



Mesleğe Yeni Başlayan Öğretmenlerin Okul Deneyimi ve Öğretmenlik Uygulamalarına Yönelik Görüşleri*

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ÖZET

Öğretmenlik uygulamaları ve okul deneyimleri öğretmen adaylarına mesleğe başlamadan önce gerçek yaşam deneyimleri sağladığı için oldukça önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bu çalışma A.B.D'nin Arizona Eyalet Üniversitesi'nden mezun olmuş ve mesleğe yeni başlamış öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik uygulamaları ve okul deneyimlerine yönelik görüşleri incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma yaklaşımının kullanıldığı bu çalışmada iki ayrı yarı-yapılandırılmış derinlemesine yüz yüze görüşme ve bir odak grup görüşmesi ile öğretmen görüşleri alınmıştır. Verilerin analizi sonucu öğretmenlik uygulaması ve okul deneyimi uygulamalarının, öğretmenlerin mesleğe başlamadan yeterli sınıf içi deneyimini belli oranda karşılamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, öğretmen adayları bu uygulamaların gerçek yaşam deneyimine hazırlama konusunda daha etkili olabilmesi için önemli öneriler sunmuşlardır. Öğretmenlik uygulamasının süresi ve zamanlaması da bu çalışmada vurgu yapılan önemli sonuçlardan biridir. Öğretmenler, öğretmenlik uygulamasının dönemin en başından başlamış olmasının kendileri öğretmenliğe başladığında dönemin başını daha sorunsuz geçirmelerine yardımcı olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca danışman öğretmenin, öğretmenlik uygulaması ve okul deneyimindeki rolünün öğretmen adayları ve mesleğe yeni başlayan öğretmenler için olan önemi araştırmanın kayda değer sonuçlardan biri olarak çıkmıştır.

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Anahtar Kelimeler:

Öğretmenlik uygulaması, Okul deneyimi, Mesleğe yeni başlayan öğretmenler, Okul öncesi öğretmeni

Geniş Özet

Amaç

Öğretmen olmak dört yıllık lisans eğitimi ile tamamlanan bir süreç değildir. Araştırmalar bunun uzun bir süreç olduğunu göstermektedir (Christensen & Fessler, 1992). Carter ve Doyle (1996) bireylerin 4 ile 7 yıllık bir süreçte öğretmenlik kimliğine sahip olabildiğini, mesleki öz-güven, denge sağlayabilme ve öğretmenlik mesleğinin gereklilikleri ile diğer istekleri arasındaki dengeyi sağlayabildiklerini söylemektedirler. Bu süreçte

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öğretmenlerin adaylarının lisans dönemindeki öğretmenlik uygulamaları onların mesleğe başlamadan önce sınıf içi gerçek deneyimler edinmesine olanak sağlamaktadır. Yapılan çalışmalar olumlu öğretmenlik uygulaması deneyiminin öğretmenlerin meslekte kalmalarında etkili olduğunu göstermektedir (Green, Hamilton, Kampton, & Ridgeway, 2005; Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Oh, Ankers, Llamas, & Tomyoy, 2005).

Lucas (1997) öğretmenliği “sadece akademik eğitimle uzmanlaşamayacak uygulamalı bir sanat” (s.271) olarak tanımlamakta, öğretmenlik uygulamaları ve okul deneyimlerinin önemine vurgu yapmaktadır. Öğretmen adayları, öğretmen olmayı yaparak yaşayarak, deneme-yanılma, gözlem yaparak ve uzman birisinin danışmanlığında uygulamalar yaparak öğrenirler (Lucas, 1997; Vartuli ve Rohs, 2009; Hoffman v.d. 2005).

Okul deneyimi ve uygulamalarının öğretmen ve öğretmen adaylarının mesleğe yönelik tutumlarını etkilediği bilinmektedir. Çalışmalar olumlu okul deneyimi ve uygulamaları deneyimine sahip öğretmen ve öğretmen adaylarının mesleği tercih etmede, mesleğe başlamada ve mesleği devam ettirmede daha istekli olduklarını göstermektedir (Henke, Chen, ve Geis, 2000; Green, Hamilton, Kampton, ve Ridgeway 2005; Oh, Ankers, Llamas ve Tomyoy, 2005). Ayrıca lisans dönemi danışman eşliğindeki okul deneyimi ve öğretmenlik uygulaması deneyimine sahip olan ve olmayanlarla yapılan bir çalışmada deneyime sahip olanların atanma yeterliklerinin, iş doyumlarının, profesyonel ilişki kurma becerilerinin daha yüksek olduğu bulunmuştur (Oh, Ankers, Llamas ve Tomyoy, 2005).

