
An interpretative phenomenological analysis: How educational planning can resolve the teacher marginalization?

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Abstract

This research explores the experiences of marginalization among teachers in Indonesia, focusing on the exclusion from decision-making, lack of professional recognition, and limited growth opportunities. Using qualitative interviews with 18 teachers, data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method. The findings reveal that teachers face systematic exclusion in policy formulation and decision-making processes, a lack of recognition for their contributions, and restricted opportunities for professional development. The research highlights the role of educational planning as a potential solution to mitigate these issues by fostering a more inclusive, collaborative, and responsive educational system. The research advocates for a paradigm shift in educational planning to address the systemic inequities that contribute to the marginalization of teachers, emphasizing the importance of involving educators in decision-making processes and professional development programs.

Keywords

Education planning, marginalization, professional growth, recognition, teacher involvement

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Introduction

In tracing the roots of marginalization in education, the need for a nuanced and contextually sensitive form of educational planning becomes imperative. Such planning should not be viewed through the mechanistic lens of policy formulation alone, but rather as a continuous ethical commitment to redressing systemic imbalances in the educational sphere. The marginalization that persists across various disciplines—mathematics (Brantlinger, 2022; Chen & Horn, 2022; Rubel & McCloskey, 2021), linguistics (Cabral, 2023; Mackey et al., 2022; Rosa & Flores, 2023), physical education (Erbas, 2021), and social sciences (Kayumova & Dou, 2022) – necessitates an epistemological shift in planning frameworks.

This change is not a matter of academic trend-following, but a critical re-evaluation of how curricula, pedagogical assumptions, and institutional cultures have normalized exclusion under the guise of tradition or neutrality. For too long, these practices have been legitimized by structures that deny access to alternative ways of knowing, often at the expense of both the learners' agency and the educators' autonomy (Ferry & Westerlund, 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Sohail et al., 2023; Thiem & Dasgupta, 2022). Educational planning, when guided by postmodern principles, must therefore acknowledge the situatedness of all knowledge, problematize the assumed neutrality of pedagogical content, and seek a radical inclusivity that recognizes power dynamics embedded within disciplinary canons and institutional decisions (Panozzo-Solanot, 2020; Winn & Schillaci-Rowland, 2021; Winn, 2021).

The discourse on educational marginalization has been consistently enriched by a broad corpus of scholarship that underscores its ubiquity across geopolitical and cultural contexts. Far from being a local or isolated dysfunction, marginalization in education manifests as a systemic and transnational phenomenon, with documented instances emerging from the United States (Strassle et al., 2022; Teshome et al., 2022), various regions across Europe (Hordern, 2022, 2023; Ochieng & Waithanji Ngware, 2023; Sorkos & Magos, 2022), and notably, from within the educational landscape of Indonesia itself (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Nur et al., 2022; Septiarti et al., 2022). The Indonesian case, however, warrants particular attention, not merely for its prevalence, but for the paradox it presents—a nation whose foundational ideological framework, Pancasila, is explicitly predicated upon the ideals of equality and social justice (Setiyawan & Maulida, 2024), yet continues to reproduce subtle forms of dichotomy and exclusion in its educational practices.

This contradiction is even more profound because Pancasila is not a peripheral doctrine but institutionally enshrined within state governance, political orientation, and legislative constructs (Emilia et al., 2022; Salam, 2021). Furthermore, its philosophical tenets are deeply interwoven into the educational ethos and pedagogical values at multiple levels of formal instruction (Aldila & Rini, 2023; Dzzakky et al., 2023; Natalia et al., 2024; Oktaviana et al., 2023), often reinforced through the moral and spiritual consciousness of the predominantly religious Indonesian populace (Azis et al., 2021; Bembid, 2023; Nurhuda, 2023; Wirawati, 2022). Thus, the tension between ideological proclamation and operational reality problematizes the state's educational planning and exposes the fragility of philosophical alignment when confronted by deeply ingrained socio-political structures.

Despite the growing body of literature examining the multifaceted dimensions of marginalization in education, a conspicuous gap persists in how the concept of education planning is mobilized—or, more precisely, underutilized—as a primary lens of inquiry to confront this enduring problem. Savitha et al. (2025) served as an initial bridge in connecting educational planning to the discourse on marginalization, yet they simultaneously highlight the nascent stage of this intersection within scholarly debates. While marginalization has been consistently documented across various national and historical contexts (Demskey-Cohen & Cohen, 2024; Jiang et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023; Messiou, 2012; Wagner et al., 2022; Wang & Chang, 2025; Yang et al., 2022), most studies have concentrated on either the sociological dynamics of exclusion or the pedagogical reforms required to enhance inclusivity. Rarely has educational planning—understood as the deliberate and anticipatory design of learning ecosystems—been foregrounded as a critical apparatus for dismantling exclusionary architectures embedded within schooling systems. This absence is particularly notable in the Indonesian context, where education planning has often been treated as a bureaucratic function rather than a transformative pedagogical paradigm. Policies are frequently devised through top-down mechanisms with limited attention to their implications for marginalized learners or for reimagining inclusive schooling structures.

