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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Novice Teachers' Challenges and Support in their First Years

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I have read ADA's policy on plagiarism and certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this paper, entitled "Novice Teachers' Challenges and Support in their First Years" is all our own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work.

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Abstract

Education as an open and dynamic system receives novice teachers every year. Novice teachers enter public schools in Azerbaijan with certain content and pedagogical knowledge, personal background and expectations. This project explores the challenges that the novice teachers in two public schools in Baku encounter in the first years of their career and the support that those beginning teachers receive. The researchers employed interviewing to identify the form of challenges that the novice teachers face, the sources and form of support that they receive and the support that they would like to receive. The challenges that these teachers confront include issues related to communication with the pupils and their parents, novice teachers' pedagogical skills and teaching strategies, how these teachers adapt to the profession, documentation challenges technical and teaching resources challenges. The findings of this study highlight that the novice teachers receive support from their experienced colleagues, school administration, Ministry of Education and Baku Education Department. The research shows that novice teachers are very interested in self-improvement; they continuously explore different Internet resources and get advice from other people such as their parents and friends who are related to teaching profession. Novice teachers' suggestions regarding the support that they would prefer to receive differ and include various professional development programs, helping teacher, collaboration with colleagues at school or in other schools as well as in online platforms, quality and long term internship programs at university and additional guidance and teaching resources. A special mentoring program was suggested depending on the results of the study.

Keywords: novice teachers, novice teachers' challenges, novice teachers' support, mentoring program.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Statement of Problem

A number of research studies have shared that teachers have a direct influence on students' learning outcomes (Bierman, 2011; Calero & Escardíbul, 2019; Silins & Mulford, 2004). Therefore, the major reforms done in education are focused on improving teaching and learning (Akyeampong, Lussier, Pryor, & Westbrook, 2013; Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013). Educational reforms also include high quality professional development which can promote learning opportunities for all educators who affect students' achievements (Aliyeva, 2016). Novice teachers are one of the groups of those educators. In order to organize their professional development, we should explore novice teachers' challenges they encounter and what support they need to overcome those challenges.

Competitive socio-economic situation and scientific and technological progress in the world demand competitive education that can meet the requirements of globalized world. After gaining the independence in 1991, the country has been improving education, especially general education. For example, in 2006 Azerbaijan developed a new national curriculum framework and professional development program to move teachers away from heavily teacher-centered approach to more student-centered approaches that improve students' critical thinking skills (Mikayilova & Kazimzade, 2016). Thus, teachers needed to be familiar with critical thinking skills, to use various methods to develop those skills in students, to acquire new teaching methods, to involve more technology into teaching and focus on students' diverse needs. These new requirements created challenges for teachers. In some Azerbaijani schools, teachers have collaborated to overcome the challenges of adapting teaching practices they never experienced.

As mentioned above, in public schools, the first direct provider of student learning is teachers (Calero & Escardíbul, 2019). These teachers also include novice teachers who enter the general education system and begin practicing. Literature suggests that novice teachers inevitably encounter challenges when they begin teaching (Cooper & He, 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt & Oort, 2011; Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen & Hökkä, 2015; Martinez, 2014). Our observations and personal experience as teachers show that in the Azerbaijani education context, new teachers enter into the system with limited teaching experience received during internship program in the last year at university, supported mainly with theoretical knowledge regarding the learning and teaching process in public schools and their subject area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this capstone project was to identify the challenges that novice teachers in public schools face at the beginning of their careers. It also determined whether the novice teachers in public schools receive any support to overcome those challenges from different institutions such as Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, Education Institution and interested parties which involves experienced teachers and school administration. In addition to the sources of support for novice teachers, the study explored the nature of that support – what kind of support novice teachers receive. The current study also aimed to reveal novice teachers' suggestions regarding the support they would like to get in order to evolve and improve their teaching practices at the beginning of their careers as well as adapt to school community.

Research Questions

The study is organized around the following research questions:

1. What challenges and support do novice teachers have in their first three years of their career?

a) What are the major challenges novice teachers face in their first years of teaching?

b) Do novice teachers receive any support from experienced teachers, school administration or Ministry of Education or Baku Education Department to overcome those challenges? If yes, what kind of support do they receive?

c) What kind of support do novice teachers suggest in order to ease their transfer to a teaching career?

Definition of the Key Terms

The study defines the following key terms in a way how they are understood in this study:

A novice teacher – a teacher with less than five years of teaching practice.

An experienced teacher – a teacher with more than five years of teaching experience.

Novice teachers' challenges – difficulties related to teaching, adaptation to school community (building relationships with colleagues, students, and parents).

Novice teachers' support – help that a novice teacher receives from school administration, colleagues, Ministry of Education or Baku Education Department related to teaching or adaptation to school community.

Significance of the Study

We as researchers thought that there were some gaps in today's education and educational policy (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). From our experiences, one of those challenges was the challenges of novice teachers that they were facing during their first years of

career. Novice teachers had a real lack of support in their working environment and schools when they started their teaching career (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). We thought that it was one of the inevitable and neglected problems. Thus, novice teachers' being inexperienced and being indifferent environment among new colleagues affect teachers' delivering the lessons and directly to students' learning outcomes. If novice teachers would see useful support either from veteran teachers, administration, or school, their success would be exceeded (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Students would learn better if novice teachers are well prepared. This is why we wanted to take an exploratory research study and find out the real challenges and supports of teachers. To create more sustainable and continuous improvement in education and educational policy, educational leaders should take into account the challenges and supports that novice teachers may encounter at the beginning of their careers and improve the ways to support those novice teachers. This exploratory research study helped us find out novice teachers' challenges and support they got from experienced teachers, school administration, the Ministry of Education, or the Baku Education Department in some Azerbaijani public schools. The study also helped us learn novice teachers' suggestions regarding the support they would want to get to overcome the challenges at the beginning of their teaching career. The study would provide some incentives for school administration and teachers specifically, novice ones to support teaching practices more to achieve better teaching and learning. Another point is that no research has been done in Azerbaijan on exploring novice teachers' challenges and what support they need in their first years of teaching.

Chapter II. Literature Review

Education as an open and dynamic system continuously receives new individuals within itself: new students and new teachers. They bring with them new needs, their backgrounds, knowledge and challenges. This research study focused more on the other newcomers in education – new teachers (novice teachers) in public schools, particularly on novice teachers' challenges that they face in the initial years of teaching and supports that they receive from different parties at school or outside school such as experienced teachers, school administration, Ministry of Education or Baku Education Department. This study also aimed to explore the novice teachers' opinions regarding the support they would prefer to receive when they begin teaching.

That being said, this chapter presents different research studies which fall under the following categories: (1) novice teachers' challenges, (2) novice teachers' support sources and forms and (3) possible suggestions to support novice teachers in the beginning of their career.

Novice teachers' challenges

The study conducted by Cooper and He (2013) focused on four novice teachers' understanding of their profession and responsibilities during four years (one year in teaching education program and three years teaching at state school). The authors noticed the shifted perception of novice teachers during these years. This was especially apparent related to student population and novice teachers' teaching settings. The novice teachers shared very similar views in terms of students' growth (even two of those novice teachers taught in urban, the other two in rural schools). Thus, the teachers here do not limit understanding of their teaching responsibilities with classroom environment only. These teachers built a close communication

with their students as a part of their teaching experience and saw their role as teachers not only in the students' knowledge development, but also in their overall well-being as individuals.

Teacher-student communication is a big part of teaching process and it influences students and teachers alike. As Hagenauer, Hascher and Volet (2015) showed teacher-student relationship (TSR) can predict teachers' joy (positive relationships) and anxiety (negative relationships) as well as poor discipline in the classroom can cause teachers' anger. TSR can affect not only teachers, but also students' engagement and achievement at school. The importance of TSR for students' engagement and achievement was researched by Roorda, Koomen, Spilt and Oort (2011) too who showed that positive TSR affects students' engagement and achievement positively whereas negative communication between teachers and students negatively impact students' engagement and their accomplishments in the given subjects. The findings showed more close relations between TSR and students' engagement.

As mentioned in the studies above, communication with students is one of the areas where novice teachers confront challenges; however, applying pedagogical skills is a crucial factor that defines teaching. The literature proves that applying pedagogical skills is defined as an area of challenges that novice teachers encounter in the initial years of their careers. One of the studies that focuses on novice teachers' challenges and contributed to our research is done by Eteläpelto et al. (2015) in Finland. The findings here showed that the novice teachers try to explore different pedagogical practices and usually show a strong motivation to be a part of school community through sharing the ideas and initiates that can lead to positive changes at school. However, in terms of pedagogical skills, the teachers inform that renegotiations are needed in order to adapt their pedagogical methods to the reality of everyday school. On the other hand, novice teachers in this research see the lack of support in order to improve students'

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well-being as one of the constraints on the way to effective lessons. As this research was around the novice teachers' professional agency (professional agency exists when participant' agency targets work-related phenomena i.e. when they make decisions, influence or have certain attitude that affect their professional identities), the novice teachers struggle with the social management of the classroom where they need other professionals' support. In terms of freely making decisions, the novice teachers did not have any challenges. This is directly related to Finnish schooling system that is built on teachers' autonomy and lack of constant demands on accountability in schools.

