

The Problems of Novice Classroom Teachers having Regular and Alternative Certificates

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Abstract

The purposes of this study are to understand the problems of classroom teachers in their first three years of teaching, and to scrutinize whether these problems differ according to having regular or alternative teacher certification. The sample of this study was 275 Classroom Teachers in the Public Elementary Schools in districts of Ordu, Samsun, and Sinop in the Black Sea region. The data gathered through the questionnaire were subject to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Results of the study indicate that there was a significant difference between alternative certification teachers and regular education teachers; area they graduated from, age, and time of graduation, however, gender, city, and type of classroom do not have an effect on problems that teachers experienced.

Keywords: Teacher education, novice teachers, professional problems of classroom teachers, certification

Introduction

Primary school teaching is a profession that has a vital role in helping children to acquire knowledge, make connections between novel information and previous learning, learn the tools of socialization, prepare for the next level of education, understand their environment, and learn values that assist them to get accustomed to the society they live in. Primary school teacher training usually follows a generic model; teacher candidates take all the subject content and teaching methods of primary education curriculum; such as reading,-writing, mathematics, science, social sciences, health care, fine arts, and physical education (Ardzejewska, McMaugh & Coutts 2010).

Elementary education in Turkey followed an uninterrupted 8 years compulsory study. Some educationists tend to split these 8 years into two cycles such as first cycle (1 – 5) and second cycle (6 – 8). This schooling model was terminated in 2012. In this particular study the first five years cycle is nominated as primary, although there is not a consensus about using primary or elementary term. Teachers who teach grades 1 to 5 in all the core subjects are generally named as primary school teachers, classroom teachers or generalists (Ardzejewska, McMaugh & Coutts 2010). However, with the new amendment on the Primary Institutions By-Law (Article 64), in the 4th and 5th grades of primary education, courses such as foreign language, visual arts, computer, religion, and physical education that require specific knowledge and skills have been taught by subject teachers instead of classroom teachers (MONE Primary Education Institutions Rules and Regulations 2007).

The success of students strongly depends on the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers (Goldhaber 2002). This crucial profession necessitates competent and motivated teachers who can cope with problems they face in the school and classroom environment, and also contribute in achieving the global aims of primary education. For that reason, teacher education requires a strong focus and high degree of interest if it is intended to improve education quality (Brouwer 2007).

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Since the demand for more and qualified teachers is an increasing the education policy-makers sometimes push the existing regular teacher education programs to shift the track toward alternative procedures, especially when there is a need for a quick solution. These alternative certification programs provide a swift way for individuals to turn into certified teachers (Malow-Iroff, O'Connor & Bisland 2007; Shaw 2008). However, in such a case the most frequently ignored aspect is teacher quality.

Alternative certification has been a method for solving the teacher shortage problem in Turkey as well as in other developing countries (Yıldırım & Ok 2001; Seferoğlu 2004) that generally evolves after a change, reform or restructuring efforts. In Turkey, there have been different teacher education tryouts. In 1982, the teacher education responsibility was transferred from Ministry of National Education (MONE) to the universities (Akyüz 2004). Then, duration of all teacher-education programs was expanded into four years for secondary teaching. This attempt caused a drastic increase in teacher demand. Similarly in 1992 all teacher education programs have been expanded to four years. Since the number of graduates decreased at the period, the existing teacher shortage has been multiplied. As a result, in 1996 graduates from different non-teaching areas were assigned and employed regardless of having or not having a teaching certificate for classroom teaching (Arslan 2000).

Furthermore, in 1997 the duration of compulsory schooling was expanded from five to eight years uninterrupted education (Law of 4306). This reform, together with the increasing demand for education and rapid population growth, has led to higher demand for classroom teachers. Relating to this reform teacher shortage was again a new question for MONE. To supply this growing demand MONE recruited graduates from different departments (those who hold a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree but not qualified to teach) were appointed as classroom teachers and primary teachers after a short term in-service teaching certificate training that lasted from 45 days to a few months. Others were trained or certified even after they started teaching (Arslan 2000). This was a trend for several decades, whenever a shortage appeared, together with some political concern, Ministry recruited people with alternative or no certificate to supply existing demand (Ari 2001). This short-term solution re-raised the question of quality at classroom teaching level.

