



## The Challenges of Beginning Teachers Experience In The Early Years of Teaching <sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The early years of the teaching profession is a period in which the teachers both begin teaching and learn how to teach and an important career step that affects their way of teaching. In this context, there are plenty of qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in different countries in the international literature on the challenges encountered in the teaching profession's early years. This research is a meta-synthesis study that synthesizes the research results discussing the challenges encountered by newly appointed teachers. Fourteen studies conducted in 11 different countries were included in the meta-synthesis. Six themes were first identified as a result of the analyzes: these are official policies and school practices, social relations, teaching practices, support, individual factors, and school-environment adaptation. In the next step, a second-level of abstraction was performed to set forth the syntheses. These are as follows: 1) mismatch between theory and practice, 2) school-environment context and 3) interaction between individual factors and contextual conditions. While the themes obtained in the research express the problem areas, the syntheses shed light on the problems' sources. Within the framework of the determining themes and syntheses, suggestions have consequently been made about the policies and practices to be developed for the challenges that the teachers may encounter in the early years of the profession.

**Keywords:** Novice teachers, beginning teachers, first years of teaching, reality shock, praxis shock

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## **Introduction**

Education, which is accessible to each citizen, is a public service with various definitions in the literature and enables people to develop their skills and knowledge through their lives. Education continues in every period of life; however, formal education is offered only in schools. Herein, it could be suggested that the aims of education and the aims of schools intersect. Those who ensure the fulfillment of the schools' objectives are school stakeholders, such as school principals, teachers, and assistants. Teachers are the specialists who make an effort and endeavor to realize the education in schools. Teachers use these specialties to improve students' qualifications and performances. The teaching profession might seem like a difficult profession since its input (resource) and product are human beings; it requires sensitivity to individual differences and requires meeting many stakeholders' expectations. This difficulty is more evident, especially for newly-graduated teachers experiencing their first years in teaching.

The first transition from teacher education to the teaching profession can become a dramatic and traumatic process. This process is called reality shock, transient shock, and praxis shock. These definitions are used to describe the collapse of ideals in the face of reality (Veenman, 1984). Keltchermans and Ballett (2002) stated that the challenges and complexity of the transition from academic life to teaching could be seen as "praxis shock." They defined this as teachers' confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being in the classroom. Praxis shock comes insight not only in the classroom but also in adaptation to school (Keltchermans & Ballett, 2002). According to the literature (Huberman, 1989; Kuzmic, 1994; Ritchie & Wilson, 1993), these challenges may emerge as the strictness and normativeness behaviors (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). Nieme (2002) attributed the adaptation problem experienced by new teachers depending on the challenges they face, to the fact that the pre-service training fails to prepare teachers for the complexity in the early years of teaching.

The teaching profession is seen as a highly backbreaking profession among newly recruited teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lortie, 1975; Tyack, 1974). The early years of the profession are an essential stage for teachers to create their professional identity. However, new teachers have difficulty developing teaching practices (Kelly, Reushle, Chakrabarty & Kinnane 2014) and creating a teaching identity in a challenging context in the school surrounded by the multi-layered concerns of everyday classroom problems and in

a vague context within the profession. These challenges affect new teachers' job satisfaction and their commitment to teaching (Lam, 2014). These problems experienced in the early years can lead to frustration, loss of motivation, stress, anxiety, and burnout syndrome. Also, such difficulties cause teachers to quit their jobs in the early years of the profession. For example, 40-50% of teachers in the United States quit their careers in the first five years of the profession (Ingersoll, 2012).

The studies conducted in different countries on the difficulties experienced by the teachers who are new to the profession (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; Cantu & Martínez, 2006; Honng, 2012; Kozikoğlu & Senemoğlu, 2018) indicate that the problems faced by teachers in the early years of the profession are similar. These include managing the classroom, workload, and administrative demands, seeking support to cope with them, dealing with new curricula, and related resource shortages (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz, 2014). Teachers require support and guidance in the early years of the profession. This is an important period in gaining a professional identity, continuing professional development, and going on the teaching career. In this context, taking a comprehensive picture of the problems experienced by teachers who are new to the profession, and a far-reaching evaluation and synthesis will contribute to the policies, the candidate teacher training models, and practices.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Employees are expected to learn professional knowledge and skills at the beginning of their careers and continue their professional development. As in other professions, the development of teaching skills should be seen as a gradual process (Helms-Lorenz, Grift & Maulana, 2016). The early years of teaching are conceptualized as a stage of professional development or a career phase. It is possible to divide the professional development stages of the teachers into three. These are the pre-service period, the early years of the profession, and the in-service period. The pre-service period is the stage in which theoretical knowledge and professional skills are gained. At the same time, the profession's early years are when theoretical knowledge and practice are integrated, and the adaptation process takes place. Finally, the in-service period covers the period from the first years to the end of the profession.