The importance of pedagogical knowledge for novice teacher is researched further in the study done by Oppenheimer and Dvir (2018). The researchers defined pedagogical knowledge that novice teachers had in three directions: novice teachers' attitudes towards the students with difficulties in mathematics, parents' expectation of and involvement with novice teachers, and teacher-student relations. The findings revealed that novice teachers' pedagogical knowledge helped them cope with difficulties that they experienced while working with students' failures, communicating with parents and resolving the issues related to the relationship between novice teachers and students.

The discussed literature focused on communication and pedagogical aspects of teaching. However, novice teachers' challenges are broad and multifaceted. In the era of technology, the education system as well as teaching process benefit from using new technologies in classroom environment. Novice teachers are expected to be savvy to explore new technologies in teaching. Gurevich, Stein and Gorev (2017) revealed that novice teachers define the importance of using new technologies such as dynamic software, digital presentations, school platforms, and WhatsApp instant messaging application in teaching. The findings revealed that these

technologies can improve learning, enhance students' motivation and increase effectiveness of the lessons. Novice teachers' difficulties related to technology can negatively influence the mentioned areas of teaching.

Many aspects of school environment are new for novice teachers. One of these new and challenging areas is documentation that novice teachers encounter when they begin teaching. Kroeger and Cardy (2006) related this challenge with several reasons. Firstly, the documentation requires time, resources and organization from novice teachers' side to be fulfilled. Novice teachers usually experience a dilemma whether they need to deal with documentation or spend that time with children. On the other hand, novice teachers do not realize the importance of the documentation in the way of understanding children and their needs. According to the authors, if novice teachers see the documentation as a way to analyze their own teaching and students' learning styles, these documents will benefit novice teachers and increase the effectiveness of their teaching.

The research done in Mexico by Matinez (2014) combined many aspects of novice teachers' challenges mentioned above in one study. The findings showed that novice teachers' face difficulties in many different areas when they begin teaching. These difficulties include issues related with parent involvement, resources, students' basic knowledge background, teaching strategies for students with particular needs, discipline at school, work overload, and career preparation and curriculum reforms. According to the author, these challenges are associated with and influenced by schools' socio-economic and academic contexts.

Novice Teachers' Support

Alongside with the challenges, a great number of research studies shared that novice teachers get some support in their first years. The study conducted by Darling-Hammond, Le

Maistre and Pare (2010) pointed out the importance of creating more effective teacher education programs. These program components were including tight coherence among courses and clinical work, proactive relationship with schools, and clinical work in schools. Challenges mainly focuses on pressures which school of education resist to the undermine preparation of entering teachers, the strength of the profession, and the reputation of schools. Moreover, they think that novice teachers are overloaded with the same responsibilities with experienced teachers. Thus, researchers think that novice teachers need support in their first few years of teaching. As noted in our study, novice teachers have some challenges and they think they need support during that period.

The study by Oliver (2016) found that veteran teachers wanted the novice teachers to become a part of the teachers' team. Based on the analysis, it was clear that the novice teachers were receiving some advice and recommendation from more experienced teachers. These recommendations were mostly related with their teaching style. In our study, some experienced teachers were also sharing their sources and teaching materials (i.e., handouts, tests, and presentations) in terms of supporting novice teachers to conduct effective lessons. Novice teachers also mentioned that experienced teachers are interested in helping them. Actually, this study was tended to determine the effectiveness of a teacher induction program in Texas. The data were collected from novice teachers, mentor teachers, coaches, and principals with substantial experience. It mainly focuses on teacher support systems that define teacher induction and retention program, effectiveness of these programs, and program participants' perceptions on program improvement.

That being said, the first finding of this study contributes to the growing literature that teacher collaboration, especially supporting novice teachers is essential in terms of helping

them overcome the challenges in their first years. According to Ginns and Watters (1996), novice teachers gain benefit from these types of collaborative teaching. In our study, novice teachers reported that experienced teachers share various advice regarding conducting lessons, communication with students and parents, and teaching methods. Moreover, experienced teachers were observing and providing novice teachers' lessons and give feedback. They also were demonstrating how to write class journals and lesson plans and were sharing their lesson plans. Furthermore, experienced teachers were inviting novice ones to observe their lessons and give motivational and emotional support regarding the profession. In their first years, they want to give up easily, in that time experienced teachers give them emotional and motivational support.

Warsame and Vellas's study (2018) is about evaluating the effectiveness of novice teacher induction support structures in a southwestern US state. Research questions focused on the perception of novice teachers regarding mentoring experiences at their universities and schools. It mainly focuses on school district comprehensive induction support, certifying university support induction programs, and other support services that supported novice teachers' decisions to remain in the profession. Its results found strong school support that compensates the lack of university support, whereas strong university support did not compensate for a lack of school support. In the same vein, Warsame and Valles (2018) reported that administrative support is pivotal. They researched effective support structures for novice teachers. In their research, novice teachers mentioned that administration is interested in their professional growth. They noted that classroom observations which principals doing were very helpful. In addition, according to report by the Public Education Network (2003), administration representatives and principals' role is tremendous. The literature review

conducted in this study suggests that teachers who participate in professional development programs, they have higher levels of coping challenges than those who do not participate (Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997). Moreover, participation in projects with colleagues as a strategy has also positive impact on overcoming challenges (Henson, 2001).

Novice teachers' support suggestions

In the study "What new teachers really need" Mandel (2006) discovered that novice teachers suffered from the lack of guidance regarding the practical issues in the beginning of their careers. Interviewees in Mandel's study gave responses for discussion of possible suggestions. Due to these responses from the veteran and novice teachers Mandel (2006) suggested possible opportunities to overcome the initial challenges through the support from the school in face of "mentoring" and "targeted professional development." Study of Fantilli and McDougall (2009) "A study of novice teachers: Challenges and supports in the first years. Teaching and teacher education" discovered the need of qualitative support for novice teachers in adaptation to school environment and professional development within the school in the first years of teaching practice. According to the findings, Fantilli and McDougall (2009) suggested to include better solutions in district hiring practices, leadership trainings for the school principals and mentors, district-sponsored support and professional development opportunities.

By focusing on novice teacher's perceptions of their professional agency in their initial years of teaching practice Eteläpelto et al. (2015) investigated initial challenges and sources of support within the school environment. After analyzing the findings from the research Eteläpelto et al. (2015) indicated "veteran teacher involvement" as a positive effect for novice teachers. Moreover, respondents in this study suggested the importance of "observing

colleagues' lessons." Such collaboration between experienced teachers and administrators was highlighted as needed and important process for novice teachers within the school.

Huang and Wang (2019) in their research "Understanding changes in teacher beliefs and identity formation: A case study of three novice teachers in Hong Kong" observe and research the construction of novice teacher' identity and beliefs "from the learner to teacher." In this study Huang and Wang (2019) highlighted the important role of school administration in establishing of novice teachers' professional beliefs and suggested the socio-institutional support, professional discourse, supportive and invitational school environment.

Finally, in the study "Novice teacher challenges and promoting novice teacher retention in Canada" Whalen, Majocha, and Van Nuland (2019) discussed the school culture and adaptation of novice teachers, their experiences and challenges in the initial years of teaching career. The essence of this study is to discover the challenges and possible solutions due to the investigation of participants' professional practice within the school. According to the findings Whalen, Majocha, and Van Nuland (2019) highlighted the importance of "veteran teacher" as positive component. On other hand "observing colleagues' lesson" suggested as a support tool to overcome problems related with planning and managing lessons, discovering teaching strategies and methods.

Chapter III. Methodology

The purpose of this capstone project was to identify the challenges that novice teachers face in public schools at the beginning of their career. It also determined whether the novice teachers in public schools receive any support from different institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, Education Institute and interested parties such as experienced teachers or school administration. In addition to the sources of the support for novice teachers, the research study also explored the nature of that support. The current study also aimed to reveal novice teachers' suggestions regarding the support that they would like to get in order to evolve and improve their teaching practices at the beginning of their careers. This research used a qualitative approach to answer the following research question:

1. What challenges and support do novice teachers have in their first three years of their career?

a) What are the major challenges novice teachers face in their first years of teaching?

b) Do novice teachers receive any support from experienced teachers, school administration or Ministry of Education or Baku Education Department to overcome those challenges? If yes, what kind of support do they receive?

c) What kind of support do novice teachers suggest in order to ease their transfer to a teaching career?

The purpose of the methodology section is to clarify the methods that are used in this study. To this end, this section is devoted to discussion of the following: research paradigm and design, sampling strategy of the research and data collection process including the source of data and data analysis.

Research Paradigm and Design

The study employed qualitative research which made use of purely qualitative data. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research helps to explore a problem and develop a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon. The current research resonates with the characteristics of qualitative research as it aimed to deeply understand the challenges that novice teachers encounter and explore the support tools that teachers suggested depending on their own analysis of those challenges. The research study targeted the novice teachers' challenges and supports as central phenomena to be clarified through exploring those teachers' understandings of the phenomena. The nature of the problem and the research question stated in the current study was investigated by employing phenomenological approach. As Creswell (2013) underlines a phenomenological study describes the phenomena (phenomenon) through several individuals' common lived experiences. Thus, this study explored what novice teachers have in common regarding the challenges and supports in the first years of their teaching and used these commonalities to explain the essence and forms of challenges and support that the novice teachers experience. Additional to the nature of the problem, Creswell (2013) also defines a phenomenological study in terms of sample population. Thus, the number of individuals involved to a phenomenological research varies from 3 to 15. The current study involved 18 participants among them 9 novice teachers, 7 experienced teachers and 2 school principals whose views were deeply explored and interpreted to reveal the novice teachers' difficulties and supports at the beginning of their career.

