

Rooted Mediation and Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Muslim-Minority *Madrasah*

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ABSTRACT

Faith-based schools in religious minority settings must sustain their educational identity while engaging with cultural plurality. Although culturally responsive teaching research has examined racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in public schools, it rarely explains how teachers in minority madrasahs negotiate religious boundaries or how their relational practices become institutionally sustainable. This study adopts Gay's Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework and explores how teachers sustain Islamic educational commitments while engaging with local culture in a Muslim-minority setting. This study used descriptive phenomenology at an Islamic elementary school in Tabanan, Bali, Indonesia. Six teachers were the primary participants. The principal and two senior staff members provided institutional triangulation, while the parents and community perspectives supplied contextual information. The phenomenological analysis of the in-depth semi-structured interviews involved bracketing, meaning units, thematic structures, and a composite essence of the phenomenon. Five interconnected themes were identified: rooted moral presence, bounded cultural translation, context-sensitive pedagogical justice, reflective professional becoming, and movement from relational adaptation to institutional sustainability. Together, these themes constitute rooted mediation and portray teachers as rooted mediators who participate without assimilating, maintain religious distinction without hostility, and combine common academic expectations with differentiated support for students. This study extends CRT by conceptualizing boundary work as a central practice in faith-based minority education and introducing bounded cultural translation as its contextual expression. It also links teacher responsiveness to Sustainable Educational Development through the culture/pluralism pathway. The findings suggest that mentoring, collective reflection, case documentation, staff induction, and supportive leadership are needed to transform tacit individual expertise into renewable institutional capacity while preserving teachers' judgement and religious integrity.

Keywords: cultural pluralism, descriptive phenomenology, educational sustainability, Islamic elementary education, culturally responsive teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

In multireligious societies, *madrasahs* combine academic and Islamic learning while mediating encounters among religious identity, local culture, and coexistence.¹ This responsibility is especially consequential in Muslim-minority settings such as Tabanan, Bali, where madrasah curricula interact with Balinese local wisdom and interfaith relations.² Communal calendars, customary-religious ceremonies, everyday language, and neighborhood relations can influence attendance, school–family communication, classroom examples, and explanations of difference.³ These interactions shape what students recognize as legitimate knowledge, respectful conduct, and belonging. Therefore, the challenge exceeds presenting tolerance as curriculum content. Islamic education must preserve religious commitments while building just and dignified relationships with surrounding cultures. In Indonesia’s multireligious system, this requires contextualization that pursues unity without erasing religious differences within everyday institutional and pedagogical practice and wider social relationships.⁴

Teachers are instructors and visible madrasah representatives in the study. Everyday decisions—greeting neighbors, responding to local events, managing culturally related absences, selecting classroom examples, and assessing students—may strengthen belonging or create distance. Culturally responsive teaching is associated with teacher–student relationships and school belonging, although self-efficacy alone does not guarantee relationships.⁵ Indonesian evidence likewise shows that teachers value culturally responsive practice, while confidence, training, curricular flexibility, resources, and administrative support condition implementation.⁶ Therefore, responsive action exceeds technical knowledge. Teachers’ diversity beliefs, self-efficacy, and professional learning shape their

¹ Widya Aulia Zahra, “Quality Education through Pesantren, Madrasahs, and Islamic Schools in Globalization Dynamics,” *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.21070/ijis.v13i3.1776>; King Alizon Camral, “Lived Experiences of Muslim Students in Secular and Islamic Educational Institutions in the Southern Philippines,” *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 45, no. 7 (August 22, 2025): 870–79, <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.450707>.

² Nadlir Nadlir et al., “Building Harmony through a Local Wisdom-Based Curriculum at a Madrasah in a Muslim Minority Setting,” *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (April 21, 2026): 387–405, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v9i2.322>; Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya et al., “Menyama Braya : Balinese Hindu-Muslim Ethnoreligious Construction in the Creation of Peace Education,” *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 1 (December 31, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2237289>.

³ Nadlir et al., “Building Harmony through a Local Wisdom-Based Curriculum at a Madrasah in a Muslim Minority Setting.”

⁴ Tracey Yani Harjatanaya, “Contextualising Religious Education in Multi-Religious Indonesia to Achieve Unity-in-Religious Diversity,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 46, no. 3 (July 3, 2025): 488–506, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2025.2450958>.

⁵ Francesca Ialuna, Sauro Civitillo, and Philipp Jugert, “Culturally Responsive Teaching, Teacher-Student Relationship and School Belongingness: A Multi-Informant Study in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms,” *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 47 (August 2024): 100839, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2024.100839>.

⁶ Tustiyana Windiyani et al., “Elementary Teachers’ Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study,” *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research* 12, no. 3 (September 11, 2025): 488–98, <https://doi.org/10.20448/jeelr.v12i3.7396>.

enactment.⁷ Their lived experiences matter because normative commitments, situational judgement, tacit knowledge, emotion, and uncertainty converge in practice.⁸

This study adopts Gay's Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework.⁹ Gay defines CRT as the use of students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and reference frames to make learning relevant and effective.¹⁰ Its dimensions include cultural knowledge, relevant curricula, caring, cross-cultural communication and congruent instruction. Indonesian studies connect responsive teaching with local knowledge, contextualized materials, community engagement and institutional support.¹¹ CRT neither decorates lessons with cultural artifacts nor uncritically accepts local practice. It examines how teachers interpret context, build relationships, maintain expectations, and exercise judgement without relinquishing Islamic commitments. This distinction matters because research may reduce responsiveness to isolated strategies while neglecting the cultural knowledge and systems shaping teachers' actions.¹² Moreover, CRT is multidimensional and cannot be represented adequately by a single technique or teacher self-report.¹³

Applying CRT in a minority madrasah creates tension. Local practices combine social, cultural, customary, and ritual dimensions, whose boundaries may remain unclear to teachers. In Bali, Hindu–Muslim coexistence and local-wisdom curricula illustrate the possibilities and demands of such encounters.¹⁴ Defensive responses may foster isolation, while unreflective adaptation may obscure institutional identity. Responsiveness therefore requires boundary work: determining what can be shared, translated, adapted, or respectfully declined. Pluralistic Islamic education allows religious commitment to coexist with openness, dialogue, and equal citizenship.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it must distinguish the cultural and religious

⁷ Meghan Comstock et al., "A Culturally Responsive Disposition: How Professional Learning and Teachers' Beliefs About and Self-Efficacy for Culturally Responsive Teaching Relate to Instruction," *AERA Open* 9 (January 7, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221140092>.

