

## Beginning Early Childhood Education Teachers' Struggles in Remote Areas

(Göreve Yeni Başlayan Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Kırsaldaki Mücadelesi)

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' concerns about working in remote areas before they enter teaching profession, and their real life experiences when they start to teach in remote areas in Turkey. Sixteen pre-service teachers were interviewed immediately after their graduation. Then, six teachers started to teach in remote areas. Two more interviews were conducted with six beginning teachers when they finish first and second semester they taught. The phenomenological analysis developed by Moustakas (1994) was used in this study. Findings of this study revealed that pre-service teachers were reluctant to work in remote areas due to social, economical, cultural, and safety problems. When they start to teach in those regions they realized that actual situation is far worse than their initial expectations. They especially struggled to teach children coming from low socioeconomic status and children who did not speak Turkish. Involving low SES parents into their children's education and lack of social life in a small and closed society were also challenging for beginning teachers.

**Key words:** Beginning teachers, remote areas, early childhood education.

### Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının doğu bölgelerinde çalışmadan önce orada çalışmaya ilişkin endişeleri ve çalışmaya başladıktan sonra doğu bölgelerinde karşılaştıkları sorunları incelemektir. On altı tane okul öncesi öğretmen adayı ile mezuniyetlerinin hemen öncesinde görüşme yapılmıştır. Ardından bu öğretmenlerden 6 tanesi doğu bölgelerinde çalışmaya başlamışlardır. Doğu bölgelerine atanan öğretmenler ile ilk sömestre ve ikinci sömesterin sonunda tekrar görüşme yapılmıştır. Veri analizinde Moustakas'ın geliştirdiği fenomenolojik analiz kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları göstermiştir ki öğretmen adayları sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve güvenlik sorunları yüzünden doğu bölgelerinde çalışma konusunda son derece isteksizdirler. Doğuda çalışmaya başladıktan sonra ise öğretmenler gerçek durumun beklentilerinden çok daha kötü olduğu görmüşlerdir. En çok zorlandıkları konular sosyo- ekonomik düzeyi çok düşük olan ailelerden gelen çocuklara ve Türkçe bilmeyen çocuklara eğitim vermek olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Doğuda aile katılımını sağlamak, küçük ve kapalı toplumlardaki sosyal hayat eksikliği de öğretmenleri en çok zorlayan konular arasındadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Yeni öğretmenler, doğu illeri, okul öncesi eğitim.

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## **Introduction**

Teacher shortage in remote areas has always been a problem in Turkey. Teachers avoid working in remote areas and do not feel ready to teach there due to geographical, demographical, social and economical disadvantageous conditions in there (Turan & Garan, 2008). Beginning teachers' problems in remote areas are categorized as social, environmental, administrative, structural problems in school, and problems originated from teacher education programs. Social problems include cultural differences, language differences, adaptation to new environment, financial problems, and lack of respect to teachers. Environmental problems include transportation, accommodation, climate, communication, lack of health service, and lack of running water and electricity (Gömlüksiz, Kan, Biçer, & Yetkiner, 2010).

Although there is a substantial regional differences between eastern and western parts of Turkey, neither teacher education program nor Ministry of National Education (MONE) curriculum consider the drawbacks in remote areas. MONE applies same and sole curriculum in all regions overlooking the needs of target population living in that regions (Turan & Garan, 2008). In developing countries mathematical and language skills are forefront among others in rural parts. Yet, nothing has changed in our curriculum activities, as a result of highly centralized educational system (Turan & Garan, 2008). In parallel with this approach, teacher education program does not include any course about regional differences. It is a fact that universities are located in city centre and students performed practicum course in schools with better educational and structural quality which made them unaware of condition in deprived areas. They had worked with children with middle and upper-middle socio economic status. Beginning teachers did not meet what they were trained for and they did not have time for getting ready for this unexpected situation in remote areas (AÇEV, 2002). Besides, in-service trainings do not take place to orient teachers to teach in remote areas (Turan & Garan, 2008).

Public schools are facing financial problems to meet their basic needs. The situation is not promising in remote areas as schools suffer from structural qualities. Insufficient physical structure and lack of educational equipments hinder teachers from educating students appropriately (Turan & Garan, 2008). Teachers cannot focus on increasing the quality of education before meeting their basic physical and material needs (AÇEV, 2002).