An interpretive paradigm is an applicable option for the current research study. In the interpretive paradigm, people's subjective experience is taken seriously and researchers "make sense of people' experience by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell"

(Blanche, Durrenheim, & Painter, 2006). It is impossible to learn novice teachers' challenges without interacting with them, asking them questions, exploring their experience. In the current study, participants' answers to our questions helped us define novice teachers' challenges and explore ways of support that novice teachers would like to receive in order to overcome those challenges.

The nature of the current research is exploratory. As Blanche, Durrenheim, and Painter (2006) state, exploratory research is an initial investigation in relatively unknown areas with an open, flexible and inductive approach as well as an attempt to look at the phenomena from a different angle. Our research identified novice teachers' challenges and support expectations in a local educational context. This approach is relatively new in Azerbaijan and the challenges and support that novice teachers experience has not been deeply investigated. The current study explored the research question in the reality of the Azerbaijani education system, looked at novice teachers' challenges and supports from those teachers' perspective and tried to understand 'challenge' and 'support' phenomena as they are defined by teachers themselves through the examples presented by them.

Sampling

For the purposes of this study, purposeful sampling was used. Because it helped us purposefully select teachers and schools to learn or comprehend the focal phenomena: novice teachers' challenges and their supports. Thus, purposeful sampling accordingly applied to both groups of teachers (novice and experienced teachers) and schools. Moreover, purposeful sampling helped to develop a detailed understanding that provides "useful" data and helped people to "learn" about the phenomena and gave voice to "silenced" people (Creswell, 2012). We chose two public schools in Baku and interviewed totally 18 people. In these two public

schools, three groups of interviewees were interviewed: two school principals, seven experienced teachers and nine novice teachers. The schools were chosen purposefully as both schools have 10-20% of novice teachers. Additionally to this fact, one of the public schools (School Tahsil) is collaborating with ADA University closely during various seminars and trainings (as a participant). Through personal connections we reached the second school (School Bilik) and found out that 10% of the school teachers are novice ones. This fact suited the purpose of the current research.

Teachers' Selection. While choosing participants for a study, it is essential to decide the size of the sample researchers need. Within the scope of the study, the sample population includes 18 participants: novice teachers (9 people), experienced teachers (7 people) and the school principals (2 people). Some of interviewed teachers (both novice and experienced teachers) are primary school teachers and some of them are teaching different subjects at schools such as English language, Physical education, and History. While choosing experienced teachers for the interviews, we focused on experienced teachers who have an opportunity to collaborate with the novice teachers. Thus, we chose the experienced teachers who teach the same subject as the interviewed novice teachers. This was done in order to reveal a logical support connection between the two groups of interviewees – novice teachers and experienced teachers.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process took place in February and March. Firstly, the researchers and ADA University sent invitation letters to school principals in order to explain the purpose of the study and the importance of their participation in the exploring novice teachers' challenges in the initial years of their career and revealing the ways of support that novice

teachers need. The invitation letters were written in Azerbaijani language as the official language of the country is Azerbaijani. Despite the fact that we sent the letters in Azerbaijani, the interviews were held in two languages (Azerbaijani and Russian) due to the fact that the instruction in Azerbaijani public schools are in these two languages. The consent form was prepared and presented to the participants in order to inform them about their rights and to assure that the confidentiality of the received information will be guaranteed (i.e., the confidentiality refers to the personal information received from participants and the identity of the schools).

Also, the consent form was prepared in two languages: English and Azerbaijani. Firstly, we wrote the consent form in English and then translated it into Azerbaijani for the convenience of the research participants. All interviewees, including Russian speaking teachers (despite the fact that the interviews were held in Russian) signed the consent form presented in Azerbaijani.

After sending invitation letters to the schools, the researchers had several site visits to schools to establish positive rapport and trustful relationships with participants in order to collect data that would be effective to answer the research question. The data collection process continued with one-to-one interviews with the administrative representatives (school principals), experienced and novice teachers in chosen schools.

Sources of Data. In order to identify the challenges that novice teachers encounter and the support they receive to overcome those challenges, the data was collected through interviewing novice teachers, experienced teachers and school principals in public schools in Baku. In the framework of phenomenological research, the typical data collection is interviewing the individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Taking this approach into consideration, three groups of participants – novice teachers,

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experienced teachers and school principals were chosen. Novice teachers are exactly the group of people who experience challenges and supports when they begin teaching and the main target of the current research was to delve deeply in order to identify the essence of 'challenge' and 'support' phenomena. Additionally to novice teachers, the experienced teachers and school principals were interviewed. As these groups of people closely communicate to novice teachers in school environment, their observations and experience of collaboration with novice teachers present a great interest for the current study to find the answer to the research questions.

Interviews. The study employed interview protocols for data collection. Three different interview protocols were prepared for three groups of interviewees: novice teachers, experienced teachers and school principals. The questions in the protocols were different depending on the interviewees. Interviewing was planned to include the following phases: interview questions preparation, piloting the interview questions, altering interview questions according to pilot interview results, interview schedule preparation, data recording system preparation and conducting the interviews. 90% of interviews were conducted in the interviewees' work places (at school) and recorded for the further data analysis. In accordance with the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic (country lockdown), 10% of interviews (with school principals) were held online. These interviews were also recorded for later data analysis.

The type of interview that was used is a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview type was more relevant to employ in this research because it is neither fully fixed nor fully free when interviewers can control the information received from participants in the interest of a research question and at the same time can leave certain flexibility for respondents having more conversational style of the interview (O'Leary, 2004). Typically, in this type of

interviews, interviewees should feel positive and trustful environment similar to conversation rather than a question-answer session in order to share their experience and opinions. Thus, the interviewees in the current study were interviewed in the own environments (i.e., school, in their own classrooms) which decreased the level of the stress that they could have felt because of interview questions or the fact that they were interviewed. On the other hand, the piloting of the interview questions proved that the questions had acceptable level of sensitivity and did not challenge the interviewees. Additionally to these circumstances, site visits to schools and phone talks (in order to arrange the interview date and time) with the interviewees before the actual interviews, created a trustful environment for effective interviews.

In terms of the nature of the interview questions, a semi-structured interview mainly consists of open-ended questions, this interview type gave the interviewees (novice teachers, experienced teachers and school principals) more freedom in terms of sharing their opinions and experiences regarding the challenges that novice teachers face and support that novice teachers receive to overcome those challenges. Also, open-ended questions were effective in the way of revealing interviewees' (novice teachers') suggestions and expectations regarding the support tools for novice teachers.

The one-on-one interviews were conducted with public school teachers who have 1-4 years of teaching experience (novice teachers), with experienced teachers who have 11-34 years of experience in teaching in public schools and school principals who are closely involved in communication with novice teachers. One-on-one interviews are relevant for interviewees who are open to share their opinions, feel comfortable to communicate, and who are articulate (Creswell, 2012). The participants were communicative and open during the interviews. Also, as the interview questions were related to the activities that they perform regularly and observe

frequently, the interviewees had a lot of information to share. Through the interviews, we raised

the issues directly connected to novice teachers' teaching experience and difficulties they have

faced or still are facing as well as the support they have received or would like to receive to

overcome those challenges. We believe that teacher-interviewees were open to share their

experience related to novice teachers' challenges, the information regarding the supports the

novice teachers have received and the people/institutions that supported them in the beginning

of their career. The interviews lasted 10-25 minutes with various participants.

Validation the Findings

Triangulation. According to Creswell (2012), triangulation is when various types of

data and different methods of data collection are used, and different individuals are chosen to

collect data. When researchers draw conclusion on multiple sources of information, individuals

and processes, the conclusion is both accurate and credible. In this study, triangulation was used

as one of the data validation strategies. Triangulation was employed via comparing and

contrasting the data from three sources (groups of participants), i.e., novice teachers,

experienced teachers and school principals. Thus, in this research, the challenges that novice

teachers have and the ways of support that they receive were explored by interviewing different

interested parties: novice teachers, veteran teachers and school administration representatives.

This will demonstrate how different interested parties determine novice teachers' challenges

and the supports that they receive to overcome those challenges.

Member checking. Creswell (2013) presents a list of *characteristics of a "good"*

qualitative study in his *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design.* One of these characteristics is

a "rigorous approach to data collection, data analysis, and report writing." Here in "rigorous

approach" the author means validation of data using different methods. For this study, we chose

a member checking as one of the ways to validate the collected data. Thus, as it was mentioned above the interviews were recorded and later, they were transcribed. The transcribed interviews were sent to the interviewees for checking and adding the information that they found relevant. Member checking is used as a way of validation, verification or assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking can be done through different activities. One of them is sending the transcribed interview to participants and this was done in the current study. According to Birt et al. (2016), this form of member checking increases the accuracy of data. All participants in the research verified the transcribed interviews and some information (details) were added by one of the participants (the school principal – School Tahsil).