Öğretmenler mesleğe yeni başladıklarında içsel ve dışsal pek çok zorlukla karşılaşmaktadırlar. Mesleki kimliklerini oluşturmaya çalışırken aynı zamanda öğrencilerin istek ve ihtiyaçlarını, okul yönetiminin talep ve beklentilerini karşılamaya çalışmaktadırlar. Bununla birlikte okul kültürüne uyum sağlayıp, onun bir parçası olmak için büyük bir çaba içine girmektedirler. Bu çalışmanın amacı lisans eğitimi sırasında gerçekleşen öğretmenlik uygulamalarının mesleğe yeni başlayan öğretmenler üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektir.

Yöntem

Çalışma nitel araştırma yaklaşımı kullanılarak yürütülmüştür. Bu kapsamda mesleki deneyimleri 1-3 yıl arasında değişen beş erken çocukluk eğitimi öğretmeni ile iki ayrı yarı-yapılandırılmış derinlemesine yüzyüze görüşme ve bir odak grup görüşmesi yapılmıştır. Katılımcılar öğrenim gördükleri üniversitede mezun olmadan önce 3 sömestr boyunca haftalık 6’şar saatten 12 haftalık okul deneyimini tamamlamak zorundaydılar. Bununla beraber bir sömestr boyunca 4 haftalık anaokulu ve ayrıca 11 haftalık anasınıfı – 3. sınıf öğretmenlik uygulamasını tamamlamaları gerekiyordu.

Çalışma verileri tematik analiz (Reissman, 2008; Aranson, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998) yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Analizler sonucunda ortak temalar oluşturulmuş ve veriler

kategoriler altında raporlaştırılmıştır. Temalar ve kategoriler araştırmacı ve alanda uzman biri tarafından belirlenmiştir.

Bulgular

Okul Deneyimi

Okul Deneyiminin amacı, öğretmen adayına gerçek sınıf ortamını gözlemleme, etkileşimde bulunma ve öğretmenlik uygulaması öncesi deneyim kazanma fırsatı sunmaktır. Katılımcılar genel olarak okul deneyimlerine yönelik olumsuz fikir beyan etmişler ve bu deneyimlerinin amaçlandığı gibi sonuçlar ortaya koymadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Öğretmen Belle, bu düşüncesini şu şekilde ifade etmiştir.

...Söylediğim gibi bir öğretmen bana tahtaya yazı yazdırdı ve kopyalama yaptırdı. Yani beni [öğretmen adayı olarak değil] daha çok gönüllü birisi oraya gitmiş gibi gördü. (Belle)

Katılımcılar sınıfta geçirilen zamanı yeterli bulmadıklarını ve bu kadar sınırlı zamanın sınıf öğretmeni veya çocuklarla ilişki kurmak için yeterli olmadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu düşüncelerinin bir bölümünün de sınıf öğretmeniyle ilişkili olduğunu altını çizmişlerdir.

Öğretmenlik Uygulaması

Öğretmenlik uygulaması öğretmen adaylarının lisans derslerinde öğrenemeyecekleri pratik bilgiyi ve deneyimleri kazanabilecekleri özgün bir uygulamadır. Meijer, Zanting ve Verloop (2002) öğretmen adaylarının bu süreçte daha çok pratikte kullanabilecekleri kurallar ve ipuçlarına odaklandıklarını ifade etmektedirler. Bununla ilişkili olarak Belle sadece uygulamada öğrendiği bir deneyim ve bilgisinden bahsetmiştir:

Çok komik ama size çocuğun saçındaki biti farkedip bulabilmenizi öğretecek bir ders yok. Bunu sadece deneyim ile elde edebilirsiniz. (Belle)

Mesleğe yeni başlayan öğretmenler sıklıkla tüm bir okul yılını başından sonuna kadar görmenin öneminden bahsederler (Evert ve Straw, 2005). Belle de tüm bir yılı deneyimlemiş olmanın faydalarından bahsetmiştir.

Dönemin başında gittim. Harikaydı. Dönem başlangıcını görebilmek o kadar çok yardımcı oldu ki bana.

Bahar döneminde öğretmenlik uygulamasına başlayan Libby dönem başlangıcını görmemiş. Kendi sınıfında öğretmenlik yapmaya başladığında bu deneyimsizliğinden kaynaklı olarak özellikle (sınıf ortamını düzenleme, sınıf kurallarını oluşturma, vb.) zorlanmıştır.

Öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik uygulaması sürecindeki rolleri

Öğretmenlerin danışmanlığı öğretmen adaylarının deneyimlerinde oldukça önemlidir. Örneğin, Belle eğer bir öğretmen adayı öğretmenlik uygulaması deneyimini olumsuz geçirir ve meslekteki ilk yılında destek almazsa mesleği bırakabileceğini ifade etmiştir. Bu süreçte de iyi bir öğretmen adayı – öğretmen ilişkisinin ilk öğretmenlik yılında oldukça önemli olduğuna vurgu yapmıştır.

