Novice Early Childhood Education Teachers' Challenges and Intern Teachers' Concerns*

Stajyer Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Yaşadıkları Zorluklar ve Öğretmen Adaylarının Kaygıları

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to shed more light into intern early childhood education teachers' concerns before entering teaching profession and novice teachers' challenges in their first years of teaching. In order to achieve this task, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with five novice teachers and five intern teachers in a district in the southeast of the United States. All interviews audio recorded then transcribed verbatim. The researcher utilized qualitative methodology for this study. Findings revealed that intern teachers were well aware of difficulties that they might encounter in their future profession and they took some precautions to cope with them. Novice teachers on the other hand declared that teaching young children is harder than their initial expectations. Their challenges were originated from teacher education program, lack of parental support, and teaching very young age groups. Nevertheless, teachers' motivation was really high in this study and if they receive support from school principal and colleagues they easily overcome difficulties that they faced in their first years of teaching.
Keywords: Early childhood education, novice teachers, intern teachers, first year of teaching

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliğe başlamadan önceki kaygıları ve stajyer öğretmenlerin mesleklerinin ilk yılında karşılaştıkları zorlukları nitel bir çalışma ile incelemektir. Amerika'nın güneydoğusunda bulunan bir bölgedeki beş stajyer öğretmen ve beş okul öncesi eğitim son sınıf öğrencisi ile yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bütün görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazı ile kaydedilmiş ardından kelimesi kelimesine deşifre edilmiştir. Veriler Creswell'in (2007) önerdiği yöntemlerle analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları göstermiştir ki okul öncesi eğitim son sınıf öğrencileri gelecekteki mesleklerinde kendilerini bekleyen güçlüklerin farkındalar ve bunların üstesinden gelmek için bazı önlemler almaktadırlar. Stajyer öğretmenler ise küçük çocuklara eğitim vermenin beklentilerinden çok daha zor olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Yaşadıkları zorluklar öğretmen eğitim programından, yetersiz aile desteğinden ve eğitim verdikleri grubun yaşının çok küçük olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Fakat bu çalışmaya katılan öğretmenlerin motivasyonları çok yüksek olduğundan eğer okul yönetiminden ve meslektaşlarından yeterince destek alırlarsa mesleklerinin ilk yılında karşılaştıkları güçlükleri kolayca aşabilecek durumdadırlar.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul öncesi eğitim, stajyer öğretmenler, öğretmen adayları, öğretmenlikte ilk yıl

Introduction

The distance between student desks to teacher desk seem to be short in physical world, yet it would be the longest psychological distance that novice teachers have traveled in such a brief time (Cruickshank & Callahan, 1983). Apprentices in other career fields begin with minor responsibilities and gradually acquire more challenges and duties contrary to this; novice teachers are given full responsibility with experienced teachers when they start teaching profession (De Neve & Devos, 2017). The first years of teaching has a crucial importance on teacher's professional development as first year experiences might either inspire teacher to form a commitment for fruitful teaching or leaving the teaching profession (Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014). It is crucial to make a smooth transition from being a student to being a capable teacher in order to reduce the problems of the first year of teaching. Studies have shown that teachers'

problems in their first-year teaching are numerous. Some of these problems originated from teacher education programs, lack of support and the age group of children. Besides their unrealistic and ideal expectations about their future career result in disappointment in first years of teaching (Akdağ & Haser, 2016; Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; LePage, Nielsen, & Fearn, 2008). As such, there is a need for bridging theory and practice in teacher education to prevent failure caused by insufficient preparation. The gap between theory and practice during teacher education influences novice teachers the most in their first years as they are not able to sufficiently implement academic knowledge to the practice (Maandag Denium, Hofman & Buitink, 2007). In this sense, field practice has an utmost importance as it is the period in which the proficiency of pre-service teachers progresses faster and more intensively than at any other stage of their professional development (Caires, Almeida & Vieira, 2012). Even though novice teachers have sufficient training in the teacher education programs, their training frequently contradicts with the classroom reality. These conflicts increase feelings of being insufficient for helping students with their needs, managing the classroom, and understanding culture of school (Akdağ & Haser, 2016; Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2002). Novice teachers are confronted with the challenges of being marginalized and navigating their school's system (Sinelnikov, Kim, Ward, Curtner-Smith & Li, 2016). Teaching profession is demanding in its nature due to the responsibility of raising future generations (Krecic & Grmek, 2005). The transition from the intern teacher to novice teacher could be a painful process. The term 'reality shock' is used to reflect collapsing of the idealism developed during the teacher education programs by the demanding and harsh reality of classroom (Veenman, 1984). Veenman further argued that reality shock was not a temporary stage that would disappear easily. In fact, the reality shock would address the process of internalization of the complex reality of classroom life, especially in the first years of actual teaching. Learning to teach is a slow and difficult process of managing classroom, implementing curriculum, developing instructional strategy, assessing student performance, and monitoring student. Therefore, novice teachers need time and support to develop the necessary knowledge and skills in order to deal with these tasks (Johnson, Birkeland, Kardos, Kaufman, Liu & Peske, 2001). It takes several months for teachers to properly deal with a classroom and to understand that first year of teaching is more overwhelming than what they anticipated before (Roehrig, Pressley & Talotta, 2002).

