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Supporting New Early Childhood Education Teachers in Public Schools

Devlet Okullarında Göreve Yeni Başlayan Okulöncesi Eğitim Öğretmenlerinin Desteklenmesi

Zeynep AKDAĞ*

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine beginning early childhood education teachers' perceived needs and received supports in public schools. Recently, supporting new teachers has been emphasized more to empower them in teaching profession. First year of teaching is considered as an induction program in Turkey as well, and this study attempts to examine effectiveness of mentoring program in public schools in Turkey. Sixteen beginning early childhood education (ECE) teachers were interviewed at the end of the first and second semester of their first year of teaching. Audio-recorded interviews were analyzed through qualitative research methodologies. Findings revealed that new teachers struggled most to find out their ways in complex legislation and paperwork in public schools. It appeared that the induction program was not implemented properly and it was not helpful for new teachers. Beginning teachers' expressions about their perceived needs in their first year was essentially a mentor.
Key words: New early childhood education teachers, mentoring, induction program.

INTRODUCTION

Before choosing teaching as a career, many people consider job satisfaction, compensation, and the personality as the main determiners (Anthony and Ord, 2008). In the broadest sense, teachers should have an understanding of child development and the learning process, organizing content and connecting related content areas, and using several materials and resources when teaching their subject matter. Additionally, they should also have an understanding of decision making in the classroom, collaborate with their colleagues, parents, and principals. Moreover, they must be able to teach students the necessary knowledge and skills in order to be successful at school and their personal and professional lives. They need to teach students to be productive, and to contribute to the economic growth of the society. In order to raise the next generation responsibly, they must meet all these criteria (Wiesman, Coover, and Knight, 1999). Beginning teachers are also expected to commit to the profession and have the same knowledge and skills as of experienced teachers (Roehrig, Pressley and Talotta, 2002). As such, mentorship and mentoring programs have been more emphasized recently. For instance, first year mentor program is becoming mandatory process. Effective mentoring programs should take into account the fact that needs of beginning teachers change over time. For instance, first-year teaching experience is different in private and public schools and in elementary and secondary schools (Ganser, 1999). Supporting beginning teachers is critical to retain them in the teaching profession. The first year of teaching is considered an induction period, and a mentor teacher is assigned to each novice teacher to provide support and lessen the newcomer's fear and anxiety. A beneficial mentoring process should be built upon sincerity and confidentiality. Mentoring is more effective when the mentor is an experienced,

* This study is a part of a dissertation
** Assistant Prof. 1, Yüzüncü Yıl University 1, Faculty of Education, Van-Turkey, e-posta: cimenzeynepakdag@gmail.com

caring, and committed person who is genuinely interested in supporting beginning teachers by being a role model (McGee, 2001).

School is a social system with complex interrelated relationships, and teachers are viewed as members of the social group in a school instead of isolated individuals. Each group is interdependent in the larger context of schools including administrators, students, and parents. The balance of this interactive social system is maintained by organizational composition, rules and routines, informal behavioral patterns, standards of performance, and organizational ideologies (Hawley and Rosenholtz, 1984). So it can be stated that teaching occurs in both complex material and ideological context. Beginning teachers are required to engage in this complex organization and physical environment successfully (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997; Fottland, 2004). As such, adaptation is another vital issue for the professional life as many teachers quit the teaching profession within their first five years (Anthony and Ord, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; Lindgren (2005); Nemser, 2003). Beginning teachers also struggle to handle the enculturation process or socialization into the professional culture of teaching as well as teaching tasks. Enculturation process involves interaction among staff and the community of which the teacher is a member. This interaction helps community members to learn the value system, norms, and expected behavioral pattern (Balcı, 2000). The adjustment process refers to learning the ropes which means fitting into the existing system. The early years of teaching are times for coping, adjustment, and survival, which depend largely on the working conditions and culture of schools. If teachers are not sufficiently supported, they may blame students, parents, or administrators to ease their difficulties and feel some comfort (Nemser, 2003). In this sense, supporting beginning teachers encourages relationships with colleagues, and it also plays role on personal development. Beginning teachers' professional development should include effective mentoring and collaboration, where beginning teachers work together as a team with experienced teachers in their first year (Lundeen, 2004).

