

# Adaption of the Beginner Teachers in Primary and Pre-school Education

## **Keywords:**

*Beginner teacher, primary education, preschool education*

## **Abstract**

*This research's main objective was to identify the main difficulties encountered by beginning teachers in the first five years of their careers, for which we have used quantitative research with a questionnaire-based survey. The population involved in the research consisted of 62 people, being represented by the Adventus University graduates, and the statistical tests applied were Independent Samples T-Test and Bivariate Correlations.*

*The results obtained from the research, after applying the T-test, show that there are no statistical differences determined by the teaching degree, no statistical differences given by the place of activity, nor differences generated by the specifics of the institution. There were statistical differences between male participants, who tend to approach activities more confidently and make better use of activity management than female participants. Other statistical differences were recorded between teachers working in state*

*institutions, tending to consider that the management of activities is less important and teachers working in private institutions, where greater importance is given to the management of activities. There were also statistical differences between teachers employed for a certain period, who tend to believe that the tenure exam is a challenging test and teachers who are employed for an indefinite period.*

## **1. Introduction**

Like any other beginning of the road, the start of a career is shy and often challenging. For efficient development of activities in the teaching career, the existence of a genuine partnership between child-family-teachers and the obstacles that appear early is required time and support for remediation. Some authors call these early-career obstacles "challenges" and "difficulties" (Çelik și Kahraman, 2021; Gholam, 2018; Kiru, 2020; Spătărelu, 2019), problems (Sanchez et al., 2018), and others recall the "praxis shock" (Çelik și Kahraman, 2021).

When theoretical notions find a practical application and working with children is challenging at the beginning of the activity, specific skills and teachers' availability are required. These obstacles, challenges, problems, or difficulties seem insurmountable in the early years, so that some novice teachers are thinking of giving up this career (Spătărelu, 2019), and in some cases, there is a dropout in the first five years (Joseph, 2011). However, some authors claim that novice teachers encountered fewer obstacles when they started working (Akdağ, and Haserb, 2016), and after a year of teaching, with the formation of experience, they developed new strategies and applied them to understand the children and improve their methods (Akdağ, and Haser, 2016).

Aydın (2018) states that, as progress and development in the professional area occur, teachers go through the 3-8 stages of their professional career, each with a particular specificity. Depending on the stage in which each teacher is, training courses can be organized, courses that take into account this specific. According to the author above, this path goes from a previous stage to survival and initiation, skills development, enthusiasm and growth, frustration, career stability, a downward slope of the career, and the end of the career.

## **2. Literature review**

Some researchers establish the causes of these shortcomings, regardless of their name, encountered by beginning teachers as belonging to the personal or professional field (Sanchez et al., 2018), and others mention as the discrepancy between theory and practice; school environment and context; the interaction between teacher and context (Çelik and Kahraman, 2021).

Among the professional difficulties, along with the high workload (Sandy et al., 2017; Sanchez et al., 2018), along with other institutional responsibilities (Sanchez et al., 2018), the mandatory requirements for accreditation (Sandy et al., 2018). 2017) and time management (Sandy et al., 2017), lack of experience is one of the difficulties encountered in the first year of teaching (Akdağ, and Haser, 2016; Spătăreanu, 2019), but despite obstacles, challenges and experience insufficient, teachers transmit their values to the children they come in contact with (Spătăreanu, 2019). Research has shown that debutants teachers learn from these obstacles and use their knowledge during practice and develop their strategies (Çakmak et al., 2019).

Another cause is the discrepancy between theoretical and practical training (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019), but novice teachers use the skills and knowledge gained during practice, as well as their strategies for finding solutions to "challenging experiences" (Çakmak et al., 2019)

Along with the daily challenges of teachers, there are "parental pressures" (Spătărelu, 2019), their distrust in the fact that their children's teacher is a beginner, poor communication, insufficient parental participation in school activities (Sanchez et al., 2018). Also, difficult positive communication and lack of dialogue to solve problems are among the difficulties experienced in the early years by beginners' teachers (Sanchez et al., 2018).