In order to meet the short- and long-term aims of the primary education, the teacher education process in the faculties of education was restructured in cooperation with MONE and the Council of Higher Education (CHE) as a part of the National Education Development Project (NEDP). The qualifications for teaching profession were changed, and initial teacher education curriculum of all faculties of education was changed in 1997-98 academic years (YOK 1998). In recent times, with NEDP, the barriers in front of schooling rate have been taken into consideration throughout the country. In the 15th National Education Convention it was declared that alternative certificate graduates would not anymore be appointed as classroom teachers, although this had been a trend in 1996-2002 academic years (Erçelebi 1999). Although the current supply of classroom teachers is adequate to meet the national staffing requirements, thousands of alternative graduate teachers who were appointed during the 1996-2002 academic years are still working as primary classroom teachers without considering their subject area and their appropriateness for the teaching level /schooling level.

Inadequate experience and knowledge cause fears of incompetency and negative decision among novice teachers. Novice teachers feel uncomfortable and avoid implementing interactive teaching strategies (Zinicola & Cevlin-Sherer, 2003) and they feel plagued by the amount and array of responsibilities that they are expected to fulfill at school (Flores, 2006). Teachers' problems, particularly those experienced by novice teachers, can be quite stressful (Babad 2009). Thus, the first aim of this study was to explore problems (problems refer to teachers' lack of knowledge and skills that they face while teaching) encountered by beginning teachers, up to three years of teaching experience, having regular and alternative certificate.. Second aim of this study was to examine problems novice teachers encounter in relation to area they graduated from, gender, city/province they work in, age, graduation year, and type of classroom they teach—and to reveal whether these problems differ according to having regular or alternative classroom teacher certificate.

Noticeably, great deal of cited studies, asserted that many teachers are faced with a range of problems during their career. Whilst these relevant studies are helpful to reveal the extent of the problems experienced by novice teachers, their findings are not suitable to make comparison between the problems of regular and alternative certificate classroom teachers at their first three years in the teaching profession. In order to achieve the above stated purposes the present study was intended to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the problems that novice teachers most frequently experienced in the first three years of their teaching? (2) Is there any difference between the problems that regular and the alternative certification teachers' experienced? (3) Is there difference between the problems male and female novice teachers' experienced? (4) Are there any differences among problems that the novice teachers experienced according to the city they work in? (5) Are there any differences among the problems that the novice teachers experienced according to the area they graduated from? (6) Do the problems novice teachers experienced differ according to age, graduation year, and type of classroom (normal or mixed grade level) they teach?

Method

Research Design

This is a survey study which enables the researcher to gather information on diverse topics such as opinion, attitude, preferences, and perceptions of individuals through questionnaires, observation and interviews (Borg 2003; Özkalp 2008). Survey method is also used to collect quantitative data about issues /units in the population. In this study survey method was chosen for three reasons: First, this study focused on opinions of the participants. Second, the same questions were asked to all the participants and third, descriptive statistics was also used in order to analyze and summarize the collected data.