Mentoring programs must identify beginning teachers' needs related to practical issues both in instructional and non-instructional contexts. In order to empower beginning teachers, mentoring programs should include development of personal strength, defined rationales and goals, continuous year-long support, collaboration, and efforts to increase the beginning teachers' knowledge and practice. Furthermore, beginning teachers should be allowed to take risks to develop creative teaching ideas and be motivated to control their professional growth through participatory professionalization programs. Giving voice to beginning teachers enable them to be dignified, and equipped to be more committed professionals who have an positive influence on children (Runyan, 1991). The mentor is not supposed to solve problems, but rather should encourage beginning teachers to come to their own decisions; that is, mentors should serve as catalysts for improvement. Therefore, a constant dialog between mentor and mentee is crucial, as it is beneficial for a mentee to be challenged by a mentor. Through this process, beginning teachers progress in their profession (Lucas, 2001). The mentoring process would be more effective if the beginning teachers are aware of the goals and expectations beforehand. Mentoring has not only desirable effects on professional development, but it also positively influences personal development of teachers as long as it is well-organized (Lindgren, 2005). New teachers approach their mentors as sympathetic colleagues with whom they can share their doubts and frustrations. Working with a mentor decreases new teachers' stress since mentors do not only supervise them but also help teachers to feel more productive and competent (Moffett, John, and Isken, 2002).

First year of teaching is also the induction period for beginning teachers in Turkey. Administrators are responsible for guiding beginning teachers and they also responsible for appointing mentors with considerable experience in the beginning teacher's field. MoNE (1995) documents claim that mentor teachers prepare guiding program to evaluate annual plan, daily plan, and teaching practice of beginning teachers. At the end of the guiding program, the mentor teacher writes a report about the novice teacher. If the administrator approves the report, then the beginning teacher officially completes the induction program. Although the written documents of MoNE claims that the induction of beginning teachers proceed as mentioned,

induction program and mentoring process do not work properly in public schools. Turkish beginning teachers have been reported to lack of systemic support in the form of induction programs or mentoring. It is treated as an obligation and beginning teachers and their mentors rarely meet. First-year teachers may be assigned mentors from other fields or who would not "mentor" beginning teachers' first-year. Moreover, beginning teachers in the induction period have been assumed to have the same responsibility with more experienced teachers and teach in the classrooms although they were supposed to observe an experienced teacher. Mentor teachers do not observe beginning teachers' practice and do not discuss their practice with them. Administrators do not provide effective guidance as well. As a result, ineffective mentoring of first-year teachers leaves them on their own (Akbaba, 2002; Haser, 2009).

The first-year of teaching is a crucial career stage in which beginning teachers are trying to build and re-build their professional values, aims, and practices that compose their professional identity. In this sense, beginning teachers are most vulnerable in their first-year of teaching if they are not in a supportive environment (Smethem, 2007). It is important to investigate beginning teachers' first year experiences in order to have a better insight of their problems and needs during this fragile period (Latimer, 2009). The findings of this study may be useful to document the effectiveness of mentoring and induction process for beginning early childhood education teachers in MoNE and provide the Ministry with fundamental principles of induction and mentoring programs. More precisely, the current study aimed to investigate the following research questions:

1) What are the beginning early childhood education teachers' needs in their first year of teaching in public schools?
2) What types of support do beginning early childhood education teachers receive in their first year of teaching in public schools?
3) How do induction programs were implemented in public schools?

METHOD

Research design

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach in which the participants make sense of their personal and social world. Phenomenological studies involve detailed investigation of the participants' lived experiences and it aimed to reach an objective phenomenon which was experienced by people (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Phenomenology is the study of life world (lebenswelt), defined as "…what we know best, what is always taken for granted in all human life, always familiar to us in its typology through experience" (Husserl 1970, pp. 123–124). It is an approach to conceptualize and study experience, with consistent philosophical foundations (Giorgi 2009). It is a broad, comprehensive, and diverse field that cannot easily be placed under certain common ground, yet it overtly addresses the lived experiences (Mooij, 2010). It might scrutinize anything that can be experienced through the consciousness of an object, a person, or a complex state of affairs. Thus, it does not apply objective analysis excluding the people who experienced. Rather, it focuses on how things are experienced by them (Giorgi 2009). Phenomenological research aims to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal base (van Manen, 1990).