⁸ L. O. Enow, "How Efficiently Are We Using Our Understanding of the Tacit Dimension of Teaching?," *Review of Education* 11, no. 2 (August 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3411>; Misrah Mohamed, Radzuwan Ab Rashid, and Marwan Harb Alqaryouti, "Conceptualizing the Complexity of Reflective Practice in Education," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (October 19, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1008234>.

⁹ Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Gay; Geneva Gay, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching," *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 2 (March 1, 2002): 106–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003>.

¹¹ Laela Hikmah Nurbatra and Masyhud Masyhud, "Infusing Culturally Responsive Teaching in Higher Education: Insights for Multicultural Education in Indonesia," *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research* 3, no. 4 (November 7, 2022): 722–30, <https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v3i4.321>; Windiyani et al., "Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study."

¹² Wen-Chia Chang and Kara Mitchell Viesca, "Preparing Teachers for Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogy (CRP): A Critical Review of Research," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 124, no. 2 (February 14, 2022): 197–224, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221086676>.

¹³ Meredith P. Franco, Jessika H. Bottiani, and Catherine P. Bradshaw, "Teachers' Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students' Experience of Warm Demand," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 76 (March 2024): 102241, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2023.102241>.

¹⁴ Nadlir et al., "Building Harmony through a Local Wisdom-Based Curriculum at a Madrasah in a Muslim Minority Setting"; Raya et al., "Menyama Braya : Balinese Hindu-Muslim Ethnoreligious Construction in the Creation of Peace Education."

¹⁵ Abdul Mu'ti, "Pluralistic Islamic Religious Education: A Vision for Indonesia," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 21, no. 2 (April 3, 2023): 121–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2023.2200280>.

dimensions of plurality rather than treating them as interchangeable.¹⁶ Because CRT scholarship predominantly examines racial, ethnic, or linguistic diversity in public classrooms, teachers' experiences of negotiating social participation, cultural translation, and faith-based identity within religious-minority madrasahs remain insufficiently understood.¹⁷

This problem concerns educational sustainability. Here, Sustainable Educational Development provides a contribution horizon through the culture/pluralism pathway, not a second theoretical framework. Beyond environmental concerns, sustainability denotes a community's capacity to maintain and renew identity, social relationships, learning equity, and institutional capabilities over time. Culturally responsive pedagogy supports sustainable futures by recognizing diversity, widening participation, and developing agency within an interdependent world.¹⁸ Indonesian teachers value integrating CRT and Education for Sustainable Development, but confidence and implementation are constrained by training, curricular flexibility, resources, and administrative support.¹⁹ Sustainable culture/pluralism practices, therefore, cannot depend on individual competence alone. Their continuity requires collective reflection, professional learning, documentation, leadership support, and institutional learning preserving situated knowledge across personnel changes.²⁰

Existing research examines CRT competence, dispositions, self-efficacy, training, and outcomes.²¹ Indonesian studies emphasize implementation.²² Less attention has been paid to how teachers interpret cultural ambiguity, revise mistakes, and understand themselves relationally. This matters because decisions in plural settings resist linear rules. Teachers use tacit knowledge, remembered encounters, relationships, and normative boundaries revealed through reflection.²³ Experience shows that judgement develops across encounters rather than from abstract rules. Studies seldom distinguish individual adaptations from institutional

¹⁶ Mehmet H. Tuna, "Fundamentals of a Pluralism-Fostering Islamic Religious Education: Navigating Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Plurality," *Religious Education* 119, no. 4 (August 7, 2024): 321–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2024.2384690>.

¹⁷ Chang and Viesca, "Preparing Teachers for Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogy (CRP): A Critical Review of Research."

¹⁸ Rachel Bowden, "Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Sustainable Futures: Learning from a European Teacher Education Project," *Education Sciences* 15, no. 6 (May 23, 2025): 647, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15060647>.

¹⁹ Windiyani et al., "Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study."

²⁰ Katia Ciampa and Dana Reisboard, "Empowering Teacher Educators: Advancing Culturally Responsive Practices Through Professional Development," *Action in Teacher Education* 46, no. 4 (October 21, 2024): 350–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2024.2357088>; Silvia Handayani, Lewes Poddell, and Tony Yeigh, "Participants' Experiences in Heutagogy Teacher Professional Education in Indonesia," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 48, no. 6 (January 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.14221/1835-517X.5739>.

²¹ Ciampa and Reisboard, "Empowering Teacher Educators: Advancing Culturally Responsive Practices Through Professional Development"; Ialuna, Civitillo, and Jugert, "Culturally Responsive Teaching, Teacher-Student Relationship and School Belongingness: A Multi-Informant Study in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms"; Judy Paulick, Alexa M. Quinn, and Charlotte D. Blain, "Developing Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy through Engaged, Asset-Based Teacher Preparation," *Teaching Education* 35, no. 1 (January 2, 2024): 61–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2023.2215166>.

²² Handayani, Poddell, and Yeigh, "Participants' Experiences in Heutagogy Teacher Professional Education in Indonesia"; Nurbatra and Masyhud, "Infusing Culturally Responsive Teaching in Higher Education: Insights for Multicultural Education in Indonesia"; Windiyani et al., "Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study."

²³ Enow, "How Efficiently Are We Using Our Understanding of the Tacit Dimension of Teaching?"; Mohamed, Rashid, and Alqaryouti, "Conceptualizing the Complexity of Reflective Practice in Education."

capacities sustaining practice after staff changes.²⁴ Phenomenology illuminates these processes without reducing teachers to implementers or indicators.²⁵

This study explores teachers' lived experiences of enacting Islamic education in an elementary madrasah within a culturally and religiously plural environment. This study asks: ***How do teachers in a madrasah located in a Muslim-minority setting experience and make meaning of sustaining Islamic educational commitments while responding to local cultural plurality, and what relational and institutional conditions shape those experiences?*** Descriptive phenomenology centers teachers' lived experiences, while institutional and social information clarifies their context. Theoretically, the study extends CRT into the underexamined context of a minority madrasah. Empirically, it develops a context-sensitive account of religious identity, pedagogical judgement, and intercultural relationships. Practically, it connects teachers' experiences with institutional conditions for sustainable educational development through the culture/pluralism pathway.