Participants

The population of this study was the Public Elementary Schools Classroom Teachers from the Black Sea region central districts of Ordu, Samsun and Sinop. There were three reasons for selecting these three cities. First, the common feature of these three cities was that these cities were given priority as development cities. Teacher candidates who are recruited to teaching profession for the first time are frequently appointed to priority in the development cities. Therefore, the teachers of the indicated cities were expected to be in their first, second or third year of teaching. Second, the participants of this study were appointed as classroom teachers before the 15th National Education Convention when it was decided that those who hold an alternative certificate will not be appointed as classroom teachers any more. Third, one of the researchers was a primary classroom teacher in Samsun during the data collection process. Consequently, Sinop and Ordu were intentionally selected. There were a total of 275 participants whose ages ranged from 22 to 31, with an average age of 26. The study participants comprised of 128 females (46.5%) and 147 males (53.5%). All participants were teaching at primary level (grades 1-5). The teachers were grouped as science, social sciences, and classroom teachers according to their undergraduate degrees. Science included graduates of Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Social sciences included graduates of Geography, Philosophy, Sociology, Religion, History, and Educational Sciences (Measurement and Evaluation, Curriculum and Instruction). The third group included graduates of regular classroom teaching. The distribution of participants by graduate area, city they work in, and gender were summarized in Table 1. Of the whole group of participants 30.5% (n=84) were from Classroom teaching, 30.9%, (n=85) from Science and 38.5% (n=106) from Social Sciences.

Table 1.
Gender, City Teachers Work in, and Graduate area of Teachers

		Graduate Area							
		Classroom teachers		Science		Social Sciences		Total	
City	Gender	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Ordu	Female	5	1.8	5	1.8	0	0.0	10	3.6
	Male	6	2.2	8	2.9	12	4.4	26	9.5
	Total	11	4.0	13	4.7	12	4.4	36	13.1
Samsun	Female	33	12.0	40	14.6	37	13.5	110	35.7
	Male	30	10.9	23	8.4	45	16.4	98	35.7
	Total	63	22.9	63	22.9	82	29.8	208	75.6
Sinop	Female	3	1.1	2	0.7	3	1.1	8	2.9
	Male	7	2.5	7	2.5	9	3.3	23	8.4
	Total	10	3.6	9	3.3	12	4.4	31	11.3
Grand	Total	84	30.5	85	30.9	106	38.5	275	100

The classroom teachers had at least four year undergraduate degree, and more than half of them were graduated by 2000 and after 2000, that is; they were graduates of new teacher education programs (58.5 %) changed 1997. The remaining participants were graduates of old teacher education program (41.5 %); they graduated in 1999 or earlier. All participants were in the first three years of their teaching experience.

More than half of the alternative certification teachers got their teaching certificate during university education from their own universities (59.7%), while 11% got it after graduation and finally 29.3% from other universities. The length of study including teaching practice varied from 3 to 24 months.

All the teachers who participated in this study have been working in the village schools. Nearly half of the teachers were working alone in their school (48%), while 26.9% worked at schools having two teachers, and the remaining 25.2% worked at schools having three or more teachers.

Data Collection Instrument

As a data collection instrument; a questionnaire was developed consisting of two parts. First part included 19 questions related to demographics of the participants. The second part included 24 items organized in a five point Likert type questionnaire ranging from strongly agree(5) to strongly disagree(1).

The content validity, face related validity, and internal consistency reliability evidence were the major qualities checked for the instrument. The procedure for the development of the questionnaire was completed in the following steps. First, an extensive review of literature was carried out to build an item pool, it resulted in 51 items. Second, this 51 items questionnaire was set to 16 experts (six classroom teachers, one educational administrator, two measurement and evaluation specialists and 7 curriculum and instruction specialists) to review the items in relation to its content relevance, language clarity, and readability. After the experts review the second part of the questionnaire was reduced to 24 items. Third, the questionnaire was administered to 57 classroom teachers, who were not included in the sample, for the reliability evidence the estimate of Cronbach alpha indicated a high internal consistency 0.84.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to the participants in 2003-2004 academic years. The data collection process was completed in several successive steps. First, to get permission for administering the questionnaire, one of the researchers approached the Governorships of three cities and the regional offices of the District of National Education Directorate, explained the purpose of the study and all

details of the procedures. After getting the necessary permission, one of the researchers went to these three cities to administer the questionnaires. The teachers completed the questionnaires in approximately thirty minutes. 300 participants returned the questionnaires, however, 15 of the questionnaires were not appropriate to use and therefore were excluded from the analysis. The survey response rate was quite high (91.7%). All the data collection process was completed in two-months.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics procedures by using SPSS software. In order to identify problems that classroom teachers experienced, descriptive statistics were used. Independent samples t-test was employed to test differences in problems teachers experience according to certification of teachers, gender, graduation year, and type of classroom they teach. In addition, One Way Analysis of Variance procedure was applied to test differences in problems according to city teachers' work, area they graduated from, and age.