As a result, the planning process becomes reactive rather than generative, addressing surface-level disparities without interrogating the deeper epistemic and systemic roots of marginalization. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its assertion that education planning must be reconceptualized as an administrative strategy and as a critical and ethical endeavor—inherently political, context-sensitive, and capable of reshaping power dynamics within educational systems. This research ventures into an under-theorized terrain where policy formation, curricular design, teacher agency, and learner equity converge by positioning educational planning at the center of the response to marginalization. It contends that the solution to entrenched exclusion resides not solely in curricular revisions or equity statements, but in the pre-emptive design of inclusive futures through planning. Herein lies the research's distinct contribution: offering education planning not as ancillary support to inclusion, but as the central mechanism of structural transformation. Within this recalibration, educational planning shifts from being a neutral, technical function to becoming a potent instrument of justice, still emergent in academic discourse, yet increasingly urgent in practice.

In response to the urgent call for more human-centered approaches in educational research, this research adopts a phenomenological design to explore how individuals experience and interpret marginalization within educational planning. As Friesen (2023) explained, phenomenology, both as a philosophical tradition and research method, is particularly suited to examining pedagogical experiences often obscured by policy-driven, quantitative models. Saevi (2023) echoes this argument by highlighting phenomenology's potential to engage with the meaning-making processes of individuals, particularly in educational contexts where lived experience is often underrepresented. Furthermore, Brinkmann and Friesen (2018) underscore the methodological strength of phenomenology in accessing the relational and intersubjective dimensions of learning and planning. This perspective proves essential when addressing the structural and symbolic forms of marginalization. Thorburn and Stolz (2022) expanded this relevance by asserting the continued necessity of phenomenological approaches in capturing the subtleties of educational practice,

while Friesen (2023) additionally critiqued the limitations of conventional validation techniques that ignore such nuance. Thus, employing a phenomenological lens, this research examines marginalization as a structural issue and elevates the experiential voices that can reshape planning practices toward greater inclusivity.

Literature Review

Education planning

Education planning, while long acknowledged as a strategic and operational backbone of modern education systems, remains underexplored in its potential as a remedy for educational marginalization, particularly within the Indonesian context. At its essence, education planning is a forward-looking and adaptive process that entails the systematic articulation of goals, allocation of resources, and formulation of structured interventions to achieve equitable educational outcomes (Alnaji, 2022), like research on educational equity to ensure educational justice (Ruhimat et al., 2024). Traditionally, it has served as a mechanism to align national development agendas with pedagogical infrastructures, ensuring that education systems respond effectively to demographic shifts, economic imperatives, and sociopolitical transitions. Neal (2018) stated that writing from an economic standpoint critiques the inefficiencies plaguing publicly funded education and proposes that planning must account for the same incentive-driven logic employed in other sectors, where precision and accountability are paramount. Despite its potential, education planning has often been reduced to bureaucratic routines rather than embraced as a dynamic tool to confront entrenched inequities. In Indonesia, where structural disparities in access, quality, and inclusion persist, planning has yet to be utilized as a central framework for redressing marginalization. Priyambodo and Hasanah (2021) underscored the strategic power of planning to enhance education quality, but even within their analysis, marginalization remains an implied, rather than explicit, concern.

Their model foregrounds institutional goal setting, participatory governance, and coherent execution—all essential, yet frequently absent, when addressing systemic exclusion. The discourse surrounding inclusive education provides valuable insights into how planning may evolve into a vehicle for social justice. Lambrecht et al. (2022) demonstrate that individualized education plans (IEPs), as manifestations of targeted planning, require leadership modalities that foster collaboration and equity-driven school culture. Their findings affirm that transformational and instructional leadership are instrumental in operationalizing inclusivity through deliberate planning practices. This argument is echoed in Pereira et al. (2024), which explored IEP implementation in Brazilian schools and highlights the necessity of interprofessional cooperation. These perspectives emphasize that planning must move beyond administrative checklists and instead be rooted in ethical responsiveness to learner diversity.

Moreover, Alnaji (2022) revealed that the curriculum planning model offers a vision of education planning as deeply ideological, anchored in foundational values, and enacted through deliberate procedures. Such a model resonates with the Indonesian context, where philosophical commitments like Pancasila have yet to be effectively translated into inclusive

educational practices. By foregrounding planning as an agent of transformation rather than mere system maintenance, the present research seeks to reframe the discourse around marginalization. Thus, this research positions education planning as an organizational tool and a critical and underutilized locus of intervention in dismantling exclusionary practices. It argues for the reclamation of planning as a transformative practice capable of contesting structural inequalities—thereby filling a discernible gap in Indonesian policy focus and international scholarly discourse.