Participants

A precondition for studying the essence of lived experiences is selecting research participants who exactly have actual experiences of phenomenon being scrutinized (Polkinghorne, 1989). In this sense, selecting participants who satisfy desired criteria gain importance in phenomenological study. This phenomenological study aimed to present an in-depth picture of supporting beginning early childhood education (ECE) teachers in public schools. Thus, the context that the phenomena investigated was the public schools that these teachers taught in their first-year. This study applied the following criteria for qualification as a participant: Being

a beginning teacher, working in public schools, and having no work experience in teaching profession.

Sixteen beginning early childhood education teachers participated in this study. All teachers graduated from the Department of Elementary Education in the Faculty of Education at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkey. METU is a technology-oriented public university and the language of instruction is English. Participants took four semesters of teaching practice courses in the second, fifth, seventh, and eighth semesters. The first three practicum courses were carried out in private schools and the last one was in public schools. Although MoNE is the chief employer for teachers, the teacher education program while the participants of current study were studying did not include any course explaining operational functioning of MoNE.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews with open-ended questions best fit phenomenological approach since the primary goal is to explore participants' responses and reconstruct their experiences of the phenomena. The purpose of in-depth interview is not to get answers and test or evaluate hypothesis. Rather, the goal is to understand the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of those experiences (Seidman, 1991). Having one-shot interview does not provide a profound exploration on the topic (Mishler, 1986). The current study employed two interviews as data collection method. The first interview aimed to reveal new teachers' needs and capability of induction programs to meet teachers' needs in the national curriculum context. They were asked to reconstruct as much detail as possible about induction process in their first year of teaching. In the second interview, participants spent more time in teaching profession and made more sense of their experiences.

The current study was a part of more comprehensive study, and the interview protocol for main study was developed by reviewing the related literature. After that, two instructors in ECE program, a teacher who had seven years of work experience in public schools, and an administrator who had eight years of work experience in public schools, investigated interview questions for appropriateness. The researcher conducted pilot interviews with three beginning teachers working in public schools in Aksaray, a province center. All three teachers were graduated from ECE programs of different universities and had no teaching experience when they started to work in public schools. After little change on the questions in the interview protocol based on the pilot interviews, the researcher started to collect data. Participating teachers were working at different cities, thus, the researcher traveled to 10 different cities in Turkey to collect data. She could not go two of the most distant cities due to scheduling problems. Therefore, three participants in those cities provided written responses for the interview questions.

Two instructors from ECE program and one instructor from Elementary Mathematics Education program conducting similar studies investigated the protocol of *Study I* interview and made minor changes for the protocol of *Study II* interview. She traveled to eight different cities and to several surrounding towns to conduct face to face interviews with 12 participants. Four participants were interviewed in Ankara during their visit. All of the interviews except for three written interviews in Study I were audio recorded for the upcoming analysis.

Data analysis

Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis was utilized to analyze the data. Data for phenomenological study consist of long and in-depth interviews involving an informal and interactive process. Although it is highly time consuming, verbatim transcription is favored for qualitative data analysis procedure (King and Horrocks, 2010). Data analysis process began with reading all transcripts multiple times. In this process all statements have equal value. Then, statements that are not relevant to the phenomenon being investigated were eliminated. For instance, 'I have no idea about how classroom needs are met' and 'I do not want to teach children anything that I do not believe' were both considered as relevant to the phenomenon of

supporting new teachers in public schools. After selecting relevant statements, the researcher determined meaning units, and removed overlapping and repetitive statements. In this way, list of all the meaning units across participants would appear. And then, researchers formed individual textural descriptions of the experience by rearranging meaning units in a narrative structure, created clustered themes indentifying similarities in the textures of participants' experiences. Next, they identified structures underlying the common experiences of participants to represent group in a meaningful whole. Finally, ultimate narrative depicting an in-depth picture of the perceived needs and received supports for new teachers in public schools was constructed (Moustakas, 1994). A researcher in the field of teacher education program monitored data analysis process for more accurate results.

Validity and reliability

In qualitative research reality is not single, objective, and fixed waiting to be discovered. Rather it is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing in its nature. In this sense, qualitative research focuses on people's construction of reality since the primary instrument of data collection and analysis is human beings. When reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity becomes strength of qualitative research and in order to ensure credibility, a researcher should use triangulation, member checks, peer examination, and participatory research, and address researcher's bias (Merriam, 1998).

