

## A Qualitative Analysis of the Support and Conflicts of the Novice-Expert School Teachers

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**Abstract** *Novice-expert school teachers' conflicts and support significantly contribute to the working relationship, teaching performance and retention. The present study aims to phenomenologically analyze novice-expert school teachers' experiences of mutual support and conflicts and how it helps their professional development. Seven expert and seven novice teachers were purposively selected from private and public schools from a district located in Punjab, Pakistan, who were interviewed to gain an insight into the phenomenon. The collected data were transcribed and analyzed employing thematic analysis guided by the selected qualitative approach. It was revealed from the themes and sub-themes that novice teachers get support from the expert teachers, and they developed self-confidence and techniques to manage a classroom, solve students' problems and adjust themselves in the school successfully. The study implies that the conflicts between novice and experienced teachers can be resolved through promoting mutual understanding, cooperation, and communication.*

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### Introduction

Expert teachers' support is widely believed to promote novice teachers' teaching and learning skills. The learning process takes place between colleagues in a school, and this process occurs spontaneously related to their roles or responsibilities in the school. Collaborative learning is made possible by sharing information from both of the teachers involved in the discussion, and it happens that time when one of them is unaware of the teaching, learning, and other management skills. Nevertheless, lack of professional support is one of the major factors that many novice teachers left their jobs (Gold & Roth, 2016; Scholten & Sprenger, 2020). It has been a keen interest to give professional support to novice teachers of kindergarten to grade twelve in the schools. Gold (2016) argued that giving personal and professional guidance to novice teachers leads to retaining them in a system successfully.

Every year, the educational system produces many professional teachers in the education field. Many researchers and institutions defined novice teachers in different ways. Novice teachers in New Zealand have two years of teaching experience in their professional career (Brunton, 2011). In Singapore, novice teachers are provided two years of training by the National Educational Department (Tan & Darling-Hammond, 2011). The expert teacher is the one who has at least ten years of teaching experience (Oras, 2011). In Australia, the novice has less than three years of teaching experience (Archived Reports, 2007). In Malaysia, novice teachers have to go through three phases: trial, training, and security clearance. Doing so, they will be able to induct into the education system, and this process is done by the Educational Services Commission (Educational Services Commission Circular, [ESCC] 2014).

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Most researchers agreed that career support is critical for novice teachers ([Gold, 2016](#); [Gordon & Maxey, 2016](#)). The first five years are critical as these years decide whether a teacher will remain in the system or leave to join the other profession (De Bolt, 2012). The first year of novice teachers' induction is crucial as the teacher's development occurs during this period, and the novice teacher learns about the actual situation of a system (De Bolt, 2012; [Gilani et al., 2020](#); [Savolainen et al., 2020](#)). Many researchers reflected that the teachers' retention depends upon the single factor, which is the duration of their first-year service in which their perception develops about their service. To survive in their first year of teaching novice, teachers need a special kind of help from the experienced teachers and administration ([Johnson et al., 2011](#)).

Teachers, over time, try to develop their knowledge, skills, techniques, and strategies of teaching to enhance their quality of teaching. Teacher's cooperation concerning pedagogy, subjects' matter, instructions, curriculum, and students is vital to help newly-inducted teachers make the classroom practices efficient and effective. According to [Varrati and Smith \(2014\)](#), collaboration with the teachers is an essential aspect through which the morale, interest, and motivation for teaching can be enhanced, especially in a novice teacher. Cooperation is crucial for the dedicated, committed, and accountable teachers on every matter related to the teaching and learning process. Cooperative work can be divided into three elements: the organisation's situation, how they interact with their colleagues, and the third one is a function of their joint work ([Grangeat & Gray, 2007](#); [Savolainen et al., 2020](#)).

From Malaysia's perspective, the teachers play a critical role in preparing the individual a balanced and responsible teacher (Rogalski, 2014). [Tomlinson \(2004\)](#) argued that motivated teachers mostly want to do good work. The committed teachers are always committed to their colleagues' learning; they know the subject matter and know how to guide this matter, and they are also responsible for managing their colleagues' learning and teaching process. They always go through a systematic process, learn from the experiences and their errors, and all these things make them responsible teachers. All these factors do not describe the relationship between the novice and expert teachers; to

understand this is important to know their current status and what is needed to be changed for their improvement.