It is worthy to note that most of the parents in remote areas are uneducated, thus, teachers are not able to pay attention individually to each parent. Besides, schools' monetary expectations from parents prevent establishing healthy parent involvement to create supportive environment for children's development (AÇEV, 2002). Teachers who appointed in remote areas struggle to adopt their new local place and parents' indifferent approach towards their children education makes this situation worse. The mistrust between teachers and parents negatively affected children's education (Turan & Garan, 2008).

On account of problems mentioned above, MONE has difficulty in finding and keeping teachers in remote areas. As such, MONE makes teachers to work a certain amount of time period in remote areas before they could move to another city. The exceptions for this rule were health problems and marriage. Graduate education is not an exception any longer. MONE has more empty position in remote areas and hires more teachers in these regions. Although no teacher was hired in western cities of Turkey such as Aydın, İzmir and

Antalya, 100 teachers were hired in Şanlıurfa, 67 teachers in Şırnak, 64 in Diyarbakır and 52 in Mardin, -some of the cities in eastern Turkey-(MONE, 2009).

There are scarcely any studies about teachers' problems working in remote areas. In this situation, teachers' problems cannot be identified and solutions could not be offered based on research (Turan & Garan, 2008). For this reason, this study aimed to investigate beginning early childhood education (ECE) teachers' struggles to adopt in remote areas. More precisely, this study seeks to answer following questions:

1. What are the concerns of pre-service early childhood education (ECE) teachers about remote areas before they start their profession?
2. What are the problems of beginning ECE teachers during their first year teaching in remote areas?
3. What is the origin of their problems?
4. How do beginning teachers cope with the problems in remote areas during their first-year teaching?

## **Method**

### **Research Site**

Ministry of National Education (MONE) is the chief employer for teachers in Turkey. Yet, there is not enough empty position in MONE to hire all the graduates from Faculties of Education. MONE conducts a standardized test called as Public Personnel Selection (PPS) examination to recruit teachers (Baştürk, 2007). Although this recruitment policy is a controversial issue in Turkey, MONE still continues to hire teachers based on their scores on standardized test. The PPS examination can only be taken once in a year. In general, MONE announce empty position in schools and teachers apply for those schools, then, the teachers having higher scores appointed to empty positions in schools. There is no certain score to be hired. The higher score teachers have the more likely they would be hired. Teachers who have high score among others get selected for the empty position. The hiring policy of MONE brings problems for pre-service teachers before they enter the teaching profession in Turkey. Many pre-service teachers report feelings of pressure of PPS examination in their senior year. They express that examination pressure negatively affected their psychology as well as their academic success, financial situation, and social life (Gündoğdu, Çimen, & Turan, 2008).

The study was conducted in 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. The ECE program had required four semesters of teaching practice courses at the second, fifth, seventh, and eighth semesters when participant of this study were studying. This study is part of more comprehensive study as the main study conducted in three separate studies; this study is also going to be represented in three parts.

### **Participants**

The first study was conducted when participating pre-service teachers graduated and waiting for announcement of MONE. They have not decided to work in public schools yet, and their career paths were ambiguous. Still, working in public schools was one of the main options for them. Sixteen senior female pre-service ECE teachers interviewed about their perceptions, expectations, and concerns about their future profession.

Second study was conducted after 16 participants were employed by the Ministry of National Education (MONE) to work at public schools in 10 different cities in Turkey. They were contacted for *Study II* and 6 participants were working in remote areas. Three participants were interviewed in face-to-face setting after the first semester that they taught and three participants provided written answers for interview questions since they worked in the most distant cities during *Study II*. Six participants were interviewed once again for the *Study III*, when they finished first year of teaching. Researcher was able to interview with participants one-on-one setting in third study. They were asked about their difficulties they experienced and their strategies to overcome these drawbacks.

The phenomenological analysis developed by Moustakas (1994) was used in this study. Interviews conducted for the study were transcribed verbatim, and then the analysis started with highlighting significant statements that provided an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon. Then, the meaning or meaning units are listed from the significant statements, then clusters and themes had appeared. A textural description of the experience was formed using clustered themes and meanings and essence of the phenomenon were constructed. In order to prevent possible confusion quotations were represented as 'P1-S2' or 'P8-S3': *P* is referred to participants and *S* is referred to mentioned quota whether occurred in *Study II* or *Study III*. The quoted participant expressions were selected as representative of the perspectives or experiences claimed for a specific issue.