The extent to which the resulting descriptions or relationships are valid in qualitative studies depends largely on four criteria namely objectivity, reliability, replicability, and systematic coherence (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer, 2000). The assumption underlying the search for objectivity is simple. The way we perceive and understand the world of empirical reality depends on us (Kirk and Miller, 1986). In other words, objectivity refers that a truth or independent reality exists outside of any investigation or observation and researchers try to uncover this reality without influencing it in any way. However, the process of investigation itself would affect what is being investigated especially in the social sciences. In this sense, a realistic aim for the researchers is to remain impartial to the result of the study, acknowledge their own preconceptions and reflect them as unbiased as possible (Smith, 1983). In short, objectivity refers to the extent to which categorization of sections of transcripts is subject to influence by the coders in the context of qualitative analysis and the primary test of objectivity in qualitative studies is inter-rater reliability, defined as the extent to which different coders come to the same coding decisions on same content (Rourke et al. 2000).

One of the assumptions underlying reliability is that there is a single reality. This reality will yield the same result with repeated study (Merriam, 1998). Researcher's position within the group being studied, selection of participants, information about them, data gathering, and the social context in which data was collected should be explained in detail. Therefore, the researcher enables readers to understand method and its effectiveness thoroughly (Shenton, 2004). The researchers' position, audit trail, and triangulation are strategies to establish credibility. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) do not suggest use of the term "triangulation" since it results in more confusion than it is assumed to clarify. They suggest explaining the use of different data collection techniques, different data collectors, or different data sources in detail rather than using imprecise and abstract term triangulation. Considering that terms such as reliability, validity, and triangulation have several meanings in the qualitative research paradigm, the quality of the research in this study was described by adopting Bogdan and Biklen's suggestion.

The present study employed Holsti's (1969) coefficient of reliability in order to measure percentage agreement among the two coders as it is recommended more. The formula is given below:

PA=2A/(nA+nB)

where "PA stands for percentage agreement. A is the number of agreements between two coders, and nA and nB are the number of units coded by coders A and B, respectively. This measure ranges from .00 (no agreement) to 1.00 (perfect agreement)" (Neuendorf, 2002 p.149)

In order to ensure reliability in this study, first, codes were discussed with a researcher experienced in qualitative research. All interviews were initially coded individually by the researcher. Then, the second coder and the researcher worked on the pilot interviews. When they reached a reasonable consensus on the codes and coded chunks as calculated by Holsti's (1969) formula, they started to code the actual data. Finally, they came together and compared their codes and they reached a total consensus. Another strategy to validate result of qualitative study is replicability. It refers to recording the exact methods, rules, and procedures so that another researcher can perform the same procedure and draw the same conclusion. Further research would be able to duplicate the data and follow the process to reach previous conclusions. Replication is only possible by reporting the study in sufficient detail so that researchers can evaluate the procedures followed and methods used (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1996; Merriam, 1998). Researchers are required to provide sufficient detailed description of the research context to enable readers to compare it with their researches and transfer findings and conclusion to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Parallel with Shenton's (2004) suggestions for transferability, research context, recruitment of participants, the data collection methods, and the time period of the study were discussed in detail. In so doing, researchers aimed to provide detailed information about the process to enable other researchers to repeat the current study.

The researcher brings a unique perspective to the qualitative research. In this sense, the researcher should ensure as much possible as that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants instead of preferences of the researcher; that is, confirmability for reducing researcher biases. There are number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher should document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study (Shenton, 2004). Ensuring replicability and confirmability is similar in this study since researcher explained underlying reason for choosing particular methodology, provided detailed methodological description, and discussed its strengths as well as weaknesses. After providing detailed methodological information, the next step is the audit trail which is a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings. These records are used for examining the data collection and analysis procedures and making judgments about the potential for bias or defect in design (Shenton, 2004). The present study employed audit trail for ensuring the confirmability. A researcher from Elementary Education Department monitored the research findings step by step and authenticated the findings of study. Finally, in order to maintain the trustworthiness of this study, data were collected over an extended period of time: middle of first year of teaching, and the end of the first year of teaching. Other strategies to ensure trustworthiness were debriefing sessions with the supervisor and thesis committee members and member checks during interviews restating or summarizing participants' responds. Besides, the researcher sent transcripts to participants in order to allow them critically analyze the transcripts and comment on them. None of the participants disaffirmed that the transcripts did not reflect their views, feelings, and experiences. Researcher had a strong rapport with the participants since she had been their academic advisor through their undergraduate education in the ECE program. In order to comfort all of the participants during the interviews, researcher ensured the confidentiality with consent forms of ethics committee. She also indicated that she was interested in their ideas and there were no correct answers for the interview questions. The participants were interviewed in their homes or where they felt comfortable in talking about their experiences.

