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Expectations, challenges and achievements of primary school teachers during their first year of work, in Kosovo

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Abstract

The first year of work in the teaching profession is characterized by many dynamics, which can be best understood by the voices of the teachers themselves who have passed the first year of work. This qualitative research conducted through semi-structured interviews with 10 primary school teachers, from different places of Kosovo, reflects the expectations, challenges and achievements that they have experienced throughout their first year of work. The findings show that the teachers have had expectations to be supported, to be given help and cooperation from their colleagues, school board and from the parents and students. They have expected from their students to be polite, committed to lessons and disciplined. There is a difference between the expectations and the reality that these teachers have faced. Teachers have experienced many challenges during the period of the first year of work, difficulties in building relationships of cooperation and understanding with the school leadership, parents of students, classroom and student management but also achievements in relation to these.

Keywords: Teacher, first year, expectations, challenges, achievements

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Introduction

The teaching profession is quite complex. It requires reading, studying, planning and continuous effort. Teachers should have professional skills and knowledge, values, trust and professional behavior. In addition, they should express commitment for professional teaching.

All teachers face the complexity and difficulties of their job, but the category of primary teachers, especially the ones that experience their first year of work, is more special. For a beginner teacher, teaching is also training at work during the first year. Regardless of their education qualification, a teacher cannot be fully prepared for teaching (Wyatt & White, 2007). Even if a beginner teacher has qualified education before his/her service, beginner teachers require detailed instructions for the first year because of challenges like the differences they face in practice, first year of work enthusiasm, adapting to the job (Yalcinkaya, 2002). Despite how good their education qualification is, there are things that are learned only by Doing the job. The experiences achieved before the job create a case for teaching practice but the real teaching challenges start with a beginner teacher entering a class (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). So, it can be said that beginner teachers learn how to teach during their first year of work when they enter their classes. Every beginner teacher can have different experiences, but generally they experience common problems and worries related to their work (Michel, 2013), like the feeling of being without work experience, a mismatch between theory and practice, social pressure towards new teachers, the desire to do many things and the fear of discipline (Yalcinkaya, 2002). The challenges which these beginner teachers have to face are different, such as class management, lesson planning, administrative requirements and the perception of the lack of support to deal with them, relationships with colleagues, and the confrontation

with the students' parents (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant, Kennetz, 2014).

The experiences of teachers during their first year of work are different based on the context where they work when they start their job. Teachers in Kosovo finish their studies in the Faculty of Education and immediately enter a job in their profession, and they practically do not get any support or training program throughout their first years of work, as it is planned to be the mentoring program.

These teachers have to face the entering dynamics of work on their own and they are so to say left to fend for themselves regarding how much support and help they may get at their working place. It is important to listen to the voices of this category and to know more about their experiences.

This research studies the expectations and the experiences that teachers have during their first year of work, respectively, the expectations that they had regarding the job of a teacher before entering it, how different their expectations are from the practical reality, challenges that they have faced and the achievements that they have experienced throughout their first year of work. By understanding teachers' expectations better we can find ways to prevent the concept of shock regarding reality during the first year of teaching, and also find forms for supporting the beginner teachers during their first year of work. This presents the purpose of this research. More specifically this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. *What expectations did teachers have regarding their job before they started working in their profession?*
 - 1.1 *Do the expectations differ from the practical teaching reality?*
2. *Which are the challenges that primary school teachers experience during their first year of work?*

3. *Which are the achievements that primary school teachers experience throughout their first year of work?*

Literature review

Bartholomew (2007) emphasizes that a new teacher needs three to five years to master the art of teaching and the work in the classroom. When new teachers enter the class, they experience differences between their expectations of their role and the actual reality which they need to face throughout their first year of work (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Many beginner teachers are taught that after they finish their education, all they have to do is to put into practice what they have learned. Most of them go to the school where they will work with a lot of enthusiasm, full of energy and they have great expectations while they start fulfilling their longtime dream of becoming teachers. Nevertheless, from their first day of work, unlike most other jobs, beginner teachers are required to finish all the activities that their colleagues with work experience have to finish. Despite the fact that beginners lack many other aspects that an experienced teacher possesses, they must meet the same requirements once they enter the field of teaching. Sometimes, this injustice goes beyond and beginner teachers usually take the most difficult tasks of teaching (Yalçinkaya, 2002) and they are expected to finish them with as much expertise as the teachers with experience. This fact creates another difficulty in the job of a beginner teacher.

