

Teachers' perceptions on continuous professional development programs in international schools in Klang Valley

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Jun 24, 2024

Revised Mar 4, 2026

Accepted Mar 28, 2026

Keywords:

Continuous professional development

Educational leadership

International schools

Teacher perceptions

Teaching quality

ABSTRACT

This study explores teachers' perceptions of continuous professional development (CPD) initiatives in international schools within the vibrant educational landscape of Klang Valley. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews and observations, this paper investigates the factors influencing teachers' engagement and the impact of CPD on teaching quality. The study involves nine teachers and two principals, offering diverse perspectives on their CPD experiences. Findings reveal that CPD programs are generally well-received, contributing to teachers' ongoing growth, enhanced teaching skills, and improved classroom management in diverse settings. Key factors affecting CPD participation include time constraints and workload, program relevance, leadership support, financial limitations, and mismatched group dynamics, with time constraints and workload being particularly significant. Observations during CPD sessions demonstrate active teacher involvement. This research enriches existing knowledge by providing a comprehensive understanding of teacher perceptions of CPD in Klang Valley's international schools. This study highlighted that the provision of CPD opportunities should be proposed and provided with teachers' professional needs taken into consideration, and leadership should ensure these needs are met for maximum effectiveness. These findings have great implications for policymakers, school administrators, and educators with an interest in developing better CPD practices in international settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of the 21st century brought about a highly competitive global economy characterized by advanced technology, necessitating the acquisition of new skills for students' educational pursuits. Therefore, educational systems need to develop strategies to address the demands of the current era. This includes equipping both students and teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to act as catalysts for change and contribute to the transformation and improvement of educational systems [1]. It is imperative to recognize the need to educate teachers in a new educational environment that significantly diverges from the traditional classroom setting in which they were taught. Well-prepared teachers have a crucial role in promoting students' academic performance and accomplishment.

The expertise, abilities, and instructional efficacy of teachers have a crucial role in moulding both the prospects of each student and the broader educational environment. In light of the ever-changing

landscape of education and the evolving requirements of learners, it is crucial for educators to actively participate in continuous professional development (CPD) initiatives in order to enhance their skills, accommodate shifting educational frameworks, and sustain their position as purveyors of effective pedagogical approaches [2]. CPD is an ongoing educational process designed for teachers who are crucial in facilitating the desired improvements in student achievement [3]. It comprises a wide variety of efforts, including collaborative networking, workshops, seminars, in-service training, and self-directed learning. CPD fosters a lifelong learning mindset among teachers.

Furthermore, teachers have a critical role to play in high-quality education. They must be well-equipped to do so by regularly updating their knowledge, improving their practice, and sharpening their skills. CPD programs are at the heart of this effort, which provides teachers with the tools they need to improve their skills. According to Egert *et al.* [4], CPD comprises various facilitated learning opportunities to support acquiring professional knowledge, skills, and disposition to improve teaching and student outcomes. It is also considered a process of lifelong learning that entails regular opportunities and experiences that are systematically planned to promote the growth and development of teachers to support student learning [5]. CPD programs aim to further teachers' education and expertise beyond what they get in their original education [6]. Governments throughout the globe use teacher CPD to promote higher-quality instruction, better student learning, and better educational results [7]. This is supported by data showing a substantial correlation between student learning and accomplishment, school quality, and enhancing teacher quality via professional development (PD) [8]. Therefore, one of the most important strategies for enhancing the standard of education in schools today is investing in teachers' professional growth.

As the primary information carriers, teachers play a crucial role in this ever-changing setting. According to Professor Datuk Dr. Norazah Nordin, Vice President for Industry, Alumni, and Community Partnership at Malaysia's prestigious Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), teachers are now required to be technology-oriented, meaning that they must reevaluate the most effective methods of teaching and must participate in ongoing PD programs [9]. Besides, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported in 2020 that 56% of teachers have received training to teach online but do not have the proper training to implement technology in the classroom, which is one of the most significant challenges teachers face when transitioning from a physical to a virtual classroom. Therefore, PD is crucial to teachers' ability to adapt to students' changing needs and provide them with appropriate guidance. Teachers who actively participated in PD had a favorable influence on their professional growth, opportunities for advancement, job retention, and dedication [10]. Teachers see school-based CPD initiatives that empower and increase the quality of teaching as efficacious [11].

Despite the well-established benefits of CPD, its actual implementation and effectiveness often depend on the perspectives and experiences of the teachers who take part in it. Teachers' perspectives are crucial when it comes to CPD efforts and the quality of education as a whole. Bettering the design, execution, and effectiveness of PD initiatives relies on a better understanding of opinions of CPD programs. Thus, this study analyses teachers' perceptions on CPD programs in international schools in Klang Valley. In order to effectively meet the objectives, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i) What are the teachers' perceptions in CPD programs in international schools?
 - ii) What factors affect teachers' participation in CPD programs in international schools?
 - iii) How does CPD improve teaching quality from teachers' perspective in international schools?
- Continuous professional development concept

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [12], CPD refers to a range of activities aimed at enhancing an individual's teaching skills, knowledge, expertise, and other relevant attributes. Besides, Egert *et al.* [4] define CPD as a range of supported learning opportunities to enhance teachers' professional knowledge, abilities, and disposition. The ultimate goal of CPD is to improve teaching practices and provide positive student results.

Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that the PD process for teachers is an ongoing endeavor, including deliberate and structured opportunities and experiences designed to enhance their knowledge and skills to facilitate student learning effectively [7]. Furthermore, the notion of CPD involves teachers actively seeking to improve their professional competence and knowledge beyond the initial training required for their employment [13]. CPD is often regarded as the systematic procedure of documenting and seeking substantiation about the competencies, understanding, and practical know-how obtained via formal and informal means subsequent to the first work training [14]. Besides, Gyamfi *et al.* [14] posits that in the context of CPD learning, professionals are actively involved in the process of enhancing and strengthening their skills and competencies. The process employs a range of methodologies, including seminars, conferences, workshops, and training courses. A CPD session's primary objective is to increase and update individual participants' knowledge, skills, and competencies. This is done to establish a reservoir of information and expertise that can be used to improve work [14].

CPD encompasses many activities to enhance the knowledge and skills of teachers who have successfully completed their initial training [15]. Its activities include various ranges, from engagement in structured educational programs to informal learning experiences inside and outside traditional academic settings. Historically, the CPD field has mostly relied on singular training methods, such as in-service training, workshops, and formal continuing education practices [7]. In order to meet the demands for enhanced quality and adhere to high standards, teachers need to engage in ongoing PD activities aimed at updating and improving their abilities [16]. CPD must establish connections between the professional and personal needs of individual teachers and between the needs of the school and the teacher [15]. Educators need to demonstrate a willingness to cultivate their own interests as part of their professional growth. By strategically planning and prioritizing their professional interests, teachers can improve the overall quality of teaching and learning within their classrooms, positively impacting the schools in which they are employed.

– Teacher's perception of continuous professional development

A significant amount of scholarly attention has recently been devoted to investigating teachers' perceptions of CPD on teaching quality. For example, Sey [17] researched teachers' perspectives about CPD. The study used a qualitative approach to collect data and elicit participant insights. The results indicated that ongoing CPD is necessary for teachers and school leaders to cultivate their attitudes and foster progress. Most teachers agreed on the significance of CPD in facilitating personal development. It is recommended that educational administrators develop additional CPD initiatives to enhance their fellow educators' skills and knowledge [17].

Based on the study, they researched how Indonesian vocational high school teachers perceive CPD [16]. The six accounting teachers surveyed had varying conceptions of what CPD included. CPD was defined as teacher evaluation, government regulations, self-improvement, and incorporating moral or spiritual principles. Teachers saw CPD as an important aspect of their careers. Since CPD activities are more directly tied to advancement, civil servant teachers are engaged in more organized CPD than their non-civilian counterparts. Teachers have shown a desire and aptitude for CPD and will benefit from assistance from internal and external sources [16]. Research by Alshumaimeri and Almohaisen [18] investigated the regularity and usefulness of PD activities among Saudi EFL educators. The findings revealed that these teachers' most common PD activities were discussing lessons with supervisors and informally exchanging ideas about teaching with colleagues. Teachers found that discussing lessons with their supervisors and viewing other teachers' lessons (peer observation) were the most beneficial forms of PD. Furthermore, the research found that almost two-thirds of educators are dissatisfied with their schools' PD offerings.

Besides, based on Al Asmari research [19], it revealed that the participants exhibited a preference for lifelong learning and experiential methodologies that placed a strong emphasis on the learner. The participants saw the CPD as assessing their pre-existing knowledge and teaching methods. Nevertheless, the individuals expressed concerns over the localization of CPD programmers, the level of institutional support for conducting classroom activities, and the implementation of follow-up initiatives. In their research, Saleem *et al.* [20] sought to investigate the perceived efficiency of CPD programmers among primary-level teachers. The research used a descriptive methodology and utilized a questionnaire form for data collection. The study results indicated that many primary school educators had a favorable disposition towards engaging in ongoing PD initiatives. In conclusion, the knowledge of the success and impact of CPD programs in the area of education relies significantly on teachers' perspectives. Teachers' perspectives, attitudes, and encounters about CPD may exhibit considerable diversity, and their interpretations substantially influence the effectiveness and adoption of such endeavors.

– Factors affect teachers' participation in continuous professional development

The participation of teachers in CPD is subject to a multitude of circumstances. These elements have the potential to either support or impede individuals' participation in PD endeavors. The content of PD, the presence of a learning community, effective management and leadership, the perceived benefits of PD, teachers' individual perceptions, the availability of time, and financial considerations are the elements that affect the engagement of high school teachers in professional learning activities [21]. Besides, several factors which significantly influence teacher engagement in CPD are the development of teaching skills, the attainment of success as a teacher, the establishment of a learning community, the enhancement of self-confidence, the improvement of student's academic performance, the maintenance of up-to-date knowledge, the revitalization of teaching enthusiasm, and the promotion of students' motivation [22]. These factors were ranked in descending order of agreement, with percentages ranging from 97% to 85%.

