

Challenging Moments of Novice Teachers: Surviving Strategies Developed Through Experiences

Melek Çakmak, Müge Gündüz & Anne Berit Emstad

Abstract

The main objective of this qualitative research study is to demonstrate Norwegian and Turkish novice teachers' reflections on bumpy moments and which strategies they use to cope with the challenges they faced in practice. The participants of the present study are novice teachers (n=17) with a maximum of five years' teaching experiences. The logbook and interview were the main data collection tools used to reflect novice teachers' challenging moments. The data was recorded and transcribed separately in the two countries, and then the categories across the data were identified and the codes compared. The results mainly indicate that the novice teachers in both contexts are learning from their bumpy moments and using their problem-solving skills, either based on their repertoire gained during school practicum or on their own strategies developed over time to find solutions to their challenging experiences.

Key Words: Bumpy moments, novice teachers, teacher education, qualitative study.

Introduction

The initial years of experience in teaching are very important for novice teachers since they face a variety of difficulties or unfamiliar conditions as much as they gain necessary skills. There are moments that arise during the course of teaching requiring a teacher to make an immediate decision about how to respond to a particular problem in practice. When such a problem arises, the teacher faces some challenges, which can be described as 'bumpy moments' (Romano, 2004, p. 665). Some problems that are perceived to have future implications or possibly affect the students in the classroom cannot be easily solved for any number of reasons, and they can be quite challenging for novice teachers. Adaptation, anxiety about abilities to meet the requirements and classroom management, the need to interact with other colleagues, time management and lesson organisation, are some problems teachers face according to prior research (e.g. Olsan & Osborne 1991, cited in Kyriacou, 1993, p. 82; Talbert, 1994).

Teacher candidates can develop their teaching skills in meeting students' diverse learning needs, in recognising students' perspectives and in grounding their understanding of what it meant to be a teacher 'for real' (Busher, Gündüz, Çakmak & Lawson, 2015). However, this process is a challenging experience for them. Senom, Zakaria and Shah (2013) clarified this issue as follows:

The transition from the teacher education institution to life in a real classroom has been characterized as a type of reality shock in which beginning teachers realize that the ideals they formed while training may not be appropriate for the realism they are faced with during their first year of teaching (p. 119).

Öztürk and Yıldırım (2013) indicate that beginning teachers' transition from pre-service education to professional practice is often 'unsettling' since the first years of teaching are also well known as being the most challenging period for new graduates in their careers (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz, 2014), and during this period they encounter the complexity of the teaching task, as also indicated by several researchers (e.g. Murshidi, Konting, Elias & Fooi, 2006; Wanzarae, 2007, Scherff, 2008). Gordon and Maxey (2000) stated that novice teachers needed to receive not only professional support, but also emotional support from family, friends, co-workers and other teacher educators.

Internationally, the percentage of teachers who leave the profession varies between 30% and 50% each year, and it is therefore important to understand why this is happening, as the social cost of teacher dropouts is also a major concern (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Thus, understanding the issues beginning teachers face and how we might support them during the initial years of teaching might be a proactive measure for maintaining those new to the profession (Ingersoll, 2003, cited in Romano & Gibson, 2006, p. 1). Schon (1983) suggested that when teachers encounter problems in their practice, they formulate and test new hypotheses by engaging in a process of reflection and drawing on familiar repertoires. The problem with novice teachers is that they have limited repertoires and a lack of relevant experience, which might negatively affect their choices of strategies to cope with bumpy moments.

Literature Review

Lang (2001) highlighted that the voices of beginning teachers, including their fears, stresses and successes, need to be heard and they are crucial to design a high-quality teacher education programme. In her study, Lang described beginning teachers as newly qualified teachers and demonstrated their reality shock of practicing that affects such teachers in a variety of ways. This reality shock experienced by novices is also defined by patterns, such as 'sink or swim' (Maciejewski, 2007; Smith & Ingersol 2004, cited in Joiner & Edwards 2008,

p. 44), and metaphors, such as ‘immigrants in new country’ (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz, 2014) in related literature.