The early years of teaching are conceptualized as a career phase as well. Although there are different classifications related to the career stages of teachers, the early years of teaching profession within the career stages are conceptualized in different names, such as

career entry stage (Bakioğlu, 1996), survival and adaptation to work (Aydın, 2018; Huberman, 1989), and the threshold stage (Vonk, 1989). According to Aydın (2018), teachers develop their professional skills at this stage, and they begin to use professional concepts by acquiring some basic ideas about teaching and their profession. At the end of this stage, teachers are expected to have a vision, undertake various responsibilities, and have specific teaching skills. The beginning teachers are essential for the teaching profession. These teachers represent the renewal of the profession. Therefore, transitioning to the teaching career as smoothly as possible is to the profession (Fottland, 2004).

This phase of the career stages is explained as a period in which new teachers both begin teaching and try to learn the logic of teaching. Besides, it is also pointed out that this period is an intensive period for new teachers to the profession. Their experiences in this process affect whether they will continue teaching and what kind of a teacher they will be (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This period, which is described as "sinking or swimming" (Varah, Theune & Parker, 1986), is highly discussed in the literature in terms of the socialization process, professional development, candidate teacher training programs, and the challenges faced by prospective teachers. The early years of teaching as a socialization process are characterized by acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and norms of both the teaching profession and the local school community (Alhija & Fresko, 2010). Teachers who learned the profession's values and norms become compatible with both the organization and professional values. In addition to learning the profession's values and norms, the first experiences of the teachers lead them to reshape their beliefs, values, and attitudes related to teaching, students, and colleagues. As a result of the socialization process, new teachers gain a professional identity. Some teachers take on an idealistic teacher's role, while some others may behave like a public servant (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). After all, teachers' experiences in the early years of the profession will also affect their teaching identity.

Those who graduated from the pre-service teacher training programs, regardless of how successful they are, face the real world's challenges when they begin teaching. As in all professions, the first years in teaching are when new teachers experience adaptation problems and difficulties related to the transition from learning to teaching (Korkmaz, Saban & Akbaşlı, 2004). Research on the issues encountered in the early years of teaching has a long history (Dropkin & Taylor, 1963; Smith, 1950; Stouth, 1952). Veenman (1984) identified the most common problems faced by new teachers: motivating students, classroom discipline, evaluating students' works, dealing with individual differences,

relations with parents, organizing the classroom works, and insufficient materials. Some of the problems are related to the subject area, while others may be school-specific, and some may be individual-specific (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017).

Beginning teachers' burnout is an economical, social, and educational problem in many countries (Long et al., 2012). The studies in the literature also address the issues experienced by prospective teachers. McCann and Johannesen (2004) identified five main areas of concern for new teachers in the study conducted in the United States. These are relationship, workload/time management, subject matter/program knowledge, evaluation, and autonomy/control. Cantu and Martínez (2006) made a comparative study between Spain and Mexico and it was determined that the beginning teachers faced academic, organizational, and social problems in both contexts; however, teachers in Mexico perceived more problems in these areas. Although the issues are similar, the frequency of problems may vary by some contextual factors. Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2018) found that prospective teachers in Turkey had various difficulties in the design and implementation of teaching, managing the classroom, relations with society, adaptation to the physical environment, relationships with the stakeholders of school such as colleagues, administrators, parents and school counselor in the first years of teaching due to the lack of physical infrastructure. Similarly, it is possible to summarize the problems faced by the beginning teachers as follows: entry shock, maintaining discipline, cultural adaptation, ensuring student motivation, effective use of various teaching methods, being sensitive to individual differences, addressing problematic student behaviors, insufficient resources and support, organization of classroom work, performance evaluation, heavy workload, problems with colleagues and preparing the official documents, reports and correspondences at school (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Fetherston & Lummis, 2012; Helms-Lorenz, Grift & Maulana, 2016; Korkmaz, Akbaşı & Saban, 2004; Öztürk, 2016).