METHOD

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design to examine teachers' everyday experiences of Islamic education, local cultural plurality, and institutional support. Phenomenology was appropriate because the inquiry concerned the structure and meaning of shared experiences rather than the frequency of predefined attitudes. Phenomenological educational research should remain centered on concrete lived episodes, participants' meaning-making, and the conditions through which experience becomes intelligible.²⁶ The descriptive synthesis was interpreted theoretically only in the Discussion; culturally responsive teaching was not an a priori coding framework.

This study was conducted at MI Al-Amin (pseudonym), an Islamic elementary school in Tabanan Regency, Bali. The madrasah operates in a predominantly Hindu, culturally plural environment in which Muslims constitute a religious minority. Therefore, it provided an information-rich setting for examining how teachers maintained Islamic educational commitments while engaging local language, customary schedules, relationships, and cultural practices. Field engagement extended across approximately four months, with interviews concentrated in May and June 2025, and included familiarization, interviews, non-participant observation, document examination, and interpretive checking.

²⁴ Windiyani et al., "Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study."

²⁵ Ahmed Ali Alhazmi and Angelica Kaufmann, "Phenomenological Qualitative Methods Applied to the Analysis of Cross-Cultural Experience in Novel Educational Social Contexts," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (April 25, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.785134>.

²⁶ Alhazmi and Kaufmann; Shefaly Shorey and Esperanza Debby Ng, "Examining Characteristics of Descriptive Phenomenological Nursing Studies: A Scoping Review," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 78, no. 7 (July 11, 2022): 1968–79, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15244>.

Participants and Selection

Criterion-based purposive selection was used because phenomenological participants require direct, sustained experience and the capacity to describe it in depth.²⁷ Six teachers (T1–T6) who had served the madrasah for at least three years were selected. The group comprised four women and two men, aged 31–49, with 6–21 years of experience. They represented religious, language, social studies, science, and mathematics teaching, including classroom teachers, an academic coordinator, and a religious-programme mentor. This variation enabled the examination of a shared phenomenon without assuming identical professional trajectories.

Only the teachers constituted the phenomenological sample. The principal and two long-serving staff clarified policy, leadership, and institutional routines. Two parents and two community figures provided information about school–family communication and community relationships. These accounts supported contextual and institutional triangulation; they were not treated as constituents of the teachers’ composite experience. Six primary participants were within the range used for intensive phenomenological inquiry, in which experiential relevance and narrative depth took precedence over population representation.²⁸ Analytic adequacy was judged through narrative depth, recurrence, and the capacity to construct textural and structural descriptions.

Data Generation

Data were generated primarily through individual semi-structured interviews in Indonesian. Teacher interviews occurred from May 14–30, 2025, and lasted 53–61 minutes; contextual interviews occurred from June 3–18 and lasted 42–70 minutes. Broad prompts invited accounts of participants’ professional journeys and concrete moments when religious or cultural differences affected their work. Probes explored feelings, uncertainty, responses to local customs, culturally situated teaching and assessment, institutional support, negative experiences, and professional continuity. This episode-focused format helped distinguish lived experience from general opinion.

With consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes recorded the setting, pauses, emotional changes, metaphors, contradictory accounts, and points for verification. Post-interview memos distinguished between direct experience, participant interpretation, and preliminary researcher interpretation. Non-participant observations of routines, classrooms, staff interactions, meetings, and religious habituation supplied contextual evidence but were not coded as constituents of teachers’ lived experiences. School vision documents, calendars, meeting records, lesson plans, character programmes, parent communications, and professional development records contextualized claims about policy and routine. These sources were consulted after the teacher-based synthesis and did not substitute for the lived accounts.

²⁷ Niroj Dahal et al., “Participant Selection Procedures in Qualitative Research: Experiences and Some Points for Consideration,” *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics* 9 (December 12, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2024.1512747>.

²⁸ Dahal et al.

Phenomenological Analysis

The analysis proceeded concurrently with data generation. Each teacher transcript was read repeatedly, while assumptions about religious harmony, cultural adaptation, and leadership were bracketed. Statements describing concrete experiences were horizontalized and divided into meaning units, which were formulated into experiential meanings and organized in QualCoder 3.8.²⁹ The software supported retrieval and comparison but did not generate interpretations of the results. Individual textural descriptions of what was experienced and structural descriptions of the conditions that shaped it were then developed. Attention was paid to hesitation, tension, disagreement, and cases complicating emerging patterns.

Each narrative was preserved before cross-participant clustering so that frequently repeated statements did not automatically outweigh less common but experientially consequential accounts. Therefore, theme inclusion depended on explanatory relevance to the phenomenon, not numerical prevalence alone. The six accounts were compared to identify recurrent structures and meaningful variations. Related meanings were clustered into themes, and textural and structural descriptions were integrated into a composite essence of the phenomenon. Congruence among design, bracketing, interviews, analysis, and presentation is important because inconsistencies can weaken the descriptive phenomenology.³⁰ Only after the teacher-based synthesis was constructed were institutional and contextual sources consulted to examine the plausibility and clarify the conditions. Gay's culturally responsive teaching and the culture/pluralism pathway of Sustainable Educational Development were used to interpret—not predetermine—the synthesis. The reported quotations were translated into English and checked against the Indonesian transcripts for semantic equivalence.

Trustworthiness, Reflexivity, and Research Ethics

Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability rather than a single validation technique.³¹ Credibility was supported by sustained engagement, cross-participant comparison, negative-case attention, and source triangulation. Participants commented on concise summaries to identify misrepresentation and provide clarification, not to treat agreement as proof of validity.³² Thick contextual description supports judgements of transferability, while coding decisions, theme revisions, memos, and source comparisons formed an audit trail.

²⁹ Alexios Brailas, Elena Tragou, and Konstantinos Papachristopoulos, "Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis and Coding with QualCoder," *American Journal of Qualitative Research* 7, no. 3 (April 29, 2023): 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/13230>.

³⁰ Shorey and Ng, "Examining Characteristics of Descriptive Phenomenological Nursing Studies: A Scoping Review."

³¹ Sirwan Khalid Ahmed, "The Pillars of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health* 2 (April 2024): 100051, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gjmedi.2024.100051>.

