



Reconceptualizing Teacher Resilience in East Asia: From Individual Adaptation to Relational and Structural Capacity

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Abstract

In recent years, teacher resilience has become an important topic in international educational research. However, much of the existing literature continues to conceptualize it primarily as an individual psychological trait or an adaptive capacity in response to stress, challenge, and change, while paying less attention to how resilience is generated within specific institutional, cultural, and relational contexts. This limitation is especially evident in East Asian educational systems, where teachers' professional practices are deeply shaped by examination culture, performance-oriented expectations, institutional responsibilities, and collective ethical norms. Under such conditions, understanding teacher resilience solely at the individual level is insufficient to capture its full complexity and situated formation.

Drawing on a socio-ecological perspective and a structure-agency analytical framework, this study re-examines the conceptual meaning of teacher resilience. It argues that teacher resilience should not be reduced to an individual's capacity to cope with adversity; rather, it should be understood as a dynamic and contextually embedded professional capacity formed through the interplay of institutional pressures, professional values, and relational support. Using Taiwan as the primary site of analysis and situating the discussion within a broader East Asian comparative perspective, this paper explores how teachers sustain professional commitment and ongoing action amid educational reform, the challenges brought by the age of artificial intelligence, and increasing workplace uncertainty through professional beliefs, support networks, and collective interaction.

This paper proposes that teacher resilience can be understood through at least three interrelated dimensions. The first is the individual dimension, which refers to teachers' self-regulation,



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professional beliefs, and sustained commitment. The second is the relational dimension, which highlights the importance of support networks, reciprocal collaboration, and professional communities. The third is the structural dimension, which concerns how teachers interpret, respond to, and even transform institutional constraints and policy demands. Through this framework, the paper seeks to move beyond the predominantly psychological and individualistic definitions of resilience found in much of the Western literature and to develop a more culturally sensitive, relational, and institutionally grounded understanding of teacher resilience.

The paper argues that future research on teacher resilience in East Asia should move beyond viewing resilience merely as an individual psychological asset and instead pay closer attention to its formation as a professional capacity embedded in institutional conditions and generated through social relationships. This perspective not only deepens the theoretical discussion of teacher resilience but also offers a new analytical lens for educational reform and teacher support policy in East Asian contexts.

Keywords: Teacher Resilience; East Asia; Structure and Agency; Socio-Ecological Perspective; Teacher Professionalism; Relational Support; Institutional Context