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, transcribing and member checking, the data was analyzed. Coding is done keeping in mind that there is truth in the data that is waiting to be discovered and coding is the tool to discover that truth (Blair, 2015). According to Saldana (2009), coding can be defined as "a transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis" (p. 6). The interview data were coded in two cycles in order to "reveal the truth" within the data and later to build a bridge between coding and analysis: initial (open coding) coding and axial coding. The transcribed interviews were read carefully by highlighting significant statements, quotes or sentences. According to the research question and sub-questions highlighting the significant parts of the data was done in three directions: (1) parts related to the challenges that the novice teachers experience (highlighted in yellow), (2) parts related to the sources and forms of support (highlighted in green) and (3) parts describing the support suggestions related to the novice teacher's challenges (highlighted in blue). Then the emergent codes were given to the parts (chunks) of the interview transcripts. The codes were

partially derived from the researchers' purposes related to the research question and interviewees' responses to open-ended interview questions. In initial coding cycle, any words related to challenges or supports described in the interview transcripts were given to certain parts of the interviews.

Additionally, in the phase of initial coding, the Sub-coding was also used. According to Saldana (2013), sub-coding is usually applied to detail or enrich the already assigned codes without beginning the second cycle in coding. In the current study, one of the sub-coding "parents" was "relationship", whereas sub-coding "children" were "relationship-parent", "relationship-student" or "relationship-teachers". This approach helped to deep understanding of the phenomena within the research study.

After the initial coding phase, secondary phase of coding was applied to filter and highlight the data. For the purpose of the study, for the second phase of the data coding Axial coding was used. Saldana (2013) defines axial coding as an extension of Initial Coding where researchers continue analytic work on the data. In this phase, all initial codes and sub-codes were collected in themes (categories) to give a meaning to the data. In order to do it in more organized and practical way, the map of initial codes and how they gather around the categories (themes) was created. Later these themes (categories) were used to answer the research question and separately the sub-questions. For example, regarding the challenges that the novice teachers encounter, the following categories were revealed: the communication challenges, challenges related to teaching, adaptation to a profession, too much documentation, technical challenges and teaching resources challenges.

Research Limitation

Like all research studies, this research also had limitations during the research process. The first and the most important limitation was the size of the sample population; we were just focusing on two public schools in Baku. It created a shortage because depending on the region and conditions, novice teachers' challenges could be different, and the research would give us different data. Unfortunately, it was out of our control.

Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this capstone project was to identify the challenges that novice teachers face in public schools at the beginning of their careers. It also determined whether the novice teachers in public schools receive any support from different institutions such as Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, Education Institution and interested parties which involves experienced teachers and school administration. In addition to the sources of support for novice teachers, the study explored the nature of that support – what kind of support novice teachers receive. The current study also aimed to reveal novice teachers' suggestions regarding the support they would like to get in order to evolve and improve their teaching practices at the beginning of their careers.

According to mentioned interest areas above, the current study is organized around the following research question:

1. What challenges and support do novice teachers have in their first three years of their career?

a) What are the major challenges novice teachers face in their first years of teaching?

b) Do novice teachers receive any support from experienced teachers, school administration or Ministry of Education or Baku Education Department to overcome those challenges? If yes, what kind of support do they receive?

c) What kind of support do novice teachers suggest in order to ease their transfer to a teaching career?

The research study was conducted in order to find the answers to the research question and sub-questions, and this chapter presents the findings revealed from the data collected through one-to-one interviews with novice teachers, experienced teacher and school principals.

Firstly, the short information regarding the schools and interviewees is presented. Further sections of Findings chapter cover three groups of findings. Considering the purpose of the research and research questions, the findings were organized in three themes: (1) the challenges that novice teachers face in the beginning of their career, (2) the sources and forms of support that novice teachers receive in order to overcome those challenges and (3) the suggestions regarding the supports that the novice teachers would like to receive in the beginning of their career.

Research context – Schools

In order to answer the research question two public schools in Baku were chosen. They are located in two different districts of the city: Nizami and Sabail districts. To present the finding in more organized and comprehensible way, these schools are called School Tahsil and School Bilik, interviewed novice teachers are numbered, such as Teacher N1 ('N' stands for 'novice') and experienced teachers are defined like Teacher E7 ('E' stands for 'experienced'). Both schools are public schools teaching in two shifts and having both Azerbaijani and Russian sections. School Tahsil has 1650 students in 1-11th grades and 100 teachers teaching different subjects according to the National Curriculum. Among these 100 teachers, 80% of them is experienced teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience and 20% of teachers is novice teachers. In School Bilik, 154 teachers teach 2330 students. 10% of those teachers are novice teachers who have begun teaching for last 3-4 years.

Theme 1: Challenges

The findings revealed in the interviews with three groups of participants – novice teachers, experienced teachers and school principals – regarding the challenges that the novice teachers experienced in the beginning of their career can be placed in the following subthemes:

1. Communication challenges; 2. Teaching-related challenges; 3 Challenges related to the adaptation to a profession; 4. Too much documentation; 5. Technical challenges; 6. Teaching resources challenges (See Table 1).

Table 1

Theme 1: Challenges faced by novice teachers

Subthemes of Challenges	Categories
Communication challenges	• Teacher-student relationships Age differences between novice teachers and their students • Parents' support to students' learning • Parents' intervention • Communicating students' learning outcomes to parents Communicating with different age group students • Communicating with different gender group students • Communicating with relatively big number of students Showing empathy towards students through listening • Gaining students and parents' trust

	Experienced teacher-novice teacher collaboration
Teaching-related challenges	• Preparation for lessons – time issue, self-preparedness • Preparing materials for lessons • Classroom management • Planning lessons and teaching according to the plans • Teacher-centered teaching • Managing time during the lesson • Adapting teaching methods to students' needs • Students' motivation • Individual approach • Lack of pedagogical experience
Challenges related to the adaptation to a profession	• Self-confidence as a teacher • Self-control in challenging situations •Personal (psychological) preparedness as a teacher • Reserved and shy behavior while communicating with colleagues • Self-awareness as a teacher

	• Lack of self-improvement
Too much documentation	• Writing class journals
	• Writing diaries (primary students)
	• Preparing students' portfolios
Technical challenges	• Lack of technical equipment
	• Using new technology
Teaching recourses challenges	• Limited teaching resources (worksheets, handouts)
	• Lack of additional resources (books, tests)

Subtheme 1: Communication Challenges. The novice teachers shared their challenges in the form of examples from their experience. Within the findings, communication challenges mainly include challenges related to teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships. The novice teachers struggle with building the rapport with their students, especially at the beginning of their teaching career. Thus, the novice teachers experience difficulties how to talk to teenage students or how to discipline primary school students. Depending on the level of the students, the challenges can be related to students' behavior (high school students), with discipline and attention to the lessons (primary school pupils), gender related difficulties (male students paying less attention to the subject). Because of age, the teenage students are very sensitive to teachers' instructions or feedback related to their behavior or academic performance. One of the novice teachers experienced it in his first-year teaching at school (this school is different from his current workplace). As the teacher put it:

…Naturally, when I began teaching, I had five years of age difference with my students, 11th grade students. There was not a big difference [age difference]. I just needed to find a right language [to communicate] so that I would not have problems. The student could think that we have little age difference. I could have said something irrelevant; the student could have answered in a [rude] way. So, there must be mutual respect… (Teacher N5, School Tahsil)

The interview data revealed that the school principals are aware of this communication challenge. For instance, the principal in School Tahsil tries to avoid assigning novice teachers to higher level students because it is complicated to discipline teenagers in 9-10th grades.

Novice teachers' young age and less teaching experience affect students' perception regarding the lessons taught by novice teachers. Thus, the students' presumptions make novice teachers' communication with the students more challenging. The novice teacher states communication challenge related to young age of novice teachers in this extract:

…Higher level students usually check novice teachers by asking questions or trying to mess the lessons [showing poor discipline]. Or they think that if the teacher is new, they can ignore the homework and come less prepared to the lessons… (Teacher N1, School Tahsil)

Findings from the interviews with the experienced teachers reveal that novice teachers struggle with building supportive and trusty relationships with the students. As one of the experienced teachers (primary school teacher) states it:

…However, they do not have experience to know the class, to know the pupils… If the student likes the teacher, then the student can understand. If the student does not like the teacher, even if the teacher has the best practical knowledge, the teacher cannot

achieve [to pass the knowledge, to teach]… There are students from difficult families, (I

would not say 'ethnic groups'). There are students from different level families. It is

difficult to communicate with them, they need a special approach [in communication]…

(Teacher E11, Bilik School)

The second big half of communication challenges are related to interaction between

parents and novice teachers. These challenges cover the active involvement of parents in

students' education, communicating the difficulties that the students face to their parents,

dealing with demand and compliance from parents and building trust with parents' community.