Education marginalization

Educational marginalization is when individuals or groups are systematically excluded or disadvantaged within educational structures, limiting their full participation, access, and opportunities to thrive. This phenomenon is neither uniform nor accidental and is often perpetuated through entrenched socio-cultural, economic, and institutional mechanisms that reinforce inequality under the guise of standardization or neutrality. Across contexts, marginalized learners may include those from minority ethnic backgrounds, impoverished communities, remote geographic areas, or students with special educational needs. [Saevi \(2023\)](#) conceptualized educational marginalization as a relational and experiential displacement wherein the individual is denied access and recognition within the pedagogical space.

This implies a more profound material and existential rupture wherein dominant educational paradigms render the learner's experience, voice, and subjectivity invisible. Marginalization, therefore, is not merely the absence of inclusion but the presence of an "othering" gaze. [Friesen \(2023\)](#) underscored that educational marginalization must be understood through the lived experiences of those affected. He notes that traditional policy analyses often overlook the nuanced and affective dimensions of exclusion, which phenomenological inquiry seeks to reclaim. In this light, educational marginalization is not just a structural phenomenon but a felt experience—an interruption of the learner's formation, belonging, and agency.

[Brinkmann and Friesen \(2018\)](#) further elaborated that marginalization manifests through "pedagogical fractures," disconnections between students and their educational environments, often exacerbated by standardized systems that ignore cultural, linguistic, or neurodiverse needs. This supports a growing body of international research that argues for an educational ethic grounded in responsiveness and situated empathy. [Thorburn and Stolz \(2022\)](#) reinforce the need for inquiry into the practice of exclusion—how curriculum design, classroom interaction, and teacher expectation unwittingly marginalize through repetition of normative ideals. His work examines how educational values are operationalized, particularly when inclusion is professed but not practiced. In many cases, the marginalized are those who do not, or cannot, conform to predetermined educational scripts. Empirical studies further support this view. For instance, researchers have described educational marginalization as a challenge of access and one of participation, representation, and legitimacy in educational narratives. Marginalized students often navigate systems in which their identities, histories, and aspirations are unrecognized or undervalued, creating environments that feel alienating and disempowering.

Thus, educational marginalization is best understood as a layered phenomenon: structural in origin, yet deeply personal in experience; visible in policies, yet often concealed in pedagogical practice. It operates through overt exclusion and the subtleties of invisibility, misrecognition, and the erosion of learner agency. This reality has been repeatedly highlighted in prior research (Brinkmann & Friesen, 2018; Friesen, 2023; Saevi, 2023; Thorburn & Stolz, 2022), all of which affirm that marginalization, though historically persistent, continues to emerge in novel forms in response to shifting educational, socio-economic, and political landscapes. Because this phenomenon increasingly resists reduction to purely quantitative indicators or policy-based diagnoses, it demands a research approach that centers on lived experience—an approach capable of disclosing the subjective, affective, and relational dynamics that statistical models cannot fully capture. In this regard, phenomenology, as both a methodological lens and a philosophical orientation, offers the necessary depth and sensitivity to interrogate marginalization as it is lived and endured by individuals within the educational system (Brinkmann & Friesen, 2018; Friesen, 2023; Saevi, 2023; Thorburn & Stolz, 2022).

By attending to meaning-making, embodiment, and the intersubjective horizon of educational encounters, a phenomenological inquiry is uniquely positioned to illuminate what it feels like to be marginalized—and, in doing so, to surface insights that are crucial for reimagining education as a space of inclusion and recognition. Hence, as educational marginalization continues to unfold in complex and often obscured ways, a phenomenological approach is not merely appropriate, but imperative, ensuring that research remains anchored in the real, resonant voices of those whose experiences have too often been overlooked.

Methodology

Research design, site, and participants

This research adopts a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of educators and learners in marginalized educational contexts. As emphasized by Friesen (2023), phenomenology is uniquely equipped to illuminate pedagogical experiences by capturing the relational, affective, and intersubjective aspects of schooling that often remain hidden beneath structural narratives. As Saevi (2023) asserted, phenomenology permits a form of inquiry that returns “to the things themselves,” allowing researchers to uncover the essential meanings embedded in everyday educational life. Brinkmann and Friesen (2018) further emphasized that phenomenology enriches theoretical discourse and functions as a method that reveals how educational realities are formed through embodied experience and situated interactions. Thorburn and Stolz (2022) similarly critique reductive methodologies and advocate for a phenomenological turn in education research, especially when addressing themes of marginalization and exclusion. Accordingly, this research employs a phenomenological design to deeply engage with how educational marginalization is subjectively experienced, perceived, and negotiated by those at the system’s fringes. Therefore, this approach aligns with the research’s central objective: to surface nuanced insights into the lived realities of marginalized learners that conventional empirical tools may obscure. The

research was conducted by engaging with teachers and educators across various educational levels in Indonesia who have experienced marginalization within the educational system.