³² Nicola Lloyd, Nerida Hyett, and Amanda Kenny, "To Member Check or Not to Member Check? An Evaluation of Member Checking in an Interpretive Descriptive Study," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 23 (January 15, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241301383>.

Reflexivity was maintained through an assumption log and post-interview memos, particularly regarding the tendency to equate adaptation with responsiveness or portray interreligious relations as uniformly harmonious. Reflexivity requires examining how researchers' assumptions and relationships shape their inquiries.³³ The madrasah authorized access, and participants received information about recording, voluntary participation, withdrawal, and the intended use of their accounts before consenting. MI Al-Amin is a pseudonym; participant codes replaced names, characteristics were reported in aggregate, and identifying details were minimized. The electronic materials were stored in password-protected files for research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis generated five interrelated themes that describe how teachers experienced their work in an Islamic elementary school situated within the culturally and religiously plural environment of Tabanan, Bali. These themes were (1) rooted moral presence, (2) bounded cultural translation, (3) context-sensitive pedagogical justice, (4) reflective professional becoming, and (5) the movement from relational adaptation towards institutional sustainability. These themes should not be interpreted as discrete variables or sequential stages. Together, they form a phenomenological structure through which teachers sustained Islamic educational identity, interpreted students' cultural and family lifeworlds, and revised their professional practice.

Six teachers were the sole phenomenological participants. Accounts from the principal and senior staff clarified the organizational conditions, while parent and community accounts contextualized school-family communication and community relationships. None of these contextual sources contributed to the theme structure. Observations and documents were consulted after the teacher-based synthesis to examine plausibility and clarify context. All excerpts were translated from Indonesian, and participant codes were preserved to maintain anonymity.

Experiencing Islamic Identity through Everyday Conduct

Teachers experienced working in a Muslim-minority environment as a form of heightened moral visibility. Their conduct was perceived not merely as personal behavior but as something that could represent the madrasah and, more broadly, Islam, to the surrounding community. This awareness did not emerge immediately. Several teachers described it as a meaning that developed through everyday encounters with neighbors, families, and local community members. T1, who had moved to Bali from a Muslim-majority area, initially assumed that her primary responsibility would be teaching Islamic subject matter. However, over time, she became increasingly conscious of how teachers spoke, greeted neighbors, and responded to community events was being observed beyond the school. A neighbor's casual

³³ Francisco M. Olmos-Vega et al., "A Practical Guide to Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: AMEE Guide No. 149," *Medical Teacher* 45, no. 3 (March 4, 2023): 241–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>.

remark that madrasah students were polite became a formative moment in her professional self-understanding. She explained:

"I felt that I had become a small face of Islam in the surrounding community. The way I spoke, greeted the school's neighbours, and even the way our students behaved outside the school was often seen as representing the madrasah." (T1)³⁴

The phrase "a small face of Islam" conveys both responsibility and vulnerability. T1 felt that ordinary actions could influence the perception of the madrasah. Consequently, teaching was experienced not only as a profession but also as a social trust.

A similar meaning appeared in T6's account. As a senior teacher, she emphasized that Islamic identity was most convincingly expressed through moral conduct rather than through symbolic display alone.

"Islamic identity cannot be adequately shown through symbols. What matters more is the character. When students have good character, other people will see Islam through their behaviour." (T6)³⁵

This moral visibility does not remove the boundaries of religious identity. Instead, teachers described a way of remaining explicitly Muslim while communicating respect for those who practised other religions: When students asked why their neighbours worshipped or celebrated religious festivals differently, teachers generally avoided responses that would encourage hostility or feelings of superiority. They began with students' experiences of friendship and neighborhood life before connecting those experiences to Islamic teachings about respect.

However, the experience was not always harmonious. T1 recalled feeling irritated when a village religious procession temporarily closed the road and disrupted the school's schedule. Her emotional response changed when she recognized that local residents were carrying out obligations meaningful to them, just as Muslims observed their own religious obligations. Assistance from residents who helped the students cross the road safely further complicated her initial interpretation of the event. Reflecting on the episode, she concluded:

"I learned that maintaining identity does not mean maintaining distance. Sometimes we need to be present so that people can understand who we are." (T1)³⁶

Teachers experienced Islamic identity as a rooted moral presence. They maintained religious commitments while seeking to make those commitments socially intelligible through restraint, respectful communication, and exemplary behavior. This theme represents the meanings attributed by teachers to their professional positions; it does not imply that all community members necessarily interpreted the madrasah in the same way.

³⁴ Interview with T1, Akidah Akhlak teacher (11 years of service), Teachers' Room, MI Al-Amin Tabanan, 14 May 2025, 09:00–09:55 WITA.

³⁵ Interview with T6, Al-Qur'an Hadith teacher and religious-programme mentor (21 years of service), Prayer Room, MI Al-Amin Tabanan, 30 May 2025, 08:30–09:31 WITA.

³⁶ Interview with T1.

Connecting Local Lifeworlds with the Curriculum

The second theme concerns how teachers used local culture and students' everyday experiences as pedagogical resources in their teaching. Across different subjects, teachers described drawing on familiar practices, institutions, landscapes, and forms of social organization to make curriculum concepts meaningful. However, the use of culture was consistently selective and limited. Teachers distinguished the social and educational meanings of local practices from their ritual significance. T1 used the Balinese practice of *ngayah* when teaching the Islamic concept of *ta' awun*. Rather than discussing the religious dimensions of the practice, she focused on voluntary work, mutual assistance and communal responsibility. She followed a similar approach when teaching neighborly conduct, drawing on cooperation within village communities because it was recognizable to students. T2 employed decision-making within families and *banjar* communities when teaching *syura lessons*. Students were asked to describe how decisions were made in their homes or neighborhoods and then compare those experiences with deliberation in Islamic teachings. According to T2, students became more active because the discussion began with a social structure they encountered in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, he emphasized that he selected universal social values such as responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and environmental care rather than incorporating ritual elements into *Fikih* instruction. T3 provided a similar account for Bahasa Indonesia lessons. She used a short text about the *subak* system to discuss cooperation in water management and connected the reading to the value of *amanah* (trustworthiness). She also invited students to write descriptions of their neighborhoods. Many wrote about rice fields, temples, *banjar*, and other community activities. While she might have previously asked students to replace examples that did not resemble the predominantly Muslim settings represented in textbooks, she later used their writing to discuss the diversity of their social environment.