### **Findings**

First theme emerging from this study was 16 pre-service teachers' concerns about working in remote areas before entering teaching profession. Remaining four themes belong to real life experiences of six beginning ECE teachers. Teaching to low socio-economic status children, teaching to students who did not know Turkish, parent involvement activities in remote areas, various deprivations in remote areas were fore fronting experiences of those teachers.

#### **Pre-service teachers' concerns about working in remote areas before entering teaching profession**

It was one of the possibilities that pre-service teachers might work in remote areas and it was one of the biggest concerns for them. They were studying capital city for about five years and got used to particular life style. They were all aware of social, structural, even safety problems in deprived regions. Besides, remote areas are sometimes lack of fundamental survival facilities such as electricity and running water. Pre-service teachers were not ready to face all those difficulties. P15 expressed simply her concern about remote areas:

*"I am afraid of working in deprived areas in a bad condition".*

Similarly P11 wanted to continue her life as she got used it:

*"I want to work in city center since I want to carry on my social life with joy".*

Some of the participants were planning to study at graduate school. MONE used to appoint teachers in city center if they are doing graduate study. Then this privilege was terminated since many teachers started to study master's degree probably to get rid of working in remote areas. P6 mentioned about this change:

*"MONE terminated privilege for the master's degree since most of the teachers tried to abuse it in order not to go to remote areas." (P6)*

Problems in remote areas sometimes went beyond lack of material and contextual issues. Remote areas consisted mostly of the ethnic population in Turkey with their own culture, language, and tradition which were unfamiliar to participants of this study. Pre-service teachers, who were planning to work in public schools, were expecting really low standards. Terrorist activities threatening people's lives in some remote areas and P16 accepted all the difficulties provided that the place is safe to live:

*"I have never been in the culture of remote areas. I do not know their life style. I have no experience about their lives; still I believe that I can adjust myself to their lives. However, if I suddenly find myself in a class in which children do not speak in Turkish, honestly I do not know what to do. I have heard of such places and I am worrying about that. Despite this, I am planning to go to remote areas provided that the area is clear from terrorist activities... Children would be so different than what I am familiar with and I need to be tolerant to diversity". (P16)*

It is expected that parents' socio-economic status is low in remote areas which makes parent involvement activities challenging for teachers. Still, P12 planned involve parents in educational activities: P12 expressed this challenging situation and especially aimed to involve those parents:

*"Although it is difficult in remote areas, I really try hard to involve parents in their children's education to enable them to see how much their children developed".*

### **Beginning Teachers' Experiences in Remote Areas**

#### **Teaching to Low Socio-Economic Status Children**

Six beginning teachers were appointed to remote areas and experienced problems to handle the conditions in there. The SES of the parents was really low in remote areas; therefore, the toys in their home may not have been as engaging as the ones in school. Some of the beginning teachers had trouble ending free play since children did not have toys in their home and did not want to stop playing. P8 was working in a little village in which the source of income was only based on primitive agricultural production. She did not want to draw back from other activities but it was difficult for her to stop free play:

*"I tend to think that we are not spending an effective time in free play, however my students really love to play with toys and they do not have many toys in their homes. Children were excessively fond of toys, even the broken ones... I am getting a particular [income] and I do not want to spoil even a minute... In the schools that I had my practicum in Ankara, children were not like this. They were not interested in toys. But [my students] are excessively fond of toys. They continuously negotiate [to play for] 5 more minutes and I cannot resist. They even forget that they are hungry. If I leave them, they can play all day long." (P8-S2).*

Children did not have opportunity to experience several events in their limited environment; hence, they shared their limited daily experiences in circle time. Beginning teachers stated that children could not get a wider perspective in such a limited environment:

*"Even their pictures are about barn and cows. One student drew a picture of me milking a cow. They only draw what they see. [...] I ask boys 'What are you going to be? Their response is "I am going to be truck driver or a crane operator." (P8-S3).*

*"They do not experience interesting events. The biggest action is to come to town from the village since even some of the secondary school children have never visited town. There is a pretty good children's playground in town and children talked about it a lot if they visited there. Sometimes they see a snake while coming to school and share it with us."* (P13-S3).