Teachers join the teaching profession with high beliefs formed during the pre-service phase in teacher training institutions, but once they join the profession, they have to face various challenges in the early stage of their career (Cain, 2012; Dayan, Parveen & Khan, 2018). As soon as they face reality, beginner teachers become responsible for managing the classes,

developing effective teaching plans, addressing the standards, taking roles and cooperating with colleagues (Redman, 2006). Class management and discipline, work with extraordinary students, determining the proper expectations regarding students, facing the stress, parents, fulfilling the documents, treating student conflicts, using different methods of teaching, treating students with disabilities and the feeling of being unprepared as teachers are other worrying aspects of first year teachers. This is also emphasized by Martin & Christopher (2020) who say that after teachers start their job, with so many roles to fulfill, they are faced with many challenges.

Murshidi, Konting, Elias & Fooi (2006) point out that when beginner teachers start their jobs, they often face a reality shock while experiencing the complexity of teaching. Teaching profession is way more complex than what young teachers think (Cookson, 2005). Teaching reality sometimes is quite different from what beginner teachers expect. They do not understand how complicated the job of a teacher can be. Many researchers have labeled the first year of teaching as a “drown or swim” scenario (Amoroso, 2005; Lundeen, 2004). What is expected of beginner teachers is to understand how to survive the challenges in class and the daily interactions with the administrators, colleagues and parents. When new teachers enter the class, a harsh reality comes into place, because they have unrealistic expectations regarding the profession of teaching before they have entered the class (Lundeen, 2004).

Also, in the study of Nahal (2010), beginner teachers express an incompatibility between their teaching expectations and actual reality during the first year. Prior to entering the class, they believed that their students would understand the lessons given in class and parents would naturally support the beginner teachers through the situations of student misbehavior. Also, they believed that students would be

naturally motivated to learn. They showed that preparatory programs do not give teachers the skills needed for class management.

Education programs in faculties and other education institutions, that offer students trainings before their first job, play an important role in preparing them for school context. The role of the faculty with preparatory programs for teachers is a successful training and prepares new teachers to fulfill the requirements of class tasks in the most effective way (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In a previous research regarding primary school teachers, they showed that they had experienced dissatisfaction in continuing their profession as teachers because there was a disagreement, a contrast between their teaching programs and the real world of teaching (Barrett, Kutcy & Schulz, 2006; Whalen, Majoča and Nuland, 2019).

According to Kagan (1992), the notion that the theoretical frame in education programs creates the foundation of formal theory that the teachers will use during their education, needs to be reevaluated. The removal from theoretical approach and acquirement of knowledge regarding the job of a teacher in class is a necessary attribute in implementing theory into practice (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In support to this are also the results of the study made by (Nahal, 2010) where he emphasizes that the curriculum content in the preparatory programs need to give the teachers practical activities regarding teaching in class. However, even though the inadaptability of teacher preparation is emphasized by many researchers as the main factor for leaving the profession of a teacher from many beginner teachers, studies suggest that it is the quality of teaching during the first year that is important in keeping the profession of young teachers than the quality of teacher preparation or previous academic performance (Peterson & Williams, 1998).

Practice during the first years have an important effect on beginners. This can have a result in the way they act inside or outside the classroom. When a beginner teacher feels the lack of control towards what is happening around them and has a feeling of insufficiency, this directly impacts his/her attitude towards the profession and career. As the first years of teaching are incredibly important, teachers need help to support them, feel comfortable that they are going in the right direction, and achieve the goals and resources that they aim in continuing their work in a pleasant way (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). The lack of an appropriate school environment, non-supportive approach of the school board, the lack of pedagogical skills and the destructive behavior of students create obstacles for beginner teachers in their efforts to accomplish their duties in the best way (Ahmed, Faizi, & Akbar, 2020). Heller (2004) discusses the fact that new teachers are new not only in teaching but also in understanding school, its politics and its culture. Therefore, for successful classroom teaching, novice teachers need to have a supportive peer community to display feelings of satisfaction.