Results

In this study researchers intended to examine answers to six related questions. The first question was stated as "what problems do novice teachers experienced the most frequently in their first three years of teaching profession?" Findings revealed that teaching a mixed grade level class (97%), applying and understanding the body of current laws, regulations and rules (90%), developing supporting teaching materials (66%), limited knowledge of primary first 5 years curriculum (66%), and limited knowledge of classroom teaching (65%) were the most frequently experienced problems of novice classroom teachers. Besides, teachers reported problems in teaching reading and writing to primary school pupils (64%), preparing measurement and evaluation instruments/tools to assess student progress and success (64%), and choosing supporting instructional materials (63%). Moreover, deciding on instructional methods appropriate to the subject and aim of the course (60%), organizing and designing learning environment appropriate to the students' characteristics (59%), transitions between topics (58%), teaching mathematics (58%) were reported as their problems.

On the other hand, more than half of the classroom teachers reported that they did not have problems in maintaining classroom discipline (59%), communicating with other teachers (59%), engaging students in practice (59%), adapting to the work environment (56%), and communication with students (54%). It need to be pointed out the one should read the percentages 41%, 41%, 41%, 44%, 46% respectively in the way that teachers consider the above situations as problems/ difficulties. Table 2 summarizes the problems they experienced and the once they did not consider as problems.

Table 2.

The Common Professional Problems of Classroom Teachers

ITEMS	<i>f</i>	%
I have difficulty in teaching mixed grade level classes.	266	96.8
I have difficulty in applying the charters, rules, law and circulars.	248	90.2
I have difficulty in understanding the charters, rules, law, and circulars.	246	89.5
I have problems in developing supportive teaching materials.	182	66.2
I experience problems as I have limited knowledge on elementary curriculum.	180	65.5
I experience problems as I have limited knowledge on Classroom Teaching.	178	64.7
I have difficulty in teaching the reading and writing to primary school pupils.	176	64.0
I have problems in preparing instruments and assessing students' progress and successes	173	63.7
I have problems in choosing supportive teaching materials.	172	62.5
I have difficulty in choosing instruction methods appropriate to the subject and aim of the course.	164	59.6
I have difficulty in organizing and learning environment appropriate to student characteristics	161	58.6
I have difficulty in making transitions between topics.	159	58.0
I have difficulty in teaching mathematics.	159	58.0
I have no difficulty in maintaining discipline in classroom.	162	59.0
I have no difficulty in communicating with other teachers	162	59.0
I have no difficulty in getting students do practice in the lesson	162	59.0
I have no difficulty in adapting to the working environment at school.	153	55.6
I have no difficulty in communicating with students	149	54.2

*Percent of agree and strongly agree

The second research question was aimed at answering whether there was a difference between regular and alternative certificate teachers in relation to problems they experience. An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to assess differences between the problems of the regular and alternative certification teachers in their first three years of teaching. The test was significant, $t(273) = 19.7, p < .001$. That is, the teachers who graduated from classroom teaching ($M = 63.30, SD = 10$), on the average, experienced less problems than those who hold alternative certificate ($M = 85.23, SD = 7.77$). It was observed that teachers who hold alternative certificate agree that their knowledge level about Elementary Education first 5-year curriculum ($M = 4.27, SD = .74$) and Classroom Teaching ($M = 4.26, SD = .77$) was not sufficient. On the other hand, regular education teachers agree that their knowledge level about Elementary Education first 5-year curriculum ($M = 1.85, SD = .86$) and Classroom Teaching ($M = 1.62, SD = .97$) was sufficient. Both, alternative certificate ($M = 4.59, SD = 0.55$) and regular education teachers ($M = 4.40, SD = .64$) experience problems in teaching mixed grade level classes to the similar degree. It can be said that in the mixed grade level classes; planning and implementation of instruction, assessment of student achievement and classroom management are more complicated and difficult compared to regular classes.