This adjustment initially created some uncertainty. T3 was worried that replacing textbook illustrations with local examples might be interpreted as changing the prescribed material. Discussion with colleagues helped her distinguish the curricular value from the example through which it was communicated:

"Maintaining Islamic values does not mean maintaining every example in the textbook. The values remained the same. Only the way it is explained changes." (T3)³⁷

The same pattern crossed the disciplinary boundaries. T4 used students' accounts of cooperation in *banjar* activities to explore mutual assistance, responsibility, and civic care in Pancasila Education. T5 incorporated harvest distribution and water management into mathematical word problems because these situations were familiar to the students. He clarified that local life was used as the context of a problem, rather than as a separate cultural topic. These experiences indicate that culture entered instruction through translation rather

³⁷ Interview with T3, Bahasa Indonesia and IPAS teacher (6 years of service), School Health Unit Room, MI Al-Amin Tabanan, 19 May 2025, 10:15–11:08 WITA.

than direct incorporation. Teachers identified a familiar cultural or social practice, selected an educationally relevant meaning, and connected it with a curricular or Islamic concept. At the same time, they maintained a boundary around religious rituals. This boundary was also apparent when the school received invitations to community events containing both social and religious elements. Teachers discussed whether participation would express respect or risk crossing religious boundaries. In one case, the decision was to attend the social component but not participate in the ritual.

However, not all teachers immediately accepted this compromise. Some considered it too permissive, whereas others regarded it as overly restrictive. This disagreement is important because it shows that bounded responsiveness was not a fixed rule or an uncontested consensus. It was a negotiated professional judgement through which teachers sought to remain culturally present without abandoning the religious purposes of the madrasah.

Context-Sensitive Pedagogical Justice: Understanding before Judging

Teachers' responsiveness was not limited to the selection of culturally familiar examples. It also shaped how they interpreted students' attendance, task completion, behavior, and academic performance. Several teachers recalled initially treating visible difficulties as evidence of low discipline. Conversations with students and their families subsequently revealed circumstances that were not apparent in the classroom. T3 assigned a group project to be completed during the weekend. When two groups had not finished by Monday, she reprimanded them. She later learned that most members had been assisting their families with village activities. The discovery produced a strong emotional response:

"I was ashamed. I felt that I had judged the students too quickly." (T3)³⁸

The experience changed her subsequent planning. She began checking school and community calendars before assigning projects that required substantial work outside school. The learning objective was not removed, but the timing and organization of the task became more attentive to students' social circumstances. T4 underwent a similar transformation as a class teacher. When a student's academic performance declines, teachers initially assume that the student has become less committed. Home visits revealed that the student's father was ill and that the child helped the family almost every afternoon. T4 invited the subject teachers to discuss the case and allowed the student to complete the required work in stages. Reflecting on this experience, she stated the following:

"I learned that every number in the gradebook has a story that may not be visible." (T4)³⁹

For T4, fairness came to mean more than applying identical procedures to every student. In another case, the school granted a limited extension to a student whose family was involved in customary village obligations. Students remained responsible for completing the

³⁸ Interview with T3.

³⁹ Interview with T4, Pancasila Education teacher and Grade VI homeroom teacher (12 years of service), Grade VI Classroom, MI Al-Amin Tabanan, 22 May 2025, 09:00–10:00 WITA.

assignment, but the submission date was adjusted. T4 described this as learning that justice does not always mean treating everyone in precisely the same way.

Other teachers have reported comparable adjustments. T1 simplified an assignment and extended its completion period after speaking with the mother of a student whose father worked late in the tourism sector. T5 allowed a student who helped a family business to complete work at school after regular lessons. T6 temporarily prioritized listening and emotional support for a student whose parents had divorced before gradually reintroducing academic expectations.

These adaptations were not described as abandoning the standards. T5 made a clear distinction between expectations and the support provided to attain them.

"The standard remains the same. What changes is the support strategy so that the student has a fair opportunity to reach that standard." (T5)⁴⁰

Context-sensitive justice involves asking before judging, investigating circumstances hidden behind visible performance, and modifying the route through which students can complete learning requirements. However, the teachers did not always agree on the appropriate amount of flexibility. Some favored the uniform application of school rules, while others prioritized individual circumstances. Flexibility was consequently experienced as a matter of collective professional judgement rather than an automatic entitlement. The accounts suggest a continuing tension between procedural consistency and contextual fairness.

Reflective Professional Becoming: Learning through Tension and Error

The fourth theme captures the temporal and transformative nature of teachers' experiences. Cultural responsiveness was not presented as a competence that teachers already possessed when they entered the madrasah. It developed through irritation, uncertainty, mistaken judgements, disagreement, and unsuccessful programs. T1's movement from irritation about a disrupted schedule to recognizing the obligations of the surrounding community exemplified this process. T3's shame after reprimanding students altered her project planning. T4 moved from a rule-centered orientation towards a more contextual understanding of justice. T5 acknowledged that a school literacy programme did not operate consistently across classes, despite having been carefully planned.

These experiences became professionally formative when reflected upon rather than concealed. T5 explained that program evaluation was not framed as an attempt to identify an individual at fault:

"When something does not work, we are asked to evaluate it together. The purpose is not to find who was wrong, but to understand what needs to be improved." (T5)⁴¹

⁴⁰ Interview with T5, Mathematics teacher and academic-activities coordinator (15 years of service), Library, MI Al-Amin Tabanan, 26 May 2025, 13:10–14:08 WITA.

⁴¹ Interview with T5.

The teachers also described becoming more willing to listen to their students. T3 recognized that decisions could not be made exclusively from the teacher's standpoint, while T6 emphasized that teachers, like students, must continue to learn. Professional development was therefore experienced less as the accumulation of techniques and more as a change in how teachers interpreted students, culture, and their assumptions about them.

Negative and uncomfortable episodes were analytically significant. They prevented plurality from being represented as effortless harmony. Local activities sometimes disrupted schedules, cultural examples created uncertainty, families had competing obligations, and teachers disagreed about appropriate accommodation. The educational importance of the plural context lay not in the absence of conflict but in its capacity to prompt reflective revision. Teachers became more responsive when they reconsidered an initial interpretation and changed subsequent practice.

