

Readiness and Challenges of Novice Teachers: A Case Study at a Private School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the readiness and challenges faced by novice teachers at a private school, drawing attention to the distinct nature of educational environments compared to public schools. As private institutions increasingly attract early-career educators, transitional difficulties emerge, stemming from differing expectations, diverse student needs, and unique institutional cultures. Drawing on data gathered from classroom observations and interviews with three novice teachers, this study explores their experiences and examines how their training equipped them for the realities of teaching. The findings reveal themes related to readiness, physical and mental preparedness, pedagogical knowledge, and adaptation to new work environments. Challenges identified include managing classroom dynamics, delivering lesson plans, and aligning with school cultures. The study highlights the importance of support structures and mentorship programs to enhance the effectiveness and retention of novice teachers in private education settings.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; Novice Teachers; Teacher Readiness; Teaching Practices; Pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

The education landscape is constantly evolving, and private schools play a crucial role in offering alternative pedagogical approaches and learning environments compared to their public counterparts (Friedman, 2017). As these institutions grow, they increasingly attract novice teachers—often early-career professionals eager to transition from theory to practice. However, the shift from teacher education programs to actual classroom practice can be fraught with challenges, particularly in private school settings where expectations may differ significantly from those in public schools (McIntyre & Byrd, 2020).

Research has shown that novice teachers often face obstacles such as adapting to diverse student needs, managing classroom dynamics, and aligning with institutional cultures, which can impact their effectiveness and job satisfaction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In private schools, these challenges may be intensified by differing educational philosophies, smaller student populations, or increased parental involvement (Baines & Foster, 2019).

This qualitative study aims to explore the readiness and challenges experienced by novice teachers at a private school, focusing on their ability to meet these distinct expectations. Through in-depth interviews, this research will capture the lived experiences of early-career educators and examine how well their training has prepared them for the realities of private school teaching. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the support structures needed to foster successful integration of new teachers and enhance their long-term retention (Darling-Hammond, 2016).

Managing students' behaviour is currently becoming increasingly challenging, and their behaviour is difficult to control effectively, causing disruptions in the teaching and learning process (Foziana et al., 2018). Novice teachers often face challenges in effectively delivering their lesson plans, resulting in a decline in the quality of learning among students (Woon & Gog, 2020). A lack of practical experience, insufficient guidance, and the inability to integrate pedagogical theory into classroom practice are among the key factors contributing to this issue. According to a study by Nguyen, H. T. (2019), novice teachers often do not receive sufficient guidance from more experienced colleagues, resulting in a lack of confidence and effectiveness in their teaching delivery.

Additionally, a study conducted by Woon and Goh (2020) indicates that novice teachers face difficulties in applying pedagogical theory into classroom practice due to a lack of experience and adequate guidance. This study is guided by the following objectives, which are

- i. to identify the readiness of novice teachers in a private school.
- ii. to identify the challenges faced by the novice teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher readiness is shaped by both formal education and support during the early teaching years. Studies have highlighted that while teacher preparation programs often emphasize theory, novice teachers struggle with practical challenges such as classroom management, adapting to diverse learners, and integrating technology (Korthagen, 2018; König et al., 2020). In private schools, educators face added complexities, including aligning with unique educational philosophies and higher demands for personalized instruction (Baines & Foster, 2019).

The challenges of teaching in private schools are compounded by differences in institutional culture, heightened parental expectations, and often a lack of structured mentoring programs (Hudson, 2019; Barton, 2019). Research shows that new teachers in private schools may experience isolation and job dissatisfaction, which can lead to higher attrition rates (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Without adequate support, these challenges can impede their effectiveness and professional growth (Schleicher, 2018).

Mentorship and professional development are critical for easing the transition into teaching. Comprehensive induction programs that foster collaboration among novice and experienced teachers have been proven to improve job satisfaction and retention (Johnson et al., 2020). In private schools, creating supportive and collaborative environments is especially important to help novice teachers navigate these early challenges and succeed in their roles (Zhao & Han, 2020).

Social Discipline Theory

The Social Discipline Theory posits that all human behaviour, including negative behaviour, is based on the need to feel accepted and valued within their social group (Dreikurs, 1960). In this theory, Dreikurs outlines the Mistaken Goals Theory, which consists of four main categories based on an individual's character and personality: attention-seeking, power or struggle, revenge, and display of inadequacy. Each type of misbehaviour has distinct motivations and approaches that can help educators understand and manage them effectively.