Beginning teachers working in remote areas tried to compensate for the students' deprivation and facilitated their limited life experiences:

*"Children do not know what the fruit is. I buy fruits and chocolate for children. I especially buy fruits that they do not know so that they would learn. I ask them what they want to do the next day.[...] Sometimes I buy cream-cake and coke. We have a party in the class. Children have not seen such things here."* (P6-S3).

Another problem in remote areas was arrival of students into school. Some of the families worked as seasonal agricultural workers out of town and they moved back their hometown in the middle of the semester. In remote areas teachers started with 4-5 children and their classroom population increased in time:

*"Students began to come to school on November and December because they worked as a seasonal worker out of town. Thus, we tried to bring them school with field scanning and home visits. [Number of students] increased gradually after November. I mean I did not have 20-25 students at first."* (P6-S2).

Beginning teacher were not emotionally ready to be challenged with poverty in remote areas. They could not handle it at first and felt depressed. Then, they decided to change the negative conditions with their own efforts.

*"I cried at home a lot. I cried all the time in the first month. Children came without socks and shoes. They just came with a t-shirt in the rain. They brought bread with sauce or just bread for breakfast. I was continuously crying as I saw this, but I realized that I would not reach a solution by crying. Then, I began to bring bagels, doughnuts or biscuits for the children. I contacted with institutions, and found some nutrition help and got some services delivered to the children. Crying does not solve anything."* (P6-S3).

### **Teaching to Students Who Did Not Know Turkish**

Beginning teachers were expecting to have some problems in remote areas, yet their problems were beyond what they expected at first. P6 determined her priorities for the local needs since she encountered with children who could not speak in Turkish.

*"90% of five years old classes did not speak Turkish. We could not communicate. They could not do what I instructed because of language barrier. In the first place, I already knew that I would experience problems and difficulties but I did not expect that much. At least, I expected that they would know Turkish. When I saw that they did not know Turkish, I realized that a very difficult semester was awaiting me. Then, I focused on language education because if I could solve this problem, I would solve other problems as well. I just focused on language education."* (P6-S2).

They had to find their solutions for children who did not know Turkish:

*“At the beginning we communicated with body language. Three or four children knew Turkish. The others could understand but not speak. Some of them neither understand nor speak. I used body language and showed visual materials... To say “sit down” I showed sitting.” (P13-S2).*

Similarly, P9 gave priority to teaching Turkish since all of the remaining activities depended on expertise on language. Teaching children who did not know Turkish required particular adjustments in teaching practice:

*“At first we were learning the same song everyday for a week long, over and over again. Beside, you cannot follow curriculum. When we repeat previous subjects, they really like studying familiar things. Their confidence increases. It seems like taking the easy way out but it is not. It really works. Generally, I conduct Turkish-Language activities first. I always conduct it first when they are most attentive.” (P9-S2).*

P13 approached children with empathy to lessen their fear of speaking Turkish:

*“They were very shy at first. When I first arrived, I said 'You are children make a noise, speak, and be energetic. There was a silence. They did not even speak to each other in free play. It might be because of several reasons. For instance, they did not know Turkish and they hesitated to speak Kurdish or Arabic in class. I recently told them run but they continued to walk. Then I asked one of the children who both know Turkish and Arabic. 'Could you tell me what 'run' means in Arabic? Your friends do not understand in Turkish. I will say it in Arabic.' He hesitated to say it and I insisted. He replied 'urk' and I said 'urk, urk.' They all laughed and were surprised.” (P13-S3).*

Parents had quite low level SES in remote areas. Most of them were still illiterate and in this context being a teacher was considered as a high status. Thus, parents respected and valued teachers to a great extent. P6 tried to get help from parents to teach Turkish to children:

*“Teachers are the most important people for parents in this city. They fulfill what teachers ask them to do. It is not only for parents. It is same in this city. I always said to parents 'It is difficult to teach and be effective for your child in school unless they know Turkish. Thus, you need to teach Turkish to your child.' One of the parents did not send her child to school for a week. I thought I received negative reaction because of suggesting teaching Turkish. I called but I could not reach. When the child came to school, he could speak Turkish. They did not send him to school to teach him Turkish.” (P6-S2).*