The first-year of teaching is a fragile career period for novice teachers since they are trying to build and re-build their professional values, goals, and practices that constitutes their professional identity. If novice teachers do not receive sufficient support in this period their vulnerability in their first years of teaching is likely to increase (Akdağ, 2014; Smethem, 2007). Nearly ninety years ago Barr and Rudisill (1930) examined the greatest difficulties of new teachers. Their findings still maintain their currency as inexperienced teachers still struggle to control over students, dealing with individual differences, instructional presentation, motivating students, organization of work, poor work conditions, assessing achievement of students, encouraging student participation in class, making assignments, and the adjustment of the teacher to the classroom situation. Novice teachers' difficulties has not changed in 70s. They continued to struggle to improve students' lives, control class and motivate students for teaching activities (Kennedy, Cruickshank & Myers, 1976). Veenman's (1984) meta-analysis of 91 studies about first-year challenges of novice teachers reflected similar picture. The top five problems out of 24 faced by the novice teachers of those studies were: classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing student's work, and relations with parents. According to Veenman's (1984) findings, novice teachers realized that their problems were beyond their initial anticipation. Nowadays novice teachers' struggle has not changed much as their most vital needs represented in a descending order: novice teachers prominently need to be supported to provide appropriate education with vulnerable group of students. They further need skills in psychological, emotional and social development of students. Taking children's individual needs in consideration while trying to improve their capacity is also challenging for novice teachers. Finally, More recent studies identified beginning teachers' challenges as Interactions with highly educated and critical parents as well

as interactions with parents from cultural minority groups (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Roosenboom & Volman, 2017). Therefore, first-year of teaching is considered as the greatest challenge in many teachers' careers (Fottland, 2004). It is well known fact that novice teachers need time to gain experience (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). In general new teachers are accepted as novice teachers, in their first three years of teaching. Yet, Claycomb and Hawley (2000) have argued that three to seven years of teaching experience is needed to become a proficient teacher. Still, they make the greatest gain during their first year in teaching profession (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005).

There are certain phases of teaching that new teachers can only learn in schools and classrooms. Novice teachers must start teaching with the knowledge of engaging a specific group of students and arranging specific curricula to their needs and abilities (Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2002). Preparedness and commitment to profession cannot ensure that novice teachers would be successful in the classroom since teaching has an unpredictable nature (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Generally novice teachers lack a clear comprehension of the learner characteristics of students, their ways of thinking about specific topics, their problems while learning a specific content since their repertoire of strategies for handling class environment is limited (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1990). When teachers involve in actual teaching environment, another form of shock emerges due to disagreements with colleagues, administrators, and policies since they often come to schools with almost no knowledge of school organizations and politics. New teachers' beliefs and behaviors may contradict with existing rules and regulations. They face power issues, conflicts of interests, and negotiation. They also should know how to interpret, navigate, and change the organizational context in which they work (Achinstein, 2006). Particularly novice teachers need support from their colleagues working at the same school. Experienced teachers offer support to novice teachers in the professional meetings and discussions among teachers (Heikka, Halttunen & Waniganayake, 2016). A supportive workplace should reduce this uncertainty; so that, it can increase novice teachers' chances for success and satisfaction. Working conditions are multidimensional for teachers including school facilities, bureaucracy, administrators' competence, and existence of opportunities for novice teachers' professional development. Factors such as an extreme teaching load, unsupportive administrators, or lack of certain school facilities can limit effective teaching and make it difficult for teachers to reach the intrinsic rewards (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Work environments with negativity and hostility are associated with emotional exhaustion and even health problems. Therefore, setting positive interpersonal relationships and empowering employee should be taken into account at workplaces while planning managerial procedures (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Helkavaara, Saastamoinen & Lahelma, 2011). Therefore, novice teachers need to be supported when they are struggling to adjust their new profession (Quagliga, Marion & McIntre, 2001) since first year of teaching might end up with leaving newly acquired profession (Hope, 1999). Policy-makers all over the world have agreed that early career teacher attrition is an economic, social, and educational loss (Long et all., 2012). Considering the time, effort, and money invested by the individual in becoming a teacher, teacher attrition causes both a waste of money and human capital. Thus, teacher retention does not just provide monetary savings, more importantly; it would provide savings in our children's educational future. A motivated and experienced team of teaching professionals directly correlates with an improved educational system because teacher attrition is disruptive to the education of students (Jalongo & Heider, 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014). Attracting and keeping good teachers require schools to provide better work environments that support professional development and treat teachers with respect (Jalango & Heider, 2006). Luckily, despite the massive difficulty of surviving in the school contexts and the frustration in the first-year of teaching, Britt (1997) asserts that novice teachers still want to continue the teaching profession due to love of teaching children and observing their development.