Research by Zhang *et al.* [23] examined the relationship between elements at the personal and school levels of teachers and their desire to engage in professional learning activities. The findings indicated that there were various factors at both the personal level (such as teachers' prior experience with learning activities, teaching experience, self-efficacy, and conceptions of learning), and the school level (including work and emotional pressure, colleague support, and principal leadership) that were associated with teachers' motivation to engage in professional learning. Another study by Abdulai and Osman [24] aimed at analyzing

the variables that influence the participation of teachers in CPD programmers in Ghana. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that a linear association was seen between the teacher qualification, teacher experience, and their involvement in CPD activities. Another study by Calleja [25] focused on investigating the motivational variables that have an impact on teachers' engagement in CPD. The research findings indicate that there are intrinsic elements that drive teacher participation. These variables include the teachers' desire to enhance their understanding of teaching, their attitudes about the advantages of inquiry, and their need to modify their classroom practices. Additionally, the study by Kashoti *et al.* [26] revealed that factors including excessive workload, time constraints, unfavorable attitudes towards the course, and inadequate availability of reference resources hindered the successful implementation of school-based CPD. In conclusion, multiple factors have been identified as influencing teachers' participation in CPD initiatives based on findings from previous studies. These factors encompass limited time availability, the impact on teachers' career advancement, teachers' attitudes and perceptions, workload considerations, support from school principals and management, as well as the content of the CPD programmers, among others.

– Effectiveness of continuous professional development in teaching quality

Cultivating teacher quality is crucial for establishing a solid foundation in the educational system and society as a whole [27]. PD is a crucial component in almost all contemporary initiatives aimed at improving education and teachers' quality. In order to enhance the competence of teachers, nations worldwide are implementing several educational reforms aimed at fostering the PD of teachers. Teacher education and in-service training are two methods of PD aimed at enhancing teachers' learning and promoting the adoption of teaching and learning practices that align with the specific needs of students [28]. Mukan *et al.* [29] researched the specificities of implementing teacher PD in Australia. The findings indicate that teacher PD is an ongoing endeavor characterized by enhancing knowledge, refining skills and competencies, and cultivating values and attitudes.

Furthermore, Borg [27] asserted that implementing good CPD initiatives may significantly influence several aspects of a teacher's PD. These include their degree of job satisfaction, fluency in language, understanding of the topic or subject matter, instructional abilities, attitudes and beliefs, and reflective competence. Consequently, these factors can shape the future success of teachers. One additional consequence of teacher CPD is its ability to assist educators in sustaining their passion and energy levels throughout the course of their professional trajectory [30]. In addition, Hinojosa [31] indicated that teachers used additional measures, such as engaging in debriefing and feedback sessions, engaging in reflection and reflective dialogue, and providing scaffolding to implement new teaching techniques after participating in CPD programs. Additionally, Cleary *et al.* [32] conducted a study examining the PD of teachers in the domain of self-regulated learning (SRL) and their strategies for implementing SRL in the classroom. The results of their study indicate that PD influenced teacher outcomes, specifically in terms of SRL knowledge and abilities.

Moreover, Rajendran *et al.* [33] did research aimed at analyzing the effects of continual PD on the retention and performance of teachers. This research demonstrates a strong correlation between involvement in CPD, rates of teacher retention, and instructional effectiveness. Active involvement in well-planned CPD programs is associated with many favorable outcomes for teachers. These include enhanced work satisfaction, better effectiveness in instruction, and a higher probability of staying in the teaching profession. CPD programs allow teachers to enhance their knowledge and abilities. In dynamic educational contexts, educators need to be up-to-date in order to successfully provide new subject matter and use developing pedagogical approaches and technological tools. Therefore, CPD is an essential element in the development of teacher proficiency.

While various benefits of CPP programs are identified and documented, not much is known about how such programs work in international school settings that are made up of diverse cultural dynamics. According to Sey [17], any CPD initiative must be contextualized to specific teaching contexts. Therefore, this study bridges the gap by examining the perceptions held by teachers in the international schools around the Klang Valley in Malaysia—a highly reputed multi-cultural setting. Widayati *et al.* [16] have suggested that teacher perceptions about CPD are shaped at the level of national policies, school culture, and individual motivations. This study extends these findings to offer a more detailed exploration of how CPD provision can be tailored to meet the needs of a specific international school staff.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is a method for uncovering the breadth of a participant's conduct and the views that drive particular concerns [34]. Qualitative researchers use various methods to learn how people see the same study topic. The use of interviews, documents, and participant observation data are all examples of the types of qualitative data used in qualitative research.

In this study, the primary method of gathering data is a face-to-face interview with open-ended questions and observations recorded using a checklist. The researcher aims to analyze the perception of principals and teachers on CPD in international schools in Klang Valley.

A population is defined by Sekaran and Bougie [35] as the complete list of individuals that the researcher is required to include as the primary subject of the study. The focus of this study pertains to the teachers employed at international institutions located in the Klang Valley. Educators and teachers working for these international schools in the Klang Valley are the targeted population of this study. From the population, the researcher selected 9 teachers and 2 principals from 3 international schools to participate in this study using the convenience sampling method. The researcher selected three international schools, namely A, B, and C, as samples for this study, with 3 teachers from each school. Only 2 principals were able to participate, one from each school except for school A. The background of the respondents is shown in Table 1. In addition, only two male respondents participated in the study.