Eğer sevmezsen [mesleği], bu meslekte kalmazsın.İlk yıl korkucudur.

Libby yanında staj yaptığı öğretmeni ile annesi aracılığı ile öğretmenlik uygulamasına başlamadan önce tanışmış olduğunu ve öğretmeni hakkında fazla bilgiye sahip olmadığını ifade etmiştir. Sonuç olarak öğretme biçimleri ve kişilikleri açısından çok uyumlu oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bununla ilişkili olarak da öğretmen adaylarının olumlu ya da olumsuz danışman öğretmenin özelliklerinin meslekte kalma düşüncesinde etkili olacağını ifade etmiştir.

Benim için mükemmeldi çünkü çok benzer eğitim felsefesine sahiptik. Yani çok şanslıydım...

Tartışma

Okul Deneyimi

Bu çalışmanın katılımcıları genel olarak okul deneyiminden çok fazla faydalanamamış ve okul deneyimi pek çok sebepten dolayı amacına ulaşamamıştır. Öğretmen ve öğrenci eşleştirmeleri, zaman kısıtlaması ve alınan derslerle ilişkilendirilmemiş olması okul deneyiminin amacına ulaşamamasındaki sebeplerden birkaç tanesi olarak belirlenmiştir.

Öğretmenlik Uygulaması

Pek çok araştırmacı öğretmenlik uygulamasının öneminden bahsetmekte (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Green, Hamilton, Kampton, & Ridgeway, 2005; Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin, 1999; Zeichner & Conclin, 2008) ve özellikle öğretmenlik uygulamasının öğretmen adaylarına sosyal açıdan birebir deneyim kazanmalarında onların öğrenmelerini daha etkili hale getirdiği söylenebilir.

Schulz (2005) öğretmenlik uygulamasının öğretmen adaylarının 'bir öğretmenin bütün görevlerini' görmesine olanak sağladığını söylemektedir. Fakat, bunun için öğretmen adaylarının dönemleri en başında itibaren öğretmenle beraber ve daha uzun süreli olarak deneyimlemeleri gerekmektedir. Bu araştırmanın katılımcıları da bunu destekleyici ifadelerde bulunmuşlardır. Katılımcılardan biri öğretmenlik uygulamasındaki deneyimi 'buzdağının görünen kısmı' olarak nitelendirmiş ve öğretmenliğe başladıktan sonra buzdağının altını gördüğünü ifade etmiştir.

Çalışmanın başka önemli bir noktası ise öğretmen adaylarının tam anlamıyla kendi istedikleri uygulamaları yapamamalarıdır. Bunun bir sebebi danışman öğretmenlerin öğretmen adaylarına kendi yöntem ve tekniklerini dayatmaya çalışmaları ve bir diğeri ise öğretmen adaylarına geri bildirim vermemeleridir.

Bir diğeri önemli sonuç ise olumsuz okul deneyimi ve öğretmenlik uygulamalarının öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliği yapma konusunda caydırıcı bir etkiye sahip olduğudur.

Öğretmenlik Uygulaması Süresi

Öğretmenlik uygulamasına çocuklarla birlikte (Ağustos) değil de öğretmenlerle beraber (Haziran) başlayan katılımcıların öğretmenliğe başladıklarında daha kolay bir geçiş yaptıkları belirlenmiştir.



Beginning Early Childhood Teachers' Reflections on Their Student Teaching Experiences*

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ABSTRACT

Student teaching experiences in teacher education programs hold a crucial part since they provide teacher candidates with practical experience before they enter the profession. This study inquires the role of split student teaching employed in early childhood teacher education program at a southwestern U.S. state university on experiences of beginning teachers' who graduated from this program. In this qualitative research, participants' reflections to their field experiences in the program were gathered through two in-depth individual interviews and one focus group interview. An analysis of interview data revealed that beginning teachers' student teaching experiences partially fulfilled their need of having adequate in-classroom experience before starting their teaching careers; yet they highlighted some suggestions for student teaching assignments to better prepare prospective teacher candidates in the program. The length and timing of student teaching has also emerged as an important result of this study. Furthermore, participants highlighted the role and importance of mentor-teachers during their student teaching.

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Keywords:

Student teaching, Field experience, Internship, Beginning teachers, Early childhood teacher

Introduction

Becoming a teacher does not occur in just four years of college education. Instead research suggests it is rather a long process (Christensen & Fessler, 1992). Carter and Doyle (1996) state that "...it takes, on average, from 4 to 7 years for teachers to achieve a sense of identity with teaching, gain a feeling of confidence and stabilization, and reach a balance between teaching demands and other interests." Student teaching experiences provides beginning teachers with real in-classroom experiences before they enter the profession. Studies also suggest that beginning teachers with favorable field experiences and student teaching experiences are more likely to stay in the profession (Green, Hamilton, Kampton, & Ridgeway, 2005; Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Oh, Ankers, Llamas, & Tomyoy, 2005).