Similarly, Romano and Gibson (2006) conducted a remarkable case study on beginning teachers’ successes and struggles. In their study, they asked one female beginning teacher to identify a total of 58 successes and struggles during her teaching practice. The teacher described some types of resources that she needed to overcome the struggles identified in this study, and the teacher’s greatest need was identified as more and improved training for working with students with special needs. This suggests that the inclusion of special needs throughout the teacher education programme might be necessary. In a self-study, Romano (2005) reported and analysed stories of ‘bumpy moments’ of teaching identified by newly qualified teachers. Through the recording and analysis of ‘bumpy moments’ in practice, several important findings emerged about the nature of novice teachers’ reflections and how these reflections actually took place in the classroom context. Rees (2015) also investigated 16 first-year teachers’ challenges they had encountered in practice. This study demonstrated many challenges and successes they faced during their first year of teaching. Rees found similar results as Romano and Gibson (2006), as newly qualified teachers emphasise the necessity of having more instruction on special education. The participants in Rees’ study also raised several issues, such as including more information on how to work with parents and families, ways to individualise instruction for the students, and the need for a variety of classroom management techniques. Kilgore, Griffin, Otis-Wilborn and Winn (2003) conducted a three-year study in which they investigated the struggles of novice special education teachers. They had ethnographic interviews with 36 beginning special educators, and one of the most significant findings they presented was that special education teachers viewed their special education colleagues as their most significant support. In another study, Britt (1997) examined 35 first- and second-year teachers’ perceptions of their beginning teaching experiences, and participants reported that although their experiences were not all positive, they were satisfied with their profession. In line with the findings of many studies conducted in the field, the teachers’ definition of struggles fell into four categories: ‘time management’, ‘discipline’, ‘parental involvement’ and ‘preparation’. Cantú and Martínez (2006) also presented the results of their study in which they investigated beginning teachers’ problems in two different contexts; they concluded that novice teachers face problems of an academic, organisational, social, material and technological nature.

As implicated above, there are many studies in the literature regarding novices, but these studies neither reflect all the problems that novices’ experience, nor explain the strategies applied in order to solve such problems. Every piece of research addresses the

issue in its own context (the context of different countries, different methodologies and different samples) and makes recommendations in accordance with the context. However, it seems that several common issues in each context lead teacher educators to discuss specific problems and find common ground. Regarding the data collection methods, although the studies reviewed used a variety of different approaches, because of the nature of the topic, they mainly deployed qualitative-focused research.

Aim and Rationale of the Research

The aim of this research is to demonstrate novice teachers' reflections on bumpy moments and which strategies they use to cope with the challenges they faced in practice. Upon the main intention of this piece of research to reflect on the challenges of novices, this study first seeks to answer the question: 'How do we define novice teachers?' There are different novice teacher profiles defined in the literature. For instance, Barrett, Jones, Mooney, Thornton, Cady, Guinee and Olson (2002) indicated that relevant studies define a novice teacher as one with less than three years of teaching experience and one whose teaching tends to focus on 'survival' (Huberman, 1993). Davis, Petish and Smithey (2006) indicate that new teachers include pre-service teachers as well as teachers in their first five years of practice.

The study is based on a transnational study, with data from both Turkey and Norway. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) emphasised that identifying and describing the issues and concerns presented during novice teachers' first year of teaching is crucial since novices can hence identify patterns, call on their previous knowledge and determine what they might need to improve their practice. However, little research has been done to understand novice teachers' experiences regarding how their concern might be met during the first year (Romano & Gibson, 2006). By better understanding beginning teachers' perceptions of their teaching experiences, strategies might be provided to prevent the concept of reality shock (Veenman, 1984). Although there has been increasing interest in studies on novice teachers' challenges, it is necessary to investigate the issue further since many interesting results were revealed in recent studies that could give researchers a more comprehensive understanding.

Moreover, Lee (2011) highlighted the need to prepare student teachers to meet the challenges of the interconnected world to move beyond their comfort zone to see the world from a different perspective and develop alternative solutions to problems they face. On the other hand, one of the aims of teacher education is to ensure that prospective teachers deal with the complexities of education. For these reasons, teacher education is also defined as a

nearly impossible endeavour, as the aims of education are constantly altered in this changing world and the tasks of teachers are indefinite and inexact (Britzman & Diplo, 2000). This vagueness is naturally reflected in the education of teachers, considering which skills and knowledge to present in schools of education (Eret, 2013).