Teacher N1 (School Tahsil) shared the moments from her experience when she struggled to

involve parents to improving students' academic and behavioral progress. According to the

novice teacher, some parents are reluctant to collaborate with the teacher in order to influence

students' performance. The issues are especially challenging considering the young age and

little life experience (how to communicate with different people, how to convey messages in

tense circumstances, how to communicate the information to sensitive audiences – e.g. parents)

that the novice teachers have. As Teacher E10 (School Tahsil) put it:

…We are responsible for each child. So, when the novice teacher speaks to the

parents, he/she must speak in the way that does not hurt the parent. Firstly, it is

important to pay attention to the tone of the speech. Secondly, the teacher must be

friendly (it is crucial). When I give feedback [to parents] in teacher-parents meetings, I

try to find some positive points (even there is nothing positive, of course, there are no

such students), for example, saying [to student's parents] that the students has more

negative sights, but there are also positive traits in the student. However, in individual

meeting with the parent, I tell everything related to the parent [about his/her child]. I

teach this to novice teachers…

Another experienced primary school (School Bilik) teacher shared this:

When we are together [discussing with novice teachers], they [novice teachers]

complain that "I [novice teachers] cannot find the way to communicate with parents", "I

[novice teachers] cannot find the way to communicate with pupils", "I [novice teachers]

cannot know the pupil"… (Teacher E11, School Bilik)

Communication challenges with parents are also shared by the school principals.

They mention a big role of parents in building rapport with students. A school principal (School

Tahsil) shared the experience:

One day a teacher [a novice teacher] came to my office and cried saying that one

of the students did not obey her. I told that I would speak to the parent, but he was a kid,

2nd grade pupil. I talked to the Department Head … She told that in these cases she had

worked [in her experience] with parents inviting the parent to observe the student in the

classroom… We found out that this teacher did not work with the parent. (Principal,

School Tahsil)

Subtheme 2: Teaching-related Challenges. All three groups of interviewees (novice

teachers, experienced teachers and school principals) mentioned teaching –related challenges

which are mainly related to teaching a lesson according to written lesson plans, teaching

approaches and how to adapt and employ different teaching approaches considering students'

different needs, avoiding teacher-centered approach in lessons and time management. The

novice teachers experience difficulties while delivering the lessons in the way to achieve

learning outcomes. According to Teacher E10 (School Tahsil), writing lesson plans is not a guarantee for the effective teaching. Teacher E10 (School Tahsil) states:

It is possible to write a perfect lesson plan. However, to realize that lesson plan in the classroom is difficult. For example, I am an experienced teacher and I can write a good lesson plan and give it to you [imagine that you are a novice teacher]. However, to teach according to the plan is difficult…

Students' engagement and their motivation are defined as a challenge by both experienced and novice teachers. Teacher N3 (School Tahsil) mentioned that this challenge increases especially after breaks whereas Teacher N4 (School Bilik) mentioned students' engagement challenge related to students' gender. On the other hand, while comparing engagement of different level of students at school, for some teachers engaging secondary school students is easier than primary school pupils. According to Teacher N4 (School Bilik), students in higher levels (8th or 10th grades) realize the importance of education more than lower level students. As the novice teacher put it:

I did not know that with little kids [primary school pupils] it will be so difficult. You need to engage them, play with them, and communicate with them. I did not know that I need to communicate with them [primary school pupils] all the time. You need to give examples from personal experience so that it [the lesson] would be interesting for them. You cannot tell them [primary school pupils] that 'кухня'[in Russian] is 'kitchen'. You have to say 'where does your mother cook?', 'в кухне'[in Russian]; 'кухня' is 'kitchen'…

Finding about teaching-related challenges revealed that female and male students demonstrate deferent level of engagement that encourages the novice teacher to adapt the

teaching methods and approaches to the situation. According Teacher N4 (School Bilik), deploying individual approach or adapting teaching methods are especially complex in the given context. Additionally, Teacher N1(Tahsil School) shared that preparation for lessons takes more time as it requires spending time on preparing additional materials for conducting an effective lesson.

Subtheme 3: Adaptation to a profession. The research study revealed one more group of findings that are collected in this subtheme. According to novice and experienced teachers' interviews, novice teachers experience challenges related to their adaptation to the profession. These include lack of self-confidence and patience while communicating with students, awareness of themselves as teachers (especially for those novice teachers who have just begun teaching). As one of the novice teachers shared:

> …I cannot accept myself as a teacher… We were used to being assessed [at university]. I always have a feeling that someone is watching me. I will finish the lesson and someone will tell me that it was a bad lesson, that I got 4 [as a grade for the conducted lesson] this time, the other time it is 3 [as a grade for the conducted lesson]… Anyway, I have a feeling that I am still a student and someone is grading me…(Teacher N4, School Bilik)

The same teacher (Teacher N4, School Bilik) stated that "the student mode" that she still possesses decreases her self-confidence as a teacher. According to Teacher E10 (School Tahsil), the novice teachers struggle with controlling their emotions and being patient that mainly affect their interaction within school community. Teacher E12 (School Bilik) described shyness as a main challenge in the way to asking for help and support underlining that the novice teachers are reluctant to share their challenges in order to receive support:

…Firstly, they [novice teachers] feel shy. They [novice teachers] are afraid to

ask for something [related to teaching or challenges] in public [at school]. Even when

we have meetings, it is difficult for them [novice teachers] to stand up and tell that they

are present [attending the meeting]…

Subtheme 4: Too much documentation. The findings reveal that the novice teachers

encounter with a great amount of paperwork as they begin teaching. It is particularly common

for primary school novice teachers. Too much documentation challenges that the interviewees

focused on are mainly related to writing class journals and different documents preparation

(student profiles, student diaries, student achievement reports). Teacher N1 (School Tahsil) and

Teacher N7 (School Bilik) mentioned the amount of work related to documentation. Almost all

interviewees including the school principals mentioned difficulties that the novice teachers

experience while dealing with class journals.

Subtheme 5: Technical Challenges. Addition to documentation challenges, there is

another group of findings that focus on some lack of and using technical equipment at schools.

The novice teachers suggested the importance of new technologies in modern teaching. As

Teacher N7 (School Bilik) put it:

…However, naturally, in the modern time, in my opinion, every school must be

provided with new resources [technology or new teaching devices] as much as

possible…

Another novice teacher explains:

This year we have smart board. I am glad. I am lucky to have it [smart board].

Because it is very important in primary classes, I mean it is necessary, because the

pupils like it [lessons] to be dynamic. They [children] like pictures, sounds. It is important, necessary… (Teacher N6, School Bilik)

Subtheme 6: Teaching Resources Challenges. The participants in the study focus on the scarcity of additional teaching resources such as extra worksheets or handouts for pupils, tests to consolidate course content, additional course books to use in lessons.

Theme 2: Sources and forms of support

The second sub-question in the research study seeks the answers regarding the sources and forms of support that novice teachers receive in the beginning of their career. According to the interview data, novice teachers receive support from different people, especially within the public schools where they teach (See Table 2). Within the findings related to the sources and forms of the support that novice teachers receive, several subthemes emerged: 1. Experienced teachers and colleagues; 2. School administration; 3 Self-improvement; 4. Third party (Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, and collaboration among schools).

Table 2

Sources of support received by novice teachers

Subthemes: Source of Support	Forms of support
Experienced teachers and colleagues	• Advising regarding conducting lessons • Observing novice teachers' lessons and giving feedback • Advising and demonstrating how to write class journals and lesson plans • Sharing lesson plans

	• Advising regarding communication with students
	• Advising regarding communication with parents
	• Advising regarding teaching methods
	• Inviting novice teachers to observe lessons
	• Motivation and emotional support regarding the profession
School administration	• Advising regarding conducting lessons
	• Advising regarding communication with students
	• Advising how to write class journals
	• Advising regarding teaching methods
	• Advising regarding communication with students
	• Advising regarding communication with parents
	• Motivation and emotional support
	• Encouraging and directing teacher-teacher collaboration
	• Involving teachers to professional

	development initiatives
Self-improvement	• Revising materials from university education • Using various Internet sites and resources to improve teaching methods • Getting advice from relatives and friends (related to teaching) • Observing experienced teachers' lessons on their own initiatives
Third party (Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, collaboration among schools)	• Professional development programs (Baku Education Department) • Open lessons, mock lessons (collaboration among schools) • ICT training for schools, appreciation, Education Forum (Ministry of Education)

Subtheme 1: Experienced teachers and colleagues. Among the common sources of support, the interviewees mentioned experienced teachers and the colleagues' advice and recommendations as a support that they receive to overcome the above indicated challenges. Teacher N1 (School Tahsil) stated that experienced teachers shared their sources such as prepared worksheets, handouts, additional course materials and teaching materials in order to support the teacher in conducting effective lessons. As a teacher shared here:

…I approach some teachers, I mean primary school teachers, ask my questions.