* This article is compiled from the author's PHD thesis.

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McLean (1999) underlines the role and importance of student teaching to beginning teachers' initial experiences in the field. Contemporary teacher education programs now stress field experience and require their students to participate in an extensive field experience throughout their program. Yet, the amount and the timeline for field experience vary greatly among programs. Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman (2005) elucidate the variety of pre-service teaching options and maintain that both the amount and timing of student teaching experiences effect beginning teachers' practice. But once again, there is little empirical data that could, with certainty, declare the best context for these internships or specify the optimal amount of time to help a prospective new teacher become more proficient at the outset of their career.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore and better understand the impact of field experiences and student teaching on beginning teachers' experiences as emerging professionals. When beginning teachers enter the field, they face many difficulties that can be both internal and external. (Kane and Francis, 2013; Melasalmi and Husu, 2018) While they are trying to define/refine their professional identity as a teacher (Xu, 2013), they also struggle to meet their students' needs, to meet the requirements of being a member of a school community, and to meet with the expectations of the school administration. The ability to manage all these demands may rest, in part, on their prior experience as a student teacher. Further, their resilience may depend on other factors, such as their preparation in the university in general, their current school environment, their support at school, and their support from family and friends at home.

This paper specifically inquires the following question: What effects do beginning teachers perceive that their split-student teaching experiences have on their experience as a new teacher?

Research Regarding Field Experience in Teacher Preparation

Lucas (1997) places heavy emphasis on field experience and describes teaching as a "practical art unlikely to be mastered through academic study" (p.271). In this practical art, teacher candidates can learn how to become a teacher through observation and supervised practice through first-hand experience, and trial and error. Vartuli and Rohs (2009) suggest that "when fieldwork and coursework were combined as in the study teacher education program, prospective teachers apply what they learn in class to real-life experiences and learning enhanced" (p.323). With ongoing support, guidance, and feedback from mentors during the apprenticeship, novices are able to improve their newly acquired skills related to one's major are vitally important when an individual moves into their teaching career (Hoffman et al. 2005).

Student teaching also creates a positive attitude among individuals who are already in the profession. Henke, Chen, and Geis (2000) interviewed 11,200 third-

year teachers, as part of the 1993 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, and these interviews revealed that teachers who had student teaching experiences would more likely choose a teaching career again, if they were given a choice.

Green, Hamilton, Kampton, and Ridgeway (2005) conducted an inquiry to explore factors of retention and attrition on graduates of a five-year program. Students of this program completed their student teaching in two placements—8 weeks in the fall semester and 14 weeks in the spring semester—in the fifth year of the program. In response to a question, participants of this study typically stated that student teaching experience was highly effectual in preparing them for their teaching career. On the other hand, graduates who did not start their teaching career or who left the profession reported unfavorable student teaching experience as one the reasons for their career choice. In conclusion, researchers of this study maintain that graduates' positive attitude toward the program was due to their student teaching experience.

To understand one student teacher's experience during student teaching, Rushton (2001) did a case study with a 22-year-old female student teacher. By utilizing in-depth interviews, reflections, and discussion, Rushton concluded that the participant's view on teaching and life in general was deeply affected by this experience. Starting her student teaching with great confidence, she later found herself questioning her confidence. Her satisfaction toward the program also changed as she moved forward in her student teaching. While she felt that the university had prepared her for student teaching and her inner-city placement, this attitude changed toward a more negative one. Dealing with children with diverse background and problems is one of the reasons for her frustration with the program. On the other hand, she benefited from the challenges she encountered in her classroom.

In another study, Bullough et al., (2002) compared two different types of student teaching placements. In this study, 21 pre-service student teachers were interviewed to compare the effectiveness of solo-placement versus partner-placement student teaching. In solo-placement, student teachers received less intervention by their mentor teachers; whereas, in partner-placement, the mentor teacher was much more involved in the student teachers' teaching. The data revealed that student teachers who worked in the partner-placement program felt more positive and confident about their teaching than those in the solo-placement program. Moreover, partner-placement students stated that they felt they were supported emotionally more than their counterparts. While single-placement student teachers expressed emotional isolation and struggled more in maintaining discipline in the classroom.

Oh, Ankers, Llamas, and Tomyoy (2005) was conducted a study with 204 in-service teachers in regard to their student teaching and its effects on their career goals, effective measures, and classroom teaching. Data for this study were collected from teachers who had pre-service student teaching and who did not, and

researchers compared the data among these two groups. Teachers who had pre-service student teaching experience were more likely to be credentialed, 82%, compared to those entered the profession without pre-service student teaching experience, 39%. Beginning teachers with pre-service student teacher were highly satisfied with their job, while job satisfaction of their counterparts was significantly lower.

