



Analysis of Teacher Welfare in Indonesia and Developed Countries: A Comparative Study

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Analysis of Teacher Welfare in Indonesia and Developed Countries: A Comparative Study

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KEYWORDSTeacher Welfare Indonesia;
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Comparative Study**ABSTRACT**

Background: Teacher welfare is a strategic factor influencing professionalism, motivation, and educational quality, yet significant disparities remain between Indonesia and developed countries. **Objective:** This study compares teacher welfare in Indonesia with the United States and Australia to identify policy implications for improving educational quality. **Method:** A qualitative comparative approach was employed using semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis of policy reports and scholarly publications. Data were analyzed through the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification. **Results:** The findings reveal that Indonesian teachers experience income disparities, unequal access to professional development, excessive administrative workloads, and limited psychological support. In contrast, the United States and Australia provide competitive salaries, structured career pathways, continuous professional development, mental health services, and work life balance policies. **Conclusion:** Indonesia should adopt a holistic teacher welfare framework integrating economic, professional, and psychological dimensions. **Originality/Value:** This study provides novel empirical and comparative insights in the field of educational policy and teacher workforce management by revealing multidimensional disparities spanning income inequality, unequal professional development opportunities, excessive administrative burdens, and scarce psychological support regarding teacher welfare systems within the context of a cross national comparative analysis between Indonesia, the United States, and Australia, which has been underexplored holistically. These findings enrich empirical evidence and serve as a strategic reference for formulating holistic, evidence based, and sustainable teacher welfare policies aimed at enhancing teacher professionalism and nationwide educational quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the primary actors in the educational process who play a strategic role in shaping the quality of human resources and determining the success of a country educational system. Various studies indicate that educational quality is influenced not only by teacher competence but also by the level of welfare they receive (Bastomi, 2025; Hestiandari, 2025; Paradila et al., 2026). Teacher welfare becomes an important factor because it relates to work motivation, professionalism, job satisfaction, psychological health, and the quality of learning provided to learners. Wealthy teachers tend to be more focused on executing their professional duties, possess high motivation to develop competencies, and are capable of creating a more effective learning process. Conversely, low welfare can have an impact on declining motivation, increasing psychological burdens, and reducing the quality of educational services provided to students (Yusuf & Ruslan, 2014; Wibawa & Rahmasari, 2024).

Although the Indonesian government has made various efforts to improve teacher welfare through certification policies, professional allowances, and career development programs, the condition of teacher welfare remains an

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issue that continues to receive attention. Various studies show that teacher welfare in Indonesia is still classified as low and not yet proportional to the workload and professional responsibilities borne. The welfare disparity among Civil Servant (ASN) teachers, Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPPK), honorary teachers, and private school teachers remains an unresolved issue. Many honorary teachers still receive income far below the standard for a decent living, forcing them to seek additional work to meet the economic needs of their families. Additionally, limitations in work facilities, high administrative demands, minimal professional protection, and uneven access to competency development also affect the level of teacher welfare in Indonesia (Hutasuhut et al., 2025; Salikin, 2011; Umami & Rohmadi, 2024).

Teacher welfare is not only related to economic aspects but also encompasses psychological, professional, and social dimensions. The concept of teacher wellbeing positions teacher welfare as a condition reflecting the fulfillment of material needs, mental health, job satisfaction, opportunities for self development, and supportive work environments. In this context, research by (Mangestuti et al., 2025) shows that the psychological wellbeing of teachers is influenced by meaningful work, which is the extent to which teachers view their work as a valuable and meaningful activity. These findings indicate that teacher welfare is a multidimensional concept that cannot be measured solely through the amount of income, but also through the quality of professional experience and the support received while performing duties as educators.

When compared to developed countries, the condition of teacher welfare in Indonesia still shows a quite significant gap. Countries such as the United States and Australia have developed more comprehensive teacher welfare systems through the provision of competitive salaries, health insurance, psychological support, continuous professional development, and clear and transparent career systems. In the United States, teachers receive institutional support in the form of continuous training, adequate educational facilities, and professional development systems that help improve learning quality (Dalimunthe, 2013). Meanwhile, Australia is known to have a more structured teacher welfare system with the support of professional institutions, continuous training, and a work environment that supports a balance between personal life and work (Ilham et al., 2025). Various studies also show that developed countries such as Finland, Canada, Germany, Australia, and the United States have succeeded in improving educational quality through teacher welfare policies integrated with adequate professional development and psychological support (Suwarno et al., 2025).