The research site was determined through a convenience sampling strategy, focusing on accessible institutions where marginalization is known or suspected to occur. Informants were recruited using a crowd-gathering approach through teacher organizations and professional communities, applying an open recruitment system to allow for voluntary participation. This method facilitated access to a wide range of educational practitioners with diverse experiences related to marginalization. In total, 18 informants participated in the research, representing a broad spectrum of educational levels and contexts within Indonesia's schooling system. This diverse composition ensured that the data reflects multiple dimensions of the lived experience of marginalization in education.

Data collection and analysis

In line with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the primary method of data collection in this research involved semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Nizza et al., 2021). This technique is particularly suited for exploring participants' first-person experiences and phenomena, providing rich, detailed accounts of how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences with educational marginalization. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow for a conversational flow that encourages participants to express their thoughts and feelings naturally and unforcedly manner (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

The researcher's role was to ask questions and to actively listen, provide prompts when necessary, and ensure that participants felt comfortable and safe to discuss personal and sensitive topics. To ensure the quality of the interviews, particular attention was given to building rapport and creating a trusting environment. As Koefoed and Simonsen (2022) suggested, a warm-up phase was introduced at the beginning of each interview to reduce potential anxiety and to help participants feel at ease. This initial conversation allowed participants to become familiar with the process and the researcher, making it easier to discuss their lived experiences openly. The interview guide was structured but left room for flexibility. This procedure allowed the researcher to pursue unexpected or significant topics that arose during the conversation.

Key topics included experiences of exclusion, discrimination, and other forms of marginalization and the participants' interpretations and responses to these challenges. Prompts and follow-up questions were designed to elicit profound reflections and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants lived experiences. Some questions are aimed at sensory perceptions, thoughts, memories, and associations related to their roles as educators in marginalized settings. This approach aligns with Smith and Fieldsend's (2021) emphasis on exploring mental phenomena and individual interpretations, allowing the researcher to gain insights into how participants make sense of their educational realities. Following the data collection process, the analysis of the interviews adhered strictly to the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as outlined by Smith and Fieldsend (2021).

IPA is particularly suitable for understanding how individuals perceive and make sense of their personal experiences. This analysis method involves a two-stage interpretation: first,

the researcher interprets the participant’s experience, and second, the researcher reflects on how their interpretations shape the understanding of the phenomenon. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and then analyzed systematically and iteratively. This process involved reading the transcripts multiple times to identify significant themes and patterns in the participants’ narratives. The phenomenological process focused on understanding the essence of participants’ lived experiences while minimizing the researcher’s biases. According to Beck (2020), it is essential to approach data analysis with an open mind and a neutral stance, ensuring that emerging themes reflect the participants’ voices rather than the researcher’s preconceptions. Using IPA, the researcher explored how marginalization is experienced within the educational system, focusing on individual and shared understandings of the phenomenon. As per Dibley (2022) and Dibley et al. (2020), the analysis also involved detailed attention to verbal and non-verbal cues during interviews, as these can offer extensive information about the participants’ emotions and interpretations.

Findings

The findings of this research are organized to address the primary purpose of the research, focusing on the marginalization of educators within the Indonesian educational system. Various quotations, examples, and thematic analyses from the participant interviews support these findings.

Table 1. *Themes and sub-themes*

Themes	Sub-themes
Experiences of marginalization	Exclusion from decision-making Lack of professional recognition Limited opportunities for growth
Impact of marginalization on teaching practice	Decreased motivation Resistance and coping mechanisms
Strategies for reclaiming agency	Community engagement Mentorship and peer support

Experiences of marginalization

The theme of marginalization was consistently mentioned across the interviews, with participants describing multiple layers of exclusion within the education system. These experiences of marginalization impacted on their professional identities, contributions, and roles within the education system. Teachers reported facing marginalization in various forms, both through exclusion from decision-making processes and a lack of recognition for their contributions to student outcomes.

Exclusion from decision-making, a significant aspect of teachers’ marginalization was exclusion from decision-making processes at both the institutional and regional levels. Many teachers felt that critical discussions, policymaking, and the planning of educational initiatives took place without their input or consultation, despite their extensive hands-on experience in

schools. Informants indicated that administrators often made decisions regarding curriculum changes, educational events, and even resource allocation without engaging the teachers responsible for implementing these decisions on the ground. One teacher felt excluded from an important regional educational fair, where only administrators and senior educators could present their work or ideas. The teacher was sidelined despite developing community-based educational modules aligned with the event's goals.

"During the regional education fair, I wasn't given a speaking slot, even though I had developed community-based modules. They said, 'Only the principals and notable educators are allowed to present.' I was just told to sit in the audience like I didn't matter." – Informant 2

This exclusion was not limited to events; many teachers felt disconnected from larger policy discussions. Higher authorities often determined educational reforms and curricular changes, with little to no input from the teachers who were in direct contact with students. The absence of teachers in these crucial conversations made it difficult for them to influence changes that could better serve their students' needs. Several informants suggested that an inclusive educational planning process could potentially improve their situation. They emphasized that educational policies and decisions should actively incorporate the input of teachers with firsthand experience with student challenges. One informant stated, "If the planners could just hear us out before implementing changes, maybe we could help them avoid the mistakes that often arise from policies made without considering the classroom realities." Informant 4 also mentioned,

"We need to be part of the conversation when decisions are being made. Educational planning should involve us at the beginning, not just at the execution stage. That would make a huge difference. It would also make us feel like our input matters."