Some researchers say that those novice teachers are concerned with legislation and documents (Akdag, 2014), but also planning activities, especially for children with different abilities, is one of the difficulties (Gholam, 2018), as well as the differentiated approach of children with SEN (Sanchez et al., 2018).

Classroom management with routines, rules, procedures (Gholam, 2018) pose a significant challenge due to the diversity and complexity of classroom events (Wolff et al., 2020), and lack of experience means that there is no course management (Akdağ, and Haser, 2016). Causes of student indiscipline are also mentioned (Çakmak et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2018) and the existence of noise that distracts the children and the teacher (Çakmak et al., 2019). Some teachers mention that planning is necessary (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019).

There are three ways to solve the teacher fear regarding direct interaction with children: building trust on both sides, involving children in decisions, and being aware of the rules that offer freedom in their environment. These lead to a peaceful atmosphere (Akdağ, and Haser, 2016), and the perception of the teachers is that they "try to make an interesting, attractive and

motivating class" that takes into account the needs of students (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019).

Another category of challenges is represented, as some authors say, by outdated textbooks (Sanchez et al., 2018), lack of technology in schools (Sanchez et al., 2018), the need to rethink traditional methods (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019), curriculum development (Gholam, 2018), confrontation with ethical and legal issues (Sanchez et al., 2018).

Fear of interacting with colleagues causes difficulties when the debutant teacher wants to apply in practice from his knowledge obtained in college and does not find understanding from experienced colleagues (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019).

To build their "professional identity" (Çelik and Kahraman, 2021; Joseph, 2011), to meet the needs of teachers who are at the beginning of their career, to be their "support and help" (Spătărelu, 2019), it appears the need to have mentors (Joseph, 2011), and the support given to the debutants teachers provides "empowerment" in the professional aspect (Akdag, 2014).

A particular category of difficulties is determined by personal causes such as insecurity, fear (Sanchez et al., 2018), discouragement from colleagues (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019), worry (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019), helplessness, exhaustion, and often panic (Çakmak et al., 2019). However, after a while, some beginners realized no need to worry about difficult situations (Çakmak et al., 2019).

Mentoring programs have been designed and introduced in several countries to meet the needs of the beginning teachers (Çobanoğlu and Ayvaz-Tuncel, 2018; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Sandy et al., 2017; Spătărelu, 2020).

A "teacher initiation" program has been implemented in Turkey since 2016 to "training, supporting and protecting the debutants teachers". After completing this 6-month program,

debutants teachers in the first year of teaching can gain practical experience and benefit from a mentor's assistance. This program includes internal activities: planning, preparation of documents, monitoring, as well as external activities: cultural visits, visits to schools, institutions, reading books to gain "additional practical experiences", requires to be found in the teaching of novice teachers (Çobanoğlu and Ayvaz-Tuncel, 2018). Another researcher states that the support program for debutants teachers aims, and the initiation and mentoring for the debutants is the guidance of those who will mentor, more precisely administrators and inspectors (Akdag, 2014).

The research aimed at mentoring, in addition to the benefits resulting from this activity, a "judicial" mentoring is identified, which harms the personal and professional well-being of novice teachers (Hobson and Malderez, 2013).

The imprint of the first years' experience can be defined for the teachers' whole career (Spătăreanu, 2019). Other authors support the same idea, Çelik and Kahraman (2021), to which is added to develop their professional skills, depending on the novice teachers' activity's efficiency.

In a research conducted in Israel, to reduce the "shock of reality" at the beginning of the professional career, the Ministry of Education initiated a 1-year program, with the conditions of obtaining a "permanent teaching license". The final year students start teaching and go through the introductory program at the same time. The program includes mentoring with a colleague, a regular course offered by university teacher training departments (Nasser-Abu and Fresko, 2010).

Also, in the absence of continuing education programs, pedagogical practice will register various problems (Barbosa and Barboza, 2019), and obstacles an insufficient "informed consensus"

on the purposes of mentoring in the training of the debutant's teachers (Hobson and Malderez, 2013).