From Relational Adaptation towards Institutional Sustainability

Teachers locate their professional learning within a relational school environment. *Musyawarah*, peer assistance, private feedback, and non-blaming evaluation were repeatedly described as conditions that enabled teachers to discuss difficult cases and revise their decisions accordingly. Teachers generally felt able to propose contextual adaptations, although decisions affecting broader school policies were expected to be discussed collectively. T6 described a culture in which shortcomings were normally communicated privately, and teachers could improve without feeling humiliated. T5 likewise emphasized that the school's strength did not depend on all teachers possessing the same capabilities but on their willingness to learn from each other. These accounts positioned leadership less as direct control and more as the creation of space for reflection and professional judgement. The principal's contextual account converged with this pattern of findings. He described *musyawarah* as the preferred mechanism for significant decisions and encouraged senior teachers to support their younger colleagues. He also confirmed that mentoring occurred primarily through informal conversations following lessons or other school activities. Senior staff similarly described cooperation and discussion as important features of the school's working relationship.

However, the same accounts revealed a gap between relational learning and institutional continuity. T2 expressed the need for systematic cultural orientation for newly appointed teachers. T3 and T4 observed that lessons from difficult cases were rarely documented. T5 proposed creating a repository of good practices, while T6 argued that the experience of senior teachers should be recorded because "*many lessons are not written in books.*" T5 summarized the problem as follows:

"Many teachers' experiences remain only in their individual memories. The school still needs to improve the documentation of good practices so that new teachers do not have to repeat the same process." (T5)⁴²

⁴² Interview with T5.

The principal also acknowledged that the documentation had not been fully developed yet. Although reflection, mentoring, and collaborative problem-solving were present, much organizational knowledge continued to circulate informally in the study. This made adaptive practice dependent on the presence and memory of specific teachers and leaders in the school. Therefore, the findings do not indicate that institutional sustainability had already been achieved. Rather, they reveal both the relational foundations and the unresolved conditions of sustainability. *Musyawah*, mentoring, and reflective evaluation supported teachers' adaptation, but these practices required more systematic orientation, case documentation, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms if they were to remain available across changes in personnel.

Across the five themes, the composite essence of the experience can be expressed as becoming a rooted and grounded mediator. Teachers experienced their work as sustaining Islamic identity through moral exemplarity, reading the cultural and family worlds of students, translating local experience into instruction within explicit boundaries, and adjusting pedagogical procedures through contextual judgement. This professional orientation was continuously reconstructed through tension and dialogue. However, its continuity depended on whether individually accumulated experience could become shared, revisable, and transferable to organizational knowledge.

Discussion

Culturally responsive teaching in a Muslim-minority madrasah was neither the assimilation of Islamic education into dominant local culture nor the protection of identity through social withdrawal. Instead, teachers used local language, relationships, customs, and moral narratives while maintaining explicit limits around Islamic belief and ritual. Taken together, these practices constitute *rooted mediation*, enacted by teachers as *rooted mediators*. Its central mechanism is *bounded cultural translation*: cultural elements are connected, reinterpreted, or respectfully declined through pedagogical judgement. This interpretation corresponds with Gay's view of cultural knowledge as a teaching resource while contextualizing it for faith-based minority education. Rooted mediation also explains how responsiveness can support Sustainable Educational Development through the culture/pluralism pathway.⁴³ This framework differentiates three levels: rootedness names the normative anchor, mediation names the relational work of negotiating difference, and bounded translation names the pedagogical mechanism. Their conjunction explains why the same action may be responsive in one situation yet inappropriate in another, depending on purpose, relationship, and religious meaning.

⁴³ Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*; Gay, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching."

Bounded Cultural Translation as a Pluralistic Pedagogical Practice

Bounded cultural translation extends CRT beyond cultural knowledge, asset-oriented beliefs, curricular relevance, communication, and congruent instruction.⁴⁴ Indonesian studies position local knowledge as contextual material rather than as decorative content.⁴⁵ Teachers did not transfer culture into classrooms. They interpreted practices, identified pedagogical meanings, connected them with Islamic purposes, and assessed the theological or ritual boundaries. Responsiveness was based on professional judgement rather than cultural techniques.⁴⁶ This distinction avoids two reductions. Unrestricted incorporation risks assimilation, while construing difference solely as a threat detaches religious education from social life.⁴⁷ Teachers instead pursued participation without absorption and distinction without hostility. This aligns with pluralistic Islamic education and Balinese Hindu–Muslim coexistence grounded in conviction, dialogue, cooperation, and respect.⁴⁸ Local language, cooperation, respect for elders, and moral concerns became bridges, whereas incompatible practices were declined through explanation.

Bounded translation moves beyond surface inclusion. CRT weakens when reduced to artifacts or self-reported techniques, neglecting beliefs, power, and context.⁴⁹ Indonesian studies frame local knowledge as contextual pedagogy requiring institutional support.⁵⁰ Here, culture became an interpretive resource with articulated limits. Pluralism required neither erasing difference nor making differences instructionally equivalent.

Rooted Moral Presence and Relational Legitimacy

Rootedness frames Islamic identity as a publicly accountable educational commitment rather than a concealed private identity. Legitimacy emerges through *akhlak*—consistency, care, patience, fairness, and respectful speech. Extending Gay’s concept of caring and cross-cultural communication, ethical conduct renders minority identities socially trustworthy.⁵¹ This rooted openness connects conviction with respectful engagement in pluralistic Islamic

⁴⁴ Chang and Viesca, “Preparing Teachers for Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogy (CRP): A Critical Review of Research”; Franco, Bottiani, and Bradshaw, “Teachers’ Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students’ Experience of Warm Demand.”

⁴⁵ Nurbatra and Masyhud, “Infusing Culturally Responsive Teaching in Higher Education: Insights for Multicultural Education in Indonesia”; Windiyani et al., “Elementary Teachers’ Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study.”

⁴⁶ Tuna, “Fundamentals of a Pluralism-Fostering Islamic Religious Education: Navigating Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Plurality.”

⁴⁷ Harjatanaya, “Contextualising Religious Education in Multi-Religious Indonesia to Achieve Unity-in-Religious Diversity”; Tuna, “Fundamentals of a Pluralism-Fostering Islamic Religious Education: Navigating Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Plurality.”

⁴⁸ Mu’ti, “Pluralistic Islamic Religious Education: A Vision for Indonesia”; Nadlir et al., “Building Harmony through a Local Wisdom-Based Curriculum at a Madrasah in a Muslim Minority Setting”; Raya et al., “Menyama Braya : Balinese Hindu-Muslim Ethnoreligious Construction in the Creation of Peace Education.”