There were children migrated with their families from other countries due to poverty, civil war, or unemployment. P8 had students from another country and experienced language problems:

*“Five of them were Afghan. At first they escaped from school. I could not catch them even when I ran after them. They do not know Turkish properly which is difficult for me. We study our literacy books. I teach numbers. They have more difficulties as compared to other students. They need more attention.” (P8-S2).*

### **Parent Involvement Activities in Remote Areas**

In this study, parents' socio-economic status was low in general and parents might feel insecure in front of teachers due to marked differences between teacher's educational level and their educational background. All of the participants behaved modestly to parents to receive their trust and support. After that, they started parent involvement activities:

*"After 1,5-2 months passed, mothers realized that I really value them. After that, they started to feel a part of the school. I really liked that. I am planning to involve parents into some part of my photography project."* (P2-S2).

Parent involvement activities were shaped by parents' SES in remote areas since some of the parents did not know Turkish or they used language with a different dialect which caused a barrier for teachers to communicate with them effectively. Beginning teachers could not expect parents to come to school and conduct an experiment or art activities with children if their SES level was very low. P9 stated that school's monetary expectation set distance between low SES parents and school. She tried to lessen monetary expectation to lessen parents' distant attitude towards school:

*"They had a fixed idea that if they had come to school, teachers would want money from them. Parents' financial status was low and they could not afford to pay for school. Thus, they avoided to come to the school. They did not come to school even when I called. However, with the help of enjoyable meetings, we showed that we did not call them to take money, rather we tried to educate their children. They liked that and began to come to school continuously. Let's say when we wanted 5 Liras, we also accepted 1 Lira. We did not insist on getting 4 more Liras since we knew that they could not give more. We tried to make them warm towards school."* (P9-S2).

Teachers had home visit activities for different purposes and gained different outcomes. P6-S2 expressed that parents were hesitant to come to school or communicate with teachers and school's monetary expectation was not the sole fear that parents had. It might stem from the previous teachers' attitude. She accomplished to break parents' hesitation by treating them closely. She further claimed that teachers had trouble to communicate with low SES parents even they underestimate them; however, she believed knowing children's environment is necessary to arrange educational activities and she visited parents to establish communication with parents:

*"Several people underestimate people living in remote areas. They cannot stay in their house they disgusted to drink their tea. I did experience any problem. I visited their house and drink their tea with pleasure. Those people supposed that outsider -it is not true-live in a luxury and they are high-toned. It is so important to see shining, proud and honor in their eyes when such a person come to their house and drink their tea. Eventually, teacher is the most important person in their life... Nothing happens without effort."*

Sometimes it is impossible to involve parents into their children education because of specific condition in Turkey. In rural areas people live in remote villages where population is scarce and scattered, thus MONE provides transportation for children living those far villages. Considering the fact that women barely enter in social life in mentioned regions, they could not travel even to town. For this reason, teachers could not be able

to meet some of the parents in a year. Transported education sets a barrier for parent teacher interaction and makes parent involvement activities almost impossible as P13 expressed:

*"I just know 4-5 parents living in this village. I thought that home visit might work and asked to the vice administrator how to do it. He suggested that I should not go alone as they were living in far villages."* (P13-S2).

Sending notes to parents was also considered as a part of parent involvement activities yet many parents did not even know reading in remote areas and P9's effort did not work at all:

*"They did not even study in elementary school. They did not know reading and writing. Children forgot if I said something to them. I had to send notes every day. Parents did not know reading and writing. If [the children] did not have sister or brother, my notes were lost and gone."* (P9-S2).

### **Various Deprivations in Remote Areas**

Most teachers were beginners both in the profession of teaching young children and local societies as they generally start to work in different districts from where they have lived or studied. Therefore, beginning teachers struggle to handle the teaching workload as well as to cope with many of unexpected problems that occur in the local district. For example, there was an electricity blackout during the interview conducted in the home of P13-S3. She mentioned that the blackout was not a coincidence, but an inconvenience that occurred in her life often.