In research conducted in England, Hobson and Malderez (2013) identified difficulties at the micro, medium, and macro-level in terms of mentoring. At the micro-level, the difficulties are related to the two people involved in the mentoring process, the mentor himself, the strategies approached, and the mentored person through the lack of openness to the process. At the intermediate level, the difficulties consist of choosing mentors and the role of acceptance and conscious assumption of it and not under responsibilities included in other responsibilities, and those at the macro level are related to decision-makers.

At the beginning of the teaching career, the tenure exam is a "challenge" for a tenured teacher position (Kiru, 2020). However, even though it is considered an obstacle, researchers state that the profession is starting to be attractive on the labour market (Kiru, 2020), seen by the attendance in large numbers and the marks obtained at the tenure exams of those who want to work in the educational field.

For early education, obstacles consist in planning, given the difficulty of carrying out mathematical activities, lack of experience, ignorance of children's particularities, difficulty in adaptation, lack of resources, difficulties in implementation: distraction, differentiated learning, difficulties related to the inability to achieve some tasks with mathematical content and assessment of mathematical activities (Güven and Gök-Çolak, 2019).

Another difficulty is classroom management in early education, before and after starting the activities (Akdağ and Haser, 2016).

To overcome these obstacles inherent at the beginning of the career, researchers offer several solutions, some of which we will mention.

One of them is the correlation between theory and practice, as well as the existence of a set of knowledge called "knowledge reservoir" (Macenhan et al., 2016).

On a personal level, the existence of a reflective journal, the focus on pedagogical practice and psychological methods of approach can help overcome the difficulties of the first years of a teaching career (Spătărelu, 2020), "critical reflection", in addition to pedagogical practice, "emancipates" teaching (Macenhan et al., 2016). At the level of working with children, one solution is discipline or instructions (Çakmak *et al.*, 2019).

From the perspective of mentoring, mentors must receive appropriate training to ensure that the mentee has the optimal climate for carrying out the activity (Spătărelu, 2020). Among the benefits of working with a mentor are: developing self-awareness, developing training strategies, achieving effective management and student-teacher solid relationships (Gholam, 2018), and support and encouragement for children and new colleagues (Sandy *et al.*, 2017).

Some authors say that in case of difficulties, the novice teachers "seek help from colleagues, administration, and parents", but they do not read books on these topics (Çakmak et al., 2019), and this type of support, mentors, and colleagues "Had the greatest impact on the assimilation of new teachers" as well as on their socialization (Nasser-Abu and Fresko, 2010).

Another solution is the collaboration between the institution's management and the employees to obtain a "welcoming" climate (Sandy et al., 2017).

The existence of a positive model of more experienced colleagues can be a good start at the beginning of a career, but an

inappropriate example should not be a reason for a "bad example" through carelessness and disrespect (White, 2015, pg. 9).

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **Research objectives**

This research has the following objectives:

1. Identify the main difficulties encountered by the beginner teachers at the beginning of the career;
2. Development of an instrument for measuring adaptive capacity in the first years of teaching career.

#### **Research hypotheses**

1. There are statistically significant differences between teachers employed in state institutions and teachers employed in private institutions in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher.
2. There are statistically significant differences between teachers working in urban areas and teachers working in rural areas in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher.
3. There are statistically significant differences between teachers working in primary education and teachers working in pre-school education in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher.
4. There are statistically significant differences in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher between teacher with different teaching degree.
5. There are statistically significant differences in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher between genders.

6. There are statistically significant differences in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher between different job obtained types.

7. There are statistically significant differences in terms of level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher between teacher with different ages.

### **Research variables**

The personal and socio-professional variables discussed are the age of the participants, the employing institution, the level of education offered by the institution where the activity takes place, the environment in which the teachers are working, seniority, didactic degree obtained, type of job obtained and difficulties encountered by the beginner teachers.

The dependent variable is the level of adaptation to difficulties of beginner teacher in primary and preschool education.

### **Research methods and tools**

The quantitative research was used to identify the debutants teachers' main difficulties within the first five years after the beginning of the career. Through the statistical tools it uses, this research offers an objective image of the phenomenon studied with the help of numbers.