Building positive relationships with colleagues will help create a coalition which will secure emotional support and will impact the teachers in keeping their profession during their first year, enjoying their work and good teaching (Anhorn, 2008). Teaching can be an isolating job, especially for teachers of primary schools, where they spend most of their time in class and less in interacting with their colleagues. As the research of Koca (2016) emphasizes beginner teachers are not emotionally and practically ready to face the difficulties of teaching on their own, so they need support. Other novice teachers, although perhaps not the best people to give teaching advice, can also play an important role in the form of peer support by listening, validating and sharing experience.

Furthermore, Clark and Byrnes (2012) found that early teachers who spent time around lesson planning with a mentor and observed other teachers rated mentoring experiences as more rewarding than those who had not received this support. The feeling of being part of a community and the positive collegiality experience have been seen as important parts of a teacher's continuous professional education.

Another type of help for beginner teachers should come from the school board. The support of the school director for first year teachers is an essential factor in their general perception of support in an educational level (Quinn & Andrews, 2004). New teachers reported that they wanted the school directors to be present, positive and committed actively in the teaching life of the school (Johnson, 2006), and wanted feedback regarding their teaching and regular interactions with their directors.

In general teachers need a supportive environment, where they feel safe and free to act, therefore the help for beginner teachers is necessary. Teachers who are not given help, knowledge, training and support throughout their first year can experience the feeling of betrayal and confusion (Ingersoll, 2001). It is a fact that they are unprepared in the beginning and it is understandable for them to need help. Entering a class with a lack of experience can cause negative feelings for beginner teachers. This can lead to the feeling of isolation, which might later on result in undesirable situations like leaving the profession (Pelin, 2019).

But if teachers are in a supportive school environment, they will better understand the tools of effective practices of teaching. Their personal ideas regarding teaching and learning can be better discussed in such an environment. A supportive environment will enable teachers to acquire skills that cannot be taught in preparatory programs, that can be successful and

helpful for the classes where beginner teachers work or will work in the future.

Research methodology

The qualitative methodology has been used for this research. Gathering of the data has been achieved by using semi-structured interviews. The population chosen for getting a sample for this research was teachers that have finished their first year of work. The sample was chosen with intentional methodology. Ten teachers were part of the study, all of them were females, who worked at different places in Kosovo (3 from Prishtina, 1 from Podujeva, 2 from Istog, 2 from Klina, 1 from Decan and 1 from Fushe Kosove). Four of the interviewed teachers worked in rural areas while 6 of them in urban areas. All of the teachers had finished bachelor studies, 8 from the Faculty of Education in Prishtina and 2 others from the Faculty of Education in Gjakova. The interviews were conducted during the period between October and December 2020, each interview lasting approximately 45 minutes; they were first recorded and then transcribed. Thematic analysis was used in order to analyze the data.

Results

The interviews with primary school teachers, who had finished their first year of work in teaching, were conducted with the purpose to show a general description of the expectations that they had before starting their profession, how much the expectations differed from reality, the challenges that they had and the achievements that they experienced throughout their first year of work. In accordance with the research questions,

the results were divided into three parts: expectations, challenges and achievements.

Expectations

This part presents a summary of the expectations that the teachers had before entering the profession of teaching and a discovery on how the expectations differed from the practical reality. From the interviews made with the teachers, these are the topics that were discussed:

Topic 1: The expectations of support from colleagues

Teachers in the first year of work have an expectation that they will have the support of their work colleagues, a moral support including understanding, help and cooperation, by being close and cooperative, by sharing their experiences and giving advice regarding teaching aspects, by supporting them in any difficulties they may encounter, and introducing them to the environment and school culture, so that they can make them feel welcomed at school.

- *I needed moral support, sharing experiences with me, getting advice on how I should approach students. G. A.*
- *Support regarding any difficulty I would encounter during my work. F. B.*
- *Advice on getting to know the new school, and its advantages and disadvantages. F. A.*

Generally, all teachers emphasize the fact that there is no big difference between what they had expected from their colleagues and the practical reality, as their colleagues were supportive since the very beginning, they welcomed the new teachers and advised them about many aspects of teaching, especially regarding administrative issues at school.