The early years of teaching career may affect new teachers' continuing careers (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017) and productivity. In this context, many countries (Turkey, USA, Israel, Netherlands, etc.) have adapted candidate teacher training programs to reduce teachers' problems in the early years of teaching to ensure their professional development and facilitate their adaptation to the profession. According to Valeeva, Baklashova, and Latypova (2018), preparatory programs for novice teachers to help overcome many informative, methodological, organizational, educational, and other challenges that accompany teachers' teaching practices. Candidate teacher training programs, as suggested

in related studies, have been reported to contribute to novice teachers in the following fields: the development of professional skills (Helms-Lorenz, Grift & Maulana, 2016), alleviating the problems of burnout (Long et al., 2012), occupational socialization and adaptation (Alhija & Fresko, 2010), decreasing the possibilities of quitting or transferring to other schools (Smith and Ingersol, 2004), staying in the profession (Gujeratti, 2012), learning institutional processes (Ulubey, 2018), using in-class technology and teaching management (Önder, 2018), and mutual learning (Löfström & Eisenschmidt, 2009). There is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' problems to set forth successful policies and practices, including candidate teacher training programs, concerning new teachers' problems.

Many studies were conducted in different countries (Hayes & Chang, 2017; Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Gülay & Altun, 2017; Mudzingwa & Magudu, 2013) related to the challenges new teachers face in the early years of teaching. The findings, results, and suggestions of these studies provide rich data to evaluate the teachers' problems in their early years from a holistic point of view. It is considered that such a comprehensive study will contribute to the policies and practices to be developed for the problems that teachers encounter in the first years of their teaching career, the quality of the essential support to be provided for teachers, and the development of candidate teacher training programs. Considering this fact, this study aims to synthesize the results of qualitative research conducted in different countries related to the teachers' problems in their first years of teaching and make suggestions for the policies and practices to be developed.

## **Method**

This research is a meta-synthesis study examining the problems experienced by new teachers and suggestions about these problems. Meta-synthesis studies are the researches analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing the findings of the qualitative studies. Noah (2017) likens it to meta-analysis and interprets the meta-synthesis as the meta-analysis of qualitative researches. In the meta-synthesis, however, the findings, results, and interpretation of qualitative research are comprehensively synthesized as the data source. They are discussed holistically. These data are not translated into quantitative data (Konan, Çelik & Çetin, 2018; Weed, 2005). Meta-synthesis is an interpretive synthesis of findings rather than a collective summary (Noblit & Haare, 1988). First of all, in the meta-synthesis studies, a literature review is performed, and the studies to be included in the meta-synthesis are determined. After that, the results of these studies are evaluated, and then they are interpreted upon

obtaining categories and themes. Finally, the resulting themes are synthesized, and the main subject areas are determined.

### **Determining the Studies and Data Collection**

Meta-synthesis studies are started after several processes. In the literature (Noah, 2017; Noblit and Hare, 1988; Sandelowski and Barroso, 2003), these steps have been identified:

- Determining the research area
- Identification of keywords
- Scanning
- Evaluating each study after determining inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Deciding on the studies to be evaluated.

This study was designed to provide a general framework for the problems experienced by new teachers. Therefore, in this study, the concepts "new teacher" and "novice teacher" were scanned in Turkish and English in the relevant databases of domestic and foreign literature in order to include the researches from different countries. TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM (Turkish Academic Network and Information Center) Social and Human Sciences Database, Google Scholar, ERIC, EbscoHost, and Web of Science were used as databases. 216 papers were found after screening the results.

There are various opinions in the literature (Bondas & Hall, 2007; Sandelowski, Docherty & Emden, 1997; Weed, 2005; Noah, 2017) about the number of studies used in the meta-synthesis studies. Considering these opinions in the literature and within the following criteria' frame, 14 papers were included in this study. Based on the subject area and aim of the study in determining these studies, the criteria can be listed as follows:

- Using qualitative methods accepted in the research literature
- Supporting research findings with data
- Having the papers in full text

The researches included in this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Information about the Researches Included in the Study*

Code	Label	Country	Study Group	Data Analysis
A1	Hayes & Chang, 2017	SOUTH KOREA	5	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A2	Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant &	UNITED ARAB	6	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A3	Ulvik, Smith & Helleve, 2009	NORWAY	9	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A4	Mudzingwa & Magudu, 2013	ZIMBABWE	24	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A5	Temiz, 2017	U.S.A.	5	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A6	Kozikoğlu & Senemoğlu, 2018	TURKEY	33	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A7	Gülay & Altun, 2017	TURKEY	14	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A8	Gömlüksiz, Kan, Biçer & Yetkiner, 2010	TURKEY	23	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A9	McCann & Johannessen, 2004	U.S.A.	6	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A10	Aitken & Harford, 2011	IRELAND	11	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A11	Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Roosenboom & Volman,	NETHERLANDS	15	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A12	Lam, 2014	HONG-KONG	13	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A13	Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017	U.S.A.	1	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis
A14	Boakye & Ampiah, 2017	GHANA	5	Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis

### Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data can be said to be one of the most challenging steps of research. Starting the analysis, along with data collection, can prevent potential difficulties



at this stage. However, there is no specific standard or method for analyzing qualitative data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In this study, analyzes were performed according to the following steps.