Conflict is described by [Aja \(2013\)](#) as "an opposition or competition between two or more forces arising either from the pursuit of incompatible goals or a class of rival opinions (p. 2009)." On the other side, [Oboegbulem and Alfa \(2013\)](#) described conflicts as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals (p. 91)." To create an effective teaching, learning, and supportive environment, it is necessary to prioritise conflicts management between staff. When people's perceptions and opinions vary, they occur ([Bano et al., 2013](#); Ghaffar, 2010; [Hassan et al., 2019](#); [Ramani & Zhimin, 2010](#); [Scholten & Sprenger, 2020](#)).

According to [Adhiambo and Enose \(2011\)](#), conflicts create discomfort and stress among expert and novice teachers and lead them toward depression and frustration. It is a threat to the smooth running of the teaching-learning process if not managed carefully, but if it is managed well, it will lead toward an effective teaching-learning process. Hence, the conflicts cannot be ignored and resolved immediately ([Ramani & Zhimin, 2010](#)). Most researchers argued that expert and novice teachers should have enough knowledge to resolve the conflicts that occur during their interaction between them ([Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem & Odigwe, 2013](#); Olubunmi, 2014).

In the past, researchers have focused on this issue of conflicts between the expert and novice teachers in the school. [Oboegbulem and Alfa \(2013\)](#) reflected that conflict might occur between them in an organization where human interaction occurs. Conflicts can break down communication between the expert and novice teachers, lead to the ineffective teaching process, and ultimately relationship turn into differences, performance does low, and create wrong arguments among the expert and novice teachers ([Bano et al., 2013](#); [Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012](#)). Hence, if the conflicts are handled properly, they may be changed into benefits and can build a strong relationship between the expert and novice teachers. This management of conflicts may effectively lead the teaching-learning process.

Expert teacher's role is more important to resolve these conflict issues. These conflicts are different and are managed according to their nature (Bano et al., 2013; Ramani & Zhimin, 2010). Ramani and Zhimin (2010) defined conflicts management as "an ongoing process that may never have a resolution." Bano et al. (2013) defined conflicts management as "a process of removing cognitive barriers to an agreement between two parties (p. 15)." On the other hand, resolution of conflicts defined by Doe & Chinda (2015, p.148) as "the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms of conflicts."

The novice teachers do not know to deal with managing their complications in relationships, attitudes, and tasks at the beginning of the job (Makave & Ndofirepi, 2012). The critical element missing in the literature is the difference between the expert and novice teachers' doing job concerning different perspectives? If we look at the time management and academic preparation perspective, there is no difference between the expert and novice teachers, but in terms of classroom management and parent-teacher interaction, the difference can be observed (Bano et al.,2013).

Like other educational institutions, the school environment has conflicts, disagreements, cooperation, and opportunities; therefore, these factors may affect novice and expert teachers' performance (Bano et al.,2013; Makave & Ndofirepi, 2012). Therefore, a detailed investigation is necessary for how novice teachers are influenced by expert teachers and how they improve their teaching, learning, and other necessary management skills while experiencing support and conflicts in a school?

### Research Questions

1. How do novice and expert teachers support each other in the teaching-learning process?
2. What conflicts arose out of the novice-

3. How do the support and conflicts between novice and expert teachers affect their professional work?

### Methodology

This qualitative research focuses on understanding how novice-expert teachers make sense of their experiences of conflicts and support from each other; apart from this, these experiences are subjective (Mason, 2012). The qualitative studies go beyond the numbers, quantities, statistics, and that is why it provides rich data and information about the problem. It generates valid, rich, and detailed data according to participants' perspective (Strecker et al.,1992). In phenomenology, the researchers construct the meaning of the event, experience, or phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, phenomenology was used to explore expert and novice teachers experiences of the support and conflict they had and what meanings they assigned to them. In the whole process, the researchers used bracketing to represent the exact meaning of the personal experiences, which helped to remove the researchers' personal biases (Maxwell, 2013).

### Participants

After identifying participants, consent letters were sent to them, and the researchers interviewed them after they showed the consent. The interviews were conducted from 14 teachers; 7 were expert teachers, 4 were males, and 3 were females. There were 7 novice teachers, 3 males and 4 females. Before the interview, the participants completed the demographic questionnaire and the obtained data is given in Table 1. It was planned to conduct face-to-face interviews, but it was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country. Therefore, the interviews were conducted telephonically.