A plethora of studies have investigated teachers' concern before entering teaching profession and their challenges after getting involved in the teaching profession. Yet, the

rationale for this study is the lack of studies focusing on early childhood education teachers' concerns and challenges as the majority of studies concentrated on elementary and secondary teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Giving voice to novice teachers while designing induction program is vital to support new teachers (Long et all, 2012). Thus, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of early childhood education teachers' concern before entering teaching profession and novice teachers' challenges after getting involved in the teaching profession. Framing early career teachers' experiences would be useful to improve first year teachers' working environment and teacher education programs. Precisely, this study was organized around the following three research questions:

1) What are the early childhood education teachers' concerns before entering the teaching profession?
2) What are the early childhood education teachers' challenges after entering the teaching profession?
3) What kinds of problems early childhood education teachers encounter and how they cope with those problems?

Method

A small number of studies which Veenman (1984) summarized in his meta-analysis implemented face to face interviews. Most of the studies rather used questionnaires in which novice teachers were asked to rate a series of possible problems that they had encountered in their teaching practice in their first-year of teaching. On the other hand, the current study involved interviews with each participant and gave them opportunity to reflect what they had experienced in teaching and college. In doing so, the current study have provided a broad range of opinions about potential concerns and challenges of participating teachers.

Data were collected using qualitative methodology in spring semester of 2012. After having Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study, the list of six practicum schools located in Tallahassee district was obtained from the Florida State University College of Education. These schools were mostly serving education to middle income children and mostly run year around. A pre-contact mail was sent to the identified schools in the districts in which the researchers introduced themselves, discussed the purpose of the study and asked for cooperation. Following this, non-respondents were contacted with a follow-up email and phone call. Directors employing teachers having less than three years teaching experience, first asked teachers if they want to join this study or not. Then, they informed researchers about their participation. Researcher called to school to make an appointment for interview. Researchers reached five teachers to carry out this study.

In order to reach intern teachers, researchers send an email to faculty members working at department of Family Child Science, Early Childhood Education, School of Communication Science and Disorders. One of the instructors from Family Child Science responded that they do not offer internships but a practicum with 60 hours of field work in a preschool classroom. That was a sufficient basis for participation and researchers waited till students finished their 60 hours practicum. Then, the researcher joined one of the theoretical courses to introduce study and asked for participation. Five pre-service teachers were agreed to participate in this study and researcher got their contact information for following scheduling. One of the volunteer participants dropped out from the study. In the end, researcher was able to conduct interview with four novice teachers and four intern teachers. All participants received 10$ Wal-Mart gift cart. Table 1 represented participants' characteristics.

Table 1
Participants' Characteristics

Intern Teachers	Age	Gender	Department
Jane	22	Female	Family Child Science

Anna	23	Female	Family Child Science
Kathy	23	Female	Family Child Science
John	24	Male	Family Child Science
Novice Teachers		Female	
Susan	25	Female	Early Childhood Education
Lisa	22	Female	Family Child Science
Sally	22	Female	Family Child Science
Tina	24	Female	Early Childhood Education

Interview protocol was designed based on the related literature. Then, an instructors at the Educational Psychology program, and an instructor from Elementary Education department investigated the relevance of the questions. And then, interview questions were redesigned based on their feedback. After developing the interview protocol, the researcher carried out interviews to document intern teachers' concerns of their future profession, and to explore novice teachers' experiences in their first three years of teaching. The interview protocols had 24 main questions. Probing questions were also asked to explore emerging issues during the interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Creswell (2007) summarizes several procedures for conducting case studies. Among varying classification of case study, he referred Stake's (1995) identification that case study divided into three types in terms of the intent of the case analysis: single instrumental case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study. In instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on one issue and selects a bounded case to reveal the selected issue. Present study embraces this case. In this study, the case was the intern teachers' concern before entering teaching profession and new teachers' experiences in their first years of teaching. The case was bounded by both time and place. Specifically, it was bounded by being new in teaching profession and it was bounded by teachers in Tallahassee.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim for the following analysis. The researcher included Creswell's (2007) suggestions to analyze the data. First of all, organized files were created for easier analysis procedure. The researcher read all the texts, made margin notes, and formed initial codes while highlighting the significant statements of participants' experiences with the phenomena. After categorizing the sets of data, grouping the sets into similar dimensions, and naming them, themes were established to reveal detailed story of the intern teachers' concerns for future profession and novice teachers' experiences in teaching. Direct quotations were used to decrease the amount of inferences that the researcher made and pseudo names were used for confidentiality.

