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FROM TRAINING TO TEACHING: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE IN MEDAN JOHOR'S PRIVATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Teachers who learn a new instructional strategy may hesitate to try it openly, seek feedback, or report difficulties after the first attempt. This article develops a framework for examining the role of psychological safety in the post-training implementation of new instructional strategies among private senior high school teachers in Medan Johor District, Indonesia. A narrative synthesis integrates research on psychological safety, training transfer, and teacher professional development. The framework proposes that teachers who feel safer taking interpersonal risks in their instructional teams are more likely to seek help and discuss implementation difficulties. These behaviours may support evidence-informed adaptation and repeated use of a trained strategy. A formative assessment example illustrates how a teacher can share an unsuccessful first attempt, receive specific feedback, and revise the strategy while preserving its instructional purpose. A prospective field design is proposed to measure perceived psychological safety before classroom implementation, feedback-seeking during early trials, and subsequent use through independently assessed teaching evidence. The article contributes a research model, an implementation rubric, and a school-level follow-up procedure. The proposed relationships remain to be tested with data from Medan Johor.

Keywords: instructional strategies, psychological safety, secondary school teachers, teacher professional development, training transfer.

INTRODUCTION

A teacher returns from training with a new way to check students' understanding. During the first lesson, most students complete the activity, but their answers provide too little information for the teacher to decide what to reteach. At the next subject-team meeting, the teacher can show the responses and ask for help, or leave the unsuccessful attempt unmentioned. The decision depends partly on what the teacher expects colleagues and supervisors to do with that information. A team that treats the difficulty as a shared instructional problem creates an opportunity for the teacher to improve the next lesson.

Psychological safety concerns the interpersonal consequences people expect when they speak up, ask for help, or acknowledge mistakes in a group. Edmondson (1999) developed the concept at team level, and subsequent research has examined how reduced interpersonal risk supports learning under conditions of uncertainty. In a school, this matters when teachers make their practice visible to colleagues while they are still learning a technique.

In Indonesia, Revina et al. (2023) identified recurring challenges in teacher professional development, including limited attention to teachers' initial capabilities, uneven relevance of training, and weaknesses in feedback and follow-up. This article focuses on one part of that follow-up: whether teachers can raise problems encountered during early implementation and obtain feedback they can use. Private senior high schools in Medan Johor District are the intended setting. Local district statistics provide background on the school context, while the proposed relationships concern teacher and team processes that require direct study.

The article addresses two questions. First, how might perceived psychological safety influence teachers' application of a newly trained instructional strategy? Second, what evidence would show that feedback-seeking helped teachers refine the strategy and use it again? The objective is to develop a framework that connects these processes with observable classroom practice.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Safety in Instructional Teams

Edmondson (1999) conceptualises team psychological safety as members' shared belief that interpersonal risk-taking is safe. In a subject team, the concept concerns how teachers expect colleagues to respond when they question an established routine, reveal uncertainty, or ask for help. A teacher's confidence in managing a classroom is a judgment about personal capability. Perceived psychological safety is a judgment about the likely response of other people. A teacher can feel capable in the classroom and still hesitate to show colleagues a lesson that went poorly.

Frazier et al. (2017) found that psychological safety is associated with workplace outcomes, including learning-related behaviours, across organisational settings. In education, Fleming et al. (2024) documented different patterns of psychological safety among K–12 educators over time and associations with perceived organisational context and staff well-being. These studies support investigating psychological safety in school teams. The question addressed here is narrower: whether teachers' perceptions predict the later use of a specific strategy learned in a defined training programme**.**

Feedback-Seeking after the First Classroom Trial

Feedback-seeking gives teachers a way to obtain information that they cannot readily generate alone. A teacher may know that students struggled to answer a question but remain uncertain whether the problem lay in the wording, the task difficulty, or insufficient explanation. Showing anonymised samples and asking a specific question allows a colleague to offer a more relevant response than a general discussion about whether the lesson succeeded.

Peer observation can also help teachers access evidence about their practice. Ridge and Lavigne (2020) identified peer observation and feedback as promising, while noting limitations in the evidence and practical barriers such as time. In the proposed framework, feedback-seeking includes a teacher's request for advice, a request for a colleague to observe a specific lesson segment, or a discussion of a concrete implementation difficulty. Attendance at a team meeting records an opportunity for interaction. A question about a particular teaching decision shows that the teacher used that opportunity to seek feedback.