This feedback from teachers indicates that a shift in educational planning towards collaboration between teachers and administrators could alleviate the marginalization they experience. Teachers are seeking recognition and a position at the table where decisions impact their professional lives and the education system. Educational planning could address these issues by ensuring that teachers' voices are included in the decision-making process, thus empowering them to influence changes that directly impact their students and work environments.

Lack of professional recognition, another key issue from the interviews was the lack of professional recognition for teachers' contributions, particularly regarding student outcomes. Teachers expressed that their hard work in the classroom often went unnoticed by administrators and policymakers, who focused on high-level achievements or theoretical constructions rather than educators' practical, on-the-ground contributions. This absence of recognition was especially noticeable when teachers raised concerns or provided feedback on policies that affected their students' well-being and learning experiences. As one teacher explained, when they submitted reports detailing student challenges or successes, they were often dismissed as "local matters" with little consideration for the underlying issues.

"Our reports are always read like checklists, and when we raise issues, they're dismissed as 'local matters.' We're the ones who understand what works on the ground, but policies are always written by people who don't know the community." – Informant 5.

This perception of being undervalued was compounded by the systemic focus on theoretical achievements rather than practical experience. Teachers reported feeling like their knowledge, developed through years of teaching and community engagement, was often disregarded in favor of abstract educational theories that had little relevance to the realities of the classroom. Several informants indicated that educational planning could also address the issue of professional recognition. For instance, Informant 7 stated,

"If educational planning could formalize recognition of our on-the-ground contributions to student outcomes, it would go a long way in restoring our professional dignity. Recognition needs to be more than just academic achievements or theoretical contributions. It should also acknowledge practical, real-world solutions we develop in our classrooms."

Additionally, Informant 3 suggested,

"I believe that an educational plan that acknowledges teachers' achievements, like creating community-based programs or improving student performance in real ways, would lead to better morale among teachers. It could help administrators understand that we are more than just implementers of top-down policies. We are contributors to the academic growth of our students."

These responses demonstrate that incorporating teacher recognition into educational planning would highlight teachers' contributions and offer a framework where teachers feel valued and appreciated for their work beyond the traditional, theoretical metrics.

Limited opportunities for growth, a third component of marginalization, as highlighted by the participants, was the limited opportunities for professional growth and development. Teachers expressed frustration with the lack of opportunities to advance in their careers, both in training and promotion. Many believed that career advancement was often determined by factors unrelated to their teaching effectiveness, such as administrative connections or seniority, rather than their ability to innovate or improve student outcomes. This limited access to professional development further perpetuated the cycle of marginalization, leaving many teachers feeling stuck in their roles with little hope for career advancement. Teachers also discussed how professional development programs were often not tailored to the needs of those working directly with students. Workshops and training sessions tended to focus on abstract topics that had little bearing on teachers' day-to-day experiences in the classroom, making them feel disconnected from the professional development process. One informant elaborated on this issue, stating that the training offered by the education system often failed to address the real challenges teachers faced in their classrooms.

"The workshops they offer never seem to be what we really need. It's always about theoretical stuff, like teaching methods that sound good on paper but don't work in our schools. They don't ask us what we really need." – Informant 4

This lack of relevant professional growth opportunities reinforced feelings of being undervalued and overlooked within the educational system, as teachers were denied the resources and support necessary for improving their teaching practices and advancing their careers. Several informants proposed that educational planning could offer a viable solution by providing a more tailored approach to professional development. Informant 6 commented,

"Educational planning should create opportunities for professional growth that are aligned with the needs of the classroom. It's important that the training offered addresses the challenges teachers face in real-life situations."

Another teacher, Informant 8, emphasized,

"If we could have a professional development program that was truly reflective of the work we do every day, it would make a big difference. Education planning should ensure that training is relevant and that teachers have access to the resources that can help them improve."

Incorporating more relevant, context-specific professional development opportunities into educational planning would enhance teachers' skills and support their growth and career advancement. Additionally, it would allow them to see tangible benefits from participating in these programs, which could foster a stronger sense of engagement and professional satisfaction.

Impact of marginalization on teaching practice

The marginalization experienced by teachers affects their professional identities and recognition; it also significantly impacts their teaching practices. The participants described how being excluded from decision-making processes and deprived of professional recognition influenced their motivation, teaching effectiveness, and overall approach to education. Many teachers indicated that the systemic neglect they experienced led to decreased enthusiasm for their work and forced them to find ways to cope with the challenges they faced. Despite these struggles, some teachers found ways to resist marginalization and adapt their practices to continue fulfilling their role in educating students.