*"It usually happens on the weekends. Actually I do not recognize it on the week days because I am in school. Electricity blackouts happen in the middle of the various chores like cleaning the house or laundry. Once there was a black out on Friday, and the electricity did not come until Monday. I had a guest in my home and we stayed two days without electricity."*

Low socio-economic status brings several problems such as health problems and it cannot be solved by sole effort of teacher. The connection among school, health institution and family does not work well, thus teachers could not find support. In this situation P2-S3 felt powerless against health problems of children:

*"I see that children have herpes on his lips but I cannot do anything about it. I know it is not my responsibility, yet it is still disturbing to me. I want to do something but I cannot."*

P8-S2 works in the city which is only three hours drive to capital, but she still needs to heat her class with stove:

*"We set up a stove. We have a stove in class right now...There is no cleaning staff in school. One of the residents of the village came to school. Fees are taken from parents and students to pay his salary. I had a doubt about stove but children were sick. I was also sick. People suggested that children currently have stove in their home It does not create danger."*

Lack of social life in a small and closed society is one of the basic problems for beginning teachers in the local district. Adaptation to working life is not an easy process, after being a student four five years with less responsibility and much freedom. Besides, studying in capital city offers several social, cultural and educational opportunities. Beginning teachers could not find social life in conservative and small local district

and got bored. P16-S2 felt anti-social in a small city after having an active social life in college education in capital:

*"I am a kind of person who loved to go to the cinema and theater once a week. I was doing this in my hometown and it increased more in Ankara. I was like a fish out of water in the local district. There is nothing else on behalf of a social life. I arrive at home at 05:15 pm because it is a short distance. I have to go to another city if I really want to do something. I can say that my social life is almost over."*

### **Discussion**

Deprivations in remote areas are well-known fact and take part in visual and published media often. Participants were aware of unfavorable conditions in remote areas and reluctant to work in those regions before entering teaching profession in public schools. Yet, they were shocked when they encounter with actual situation. Conditions in remote areas are not scrutinized extensively and do not take into account while developing a curriculum. Thorough understanding could only be reached investigating needs of people living remote areas including parents, teachers and students. Without involving all stakeholders' needs in education, renovation movement in curriculum would be unrealistic, disjointed, and constrained (Turan & Garan, 2008). This study revealed that experiences of beginning teachers in remote areas confirmed several social, environmental, cultural and structural drawbacks in some parts of Turkey. Deprivation of social and structural quality in remote areas made beginning teachers life unbearable. Those deprivations cover but not limited to electricity blackout, running water cut, transportation problems, and lack of social facilities such as cinema, theater, and shopping center.

It appeared that beginning teachers' primary problem was not just making effort to orient themselves in a new profession, rather they struggled more to adopt themselves in a local culture and life style. Beginning teachers declared that struggling with those problems harder than handling teaching workload in their first year of teaching. They further stated that problems in local districts not only negatively affected their teaching practice but also affected their social life and psychology. Beginning teachers were emotionally challenged with lack of social life and poverty in rural areas as they have been educated for ideal educational condition for four years. Then, they were required to teach children living in poverty and children did not even have basic needs such as foods.

Findings of this study addressed the weakness of early childhood teacher education programs in training teachers for children with diverse backgrounds and for managing the challenges in the first year teaching in remote areas. Poverty is a common problem all over the country and teachers expected to encounter with poverty in remote areas. However, some of the problems are beyond than their imagination. Most of the children in eastern part are bilingual and their mothers do not speak in Turkish (AÇEV, 2002). As such, teachers found themselves in a situation that they had to teach children who could not speak Turkish. It was impossible to teach children without communicating them and their parents. Beginning teachers communicated children using body language at first and then they prioritized teaching Turkish because children could not perform what teachers instructed due to their language barrier. Beginning teachers tried to figure out the best way to teach Turkish, yet they did not have a course about it or they did not find sources suggesting practical solution to teach Turkish as a second language to young learners. In this case, they found their own way

through trial and error. Their first year of teaching would be more easy and effective if they had received support on this particular issue. Considering the fact that language was the most important tool for communication, lack of language ability could also cause failure in elementary school (Justice, Bowles, Pence Turnbull, & Skibbe, 2009). Still, MONE's curriculum does not take the substantial regional differences between eastern and western parts of Turkey in consideration. Although ECE curriculum is flexible to implement, there is an increasing need for programs considering target population's characteristics rather than sole and similar program for all population in Turkey (AÇEV, 2002). MONE and teacher education programs should work collaboratively to develop special programs for teaching Turkish to children living in eastern part of Turkey. As participants stated, children were shy and hesitant to involve in activities at first. When they began to learn Turkish, their confidence increased, and they started to involve in classroom activities more.