Transfer, Adaptation, and Continued Use

Training transfer involves applying what was learned in a work setting and maintaining its use over time. Ford et al. (2018) emphasise specifying the practice, the context, and the time frame when assessing transfer. Sims et al. (2025) likewise distinguish developing understanding and technique from embedding change in routine teaching. In this article, transfer is examined through initial use, evidence-informed adaptation, and later use**.** These indicators answer different questions. A teacher can try a strategy once, adapt it after reviewing student work, or use it again in another lesson while preserving its purpose.

Adaptation matters because teachers work with different subjects, class sizes, and lesson schedules. For a formative assessment strategy, a written exit question could be replaced with an oral prompt or a brief written response during the lesson. The essential function is preserved when the teacher elicits evidence of understanding, interprets it, and uses it to decide what to do next. Assessing that function allows researchers to recognise meaningful adaptation across subjects.

METHOD

Article Design

This article uses a narrative literature synthesis to develop a conceptual model and a prospective field design. The literature search used terms including *team psychological safety*, *psychological safety among teachers*, *training transfer*, *peer feedback*, and *teacher professional development*. Sources were selected for their relevance to the definition of constructs, mechanisms of team learning, or measurement of instructional implementation. The synthesis connected the timing of the proposed mechanism with the evidence required to assess it. The article uses published sources, and the model has yet to be tested with teachers in Medan Johor.

Proposed Participants and Measurement

The proposed study would recruit teachers from participating private senior high schools (*SMA swasta*) in Medan Johor. Teachers would complete a common training programme on one clearly defined strategy, such as using formative assessment to guide subsequent instruction. Each participant would identify the subject team or

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regular instructional group with which they discuss teaching. Using a consistent team reference helps distinguish perceptions of the immediate working group from general impressions of the school.

Table 1. Proposed measurement schedule

Timing	Measure	Proposed evidence
Before training	Perceived psychological safety and baseline use of the target practice	Confidential survey referring to the teacher's instructional team and a baseline teaching artefact or observation
Immediately after training	Understanding of the trained strategy	Brief case task requiring the teacher to interpret student responses and propose an instructional action
Weeks 1–3 after training	Early classroom trials, requests for feedback, and available opportunities	Short records identifying the lesson, the question raised with colleagues, and any feedback received
Weeks 4–6 after training	Quality of implementation	Independently scored observation or annotated teaching artefacts showing how evidence informed instruction
Weeks 8–10 after training	Continued use and adaptation	Evidence from another eligible lesson, with a brief explanation of any modification

The proposed survey would adapt items from Edmondson's (1999) measure for individual reports about the instructional team. Item wording and the Indonesian-language version would be reviewed with local teachers before use. The main analysis would treat the measure as each teacher's perception of team psychological safety. A shared team score would require multiple respondents per team and adequate evidence of agreement and reliability before aggregation.

Proposed Analysis

The primary outcome would be the quality of implementation at weeks four to six. The analysis would examine whether perceived psychological safety predicts early feedback-seeking and whether feedback-seeking predicts subsequent implementation after accounting for psychological safety and baseline practice. The sampling and analysis would account for teachers working within teams and schools. The number of participating schools and teams, rather than the total number of teachers alone, would inform the feasibility of the planned analysis.

Workload, previous experience with the strategy, access to mentoring, and opportunities for application would be documented because they can help explain differences in implementation. A teacher with no eligible lesson during a follow-up window would be recorded separately from a teacher who had an opportunity and did not implement the strategy. The study would report direct and indirect estimates with confidence intervals. Any indirect association would be interpreted as evidence consistent with the proposed mechanism, since time-ordered observational measurements cannot by themselves establish causality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Proposed Mechanism and Hypotheses

The synthesis suggests that psychological safety may be especially important after the first classroom trial**.** The trial gives the teacher something concrete to discuss. Psychological safety may make it easier to disclose the difficulty, and a useful response from colleagues can help the teacher decide what to change. The proposed pathway is therefore perceived psychological safety → early feedback-seeking → later implementation quality. A direct association is also plausible because teachers who anticipate constructive responses may be more willing to try a strategy openly and arrange follow-up support.

Table 2. Proposed hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship to be tested
H1	Higher perceived psychological safety is associated with more early feedback-seeking after training.
H2	More early feedback-seeking is associated with stronger later implementation after accounting for perceived psychological safety and baseline practice.
H3	Higher perceived psychological safety is associated with stronger later implementation after accounting for early feedback-seeking.
H4	Perceived psychological safety has a positive indirect association with later implementation through early feedback-seeking.