As for the third research question an independent-samples *t* test was conducted to test differences between the problems male and female teachers experience in their first three years of their teaching. The test was not significant, $t(273) = .58, p = .57$. The mean scores of female ($M = 78.04, SD = 13.2$) and male ($M = 78.96, SD = 13.2$) teachers were very close to each other. That is, novice female and male teachers experienced similar problems in their first three years of their teaching.

The fourth question was on examining the difference among teachers from different provinces (city they work at) in relation to problems they experience. One-way analysis of variance was conducted to test the difference among the three cities (Ordu, Samsun and Sinop) that teachers work in, and problems teachers' experience. The ANOVA test was not significant, $F(2, 272) = .056, p = .95$. There were no differences in the problems teachers' experience as compared to the cities they work in. The scores of

the participants ranged from 24 to 120. High scores indicate that the teacher experience a considerable number of problems. The mean scores for each city were very close to each other: Ordu ($M= 79.19$, $SD= 16.19$), Samsun ($M= 78.46$, $SD= 11.98$), and Sinop ($M= 78.22$, $SD= 17.17$). That is, teachers in these three cities experienced problems to similar degree. The possible reason behind this finding is that these provinces share some common characteristics such as living conditions, economic status, student profiles, and infrastructure of schools. Furthermore, these cities were identified as “development priority cities” by the State Planning Organization of Turkey (DPT, 2000). The provinces that need primary attention to facilitate their development.

The fifth question investigated the difference among problems the teachers experience and the program difference among the teachers’ area and the problems teachers’ experience. The independent variable, the area teachers graduated from, included three groups: Classroom Teaching Graduates, Science Graduates, and Social Sciences Graduates. The ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 272) = 193.2$, $p < .001$. Because ANOVA test was significant Multiple Comparison test was run (Dunnett’s C). Results of Multiple Comparison test indicated that there were significant differences in the mean score between the Classroom Teaching Graduates and Science Graduates, and Classroom Teaching Graduates and Social Sciences Graduates, but no significant differences between Science Graduates and Social Sciences Graduates. Science and Social Sciences graduates appear to have more problems when compared to Classroom Teaching Graduates. That is, beginning teachers who have completed regular training and are fully qualified to teach experience less problems than the teachers who hold alternative certificated. The possible reason for the difference between regular and alternative certificate teachers’ problems is that the process of regular teacher education might enhance the teachers’ subject matter competence and might have provided to the candidates essential information about teaching profession compared and assimilated it as compared to short term alternative teacher certification. Regular program graduates have more time and chance to assimilate and practice what they have learned. The results of these tests, as well as the means and standard deviations are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Department and Problems

<i>The program teachers graduated from</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Sciences</i>
Classroom Teaching	63.31	10.0	84	*	*
Science	84.76	8.85	85		NS
Social Sciences	85.59	6.80	106	NS	

$F = 193.2$, $p < .001$

Note: NS = Non-significant differences between pairs of means, while asterisk (*) = significant difference. Based on Dunnett’s C procedure

In order to answer the last research question “do the problems novice teachers experienced differ according to age, graduation year, and type of classroom (normal or mixed grade level) they teach?” one-way analysis of variance and t-tests were used.

ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the difference between age and the problems teachers’ experience. The independent variable age was categorized into three; teachers between the age 22-24, teachers between the age 25-27, and teachers of 28 and above. The dependent variable was the problems that the teachers experienced. The results of ANOVA indicated a significant difference between age and the problems teachers experience, $F(2, 272) = 22.51$, $p < .001$. Because ANOVA test was significant Multiple Comparison test was run (Dunnett’s C). Results of Multiple Comparison test indicated that there were significant differences between the pairs. Teachers of age 22-24 ($M = 69.6$, $SD = 14.4$) have lower mean scores when compared to teacher of age 25-27 ($M = 81.7$, $SD = 11.4$), and teachers of age 28 and above ($M = 79.1$, $SD = 12.2$). Obviously, teachers of age 24 and below experience less problems compared to older ones. This result can be a reflection of the initial teacher education’s effectiveness. That is, classroom teaching graduates are more confident about their skills in teaching. Moreover, the results of the study reveal that alternative certification teachers were older than regular education

teachers. Younger teachers with regular certificate may demonstrate more competence and confidence level. These results are consistent with Manuel and Hughes' (2006) research. They asserted that teachers with the average age of 21 years were idealistic and optimistic. Furthermore, the new initial teacher education programs were put into practice starting in 1998–1999 academic year (Seferoğlu 2004, YOK 1998), thus, the regular certificate teachers were educated through this “new” program. It can be concluded that they may be mentally and emotionally better prepared than those who were not specifically trained for teaching.

Table 4.

Certification and Age

<i>Certification Type</i>	<i>Age</i>							
	<i>22-24</i>		<i>25-27</i>		<i>28+</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Regular	40	47.6	36	42.9	8	9.5	84	100
Alternative	23	12.0	134	70.2	34	17.8	191	100

When investigating the difference between teachers according to year of graduation, it was seen that, the teachers who graduated between 2000 and 2002 ($M = 75.1$, $SD = 13.7$) on the average experienced less problems than those graduated in 1999 and before ($M = 83.4$, $SD = 10.8$). As the graduates of 2000-2002 were mainly graduates of classroom teaching program, it may be inferred that they fell more motivated and dedicated to confront some of the problems they face.

Results of the study also revealed that there were no differences between the problems of the novice teacher who teach mixed grade level classes and regular classes in their first three years of teaching. The t-test was not significant, $t(273) = 1.74$, $p = .083$. The teachers who taught mixed grade level classes ($M = 79.26$, $SD = 12.75$) on the average experienced similar problems with those who taught regular classrooms ($M = 75.91$, $SD = 14.56$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated classroom teachers' problems related to their first three years of teaching and examined whether these problems differ according to having regular or alternative teacher certification.

Novice teachers enter the classroom with either little or no previous classroom experience and they are expected cope with all aspects of classroom life and school administration. The resulting data provided evidence that novice teachers experience difficulties in many aspects of teaching during their first three years. Such problems escalate in case of teacher shortage because of rapid population growth, poorly devised reforms, inconsistent policies in recruitment process, and increasing demand for education. Alternative certification has been a political response to the supply and demand concerns in the teaching area. In Turkey, to reduce teacher shortage MONE has been recruiting alternative certificate teachers who graduated from the education faculty and other faculties (such as: Art and Science, Engineering) and many others with or without teaching certificate (Doğan 2005) as classroom teachers. In order to reduce the classroom teachers' problems, MONE provided a short term in-service teacher training or an alternative certification short term course. However, this strategy did not overcome, especially; classroom teaching questions (Gürsoy 2003).

It was found that alternative certificate holders as classroom teachers face more difficulties than regular classroom teaching graduates. These problems are closely related to the quality of pre-service teacher training. Sokal, Smith, and Mowat (2003) found that there were significant differences between regular education and alternative certification programs. Kaygas (1999) supported this claim that alternative certification programs are different from regular ones, alternative certificate teachers' knowledge level and competencies in primary school curriculum and classroom teaching were lower than regular classroom teachers. There were several researches in the literature that focused on the pre-service teacher education programs (Arı 2001; Gökçe 2003). Whether the teachers know how to plan lessons, to implement plans in the lessons, and to assess the student success, depends on their initial teacher education. Thus, teachers without regular teacher preparation are likely to experience problems such as conveying the subject matter to the students, and assessing students' success.