- 1- Reading and editing data
- 2- Coding the data
- 3- Gathering up the codes and creating categories
- 4- Synthesis (creating analytical themes)
- 5- Presenting and interpreting analytical themes

Firstly, the studies within this research scope were read, and the label4, purpose, themes, and suggestions in these papers were arranged into a table. In addition, the studies were named as A1,A2,A3....., A14. In the second step, the codes in the studies were marked and then transferred to digital media. Similar codes were brought together, and the substructures of the themes were created. Then the researches were reviewed once again, and the necessary procedures were performed for the codes to be added or removed to complete the coding process. In the synthesis process, firstly, the codes were put together, and common themes were formed. Upon creating the common themes, an abstract generalization was made, and the syntheses were produced.

The obtained codes, themes, and syntheses were arranged into a figure to provide a holistic view. Each theme was described as a title with direct quotations, and syntheses were discussed in headings. Direct quotations were provided by the obtained codes by combining the code of the study and the code of the participant in that study.

### **Validity and Reliability**

There are differences in the criteria for validity and reliability, depending on the type of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). There are no common methods in which researchers agree to ensure validity and reliability in meta-synthesis research. The triangulation technique, which is commonly emphasized in the literature (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Neuman, 2011), has been used for the validity of the research. The triangulation technique has different types, such as data collection and researcher triangulation. Since the data source of this research is secondary research, the researcher triangulation has been made. In this framework, both researchers made the coding and created themes by reading the meta-synthesis studies separately. In the next stage, these codes and themes were brought together

and shared with two different researchers. The codes were discussed, and so themes were decided.

Reliability in qualitative research is related to the repeatability of the study. In other words, if the processes are repeated, similar results can be achieved. In this context, the criteria for inclusion in meta-synthesis studies included with these criteria, and data analysis were reported in detail. Finally, to support the themes, direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis were presented with the relevant study's code and enabled to be confirmed.

## **Findings**

Six themes and three syntheses were put together after analyzing the studies included in the meta-synthesis. The codes, themes, and synthesis obtained from these studies were explained and discussed under headings shown in Figure 1.

## **Themes**

### ***Formal policies and practices at school***

This theme focuses on formal policies and the problems arising from school practices about the teachers in the teaching profession's early years. In many countries, preparatory programs are conducted under the name of initial training, training program, or induction to ensure the prospective teachers' adaptation to the profession. Within these programs are various practices such as seminars, observations, and in-service training. Unplanned or unnecessary activities might be perceived as a problem in training programs. Besides, the school administration's strict control over new teachers is perceived as a problem by teachers in terms of autonomy. Another major problem is that new teachers are given certain duties such as classroom management and keeping watch as if they were experienced teachers. In addition to this heavy workload, it is a fact that the school administration might give new teachers extra duties. Low salary and the lack of resources (course materials) are other issues considered a problem in the meta-synthesis (Mundzigwa & Magudu, 2013). Although wage policies vary from country to country, the lack of resources generally emerges as a problem in rural areas.