Table 1. Background of the participating respondents

Participants	School name	Age	Gender	Years of teaching
Teacher 1 (P1)	A	36	Female	6-10 years
Teacher 2 (P2)	A	35	Female	11-15 years
Teacher 3 (P3)	A	45	Male	16-20 years
Teacher 4 (P4)	B	30	Male	6-10 years
Teacher 5 (P5)	B	50	Female	16-20 years
Teacher 6 (P6)	B	37	Female	6-10 years
Teacher 7 (P7)	C	29	Female	0-5 years
Teacher 8 (P8)	C	37	Female	11-15 years
Teacher 9 (P9)	C	43	Female	16-20 years
Principal 1 (P10)	B	45	Female	21 years
Principal 2 (P11)	C	58	Female	30 years

The present study employs a qualitative research methodology, explicitly using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. The researcher followed an established set of questions throughout the interviews, ensuring consistency across all participants. The researcher formulated a set of fundamental questions before engaging with the participants. There were two separate sets of questions, one designed for principals and another for teachers. Each interview question set contains a total of 16 questions. The document comprised four primary sections: section A had four fundamental demographic inquiries, specifically pertaining to gender, age, years of teaching experience, and school affiliation. Section B focused on the teachers' perception, section C explored teacher participation, and section D encompassed questions concerning the efficacy of CPD.

There were two data collection methods utilized in this study, which are interview and observation. First, the interviews were conducted through Google Meet and Google Forms. The planned question form determined the order of questions. In order to ensure the availability of participants during interviews and to get diverse perspectives and information on CPD programs, each interview has been prearranged with participants, and a consistent set of questions has been provided to all individuals. The Google Form interview questionnaire was sent to participants 2 days earlier for them to prepare the responses. Second, the researcher observed teachers' engagement in CPD programs in three selected schools. The researcher employed an observation checklist to assess the level of teacher engagement, enthusiasm, classroom environment, program efficacy, and trainer proficiency.

After the collection of relevant information, the subsequent step involves the analysis of the data. Data analysis involves systematically organizing, arranging, and interpreting a large volume of gathered data to establish coherence, organization, and significance [36]. Firstly, the researcher transcribed the interview audio into written form. Through transcription, the researcher achieved a heightened comprehension of the study by actively listening to the recorded conversations and carefully examining the transcribed interviews. Secondly, the data obtained from various sources, such as observation sheets, interview transcripts, recordings, and questionnaires, were organized and classified according to specific themes or topics. This classification facilitated the arrangement of the data into easily controllable divisions.

Third, the gathered data were then subjected to examination using content analysis. Following the categorization of the data, the researcher proceeded to examine all entries that shared the same theme. This analysis presumably entailed examining patterns, correlations, or associations among the various categories. The goal was to combine or connect categories to identify shared patterns or important discoveries relevant to the study goals. Interpretation entails contemplating the research participants' words, actions, or responses. The objective is to extract substantial knowledge or revelations from the gathered data. In summary, the researcher utilized a systematic approach to analyze the data, which involved organizing, summarizing, and

interpreting it. This method enabled the researcher to extract, comprehend, and generate valuable insights from the obtained data, ultimately formulating findings and conclusions for the study [37].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Teachers' perception of continuous professional development

In this study, the participants have a good and positive perception of CPD programs conducted in international schools. Participants across various perspectives emphasize the crucial role of CPD programs in ensuring continuous growth, enhancing teaching skills, supporting catering to a diverse student population, and enhancing teaching quality overall. Participants commonly consider CPD programs essential for maintaining a culture of continuous learning. These programs provide organized chances for teachers to explore innovative teaching approaches, pedagogical innovations, and breakthroughs in educational technology. The respondents' views are presented:

"It's an important program to ensure continuous growth for teachers." (P2)

"The structured and ongoing nature of CPD allows me to engage in targeted professional growth, fostering a dynamic learning environment for my students." (P5)

".....it enhances my ability to implement innovative teaching strategies that cater to the varied learning styles within an international student body..." (P3)

Besides, there was an agreement among participants that CPD programs are extremely beneficial for improving teaching skills. Participants recognize that these programs offer chances to acquire novel techniques, teaching tactics, and instruments. They view CPD as a method to enhance instructional approaches, classroom management, and teaching strategies, enabling them to effectively address the changing requirements and expectations of the current generation of students. Participants perceived that CPD programs offer valuable skills and enhance teaching quality.