Research on comparative education has attracted attention in teacher education studies in recent years. Different perspectives on various dimensions of education in different systems in teacher education are presented through the aims, methods and main results of these studies). The lack of comparative research in the context of classroom management may also contribute to the extent of this dimension. Another remarkable feature of this study is that the researchers who carry out the study have been working in teacher education faculties in the two different systems and they are quite experienced in the field. This has enabled the researchers to build a research platform to carry out continuous discussion on the purpose, methodology and analysis and presentation of the findings.

Teacher Education in Turkey and Norway

Turkey

The structure of the present formal Turkish education system consists of preschool education, elementary education, secondary education and higher education (Higher Education System in Turkey, 2014). Higher Education Council (HEC) is responsible for the planning, coordination and supervision of higher education in Turkey. The late 1990s became the age of transformation or reform in the Turkish teacher education system (Kiraz, 2003) and reconstructed the teacher training system is reconstructed by HEC in 1998, in order to increase the quality of teacher training. All teacher-training programs nationwide were increased to four years and therefore, Turkish universities started the process of reconstruction in the Faculties of Education, which would train pre-service teachers equipped with basic skills in teaching environment (Deniz & Şahin, 2006). It became imperative for teacher training institutions to change the curriculum by including pedagogical courses, increasing the length of methodology courses and giving more emphasis to teaching the skills that are related to effective instruction (Simsek & Yıldırım, 2001; Yıldırım & Ok, 2002).

Additionally, the pedagogical formation certificate programme is also offered by the faculties of education to those who did not graduate from the faculty of education with the knowledge and skills required for the teaching profession to meet teacher demand (Önder & Tagay, 2015).

Norway

Teacher education in Norway is mainly delivered by universities and university colleges. All programmes must be accredited by NOKUT, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education. There are two main programmes (GLU) qualifying for teaching in primary school (grades 1 -7, ages 6 –13) and lower secondary school (grades 8–10, ages 13–16). Then there is a one-year programme in Practical and Didactic Education that builds on a course of academic studies or on a vocational training course with practical training and vocational theory and qualifies for teaching for subject teacher education (PPU). Another programme is three years for vocational teacher education. There is also an integrated master's degree (five-year) that qualifies for the teaching of certain subjects from the fifth year of the primary school, in the upper secondary school and in adult education. There have been several reforms in teacher education with new curricula. In 2010, a new national curriculum was presented, that required more coursework on pedagogy and upon research-based subject-specific methods, like students learning and classroom management. This was further developed, and starting in 2017, is the requirement that teachers have to obtain a master's degree.

Methodology

This qualitative study mainly addresses the question: 'How do novice teachers define their challenging moments in their teaching process and how do they cope with them?' Qualitative method is used in this piece of research study since "qualitative research can help researchers to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences" (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 226). As Jackson, Drummond and Camara (2007) emphasise that by design, the qualitative research enable the researcher get much more about a phenomenon although the results will not be generalizable to a population since very few participants participate in studies offering so much depth of detail.

Research Participants

In the present study, novice teachers are defined as beginning teachers in their first five years of teaching (Lavigne, 2014) as based on the literature discussed earlier. The participants of the study are selected using convenience sampling (i.e. it involves drawing samples that are both easily accessible and willing to participate in a study) (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). As Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) pointed out, convenience sampling is easy and the subjects are readily available. The participants in both countries are selected according to the number of criteria, such as teachers having similar professional experience (novice teachers with a maximum of five years of teaching experience) and teaching similar age group

(teaching primary and/or secondary school). However, gaining access also played an important role in the selection of the participants, since the researcher were, to a large extent, depend on the consent that the participants would give to participate in the study.

The first group of the participants of this study is novice teachers (n=14) with a maximum of five years' teaching experiences who have been enrolled in a graduate programme in the Faculty of Education in two different state universities in Turkey. They all work in a similar context (working in inner-city schools).