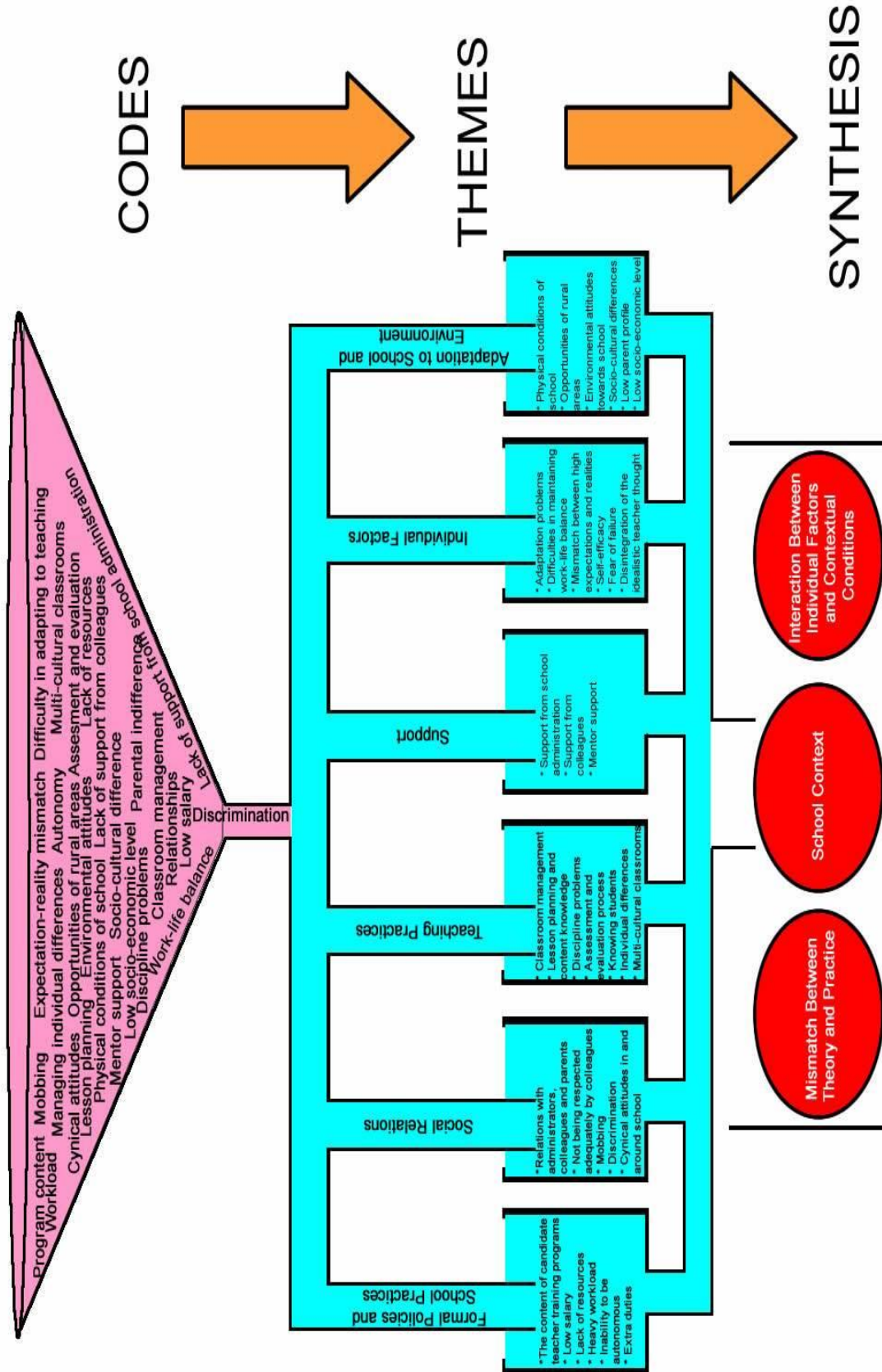


Figure 1. The codes, themes, and synthesis

Within this theme, direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis are as follows:

*“Well, I was given too much administration work during my first year, which made me tired. Of course, I understand I had no choice then, but I still wish I hadn’t been so fed up with that much work.”(A1-Ms. Jeong).*

*“Since the in-service training was not given earnestly, it’s become usual to get a scolding from each inspector. We had to try to understand authority, correspondences, and responsibilities by asking around or deciphering the regulations on our own because the district directorate of national education was incapable of informing us about the correspondences and assumed we have innate knowledge about them.” (A8-M16E).*

*“I worked at school from 7 in the morning until half-past 6 at night. At night I would prepare for my lessons. I was used to working hard in my previous career, but as a teacher, you have to do so many new things, and you carry such a high responsibility” (A11).*

### ***Social relations***

This theme focuses on the problems stemming from new teachers' relations with other colleagues within the school. Although these problems are often associated with school climate and culture, administrators and other colleagues' negative attitudes and behaviors are also perceived as problems by new teachers. Within social relations, new teachers may also have problems with parents. The issues with parents could result from families' high expectations and new teachers' incapability to meet these expectations and their lack of experience in managing the relationships. Cynical attitudes in the school environment refer to hostile attitudes and behaviors towards the organization or colleagues. These cynical behaviors may also occur as mobbing or discrimination. These adverse situations cause the inability to meet new teachers' self-esteem and damage their perceptions of dignity. Direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis within the scope of this theme are as follows:

*“Sometimes the parents want my number, but I don’t give it to them - I want to keep my privacy, and I didn’t want to talk to them on the weekends or my holiday, so I let the social worker do the work, and the parents can come any time during the day.” (A2).*

*“You know, sometimes accidents happened. I do not know exactly everything about it because I would not have been there when it happened. Sometimes they come in. What is this on her cheek? How did she get this scratch? That is the only thing parents make pressure.” (A5-Sally).*

