

The divides between novice and veteran teachers in language policy planning

Jasper Hsieh

The University of New South Wales

Novice teacher attrition remains an ongoing issue in many developed countries, including Australia and Taiwan. This issue has been examined in relation to a range of structural factors, such as the influence of teacher education programs, school size, and principals' leadership. More recently, a growing body of research has highlighted the role of school communities, which motivates this study to further explore the relationships between novice and veteran teachers.

By examining how these relationships evolve within the context of language policy planning, this study asks why some novice teachers feel recognised—or unrecognised—by their school communities. To address this question, we juxtaposed ethnographic data from both novice and veteran teachers to examine how and why each group positioned the other. The data were collected from six urban public schools during the implementation of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 policy between 2023 and 2024. This spatiotemporal framing allows us to focus on the relationships between novice and veteran teachers when both groups acted as arbiters of the policy (Menken, 2008).

The participants comprised three novice teachers and three veteran teachers from six different urban schools, all located in northern Taiwan. Data collection involved three rounds of individual, in-depth interviews conducted in the early, middle, and later stages of 2023. In addition, I conducted approximately 20 hours of school visits in two of these schools, which provided opportunities to observe the daily work of novice teachers and their interactions with veteran teachers. These observations were used to clarify and corroborate interview data, particularly regarding novice teachers' non-teaching workloads associated with the implementation of the Bilingual 2030 policy, such as organising English competition activities and undertaking timetabling responsibilities.

Data analysis followed the six-step process recommended for reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022). Drawing on Ball's (2003, 2016) concepts of performativity and professionalism, we analysed how novice teachers' agency was both enacted and constrained by veteran teachers during the implementation of the Bilingual 2030 policy. The findings indicate that direct and informal engagement and

communication with veteran teachers created spaces for novice teachers to exercise agency as they adapted to the forms of bilingual education accepted within their school communities. Based on these findings, we call for a whole-school, caring approach to bridge divides between novice and veteran teachers in their understandings of bilingual education policy and its local enactment.

Keywords: Teacher attrition, novice teachers, language policy, bilingual education

References

- Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), 215-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>
- Ball, S. (2016). Neoliberal education? Confronting the slouching beast. *Policy Future in Education*, 14(8), 1046-1059. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210316664259>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in(reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328-352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56, 1391-1412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y>
- Menken, K. (2008). *English learners left behind: Standardized testing as language policy*. Multilingual Matters.