The method used descriptive methods, cross-sectional survey and some elements of correlational research for investigate the group of novice teachers. The questionnaire conducted for this research is called "Questionnaire for debutants teachers in primary and pre-school education" and is aimed at the school year 2020-2021. It was an online tool, and it was sent to debutants teachers who have started their careers in the last 5 years in primary and pre-school education. The questionnaire consisted of 29 closed-ended items, extracted from the variables and hypotheses

mentioned in the research, and included the possibility of completion with the respondents' options.

### **The population**

The population involved in the research regarding the difficulties encountered by the novice teachers in the first five years of their careers is represented by Adventus University graduates.

This research involved 62 people (60 women and 2 men) aged between 19 and 54, represent an convenient sample. The responding teachers are employed in primary and pre-school education and work in different environments, both urban and rural, in private and public education units, and the career experience varies between 0-5 years. Some participants' teaching degree is the tenure exam, and the other participants are debutants teachers. Some participants have the position obtained for an unlimited period, while others have the position obtained for a limited period.

## **4. Research results**

The following statistical tests were applied to determine the results: Independent Samples T-Test and Bivariate Correlations.

In the first test, results were obtained depending on the gender variables, place of activity, institution-specific typology, type of institution, type of job obtained, a teaching degree, and for the second test, results were obtained depending on the age variable.

### **Teaching degree**

When applying the T-test, no statistical differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) were noticed between the participants represented by the

beginner teachers and those who obtained the final teaching degree in any of the questionnaire items.

There are no differences of opinion between the two categories regarding the difficulties encountered at the beginning of the teaching career; in the early years, teachers having the same opinions. Teachers in both categories probably did not have enough time to change their minds. This test should be repeated in other contexts, on another sample, to see if the data is maintained.

### **Participant's gender**

Statistically significant differences were obtained ( $t = 3,01$ ;  $df = 59$ ;  $p = 0,004$ ), between the opinions of men and women present in the research on the management of activities carried out with children. The average score obtained by male participants ( $M = 6$ ;  $SD = 0,00$ ) was significantly higher than the average score of the female participants ( $M = 5,47$ ;  $SD = 1,37$ ).

The results obtained in this item indicate men's tendency to manifest a way of working that denotes more safety and an increased tendency to capitalize on the management of activities.

Being representative research for the graduates of Adventus University, it is recommended to apply this test to a population from other universities' graduates.

### **Place of activity**

Following the T-test application, there were no statistically significant differences ( $p > 0,05$ ) between participants working in urban areas and those working in rural areas regarding accommodation at work.

The results obtained in this item indicate the probability that the difficulties related to the first years of the teaching career are not related to where the teachers carry out their activity.

### **The specifics of the institution**

There are no statistically significant differences ( $p > 0,05$ ) between participants working in pre-school institutions and those working in primary education institutions.

The results obtained in this item indicate the probability that teachers' difficulties at the beginning of their teaching career are not generated by the institution's specifics where they work.

### **The institution types**

Statistically significant differences were obtained ( $t = -2,55$ ;  $df = 60$ ;  $p = 0,013$ ) between teachers employed in public institutions and those employed in private institutions, in terms of activity management. The average score obtained by participants working in public institutions ( $M = 5,06$ ;  $SD = 1,53$ ) was lower than the one of participants working in private institutions ( $M = 5,90$ ;  $SD = 1,01$ ).

Teachers working in public institutions tend to consider that activities' management is less critical than teachers working in private institutions.

Teachers who work in private institutions probably consider that the education system in their institutions needs more attention regarding the management of activities. To establish the degree of collaboration between teachers employed in the same public institution compared to teachers employed in the same private institution, another research is needed to provide additional information.

### **The job obtained type**

Statistically significant differences were obtained ( $t = 3,03$ ;  $df = 60$ ;  $p = 0,004$ ) between participants working for a specified period and participants working for an unestablished time, in terms of opinion about the difficulty of the securitization exam. The average

score obtained by participants working for a specified period ( $M = 5,81$ ;  $SD = 1,47$ ) was significantly higher than the participants working for an undetermined period ( $M = 4,55$ ;  $SD = 1,79$ ).

The results obtained in this item indicate the probability that those teachers who work for a certain period believe that the tenure exam is a difficult test. This result is predictable, as it is typical for those employed for a particular time and have obtained results below the level expected at the tenure exam to consider that this is a difficult obstacle to pass.