Another strategy to increase trustworthiness of present study was to employ inter-coder agreement to decrease the amount of inferences that the researcher made. Beside, direct quotations were used to decrease the amount of inferences that the researcher made. Rich and thick description of the study including teacher education and public school context was provided and previous research in the literature was used to assess the findings of the study.

FINDINGS

Supporting new teachers in public schools consist of three components in Turkey: Induction program, mentor teachers, administrators' and inspectors' guidance.

MONE Seminars

MONE had a detailed legislation for the induction of first year teachers in public schools. The induction period consisted of three phases. Basic training phase aimed to inform candidate teachers about public employees' minimum common qualifications. Preparatory training phase focused specifically on candidate public school teachers' profession and necessary skills that they must adopt for teaching and make them ready for public schools' demands. Finally, the induction period was completed with a practicum phase. Yet, beginning teachers started teaching with full responsibility immediately after they were hired by MoNE. Basic and preparatory trainings demanded a great deal of time and they were held on weekends. MoNE inspectors and district managers were responsible for offering those trainings. Thirteen participants stated that MoNE seminars were not effective and helpful:

> *"MoNE district manager just read legislation from power-point. Besides, it was held in weekends and we could not go to out of town. It was stressful for us. Thus, I do not find MoNE seminars effective."* (P4-S2).

Only three teachers thought that MoNE seminars were effective. P16 expressed that she learned a great deal of legislation in seminars:

> *"There were several things that I did not know before seminars but I learned them in seminars. Maybe I do not know all of the details and I may have some missing information but I believe that I learned a great deal in seminars. At least, I know where I should consult if I have trouble."* (P16-S2).

All of the beginning teachers struggled at some degree to understand MoNE's legislation and how to carry out paperwork in public schools. P11 believed that MONE's legislation was complex and it could not be comprehended in MoNE seminars, and she decided to study Open University:

> *"They tried to explain the legislation in preparatory seminars but they could not explain everything. They claim that it is impossible to explain law of public personnel in its full detail. We need to investigate and find several things but there are tons of information. I even started to study public administration at Open University just because of realizing my drawback [upon legislation]. How these processes are running? What are my rights and how could I seek my rights? How could it be administered within this job?"* (P11-S2).

The complex and unstable nature of the MONE legislation was also difficult to follow when participants tried to understand it.

> *"It has been changing all the time. I learn something and it is changed next time I checked it. Besides, its language is difficult to understand and I could not comprehend everything about appointment and designation. I try to learn them but as I said it is not possible to comprehend everything. I mean I have difficulty with it."* (P16-S3).

Beginning teachers' expressions about their perceived needs in their first year pointed out another person, generally in the position of a mentor or a friend.

> *"I wish someone could tell me 'You need to prepare these. Look at these examples. You can keep these files. Firstly, you need to prepare food list. You should prepare in this way.' I solved all these problems after encountering with them. It was not in an order. I really had trouble. I learned with trial and error. I could have handle in my first month not in my 3rd month, if I had have help from someone."* (P2-S2).

Teachers complained that seminars were too much theory and less of practice.

> *"Paperwork was very difficult at the end of the semester. We have taken seminars but it was not related with plans and paperwork at all. Actually, I*

> *learned them at seminars but I learned from my friends that I met at seminars".* (P10-S2).

Mentor Teachers

Although there was an official policy in MoNE that a mentor teacher must be appointed for beginning teachers in their first year, 11 teachers did not have mentor teachers. Five teachers had mentors and they declared that the mentoring process was considered as a formality by the mentors. MoNE appointed teachers in two different positions: permanent and temporary. Permanent positions were more desirable since they guaranteed a permanent job status and had more privileges. Temporary positions did not guarantee the position for the following years and provided fewer rights for the teachers. Teachers needed to have higher scores on Public Personnel Selection (PPS) examination in order to be appointed in permanent positions. In this study 4 teachers had permanent positions and all of the remaining teachers were occupying the temporary positions. Mentoring process was under the responsibility of administrators and administrators did not appoint mentor teachers to beginning teachers who were holding temporary positions. Only one participant having a temporary position had a mentor. This situation decreased the possible support for beginning teachers in their first-year of teaching. P4 did not have a mentor teacher but another teacher who was also newly appointed had one because of her permanent position:

> *"Another teacher who was appointed recently has a mentor. She is in the permanent position. I have asked to the administrator. He said 'Normally mentor teachers are appointed but you would not have one because you are in the permanent position".* (P4-S2).

