

Title

A Qualitative Study on Adjusting Approaches Toward Novice Teachers

—Based on Surrounding Teachers' Narratives—

Research Overview

This study explores how teachers adjust their approaches toward novice teachers through understanding, interaction, and feedback. It highlights how relational conditions shape engagement strategies, showing that workplace support is dynamic and formed through ongoing interactions in school settings.

Purpose

Concerns about early turnover and mental health problems among novice teachers highlight the importance of workplace support. Previous studies have shown that novice teachers perceive support and engage in help-seeking behaviors based on everyday communication and trust formation (Sen, 2025a). However, most existing research has focused on novice teachers, with limited attention to surrounding teachers who provide support (Sen, 2025b). The adjustment of senior teachers, who guide novice teachers daily in the same school, has not been adequately studied. Therefore, this study explores how senior teachers adjust their approaches to novice teachers. It defines “senior teachers” as those in the workplace holding a senior position compared to novice teachers.

Methods

This study targeted 15 senior teachers (mean age = 45.73 years, standard deviation = 9.77; 10 males and 5 females), including 10 elementary and 5 junior high school teachers. Participants had an average of 19.9 years of teaching experience and had worked at an average of 4.7 schools. Data were collected in December 2025 through semi-structured interviews conducted online via Zoom, with participants recruited through a research company. Informed consent was obtained, and the study was approved by an ethics committee (No. E2025ALS244). Additionally, data were analyzed using the modified grounded theory approach—suitable for examining processes emerging from interpersonal interactions.

Results

The analysis generated five categories, eight subcategories, and 33 concepts. Categories are indicated by 《 》, subcategories by < >, and concepts by 【 】.

Senior teachers understood novice teachers through 《understanding of novice teachers》, including <individual characteristics>, <situational conditions>, and <guiding principles>. Thus, they initially selected <instruction> or <delegation> as forms of engagement within 《selection of engagement direction》. <Instruction> was expressed through actions, including 【anticipatory guidance based on predicted difficulties】, 【step-by-step guidance from basics to

completion】 , 【engagement in jointly carrying out practice】 , and 【praise and encouragement followed by suggestions and advice】 . Consequently, <evaluation> and <influence> emerged within 《feedback from novice teachers and other teachers》 , including reactions from novice teachers and evaluations from other teachers and administrators. These functioned as feedback indicating the appropriateness of the engagement. Such feedback led to updates in 《understanding of novice teachers》 , resulting in a re-selection of engagement strategies. However, <avoidance>—which was not present at the initial stage—emerged as a new option. <Avoidance> was manifested through 【self-protective restraint to avoid being perceived as harassment】 and 【restraint to prevent psychological burden on novice teachers】 . Through the iterative cycle of engagement and feedback, 【bidirectional relationships】 were formed. These relationships functioned as outcomes and conditions that regulate subsequent engagement. Specifically, when 【bidirectional relationships】 were established, <delegation> and 【engagement in jointly carrying out practice】 were promoted. Conversely, when relationships were weak, <instruction> was intensified or <avoidance> was more likely to be selected. Particularly, <avoidance> was not an initial choice; it developed during the process due to new insights, relationship issues, self-protection from harassment claims, and the psychological burden on novice teachers. These processes unfolded under the influence of 《organizational and school contextual factors》 .

Discussion

Senior teachers adjust their approaches by selecting engagement strategies informed by their understanding of novice teachers, which they refine through feedback, with relationships influencing subsequent interactions. Thus, engagement evolves through updates in understanding and relationship dynamics. This process reflects the dual structure in teaching: “equal collegial relationships” and “hierarchical mentoring relationships.” In Japanese schools, novice teachers are assigned core responsibilities despite limited experience and need for guidance, leading both parties to navigate between these roles. Furthermore, workplace support is constituted through engagement, feedback, and relationships. Its effectiveness depends on how engagement is adjusted based on relational conditions. This study highlights that engagement with novice teachers is shaped by relational structures, not just individual competencies.

References

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- Sen, Y. (2025b). Trends and prospects in research on workplace social support among teachers: Perspectives on effectiveness and challenges. *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education, The University of Tokyo*, 65, 139–150.

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