### **The participants' age**

The Bivariate Correlations test was used to observe the correlation between age and research variables, which showed a negative correlation ( $r = -341$ ;  $p = 0,007$ ) between the participant's age and perception that the task of completing documents is difficult (Table 1). The lower the age was, the greater the perception of difficult completion of documents was identified.

The lack of experience and the exercise of completing the documents in the first years of the career determined the younger teachers to perceive this task as difficult.

A negative correlation was observed ( $r = -275$ ;  $p = 0,030$ ) between the participant's age and the perception that the lack of effective initial pedagogical practice leads to difficulties in the teaching process (Table 1). As age decreases, so do the perception that the lack of effective initial pedagogical practice leads to difficulties in the teaching process. In the absence of concrete situations in the teaching process, the lack of effective initial pedagogical practice generates difficulties for the youngest teachers in the teaching process.

There was also a negative correlation ( $r = -271$ ;  $p = 0.033$ ) between the participant's age and the perception that of all the activities carried out in classes/groups, the mathematical activities

have a high degree of difficulty (Table 1). The lower the age, the greater the perception that all the activities carried out in classes/groups, the mathematical activities have a high degree of difficulty. Probably, the lack of effective initial pedagogical practice and the theoretical and practical lack of mathematical notions determine the perception of younger teachers that mathematical activity is more difficult.

There is also a negative correlation ( $r = -0,262$ ;  $p = 0,039$ ) between the participant's age and the fact that they encountered personal difficulties at the beginning of their career (Table 1). The lower the age was, the higher the participants' perception that they encountered personal difficulties at the beginning of their career was identified.

Perhaps, the younger the teachers are, the more difficulties encountered at the beginning of their careers are related to personal aspects, which interfere with the professional difficulties.

The research results did not confirm the hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences between teachers working in urban areas and teachers working in rural areas in terms of difficulties encountered in the first years of teaching. The hypothesis was not confirmed that there are statistically significant differences between teachers working in primary education and teachers working in pre-school in terms of difficulties encountered in the early years of teaching.

## **5. Conclusions**

Following the interpretation of the results obtained after applying statistical evidence, the following conclusions were outlined.

Male teachers tend to approach activities more confidently and make better use of activity management than female teachers.

Teachers working in public tend to consider that activities' management is less critical than teachers working in private institutions; the second group attaches greater importance to activity management.

Teachers who are employed for a certain period tend to believe that the tenure exam is a challenging test (they probably got results below the level expected at the tenure exam), more than those who are employed for an unlimited time.

The teaching degree does not influence novice teachers' opinions regarding the difficulties encountered at the beginning of the teaching career. Both the beginning teachers and those who obtained the final didactic degree had the same opinions about the obstacles encountered, probably due to insufficient time to change their minds.

The teachers' workplace does not influence the accommodation at work, both for the urban area and for those from the rural area.

The institution's specifics in which the debutants teachers are employed do not induce differences between pre-school education participants and those in primary education.

The age variable made negative correlations with several items included in the research, showing that the perception of some items' difficulty also increases to the extent that it is smaller. Thus, for a younger age, the task of completing documents is difficult (probably due to lack of experience and exercise), the lack of effective initial pedagogical practice leads to difficulties in the teaching process (in the absence of concrete teaching situations).

Also, of all the activities carried out in classes/groups, the mathematical activities have a high degree of difficulty (probably due to the lack of effective initial pedagogical practice and the theoretical and practical lack of mathematical notions), and there are more personal difficulties at the beginning of the career

(probably several aspects of personal life interfere with professional difficulties).

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## Tables, figures ang appendices

Dependent variable (partial values)		Age
Filling out Documents	Pearson Correlation	-0,341 <sup>a</sup>
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0,007
	N	62
Lack of practice	Pearson Correlation	-0,275 <sup>a</sup>
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0,030
	N	62
Mathematical activities	Pearson Correlation	-0,271 <sup>a</sup>
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0,033
	N	62
Personal difficulties	Pearson Correlation	-0,262 <sup>a</sup>
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0,39
	N	62

Table 1- Correlations