The second group is novice teachers (n=3) with one year of experience from Norway; the three teachers work in secondary school, and all completed their practical-pedagogical education (Norwegian acronym PPU) in 2013. One work in an inner-city school, and two works in small upper secondary schools in rural areas, all of them in different parts of Norway. 28 novice teachers was contacted and asked if they wanted to participate in the study. Just 10 of them replied, and out of them just four was positive to participate. The demand of writing the logbok was the main reason why just four agreed to be a part of the study. The logbok was considered to give some in depth information about the bumpy moments, so it was not considered to change in this demand. When the study started, one of the participants withdrew, and just three novice teachers participated in the Norwegian study.

Data Collection

In the data collection process, initially novice teachers were asked to use log books for two weeks to write about their challenging moments during their teaching. However, in Turkey, the log books did not work out as expected; therefore, focus groups and individual interviews were used as the sole data collection tool in Turkey. In Norway, the research participants maintained a logbook for a two-week period in the autumn of the second year of working at the schools. Later, they were interviewed and had the opportunity to elaborate on their field experiences.

The logbook and interview items were adapted from the study conducted by Romano (2005). The following items were directed to novice teachers when asked to use the logbook and during the interviews to reflect on their challenging moments: (a) Describe the bumpy moments you experienced during your teaching; (b) How did you manage to handle it? What helped you? Interviews lasted approximately 10–20 minutes for the participants, and all interviews were audio-recorded by both researchers after receiving the participants' permission.

Because of the nature of the research question, a structured interview was used to collect data in this study. If the researcher needs to gain insight into things such as people's

opinions and experiences, interviews certainly provide more suitable data (Denscombe, 2010). Cohen and Manion (1994) emphasised that a structured interview is one of the most frequently used data collection methods of eliciting information in educational research.

Data analysis

Content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was carried out on the data in both the Turkish and Norwegian studies. The data were transcribed and then analysed. First, codes were identified by making notes in the margins; this was done separately in Turkey and Norway. Then, the codes were compared and divided into categories. The data were reduced into three broader categories across the data in the two countries. These main categories were ‘classroom order and peace to work’, ‘discipline - stopping misbehaviour’ and ‘instructional management’. Under these categories, sample extracts are presented to demonstrate the challenging moments and their surviving strategies across the two countries. In other words, representative quotations (Anderson, 2010) are determined to reflect the participants’ views.

Findings

I was panicking all the time in my first year of teaching while I was trying to handle pressure in the classroom.

This is a quote from one of the novice teachers, describing her first year in practice. Dealing with classroom management creates emotional distress, and the novice teachers participating in this study expressed their distress as situations make them feel ‘terrible and exhausted’, ‘powerless’, and they also reported feeling ‘provocated’ and ‘stunned’ by situations they define as challenging. Veenman (1984) defines the first-year experience of teaching as ‘the transition from teacher training to the first teaching job could be a dramatic and traumatic one’ (p. 143). As noted previously, we divided the situations they described into three categories: (a) classroom order and peace to work; (b) discipline - Stopping misbehaviour; (c) instructional management. In this part of the text, we will provide examples of novice teachers challenging moments, and describe how they cope with them.

Classroom order, peace to work

The novice teachers found it challenging when they do not have control over the tranquillity of the classroom. They described situations in which chatting turns into loud conversations, students making noise, muttering or students having arguments with their

peers. This interrupts students and distracts the teacher. For instance, this example is from one of the Turkish teachers, who described how she was struggling to keep the class quiet:

While I was teaching in the classroom, I noticed that a couple of students were having conversations loudly and also somebody was muttering a melody. Inevitably, my attention got distracted. I told the class to keep quiet, but it did not work (Female, Maths Teacher-3 Years of Teaching Experience).

Similar incidents are noted as challenging by the other research participants. In other words, the participants draw on the repertoire they have. They try to solve the problem by putting themselves into the limelight, or try to remember how their own teachers got the class to be quiet. For instance, in the specific case explained above, the teacher tried to shift the activity and involve the students in choosing the activity, as it is explained below:

I started doing a different activity and decided to give those two students a task to do. They did the task without saying a word about it. Then, I told the class that I was open to any suggestions of activities that they would like to do in the classroom. After that, those two students and also other students began to follow the established classroom rules.