Mentoring, however, did not always provide the support new teachers needed. P5 pointed out the ineffectiveness of mentoring process even though she had a mentor:

> *'It does not work. It does not work. I just know my mentor teacher's name. Other beginning teacher also just knows her name. She [my mentor] asks me what a portfolio is. Such a process is running. No one says anything to you. No one supports you or explains anything to you. No one cares about you. You have to cope with everything on your own."* (P5-S2).

As it was mentioned before, participants in this study did not have a course on operational process of MoNE. Thus, participants had limited knowledge of MoNE procedures. Several participants were not aware of the mentoring process:

> *"Actually we have a mentor since we are in an induction period but I do not know my mentor. I think administrator is our mentor because there is no experienced teacher. We are both temporary position teachers. I am totally unaware of my mentor. No one has ever mentioned. I am curious about it."* (P12-S2)

P10 was not sure about her mentor since she was not informed about mentoring process. She assumed that experienced teachers would be her mentor since she received help from experienced teachers although they could not meet often:

> *"I think morning teacher is my mentor but it is limited, she is morning teacher and I am afternoon teacher. I barely see her since she leaves school early. Even if I come to school early, I cannot meet with her. However, she helped me a lot at in the beginning when we had a meeting with parents. She arranged everything. I did not know anything at that time. She wrote agenda items and she made a presentation."* (P10-S2).

Majority of the elementary schools had only one ECE class. For this reason, beginning ECE teachers had primary school teacher mentors. P8 was working in an elementary school and she had a primary, teacher as her mentor, yet she preferred to have a mentor teacher with ECE background:

> *"It would be better if she was from ECE department. Primary school teachers know (only) their field. I think it would not be helpful for us. However, if mentor*

> *is from early education, it would be efficient and I want to have one. I would benefit from her experiences and she also would learn new things. It would be great."* (P8-S3).

Sometimes informal mentoring worked better than the formal one when experienced ECE teachers were ready to help the new teachers in their schools. Even though these experienced teachers were not officially appointed as mentor teachers, they guided beginning teachers in their first year experiences:

> *"She knows children better. She lives in the same neighborhood and knows children. She gave me information about children. She gave me information about both educational activities and the process in school such as how we can get e-school password. She provided all kinds of information. She shared all of her experiences."* (P4-S3)

P16-S2 needed someone to lessen her fear. It might be lessened if she had a mentor teacher. P16 listed what she needed in her first years of teaching and her needs are common for all of the participants:

> *"It would be great, if someone told me how to handle children because you were frightened. I was frightened. It seemed to me scary. Especially, when I received the list including 25 children. Oh my goodness! What! 25!... It would be better, if someone guide about parents 'You should speak in this way and exhibit this attitude.' Because, you start with such a psychology that you have recently graduated and suddenly thrown into class. We have no experience with parents."*

Beginning teachers' best supporter is the internet in terms of paper work. They used it for finding activities and fulfilling paperwork. P14-S3 explained this process:

> "*I found all of the forms from internet. I found all of the songs and finger plays from early education web sites. Sometimes, I could not find some song's melody and I could not create melody for them. I had to investigate them on the internet."*

Inspections in MONE

Administrators were primarily responsible for beginning teachers and they were inspected and guided by administrators. Yet, their limited knowledge of early education was not sufficient to guide or inspect beginning teachers. Administrators were supposed to review teachers' plans but P14 claimed that her administrator was not aware of what she was doing:

> *"He does not investigate it. I think it is a waste of paper. He just signs it. He does not read at all. He never asked 'What did you do?*" (P14-S3).