**Table 1.** Study Participants

Participants	Age	Education	Service time	Status	Job scale	Gender	Job nature
A	30	Masters	8 years	Expert	14	Female	Permanent
B	50	Graduation	20 years	Expert	16	Male	Permanent
C	35	Masters	10 years	Expert	14	Female	Permanent
D	33	Masters	2 years	Novice	14	Male	Contract
E	43	M. Phil	1 year	Novice	14	Female	Contract

F	37	Masters	7 years	Expert	16	Male	Permanent
G	42	M. Phil	10 years	Expert	14	Female	Permanent
H	21	Graduation	6 months	Novice	14	Male	Contract
I	24	Graduation	1 year	Novice	14	Female	Contract
J	23	Masters	8 months	Novice	16	Female	Contract
K	27	Masters	1 year	Novice	14	Female	Contract
L	25	M. Phil	1 year	Novice	16	Male	Contract
M	28	Masters	4 years	Expert	14	Male	Permanent
N	27	Masters	5 Years	Expert	14	Male	Permanent

## Data Collection

During the semi-structured interviews with the participants, two audio recorder devices were used so that if any technical problem occurs in any one of the devices, interview data may be reserved in the other one. The semi-structured interview is well established in qualitative research as it empathizes with interview subjects and encourages them to reflect on the topics of interest (Bryman, 2012). Besides recording the interviews, important notes were taken, which helped interpret and rephrase the questions in further interviews (Punch, 2013). Probing and promoting questions were used to get insights and understanding of the participants' meanings and beliefs (Creswell, 2018). A list of questions and sub-questions were used as an interview guide to understanding the phenomenon under study. The duration of each interview was 43 to 72 minutes. Each interview began by asking participants: how do you experience your relationship with novice/expert teacher?

## Data Analysis

Every phrase and statement of the interview transcript is considered important for analysis and is reviewed critically (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In the first step of the formal data analysis process, the researchers broke down the data analytically into different broad categories through the coding process. After every interview, the transcripts were categorized into different events, occurrences, acts and ideas to compare the differences and similarities. Each line and sentence were reviewed with the constant comparison approach to find similarities and differences (Thai & Chong, 2012). Through the systematic and constant review of the text, errors and omission were eliminated, and appropriate categories and themes emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The emergent themes were described in the perspectives of the

participants' experiences and using their typical quotes. The themes and sub-themes are given in the results section.

## Results

Qualitative data analysis is a dynamic process in which key concepts and aspects are identified and presented in the form of themes that address the study's research questions (Clifford, 2017). The following themes and sub-themes emerged as a result of this process.

## Support

When a novice teacher enters school for teaching, he needs support and guidance to adjust to the new working environment and counter their shortcomings and problems at the start of their career. Expert teachers support school rules such as how to engage with students and adjust themselves in the school environment smoothly. According to expert teachers' perspective, novice teachers usually respect the expert teachers, particularly at the start of their career. It was also reflected that some of the novice teachers were ex-students of expert teachers, so they do so.

The novice teachers required a fully supported working environment where they can interact with experienced teachers at a newly appointed working place to perform with their full potentials. Some of the expert teachers also reflected that when they started the job in school, they also felt a need to have support and guidance, and they got it from senior teachers to perform well. The expert teachers were also the novice teachers at the time of their first appointment, and they agreed that they also got the support that time, and now they will provide guidance to the novice teachers as they are now experienced teachers and loved to share their experiences. The following sub-themes emerged under this main theme.

## Developing Confidence

When novice teachers come to school at the start of their career, they face a lack of confidence. Confidence is developed mixing up with senior teachers, and it is very important for a good start and long-term professional relation with the teachers. According to one of the novice teachers having a master's degree in physics and serving in a school for one year described that:

*"I felt hesitation at the start of my career and a lack of confidence. I used to sit alone in the staff room apart from the group of other teachers. I was good with children but not so much engagement with teachers at the start of the career. Nevertheless, over time, I engaged myself with expert teachers, and in this process, my senior teachers gave me a lot of space and support to learn from them."*

At the start of the novice teachers' career, they also felt a fear that they did not know what is going to happen; either the expert teachers would like their way of teaching or what would be the expectations of the expert teachers from them. What is the behavior of the expert teachers with novice teachers? Nevertheless, novice teachers reflected that they were welcomed warmly, and the experts were very fair and cooperative with them. Senior teachers helped novice teachers to overcome this fear with low expectations. They gave space to them to perform well according to their potentials.