Furthermore, teachers who had pre-service student teaching stated that their student teaching experiences were very helpful in their job. On the other hand, while there were differences between these two groups in terms of efficacy, enjoyment of classroom teaching, staying in teaching, and building professional relationships, the differences were not found to be statistically significant. However, those who had student teaching with continuous support and mentorship reported a substantial difference on their intention to stay in the profession compared to those who had little, or no support or mentorship. In summary, the results of this research indicate positive long-term outcomes influenced by pre-service student teaching on beginning teachers' job satisfaction and teacher retention, especially with the help of constant mentorship (Oh, Ankers, Llamas, & Tomyoy, 2005).

A cohort model "in which a group of students begin and end the program of study together by taking a prescribed sequence of courses" (Locklear, Davis, & Covington, 2009) is used in Arizona State University's (ASU) teacher education program. Pre-service education of teachers includes internships and student teaching or field experience, which is usually completed during the last year of preparation. Unlike many pre-service teacher education programs, ASU's Early Childhood teacher education program required its students to have three internships and two student teaching experiences – preschool and K-3rd – before their graduation.

Method

Data collection tools

The data collection method used for this study was qualitative. Two interview types – two face-to-face individual semi-structured in-depth interviews (Kvale, 2009; Gerson and Horowitz, 2002; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) with each participant and one focus group discussion (Kvale, 2009) – were utilized to collect the relevant data for this study. Face-to-face interview questions were formulated by the researcher and a professional in the field, and focus group discussion questions were formulated after completion of first and second sets of individual interviews. Focus group interview was done after individual interviews to discuss the common, crucial themes that emerged in the first and second round interviews; to discuss some untouched themes that are considered to be important by the researcher; and to discuss some issues that participants disagreed on, and clarify the reasons for their disagreements. All collected data were transcribed verbatim in order to be coded and analyzed.

Participants

Five teachers employed in a southwestern U.S. state – three second-year and two third-year teachers who were graduates of ASU’s Early Childhood Teacher Education Program – are chosen as participants among those who wanted to participate. Recruitment of participants was done through ASU’s records and a participant recruitment letter was sent via e-mail. After individuals responded to the e-mail 5 of them were found to be qualified for this study. All five participants in the study were beginning teachers employed in Preschool-K–3rd grade level classrooms at the time of interviews. Table 1 provides specific information on the profile of each participant.

Table 1. Participants’ field experiences

Name	Age	Experience	Type of School
Belle	41	Preschool: 4 weeks	Public School: Preschool
		K–3: 11 weeks	Public School: Kindergarten
Olive	25	Preschool: 9 weeks	Public School: Preschool
		K–3: 16 weeks	S. America: Kindergarten
Libby	25	Preschool: 4 weeks	Public School: Preschool
		K–3: 11 weeks	Public School: Kindergarten
Sofia	28	Preschool: 4 weeks	Public School: Preschool
		K–3: 11 weeks	Public School: Kindergarten
Kayla	25	Preschool: 4 weeks	Public School: Preschool
		K–3: 11 weeks	Public School: 3 rd grade

Analysis

Results of this study are presented through common themes that emerged throughout the individual and focus group interviews. Based on interview data analysis, a professional in the field and the researcher identified themes and categories. Thematic analysis (Reissman, 2008; Aranson, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998) – a form of analysis in which data is fragmented into thematic categories – is employed. Aranson (1994) describes thematic analysis in the following process: a) After collecting data, researchers form thematic analyses by listing patterns of experiences from transcribed conversations through paraphrasing core ideas and using direct quotes from participants. b) In the next step, researchers “identify all data that relate to the already classified patterns” and then related patterns are combined under sub-themes. The aim of theme formation is to get a comprehensive picture of participants’ collective experiences based on their stories. c) As the last step,

Aronson suggests that the researcher should establish a valid argument on these themes by referring to the related literature to form the stories. In conclusion, she maintains that “a developed story line helps the reader to comprehend the process, understanding, and motivation of the interviewer.” (para. 9).

Results

Results of this study were presented in the following categories: Internship, student teaching, and mentor’s role during student teaching.

Internships

The goal of internships is to provide students with opportunities to observe and engage in real classroom practices and gain experience before their student teaching assignments. Students enrolled in Early Childhood Teacher Education Program at ASU needed to complete three internships, for six hours a week for 12 weeks each semester. Several grievances emerged throughout interviews regarding their internship experiences. Overall dissatisfaction toward internship was the belief that they were not as effective as they were supposed to be. It seems that internships did not serve their purpose for some of these teacher candidates.