Discipline - Stopping misbehaviour

Situations involving students who misbehave towards their peers creates challenges for these novice teachers, as they find it challenging to handle such situations. One of the Norwegian teachers wrote the following in her notebook:

While I was walking down the hall, I observed two students standing and talking intensely and close together. Suddenly, they started to fight. The hallway was full with students who were about to cheer for the fight. I realised that that the situation was going to escalate. I came in the hall, carrying lots of books, sheets and dictionaries. I did not have time to think before they began to beat each other. Both boys were perhaps 20 cm taller than me, so I just had to intervene and said quite loudly and clearly 'Now we stop,' and then I grabbed each boy's hand and I held them apart. (Female, Teacher-1 Year of Teaching Experience)

The Norwegian novice teacher experienced the episode as disturbing, and her reaction was intuitive there and then. She felt that the only opportunity she had was the position of power she had as a teacher. After some discussion with her colleagues, she decided that all students who had been involved in the situation should be to the principal's office as soon as possible.

Another incident reported in Norwegian context involved students who had created a 'Snapchat' account in a false name and sent lewd photos and texts to another student. The messages had been of such a nature that no student deserved to hear or see and were defined as bullying by the teacher. The teacher found this situation provocative, and he contacted both colleagues and the principal to get help and support to deal with the situation.

In similar incidents in our data material, the novice teachers say that they try to act with a sense of authority and control to draw the students' attention away from the problematic situation. They search for help from their colleagues, administration and parents. The help they get is mostly based on experiences of more seasoned teachers. None of the research participants report that they read literature to find solutions or new strategies to handle the challenging situations they had been facing. One of the novice teachers in Turkey reported her coping strategy was asking for 'help from experienced colleagues', as illustrated below:

...Even if I cannot find a solution to every problem I face in the classroom, I act as if I have a sense of authority and control to draw the students' attention away from the problem. If the problem is serious I believe that I can get help from my colleagues, administrators and also from parents. We can reach a consensus on the issue. (Female, Primary School Teacher- 2 Years of Teaching Experience)

Instructional management

Some of the situations described as challenging by the novice teachers in this study are the ones in which they feel that their teaching is failing, that is, when students are not motivated to work, when they are protesting or not doing as they are told. For instance, students sit on the floor, refuse to read books or do not understand the topic the teachers are trying to teach. A Turkish novice teacher described how she was struggling with explaining a concept in her Maths class:

I tried to explain a mathematical concept to my students that was beyond their level. Although I had several lessons on this topic, none of the students seemed to understand it. I had spent a lot of time in explaining the concept for weeks, and I could not find any other way to explain it better. I felt terrible and exhausted. (Female, Primary School Teacher - 4 Years of Teaching Experience)

One of the novice teachers reported that she tried to cope with the challenges by asking for help from colleagues but she was not getting any support, as she explained below:

It became harder to see possible solutions to the problem or connect with those who could offer support when I shared it with my colleagues since they seemed very indifferent to my problem. I wanted to get some help from experienced teachers in the department but they either ignored me or avoided sharing their knowledge and experiences with me. I was very disappointed by their attitudes towards me. Since then, I always felt that experienced teachers and also principals in schools should provide more guidance and support. I thought that their supervision was crucial for novice teachers. (Female, Science Teacher, 3 Years of Experience)

This is the only research participant who reported a lack of help and support from colleagues. All the other participants mentioned their supportive colleagues who tried to find solutions together with the novice teachers. However, the incident shows how a lack of support can be disappointing when struggling with instruction. Beginning teachers in their

first five years pointed out, as illustrated below, that they generally make an effort to develop their own strategies for each case they experience. That is to say, they develop some strategies they gain during their teacher education programme:

I was teaching 10th graders, and there were 27 students in the classroom. I wanted to call out their names while I was allocating students' turn. In order to be able to do that, I prepared some name badges earlier but I forgot to distribute those name badges to the students at the beginning of the class. When I realised that, it was too late.