## Addressing Students' Problems

Students have many issues needed to be solved outside and inside of the classroom. Novice teachers do not have enough knowledge and experience to address their problems. Expert teachers play an important role to support novice teachers to make them able to tackle these problems for the betterment of the student. The expert teachers already had dealt with these problems, and they are aware of how to solve these issues. One of the expert female teachers who was a master degree holder and has ten years teaching experience in a public sector school reflected that *"One novice teacher came to the school and was not ready to get help from me and after facing some troubles during the job, he finally came to me for help and guidance"*. Novice teachers do not entirely understand the students' problems, and similarly, they do not know how to solve their issues, outside or inside the classroom. Therefore, expert teachers always

provided help, support, and guidance through one-to-one conversation and group discussions.

## Managing Classrooms

Effective management of a teacher in a school environment is very important to be a good teacher. Expert teachers supported novice teachers to be well managed in different activities of the school and classroom. One of the novice teachers in the private sector, having service of less than one year and master degree qualification, stated that:

*"Senior teachers supported me very well-liked one of my senior teachers helped me divide the syllabus weekly and monthly, and how to manage and plan lessons, examine the homework, and take a test in just 40 minutes"*.

One of the female novice teachers working in a private sector school and having one year of teaching experience elaborated that, *"When I joined the school as an English teacher, I started my career for the first time and I was not aware of service rules and regulations in school such as syllabus plan, lecture plan, schools leaving rules for short- or full-day leave"*.

Senior teachers told me all these planning strategies and rules, and they always were very supportive and cooperative with me. Expert teachers always supported novice teachers to manage their academic affairs in the school. Along with all these things, expert teachers also guided the novice teachers on maintaining the staff and students' attendance register. Expert teachers also guided novice teachers on how to deal with the student's disruptive behavior and how these behaviors can be handled. They also guided to conduct the parent-teachers' meetings to give them information and report their children's progress.

It was also revealed by the expert teacher and the novice teachers that the expert teachers also seek help from the novice teachers in many matters. In some cases, expert teachers do not have the energy and physical power to conduct these activities alone, so they took help from the novice teachers to perform many activities using their energies and potential.

## Conflicts

People have a different point of views and this contradiction in point of views leads them toward conflicts. Conflicts and differences between the expert and novice teachers remain

just only in the staffroom, and the students never suffer. Students remained unaware of the expert and novice teachers' conflicts, and this is a good thing as if these conflicts appear before students, they will discuss the teachers as an activity of entertainment. If these conflicts become common, then the teaching-learning process will be poorly influenced. Therefore, such conflicts should be remained only in the staffroom and between the teachers.

The participants perceived that conflicts and differences among the expert and novice teachers occur due to individuals' specific principles. Almost every participant claimed that our issue or problems were not personal; rather, these were based on principles. One of the expert teachers having experience of more than twenty years and graduation degree was working in a public sector described that *"One of the novice teachers came to me and asked his share from non-salary budget and suggested that rather spending these budgets on the school we will share it between us. This was the conflict between him and me, and finally, he had to step down from his demand."*

This is ethically, morally and legally wrong, and there is no way to justify it on any account. One of the expert teachers reflected that *"A novice teacher called a child devil and I prohibited him not to call so, this is wrong, our position and as a teacher, we should not call students with wrong names, and this was a cause of ethical difference between us."* One of the main reasons for the conflicts among the expert and novice teachers was politics. Expert teachers demanded that novice teachers should follow their instructions and command. This kind of difference led them to make lobbies among the teachers and other staff members, which was a negative approach for a teacher. This led to being problematic for the children and also for the teaching-learning process.

At the start of novice teachers' career, the expert teachers gave instructions, guidance, and feedback to novice teachers, but they did not always welcome these instructions. One of the male novice teachers working in a private sector with an experience of fewer than two years of service reflected that *"If novice teachers start teaching well or result is good or principal appraises them then expert teachers do not like this as they think that they have been ignored or degraded. This is one of the reasons behind conflict among expert and novice teachers"*.

Sometimes, the novice wanted to do an activity like arranging some trip and the expert teachers resisted that. As one of the novice teachers reflected that,

*"My colleague (female) and I wanted to arrange a trip for the refreshment of the students. The principal allowed us to arrange this, but when expert teachers came to know, they resisted against it, and at the end, after an argument of two days, we have to step down from our point."*

Most of the expert teachers reflected that some of the novice teachers are well qualified, and they think that they are very capable of teaching and managing the students in the classroom. Nevertheless, they must have experience; it is the ground reality. These well-qualified novice teachers do not want to get advice from expert teachers. When they experienced difficulty dealing with the classroom and student management, they have to move to expert teachers.

