



<http://www.eab.org.tr>

Available online at:  
[http://ijrte.eab.org.tr/media/volume4/issue2/p\\_karatas.pdf](http://ijrte.eab.org.tr/media/volume4/issue2/p_karatas.pdf)

Educational Research Association The International Journal of  
Research in Teacher Education  
2013, 4(3): 10-23  
ISSN: 1308-951X



<http://ijrte.eab.org.tr>

# CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS: SUPPORT, IDENTITY, AND PEDAGOGY IN THE INITIAL YEARS OF TEACHING

**Pinar KARATAŞ & A. Cendel KARAMAN**

aMiddle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus, School of Foreign Languages, CYPRUS

bMiddle East Technical University, Faculty of Education, ANKARA

[karatas@metu.edu.tr](mailto:karatas@metu.edu.tr) [cendel@metu.edu.tr](mailto:cendel@metu.edu.tr)

---

## Abstract

Beginning teachers experience various challenges as they strive to develop their teaching in new environments. In this paper, we explore the challenges faced by novice language teachers and the support needed to address these. For this purpose, recent studies on the experiences of novice language teachers were reviewed. Three major themes were prevalent in research on this issue: support, identity and pedagogy. In the paper, we discuss each area and a selection of related studies. In addition, to present a specific case, we highlight the results of an exploratory semi-structured interview we conducted with a novice language teacher at a university in Cyprus. The results underscore the criticality of addressing challenges faced in initial years of teaching. Since beginning teachers make decisions to either stay in the profession or drop out, instead of alienating novice teachers, educational leaders ought to organize collaborative opportunities with beginning teachers. Such endeavors may help provide the necessary environment fostering safety, belonging, and self-esteem for novice teachers.

**Key words:** Novice teachers; language teacher education; novice English teacher; Cyprus

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In English Language Teaching (ELT), in the last two decades, discussions on the importance of contextual factors when implementing changes in classrooms and using materials have continued to draw interest. This is linked to the understanding that what is authentic in a particular place may not necessarily be authentic in another place due to sociocultural differences. As Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) remind us, an appropriate pedagogy “should be a pedagogy of both global appropriacy and local appropriation” (p. 199). Teachers can also face difficulties while adapting to the emerging issues in the changing ELT praxis. For instance, in the past 15 years, areas of shifts in focus included changes in teaching four language skills with an interest in discursal functions, the role of technology in instructional processes, and a rethinking of the locus of attention with an emphasis on the role played by learners (Paran, 2012). In this regard, teachers are also “battling with the conflict between their beliefs, their training, the realities of the classroom, the demands of parents and learners, the requirements to demonstrate immediate attainment.” (Paran, 2012, p.457). Furthermore, as Canagarajah (2006) noted, in addition to the pedagogical developments, “our professional knowledge gets further muddled by the new movements of globalization, digital communication, and World Englishes” (p. 9).

Due to these and all other changes, expectations of teachers' knowledge and skills have increased. Today's language teacher is expected to think critically, reflect on the changes in the world and implement the appropriate ones in the class. In order to develop knowledge that will support effective teaching, language teachers need to immerse themselves in the literature of various fields such as psychology, sociology, instructional science (Champeau de Lopez, 1989). While the evolving trends in the field present areas of challenge for all teachers, novice teachers in particular are likely to face unique difficulties linked to the concerns and adaptation problems that emerge during the initial years of teaching. In this paper, we explore the challenges faced by novice language teachers and the support needed to address these. For this purpose, recent studies on the experiences of novice language teachers will be reviewed.

### **1.1 Novice teachers**

The term "novice" has frequently been used in studies on beginning teachers, and as Farrell (2012) noted, there is no clear-cut definition of *a novice teacher* in the literature. A novice could be anyone who is teaching something new for the first time or who has entered a new cultural context for the first time (Farrell, 2012). There is also no consensus on how many years of teaching are necessary to end this novice stage. Some researchers defined a novice as a teacher with less than five years of teaching experience (e.g. Kim & Roth, 2011). Others referred to it as a teacher with two years of teaching experience or less (e.g. Haynes, 2011). For the purpose of this study, a novice teacher was defined as a teacher who has less than two years of teaching.