The first category is attention-seeking. This behaviour is displayed by students who seek positive attention from teachers or peers. Examples include eccentric behaviour, attempts to stand out, or excessive involvement in class. The underlying causes of such behaviour may include a lack of self-confidence, feelings of marginalization, or a need to prove their presence. According to Marzano et al. (2003), the best approach to managing this behaviour is to provide positive attention, offer constructive participation opportunities, and address the underlying causes of the desire for attention. These strategies can help reduce attention-seeking behaviour.

The second category is power or struggle. This behaviour is exhibited by students who try to gain control or resist the instructions and rules set by the teacher. Examples include refusing to follow given instructions, opposing directions, or displaying attitudes that contradict the teacher's guidance. The factors driving this behaviour often stem from a desire to test boundaries, assert independence, or a perception of injustice. According to Wong et al. (2012), this behaviour can be managed by establishing clear boundaries between the teacher and students, offering controlled choices, and using a fair and consistent approach in the classroom.

The third category is revenge. Revenge involves actions or behaviours aimed at retaliating for anger or dissatisfaction towards a teacher or peer. Examples include sabotage, bullying, or harmful actions. The root causes of this behaviour may be feelings of injustice, repressed anger, or feelings of being marginalized. According to Coloroso (2002), managing this behaviour involves building positive relationships, providing opportunities for expressing opinions, and offering effective positive alternatives that can help reduce revengeful behaviour.

The fourth category is display of inadequacy. This behaviour includes showing a lack of enthusiasm, low self-confidence, or feelings of helplessness. Factors contributing to this behaviour can include academic pressure, social conflict, or ongoing failure. According to Dweck (2006), managing this behaviour requires providing emotional and social support, offering diverse and challenging tasks, and helping students build self-confidence to continually develop their potential.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research combines observations and interviews to explore the readiness and challenges of novice teachers in private schools. Observations involved non-participant observations in classrooms, focusing on teacher-student interactions, classroom management, and instructional strategies. This allowed the researchers to collect real-time data on the everyday experiences of novice teachers. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format with novice teachers to gain deeper insights into their preparation, challenges, and the support they received. These interviews provided personal reflections on the transition into private school teaching.

Data collected from observations and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers coded the data to identify key themes and patterns, which were then categorized into broader themes such as readiness and challenges in classroom management. This process allowed for the systematic exploration of the experiences shared by the participants and ensured that the data were interpreted in a way that reflects the complexities of their teaching environments.

FINDINGS

This study identified two key themes related to the experiences of novice teachers in private schools: readiness and the challenges faced in their early years of teaching. These themes encapsulate the realities that novice teachers encounter as they transition from theoretical training to the practical demands of the classroom.

Demographic Profile

Table I. Demographic Profile

Respondent	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
R1	25	Male	Malay
R2	28	Male	Malay
R3	26	Female	Malay

Three novice teachers were selected as respondents for this study. All respondents are between the ages of 25 and 28; they have been working for less than a year at the private school. Two respondents are male, and one is female. All respondents are of Malay ethnicity.

Educational Background

Table II. Qualification & Teaching Background

Respondent	Qualification	Teaching Background
R1	Bachelor of Drama	NIL
R2	Bachelor in English with Communication	NIL
R3	Bachelor of Laws	NIL

Based on the interview analysis, all respondents involved in this study do not have any teaching background. R1 obtained a degree in drama, R2 in English communication and R3 in law.

Formal Teaching Experience

Table III Formal Teaching Experience

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...teaching drama education and basic dance... teaching children aged 5-6 years..."	Experience as a program facilitator
R2	"...served as a teacher at several private schools such as BB and KK..."	3 years of formal teaching experience in various schools
R3	"...a private school teacher for science and Malay language subjects..."	1 year of formal teaching experience in a private school

As seen in Table III, two teachers - R2 and R3 - have had formal teaching experience in schools. R2 has three years of experience teaching in several private schools, while R3 has one year of experience teaching science and Malay language subjects in a private school. Although R1 does not have formal teaching experience, R1 has been involved as a facilitator in children's dance and drama programs before.

Physical Readiness

Table IV Physical Readiness

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...conducted some research, such as asking experienced friends... ensuring physical condition is good..."	Conducted initial research and gathered various information, ensured good physical condition
R2	"...getting enough quality sleep before starting work to maintain a good mood... obtained information online..."	Gathered information, maintained quality sleep
R3	"...acquired reading materials and other references... ensured enough sleep... drank coffee for a good mood..."	Gathered information, maintained quality sleep, drank coffee for a good mood

The analysis of physical readiness conducted by the researchers found that all respondents emphasized the importance of physical preparation before teaching. This includes gathering relevant information from various sources such as online searches and asking friends, and ensuring quality sleep. R2 and R3 ensure to maintain a ready physical state. R1 always underscores the importance of good health and physical condition, while R3 drinks a cup of coffee to get into a good mood before teaching.