Another problem stemmed from poverty appeared in children's arrival in school. Economy was based on primitive agricultural activities in remote areas and people could not find opportunity to work in industry or service sectors. For this reason, they moved to other cities to work as seasonal workers in more developed agricultural areas. As such, beginning teachers accepted new children in class until late December and children left school in early May. This situation arouse the needs for region specific curriculum since National ECE curriculum was designed supposing that all children would arrive at school in September and leave in June.

Kagıtcıbası (1979) compared elementary school students draw a man test scores in rural and urban areas in Turkey. Her study concluded that little intellectual stimulations appeared in children's picture due to limited environmental support. This is mainly originated from general economical deprivation prevalent in the remote areas. Although these children are expected to engage in some intellectual activities in school, their performance on draw a man test reflected that school did not serve adequate education in counteracting and compensating children's disadvantageous conditions in remote areas. Using Kagıtcıbası's conclusion as a standing point, it would be claimed that environment influences intellectual functioning in a great extend. As such, Beginning teachers primarily focused on facilitating children's learning since they believed that children did not experience interesting incidents in their limited environment and could not develop a wider perspective for life. Teachers tried to compensate children's drawbacks with their own effort and budget. However, they were not able to deal with all of the difficulties in remote areas, such as children's health problems. Low socio economic status result in many unfavorable consequences in rural areas. The lower the socio economic status people have the lower health-related quality of life they experience. Both psychological and physical health problems anxiety and depression was more common in rural areas (Oğuztürk, 2008). Feeling powerless against children various problems made beginning teachers depressed.

All of the participants graduated from Middle East Technical University (METU) located in capital city. METU is one of the best universities in Turkey and it offers several sport, art and social facilities. Thus, beginning teachers got used to involve in those kinds of activities in a regular bases and lack of social life in a small and closed society is one of the basic problems for beginning teachers. They felt alien, anti-social, and depressed in a small conservative city after having an active social life during college education. Even worse than that remote areas are highly patriarchal and women barely enter into social life. Furthermore, honor killings against woman are still exist in remote areas (The New York Times, 2003). Teachers felt as if they were monitored by local people since their physical appearance does not match local district's women. They were uncomfortable with the persistent stare of local people.

Chavkin (1993) stated that one of the barriers for family-school partnership is lack of positive contact with the low-income parents and negative attitudes and low expectations on the part of both parents and educators for low income children. Before entering teaching profession, participants were well aware of low socio-economic status of parents in Turkey and accepted that it was the teacher's responsibility to organize parent involvement activities. When they began to teach, they realized that low SES was the biggest barrier for parent involvement activities and parents' SES played an important role in shaping their involvement. For instance, low SES parents were afraid of coming to school because they believed that school expected them to pay for their children's educational needs. Before lessening parents' fear of school, teachers could not expect them to come to school and conduct an activity with children. In this situation, beginning teachers accepted all responsibility of having positive relationship with the parents.

In order to gain parents' trust and respect, teachers primarily tried to establish empathy with parents in order to understand their way of thinking. First of all, they recognized that they needed to be patient, tolerant, and understanding to establish a healthy relationship with parents. Beginning teachers did not think of finding excuse to disregard parent involvement activities as teacher education program really made them aware of importance of involving parents in their children's education. First, they needed to find the best way to communicate with all these types of parents as it was not an easy process to set balance between demands of parents and teachers' role. In order to eliminate the marked difference between teacher and parents' education, beginning teachers behaved modestly to parents. They asked parents' ideas to show them that they were welcomed in school and teacher cared parents as much as children.

Participants have learned several strategies to involve parents in educational activities. They all recognized that implementation was not as easy as it seemed. They experienced that not all techniques worked for all contexts. Parents were not familiar with teacher visits in remote areas. When they received such attention, they respected the teachers more and they became more interested in their children's education. Yet, no matter how much effort they spent teachers would not able to involve some parents. Besides, most of the parents could not speak Turkish, which made them avoid contact with teachers. Administrators in those regions are local people in general and should take over responsibility to help teachers for effective communication with parents. MONE curriculum and teacher education program might develop more culture specific and realistic parent involvement activities that are easily accepted by Turkish low SES parents.

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