Topic 2: The expectations of support from the school board

Teachers expect to have the support of the school board. More specifically, they expected to be given instructions regarding school, internal rules, moral support and information on teaching and extracurricular activities, to be offered close communication, professional and practical support in cases where they would be faced with difficult situations.

- *I needed professional and practical support during the first days of work. F. A.*
- *I expected that whenever I had a problem e.g. if there was a student in class with whom I could not coordinate, the school director's office would manage that student or at least help me find a solution on what to do. F. S.*

There is a difference between the expectations that the teachers had towards the school board and the practical reality they had encountered. Almost all the teachers declared that they had expectations that the school board would take into consideration the fact that it's their first year of work, but they had been treated the same way as the teachers with many years of experience. Also, the professional level required from them was the same as the one from teachers with experience. This is how teacher G. A. expressed herself:

- *I expected that they would take into consideration the fact that I am in the beginning of my career and I need instructions but when I got hired, I was considered the same as the colleagues who had been working for many years.*

Often the teachers faced a cold and indifferent attitude from the directors. They have formal relationships with the directors, where they discuss submitting an educational plan and not any substantive discussion. Furthermore, the teachers' requests for help in specific situations like dealing with parents or

problematic students, were often avoided by being promised that they would find a solution but they did not.

- *Even though I have gone to the school director's office of the to discuss this, I have been told that these are the conditions at school, and I was not given the support I had requested. F. S.*

Topic 3: The expectations regarding student behavior differ from practical reality

There is a difference between the teachers' expectation regarding student behavior during their first year of work with the reality they have faced. Student behavior management was not seen as a problem for the teachers but it was one of the things they were challenged in the beginning of their career. They expected that the students would act the way the teachers expected them, they would strictly follow the instructions given, all the students with no exception would do the homework, would respect each other, would be disciplined, would possess high politeness, would be focused during class and would obey teachers' requests.

- *I expected the students to be polite, focused in class and hard-working. F. B.*
- *I have not imagined that it would be so difficult to manage them, maybe because there was a high number of students in class. I expected that they would act the way I would tell them to and they would follow my instructions, and they would do their homework and respect each other. G. A.*

Topic 4: The expectations regarding support and cooperation with the parents differ from practical reality.

Teachers had expectations that they would find understanding and cooperation with the parents, because they believed that parents would understand that teachers make decisions based on what is best for the students and they work for their own

good, so they expect the approval from the parents. All the teachers emphasize that they have expected that the parents would be continuously interested in the success of their children, would be real and cooperative, participate in school activities or at home with the students, and show higher interest. The teachers always emphasize that they found these expectations in the majority of the parents but there were specific cases that did not fulfill the teachers' expectations, and this was a characteristic for each interviewed teacher.

- *I expected to have good and cooperative relationships for the benefit of their children. F. B.*
- *My expectations were to develop strong cooperative relationships with the parents, but not all parents respond the same way. G. H.*

There is a difference between the general expectations the teachers had at the beginning of their careers. Teaching has been perceived as a more abstract process and an ideal one where teachers have thought that they would achieve their ideas, organize their classes, and have an immediate impact in the students' life and performance.

- *I expected that I would have no bad students in my class, but I have understood that this does not entirely depend on me as a teacher. G. H.*
- *I expected that I would achieve my ideas on how to organize the class, and how much I would have an impact in my students' lives, but in reality, this was way harder than I thought. G. A.*

Challenges

The teachers were asked regarding the challenges they had experienced during the first year of work. Based on their answers the following topics were discussed:

Topic 5: Challenges concerning the school board

During the first year of work, teachers were faced with many challenges, for which they were not prepared. One of them was creating a relationship with the school board. The teachers explain that their relationships are very formal and they do not have any close relations, in the sense of creating discussions, talking about issues that worry them; their relationship is more official, usually it concerns lesson planning that needs to be sent every two months. There is no deep connection with the school director's office: two teachers emphasize a cold attitude and sometimes even an arrogant approach towards the teachers.

Also, the fact that teachers throughout their first year of work expected to be treated differently from the teachers with work experience, and that account would be taken of the fact that it's the beginning of their career and they do not have any practical experience, makes it hard and challenging for beginner teachers to build a strong and cooperative bond with the school board.