*“A relationship with a colleague broke down, and I didn’t realize that people weren’t talking to me anymore. That was very difficult because all the new teachers sit together in the same area. It was upsetting because I felt they were passing judgment” (A10-NQT5).*

### ***Teaching practices***

This theme focuses on the problems faced by new prospective teachers in putting their academic knowledge and skills into practice. Teaching requires professional knowledge and skills to be reflected in practice. In this context, it is possible to suggest that new teachers have difficulties transferring their theoretical knowledge into practice in classroom management, planning, assessment, and evaluation, knowing students, managing individual differences, and dealing with problematic students. Another major problem is new teachers' lack of knowledge about the curriculum and its content. Teachers consider this lack of knowledge as a problem for themselves. Direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis within the scope of this theme are listed below:

*“One of the major challenges was to be responsible for a class with 15 non-native Norwegian speakers from different countries and very different backgrounds” (A3-6).*

*“Since I work as a teacher in Istanbul, there are various students from all over Turkey in the classroom, and they*

*come from different cultures from each other, which caused difficulties in classroom management because I didn't have enough experience before.” (A6).*

*“I think I know how to prepare questions, but sometimes I don't know how hard the questions should be. Sometimes, I see that the students fail at an exam that I supposed it was an easy one, and I see the results I didn't expect to see. Possibly, this is because I don't know my students well enough, or they don't repeat what I taught adequately.” (A7-Ö7).*

*“I need to improve my classroom management. My 33 students are a vivacious bunch” (A13).*

### **Support**

This theme focuses on the lack of support that new teachers cannot get from the school administration and colleagues. Teachers need professional sharing, psychological, and social support to overcome the problems they face in the early years of the teaching profession, adapt, and gain professional identity. With mentoring practices, in this context, it is aimed to provide support to new teachers. However, teachers might not get sufficient support due to the mentor or mentoring system's reasons. Also, support is a multifaceted process involving the school administration and colleague support. Teachers who do not get sufficient support from their colleagues and the school administration are likely to have problems or have difficulties in dealing with issues. Direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis within the scope of this theme are as follows:

*“My mentor was from a different branch. I could easily answer my questions about paperwork, but I didn't support teaching and my branch. I didn't get much support about what to do about class activities.” (A6)*

*“No way would I go to that person again (Deputy Principal). I didn't know who else to go to if I had a troublesome student. Trying to survive yourself is a huge thing. The sense of isolation on the staff, and you don't know who to go to” (A10, NQT2)*

*You had to figure it all out yourself ... That was the main reason why I had so much trouble in my first year. They left me to my faith. Nobody guided me at all, although I often asked for [support or supervision] (A13).*

### ***Individual factors***

This theme focuses on the problems caused by individual factors as well as environmental factors. Although the sources of the problems experienced by new teachers are different, their characteristics may also be the problems' source. The problems grouped under this theme, such as low self-efficacy, fear of failure, maintaining work-life balance, and adaptation to the profession, are closely related to individuals' capacity to adapt and their belief in dealing with problems and competency. Direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis within the scope of this theme are as follows:

*“I go into the Internet every day now, even on the weekends. I have to stop because it eats me up. When students send me an e-mail in the evening, I answer back on Friday night or Saturday morning. It’s my fault” (A3-9).*

*“It’s like being thrown in a cage of wild animals. That first week was like oh my gosh! These kids are different. They’re not what I thought they would be, not at all. I thought if someone would say “we don’t do that” or “walk,” and they would just do it.” (A5-Lisa).*

### ***Adaptation to school and environment***

This theme focuses on the areas that make it difficult for new teachers to adapt to school and the environment. In this context, the school's physical conditions, the opportunities of the region, the environment's view of the school, the socio-economic conditions of the families, and their interest in the school are the factors that make adaptation to school more difficult for teachers. Besides, teachers may also encounter adaptation problems in regions with different socio-cultural characteristics they are unfamiliar with. Direct quotations from the studies included in the meta-synthesis within the scope of this theme are as follows:

*“I have adaptation difficulties in many ways. The society's lifestyle and their way of raising children are*

*not the things I adopt in terms of the issues they care.”*

*(A6).*

*“We have transportation problems; no regular transportation service is available from the village to the district of the city. We also have a water problem: we have to supply our drinking water in buckets since city water is not enough. We are having problems with electricity as well: power cut is experienced continuously.” (A8-M20E).*

### **Meta-synthesis**

Under this heading is given the syntheses obtained due to the second-level abstraction of the research results and suggestions of the themes extracted from the studies included in the meta-synthesis. In this context, three syntheses are obtained: the difference between theory and practice, school context, and teaching training policies. These syntheses shed light on the source of the problems experienced by new teachers in the teaching profession. The syntheses also refer to the outcome of meta-synthesis studies. Versatile evaluations, research results, and suggestions related to the syntheses are discussed below under headings.