How the Mechanism Could Work in a Formative Assessment Lesson

Consider a fictional Grade 10 mathematics teacher who ends a lesson by asking students whether they understood the material. Most indicate that they did, but the teacher cannot identify which step students can perform independently. During the follow-up meeting, the teacher might say, "I tried an exit question, but the answers gave me little to work with. Can we look at the question together?" The request reveals a difficulty and defines the kind of feedback needed.

A colleague could suggest asking students to explain why one transformation of an equation is valid. The teacher can then use a similar item in the next lesson and group responses by the reasoning students demonstrate. If several students apply an operation to only one side of the equation, the teacher can address that misconception before moving to a more complex problem. The follow-up evidence would show the original prompt, the revision, a de-identified sample of responses, and the instructional decision the teacher made. This sequence makes the link between collegial feedback and classroom use visible.

The same sequence can be applied in different subjects. A history teacher might ask students to distinguish a claim from supporting evidence, while a science teacher might ask them to explain why a result supports a particular interpretation. In both cases, the implementation criterion is whether the teacher uses the evidence to guide instruction. Teachers can therefore adapt the task to the subject while researchers assess the same instructional function.

Assessing the Quality of Classroom Implementation

The proposed rubric separates evidence of student thinking from the teacher's response to it. An approved lesson plan can show that an activity was prepared. Observation or annotated teaching evidence can show whether the activity was used and what decision followed.

Table 3. Proposed rubric for implementation quality

Dimension	Evidence of appropriate implementation
Eliciting evidence	The teacher uses a task or question that can reveal students' understanding of the stated learning objective.
Interpreting responses	The teacher identifies a meaningful pattern in the responses, such as a common misconception or an area of secure understanding.
Taking instructional action	The teacher uses the pattern to select and explain an appropriate next step, such as reteaching a concept or moving to a more challenging task.

Each dimension can be scored **0** for absent evidence, **1** for partial evidence, and **2** for clear evidence. The total ranges from **0 to 6** when all dimensions can be assessed. An incomplete observation or artefact should be flagged as insufficient evidence for the affected dimension. Before use, raters should score sample lessons independently, discuss discrepancies, and check whether the criteria can be applied consistently across subjects. For the later follow-up, the same rubric can be applied to a new lesson to assess continued use.

School Practices That Make Feedback Easier to Seek

A subject team can schedule a brief discussion after the first implementation window and give teachers a common structure: describe the intended change, show a small piece of classroom evidence, and raise one question. A facilitator can open by sharing an example of a lesson that required revision. When teachers raise a difficulty, the team can discuss the task, the student responses, and the available options. Agreeing on one change to try gives the teacher a clear basis for the next lesson.

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School leaders also shape the conditions for these conversations. They can explain how developmental observation records will be used, provide time for peer discussion, and respond to barriers that teachers cannot resolve alone. Psychological safety can coexist with clear instructional standards. A team can examine a weak activity directly while treating the teacher's decision to raise it as part of professional learning. The distinction matters when a supervisor also conducts formal appraisal. Teachers should receive a clear account of the purpose and use of each observation.

Interpreting Different Patterns of Transfer

High perceived psychological safety may coincide with frequent requests for feedback and little classroom change. In that case, the evaluation should examine whether feedback was specific, whether the teacher had an eligible lesson, and whether the school could remove practical barriers. If teachers report low psychological safety while showing strong implementation, they may be learning individually or receiving support outside their regular team. If implementation improves at weeks four to six and then declines, the later evidence can help distinguish a scheduling problem from difficulty adapting the strategy to a different topic.

The framework has two main limitations. First, the literature includes studies from workplaces and education systems that differ from private senior high schools in Medan Johor. Second, teachers who implement a strategy successfully may later feel safer discussing it, so the relationship could be reciprocal. Measuring perceived safety before implementation helps establish the intended sequence. A later study could examine whether a defined change to team feedback routines produces changes in perceived safety and classroom use.

CONCLUSION

Psychological safety may support the post-training implementation of new instructional strategies by helping teachers disclose early difficulties and request specific feedback. The proposed framework links perceived safety in instructional teams, feedback-seeking during early trials, and independently assessed classroom implementation. It also distinguishes initial use from continued use and evaluates adaptations according to whether they preserve the strategy's instructional purpose.

For private senior high schools in Medan Johor, this framework provides a way to assess what happens after training and identify whether teachers need better feedback, more opportunities to practise, or clearer organisational support. Field research is needed to establish whether the proposed relationships occur in this setting and how strongly they relate to sustained use.

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