When one is not in good mental condition then how it is possible to deal with children properly? When teachers are not in good relationships, they do "leg-pulling" for their benefits. An M. Phil permanent appointed expert teacher in a public school pointed out that, *"A newly appointed headteacher never missed any chance to degrade us. She did not care about us and always tried to behave us disrespectfully. This was all due to political support to her, for which nobody could stand against her to cross-talk for their rights. Students and teachers did not like her rude behavior never followed her instructions."*

## Findings and Discussion

The results about supporting novice teachers by expert teachers are very important and interesting, especially for novice teachers to adjust themselves during their initial years of teaching. The research outcomes reflected that in most cases, novice teachers get support from the expert teachers except in some cases where novice teachers do not want to take help. The results also showed that the expert teachers' support influenced the novice teacher to retain them in the teaching profession.

It was revealed that the support of the expert teachers provided energy through which the benefits can be gained like to enhance the novice teachers' retention, professional development,

improve the problem-solving techniques, learning the use of the instructional methods from the experiences of the mentors and expert, increase self-confidence, decreasing the feeling of loneliness, and positive attitude towards their profession.

The findings of the conflicts in this study revealed that the conflicts among novice and expert teachers always occur based on individuals' ethics and principles. The novice and expert teachers have their code of conduct and ethics which they established and never compromised. Most of the conflicts were based on principles, and in few cases, they were on a personal basis. It was reflected from the results that the conflict among the expert and novice teachers was due to not giving respect to the expert teachers by the novice teachers.

It was found that most of the novice teachers were highly qualified, and they thought that they did not need advice from the expert teachers, which was like disrespect for the expert teachers, according to them. At this stage, politics took place between the expert and novice teachers and led them to conflicts. The positive aspect of this situation is that these conflicts remained between expert and novice teachers, and students always remained unaware of this.

The support among the novice and expert teachers in the current study is very important, especially for novice teachers. It was reflected in this study that in most of the cases, novice teachers get support from the expert teachers to expect in some cases. These results resemble the results of a study by [Joiner & Edwards \(2008\)](#), who explored that the expert teachers' support influenced the novice teacher to retain themselves in the teaching profession, and many novice teachers took it quickly. These results also support the results of the [Bush & Coleman \(1995\)](#) that the support of the expert teachers provide support through which the benefits can be gained like to enhance the retention of the novice teachers, professional development, improve the problem-solving abilities, use of the techniques and instructional methods from the experiences of the mentors and expert, increase self-confidence, decreasing the feeling of loneliness and positive attitude towards their profession.

The findings of this research also look like the findings of [DeBolt \(2012\)](#) that the conflicts among the novice and expert teachers were based on ethics and principles that novice and expert teachers have their code of conduct and ethics and established them own and never compromise on them. According to [Adhiambo and Enose \(2011\)](#), conflicts cause discomfort and stress among expert and novice teachers and lead them to depression and frustration. It is a threat to the smooth running of the teaching-learning process if not managed carefully. However, if it is managed carefully, it will lead toward an effective teaching-learning process, and these results also support the findings of the current study, which also reflected that conflicts management is very important for an effective teaching-learning process ([Savolainen et al., 2020](#); [Scholten & Sprenger, 2020](#); [Waheed et al., 2020](#)). Most researchers reflected that expert and novice teachers should have enough knowledge to resolve these conflicts that occur during the interaction between the expert and novice teachers. According to [Olubunmi \(2014\)](#), these results also support the current study's results that effective communication is a key factor in resolving these conflicts.

## Conclusion

Expert teachers provide help and opportunities to novice teachers to perform well. Getting support from expert teacher is another important aspect for novice teachers to improve themselves. Mostly, novice teachers get support from expert teachers, and they develop self-confidence and techniques to adjust themselves in the school successfully. Another aspect is the conflict between the expert and novice teachers, and the conflict was found based on principles, ethics, and personal issues and values of the individuals. The cooperative relationship between expert and novice teachers plays a significant role in the positive teaching-learning process and overall supportive and learning environment. The conflicts between novice and experienced teachers can be resolved by mutual understanding, cooperation, and communication.

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