#### ***The mismatch between theory and practice***

The first career step of the teaching profession begins with undergraduate education. This period includes a formal education process in which the theoretical knowledge about the profession is gained, and specialization is provided. At the end of this period, prospective teachers are expected to transform their understanding and knowledge of curriculum, children, learning, and pedagogy into practical classroom activities (Fotland, 2004). Prospective teachers assume that they have the knowledge and skills required for teaching, and they have the enthusiasm to put these into practice as soon as possible. Schuck, Aubusson, Buchanan, and Russell (2012) described the feelings and thoughts of the prospective teachers in the first months of teaching as follows:

“...The first months of teaching are like traveling on a speed train for teachers who have just begun teaching. Teachers who are very happy to have begun teaching at a school look forward to teaching. They spend their happy days presuming that they have planned the activities and first classes that will motivate students.”



Apart from new teachers' enthusiasm, the inconsistencies between their ideals and classroom realities, inadequacies, and not feeling ready require prospective teachers to enter into an intense struggle (Aydın, 2018). This discrepancy between teachers' theory and practice is referred to as "praxis shock" (Keltchermans & Ballett, 2002) in the literature. The differences between theory and practice lead to anxiety in new teachers. According to Sandlin, Young & and Karge (1993), teachers who can not integrate theoretical knowledge with practice begin to experience pressure on three levels. These are anxious about whether they will be able to continue their teaching career, worry about not being able to fulfill their actual teaching duties, and finally, anxiety about influencing their teaching skills and students' learning capacity. In this context, extra attention must be paid, especially to applied programs (Gujarati, 2012; Helms-Lorenz, Van de Grift & Maulana, 2016). Teaching is a profession that requires integrating essential knowledge with practice. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) stated that pre-service educational institutions could better prepare prospective teachers for the teaching profession by providing training service in areas that reflect teaching reality. To eliminate the mismatch between theory and practice, prospective teachers' experiencing teaching practices in authentic classroom environments, especially during the undergraduate education process, and facing the potential problems they may encounter in their teaching career in advance will both contribute to their professional development and reveal the weaknesses they will need to strengthen. In this context, giving priority to the practice in pre-service education may reduce the risk of new teachers' experiencing the praxis shock. Candidate teacher training programs are implemented in many countries (Turkey, Israel, Netherlands, USA, etc.) to bridge theory and practice. After theory-based pre-service training, practice-oriented candidate teacher training programs can reduce the praxis shock as well.

### ***School-environment context***

The nature of the relations in the school and with the environment and the conditions of the region were brought together in this synthesis. The culture, geographical conditions, and socio-economic level of the families in the school where teachers begin to work might be the source of the problems experienced. They may affect the severity of the issues. Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2018) underlined that the difficulties prospective teachers experience in relations with the society might stem from the factors such as prospective teachers' being unfamiliar with the region and the differences in terms of culture, language, socio-economic level, and education level of people, and their interests. Zetlin, MacLeod, and Kimm (2012)

determined that the problems faced by prospective teachers in different levels of schools and regions (cities, towns, etc.) differed. The region's conditions are considered the source of the problems, such as families' low interest in the school and socio-economic problems in the studies included in the meta-synthesis (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kozikoğlu & Senemoğlu, 2018; Mudzingwa & Magudu, 2013).

School culture and climate constitute another critical issue. New teachers need help to understand the importance of teaching and to find resources that will enable them to continue their work effectively and satisfactorily (McCann & Johannessen, 2014). New teachers can find sufficient support to overcome problems, and they can gain a professional identity in a short time in schools with a supportive culture and an open climate. As stated in the literature on effective school research and school leadership, the environment also plays a vital role in helping teachers progress in their professional careers and maintain their teaching (Lam, 2014). Given the effect of school administration and culture on new teachers' attitudes towards students and their experiences in teaching, Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2018), seeing the candidacy period as an acculturation period, stated that it is necessary to provide suitable opportunities for new teachers and encourage them to cooperate with experienced teachers. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) concluded that prospective teachers supported by mentor teachers and collaborate with other teachers in the planning process are less likely to quit or get transferred to another school in the first years of their teaching career. The principals have a significant impact on the supportive school culture and the professional development of newly recruited teachers. According to Bredeson and Johansson (2000), principals, as the leaders of teaching, have a significant role in teacher learning in creating a learning environment, designing professional development, determining its content, presenting, and finally evaluating it. In this context, the school culture, school climate, and the principals, who have a significant impact on these, maybe a source of the problem and maybe a source of professional development.