Maybe it could be integrated a little bit more, maybe the assignments with the internships. I think that would help the student as well as your teacher that your interning with. Because as I said, one teacher had me work on the bulletin board and copying. So had she seen me more than just a volunteer going in there. (Belle)

Time spent in the classroom for internships is not enough to establish a relationship with teachers or students. All five participants reported some complexity regarding their internship experiences, although they highlighted the role of the teacher they interned with.

Especially in the earlier internships, like in my first, I wasn’t really doing any teaching at all. And I think I hadn’t developed early relationships with teachers, so it was harder for me to, her give me the space like time to teach something. And then at the Head Start they were really nice and they kind of let me, you know, do what I needed to do. So, I think a lot of that part of it depends on how great your mentor teacher is that you are interning with. (Libby)

Student teaching

Student teaching is a unique experience during which student teachers gain practical knowledge and experience that is not learned in their courses. “Although they often observe their mentor teachers’ lessons, student teachers are particularly interested in learning rules of thumb and tips for their own lessons” (Meijer, Zanting, & Verloop, 2002, p.406).

Belle who teaches in a public kindergarten in a low-socio-economic neighborhood talks about a knowledge that was only learned with practice.

It is funny, we say that ‘there is not a class to teach you how to detect lice in children’s hair.’ There is not important classes like that, instead you gain from experience. You go and do your student teaching, but that the first year being thrown into a classroom, there is absolutely no preparation for that. (Belle)

Sofia, on the other hand, mentioned about “the little things” that made a big difference in her teaching. She learned these little tricks from her mentor teacher and other more experienced colleagues. Although she has been in the teaching profession for three years, she is still willing to learn as much as she can from more experienced teachers.

I definitely think that for values that she taught me and true things that she taught me with classroom management. And that it is definitely where I think I took most of it, classroom management, because I mean I knew the content. And little tricks, little things to say, little things to do. They don’t teach you know. Like little, songs to sing to kids, they don’t understand, and I think the little things are kept out and she showed me a lot of those little tricks, and that kind of stuff. I think that was, those little things I still keep with me, and show other people as much as I can. They want to know. (Sofia)

Beginning teachers often emphasizes importance of seeing the whole process that happens in an academic school year. Preservice teachers who participated in a study conducted by Evert and Straw (2005), similarly, expressed their concern regarding not seeing the whole process such as the end of year pressure. Talking about her K–3 student teaching experience, Belle felt she vastly benefited from this experience since she had an opportunity to see the beginning of a school year.

I went in the beginning of the year. That was awesome. It was so helpful to be able see the beginning. Because that is another thing. Beginning of the year –whew – you do not know or realize what to do in the beginning of the year. So I went with her, I met her at the end of the year, and we talked, because we are a year around school. We talked about ‘Ok, do you want to come to start to meeting?’ So I went starting from the first day, her initial meeting. And from then on I saw what it took to start to open up your classroom, what you need to do and that. When I was thrown into it I was like ‘what, I need to do what?’ (Belle)

Having done her student teaching in the spring semester, Libby did not see all the beginning processes that started in the fall. As she started teaching her own classroom, she realized the difficulties (setting up the classroom and establishing classroom rules, etc.) that were the result of lack of experience for the fall semester:

When I student taught it was in the spring so I really didn't experience that part of the year. Like where the teacher is setting up the expectations, and I mean she helped me understand like the procedures for, you know, when different things happen; you know how you deal with them. But I wasn't there when she was setting up the classroom expectations. So I think that would be a really important thing for new teachers to learn. (Libby)

The role of the mentors during student teaching

Mentorship and mentors holds a significant role in the experience of student teachers (Akdağ, 2014; Schuck et.al., 2018). Student teachers' experience with their mentor and guidance from them help to form their identity as a teacher. For example, Belle feels that if one does not like her/his student teaching experience and did not get support in the first year of teaching, s/he will not stay in the profession. Therefore, she put a huge importance on the role of the student teaching experience and support in the first year of teaching:

If don't love it, you are not gonna stick with it. I think going through that if you don't get the full experience, like I said, that first year is frightening. And I'd imagine we lose a lot of teachers if there is no support. Because, it is overwhelming. (Belle)

Having an excellent relationship with her student teacher-mentor, Belle feels this was an important impact on her decision to teach in the school she is working currently:

There is a reason that I am at that school. I am there because of her. The experience I had, I just fell in love with her, the kids, staff, school, with everything. She is an awesome teacher. And I would just sit back kind of in an amazement.

She has been teaching for 15 years now. And it was, that was an awesome experience. (Belle)

Because Libby's student teaching was arranged through her mother, she was previously familiar with her mentor teacher, but didn't know her all that well. It turned out there teaching style and personalities were a perfect match.

She was the perfect person for me to be with, because we had like very similar teaching philosophy. I mean I was just really lucky, I have resources, and you know my mom knew teachers and things like that. (Libby)

Moreover, this experience might have an effect on their decision to stay or leave the profession. Referring to her student teaching experience with her mentor, she implied that student teachers with negative mentor teacher experience might not have started teaching in the first place..