- *The school board needs to create a cooperative relationship, something that the school board where I work does not do. V. SH.*
- *Usually, the relationship has been very formal – official. G. H.*
- *Yes, because of his aggressive and arrogant approach in some cases. F. A.*

Topic 6: Challenges related to students

One of the biggest challenges faced by teachers during the first year of work has been student management, something that they did not think would be so difficult. Persuading the students to respect class rules, fulfilling the school requirements like homework or taking care of the class environment, and the creation of prosocial, stable and long relationships with students has been a challenge. Moreover, creating strong

relationships and genuine communication between them and the students was also a challenge, where teachers continuously try to research and find methods or techniques to achieve some improvement.

A phenomenon in itself, which has remained as an unsurpassed challenge for the teachers, was the fact that they had students with disabilities inside their classes. This situation is considered as very difficult for the teachers who have not had any prior knowledge regarding work with disabled children and who had not received any specific prior training during their studies.

- *The challenges were researching and finding methods or techniques to achieve improvements. F. A.*
- *My biggest challenge was that I had students with disabilities in my class without any assistants and I had to work with them and the other students at the same time. F. B.*
- *Challenges related to student behavior included convincing them to respect class rules, and fulfill their responsibilities like homework or taking care of class environment. G. A.*

Topic 7: Challenges in relation to students' parents

Although teachers declared that generally they had managed to create relationships of understanding with the students' parents, they emphasized that they needed to do a lot more work to overcome many challenges. One challenge was to establish relationship with the parents of the students who had shown no commitment in class, since the parents did not always responded to the invitations to meet the teachers for cooperation. Even more challenging were the experiences with those parents who did not agree with the teachers' opinions. One of the teachers mentioned that they did not have matching opinions with the parents because the parents considered their children as extraordinary students, with high intelligence,

where in reality those students' performance was average in comparison with their peers. This prevented teachers from creating a close relationship with some students' parents.

- *Our opinions regarding students' success and performance at school did not match and that was a challenge; this happened because some parents thought their children were extraordinary and super intelligent; however, their performance in class was average in comparison with their peers. G. A.*

During the first year of work teachers were faced with judgements created by the parents. For example, teacher F. S. mentioned that the fact that she was young and requested parents' cooperation in order to improve the students' performance, the parents expressed lack of trust and doubted her skills only because she was young.

- *When I asked a parent to help their child at home, to practice together so that they would get the result they wanted, the parent said: - maybe you do not know how to explain because you are young and you don't understand children, why don't you ask your colleagues. This was very disappointing for me.*

Other challenges had to do with the lack of interest from some parents to take part in parent meetings and discussions on issues of interest for both parts.

- *The lack of interest in parent meetings to discuss issues which would interest both parties. F. A.*

Generally, teachers think that everything is a challenge during the first year of work, from the moment they enter the class and then with everything they need to deal with. There are many elements which teachers have not thought about or expected to deal with. This is how teacher G. A. expressed herself.

- *During the studies I imagined the job of a teacher would be easier, I did not think that I would have to deal with a lot of administrative work, meetings inside school, other obligations regarding school,*

meetings and requests from the parents. I thought I would have to deal more with students and work inside the class, but it turned out to be a lot more work than I had expected.

They had never expected that some of the teachers would have to work with children with disabilities or, as the case of teacher V. Sh., with combined classes.

- *I work with combined classes, and I had never thought about it. As a student I completed my pedagogical practice in a class but when I got hired as a teacher my work was way more different than what I did in my practice. Everything was more different, as at first I have a one-hour lesson with two classes, then I have lesson with one group for a few minutes and then manage the other group within one class.*

There were also challenges related to creating a relationship with the school board or even with work colleagues, time-management, class management, creating equality and students' work habits, the lack of didactic equipment to create teaching activities. What makes it harder to face these challenges is the fact that apart from moral support from the work colleagues, teachers do not have any type of support from anyone else through the first year of work, and they are not even trained at university how to overcome such challenges. This is something that the teachers have expressed:

- *Work with the parents and the students has been the hardest one, we have not had any prior preparation at the university. F. S.*
- *Class management is easier when you have less students in your class and when you do not have any students with disabilities and you need to be prepared even for these cases, but we did not have something like that at university. F. B.*
- *The challenge was evaluating the students. We did not have any information at work or any preparation at the university. G. H.*