A number of prior studies have examined teacher welfare from various perspectives. Riesmawati et al. (2025) highlighted the low welfare of teachers in Indonesia, which is influenced by income disparities, high workloads, and limited supporting facilities. Siswanto (2018) explained that teacher certification is an important instrument to improve the financial welfare and professionalism of teachers, although its implementation still faces various challenges. Usman (2023) found that low teacher welfare impacts performance quality and student learning achievement. On the other hand, (Paradila et al., 2026) emphasized the importance of the psychological dimension in teacher welfare through the concept of meaningful work. Nevertheless, most of that research still focused on the condition of teacher welfare in Indonesia partially and has not done many comprehensive comparisons with developed countries in the economic, professional, or psychological aspects simultaneously.

Based on the review of prior research, there is a research gap that needs to be filled. Most studies only discuss teacher welfare within a national context or highlight one specific dimension, such as the financial or psychological aspect. Research comparing Indonesian teacher welfare with developed countries comprehensively remains relatively limited. Yet, such a comparison is crucial to identify best practices that can be used as references in formulating policies to improve teacher welfare in Indonesia. Therefore, a study is needed that does not only compare teacher income levels but also analyzes professional support, career systems, work environments, and aspects of psychological wellbeing applied in various countries.

Teacher welfare is a critical factor that directly influences educators' motivation, professionalism, job satisfaction, and psychological health, ultimately determining the quality of the learning process experienced by students. Although the Indonesian government has launched various intervention programs, such as teacher certification and employment status adjustments under the Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPPK) scheme, significant welfare disparities remain a fundamental issue in the field. Non civil servant (non ASN) teachers, particularly contract or temporary (*honorer*) teachers, are frequently confronted with income levels far below the decent living standard, disproportionate administrative burdens, and a lack of professional protection and mental health support. In contrast, developed countries like the United States and Australia have established a more comprehensive approach that integrates economic security, structured career development, and systematic psychological support to maintain their national educational quality. This policy gap highlights an urgent need for a comparative study to map out best practices that can be adapted into the educational governance reform in Indonesia.

In light of this urgency, this study focuses on a comparative analysis of teacher welfare conditions in Indonesia and two developed countries, the United States and Australia. Specifically, the scope of this investigation is directed at three primary dimensions of teacher welfare: economic well being (salary, allowances, and social security), professional well being (access to continuous training and career pathway clarity), and psychological well being (mental health services, administrative workload, and work life balance). The primary objective of this research is to analyze and compare the state of teacher welfare across these three countries, identify the systemic factors that influence it, and formulate transformative policy implications to sustainably improve teacher welfare and professionalism in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study utilizes a comparative qualitative research design to compare the welfare conditions of teachers in Indonesia with those of teachers in developed countries, specifically the United States and Australia. This approach was selected because it enables researchers to deeply understand various aspects of teacher welfare, including economic, professional, and psychological dimensions, within different social and educational policy contexts. By adopting a qualitative lens, this design goes beyond superficial statistical indicators to explore the subjective experiences and daily realities of educators in their respective environments. Furthermore, a comparative framework is essential because teacher welfare does not exist in a vacuum; it is highly dependent on macro level policies, fiscal capacities, and cultural contexts unique to each nation. Analyzing these distinct settings side by side enables researchers to critically identify systemic policy gaps in Indonesia while extracting proven best practices from the more established educational systems of the United States and Australia to inform sustainable domestic reforms.

2.2 Research Object

The object of research includes teacher welfare which encompasses the following aspects: 1) Economic welfare (salary, allowances, and social security); 2) Professional welfare (career development, training, and professional appreciation); 3) Psychological welfare (job satisfaction, motivation, and work environment). The research subjects consist of primary and secondary school teachers in Indonesia, along with comparative data from teachers in the United States and Australia obtained through policy documents, official reports, and research publications.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through: 1) Semi structured interviews with teachers, principals, and educational policy-makers in Indonesia; 2) Documentation, in the form of educational regulations, teacher welfare reports, and statistical data from the Ministry of Education, UNESCO, OECD, and related institutions; 3) Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with teachers to obtain an overview regarding professional and psychological welfare experiences.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes: 1) Data condensation; 2) Data display; 3) Conclusion drawing and verification. The comparative analysis was conducted by comparing findings from Indonesia with teacher welfare data and policies in the United States and Australia to identify similarities, differences, and best practices that can be adapted to the Indonesian context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The results of the document analysis, interviews, and various educational policy sources show that teacher welfare is a strategic issue influencing the quality of education in every country. Although Indonesia has implemented various programs to improve teacher welfare through certification, professional allowances, and the recruitment of PPPK teachers, the condition of teacher welfare still presents various challenges, particularly in economic aspects, professional development, and psychological wellbeing.

In the economic aspect, teachers in Indonesia still face income disparities based on employment status. Civil Servant (ASN) teachers generally receive relatively more stable salaries and allowances compared to honorary teachers and some private school teachers. Conversely, in the United States and Australia, teacher remuneration systems tend to be more standardized and adjusted to education levels, work experience, and the cost of living in each respective region.