"I find the CPD program invaluable for enhancing my teaching skills and staying abreast of educational advancements.....Emphasizing a commitment to lifelong learning, the CPD program is pivotal in equipping educators with the tools and knowledge needed to adapt to evolving educational landscapes." (P5)

"CPD program is one of the important training in a teacher's career life to improve their skills as an educator, especially as an international school teacher." (P6)

Engaging in these programs enables educators to enhance their teaching repertoire by emphasizing various teaching styles and formative assessment techniques and incorporating novel technological tools. Moreover, the participant perceives that CPD programs enhance their efficacy and efficiency in the classroom. International schools often accommodate heterogeneous student populations, including varied cultural origins, learning modalities, and linguistic proficiencies. CPD programs are essential in providing teachers with the necessary techniques to manage this variety properly. Through CPD, participants agreed that they may acquire the necessary skills and methodologies to address the unique needs of each student effectively, hence promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Overall, the study results concluded that all nine teachers and two principals positively perceive CPD programs and their importance on teaching quality.

Overall, teacher participants in this study consider CPD crucial in improving the quality of teaching in an international school. It facilitates the adoption of creative and flexible teaching methods while also encouraging CPD, reflective practices, and the integration of new approaches and technologies. This collaborative endeavor promotes a setting favorable for ongoing enhancement, thereby positively influencing the standard of education and students' experiences in their learning.

From the principals' point of view, the perception of the importance of CPD programs are aligned with the teachers. Principals also agree with teachers that CPD programs are important for teachers since they offer teachers the opportunity to stay informed about new curricula, teaching approaches, and educational materials. These programmers provide a targeted strategy designed to improve pedagogical abilities and provide activities teachers may use immediately in their classrooms. The principal's answers can be seen:

"The field of education is constantly evolving hence CPD programs provide opportunities for teachers to refine their teaching skills and learn new strategies, pedagogies and classroom management." (P10)

“... very important and what they get out of it is updates on new syllabus, new teaching methods, things, maybe new resources that are coming in linked with that... It's very much focused on skills and activities you can use in the classroom, but it's far more generic. So, it's more about pedagogy with a particular focus...” (P11)

Both viewpoints highlight that CPD programmers provide opportunities for ongoing learning, honing skills, and practical implementation of new teaching methods, thereby boosting educators' ability to give high-quality education to their students. Besides, both principals emphasize crucial elements of CPD that greatly enhance the progress and efficacy of teachers. Principals highlight that CPD programmers facilitate teachers' adoption of the idea of continuous professional learning. In addition, CPD encourages teachers to work together by giving them a forum to talk about their work, get feedback from others, and learn from each other's successes and failures. Teachers can draw on a wealth of collective wisdom in this setting, improving their teaching methods.

3.2. Factors that affect teachers' participation in continuous professional development programs

Based on the interview data, there were five factors identified. First factor is time constraint. Most participants said that teachers often have time constraints due to their demanding schedules during school hours and their obligations after school. The 7 out of 9 teachers indicate that they have time constraints and heavy workload challenges to participate in CPD programs. Some evidences are shown:

“Time constraint to complete follow up tasks, tiring and not able to focus 100% too long as it is right after school hours.” (P1)

“Some challenges within the school that may affect my ability to engage in CPD activities include conflicting schedules, heavy workload demands, and limited resources for professional development...” (P5)

Second factor is relevancy of CPD programs. Some participants discovered that the existing CPD programs do not correspond with their specific topic domains or professional objectives. The presence of repetitive or irrelevant programmer material hindered engagement and discouraged participation in contemporary instructional circumstances.

“... the availability of relevant and tailored CPD programs are limited, impacting the alignment of these opportunities with my subject area or specific professional goals...” (P3)

“I don't want to participate in CPD programs because sometimes the objective of the CPD programs is not applicable to the current situation and its increases the teacher's workload.” (P6)

The third factor is leader support. Participants also highlighted that the lack of leadership support could hinder their participation in CPD programs. If schools fail to prioritize or provide enough support for continued PD, teachers may experience a decline in the desire to participate in CPD activities. The participants answered were recorded:

“... Lastly, a lack of institutional emphasis or recognition of the value of CPD may dampen motivation for engagement among educators...” (P3)

“No encouragement and support from leaders.” (P9)

Participants also indicate that financial constraints are one of the factors affecting participation in CPD programs. The insufficiency of funds designated for PD may impede the capacity of educators to participate in significant CPD opportunities, particularly when the educational institution is confronted with financial limitations.

“...Secondly, limited financial resources may hinder participation, especially if the school faces budget constraints for professional development opportunities...” (P3)

Lastly, teacher participants said that one program's mixed primary and secondary school teachers declined teachers' desire to participate in CPD programs. As pedagogical approaches frequently differ across student levels (primary and secondary), grouping teachers from various levels (primary and secondary) without considering their particular teaching contexts can impede the exchange of effective ideas and strategies. In summary, engaging and committed teachers' participation in CPD initiatives is significantly influenced by various factors. Time constraint and workload resulting from substantial duties, scheduling conflicts, and the arduous nature of teaching obligations frequently impede their capacity to engage in CPD

endeavors. The difficulty is exacerbated by financial limitations, limited relevant programs, and an absence of institutional commitment to CPD.