Achievements

This part presents a description of the achievements that the teacher believe they have accomplished during the first year of work. Based on their answers the following topics were discussed:

Topic 8: Achievements in regards to colleagues and the school board

Teachers declare that during the first year of work they have experienced a few achievements in regards to the relationships with their colleagues and the school board. Within a year they have managed to build healthy relationships with their work colleagues, they have learned how to work in a group, how to go through challenges of creating cooperative relationships and they have developed the responsibility for the common success of the school and they have achieved this by cooperating. This type of cooperation was nonjudgmental and supportive, which gave them the chance to discuss the difficulties that they had with students' behavior or performance in class, and regarding administrative aspects like lesson planning or school rules. These gave the teachers a feeling of support and belonging at school. Also, in regards to the relationship with the school board, it is emphasized that they have created a good relationship and mutual respect, not any deeper relationships.

- *The help especially in the administrative aspect of work with the class journal, sometimes even clarifying the procedure of a class lesson. G. H.*
- *We have often discussed different difficulties with different students and we have created a good understanding without feeling prejudiced. SH. O.*

Topic 9: Achievements in class and student management

The teachers state that during the first year of work they have reached many accomplishments regarding class management and relationships with the students. Establishing order in class, creating a discipline, students obeying the rules, positive attitude in class, and instilling good habits and eliminating bad habits have been some of the things they have accomplished. One of the teachers who worked with first graders explains how hard it was for her in the beginning because of student behavior in class since they were used to preschool that allowed them to be freer, without rules or responsibilities. As time passed, she managed to restore order and discipline in class. Generally, all teachers state that it took them a while to put order and set rules in class. They consider good communication with students also an achievement, and they have tried to find ways to engage all students and ensure their participation and commitment in lessons. Although at the beginning it was hard for them to manage time for class activities, they have achieved better use of time in organizing activities.

- *Setting rules, students obeying the rules, and time management for organizing activities. G. A.*
- *Students' positive attitudes. Learning good habits and eliminating some bad ones which we have noticed from the beginning of our work with them. G. H.*

Topic 10: Achievements in regards to relationships with the students' parents

Teachers declare that they have managed to build cooperative relationships with the students' parents. They have developed their communication skills gradually, through meetings and discussions with parents where they were better informed about the students' characteristics, which helped them find the

right approach towards the students. They also state that they managed to earn parents' trust and respect, which in the beginning was not easy. They describe that they needed to do a lot of work in the beginning in order to find the right communication approach with the parents since at first, they felt unsecure regarding how they would welcome them. Two of the teachers confess how they felt worried regarding how the parents would accept them and how their young physical appearance would impact their doubts in the skills that the teachers have in teaching.

- *I did not know how they would accept me in helping their children with their future, and I believed that my young physical appearance would make them doubt my teaching skills. V. Sh.*
- *I have gradually developed my communication skills; I have created a language of understanding and I was open to the possibility of cooperating with the parents. G. A.*

Discussion

The previously-shown findings of the research make us take into consideration things that teachers go through in the beginning of their careers. As McCann & Johannessen (2004) emphasize, the first years of teaching are incredibly important. Teachers need help and support in order to feel like they are in the right path and achieve their resources so that they can continue working in a satisfying manner. The results of this research also confirm that teachers need support, help and guidance on many aspects of teaching from all sides of the school and also it is an expectation of them in the first year of work to have this. Therefore, it is important to give them the right support so that they can have their job easier at the beginning and not experience shock from the practical reality from the beginning, because, as the research results show, there

are differences between the way they have perceived or had expectations about teaching in the beginning and during the first year, when they face things they never imagined they would face, such as managing classroom, time and problematic students' behaviors, building relationships with the school leadership, relations with parents, accomplishment of administrative tasks, work with students with special needs, work with combined classes and lack of didactic equipment.