Decreased Motivation, a consistent theme that emerged in the interviews was the impact of marginalization on teachers' motivation. Participants described feeling demotivated by the lack of recognition for their efforts, exclusion from key discussions, and devaluing of their practical experience in favor of more theoretical or administrative approaches. This devaluation led to a sense of frustration and disillusionment with the educational system, which, in turn, affected their enthusiasm for their work. One teacher shared that the continual neglect of their contributions in favor of administrative decisions and theoretical frameworks made them feel

disconnected from the larger goals of the education system. Over time, this lack of recognition eroded their initial passion for teaching, making them feel their work was undervalued.

"I used to love teaching because I could see the impact I had on students. But after years of being told that what we do in the classroom doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, I started to question why I'm doing this at all."– Informant 7

This decrease in motivation was compounded by the feeling that teachers were being left out of important decisions that impacted their ability to teach effectively. The systemic lack of inclusion and respect for teachers' opinions made many participants feel less invested in the educational process. As a result, teachers often felt like mere cogs in a machine, rather than valued professionals contributing to the development of future generations. Several informants suggested the possibility of inclusive educational planning to address this issue. Informant 3 explained,

"If I were included in the decision-making process, I would be able to contribute ideas that could actually make my job easier and more effective. I would feel more invested in the changes being made and more motivated to implement them in my classroom."

Informant 1 added,

"If educational planning was more inclusive, it would provide a platform where teachers' voices are heard and valued. That alone would be a huge motivator. Feeling like we are part of the process would reignite our passion for teaching and improve the outcomes we're all striving for."

By including teachers in educational planning, teachers would likely feel a sense of ownership over the changes being implemented. This involvement could be a significant motivator, encouraging teachers to work more effectively and passionately toward educational goals.

Resistance and coping mechanisms, despite the significant challenges posed by marginalization, many teachers developed various coping mechanisms to continue their work and resist the negative impact of their exclusion. These strategies included finding alternative ways to engage with students, collaborating with peers, and building strong relationships within their communities. Rather than passively accepting marginalization, many teachers found ways to assert their agency and maintain their sense of purpose within the classroom. For instance, some teachers took it upon themselves to create professional development opportunities by seeking informal learning spaces or peer mentorship. One participant described attending local teacher-led workshops and sharing knowledge with colleagues to resist the stagnation imposed by formal professional development programs that did not meet their needs.

"When the official training doesn't address what we need, we make our own space. I've joined small groups with other teachers to share experiences and ideas. That's how we keep learning and growing, despite the system failing to support us."– Informant 6

In addition to peer support, many teachers emphasized the importance of community engagement in resisting the effects of marginalization. By involving parents and local stakeholders in their teaching practices, teachers could create more meaningful and impactful learning experiences for their students. This helped the teachers reclaim some sense of agency and strengthened their ties to the community, providing a sense of validation and support often missing within the formal educational structure. Another coping mechanism mentioned by participants was the cultivation of strong, supportive relationships with students. Teachers described how they worked to create a positive and nurturing environment in their classrooms, which allowed them to continue to feel effective and valued, even if their contributions were overlooked at the institutional level.

"I try to make my classroom a space where the students feel valued and understood. It's not just about teaching them the curriculum; it's about connecting with them on a personal level. When I see them thrive, it gives me a sense of purpose, even if no one else recognizes my efforts." – Informant 4

When asked how the system could better support their efforts, many informants suggested that comprehensive educational planning could alleviate the need for resistance. Informant 4 suggested,

"What we need is an educational framework that addresses the real issues we face. If the government or education boards took more time to understand the challenges on the ground, the solutions would make sense, and we wouldn't have to fight to make them work."

Moreover, Informant 9 noted,

"If educational planning included continuous feedback loops from teachers, we wouldn't be in this situation. We wouldn't feel the need to resist. The system would adapt to us instead of the other way around."

By ensuring that educational planning incorporates continuous input from teachers, the education system is more responsive and relevant to the needs of both educators and students. This responsiveness could reduce the need for resistance and coping mechanisms, leading to a more harmonious and effective educational environment.

Strategies for reclaiming agency

As the teachers in this research dealt with their marginalization within the education system, they also employed various strategies to reclaim their sense of agency and professional identity. While the broader system often sidelined their contributions, teachers found ways to assert their roles, connect with their students, and seek personal and professional growth

despite these barriers. These strategies were critical for sustaining their motivation and ensuring their work remained meaningful in the face of systemic neglect.

Community engagement, community engagement was one of the most common and powerful strategies used by teachers to reclaim their agency. Many participants reported that building strong, supportive relationships with local communities, parents, and students was key to resisting marginalization and asserting their value within the educational ecosystem. By taking an active role in community-based initiatives and seeking input from parents and local leaders, teachers created a sense of connection and relevance often absent from formal policy-making processes.