### ***Interaction between individual factors and contextual conditions***

Although there are common problems for newly-recruited teachers, they do not experience the same issues. It is a limitation to explain the problems encountered by new teachers only with environmental conditions. Under this synthesis is evaluated the interaction between individual factors and the environment. Personal factors are sometimes the source of the problems; however, they can also be determinant in coping with the environment's issues and resisting them. In this context, new teachers with high self-efficacy and adaptability

capacity are more successful in overcoming them. According to Bullough (1989), whether new teachers will face problems depends on the interaction between personal characteristics and contextual conditions. The skills, understandings, and attitudes new teachers bring to the classroom and the school context determine what kind of problems teachers will face.

Honng (2012) compared the resistance reactions between the teachers who left the profession and the teachers who go on teaching; both groups stated that they have similar problems: teachers who left the profession have the beliefs that lay heavy burdens that may cause stress and emotional exhaustion on them, while those who go on teaching set boundaries in their relations with the students and tend to take measures against the situations that would leave them in a difficult situation. In addition, it was also found that the teachers who left the profession referred to their personality traits when they encountered unwanted student behaviors and the problems related to classroom management, and they consequently experienced a decrease in their self-efficacy; on the other hand, the teachers who continued teaching maintained strong self-efficacy beliefs with the support of school administrators. Meristo and Eisenschmidt (2014) determined that school climate and administrators' support influenced new teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. As a result, it can be suggested that self-efficacy perception, capacity to deal with problems, professional knowledge, and skills related to the profession, and adaptation capacity in new teachers are vital factors in dealing with issues and can be the source of problems.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

After graduating from teacher training programs, new teachers who began their teaching career try to transform their pedagogical knowledge into teaching and curricular knowledge into practice. However, prospective teachers face many problems, including praxis shock, and have difficulties when they start teaching. Novice teachers' experiences in this period significantly determine whether they will create a professional identity, develop their professional skills, and continue to work efficiently or not. In this context, identifying the problem areas and sources of problems new teachers experience is highly important for the measures to be taken and the developed policies. In the related literature, many studies focus on the general issues and more specific aspects of these problems new teachers face in the teaching profession's early years. Although the cultures, regions, and education systems vary, the related literature points to similar problems. In the current study, in this context, the studies' research results using qualitative methods on the problems new teachers face in the early years of teaching were brought together and synthesized.

As a result of the research, six themes were determined to identify new teachers' problem areas: official policies and school practices, social relations, teaching practices, support, individual factors, and adaptation to school and environment. Although these themes refer to the problem areas, the main reasons lying under these problems are more important for the policies to be developed as a solution. With a second level abstraction, three syntheses were obtained for the main source of this study's problems. These are as follows: the mismatch between theory and practice, school-environment context, and the interaction between individual factors and contextual conditions. The syntheses obtained through the research were discussed and explained in line with the literature. Finally, the following suggestions have been made based on the research results and the syntheses deduced from the results, suggestions, findings, and interpretations of the meta-synthesis studies. These are practice and policy-oriented recommendations, emphasizing reducing the problems new teachers may face and making adaptation to teaching easier for them.

### ***Suggestions for practice***

- Teacher training institutions' providing education in accord with the realities of education,
- Collaborating with universities within the context of teacher training to help teachers (prospective teachers) overcome potential difficulties and improve themselves,
- Giving weight to the applied training programs in the pre-service period to increase prospective teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and decrease the gap between theory and practice,
- Avoiding giving challenging classrooms and full-time duties to newly-appointed teachers; setting time aside for new teachers to improve themselves by reducing their workload,
- Providing teachers with training programs about the general problems they may encounter in the early years of teaching as well as the specific problems in their branches,
- Providing opportunities for new teachers to develop positive relationships with students and colleagues,
- Assigning new teachers in the areas with challenging conditions after they gain experience and complete the adaptation process instead of choosing such schools as their first place of duty,

As leaders and mentors, school administrators should develop practices and opportunities that will contribute to prospective teachers' professional development.

***Suggestions for policy***

- Creating initial training programs to develop a supportive school culture and meaningful and transparent relations,

- Developing effective mentoring practices,

- Developing mechanisms to support new teachers' collaborative activities, to help them express their particular needs, and ensure that their opinions are heard,

- Creating professional learning community practices sensitive to new teachers' needs and sharing their knowledge and experiences.

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