⁴⁹ Chang and Viesca, “Preparing Teachers for Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogy (CRP): A Critical Review of Research”; Comstock et al., “A Culturally Responsive Disposition: How Professional Learning and Teachers’ Beliefs About and Self-Efficacy for Culturally Responsive Teaching Relate to Instruction”; Franco, Bottiani, and Bradshaw, “Teachers’ Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students’ Experience of Warm Demand.”

⁵⁰ Nurbatra and Masyhud, “Infusing Culturally Responsive Teaching in Higher Education: Insights for Multicultural Education in Indonesia”; Windiyani et al., “Elementary Teachers’ Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study.”

⁵¹ Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*; Gay, “Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching.”

education.⁵² Rooted moral presence kept teachers identifiable as Muslim educators without superiority or identity dilution. Credibility rested on the congruence between values and encounters, reflecting Islamic education combining conviction and civic engagement.⁵³ CRT and close teacher–student relationships support school belonging.⁵⁴ The contribution is that belonging may strengthen when religious identity becomes ethically intelligible through conduct rather than invisible.

Pluralism was not effortless harmony. Teachers listened, explained, and sometimes declined participation without degrading others, thereby distinguishing cultural from religious differences.⁵⁵ Critical reflection exposed how identity, assumptions, authority, and experience shaped encounters.⁵⁶ Structured identity reflection can strengthen criticality, diversity beliefs, and CRT efficacy.⁵⁷ Reflection thus joined firmness with openness.

Context-Sensitive Pedagogical Justice

Context-sensitive pedagogical justice distinguishes equal standards from identical treatment. Adjusting language, tasks, timing, explanation, and emotional support created equitable routes towards shared goals without lowering expectations. This reflects CRT's asset-based connection between experience and academic participation.⁵⁸ It also resembles warm demand, where culturally responsive relationships combine care and academic insistence.⁵⁹ Justice was enacted when teachers preserved the purpose of a task while varying support. This differed from permissiveness because standards remained visible and from rigid equality because cultural and relational positions informed access to the standards. Responsive assessment considers the background and flexible opportunities to demonstrate mastery.⁶⁰ Therefore, contextual adjustment can protect fairness and the validity of educational judgement rather than create sympathy-based exceptions. Such judgements require multiple sources because self-reports alone are insufficient.⁶¹

⁵² Mu'ti, "Pluralistic Islamic Religious Education: A Vision for Indonesia"; Tuna, "Fundamentals of a Pluralism-Fostering Islamic Religious Education: Navigating Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Plurality."

⁵³ Mu'ti, "Pluralistic Islamic Religious Education: A Vision for Indonesia"; Harjatanaya, "Contextualising Religious Education in Multi-Religious Indonesia to Achieve Unity-in-Religious Diversity."

⁵⁴ Ialuna, Civitillo, and Jugert, "Culturally Responsive Teaching, Teacher-Student Relationship and School Belongingness: A Multi-Informant Study in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms."

⁵⁵ Tuna, "Fundamentals of a Pluralism-Fostering Islamic Religious Education: Navigating Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Plurality."

⁵⁶ Enow, "How Efficiently Are We Using Our Understanding of the Tacit Dimension of Teaching?"; Mohamed, Rashid, and Alqaryouti, "Conceptualizing the Complexity of Reflective Practice in Education."

⁵⁷ Jolina Ulbricht et al., "Fostering Culturally Responsive Teaching Through the Identity Project Intervention: A Qualitative Quasi-Experiment with Pre-Service Teachers," *Identity* 24, no. 4 (October 2024): 307–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2024.2361890>.

⁵⁸ Franco, Bottiani, and Bradshaw, "Teachers' Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students' Experience of Warm Demand"; Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*.

⁵⁹ Meredith P. Franco, Jessika H. Bottiani, and Catherine P. Bradshaw, "Assessing Teachers' Culturally Responsive Classroom Practice in PK–12 Schools: A Systematic Review of Teacher-, Student-, and Observer-Report Measures," *Review of Educational Research* 94, no. 5 (October 20, 2024): 743–98, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543231208720>; Ialuna, Civitillo, and Jugert, "Culturally Responsive Teaching, Teacher-Student Relationship and School Belongingness: A Multi-Informant Study in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms."

⁶⁰ Michael E. Walker et al., "Culturally Responsive Assessment: Provisional Principles," *ETS Research Report Series* 2023, no. 1 (December 6, 2023): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12374>.

⁶¹ Franco, Bottiani, and Bradshaw, "Teachers' Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students' Experience of Warm Demand."

Contextual judgement carries risks. Unstructured discretion can produce inconsistency and obscure evaluation. CRT-oriented agencies depend on purpose, competence, autonomy, reflexivity, professional learning, and support.⁶² Self-reports alone cannot establish responsive practice.⁶³ Clear goals, documentation, collegial consultation, and reviews can preserve responsiveness while preventing unaccountable improvisation.

From Reflective Becoming to Institutional Sustainability

Culturally responsive competence is developed through encounters, mistakes, dialogue, and reflection, not before employment. CRT enactment depends on diversity beliefs, self-efficacy, and professional learning,⁶⁴ while identity work strengthens reflection and efficacy.⁶⁵ Indonesian teacher education values metacognitive reflection and collaboration.⁶⁶ Technical instruction cannot reproduce routed mediation; teachers must interpret uncertainty and revise practice. Reflective professionals connect experience with sustainable educational development. Individually, sustainability means continued learning as cultures and student needs change; institutionally, practical knowledge must survive staff turnover. Mentoring supports tacit knowledge transfer among novice teachers,⁶⁷ while professional learning communities organize shared purpose, collaborative inquiry, trust, and collective responsibility.⁶⁸ Indonesian professional education similarly values reflection and collaborative capability development.⁶⁹ These mechanisms matter because competence remains experiential and informally transmitted. The madrasah had an emerging foundation, not a completed one. A culture/pluralism pathway requires local cultural-religious induction, senior–novice mentoring, case-based reflection, and a revisable decision repository. Mentoring can transfer experiential knowledge,⁷⁰ whereas professional learning communities organize inquiry and responsibility.⁷¹ These supports transform individual adaptation into organizational learning without standardizing culture into a checklist.