From the principal's viewpoint, teachers' participation levels in CPD programs vary. Not all teachers demonstrate equal levels of enthusiasm or excitement when it comes to CPD. Certain educators continuously desire and are willing to acquire new approaches, but others may not exhibit the same passion. The responses from principals outlined this statement:

"Teachers' excitement can vary, not all teachers are enthusiastic about CPD. Timing and convenience, incentives." (P10)

"...Some are always excited, but I don't think you will ever get 100 per cent of people excited. Some will. some will think, oh my God, I've got the best things to do. Or I've got all these books need to mark..." (P11)

In addition, several obstacles that prevent teachers from participating in CPD programs are emphasized by principals. Principals emphasize that financial constraints, time and workload constraints, and the relevancy of training are elements that impede teachers' engagement. These findings are aligned with teachers' viewpoints. The principals' answers for the challenges are:

"Practicality of application." (P10)

"... I think the barrier would be more that sometimes you want people to join it and maybe then they're not quite so enthusiastic if they have other things that they need to do. But I think with Cambridge it used to be finance constraint a big issue because they're very expensive the courses..." (P11)

Generally, the principal views the opinion that teacher involvement in the CPD program is impeded by variables including time constraints, responsibility, and program applicability. Time constraints, heavy obligations, and multiple responsibilities are common for teachers. Balancing CPD with daily teaching responsibilities, lesson planning, grading, and other obligations can be difficult. Participation in CPD may be decreased among teachers if they do not perceive the content as immediately relevant or advantageous to their teaching practices or student outcomes.

3.3. Effectiveness of continuous professional development programs on teacher quality

This study examines educators' personal experiences and viewpoints in international schools, revealing how CPD programs have significantly improved the quality of teaching. All the participants agreed that CPD programs have positively impacted their teaching strategies. There are few participants' answers for the question does CPD programs enhance their teaching quality.

"Yes, it does, as the input gained can be applied to our teaching practices and classroom management." (P1)

"Yes. It improved my teaching quality." (P4)

"Absolutely, CPD programs have significantly improved my teaching quality in the international school setting..." (P5)

From the responses, CPD programs have significantly improved teachers' teaching quality in international schools. Besides, these CPD programs have used new technology, varied pedagogical techniques, and inventive teaching tactics, enabling educators to adjust to the ever-changing requirements of their multinational student population.

"Yes. CPD programs in my school have helped me improve my teaching method. Also introduces plenty of new technologies to enhance my teaching and learning process." (P2)

"These programs have equipped me with a diverse set of pedagogical approaches, cultural understanding, and technology integration skills, allowing me to adapt my teaching methods to the unique needs of my international students..." (P5)

Furthermore, participants also highlight that the CPD program has expanded teachers' cultural competency and allowed them to establish inclusive and internationally conscious classroom settings. Access to various teaching methods and knowledge of international educational developments has empowered educators to meet the demands of varied student populations successfully. The evidence is provided:

“Engaging in CPD has broadened my cultural competence, allowing me to create a more inclusive and globally aware classroom environment.” (P3)

“The continuous learning and exposure to global educational trends through CPD have enhanced my ability to create inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environments, positively impacting the overall quality of education I provide.” (P5)

Moreover, CPD programs assist teachers in managing the classroom effectively. Participants indicate that CPD provides teachers with techniques to proficiently handle diverse classes and cater to different learning preferences, thereby establishing inclusive educational settings where each student feels esteemed and assisted.

“The exposure to innovative approaches and technologies in CPD has enhanced my ability to adapt to the dynamic nature of international education...” (P3)

“CPD equips teachers to effectively manage diverse classrooms by offering strategies to address various learning styles. This has improved my ability to create inclusive learning environments where every student feels valued and supported.” (P9)

Overall, most teacher participants emphasize that CPD programs in international schools function as transformational platforms. They enhance teachers' abilities by providing them with the most up-to-date teaching methods, technical resources, cultural understanding, and chances for collaboration. This ultimately improves the quality and efficacy of their teaching in addressing the different requirements of their international students. CPD programs inform teachers about current worldwide educational trends. These programs integrate cutting-edge teaching methodologies, pedagogical strategies, and technological advancements. The capacity to adapt enables educators to efficiently respond to the changing requirements of the educational environment, thereby guaranteeing that pedagogical approaches continue to be pertinent and in line with modern educational standards. The statements provided by the two principals are as discussed:

“It contributes to the overall improvement of teaching quality...ensuring that educators stay abreast of global educational trends, adopt effective pedagogical strategies, and cultivate a culture of lifelong learning... CPD programs enhanced teaching practices, with visible improvements in the integration of technology in classrooms, implementation of student-centered approaches, and the development of culturally responsive teaching methods.” (P10)

“...I can see teachers using some of the skills. Such as the introduction of small whiteboards... I can see that the teachers have a much better level of understanding in how their students grasp the new concepts and new things...” (P11)

From the principal's point of view, CPD effectively improves teacher quality by encouraging the use of new strategies, creating a culture of continuous learning, and improving teaching methods, all of which ultimately improve the quality of education for students. Furthermore, the principals also received positive feedback from teachers on how the CPD program enhances their teaching quality.