Findings

Intern Teachers
Intern teachers' concerns of their future profession are clustered around their perceptions of the profession and expectations about the school contexts. Because of the word limitation, only important parts of result will be represented here. The term perception is difficult to clearly define. For the purpose of this study, it is defined as participants' expressions of a positive or negative perspective concerning being an early childhood education (ECE) teacher. Their reflection upon the teaching profession concentrated mostly on importance of ECE and difficulties of being an ECE teacher. Jane expressed importance of early education for children:

> *"I perceived it something that totally important. It is needed for today's children. Kindergarten is the bar has been raised so much previous years so children do need to come in knowing their ABC, color, numbers. They are able to count to 50 or 100. It is a very important part of child's life that forms the basis for who they are going to be."*

As they perceive early education something really important, intern teachers feel pressure to meet children's needs in classroom. Still, they are not reluctant to face their fear since their motivation to teach surpasses their concern. Anna noted:

> *"It makes me nervous! I love children, I love teaching. I love entire environment but it makes me nervous. Woow! I really hope I am able to do justice for each child. You know even over 3-4 months growth happens on child. It is almost a miracle. I am excited to get into the field I am very excited about it."*

This pressure originated from feeling unprepared for their future profession. The lack of preparation is generally tracing back to teacher education program and universal debate in educational field that *theory-practice gap*. Although Kathy is satisfied with teacher education program she knows she has way to go to be responsive all of children's needs in classrooms.

> *"Theoretical part it is great but it is all theory. Some of them are not possible to translate for every single child to every single classroom situation. I just wish that there were more hands on knowledge. Everything great on paper when you reading in the book. And then when you get into classroom with a child she has learning difficulty or behavior problems. You could be able to take care of it."*

All intern teachers felt incapable of putting theory into practice and trying to figure out some ways to do so. The only male participant John also drew attention theory practice gap and like other participants he is trying to get more experience in the filed by doing volunteer job:

> *"As I said learning from the book and being in the actual setting is too different thing. Yes you do get the knowledge from the book but of course I would suggest you know tell anyone so not just learn from the book. This is why I actually volunteering to get the experience."*

Being alone in class and shouldering all class responsibilities amplifies intern teachers concerns. This could be interpreted positive way because Jane is only worried about offering qualified education to young children:

> *"I am going to establish my own curriculum for the like my own lesson plan and thought of that just give butterfly in my stomach. I can interact with the children all day but can I really teach them, really going to help them is a big concern for me."*

Intern teachers' concerns were not limited with teaching task Anna is worrying about relationship with other teachers and school principal:

> *"We are all focusing on same common goal…I am hoping that it is supportive environment without any harsh negative being trying to after each other instead of trying to help them."*

Intern teachers' future plans and career decisions were uncertain thus participants felt stressed due to their indefinite future plans. Kathy reflected their tension while deciding on their career path:

> *"It does not really matter the environment. I just really want to be in the field it does not matter place. I mean I would prefer to work with the reason first but it does not matter. Public, private, Head Start which ever because you will also find the problems in certain environment."*

Having children in class whose parents are indifferent even criminal would give hard time even for experienced teachers. John addressed how it would be difficult to handle such a child in class:

> *"One of the big problem we have right now is kids that are in low economic social environment that are being raised by parents who cannot support them or parents who abused not caring enough who use illegal drugs illegal substance so these kids have tendency to not have a strong bases for education."*

Another themes emerged from data was intern's motivations for pursuing a teaching profession. All of the intern teachers were driven by intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic. They aimed to touch children's life and be satisfied with the difference that they accomplished with children. Being accomplished meant helping children to reach their full potential for Anna:

> *"I just love the idea helping children and getting them back to their rightful places when they get older."*

Classroom management has always been number one problem of new teachers. Intern teachers concerns concentrated on this issue as well and they are planning their classroom management style. Kathy explained how she is going to manage her class in a positive way:

> *"Basically just laying out ground rules having a foundation and making simple rules you know not to expect too much. I also want to values like respect, caring, being generous sharing those kinds of things. I want to stress that and I fell like stressing those values would help me to classroom management easier but I do not want to use time out or anything."*

It is a pervasive problem all over the world that government could not establish standardization in all schools. It is even an issue in USA although it is a super power in world. Intern teachers are uncertain about physical condition in their school as it really depends on where they are going to carry out their profession. John emphasized this issue:

> *"There are a lot of private schools and they have a lot of resources and then there are some schools under really low SES like they got nothing. Numbers of children who are homeless within in Orlando area and so with that I think that most likely to schools are going to don't have as many resources as the other schools."*

Finally based on all difficulties in nature of being ECE teacher requires them to be patient for Anna:

> *"I think they need to be patient. I think it is one of the biggest one. That's something I learned over during my practicum course. It is not something like people think of before going into. But I think it is one of the biggest factors as being able to be patient with children and understanding."*