They help me and explain… (Teacher N3, School Tahsil)

Some novice teachers (Teacher N6 and Teacher N7, School Bilik) mentioned the benefit

of observing experienced teachers' and the colleagues' lessons. These teachers mainly observed

and benefited from the experienced teachers' teaching approaches, how the experienced

teachers engage the students or how they treat students during the lessons. Teacher E10

(School Tahsil) mentioned demonstrating how to fill class journals as a support to novice

teachers:

…When we have school holidays, we go to work. I say to the girls [young

colleagues] to approach me with the class journals because we do not have this

opportunity in other time…

Subtheme 2: School Administration. According to the participants, school

administration, particularly assistant principals support novice teachers to overcome challenges

related to writing class journals, filling primary school pupils' diaries or preparing students'

profile folders. According to principals, they assign experienced teachers and heads of

departments to assist novice teachers in their challenges as well as frequently observing novice

teachers' lessons to give feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. As a principal in School

Bilik put it:

…As soon as a novice teacher begins to teach in the school, I assign that teacher

to an experienced teacher who teaches the same subject. For example, novice

Azerbaijani language teacher to experienced Azerbaijani language teacher…

Teacher N1 (School Tahsil) mentioned that the principal herself introduced the teacher

to the class in the first day of her teaching. According to the novice teacher, this boosted the

teacher's motivation. The principal form School Tahsil shared that the school community organizes meetings with both novice and experienced teachers to address the novice teachers' challenges through discussions and teacher-teacher collaboration. The principal also mentioned that she was creating the conditions for the novice teachers to participate in professional development programs. The principal also shares the information about new trainings and seminars with the teachers and usually include the novice teachers in various projects in order to encourage novice-experienced teacher collaboration.

Subtheme 3: Self-improvement. Several novice teachers shared during the interviews that while facing challenges or when they observe weaknesses in their experience, they were finding support through different online materials or they were revising the materials covered during their university education. Also, the novice teachers find international experience in teaching very useful for their professional development. Teacher N6 (School Bilik) shared:

> … I search in the internet, listen to video lessons, learn from them. I search for teaching in Russia… I mean to compare [with our teaching]… I mean I add the things that we do not have. I try to work…

Further, some novice teachers prefer to discuss their challenges related to teaching with their friends and relatives. Teachers N5 (School Tahsil) stated:

> When [challenges] related to lessons, I discuss them at home, my parent is also a teacher... My other friends are working [as teachers]. I receive advice from them...

Additionally, Teacher N1(School Tahsil) mentioned a district teachers' meeting where she had a chance to collaborate with the teachers from different schools and discuss different challenges with them.

Subtheme 4: Third party (Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, collaboration among schools). The group 'Third party' in Table 2 includes different people or sources mentioned by one or two interviewees such as the Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, or other schools. Among these sources are recent Education Forum that the teacher attended (Teacher N6, School Bilik), Baku Education Department – Support for Teaching Center (School Bilik's principal) and schools' collaboration. According to the principal from School Bilik, collaboration between schools in providing mock lessons and open lessons support novice teachers:

> … by Baku Education Department. There is a center – Support for Teaching. There, specialists provide [us] with recommendations. Anytime… Almost during all nine months… even in summer, they [Support for Teaching Center specialists] provide teacher development opportunities… Open lessons, mock lessons are conducted. When we have them [open and mock lessons], we invite them [teachers from other schools] and when they have [open and mock lessons], those schools invite us…

Theme 3: Novice Teachers' Support Suggestions

For the purposes of this study, the novice teachers were asked to introduce different suggestions regarding the support they would like to receive in the beginning of their career in order to overcome their challenges. The participants mentioned different support suggestions (See Table 3). Five out of nine novice teachers mentioned the importance of professional development initiatives (See Chart 1). The novice teachers suggested to be provided with different professional development initiatives such as seminars or workshops, covering more practical approaches with active teaching and mock lessons. Teacher N1 (School Tahsil) suggested organizing meetings with district or city novice teachers for sharing their experience

with one another. Teacher N2 (School Tahsil) suggested trainings or workshops with more practical direction where novice teachers would have a chance to present mock lessons and receive feedback from other teachers (both novice and experienced teachers). Some interviewed novice teachers, four out of nine suggested that working with a helping teacher can lessen novice teachers' load and give them more opportunities for professional development. As Teacher N6 (School Bilik) stated:

> … Helper, assistant may be, for example. Some private schools have this [helper, assistant]. There is a main teacher and additionally, assistant, someone who helps, at least in primary school Grade 1…

While reflecting on university practice in terms of teaching experience, some of the novice teachers would like to have longer and more quality teaching practice during university education. Teacher N7 (School Bilik) suggested:

> … in my view, I would suggest paying more attention to teaching practice at university. Yes, I also participated in teaching practice [at university]… I would say spending one whole year for teaching practice [at university] would be better, in my opinion…

Also, the novice teachers preferred to have more ready materials for teaching such as tests, worksheets, or handouts for more effective lessons. Teacher N2 (School Tahsil) would like to have a guidance book for novice teachers that can be sources of support. As addition to more practical support suggestions, some novice teachers suggested different motivational meetings with novice teachers to discuss their difficulties. Teacher N3 (School Tahsil) suggested:

…For example, more seminars like for giving motivation… to discuss the questions that create problems for new teachers… For example, to have [meetings] every month. To discuss the problems that we encounter during the month, to discuss them [problems], find solutions, to listen to other's [teachers'] opinions…
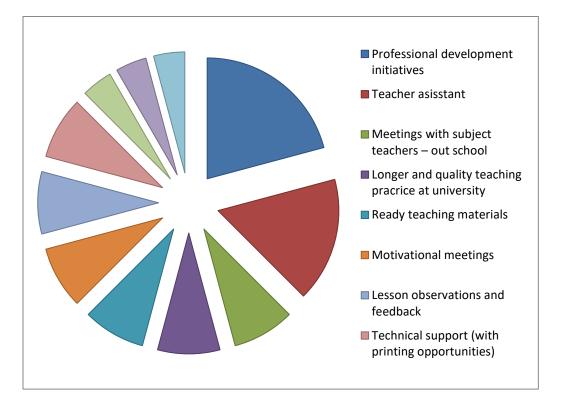
Table 3

Supports suggested by novice teachers

Suggestion	Number of interviewees
Professional development initiatives, such as seminar (in and out of the school) or workshops (active practice based) with mock lessons to teach	5
Helping teacher	4
Meetings with subject teachers – out school	2
Longer and quality teaching practice at university	2
Ready teaching materials	2
Motivational meetings	2
Lesson observations and feedback	2
Technical support (with printing opportunities)	2
Online platform for teachers	1
Guidance book for novice teachers	1
A person responsible for novice teachers at school	1

Chart 1

Supports suggested by the novice teachers

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this capstone project was to identify the challenges that novice teachers face in public schools at the beginning of their careers. It also determined whether the novice teachers in public schools receive any support from different institutions such as Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department, Education Institution and interested parties which involves experienced teachers, and school administration. In addition to the sources of support for novice teachers, the study explored the nature of that support – what kind of support novice teachers receive. The current study also aimed to reveal novice teachers' suggestions regarding the support they would like to get in order to evolve and improve their teaching practices at the beginning of their careers.

The research was done according to the purposes of the project and findings were presented in the previous chapter. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings of the study as related to the literature on novice teachers' challenges in the initial years, the nature of those challenges and how and where novice teachers receive supports to overcome those challenges. The discussion also connects the findings about the support suggestions given by novice teachers with possible support systems for novice teachers provided in the literature. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a brief summary.

For the purposes of the study, the following research question and sub-questions were posed:

1. What challenges and support do novice teachers have in their first three years of their career?

a) What are the major challenges novice teachers face in their first years of teaching?

b) Do novice teachers receive any support from experienced teachers, school administration or Ministry of Education or Baku Education Department to overcome those challenges? If yes, what kind of support do they receive?

c) What kind of support do novice teachers suggest in order to ease their transfer to a teaching career?

Discussion of Q1a: Novice teachers' challenges

The findings related to novice teachers' challenges cover different areas of their profession and these challenges can be grouped around the following subthemes:

1. Communication challenges;

2. Teaching-related challenges;

3. Challenges related to the adaptation to a profession;

4. Too much documentation;

5. Technical challenges;

6. Teaching resources challenges.

Looking broadly, these challenges cover different aspects of being a teacher, i.e. preparation for lessons, conducting lessons, engaging students during lessons, communication with students, their parents, and colleagues. These aspects are crucial for all teachers, especially, for novice teachers which is supported by great number of literature (Díaz, 2008; Frieberg, 2002; Rieg, Paquette, & Chen, 2007)

Communication challenges. The findings in this research proved that teaching is much more than applying content knowledge received from university in the classroom environment.

As Cooper and He (2013) report, teacher-participants in the study define their role beyond giving content instructions in the classroom. Align with this literature, this study also suggests that being a teacher involves not only teaching certain content but also continues communication with various groups of people including students, parents, colleagues and school administration. Teachers are frontline individuals directly communicating with students from different age groups. In this context, knowledge-based communication that novice teachers experience is closely entwined with relationships that the teachers build with students. Our study demonstrates that building these relationships is relatively difficult for novice teachers as they did not experience or practice it before. Even the literature review conducted in this study suggests that (Cooper & He, 2013) small age gap between students and novice teachers contributes to building rapport with students, our research reveals the opposite. According to the findings, the novice teachers experience certain communication problems especially due to their young age as the students can ignore their tasks and be less disciplined in novice teachers' lessons. In these instances, the novice teachers spend more time to establish rapport with the students, engage them in the lessons and gain students' trust. At the same time, positive teacher-student relationships influence students' engagement and achievement positively and negative TSR (teacher-student relationships) have negative effect on students' engagement and achievements (Roorda et al., 2011). However, the connection between these variables is stronger with engagement. Quality of TSR directly affects teachers' wellbeing and their emotional experience in class (Hagenauer et al., 2015). Supporting this literature, challenges that the novice teachers face in communication with the students proves to be an area for broader research and the supports that the novice teachers receive related to this challenge becomes crucial for successful transformation of novice teacher to experienced ones.