According to the research results of Brannan and Bleisten (2012), beginner teachers need support and what they mean by support is information about youth psychology, resources and logistical knowledge provided by colleagues. Building positive relationships with colleagues will help in creating a coalition that will secure emotional support and will impact new teachers in staying in their profession, finding satisfaction in it and creating good relationships (Anhorn, 2008). Based on the results of the study, teachers had the moral support and help in administrative aspects, like how to fill in the class diary or how to plan the lessons. Their colleagues showed willingness in supporting new teachers. This willingness should be used in order for the new teachers to have bigger support during their first year of work in teaching. The mentoring process can be a solution. As a result, new teachers will learn from the experiences of experienced teachers, and they can adjust those with the problematic situations which they will face. This can be done through class observations from the colleagues, meetings with experienced teachers where they discuss topics which preoccupy the new teachers and they have the chance to listen to the experiences of their colleagues with work experience. As Richards & Farrell (2005) emphasize, when beginner teachers analyze a case, they have the possibility to benefit from the practices of experienced teachers. Resnick (1991) mentions that the interactions between beginner teachers

and their colleagues are the key to the development of learning activities in teaching and learning. Professional discussions between colleagues are mentioned also by Feiman-Nemser (2001) who says that this interaction between beginner and experienced teachers helps them share experiences and instruct beginner teachers to learn from their mistakes. This should not be done only by the experienced colleagues; the school board plays a great importance also. The support of the school principal is a main factor in their general perception regarding support at school (Quinn & Andrews, 2004).

The school board has a decisive role because they need to organize meetings to get to know each other and create a healthy and friendly relationship between colleagues. This is an aspect that should be taken into consideration, and a phenomenon that requires improvement in our case, because as the results of this research show teachers see this relationship with the school board as a challenge and they have not offered help besides moral support. The relationship with them has been formal and there was no initiation to help from their side, and in some cases, they have kept an indifferent and cold approach.

Thus, mentoring processes inside school need to be initiated by the school board. Besides this, they can expand the cooperation network even with other schools, for instance, the partnership between schools and beginner teachers to create a professional community for teaching which would ease the process and share the experiences (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). As Barkhuizen (2011) mentions, beginner teachers need not only the stories of experienced teachers, but also to analyze each other's cases, because they can experience similar challenges. Organizing such meetings between beginner teachers from other schools can be beneficial in this case.

Another thing that should be taken into consideration is the quality and the content of the study programs during the phase before working. The faculties which have been specialized for preparing the teaching staff for primary school should include in their courses content that is relevant and helps teachers to have the proper preparation at the stage when they begin to serve as teachers. As the results of the research show, a considerable part of the teachers think that they are not sufficiently prepared for aspects such as administrative work, about teacher's diary, lesson planning, meetings with parents, relations with leadership and colleagues, evaluation process, or work with children with special needs or even with combined classes. They may be generally informed about these issues only in theory. To make teachers' job easier, these need to be taken into consideration and as Ingersoll (2001a) explains, teachers that are not given help, knowledge, training and support during the first year of their work experience a feeling of betrayal and confusion and as a result they pull back from their profession.

Conclusion

This research has examined the expectations and the differences between primary school teacher expectations and the practical reality that they had to face. Also, the challenges and expectations that they have experienced during the first year of their work.

The research has provided the conclusion that teachers in their first year of work expect support, understanding, help and cooperation from their colleagues and school board. From their students they expect to be polite, to listen and follow the teacher's instructions, be committed to their lessons and disciplined. As for the students' parents, they have expected

understanding and cooperation. There is a difference between the expectations and the practical reality that the teachers have experienced. They had to face many challenges throughout their first year of work journey, such as difficulties in building understanding and cooperative relationships with the school board, the students' parents, class and student management and situations which they never thought would be part of their job. However, teachers have experienced achievements in regards to their relationship with work colleagues, school board, class and student management and the relationship with the students' parents during their first year.

By having in mind, the results of the research regarding expectations, challenges and achievements that primary school teachers have experienced during their first year of work, there are many elements which should be taken into consideration, such as the possibility to use the willingness of the teachers with experience to mentor the teachers of first year of work, redefining the role of the school board in regards to helping and supporting teaching during their first year of work. In addition, consideration should be given to the program content and the preparation from the faculties which are specialized to train primary school teachers. All of these elements have to do with offering possibilities to teachers in the beginning of their career, and give them the chance to create strong relationships, commitment, success and pleasure in the teaching profession.

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