Novice teachers
This study revealed that novice teachers experience more problems than their initial expectations. Lisa illustrated this issue with exaggeration:

> *"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."*

Sudden entry to teaching increases teachers' struggle in their first years. Besides meeting both teaching and caring tasks of young children alone was not an easy task to be accomplished for Sally:

"I expected it to be a lot easier, more fun…It was harder than I thought it was going to be. I did not know nearly enough to immediately be thrown into a school like that. I started so quickly and without really any instruction. They kind of just faced me in my classroom. Here your fifteen students. Really curious 15 3-years old! You have to do clean them in the bathroom, eat snacks, go outside. Come back in when their parents gone."

It did not take much time for novice teachers to realize how demanding teaching profession is. Fulfilling both teaching and caring task in class requires teachers to know children closely as Tina reflected:

"On the first day I realized that it is a lot harder than people think it is. It requires a lot of energy. So after the first week I am started to getting to know the kids like I said before individually so I know how to react to each one of them based on certain situation. It started to make sense because before I did not really know them so it was kind of hard on the first place. You have to know them you have to know every child's personality."

As novice teachers got help from colleagues and got experience in time they became more practical and their confidence increased. Lisa explained this process:

"I wasn't so much hand on but kind of watch the other teacher who I was working with and kind of learn from him. Now I feel I could control all class."

Novice teacher did not experience relationship problems with school principal, colleagues or children. The biggest relational challenge was with parents especially when their kids misbehave. Tina explained this:

"One of the children is consistently giving us problem. You know having hard time. That stresses me out because it is kind of hard to deal with without coming up too harsh with the child because it seems like the conscious discipline does not work so much. How they being disciplined at home and then how they are at school. So trying to balance with parent probably is the most difficult situation."

Being responsible of such a vulnerable group of children result in feeling more pressure from parents for Sally:

"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."

Susan criticize teacher education program as focusing more on theory. She addressed that practical knowledge work more in class:

"I didn't have much background on children and teaching….it tells you what you already know, but they don't give you any hands on. So I would say more hands on things should be added to the program."

Sally on the other hand expressed that some part of teaching profession could only be learned in itself:

"I don't think that there is necessarily anything that could have prepared me more so than I was. You could have done scenarios what would happen when parents come in but until you are actually in the situation and having to discern how to react."

In this study teachers never get negative reaction from school principals rather they are really supportive. Having such a model increases their motivation as Susan said:

"She is phenomenal like she does work that you would think that only the teacher would do like considering her position. She is never afraid to do dirty work really get in and help like she cleaned toilet. One of our students having hard time falling asleep during nap time…Director came and then she laid with him for alike 30 minute you know calm him down. And eventually he got sleep and I think that she is really amazing, she is director and she is so involved."

In current study motivation refers to novice teachers' dedication and commitment to teach young children. In this study novice teachers' motivation mainly originated from love of children and the positive affect that they made in children's life. Sally explained how this profession would be rewarding when she receives unconditional love from children:

"I saw I am making a difference in child's life. Maybe they go home and they do not get as much attention. I think they really like to be around me. Miss S. 'I love you' I think that I like the children most. I feel like make a hope make a difference. Even if they had bad life at home, for a little while I can make them happy. It is like a place to escape."

Discussion and Conclusion

Manuel and Hughes (2006) found that group of pre-service teachers coming from different departments chose to teaching due to three main reasons: the desire to work with young people, making difference in students' lives, personal fulfillment and continuing interest and engagement in the subject area they are going to teach. All these reasons capture personal ambition, moral exertion, social mission and intellectual development. The findings of current study revealed that intern teachers' idealism and optimism are originated from their belief in the power of education that change both theirs and others lives for the better. These participants were driven by their passion and were already committed to the job. Personal inclination for working with young people and love for children are predominant factors that motivating intern teacher for teaching young children. Besides, novice teachers' do not lose their commitments after involving in profession.

Lortie (1975) classified occupation rewards into three types: extrinsic, ancillary, and intrinsic rewards. The first one involves income, status in society and power over others and basically related with environmental features of profession since they exist independently of the individual who occupies that profession. Ancillary rewards are originated from nature of profession and they are taken for granted; however, they are both objective and subjective depending on people. For instance, work schedule of teaching maybe favorable for married woman but not for men. On the other hand, intrinsic rewards refer teachers' enjoyment of their work and the structure of teaching rewards put emphasis on intrinsic rewards. Teaching as a profession is mainly motivated by intrinsic reward rather than extrinsic reward. For the participants of this study, the underlying reason is that making difference to children's life and help people. More broadly, they intend to change whole society with the power of education. Participating teachers believed that early education is different than upper grades in that teachers work with young children and responsible for the overall physical, emotional, social, and cognitive needs of children including warmth, nurture, feeding, and cleaning. It is a motive for participants to feel that their influence on the lives of young children would be greater than any other teachers since they develop skills which assist each child to be competent to face the future. They measure their satisfaction in moments or instances of involvement with children.