⁶² Mina Min et al., “What Empowers Teachers to Become Social Justice-Oriented Change Agents? Influential Factors on Teacher Agency toward Culturally Responsive Teaching,” *Education and Urban Society* 54, no. 5 (June 30, 2022): 560–84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131245211027511>; Mina Min and Rachel Nelson, “Exploring the Factors Influencing the Development of Teacher Agency for Culturally Responsive Teaching,” *International Journal on Social and Education Sciences* 6, no. 3 (August 12, 2024): 334–50, <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijonses.672>.

⁶³ Franco, Bottiani, and Bradshaw, “Teachers’ Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students’ Experience of Warm Demand.”

⁶⁴ Comstock et al., “A Culturally Responsive Disposition: How Professional Learning and Teachers’ Beliefs About and Self-Efficacy for Culturally Responsive Teaching Relate to Instruction.”

⁶⁵ Ulbricht et al., “Fostering Culturally Responsive Teaching Through the Identity Project Intervention: A Qualitative Quasi-Experiment with Pre-Service Teachers.”

⁶⁶ Handayani, Poddell, and Yeigh, “Participants’ Experiences in Heutagogy Teacher Professional Education in Indonesia.”

⁶⁷ Jiying Xu et al., “Mentoring and Tacit Knowledge Transfer in Novice Teachers From Chinese Middle Schools: Mediating Effect of Job Crafting,” *Frontiers in Education* 7 (July 15, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.772638>.

⁶⁸ Christopher Hudson, “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) Operation in Schools,” *Journal of Education* 204, no. 3 (July 24, 2024): 649–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574231197364>.

⁶⁹ Handayani, Poddell, and Yeigh, “Participants’ Experiences in Heutagogy Teacher Professional Education in Indonesia.”

⁷⁰ Xu et al., “Mentoring and Tacit Knowledge Transfer in Novice Teachers From Chinese Middle Schools: Mediating Effect of Job Crafting.”

⁷¹ Hudson, “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) Operation in Schools.”

This interpretation aligns with the sustainable educational futures of responsive pedagogy. Bowden identified commitments to participation, context, transformation, and questioning assumptions.⁷² Indonesian teachers value CRT–ESD integration, but training, curricular rigidity, resources, and administrative support constrain its implementation.⁷³ Therefore, sustainability requires sustained professional learning and institutional commitment, not isolated initiatives.⁷⁴ Professional learning communities institutionalize shared inquiry and responsibility,⁷⁵ whereas Indonesian teacher education highlights reflection and collaboration.⁷⁶ Sustainability denotes the capacity to preserve Islamic educational integrity, respond to local plurality, and renew practice.

Interpretive Limits

These propositions are analytically transferable but not statistically generalizable, offering contextual knowledge.⁷⁷ They describe one experiential structure in a faith-based minority setting, not a universal model of culturally responsive Islamic education. This single-madrasah study relies on adult accounts and cannot establish causal effects on achievement, belonging, or intergroup relations in children. Observations and documents contextualized narratives but did not form an independent classroom corpus of data. Self-reports incompletely represent culturally responsive practice.⁷⁸ Future studies should combine repeated observations, student interviews, comparative sites, and longitudinal inquiry. Longitudinal research could examine mentoring and institutional learning,⁷⁹ testing whether rooted mediation recurs across religious, regional and organizational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that culturally responsive Islamic education in a Muslim-minority setting is best understood as *rooted in mediation*. Teachers neither assimilated Islamic education into the surrounding culture nor protected their religious identity through withdrawal. They sustained Islamic commitments while engaging in plurality through moral visibility, selective cultural translation, contextual judgement, and reflective learning. The *rooted mediator* therefore represents a professional orientation in which fidelity to faith

⁷² Bowden, “Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Sustainable Futures: Learning from a European Teacher Education Project.”

⁷³ Windiyani et al., “Elementary Teachers’ Perceptions of Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education for Sustainable Development: A Cross-Cultural Study.”

⁷⁴ Youth European Commission: Directorate-General for Education Sport and Culture et al., *Teacher Education for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development – Analytical Report*, 2023, <https://doi.org/doi/10.2766/144189>.

⁷⁵ Hudson, “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) Operation in Schools.”

⁷⁶ Handayani, Peddell, and Yeigh, “Participants’ Experiences in Heutagogy Teacher Professional Education in Indonesia.”

⁷⁷ James W. Drisko, “Transferability and Generalization in Qualitative Research,” *Research on Social Work Practice* 35, no. 1 (January 24, 2025): 102–10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315241256560>.

⁷⁸ Franco, Bottiani, and Bradshaw, “Teachers’ Structuring of Culturally Responsive Social Relations and Secondary Students’ Experience of Warm Demand.”

⁷⁹ Hudson, “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) Operation in Schools”; Xu et al., “Mentoring and Tacit Knowledge Transfer in Novice Teachers From Chinese Middle Schools: Mediating Effect of Job Crafting.”

becomes compatible with constructive coexistence because boundaries are communicated without hostility, and difference is approached without cultural superiority.

This study contextualizes Culturally Responsive Teaching by showing that cultural knowledge in a faith-based minority school cannot be simply incorporated. It must be interpreted in relation to pedagogical purposes and religious boundaries. *Bounded cultural translation* captures this process as participation without assimilation and distinction without exclusion. Context-sensitive pedagogical justice further demonstrates that common educational purposes can coexist with differentiated support. Responsiveness thus resides not in cultural decoration or unrestricted flexibility, but in accountable professional judgement that connects identity, relationships, curriculum, and learner circumstances.

For Sustainable Educational Development, the central implication is that individual responsiveness must become renewable institutional capacity. Informal mentoring, *musyawarah*, and non-blaming reflection already provide relational foundations; however, their continuity requires structured induction, documented cases, collaborative reviews, and revisable repositories of local practice. These mechanisms should not standardize cultural responses or displace teacher agency. Their purpose is to make contextual reasoning visible, discussable, and transferable when staff or leadership changes occur. The culture/pluralism pathway is therefore not an additional programme beside Islamic education. It is the institutional capacity to renew Islamic education through culturally informed judgement, equitable participation, and relational trust. When these capacities are cultivated collectively, religious integrity and openness to plurality can function as mutually reinforcing educational commitments. Its durability is the practical test of whether pluralistic commitments can survive beyond teachers and leaders.

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