Teachers described how they worked to bridge the gap between the school and the community by hosting events, engaging in volunteer work, and addressing local issues directly in the classroom. For example, some teachers involve parents in school activities, allowing them to participate in learning and voice concerns about their children's education. This strategy strengthened the teacher-student relationship and enhanced the teachers' standing in the community, fostering a sense of mutual respect and support.

"I've found that when I involve parents in the classroom, they begin to see how important their role is in their child's education. That support translates into a more positive learning environment for the students, and it gives me more confidence in my work, even if the school system doesn't always acknowledge it." – Informant 4

Through these efforts, teachers could carve out a space where the community recognized their contribution, even if the formal educational system failed to offer the same level of validation. While community engagement was considered a powerful strategy for reclaiming agency, many teachers also emphasized the need for educational planning that acknowledges the importance of community involvement. Informant 6 noted:

"If the education system recognized the role of the community more officially, we could have more structured support systems in place. It's not just about individual teachers doing their best on their own; it's about building something that lasts, something that can be supported through planning."

Incorporating community-based solutions into formal educational planning could enhance the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives. This would provide teachers with a more stable and institutionalized framework to engage with local communities and build sustainable support systems for students and educators.

Mentorship and peer support, another critical strategy for reclaiming agency was the creation of mentorship and peer support networks. Many teachers emphasized connecting with colleagues for professional development, emotional support, and exchanging ideas. Without formal professional development opportunities catering to their specific needs, teachers turned to one another for guidance and collaboration.

These informal mentorship relationships allowed teachers to share their challenges, successes, and strategies for coping with the marginalization they experienced. One participant discussed how they had found strength and inspiration through discussions with a colleague

who had been teaching for many years. Through this mentorship relationship, they learned strategies for navigating the system, dealing with difficult students, and maintaining a sense of professionalism despite the lack of institutional support.

"I met a senior teacher who really helped me understand how to survive in the system. She taught me how to stand firm in my beliefs about teaching and how to make small changes in the classroom that have a big impact. I don't feel so alone in this anymore."—
Informant 6

These peer support networks allowed teachers to navigate the complexities of their profession while maintaining a sense of solidarity with others who faced similar challenges. This camaraderie was essential when the broader educational system failed to offer meaningful support or recognition for teachers' efforts. In addition to peer support, some teachers also emphasized the role of mentorship in their personal growth. They described how having a mentor—either formally or informally—allowed them to build their confidence, improve their teaching practices, and feel more empowered in their work.

While mentorship and peer support networks are invaluable, informants suggested that these relationships could be enhanced through formalized support within educational planning. Informant 8 stated

"Mentorship programs need to be more structured. They shouldn't just be left to chance. If we had clear policies and support for mentorship, more teachers would have access to this kind of support, especially those who are new or isolated."

Additionally, Informant 14 expressed

"It would be great if educational planning included designated time for peer collaboration. Teachers often don't have the time or space to meet with their colleagues. If we had institutionalized peer support, we could learn from each other and feel more connected."

By integrating mentorship and peer support into educational planning, schools could provide teachers with more structured opportunities for collaboration and professional growth. This could encourage a greater community spirit among educators, helping them to feel more supported and empowered in their work.

Discussion

The findings from this research are consistent with a growing body of literature that highlights the systemic nature of educational marginalization and the potential for educational planning to act as a strategic tool for inclusivity. This research, like [Savitha et al. \(2025\)](#), illuminates the profound ways marginalized groups—whether students or educators—are excluded from the decision-making processes shaping their educational experiences. The participants in this research echoed a critical concern: the lack of meaningful inclusion in the

development of educational policies. Teachers felt disempowered, their perspectives often dismissed by top-down administrative structures.

This mirrors the findings of Teshome et al. (2022) and Wang & Chang (2025), who also emphasize that top-down policies, when not inclusive, perpetuate the marginalization of both educators and learners. Savitha et al. (2025) highlighted that when considered holistically and inclusively, educational learning can directly address these imbalances by giving voice to marginalized groups and ensuring their needs are accounted for in the planning process. The key argument from this research is that educational planning must shift from being a bureaucratic task to a tool for dismantling systemic exclusion.

A significant takeaway from this research is that marginalized groups, particularly those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, are often sidelined in educational planning processes, which reflects similar findings in the work of Erbas (2021) and Kim et al. (2021). They both argue that exclusion occurs at the student level and within institutional structures, where educational policies are made without a deep understanding of local needs or the lived experiences of teachers and students. As reported by the informants, the lack of professional recognition corresponds with the work of Messiou (2012), who suggested that marginalized educators are often overlooked in professional development initiatives. Without tailored educational planning that considers these needs, systemic inequities are perpetuated.