Based on Fuller's (1969) theory, teaching practice improve in a predictable sequence as teachers have experience. Initially their primary concern is self-oriented and focuses on being successful as a teacher. They are concerned with their self-efficiency and suspect their proficiency to control classes, their content knowledge and meeting the needs of students, parents, and administrators. More precisely, teachers improve in sequence and their concerns move to task concerns about handling large class size, planning instructions, and overcoming work load. Finally, in impact concern stage teachers become concerned with motivating students and meeting their individual needs. First-year of teaching is considered as the greatest

challenge in many teachers' careers. Novice teachers are required to adapt their understanding of curriculum, child development, and learning into their teaching practice. When they first enter the teaching profession, they do not get help or supervision by experienced teachers any longer since they have to learn standing on their own feet. All these responsibilities result in insecurity in the first year of teaching and they experience fear and stress while socializing into school culture and handling problems in the classroom. Ghait and Shaaban (1999) asserted that teachers' concerns lessen as they gain experience. The situation is not different for participating teachers in this study. Although they concerned their capabilities to handle such a young age group of children at first, they felt more comfortable after having their own class. Educating young children is not an easy task and requires great deal of knowledge and skills on child development. When novice teachers realized their success with children in profession, their concerns diminished.

Literature have addressed that failing to meet the demands of the teaching profession generally have accompanied with the feelings of depression and helplessness for new teachers (Achinstein, 2006; Evans, 1997; Gold, 1996; Huberman, 1992; Ingersoll, 2001; Roehrig, Pressley & Talotta, 2002; Stokking et all., 2003; Veenman, 1984). Therefore, providing intern ECE teachers with the real cases of challenges and demands of teaching to young children may help them in planning their resources and possible practices for future teaching.

Sumsin (2002) explained the experience in the field of ECE by drawing a metaphor. The journey because ECE teachers encounter some challenges while becoming, and being teacher. The information gathered from novice teachers have been considered as critical for several stakeholders as it highlights recruitment, preparation, support, and retainment of highly qualified teachers who are trained to address the educational needs of all students (D'Aniello, 2008). In this sense, this study have explored the experiences of new teachers in the field of early childhood education and documented their challenges as well as accomplishments and capabilities. The information presented in this study provided a solid base for teacher education programs in reviewing and renewing the program experiences in order to enhance their graduates' knowledge and skills which would help them in the early years of their profession.

The present study has also provided real life cases for teacher education programs to be discussed by the intern teachers. The challenges presented in this study and novice teachers' ways of dealing with challenges may provide intern teachers with a repertoire of possible experiences they may have once they start teaching as novice teachers and help them develop rational expectations of children, classrooms, schools, and parents. Novice teachers' experiences also documented the demands of the teaching profession and how novice teachers may or may not manage these demands within the systemic limitations.

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Uzun Öz

Giriş

Öğrenci sırası ile öğretmen masası arasındaki uzaklık fiziksel dünyada çok kısa bir mesafedir fakat stajyer öğretmenlerin bu kadar kısa sürede kat ettiği mesafe psikolojik olarak çok uzundur (Cruickshank ve Callahan, 1983). Stajyer öğretmenler mesleklerinin ilk yılında pek çok sorunla karşılaşmaktadırlar. Bu problemlerin bazıları öğretmen eğitim programından kaynaklanmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik görüşleri, beklentileri ve kaygıları da bu problemlere neden olan faktörler arasındadır. Bu problemleri azaltmak için öğrencilikten öğretmenliğe geçişi kolaylaştıracak önlemlerin alınması önem arz etmektedir (LePage, Nielsen ve Fearn, 2008). Teori ve pratik arasındaki fark öğretmenleri en çok mesleklerinin ilk yılında etkilemektedir çünkü akademik bilgilerini uygulamaya dökmelerine engel olmaktadır. Teori ve pratik arasında köprü kurulması öğretmenlerin mesleklerine daha iyi hazırlanmalarına yardımcı olacaktır (Maandag Denium, Hofman ve Buitink, 2007). Öğretmenler öğretmen eğitim programında iyi bir eğitim almış olsalar dahi aldıkları eğitim sık sık gerçek sınıf ortamıyla çelişmektedir. Bu çelişkiyi yaşadıkça öğretmenler çocukların ihtiyaçlarına cevap verme, sınıf yönetimini sağlama ve okul kültürünü anlama konusunda kendilerini yetersiz hissederler (Stanulis, Fallona ve Pearson, 2002).