Communication challenges related to TSR is just one aspect of communication challenges that the novice teachers encounter. Due to influence of teachers to students' engagement and participation (Silins & Mulford, 2004) and parents' natural interest in their children's school achievements, these two sides (teachers and parents) are engaged to communication over the students' wellbeing. Aligned with this literature, findings of the current study demonstrate that this type of relationships causes certain difficulties for the novice teachers such as continuous demands and compliances from patents, difficulties on involving the parents into students' school life or the opposite – too much interference of parents in teaching process at school. These findings suggest that the novice teachers need certain mechanisms or supporting parties, psychologists or more experienced teachers in order to overcome this communication challenge and effectively involve parents into school-parent collaboration. The research done by Eteläpelto et al. (2015) in Finland reports that novice teachers are lack of competences and tools to support students' well-being. This research once more emphasizes the importance of increasing teachers' competence in communication with students in order to contribute to healthy social environment within the schools and successful students.

Teaching-related challenges. Novice teachers' challenges are not limited to communication challenges. The second group of challenges that the novice teachers face are directly related to teaching in the classroom. Eteläpelto et al. (2015) revealed that the novice teachers need to adjust their pedagogical methods to the everyday classroom reality whereas the other researchers (Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2018) inform that there is a gap between the novice teachers' content knowledge and their pedagogical knowledge. Building the bridge with the current literature, our study also reveals the novice teachers' challenges related to the adaptation

of their teaching methods in classroom environment. This challenge can be explained by novice teachers' lack of pedagogical practice or of pedagogical knowledge. The interviews with experienced teachers and school principals underline the full content knowledge that the novice teachers have. However, the findings show the lack of pedagogical skills of novice teachers. The findings revealed that the novice teachers have difficulties to adapt their teaching approaches to different students' needs and sometimes conduct lessons with more teacher-centered approach. According to both interviewed novice and experienced teachers, the cause of this difficulty can be the lack of real-life practice in teaching. The findings demonstrate that the novice teachers need more tools and support to learn how to use different teaching methods in the classroom environment where they teach pupils from different age groups and with various needs.

Adding to already mentioned challenges, Eteläpelto et al. (2015) also mentioned some other perceived constraints by novice teachers such as classroom management and lack of time and material resources. Aligned with this literature, the novice teachers in our study also experience the lack of time (i.e. time for preparation for lessons in terms of self-preparedness and additional resources that they use in lessons) and classroom management skills that restrain practicing an effective teaching. Additionally, our research defines time constraint for novice teachers in broader meaning as they encounter challenges in dividing time proportionally within lessons. We can relate this challenge with lack of teaching practice that novice teachers usually receive during internship period. This once again leads us to the idea of more sophisticated approach in increasing novice teachers' pedagogical knowledge at schools and universities alike.

Challenges related to the adaptation to a profession. The third group of challenges that the findings point out are related to how the novice teachers adapt to the profession. When the novice teachers enter to teaching, they have a different professional identity and depending on a school reality where they begin teaching the novice teachers renegotiate their professional identities (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). The findings demonstrate that the novice teachers feel less self-confident and psychologically prepared for teaching. This shows that the novice teachers perceive the teaching profession needs certain personal qualities (being reserved and shy) and psychological preparedness. We can relate these conditions directly to how they perceive their professional identity and which personal qualities they relate to being a teacher. Additionally, the findings reveal that the novice teachers' personal qualities such as being reserved or shy create obstacles in the way the novice teachers ask for support while experiencing various challenges. These challenges increase the importance of school community's, especially colleagues and principals' support factor in creating the environment at school where novice teachers can develop professionally and form their professional identities.

Too much documentation. The literature review conducted in this study suggests that novice teacher experience difficulties in terms of time, resources and organization when they encounter with documentation in school environment (Kroeger & Cardy, 2006). According to the authors, novice teachers evaluate documentation as a time-consuming activity, and they need to organize this paperwork to be beneficial in their communication with and understanding of children. Aligned with this literature, this study also revealed challenges related to the novice teachers' responsibilities regarding writing class journals and other documentations such as writing student profiles, writing primary school pupils' diaries. As the novice teachers do not have enough exposure to dealing with documentations related to teaching, experiencing these

difficulties is directly related to the lack of school teaching experience. It is inevitable that these difficulties arise during first teaching years. All testimonies given by novice teachers, experienced teachers and school principals prove that documentation challenge is directly related to teaching practice. Despite university teaching practice (internships), the novice teachers can have a full understanding of how to fill class journals or make notes in diaries or student profile folders only when they take full responsibilities of teaching in schools. This group of challenges is possible to overcome through close collaboration within the school community (experienced teacher-novice teacher or administration-novice teacher collaborations).

Technical challenges. The literature review conducted in this study suggests that (Gurevich et al., 2017) novice teachers highly appreciate the role of technology in improvement of learning, students' engagement and conducting effective lessons. The current study reveals several challenges related to using new technologies in the classroom environment. The findings show that not all novice teachers have access to technology in schools because the classrooms where they teach have not relevant equipment. In this case, the teachers sometimes use their personal devices to improve the effectiveness of lessons. When they use the school equipment such as projectors or computers, they can face with malfunction of that equipment.

Teaching resources challenge. Scarcity of resources both stationery and teaching resources as one of the challenges that the novice teachers confront has already been mentioned in the reviewed literature for this study (Martinez, 2014). Aligned with this literature, the current research suggests that the novice teachers struggle with the lack of additional resources for teaching such as additional worksheets or handouts, teaching manuals or additional course books for effective teaching. Additionally, when the teachers have an opportunity to obtain

these resources, they struggle with the barrier of distributing these resources among the students (i.e. printing of resources: worksheets or handouts).

Discussion of Q1b: Support for novice teachers

The literature review conducted in this study suggests that novice teachers while starting their career are overloaded with the same responsibilities as experienced teachers. Thus, researchers think that novice teachers need support in their first few years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). The analysis of data revealed the following major findings.

1. Experienced teachers and colleagues;

2. School administration;

3. Self-improvement;

4. Third party.

Support from the experienced teachers and colleagues. In his study, Oliver (2016) found that veteran teachers wanted the novice teachers to become a part of the teachers' team.

Based on the analysis, it was clear that the novice teachers were receiving some advice and recommendations from more experienced teachers. These recommendations were mostly related with their teaching style. In our study, some experienced teachers were also sharing their sources and teaching materials (i.e., handouts, tests, and presentations) in terms of supporting novice teachers to conduct effective lessons. Novice teachers also mentioned that experienced teachers are interested in helping them.

That being said, the first finding of this study contributes to the growing literature that teacher collaboration, especially supporting novice teachers is essential in terms of helping them overcome the challenges in their first years (Yost, 2006). According to Ginns and Watters

(1996), novice teachers gain benefit from these types of collaborative teaching. In our study, novice teachers reported that experienced teachers share various advice regarding conducting lessons, communication with students and parents, and teaching methods. Moreover, experienced teachers were observing and providing novice teachers' lessons and they were giving feedback. They were also demonstrating how to write class journals and lesson plans as well as they were sharing their lesson plans. Furthermore, experienced teachers were inviting novice ones to observe their lessons and give motivational and emotional support regarding the profession.

Administrative support. In the same vein, Warsame and Valles (2018) reported that administrative support is pivotal. They researched effective support structures for novice teachers. In their research, novice teachers mentioned that administration is interested in their professional growth. They noted that classroom observations which principals were doing were very helpful. In addition, according to report by the Public Education Network (2003), administration representatives and principals' role is tremendous. In our study, assistant principals were also supporting novice teachers to cope with technical challenges such as writing class journals and different documents preparation (i.e., student profiles, student diaries, or student achievement reports). Principals also assigned experienced teachers or heads of departments to help novice teachers and give feedback on their lessons. Principals also encouraged novice teachers and boost their motivation in their initial years. Actually, they were doing it via praising and appreciation of novice teachers' work. Principals were also creating conditions to attend professional development programs. School principals were also advising regarding conducting lessons, teaching methods, communication with students and parents, and how to write class journals. The literature review conducted in this study suggests that teachers

who participate in professional development programs, they have higher levels of coping

challenges than those who do not participate (Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997). Moreover,

participation in projects with colleagues as a strategy has also positive impact on overcoming

challenges (Henson, 2001).

Self-improvement. Likewise, novice teachers' self-improvement is the greatest signs of

their behavior and helps them improve their weak sides (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran,

Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Teachers' self-improvement implies to what extent novice

teachers are keen to spend their time in teaching and how persistent they are while facing

hindrances. It also related with the level of teachers' professional commitment. Aligned with

the literature, the analysis of the data shares the novice teachers were involved in improving

their teaching practices, relying on their notes from the courses taken at the university or getting

some useful online materials. Some of the teachers were getting some support from their

educator parents.

Third party. The reviewed literature reveals that novice teachers understand the

importance of the professional development in terms of using strategies to make classrooms

more effective (Warsame & Valles, 2018). That being said, the findings of this study suggest

that the novice teachers were supported (Ministry of Education, Baku Education Department,

and third parties) through involving in various training sessions.