Similarly, Wiesman, Coover, and Knight (1999) claimed that the success level of teachers in the teaching profession directly depends on their initial education. If the initial education equips teachers well enough to teach students, their achievements throughout the years will rise. As a result, the problems the novice teachers experience in their first years may decrease. When compared to regular teacher education programs the number of and the credit/hours of experience of alternative certification program is fewer (Yıldırım & Ok 2002). Therefore, alternative certification teachers experience more problems on curriculum development, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and motivating students than those trained in regular teacher education program.

The first probable implication of the study is that an awareness of classroom problems encountered by novice teachers may provide applicable information for teacher educators while they evaluate their programs. Regarding the novice teachers' professional problems, this study focused on both regular and alternative certification teachers. The following are recommendation could be helpful to reduction of encountered problems.

Alternative teacher certification programs provide a fast-track into the classroom for individuals seeking a career in education and reduce teacher shortages by recruiting a significant number of teachers into the profession in areas exercising shortage (Shaw 2008). Therefore, if it is unavoidable to recruit alternative certification teachers to overcome the existing teacher shortage; in order to ensure that the children do not become victims of alternative teacher certification and/or recruitment process, these programs should be carefully planned, and must be cautious in selecting the merited individuals to teach (Lederman, Lederman, & Abd-B-Khalick 2006).

Although high quality alternative certification programs have a positive impact on teacher shortages (Darling-Hammond & Sykes 2003; Rosenberg, Sindelar & Connelly 2004), these programs cannot solve the teacher shortage problem alone. The recruitment of alternative certification teachers makes people think that the profession is open to anyone. However, teaching is not just an opportunity to earn an income but also a great responsibility. Well-educated, motivated teachers can make a remarkable difference in their students' lives. Besides, researchers claimed that the duration of teacher training programs have had a stronger influence on skills and effectiveness of teachers (Ashton & Crocker 1987; Darling-Hammond 2000). Therefore, in order to reinforce professional prestige of the teaching profession, it is necessary to carefully assign those who would like to enter the educational community (Doğan 2005).

Teaching reading-writing and instruction in mixed grade level classrooms was the most common problem in the first three years of both regular and alternative certification teachers (Görür, Altındağ & Özkaya 2007). Although teacher candidates take courses about this subject, the allocated time and experiences on this issue are quite limited especially in alternative certification practices. The clearest implication from this study is that initial teacher education programs must provide teacher candidates with further knowledge about instruction in mixed level classrooms, and teaching literacy.

The third implication from this study is that teacher education institutions should provide an efficient support system for beginning teachers. Internship is a crucial time in teachers' career, so genuine effort should be made to introduce the features of schools' working conditions and to help new teachers understand the complexities of school environments. The more problems beginning teachers encountered in their induction year, the more they feel incompetent (Veenman 1984). In order to overcome the challenges that novice teachers come across, they necessitate mentoring and supervision and support as they are developing confidence and professional excellence (Darling - Hammond 1998, Feiman - Nemser 2001, Luft & Patterson 2002). Therefore, mentoring and induction programs are very important to the novice teachers especially in first years of teaching. Moreover, internship period of teachers should be well-organized and they should be assigned to well-equipped central schools with mentor teachers, instead of poorly equipped village schools.

Presenting results derived from the study will contribute to the overall literature that exists on this issue. Whilst the professional problems of novice teachers described in this study are corresponding to those that one may come across in the existing literature, determination of the differences between the problems faced by regular and alternative certificate teachers provide an understanding about the importance of pre-service teacher education that is the regular teacher education program.

Future research on the problems of beginning teachers should address teaching mixed grade level classroom, aspects and effectiveness of mentoring and teacher induction programs for a more comprehensive study of teacher education.

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