“Teachers in our international school have provided positive feedback on how CPD has equipped them with the skills to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, allowing them to effectively engage with students from diverse backgrounds and enhance their overall effectiveness as educators.” (P10)

“... there are a lot of people here come and tell me when they've tried things. I think the other thing is sitting in the middle leaders sessions where I hear the feedback from the participants there. That's also quite interesting because I heard really quite positive things that people have used from the previous training session and actually used them in class and they come back with very positive examples and positive outcomes...” (P11)

In conclusion, the demonstration of positive outcomes and practical applications of CPD- acquired strategies by the teachers in their classrooms serves as empirical evidence for the direct influence that CPD exerts on enhancing student learning experiences and teaching methodologies.

3.4. Discussion

Based on the findings, the data revealed that teachers believe that CPD programs are essential for their professional growth, the improvement of their teaching skills, and the ability to meet the needs of a diverse student body. In order to keep up with the latest educational trends and methodologies, they all agree that CPD is crucial. CPD programs are seen as helpful for enhancing teaching methods, managing the

classroom, and catering to each student's unique requirements. It is also believed that CPD is a means to create a more engaging classroom and introduce new methods of instruction. There is a growing positive perception of CPD programs among teachers. CPD programs are essential for developing and improving teachers in the ever-changing environment of international schools. This result is parallel with previous studies' findings. Educators had a positive perception of the CPD program, seeing it as effective and designed to be beneficial [15]. Besides, Bunane *et al.* [38] indicated that educators acknowledge the significance of CPD initiatives in enhancing their pedagogical skills and topic understanding.

Furthermore, a number of factors impact the likelihood that an individual will participate in CPD programs. Teachers deal with a lot of demands on their time and find it difficult to fit CPD events into their already-packed calendars. Some educators may not participate in CPD programs because they do not believe the material is relevant to their work or their personal aspirations. Without the backing and acknowledgment of school administrators, students may feel less motivated to do their best. Participation is also affected by financial limitations, as there is insufficient support for CPD programs. Additionally affecting teachers' capacity to participate in CPD are personal variables, such as health concerns and family obligations. The priors' studies are aligned with the current study's results. For example, Zhang *et al.* [23] found that both the personal level (such as teachers' prior experience with learning activities, teaching experience, self-efficacy, and conceptions of learning) and the school level (including work and emotional pressure, colleague support, and principal leadership) that were associated with teachers' motivation to participate in professional learning. Besides, according to Kashoti *et al.* [26], factors such as excessive workload, time constraints, unfavorable attitudes toward the course, and inadequate reference resource availability hinder teacher participation in CPD programs. Research by Dilshad *et al.* [39] stated that time constraints, limited financial resources, and the unavailability of study leave considerably impact teachers' capacity to engage in ongoing PD.

Lastly, CPD programs are essential for improving the quality of teaching. It allows teachers to enhance their knowledge, acquire new skills, and remain up-to-date with the most recent teaching approaches and technology. Prior studies also emphasize this notion. For example, Hinojosa [31] indicated that teachers used additional measures, such as engaging in debriefing and feedback sessions, engaging in reflection and reflective dialogue, and providing scaffolding to implement new teaching techniques through CPD programs. Research by Cleary *et al.* [32] also stated that PD influenced teacher outcomes regarding SRL knowledge and abilities. Besides, Rajendran *et al.* [33] found a strong correlation between involvement in CPD, rates of teacher retention, and instructional effectiveness. Active involvement in well-planned CPD programs is associated with many favorable outcomes for teachers. These include enhanced work satisfaction, better effectiveness in instruction, and a higher probability of staying in the teaching profession. In this study, all participants acknowledged that CPD programs have positively impacted their teaching strategies and quality. Teachers generally agree that CPD programs are crucial to their own PD and the success of their classrooms.

While the overall belief of participants in CPD programs is viewed as positive, serving their PD, some challenges have also emerged. For example, most of the teachers mentioned problems that relate to time constraints and workload issues that do not allow them to devote sufficient time to the activities included in CPD. There was also a belief on the part of some participants that the content of CPD did not relate well enough to their subject areas or professional objectives, again with implications for reduced motivation to participate in this kind of activity. Such findings point to the need for more targeted CPD programs which are context-specific if maximum effectiveness is to be achieved.

The results have practical implications for education stakeholders such as policymakers, school leaders, and educators. To be more effective, the CPD programs need to be coupled with specified professional goals of teachers and supported by strong leadership. This would amount to an enabling environment that fosters constant PD and hence an improvement in the quality of teaching and subsequently in student achievement. In short, the entire study can be summarized as in Table 2.

The findings highlight that CPD programs are considered important in international schools; however, a number of challenges hinder the effectiveness of these programs. This finding is consistent with the study by Silverman [37] which emphasize the role and importance of CPD regarding improvement in both pedagogical and content knowledge. Added to that are the diverse student populations and cultural differences that each international school brings in, adding uniqueness to the already complex scenario. This study extends the literature by emphasizing the urgent need for more inclusive and context-specific CPD initiatives that address these unique challenges [40]. These findings further indicate that school leadership is influential in encouraging or discouraging teachers to engage in or not engage in CPD—a suggestion strongly related to the research of Zhang *et al.* [23] on teacher motivation to engage in professional learning and its relation to principal leadership. Any future designs of CPD programs should consider ensuring that leadership supports such programs and that the CPD programs are aligned with the professional goals of the teachers in order to achieve maximum engagement and effect.