Mental Readiness

Table V Mental Readiness

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...need to be patient and always be ready and prepared..."	Need patience and readiness

R2	"...trying to maintain a good mood before coming to school..."	Good mood, positive emotions
R3	"...trying not to care about distracting things..."	Good mood, positive emotions

The mental readiness analysis shows that respondents R2 and R3 try to maintain a good mood before teaching, highlighting the importance of positive emotions. R1, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of patience and always being mentally prepared before they teach.

Knowledge of Pedagogy in Education

Table VI Knowledge of Pedagogy In Education

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...not sure, but have heard about it..."	Limited knowledge
R2	"...know a little... familiar with approaches and their pros and cons... have taken related courses..."	Some knowledge, has taken courses
R3	"...no..."	Limited knowledge

Table VI demonstrates that R1 and R3 have limited knowledge of pedagogy in education, while R2 has some knowledge due to her previous related coursework.

Duration Taken to Adapt to New Work Environment

Table VII Duration Taken To Adapt To New Work Environment

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...about a month, but still learning..."	Quickly adapted to the school environment
R2	"...a month... introduced myself, observed, and understood the students here..."	Quickly adapted to the school environment
R3	"...two months..."	Quickly adapted to the school environment

Overall, all respondents quickly adapted to their new work environment, taking between one to two months to understand the new school culture. According to R2, the adaptation process involved observation, self-introduction, and understanding the students and school environment

Advice or Guidance for Novice teachers

Table VIII Advice or Guidance for Novice Teachers

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...possess strong inner strength... use appropriate language... be creative and diversify things..."	Strong inner strength, creativity in teaching
R2	"...understand the approach used... be flexible and adaptable to various changes... spend time with	Flexibility, understanding the

	students to understand their character..."	approach used
R3	"...understand the school's concept and methodology, as it differs from academic schools... prepare physically and mentally..."	Understanding the approach

It can be seen from Table VIII that R2 and R3 agree that understanding the approach used at the current school is crucial, as it significantly differs from other typical schools. R1 emphasizes the importance of having strong inner strength and creativity in teaching. R2 suggests that flexibility is essential to adapt to various changes in the workplace.

Knowledge About Energy Profile: Four Types of Kids by Carol Tuttle

Table IX Knowledge About Energy Profile: Four Types Of Kids By Carol Tuttle

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...aware... treat all students equally... understand students' character..."	Aware
R2	"...not all... some student characters are difficult to identify because they are too quiet and secretive..."	Some awareness
R3	"...only 20 percent of student characters..."	Some awareness

The analysis of the novice teachers' knowledge about the Energy Profile: Four Types of Kids by Carol Tuttle (2020) shows that all respondents have basic knowledge of the topic. However, their understanding is still limited.

Opinions About the Current Work Environment

Table X Opinions About The Current Work Environment

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...like the work environment here... motivated and enthusiastic to come to school..."	Likes, motivated
R2	"...enjoys the work environment... motivated, good colleagues who understand and listen well... good support..."	Likes, motivated
R3	"...positive vibes and good culture..."	Likes, motivated

The analysis of opinions about the current work environment in Table X shows that all respondents enjoy their work environment and feel motivated by the positive culture and support they receive from the school staff.

Challenges Faced by Novice teachers

Table XI Challenges Faced By Novice Teachers

Respondent	Remark	Note
R1	"...struggles to deliver lesson plans on new topics... needs to remain patient and strong mentally and physically... different school dynamics... the way educators communicate, using appropriate words with	Challenges in delivering lesson plans, challenges in managing student behaviour

	students... teachers are role models for students..."	
R2	"...challenges in delivering lesson plans... challenges in managing student behaviour... difficulty understanding the culture implemented in this school because it differs significantly from the norm..."	Challenges in delivering lesson plans, challenges in managing student behaviour
R3	"...challenges in managing noisy students and student behaviour... difficulty in delivering lesson plans because some students still cannot read and write..."	Challenges in delivering lesson plans, challenges in managing student behaviour

Based on the analysis of the challenges faced by novice teachers as presented in Table XI, the researchers found that all respondents experienced difficulties in delivering their lesson plans to the students. Additionally, R1, R2, and R3 faced challenges in managing their students' behaviour in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the notion that teacher readiness and the effectiveness of the support from the private school environments are pivotal to their professional growth and the overall quality of education. Addressing these challenges requires a collective effort from educational institutions, policymakers, and teacher training programs. By prioritizing structured support and development, private schools can empower novice teachers to thrive in their roles, ultimately benefiting the students and the educational community at large.

This study highlights the need for further research on novice teachers' experiences to explore how these findings may be relevant in various cultural or institutional contexts.

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