In the professional aspect, teachers in developed countries obtain broader access to continuous training, career development, and institutional support to improve competence. Meanwhile, some teachers in Indonesia still face limited access to professional development programs, particularly in remote areas and regions with limited educational resources.

In addition to the economic and professional aspects, the research results also show differences in the psychological wellbeing dimension. Teachers in the United States and Australia generally receive more systematic support through mental health services, professional counseling, and work life balance policies. Conversely, teachers in Indonesia still face relatively high administrative pressures, additional workloads, and reporting demands that frequently reduce focus on the learning process.

Table 1. Comparison of Teacher Welfare in Indonesia, the United States, and Australia

Aspect	Indonesia	United States	Australia
Economic Well-Being	Varies according to employment status	Relatively stable and competitive	Stable and competitive
Professional Development	Uneven across regions and institutions	Structured and continuous	Structured and continuous
Career Pathways	Limited to certain categories	Clearly defined and competency-based	Clearly defined and competency-based
Psychological Support	Limited availability	Systematically provided	Systematically provided
Administrative Workload	Relatively high	Better managed	Better managed
Work-Life Balance	Remains a significant challenge	Addressed through policy initiatives	Addressed through policy initiatives

The comparison results show that developed countries view teacher welfare as a long-term investment in educational development. Therefore, welfare policies do not only focus on financial compensation but also encompass continuous professional development and psychological support

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Teacher Welfare as a Strategic Factor in Enhancing Educational Quality

The primary findings of the study demonstrate that teacher welfare is a strategic factor influencing the quality of education, yet the approach applied in Indonesia remains different from developed countries such as the United States and Australia. The research results reveal that teacher welfare policies in Indonesia are still more oriented toward financial aspects through certification and professional allowances, whereas developed countries develop a more comprehensive approach by integrating economic, professional, and psychological welfare.

These findings can be interpreted through the concept of teacher wellbeing (Kurle & Warwas, 2025; Wang, 2025), which explains that teacher welfare is a multidimensional condition encompassing material welfare, mental health, job satisfaction, social relationships, and opportunities for professional development. From this perspective, teacher welfare is measured not only by income levels but also by the ability of the educational system to create a work environment that supports professional development and work life balance.

The urgency of these findings lies in the fact that educational quality heavily depends on the quality of the professional life of teachers. Teachers who obtain adequate economic and psychological support tend to possess higher motivation, creativity, and commitment in executing educational duties. Conversely, teachers who experience economic pressure and excessive workloads have the potential to experience a decline in job satisfaction and productivity.

The results of this study align with Winarno et al. (2024), who found that meaningful work has a significant influence on the psychological wellbeing of teachers. Nevertheless, this study indicates that the meaningfulness of work alone is insufficient if it is not supported by an adequate welfare system. Consequently, teacher welfare needs to be understood as the result of the interaction between individual factors and structural factors within the educational system.

3.2.2 Welfare Disparities Between Indonesian Teachers and Developed Countries

The research findings demonstrate the existence of a quite visible gap between teacher welfare in Indonesia and teachers in the United States and Australia. This disparity is apparent not only in the income aspect but also in the availability of professional development programs, psychological support, and the clarity of career pathways.

From the perspective of human capital theory (Kartiko & Gultom, 2026), investment in teacher welfare constitutes an investment in the human resource quality of a nation. Developed countries tend to position teaching as a strategic profession, meaning that various welfare policies are designed to enhance the competence, motivation, and retention of educators. Conversely, in Indonesia, welfare disparities based on employment status are still found, particularly between ASN and non ASN teachers.

These findings reinforce the research of Romadhon et al. (2025), which states that teacher welfare in Indonesia is still influenced by income disparities and limitations in work facilities. However, this study provides a new perspective through an international comparative approach showing that the primary difference lies not merely in the amount of financial compensation, but in the comprehensive integration of welfare policies.

The similarity between Indonesia and developed countries is the acknowledgment that teachers are the primary actors in enhancing educational quality. The difference lies in policy implementation. Developed countries have developed more systematic and sustainable systems, whereas Indonesia still faces various challenges in the equitable distribution of welfare access for all teachers.

An alternative explanation for these findings can be linked to differences in fiscal capacity, national economic conditions, and the structure of the educational system of each respective country. Therefore, not all policies from developed countries can be applied directly in Indonesia without considering the local context.

