, which promote shared inquiry, reflective practice, and mutual support (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sims & Fletcher, 2021). At the same time, digital and blended CPD formats expand opportunities for engagement by enabling flexible, interactive, and networked learning environments. Tools such as webinars, discussion forums, and micro-credentials facilitate continuous participation and professional dialogue (Trust et al., 2016; Fütterer et al., 2024).

Organizational and leadership factors remain decisive in shaping engagement. Autonomy-supportive leadership, adequate resource allocation, and recognition of professional growth contribute to the development of a supportive learning culture (Liu dhe Liao, 2019; García & Weiss, 2019). Conversely, structural constraints—such as workload pressures and limited institutional support—continue to hinder meaningful participation.

In addition, emotional and psychological dimensions, including professional satisfaction and well-being, play a significant role in sustaining engagement. Teachers who experience supportive environments and positive professional identities are more likely to remain actively involved in CPD (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Within the Albanian context, these findings underscore the need to align CPD policies with school-level practices, ensure equitable access to high-quality professional development, and strengthen leadership support. Adopting context-sensitive and evidence-based approaches to professional development can help improve instructional quality and student achievement, although additional targeting may be required to ensure that these benefits contribute to reducing educational disparities (Meissel et al., 2016).

Overall, effective CPD should be understood as a continuous, collaborative, and context-responsive process. Strengthening teacher motivation, fostering professional collaboration, leveraging digital innovation, and ensuring systemic support are critical for sustaining engagement. These priorities provide important directions for future policy and practice in Albania and beyond.

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Research Ethics. This study was conducted in accordance with applicable academic and ethical standards. As the research is based on a systematic review of existing literature and does not involve human participants, formal ethical approval was not required. All sources have been properly cited to ensure academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

Data Availability Statement. All data used in this study are derived from publicly available sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles and academic databases. The relevant sources are cited within the manuscript. No new data were generated or collected for this study.

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Author Contributions. Iris Mançi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, and Project administration. The author is solely responsible for the conception, conduct, analysis, and preparation of the manuscript and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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