Moreover, the findings of this research highlight that educational policies and practices in Indonesia are shaped by a framework that emphasizes inclusivity on paper but fails to deliver on the ground. This paradox, where the nation's foundational ideology promotes equality through Pancasila but often overlooks marginalized communities, aligns with the observations made by Nur et al. (2022) and Setiyawan & Maulida (2024). These authors stress that the disconnection between policy ideals and real-world practices creates contradictions in the educational system, leading to marginalization despite inclusive policies. In this sense, the findings of this research reaffirm the notion that educational planning must be designed with inclusivity in mind and be implemented to effectively address the structural inequalities present within the educational landscape (Ochieng & Waithanji Ngware, 2023).

Furthermore, the research findings emphasize the critical role that teachers' voices play in shaping the educational landscape. The informants expressed frustration with policies created without sufficient consultation with those on the ground. This resonates with the findings of Green et al. (2023) and Rubel & McCloskey (2021), who argue that educational planning processes that fail to include the perspectives of educators are less likely to meet the actual needs of students. These scholars suggest that when educators are actively involved in the planning process, the resulting policies are more contextually relevant and have a greater potential to address disparities. Therefore, the research suggests that by incorporating teacher input, educational planning can become a more dynamic tool for change that actively confronts the power dynamics embedded within the educational system.

In examining the potential of educational planning to solve educational marginalization, the research also aligns with Thiem and Dasgupta (2022), who argue that planning should be considered a long-term, forward-looking strategy rather than a reactive response to current issues. The research highlights that educational planning can preemptively address marginalized groups' needs by designing inherently inclusive systems from the start. This anticipatory approach to educational planning ensures that marginalized students are not

simply the recipients of remedial measures but are actively integrated into the learning process through thoughtful, inclusive design. This aligns with [Sorkos and Magos \(2022\)](#), who advocate for planning that proactively addresses inequalities rather than reacting to them once they become apparent. One critical aspect of the research findings is the recognition that if implemented correctly, educational planning can create more opportunities for professional growth among marginalized educators. Informants expressed that current professional development programs were inadequate and disconnected from the realities of their teaching environments.

This points to a gap in the educational planning process identified in various studies, including [Cabral \(2023\)](#), who suggests that professional development initiatives should be more personalized and aligned with teachers' immediate needs. In this sense, educational planning can be a powerful tool for improving teaching quality and teacher retention, particularly in marginalized communities where resources are often scarce. Finally, the research highlights a key gap in the current educational planning discourse that [Beck \(2020\)](#) and [Savitha et al. \(2025\)](#) both note: the underutilization of educational planning as a central mechanism for dismantling marginalization.

While much of the research on marginalization has focused on policy-level solutions or grassroots pedagogical reforms, this research emphasizes the importance of embedding inclusivity at the planning stage. By integrating a diverse range of voices, particularly those of marginalized groups, into the educational planning process, educational systems can create more equitable and sustainable solutions to the challenges of marginalization. This insight aligns with [Kurniawan et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Septiarti et al. \(2022\)](#), who emphasize that marginalized communities should not just be the subjects of educational policy but active participants in shaping those policies.

Conclusion

This research sheds light on educators' experiences of marginalization, emphasizing how exclusion from decision-making, lack of professional recognition, and limited growth opportunities have significantly impacted their professional identity and teaching practices. The findings reveal that these challenges, often rooted in institutional structures, can be effectively addressed through a comprehensive approach to educational planning. By positioning educational planning as a transformative tool, this research argues that it can create more inclusive, supportive environments where educators are actively involved in the planning and decision-making processes that shape their teaching contexts.

The main themes—Experiences of Marginalization, Impact of Marginalization on Teaching Practice, and Strategies for Reclaiming Agency—all emphasize the value of an inclusive and participatory approach to educational planning. Teachers expressed the need for their voices to be heard in decision-making processes, for greater recognition of their contributions, and for more targeted professional development opportunities that align with their on-the-ground realities. When re-envisioned as a proactive, inclusive strategy, educational planning can address these concerns by fostering an environment where teachers are empowered and recognized as key stakeholders in shaping education policy and practice.

The implications of this research are clear: policymakers and educational administrators must adopt a more inclusive approach to educational planning, involving teachers in key decisions that affect their teaching environment. This inclusion will give teachers a sense of ownership but also improve the quality of educational outcomes. Furthermore, educational planning should be continuous, providing teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities that align with their needs and teaching realities. To address systemic marginalization, educational systems must focus on dismantling exclusionary structures by implementing planning that emphasizes teacher agency and recognition. Further exploring how different participatory planning models can be applied in various educational settings would provide valuable insights for future research. Comparative studies across regions could also reveal the effectiveness of inclusive planning in reducing marginalization and improving teacher satisfaction and student outcomes.

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Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interest.

Use of AI Statement

The authors declared that they had not used any AI tools in their manuscript preparation and submission.

Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Nani Hartini	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Widaningsih		✓					✓	✓		✓		✓		
Wulan Garnasih	✓		✓			✓					✓		✓	

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

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

Data Availability

The data supporting this research findings are available on request from the corresponding author [N.H]. The data, which contains information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, is not publicly available due to certain restrictions.

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