According to MoNE's legislation, beginning teachers were also inspected and guided by MoNE's inspectors twice in their first year of teaching. The first inspection was for guidance and the second one was the real inspection. Unfortunately, MoNE did not have many inspectors specialized on ECE. Beginning teachers experienced problems with inspectors as they were trained for inspecting elementary education teachers. Although ECE and elementary education would be similar in some respect, ECE had exclusive features and needed to be investigated and evaluated by an inspector who had knowledge on specific characteristics of early education. Lack of knowledge of ECE made inspectors to expect the same responsibilities with elementary teachers although some of them were unnecessary for ECE teachers. For instance, lesson schedules did not exist in ECE classes since daily schedules in ECE were non-discrete, which means there were no lessons in ECE classes. An inspector insisted on a lesson schedule and P2 could not persuade him that there was no need for this paper work:

> *"I said I did not need it, so I did not prepare lesson schedule. He said 'Government speaks with documents'. I said 'ECE teachers cannot enter one class and not the other classes. It is different that we [ECE teachers] have to be in the class all the time. It is meaningless to differentiate first lesson and second lesson.' He still wanted me to prepare that document."* (P2-S2).

P16 believed that there was a conflict between expectations of inspector and the characteristics of early education:

> *"I was warned that 'Your classroom management was not good, your children are too free.' I did not know what kind of class he was expecting but he found my class too free. He warned me that "You need to be cautious on authority.' I did not know what he was expecting. Children were sitting on their chairs during Turkish-Language activity, I was asking questions and children replied. Some of them got up and wandered around and sit again. Did he expect children to stand still? It is not possible to make children sit in the same position such a long time. He perceived that as a lack of authority. I do not make children involve in my activity with force if they do not want to be involved. My practice is that 'Ok! You can silently sit in that corner and deal with these activities without making noise."* (P16-S3).

MONE implements centralized national curriculum. An inspector investigated P12's practice according to this centralized curriculum and criticized her due to the lack of home visits in her teaching practice without considering local circumstances. In general, parents' SES was quite low in this study and they lived in single-room houses. In some situations, beginning teachers even hesitated to interact with fathers due to local cultural norms. P12 felt uncomfortable in a small room with the existence of the student's father and did not go on home visits.

> *"The inspector said 'You did not visit homes.' All of the fathers were staying at home and mothers were working in potato fields. They lived in a single room heated with stove. You could not say I' will visit you.' How could I say 'I will come to you and discuss condition of your child while their husband was staying at home? Then, I decided to make home visit activities in summer. Then, inspector sent an official notice that I did not do any home visits."* (P12-S2).

DISCUSSION

Most professionals go through a certain period of apprenticeship before they start practicing on their own. Not following this tradition, teachers have been considered as full members of the teaching profession when they are hired. Therefore, the responsibilities of a beginning teacher are the same as those of experienced one (Saban, 2002). In this sense, induction programs should focus on well-matched mentors, curriculum guidance, collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, and inspired leadership. The success of school-based induction programs relies on how teachers work together, and the principal can play a central role in facilitating interaction among teachers with various levels of experience. Successful induction may also help to shape professional culture and school capacity (Johnson, Birkeland, Kardos, Kaufman, Liu, and Peske, 2001). King (2004) divided support received by beginning teachers into three broad categories. These are educational, professional, and personal support. In this study, beginning teachers mostly received professional support from teachers who teach the same subject or grade level. They also received support from official mentors, colleagues, and administrators. Yet, it was not a structured, detailed, and sufficient support. Beginning teachers received help when they experienced problems and asked for help. The findings highlighted ineffectiveness of mentoring and induction programs in public schools.

First year of teaching is considered induction year in public schools, and beginning teachers are candidates in that period. They are required to complete induction period successfully to continue teaching profession. The induction period consists of three parts: The first part only focuses on general information that public officer should know such as Turkish constitutes basic principles, Turkish language grammar, and Atatürk's principles. The second part is specified on teaching profession and it is basically about MoNE's structure, organizations, and legislations. The first two preparatory trainings last for the first semester of first year of teaching and held on weekends. MoNE inspectors and district managers are responsible for giving those trainings (MoNE, 1995). Those preparatory courses keep new teachers busy on weekends, yet they are not designed to meet beginning teachers' basic needs.

In this study only three teachers found the preparatory courses effective and helpful. It appeared that beginning teachers were overwhelmed with the paperwork in MoNE. During their first few months of teaching, teachers felt ill-prepared to effectively manage all those requirements of paperwork. Preparatory courses would be more effective if they were redesigned to inform beginning teachers on MoNE's complicated paperwork, its complex legislation and organization.