I was stunned for a few minutes. Initially, I thought that, after asking a question, I might choose among the students to respond without calling out their names but then I realized it might be irritating for the students. Suddenly, I noticed that there was an attendance sheet on the teacher's desk, and I thought I could use this to organise the task and to nominate the students during the task. At the end, I solved the problem, but I felt quite bad about it. I believe that if I had prepared a to-do list before the class, I would not have put myself in such a difficult position. (Male, Foreign Language Teacher, 3 Months of Teaching Experience)

Failing in instructional management could be very frustrating and stress-provoking, as one of the Norwegian novice teachers reported as below:

In a lesson students were expected to spend the last half hour to do tasks on the work plan. One of the students did not pick up neither book, notebook nor something to write with. He also decided that he would sit on the floor and not on the chair. Refusing to work was nothing new for me since he was a continuous challenge that had been right from the start. When I asked him why he did not want to do anything, he used to answer "Is there anything you do not understand here anyway?" or "I do not care what you say anyway." I really tried hard to solve the problem and I struggled to figure out how I could motivate him. I also talked to other teachers to find out how he was doing in other subjects.

I talked to the headmaster after the lesson. He told me that the student's parents had already been invited to school to discuss his disruptive behaviour. Then, I felt that I had met my role as tutor and given notice to anyone who could help in the case. Nevertheless, it was terribly difficult to figure out what to do and how to deal with such challenges. I tried to think through what could be the reason and what I could do as a teacher to improve the situation of the learner (Female, Teacher-1 Year of Teaching Experience) .

After being in the job for more than a year, some of the novice teachers, both in Turkey and Norway, have realised that they do not need to worry as much these kinds of challenging situations, acknowledging that they cannot find a solution to every problem they face. One of the Norwegian teachers said:

Later, I came to feel that many of the situations I experienced were major exceptions. Now, as time has passed, I find that these challenging moments are not exceptions; these things actually occur at frequent intervals all the time (Female, Teacher-1 Year of Teaching Experience)

The challenging moments reported by these novice teachers in Turkey and Norway are

related to classroom order, stopping misbehaviour and failing in instructional management. These challenging situations make them feel powerless, exhausted and often panicked. They act intuitively in such situations, and they try to find activities that may help to change the situations, either involving discipline or instruction. They tend to find support among colleagues and principals when they are reflecting on the incident itself. The findings also indicate that the novice teachers are in need of debriefing after such situations, and the ones who cannot get sufficient help and support feel disappointed. We will now discuss these findings in the light of existing literature and theory in the field.

Discussion

Stansbury and Zimmermann (2004) suggested that the first years of teaching are specifically stressful as beginning teachers since they face emotional and professional challenges. According to Fantilli and McDougall (2009), ‘beginning teachers in difficult situations often feel like failures’ (p. 815). The bumpy moments reported by the research participants caused emotional stress and a feeling of failure, and as Maslovaty (2000) suggested, methods for managing these challenges are usually related to situations that a teacher has experienced. Our findings indicate that novice teachers’ ‘bumpy moment’ descriptions generally highlight their concerns regarding classroom management related to ‘classroom order’ and ‘discipline’, but also instructional challenges. This outcome did not come as unexpected since almost all research studies investigating novices’ struggles indicate the same result (e.g. Veenman, 1984; Çakmak, 2013). In his study, Veenman identified eight problems as motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students’ work, relationships with parents, organization of class work, insufficient and/or inadequate teaching materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students and also classroom discipline. He concluded that classroom discipline was the most serious problem perceived by beginning teachers. In a different study, Çakmak (2013) found out that classroom management is an important issue to deal with by novice teachers even after their first year of teaching.

Classroom management is an issue that novices might face in their teaching. This is emphasized by several researchers in earlier studies (e.g. Veenman, 1984, Talbert 1994, Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). According to the findings of the present study, “bumpy moments” appeared to have some differences, but they also have some similarities, despite the differences in teacher education curricula and in school’s professional culture in the two countries. The novice teachers in both Turkish and Norwegian contexts reported that their main struggle was to develop classroom management strategies. Disturbing behaviours, such as refusing to follow instructions, chronic avoidance of work and not being motivated to

work, were mentioned as intolerable and stress-provoking behaviours by the novice teachers in both contexts, as it is concluded in the study conducted by Sun & Shek (2012). However, Discipline-Stopping behaviour seemed to be more prevalent in Norwegian context since there were more incidents reported under this category by the novice teachers, as illustrated earlier. In Turkish context, on the other hand, most of the novice teachers reported that they had to spend a great deal of energy to manage the classroom order, which indicated that the category of “Classroom order, peace to work” were more prevalent in Turkey than in Norway.