Öğretmenlik gelecek nesilleri yetiştirme sorumluluğunu üstlendiği için doğası gereği çok çaba isteyen bir meslektir (Krecic ve Grmek, 2005). Öğretmen adaylığından öğretmenliğe geçiş çok acıklı bir süreç olabilir. 'gerçeklik şoku' (reality shock) terimi öğretmen eğitim programında idealize edilen beklentilerin sert ve talepkar sınıf ortamında çöküşünü ifade etmek için kullanılır. Gerçeklik şoku kısa sürede geçmeyen bir durumdur ve öğretmenler mesleklerinin ilk yılında bu durumu içselleştirip sınıf ortamının çok zorlu karmaşık bir yapısı olduğunu kabullenirler (Veenman, 1984). Öğretmeyi öğrenmek yavaş ve zorlu bir süreçtir. Sınıf yönetimini sağlamak, müfredatı uygulamak, öğretim stratejileri geliştirmek, öğrencilerin performansını değerlendirmek ve onları gözetmek öğretmenler için öğrenmesi zaman alan becerilerdir. Bu nedenle Stajyer öğretmenler bu karmaşık bilgi ve becerileri edinmek için zaman ve desteğe ihtiyaç duyarlar (Johnson ve diğerleri, 2001). Stajyer bir öğretmenin öğretmenlik mesleğinin ilk yılının beklediğinden çok daha yoğun ve yorucu olduğunu anlaması kısa sürer (Roehrig, Pressley ve Talotta, 2002).

Bundan yaklaşık 90 yıl önce Barr ve Rudisill (1930) stajyer öğretmenlerin yaşadıkları zorlukları incelemişlerdir. Çalışmalarının bulguları güncelliğini korumaktadır. Stajyer öğretmenlerin sorunları halen şu şekilde sıralanabilir; sınıf yönetimini sağlama, bireysel farklılarla ilgilenme, dersleri hazırlama, öğrencileri motive etme, işleri organize etme, kötü çalışma koşulları, öğrencilerin başarısını değerlendirme, öğrencileri sınıf etkinliklerine katılmaya teşvik etme, ödev verme ve sınıf ortamına uyum sağlama. Stajyer öğretmenlerin sorunları 70'li yıllarda da çok fazla değişim göstermemiştir. Stajyer öğretmenler 70'li yıllarda da en çok sınıf yönetimini sağlama, öğrencileri öğrenme aktivitelerine katmak için teşvik etme ve öğrencilerin yaşantılarını geliştirme için çaba sarf harcamışlardır (Kennedy, Cruickshank ve Myers, 1976). Veenman'ın (1984) öğretmenlerin mesleklerindeki ilk yılını incelediği 91 çalışmayı içeren meta-analiz araştırması da benzer bir resmi yansıtmaktadır. Stajyer öğretmenlerin 24 problem içerisinde en çok yaşadıkları 5 problem: sınıf yönetimi, öğrencileri motive etme, bireysel farklılıklarla ilgilenme, öğrencilerin çalışmalarını değerlendirme ve ailelerle ilişki kurmadır. Günümüzde de stajyer öğretmenlerin yaşadıkları zorluklar çok fazla değişmemiştir. Stajyer öğretmenler dezavantajlı durumda olan öğrencilere eğitim verme, öğrencilerin psikolojik, sosyal ve duygusal gelişimlerini destekleme, bireysel farklılıkları göz önüne alma, yeni öğrenme-öğretme stratejileri belirleme konusunda zorluk yaşamaktadırlar (Terek, Ivanović, Terzić, Telek ve Šćepanović, 2015). Bütün bunlara dayanarak öğretmenlik mesleğinin en zorlu döneminin ilk yılı olduğu kabul edilmektedir (Fottland, 2004). Bu nedenle stajyer öğretmenler tecrübe kazanmak için zamana ihtiyaç duyarlar (Ingersoll ve Smith, 2004; Stanulis ve Floden, 2009). Aday öğretmenlik programı hazırlarken stajyer öğretmenlerin görüşlerini almak onları destekleyebilmek için önemlidir (Long ve diğerleri, 2012). Bu

çalışmanın amacı okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliğe başlamadan önceki beklenti ve kaygılarını aynı zamanda göreve yeni başlayan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ilk yıllarında karşılaştıkları sorunları incelemektir. Kariyerinin başında olan öğretmenlerin yaşadıklarını incelemek yeni öğretmenlerin çalışma ortamının iyileştirilmesi için faydalı olabilir. Bu çalışma aşağıdaki sorulara cevap vermeyi amaçlamaktadır:

1. Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğine başlamadan önce beklentileri ve kaygıları nelerdir?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğretmenliğe başladıktan sonra karşılaştıkları zorluklar nelerdir?
3. Stajyer okul öncesi öğretmenleri ne tür sorunlarla karşılaşmakta ve karşılaştıkları sorunları nasıl çözmektedirler?