The Role of Professional Development in Enhancing Teacher Welfare The research findings indicate that continuous professional development is one of the factors differentiating the level of teacher welfare in Indonesia and developed countries. Teachers in the United States and Australia obtain broader access to training, advanced certification, professional communities, and opportunities to conduct research and learning innovations. These findings can be explained through the theory of teacher professionalism, which emphasizes that professional welfare emerges when teachers have opportunities to develop competencies, obtain professional recognition, and participate in educational decision making. Within this context, professional development is not merely an increase in technical competence but also serves as a means to enhance job satisfaction and the professional identity of teachers. The results of this study are consistent with Sinurat et al. (2025), who show that a strong professional development system contributes to the improvement of educational quality in developed countries. However, this study finds that access to professional development remains uneven in Indonesia, particularly for teachers located in remote areas. These findings hold important significance because they demonstrate that enhancing teacher welfare cannot be achieved solely through salary or allowance increases. Support for professional development also plays a major role in creating job satisfaction and the intrinsic motivation of teachers.

3.2.3 Policy Implications and the Holistic Teacher Welfare Model

Based on all the research findings, it can be concluded that effective teacher welfare must be constructed through a holistic approach that integrates economic, professional, and psychological aspects. These findings extend prior literature which generally highlighted only one dimension of welfare separately.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept of teacher wellbeing as a multidimensional framework in understanding teacher welfare. Practically, the research results show that enhancing teacher welfare requires policy reforms oriented not only toward financial compensation but also toward strengthening professional development, simplifying administrative workloads, providing mental health services, and creating a supportive work environment.

A critical idea that can be proposed from this study is that teacher welfare policies in Indonesia need to shift from a compensatory approach toward a transformational approach. This means that teacher welfare is no longer viewed merely as the provision of incentives, but as a sustainable educational development strategy. With such an approach, teachers become not only policy beneficiaries but also the primary actors in the transformation of national educational quality.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

This study carries deep policy implications for the reform of educational governance in Indonesia. Practically, the government needs to shift the focus of teacher welfare policies from merely providing partial financial incentives toward a holistic and integrated support model. This encompasses simplifying the administrative burdens that weigh teachers down, providing systematic psychological support, and ensuring equitable access to professional development down to remote areas. Furthermore, policies must be capable of minimizing welfare disparities among employment statuses to guarantee equal standards of professionalism for all educators.

4.2 Research Contributions

The primary contribution of this research lies in the comparative analytical framework that integrates three dimensions of teacher welfare, economic, professional, and psychological, simultaneously. This study fills the research gap related to the lack of comprehensive international comparative reviews regarding the condition of teachers in Indonesia and developed countries. Through mapping the best practices from the United States and Australia, this study provides a scientific evidence-based foundation for policymakers in designing strategies to improve the professional quality of life of teachers that are not only reactive, but transformational and sustainable.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has limitations in terms of the scope of the comparative data, which focuses specifically on the United States and Australia, meaning that the generalization of the results may be limited to educational systems with similar characteristics. Additionally, the use of secondary data from policy reports sometimes provides an overview that is normative in nature, which might not fully capture the daily realities of teachers in the field in great detail. Therefore, future research is suggested to conduct broader field studies across various provinces in Indonesia to capture local variations in the implementation of welfare policies.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Subsequent research is advised to expand this study by executing empirical field research to gather more direct data from educators. Furthermore, future longitudinal research is highly necessary to monitor the effectiveness of the impact of welfare policies on the improvement of student learning quality empirically and periodically.

6. CONCLUSION

Teacher welfare is a strategic determinant in the development of educational quality that is multidimensional in nature, moving beyond the aspect of mere financial fulfillment. The comparison results show that the significant difference between Indonesia and developed countries such as the United States and Australia lies not only in the amount of compensation, but in the systemic commitment to providing continuous professional support, offering mental health services, and creating a work environment that supports a balance between personal life and professional demands.

Indonesia currently still faces challenges of welfare disparity influenced by differences in employment status and high administrative workloads, which ultimately hinder the focus of teachers in executing pedagogical duties. Existing policies still tend to be compensatory in nature, meaning they need to be transformed into a transformational welfare model that views teachers as a strategic asset to the nation. Sustainable educational reform can only be achieved if teachers are placed within a working ecosystem that values psychological wellbeing, professionalism, and the dignity of their profession equally.

Strategies for enhancing teacher welfare holistically require synergy among the government, educational institutions, and the community. By adapting relevant best practices without neglecting the local sociocultural context, Indonesia has the potential to create a more inclusive and high-quality education system. An integrated welfare enhancement will ultimately become the primary catalyst for increasing teacher motivation and performance, which directly contributes to strengthening the quality of national human resources in the future.

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CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Fatimah Az Zahrah: Conceptualization; Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft. Muhammad Fiqri Syahril: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Writing - Review & Editing.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing financial or personal interests exist that could have influenced the outcomes or decisions related to this study.

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