Discussion

As presented under results, discussion is also presented under the following categories: Internship, student teaching, and length of student teaching.

Internships

Commonly, participants of this study did not feel a great benefit from internships before they started their student teaching. Internships did not serve their purpose for a variety of reasons, which is parallel to Boz and Boz's (2006) results. These include the view of the placement teacher toward interns, time limitations, and lack of connections to the courses taken. If it is arranged well, it is possible that internships have a huge impact on students' learning, and students' experience in the program and can influence their beginning career. There I would suggest, consistent with participants' statements, that internship should be integrated within a course taken at the time. Therefore, students will have an opportunity to integrate learning activity into academic or theoretical content (Gallego, 2001; Shepel, 1995). For example, classroom management or special education courses – areas where participants of this study struggled most in their beginning years in classroom – could be two of those courses. Second, interns can be seriously encouraged to use this opportunity to find a mentor for their student teaching. If the internship is integrated with management class, this also can be an opportunity for students to find a mentor whose classroom management and discipline philosophy will match theirs. Therefore, since they will already be equipped with classroom management and discipline skills learned from their student teaching, instead of trying to develop this skill in their first year. Thus, internships should be designed in way that will be more effective for students in the program.

Student teaching

Many researchers emphasize the role and experience of student teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Green, Hamilton, Kampton, & Ridgeway, 2005; Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin, 1999; Zeichner & Conclin, 2008). One aspect of student teaching is that it gives student teachers an opportunity to gain direct experience through social involvement and to make learning more effective (Wegner, 1998).

Schulz (2005) points out that student teaching enables prospective teachers "to understand the full scope of a teacher's role" (p.160). I agree with this statement with caution. Participants of this study maintained that they were not aware of some aspects of teachers' roles when they started teaching, even though these teachers completed their internships and student teaching assignments successfully in the program. Parallel to Mahmood's (2013), one participant maintained that the program did not give a realistic view of teaching after graduation, and she expressed her view as:

I imagine an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg is where you can actually see, is like your lesson planning, and teaching. Teaching, because teaching is teaching, you are making kids learn things. And then the iceberg the below water is 12 times bigger than that. And all the other crap of teaching, from newsletters. I think you have to be prepared for the fact that it is time consuming and hard, and you have to really check yourself to see if this is really that you wanna do. This is kind of like sink or swim thing, this is truth of the teaching. Teaching is hard, it is hard finding a job, you need to set yourself out, set yourself out and figure out if you are really gonna do this or not. (Kayla)

For student teachers who began the student teaching apprenticeship mid-year, the experience did not closely mirror that of real life as parallel to Öztürk and Yıldırım's (2014) results. This is because the student teacher steps into a classroom that is already functioning well. For example, the physical environment has been set up and all the rules and curriculum are in place. This has both positive and negative outcomes for student teachers. First of all, this environment is sheltered and they are allowed to make mistakes during this learning opportunity. They learn from their mistakes with constructive feedback from their mentor teacher. Secondly, in this safe, meaning-making environment they find a chance to develop a professional identity, which might be hard otherwise (Shepel, 1995). As they become comfortable in the teaching environment, they gain self-efficacy (Hong, 2010) and form their identities (Lee et.al., 2012; Melasalmi and Husu, 2018). Research shows that students who have had negative student teaching experiences or no student teaching experience at all are less likely to enter the profession or stay in the profession after the first year (Hong, 2010; Oh, Ankers, Llamas, & Tomyoy, 2005; Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010).

Pointing out the negative outcomes of student teaching in a sheltered environment is also important. For example, some mentor teachers might expect student teachers to mimic their teaching style. In this situation, student teachers would have "little room to develop their own practice and would have to fit into a fairly tight mold structured by their cooperating teachers" (Valencia, et al. 2009, p.310). On the contrary, some mentors believe that student teachers learn through trial and error and momentarily leave while student teachers take over the classroom (Valencia et al. 2009). The downside of this idea is that student teachers do not get constructive feedback to improve their teaching practices, they might feel emotional isolation, and they might struggle with classroom discipline. (Bullough et al., 2002). Schulz (2005) suggests that programs should "ensure that teacher candidates are placed with collaborating teachers who question and study their own practice, and invite teacher candidates to do the same (p.164). Perspectives on this topic varied among the participants in this study. One of them struggled with emotional isolation and issues related to classroom discipline. One had great support and constructivist feedback. Another stated she had very similar classroom practices to her mentor. Thus, results confirm the importance of a balanced and supportive (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; Schuck

et.al., 2018) relationship between student teacher – mentor relationships to be able to construct high self-efficacy.