Yöntem

İlköğretim ve orta öğretim öğretmenlerinin öğretmenliğe başlamadan önceki beklenti ve kaygıları ile başladıktan sonra yaşadıklarını inceleyen pek çok çalışma olmasına rağmen okul öncesi öğretmenleri üzerine bu konuda çalışmaya pek rastlanılmamaktadır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma sadece okul öncesi öğretmenleri ve öğretmen adayları ile yürütülmüştür. Çalışmayı yürütebilmek için gerekli izinler Etik Kurul Komitesinden (Institutional Review Board) alındıktan sonra Florida State Universitesi'nden altı uygulama okulunun iletişim bilgileri alınmış ve okul müdürlerine üç seneden az süredir öğretmenlik yapan öğretmenleri olup olmadığı sorulmuştur. Bu şartları sağlayan beş öğretmene ulaşılmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarına ulaşmak için Florida State Universitesi'nde bulunan Aile Çocuk Bilimi (Family Child Science) Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği (Early Childhood Education) ve İletişim Bilimleri ve Bozuklukları (School of Communication Science and Disorders) bölümlerinde görev yapan akademik personele e-mail gönderilerek uygulama derslerini tamamlayan öğrencileri olup olmadığı sorulmuştur. Aile Çocuk Bilimi öğretim üyelerinden bir tanesi geri dönüş yaparak öğrencilerinin okul öncesi eğitim okullarında 60 saat süren uygulamaya katıldıklarını belirtmiştir. Altmış saatlik uygulama süresi bu çalışmayı yürütmek için yeterli görülmüştür. Araştırmacı teorik derslerden birisine katılarak çalışmaya gönüllü olan öğrencilerin iletişim bilgilerini almıştır. Araştırmacı beş öğretmen ve beş öğretmen adayı ile görüşme yapmıştır. Çalışmaya katılan öğretmenlere ve öğretmen adaylarına 10 dolarlık Walmart hediye kartı verilmiştir.

Bu çalışma doğası gereği nitel bir çalışmadır ve araştırma deseni olarak örnek olay benimsenmiştir. Veri toplama yöntemi temel olarak katılımcılarla gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine görüşmelerdir (Creswell, 2007). Görüşme protokolü ilgili literatür taramasından sonra belirlenmiş ve Eğitim Psikoloji ve İlköğretim Bölümündeki iki öğretim üyesi tarafından soruların uygunluğu incelenmiştir. Öğretim üyelerinin geri bildirimlerine bağlı olarak son şekli verilen ve 24 sorudan oluşan görüşme protokolü ile yüz yüze görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler ortalama 40 dakika sürmüştür. Bütün görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazı ile kaydedilmiş ardından kelimesi kelimesine deşifre edilmiştir. Örnek olay çalışmalarında katılımcıların algılarını çözümlemeye, olayı, olguyu nasıl yaşadıkları ve anlamlandırdıklarını ortaya koymaya çalışıldığı için analizin kendinden çıkan kodların daha uygun olacağı belirtilmektedir (Creswell, 2007). Veri kodlama sürecinin ilk aşamasında alan yazınından yararlanarak ve açık kodlama suretiyle kodlar geliştirilmiştir. Güvenilirliği sağlamak için veriler araştırmacı ve Florida State Üniversitesi Eğitim Psikoloji bölümü son sınıfı öğrencilerinden biri tarafından eş zamanlı kodlanmıştır.

Deşifre edilen görüşmeler kodlayıcılar tarafından okunmuş kenarlarına notlar alınmış ve önemli ifadelerin altı çizilmiştir. Daha sonra benzer ifadeler gruplandırılmış ve kategoriler oluşturulmuştur. Öğretmenlerinin öğretmenliğe başlamadan önceki beklenti ve kaygıları ile başladıktan sonra yaşadıklarını ortaya koymak için temalar belirlenmiştir. Araştırmacının yorumunu en aza indirmek için direk alıntı yapılmış ve katılımcıların gizliliğini korumak için takma isimler kullanılmıştır.

Sonuç

Çalışmanın bulguları göstermiştir ki okul öncesi eğitim son sınıf öğrencileri gelecekteki mesleklerinde kendilerini bekleyen güçlüklerin farkındalar ve bunların üstesinden gelmek için bazı önlemler almaktadırlar. Stajyer öğretmenler ise küçük çocuklara eğitim vermenin beklentilerinden çok daha zor olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Yaşadıkları zorluklar öğretmen eğitim programından, yetersiz aile desteğinden ve eğitim verdikleri grubun yaşının çok küçük olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Fakat bu çalışmaya katılan öğretmenlerin motivasyonları çok yüksek olduğundan eğer okul yönetiminden ve meslektaşlarından yeterince destek alırlarsa mesleklerinin ilk yılında karşılaştıkları güçlükleri kolayca aşabilecek durumdadırlar.