Table 2. Summary of overall findings

Research question	Findings
RQ1: what are the teachers' perceptions of CPD programs in international schools?	<p>Teacher's interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Perception: positive. Participants view that CPD programs support their continued growth, enhance teaching skills, assist them in meeting diverse student needs and enhance teaching quality. – Satisfaction level: moderate. <p>Principal's interview:</p> <p>Positive. CPD programmers provide opportunities for ongoing learning, honing skills, and practical implementation of new teaching methods, thereby boosting educators' ability to give high-quality education to their students.</p>
RQ2: what factors affect teachers' participation in international schools' CPD programs?	<p>Teacher's interview:</p> <p>The five factors hinder teachers' participation: time constraints and workload, the relevancy of programs, lack of leadership support and recognition, financial constraints and mismatched teaching groups.</p> <p>Principal's interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Teachers' participation level: vary based on teachers – The two factors that hinder teacher participation are the practicability of the programs and time constraints. <p>Observation result:</p> <p>All Three schools demonstrate a high level of teachers' participation on the CPD program.</p>
RQ3: how does CPD improve teaching quality from teachers' perspective in international schools?	<p>Teacher's interview:</p> <p>CPD programmers encourage teachers to use new technology, varied pedagogical techniques, and inventive teaching tactics, enabling educators to adjust to the ever-changing requirements of their multinational student population.</p> <p>Principal's interview:</p> <p>CPD improves teacher quality by encouraging the use of new strategies, creating a culture of continuous learning, and improving teaching methods.</p>

3.5. Limitations of the study

There are several limitations have been identified. The first limitation is the limited sample size. The generalizability of the results is limited due to the small size of the study's sample. The opinions of these 11 participants may not wholly reflect the wide range of perceptions and expectations held by teachers in the context of international schools in Malaysia. Therefore, future studies should aim for a more extensive and diverse participant group to increase generalizability, including more teachers and principals from other regional international schools. The study can capture regional differences in expectations, perceptions, and practices by including teachers from various regions. This makes the results more representative of the entire nation and prevents overgeneralization based on the opinions of a few participants.

The second limitation is that the sampling could be biased. The participants were picked based on their availability and desire to participate, contributing to a bias in the sample. Their opinions are not representative of the teacher population as a whole. Therefore, this might add some bias to the data. Therefore, a quantitative survey can supplement the qualitative findings to reach more teachers and principals. This can offer a broader perspective on their perceptions and permit statistical analysis. Quantitative surveys enable researchers to collect data from more teachers, thereby augmenting the representativeness of the study's findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This research thoroughly examined the perceptions, challenges, and impact of CPD programs in international schools, revealing participants' consistent and optimistic viewpoints about the importance of CPD. From various viewpoints, teachers and principals universally recognize the need for CPD as a fundamental element for ongoing improvement. They stressed its significance in refining teaching abilities, adjusting to varied student populations, and overall enhancing the quality of teaching. The study revealed how CPD programs cultivate a culture of continuous learning, offering organized chances for educators to delve into inventive teaching methods, technological advancements, and pedagogical innovations. As a result, their knowledge base expands, and their skill sets become more refined. Participants recognized the crucial significance of CPD in meeting the needs of various learners, promoting inclusion, and developing cultural competence among instructors. Nevertheless, although CPD is recognized for its significance and practicality, the teacher's varied satisfaction levels highlight the necessity for further improvements. Teachers prefer subject-specific, individualized growth trajectories and universally applicable approaches surpassing disciplines' divisions. They are searching for CPD programs that provide practical methodologies that can be implemented in various educational positions and subjects.

Besides, teachers confront various factors that hinder their participation in CPD, such as financial limitations, time restrictions, tasks that require extensive attention, and discrepancies between CPD goals and

present requirements. All of these factors have a substantial impact on their capacity and inclination to engage in PD endeavors. Understanding every aspect of the opportunities and challenges teachers encounter when participating in CPD programs is essential. By strategically planning, providing support, and nurturing a culture of continuous learning, educational institutions and schools can create favorable conditions for educators to engage in enhanced PD opportunities. As a result, teaching practices, student learning experiences, and the educational landscape are positively affected.

Teachers' participation in CPD is not only a means of investing in their own professional advancement but also a priceless resource for molding each student's educational path. As teachers of ongoing learning, their classrooms transform into dynamic centers of creativity, inclusiveness, and exceptionalism, guaranteeing a more promising future for the generations they lead and motivate. This paper has demonstrated positive perceptions of the CPD programs from teachers in international schools and identified some key challenges to participation. However, overall generalizability has been limited due to the relatively small sample size and using a convenience sampling strategy. Consequently, studies should seek to increase participants' number and diversity, probably through a mixed-method approach, in order to comprehensively establish what perceptions teachers hold concerning CPD and the experiences encountered in training.

FUNDING INFORMATION

This article processing charge was supported by UNITAR International University's Research Fund.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Research Ethics Committee of UNITAR International University, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, approved the current study (Approval #UNITAR/FEH/REC/2025/001/Edward).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data is available with the corresponding author, [ED], and can be provided upon reasonable request.

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