New teachers need extensive support in induction period; otherwise they feel alone with their concerns and problems. In the induction period, schools should make assignments that fit beginning teachers' backgrounds and interests, provide easy access to school resources and practical information. Moreover, mentoring programs should involve regular opportunities for substantive talk about teaching and learning since new teachers try to make sense of what is going on in their classrooms. The explanations and advice they receive, especially from more experienced colleagues, affect their attitudes positively. Successful mentoring processes can only be accomplished if mentor teachers have time,interest, and expertise to help new teacher. Beginning teachers also need to socialize in the context of teaching practice, become accountable for students' care and educational activities, and interact with other school professionals and parents. These endeavors are believed to develop beginning teachers' own teaching expertise. There is a need to provide assistance to new graduates for their adjustments into their new roles and environments (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). According to MoNE's legislation on the mentoring process, mentor teachers should be appointed to beginning teachers who are teaching in the same branch of the school. The mentoring period must continue at least two months, and it should cover all necessary theoretical and practical information that novice teachers might need. Periodically mentor teachers submit a progress report of beginning teachers to administrators. The process continues with regular meetings that focus on school-based issues as well as district-based content. In the mentoring process focus is on instruction and collaborative coaching as well as observing and providing feedback on classroom management and other basic instructional practices to new teachers. New teachers are not allowed to be in charge of class; rather they need to be supervised by mentors in class in their first year. (MoNE, 1995). Beginning and experienced teachers both benefit from frequent and meaningful interaction during mentoring process in the induction period. Experienced teachers may learn from their mentee about the latest approaches to literacy, or strategies for integrating technology into the classroom (Johnson, et al., 2001). Studies have also emphasized the importance and effectiveness of mentoring process in which professional knowledge passed through experienced teachers to novice. Benefits of effective induction programs were not limited to support new teachers. They also provided renewal for experienced teachers and schools. This circulation helped in overcoming the difficult nature of the first year of teaching (Johnson, et al., 2001). However, beginning teachers reported that their official mentors generally taught different grades and subjects. For this reason, they did not meet each other often and ongoing observations, discussions, and feedback hardly took place in the induction period. As such, participants generally felt alone in the process and tried to figure out their own way except for independent schools' teachers. Elementary schools generally had only one ECE class and this situation increased the loneliness of beginning ECE teachers. Both administrators and mentors did not take this process seriously to help beginning teachers to cope with difficulties and becoming more competent in teaching. Lack of peer support was accompanied by lack of administrator support in elementary schools as administrators had no ECE background.

Although new teachers were eager to observe the experienced teachers and develop their professional skills under guidance, administrators' and mentors' avoidance left beginning teachers on their own and they missed the opportunities to observe the expert teachers in profession. All of the beginning teachers participated in this study had full responsibility of a class from the very beginning of their teaching career. None of them ever mentioned observations conducted by their mentors, nor did they mention collaborative mentoring, helpful feedback in the areas of classroom management, or even basic instructional practices such as

lesson plans and obtaining necessary teaching materials. Furthermore, most of them did not even have a mentor teacher, or their mentors were from different branches. Only two beginning teachers in this study had access to the insight of experienced colleagues. It appeared that both induction period and mentoring process were carried out on paper in public schools and not helpful or supportive for novice teachers. There is a need for some enforcement to make administrators put mentoring process into effect as they are primary responsible of guiding new teachers.

MoNE did not have sufficient number of inspectors specialized on early education which made inspection process ineffective for ECE teachers. This could be solved by hiring more inspectors who have early education background and put them in charge of inspecting ECE teachers. Besides, inspectors were responsible for guiding beginning teachers, yet they were not familiar with early education which leads to lack of proper guidance for new teachers.
The educational policy in Turkey has changed and will continue to change as our country struggles to improve socially and economically. Supporting new members in the teaching profession plays pivotal role to provide new generation with high quality learning environment in which all of children feel safe and successful. MoNE prepared a long and detailed induction program, yet the induction program and mentoring process only remained on paper. Although beginning teachers were required to attend seminars on weekends throughout the first semester, they did not benefit from the seminars. It appeared that the contents of seminars were depended on instructors' personal interest. MoNE determines topics for training program, but there is no fixed program for fundamental needs of beginning teachers. A further study could focus on possible ways to improve induction programs for public school teachers. It was expected that the findings of this study would provide feedback to teacher trainers and policy-makers in their efforts to improve teacher education programs and beginning teacher support policies, to the limited extend possible.

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