In Turkey, the participants had taken a Classroom Management Course which covers some crucial dimensions including motivation and communication, social and psychological factors that influence student behavior, developing and teaching rules and routines for classroom management, gaining student cooperation, protecting and restoring order, creating a positive learning environment, effective use of time in class, problem behaviours and ways of dealing with them during their initial teacher preparation programme. The present study reveals that when novice teachers from Turkey encounter some problems with regard to classroom management, they can get benefit from the knowledge and skills they gained during their initial teacher education programme. In Norway, classroom management has been strengthened in teacher training program since 2010. Even though, the Norwegian participants in this study, don't report use of strategies gained from teacher education, they find support among colleagues and principals.

The situations reported by the novice teachers in both countries seem to be common challenges teachers encounter in their everyday jobs. As one of the research participants realised after one and a half year of teaching experience, ‘these things actually occur at frequent intervals all the time’. Nevertheless, they feel overwhelming, and they all search for some kind of support or debriefing after the situations have occurred. More experienced colleagues can play a crucial role by serving as a sounding board, offering sympathy and perspective and providing advice to help reduce the inevitable stress. Although this type of support does not directly affect and improve teaching performance, it does promote beginning teachers' personal and professional well-being and transmit the culture of teaching. It is obvious that beginning teachers need help in knowing how to approach new tasks and in solving specific problems as well as in dealing with teaching challenges specific to their own students. Looking at such challenges from the perspective of experienced veteran teachers can provide problem-specific support and possible solutions that can help novice teachers improve teaching performance in specific instances and reduce new teachers' stress levels (Stansbury & Zimmermann, 2000).

The novice teachers talk about help and support from either colleagues or principals. Support and guidance from school leaders and mentors are two of the most protective factors in the school environment for novice teachers (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). By turning to the mentor/supervisor or principal, they may consider their opinion important, or they may seek acknowledgement for their struggles in bumpy moments. The novice teachers get a kind of acceptance from colleagues or principal, which is important for them. Thus, for the principals it is important to know that they have an important role in emotional support and guidance, and in building relational trust to keep their novice teachers in their job (Brock & Grady, 1998; Wynn, Carbony & Patall, 2007). Supportive and informative leadership has a strong impact on how new teachers perceive the school culture. Beginning teachers who work in supportive and informative workplaces are more likely to seek advice when needed (Flores, 2001).

Novice teachers in this study state that when they faced a challenge, they used a strategy from their repertoire or acted on their intuition to solve the problem, as Lortie (1975) suggested the following: ‘The effect is that own experience, in the form of learning while doing, is seen as the most important source of the acquisition of knowledge and skills’ (cited in Veenman 1984, p. 167).

Although there is an expectation about mentoring for novice teachers in Norway, not all schools have a system for this, and teachers do not have time on their schedule for guiding novice teachers, as our findings illustrated that one of the novice teachers sought support in struggling in instructional challenges in Maths but she could not get any help. When there is no supervisor or mentor present, and colleagues do not help or support the novice teacher, the teacher, therefore, must handle his/her instructional and emotional problems on his/her own.

Conclusion

Davis, Petish & Smithey (2006) suggested that ‘new teachers are, by definition, novices working toward expertise’ (p. 608). This study aimed to investigate the ‘bumpy moments’ of novice teachers since novice teacher’s first year of work as a professional is a unique time (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014). The related literature put forward that there are many terms used to describe the challenges novice teachers face, such as ‘struggle’, ‘difficulty’ and ‘reality shock’. Although these studies on identifying novices’ problems were conducted in different contexts, most (e.g. Veenman, 1984; Çakmak, 2013; Talbert 1994, Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, Akın, Yıldırım & Goodwin, 2016) had similar conclusion, mainly emphasising novices’ difficulties in classroom and time management and their interaction with students and colleagues.