Completing student teaching assignments only in spring or fall was also commonly discussed by participants. Having experienced only one semester of student teaching, participants felt a lack of experience and knowledge. Again, which semester the student teaching occurred in also made a difference. Candidates who did their student teaching in spring expressed a more dramatic negative start in their first year of teaching. They felt there was a definite disadvantage of starting their student teaching after the academic year started. This is because student teachers do not see the beginning process of classroom set-up such as the physical arrangement of the room and establishing procedures and instilling the rules to a new cohort of children. Consequently, the teachers who apprenticed in the spring semester tended to struggle more in their first year of teaching than the student teachers who completed this experience in the fall (Burke, 2004).

Some participants implied that while a positive student teaching experience eased the transition from college to the teaching profession, a negative student teaching experience might keep graduates from entering the profession. Finding similar outcomes, Green et al. (2005) outlined the importance of positive student teaching on retention, and negative student teaching experience on leaving the profession (Timostuk & Ugaste, 2010). As student teaching has such a huge impact on beginning teachers' decision before they enter teaching career, participants highlighted that some aspects of student teaching could be improved.

Another suggestion pertains to student teaching in a preschool setting. Some of the participants expressed a change of view toward preschool placement. They originally saw preschool teaching as “babysitting.” Education of very young children and pre-schooled aged children are commonly marginalized and teachers for young children are seen as babysitters (Ciyer, Nagasawa, Swadener, & Patet, 2010). Also preschool student teaching caused a shift in student teachers' views from “babysitting” to “complex and important for later schooling”. One participant put it as:

It was awesome. I loved it. I was actually super mad, when I learned we were gonna do preschool. I was like ‘I don’t wanna waste my time on preschool, because it is babysitting, I don’t wanna do it’. I was like really irritated. And after, I was like ‘It was amazing, I was so happy’. So it was, I loved it. I think it taught me a lot. And I think even if you don’t like end up teaching in preschool, knowing where kids come from that, it helps you. You like, ‘Oh, they should have learned, like fine motor skills, they should have learned it in the preschool’. If they didn’t, that is because they didn’t learn in preschool. So, sometimes you use that kind of stuff, in your classroom for the kids that don’t have that.

Although their viewpoint changed toward preschool teaching, most of them were not willing to teach below kindergarten. It is intriguing to say that among five participants, only one teacher taught in preschool at the time of interviews. In light of

these findings it can be concluded that a required preschool student teaching is an effective way to change the perception regarding education of young children under the age of five. Furthermore, it is also desirable that student teachers should also have a quality experience in a setting for very young children. Finally, I have to emphasize that student teachers should be placed in a preschool that will allow this change of view. As one might predict not all preschool settings offer quality education and care, and an experience in such places will only validate their view instead of a change.

Length of student teaching

Individuals who participated in the study stated the length and timing for their student teaching affected their practice as a first year teacher, which was also claimed by Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman (2005) and also Mogharreban, MyIntyre, and Raisor (2010).

Participants who started their student teaching earlier than they were required—for example, starting in July instead of August—stated that attending school meetings with their mentors before the semester started was a big help in their understanding of the beginning-the-year process. They also helped their mentor teacher set up the classroom before students arrived. Seeing the whole process from the beginning, they had less difficulty with their classroom set-up. For example, Kayla started her student teaching experience during the fall semester and started prior to the beginning of the year with her mentor teacher: She assisted her mentor teacher in setting up the classroom. She attended all the meetings with him. She met him regularly to plan. She also received feedback from him on a regular basis. Additionally, because she agreed with his classroom management philosophy and techniques, she acquired a great deal of these tools from him. Thus, among all participants, Kayla, who stated the importance of being prepared for the classroom well ahead of the time, reported fewer problems in her beginning years, and she had a much better first year of teaching than other participants.

In light of these findings, I propose that students should be taught about the importance of attending meetings, if possible, with their mentor teacher. They should be encouraged to ask their mentor teacher to see the process before the semesters starts for children. They should be given information regarding the challenges that they might encounter. These include parents' over involvement or under involvement, dynamics in the school, and relationships with colleagues.

Conclusions

Analysis of the data suggests that a positive student teaching experience—like the experiences of some of these participants—made a difference in their decision to enter teaching. As also emphasized by Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow, (2002), positive student teaching experience resulted in this study's participants' development of strong self-efficacy related to teaching and preparedness which inspire them to enter teaching.

Although, they felt improvement of their skills in the program, they also stated that a program cannot fully prepare someone for her/his teaching career, since there are many other factors such as student population, support from the administration, and grade changes every year that might determine beginning years of experience. Participants of this study were in either second or third year of teaching. Therefore, they started their teaching career and managed to stay in teaching for two or three years. All of them reported a love for students and teaching, and an eagerness to stay in teaching. There is also a need to do studies with graduates who did not enter a teaching career or just quit teaching in their beginning years. It is also important to get an understanding of their views toward the program and of the student teaching experience.

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