Discussion of Q1c: Novice Teacher's Suggestions Related to Support

To overcome initial challenges in the beginning of teaching career our interviewees

shared some helpful support suggestions. In accordance with these suggestions, most of

interviewees agreed in providing "Professional development initiatives" and "helping teacher"

support tools. Other prevailing suggested support tools were noted as a longer teaching practice

during university education, ready-teaching materials, guidance book, mock lessons, feedback system and motivational meetings.

Suggested professional development initiatives such as seminars, workshops and training sessions which can be "targeted professional development" regarding to the Mandel (2006), can encourage novice teachers to avoid teaching, communication, adaptation and documentation related challenges. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) find out the need to include in pre-service programs a practical task, district-sponsored support and professional development opportunities, workshops, time for planning, classroom observations, support from resource personnel and access to subject-specific resources.

Novice teachers also shared that they need some teachers who could help them in their first years. For overcoming teaching related challenges Eteläpelto et al. (2015) highlighted collaboration with a veteran teacher who can help in various teaching situations. Most of our interviewees suggested the need of teacher who can help them during their work and working with helping teacher may open more opportunities for the professional development. Novice teachers can concentrate more on seminars and training sessions by spending less time on adaptation process and other teaching related challenges. Mandel (2006) discovered that practical part of teaching activities needed guidance. Such guidance in face of experienced teacher's help suggested by interviewees, considered as a way to overcome initial challenges and spending less time on adaptation process. Moreover, suggestion to have support or help from other colleagues was highlighted by Huang and Wang (2019) in scope of need to supportive school environment.

Interviewees in our study suggested longer practice during the university education to expand their teaching experience. Schatz Oppenheimer and Dvirt (2018) share that there is a

gap between content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge regarding novice teachers. However, in their study, Fantilli and McDougall (2009) state that pre-service programs with practical task defined as positive beginnings for the novice teachers' career development. Experienced teachers and school community may help to establish a practical base of solutions for the novice teachers within the school.

Finally, interviewees suggested mock lessons to receive feedback both from novice and experienced teachers and motivational meetings with other novice teachers for discussion of their difficulties. Whalen et al. (2019) mention that an involvement of "veteran teachers'" and "observing colleagues' lesson" as a support tools to overcome initial challenges. Observation of experienced teachers and creation of learning communities according to Whalen et al. (2019) are needed support tools for novice teachers in scope of opportunities to understand how to plan and manage lessons, to see how different teaching strategies and methods work in classroom environment. Suggested by interviewees motivational meetings with colleagues was reflected in the study of Huang and Wang (2019) as a needed support tool in sphere of professional space that would allow teachers to discuss teaching and personal-professional experiences to promote collaboration among colleagues.

By making parallel between our literature review and suggested support tools an answer to the Q1c is an implementation in school environment mechanisms which were suggested as a professional development and helping teacher initiatives.

Conclusion

Education as an open and dynamic system receives novice teachers every year. Novice teachers enter public schools with certain content and pedagogical knowledge, personal background and expectations. These teachers face challenges, receive certain support to encounter those challenges and have their expectations regarding the support that they would like to receive. Challenges that novice teachers confront cover their communication with pupils, parents and colleagues, pedagogical skills, adaption to teaching profession, documentation challenges, and technical and teaching resources challenges. Novice teachers do not work in isolation. They receive support from their colleagues, school administration, Ministry of Education and Baku Education Department. The research shows that novice teachers are very interested in self-improvement; they continuously explore different Internet resources and get advice from more experienced colleagues and professionals. It is very important to understand what kind of support novice teachers themselves expect in the beginning of their career or what support forms they find more effective. Novice teachers' suggestions differ and include various professional development programs, helping teacher, collaboration with colleagues at school or in other schools as well as in online platforms, quality and long-term internship programs at university and additional guidance and teaching resources.

Every year a new wave of beginning teachers launches their career in public schools and as other teachers they also influence students' engagement and academic achievement. Thus, effective teachers and teaching are important for the success of students in public school. In order to create and implement effective support programs for novice teachers for their further professional improvement, it is crucial to define the challenges that novice teachers encounter and their current support sources at schools. These two categories of

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information can help the educators to understand the working environment of novice teachers.

However, broader research study that includes more schools and novice teachers is needed to be

conducted in this direction in urban and suburb areas to define novice teachers' challenges and

support beginning teachers in public schools.

Recommendations

As a complex occupation, teaching requires certain knowledge and skills that are essential in successful teaching and pre-service teaching preparation is rarely enough for providing teachers with these skills and knowledge. Teachers can acquire this sufficient portion of skills and knowledge only when they enter the profession and experience real classroom teaching and learning process (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The findings of the current study revealed that experienced teachers in the public schools (i.e., the schools participated in the study) support their young colleagues by giving them advice, motivating them, observing novice teachers' lessons, creating conditions when the novice teachers can observe their lessons and sharing with the young teachers their teaching materials. This support helps novice teachers overcome communication challenges, teaching-related challenges, challenges related to technical issues, documentation and resources and encourage them to adapt to a new profession. However, this support is mainly unsystematic initiated either by principals or by the teacher community. The literature reviewed for the study shows that one of the forms of novice teachers' professional development within schools is mentoring programs used in many different variations throughout the world (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Polikoff, Desimone, Porter & Hochberg, 2015; Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks & Lai, 2009). The review of the literature describing those mentoring programs and the findings of the current study allow us to recommend Mentoring program for the particular public schools where the current research was conducted.

The general goal of teacher mentoring programs is to provide beginning teachers with a certain local guide; however, these programs' characteristics and content vary depending on the education systems and preparedness of mentors and novice teachers – mentees (Ingersoll &

Strong, 2011). According to Hawkinson and Cannata (2009), mentoring interaction can be categorized in following ways: instructional, psychological, classroom management, and administrative. Among these groups of mentoring interactions, instructional mentoring focused on content and instructional development of novice teachers' experience is seemingly more beneficial and effective in order to improve novice teachers' professional skills (Polikoff et al., 2015).

Taking into account context of Azerbaijani education and particularly the public schools participated in this study, we would like to suggest a special form of mentoring – an instructional mentoring program. Defining the form of mentoring program (instructional mentoring) for this particular case is as important as defining the duration of the program. According to the Huberman (1989), first two years of teaching experience is a survival period for novice teachers and has long-terms consequences in the novice teachers' further career. Considering this, we would recommend eighteen-month or two-year mentoring program that can cover the most difficult period of teaching for beginning teachers.

Another important factor for the successful mentoring program is selecting mentors for novice teachers. The data collected from two urban schools in Baku showed experienced teachers support their young colleagues with their advice and recommendations. This proves the experienced teachers to be good candidates for a mentor role. Additional to this, according to conceptual framework presented by Polikoff et al. (2015) the following characteristics while choosing mentors are crucial for effective mentoring programs: mentor-mentee match, mentor knowledge and ability, and mentor-mentee interactions. The literature supports that if mentor and mentee share interpersonal similarities, instructional beliefs and teaching approaches, these can lead to better mentoring program outcomes (Polikoff et al., 2015). Adding to mentor-

mentee match, mentors with more knowledge and ability can affect the mentoring programs positively. The following abilities that mentors have may be especially important for the positive outcomes of the process: pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge and ability to teach adults (novice teachers). The conceptual framework suggested by the authors underlines one more important characteristic for selecting mentors: mentor-mentee interactions. Here the main components are duration of the interaction, active learning, and content focus (Hawkinson & Cannata, 2009 as cited in Polikoff et al., 2015). Various studies mentioned in Polikoff et al. (2015) notice the relationship between mentoring time and mentees' satisfaction with the mentoring program. Moreover, active learning aspect in mentor-mentee interaction includes observation of mentees' teaching, constructive feedback and further discussion as well as observation of mentors' lessons by mentees that can give the latter a model of effective instruction. The last component of mentor-mentee interaction is related to content-focused professional development that brings us to the effectiveness of instructional mentorship programs that we recommend. To sum up, the findings of the current study and part of the conceptual framework suggested by Polikoff et al. (2015) regarding the selecting mentors in mentoring programs give us a clear picture of how to choose mentors for effective mentoring program.

Taking into account the novice teachers-experienced teachers proportion in the public schools participated in the current study, we observe that 10-20% of teaching staff consists of novice teachers whereas overall teacher population is 154 (School Bilik) and 100 (School Tahsil) teachers (respectively to the mentioned percentages). Considering this fact, we would like to suggest one mentor – experienced teacher for one mentee – novice teacher in the recommended mentoring program. This match (Mentor 1: Mentee 1) can increase a duration of

mentor-mentee interaction that can give another opportunity for active learning process such as co-teaching and co-planning within the recommended mentoring program. On the other hand, the literature suggests positive effect of increased duration of mentor-mentee interaction on the successful outcomes of mentoring programs (Polikoff et al., 2015).

To conclude, the findings of the current research and reviewed literature on the effectiveness of mentoring programs (mainly applied in the USA), allow us to recommend the instructional mentoring program for the public schools which would be an incentive for school administration, experienced and novice teachers to apply a more systematic approach to novice teachers' support in order to overcome the novice teachers' challenges in the beginning of their career.

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