Another remarkable point to be mentioned here is that, although the related literature indicates that newly qualified teachers as novices experience similar problems and difficulties in their teaching, they also present some unique cases. However, teachers tend to solve their problems by benefitting from the knowledge and experience of their colleagues rather than addressing the issue using scientific sources, such as articles. Being unaware of the scientific resources available to solve the problems faced by new teachers may be the key factor for resorting to this method. During the practicum process, it is important to make novice teachers aware of the scientific research studies on related issues while they are gaining knowledge and skills in a specific area. The present study also contribute to the literature since it indicates the differences and the similarities between the strategies that novice teachers used to attempt to find some solutions for their challenging times in the two different contexts. In other words, the findings of this comparative study indicate that novice teachers experiences of “bumpy moments” seemed to have some differences, but they also have some similarities, despite the differences in teacher education curricula and in school’s professional culture in the two countries

Some of the evidence in the present study put forward that both the quality and the quantity of induction are quite important. Mentor and colleagues’ support are crucial for novice teachers in their initial years therefore, induction programs are particularly helpful for new teachers regardless of the quality of their preparation during practicum process. The study also suggest that collaborative and supportive workplace is fundamental to effective workplace learning for beginning teachers. Schools might develop and implement induction support programmes or design formal mentoring programmes for beginning teachers.

This paper also shows how novice teachers recognise shortages in their teaching repertoire, the survival strategies they use and implications for teacher training. As teacher trainers, we can help novices expand their repertoire of strategies — from instructional delivery to classroom management — and we also need to know why they may think ‘I wish they had taught me about...’ or ‘how lucky I am to have been taught this’ (Leshem, 2008, p. 204). Within that period of time, novices should be able to identify their students’ learning problems and how to address them by reflecting critically on the issue.

The findings from the present study suggest that the novice teachers in both contexts are learning from their experiences, including their bumpy moments, and attempting to find solutions for their challenging times by using their problem-solving skills, based on either their repertoire gained during school practicum or their own strategies developed over time.

The present study also reveals that not only teacher education institutions but also schools that employ teachers should provide a well-organised and effective support system for novice teachers.

In conclusion, it is inevitable for novice teachers to encounter problems when they enter the real teaching atmosphere (Flores & Day, 2005). Having an awareness of the problems that novice teachers experience will allow us to think more deeply about adopting approaches that will help make their transition from novices to experts smoother and less problematic (Çakmak, 2013). Moreover, as Okumuş & Biber (2011) suggest that increasing beginning teachers' self-efficiency would reflect on educational-instructional process and students.

In sum, more research studies can be conducted on this specific issue and all the aspects of the issue can also be analysed by all the stakeholders of teacher education (e.g. teacher educators, researchers, educators, teacher candidates).

Additionally, as teacher educators and researchers, we should try to find answers the following questions:

- What kinds of strategies can we use to help novice teachers?
- How can we encourage them to voice their concerns and difficulties that they have faced in their teaching?
- How can we train them to reflect on their own teaching practices to be skilled teachers?

As a concluding remark, we can conduct investigations to answer these difficult questions in different contexts and share the results to give some food for thought on the issue. Such efforts hold promise for understanding how teacher educators might better prepare their prospective teachers for the work of teaching, as there is currently little connection made across the different phases of learning to teach (Feiman-Nemeser, 2011, cited in Romano & Gibson, 2006, p. 1).

There have been quite a few studies conducted 'to better understand the concerns of novice teachers' (Fantilli & McDougall 2009, p. 815). However, according to Veenman (1984), a comparative analysis of the problems of beginning teachers in different countries is needed to establish whether the challenges of novice teachers in different contexts are different, and if so, what kind of differences stand out in these contexts. Providing these differences in the two countries with regard to the "bumpy moments" experienced by the novice teachers is considered to be the main contribution of this research study to the literature. However, the results of this research study should be treated tentatively since they are derived from a relatively small sample. It should also be emphasised that it is necessary to

design many more comparative studies in the future in order to identify the similarities as well as the differences between the challenges encountered by the novice teachers in different contexts.

An awareness of classroom problems faced by novice teachers might provide applicable and valuable information for teacher educators while they evaluate their programs (Taneri & Ok, 2014). This study proposed to examine novice teachers' reflections on bumpy moments and their strategies used to deal with these challenging moments in practice by providing some remarkable incidents of "bumpy moments" experienced in schools in Turkey and Norway, which lead us, as researchers, to investigate emerging aspects of the issue.

Acknowledgements:

An early version of this paper was presented at the European Conference on Education Research, Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, 7–11 September, 2015.

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