Most research emphasizes the role of the first years of teaching in a teacher's career and how the experiences of teachers shape their identity and future practices. Pitton (2006) argued that "the success of new teachers is critically linked to their first teaching experiences and the opportunities they are given to talk through issues they face in the classroom" (p. 2). If they are left alone with their challenges and start to feel ineffective, they believe that they are not suitable for the profession and quit their jobs. Regarding the reasons for the increase in teachers' leaving the profession, researchers have pointed to the gap between pre-service education and in-service development. After receiving university education and starting their jobs, novice teachers suddenly have no further contact with their teacher educators, and they experience the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues on the very first day of school without much guidance from their new school (Farrell, 2012). When the figures concerning drop-out rates are considered, it is not difficult to see how serious the situation is. "25% to 50% of beginning teachers leave during their first three years of teaching, and nearly 10% leave in their first year" (Ozturk, 2008, p. 20). These figures point to the need to explore the challenges novices face and help them overcome their problems in their first years of teaching. In this paper, we focus on the professional challenges of novice language teachers. Furthermore, we explore the types of support needed and their availability.

## **2. STUDIES ON NOVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

### **2.1 A Focused Review**

In this study, we reviewed studies related to novice language teachers. The review was limited to studies that appeared in journals included in the Wiley Online Library database published between 2002 and 2012. Ten particular studies, the titles of which included "novice teachers", were selected as relevant for the focal review on novice language teachers. The online library called "Wiley Online Library" was chosen since it

was the platform that published the most relevant scholarly journals related to the field. As noted by Wiley, the databases:

hosts the world's broadest and deepest multidisciplinary collection of online resources ... access to over 4 million articles from 1500 journals, over 11,500 online books, and hundreds of reference works.

In analyzing the selected studies' results', we utilized an analytical frame that included three major focus areas. These were *support*, *identity*, and *pedagogy*. In the next sections, each area is discussed.

### **2.1.1 Support**

Support is one of the most frequently discussed themes in research in this area. This suggests that the challenges novice teachers face have attracted a lot of attention and more research on support has been carried out recently to help them overcome the challenges and survive in this profession.

#### *Mentors as Support providers*

Brannan and Bleisten (2012) conducted a study to investigate the novice teachers' perceptions of support. Results revealed that novice teachers are in need of support and what they want is "support like pedagogical ideas, teaching resources, and logistical knowledge provided by colleagues, mentors or both" (p. 534). They also want to receive additional feedback from mentors and affective support, which shows that they find the assistance useful to cope with the challenges. They emphasized the importance of the "need to be heard" and appreciated when they were heard and received affirmation in their teaching practice.

With a slightly different area of emphasis, Mann and Tang (2012) examined the role mentoring plays in novice teachers' professional development, support and socialization in their case study. They examined the support novice teachers received from their mentors over a full year and the nature of this support. As Worthy (2005) states, "novice teachers in Hong Kong are often expected to perform effectively and assume full teaching responsibilities right from the first day on the job" (as cited in Mann and Tang, 2012, p. 473). Therefore, they need some kind of support to survive this period easily. Results reveal that mentors play a very important role in supporting novices. Mann and Tang (2012) also focused on the age and experience of mentors, and examined whether or not these affected the relationship between mentors and novices. They found that having an experienced mentor was not necessarily an advantage. For example, one of the novice teachers in the study had the most positive relationship with his mentor who had only one year's teaching experience and the novice teacher described their relationship as peers based on willingness to collaborate and help one another. Mann and Tang (2012) argued that since there wasn't much gap in teaching experience between the mentor and the mentee, they were able to establish a close relationship. They claim that younger mentors are "good sources of emotional and practical support, perceived as more approachable, and with more attainable suggestions". Carter and Francis (2001) also stated young mentors are better at emphasizing and recalling what it is like to be a beginning teacher" (as cited in Mann and Tang, 2012, p.485). As an alternative, there might be two mentors, with the experienced mentor playing a more advice giving role and the relatively inexperienced mentor playing a collaborative and empathetic role. In this way, the novice teachers can benefit from two mentors to meet their different needs.

Another important point stressed in research studies is related to the opportunity and time novice

teachers have so that they can meet their mentors and observe them. In the study conducted by Brannan and Bleistein (2012), novice teachers reported that they appreciated when their mentors listened to them, offered help when needed and shared their experiences with them. Moreover, the data showed that these novices needed to be accepted despite their weaknesses and mistakes. For example, one of the novice teachers stated, “one day I forgot my textbook. I went to his [the mentor’s] office to ask if he had an extra copy ... he said, ‘it happens.’” (p. 531). This positive confirmation was enough to make the novice teacher feel relieved. However, what Brannan and Bleistein (2012) found was that novice teachers had limited opportunity to meet their mentors and receive support. Some even did not have any mentor. In their study, they investigated novice English to other languages teachers’ perceptions of social support and the impact of their perceived support on teacher efficacy. Out of the 30 novice teachers, 4 did not have a mentor teacher. 13 had limited and 13 had frequent contact with their mentors. The ones who did not have much chance to communicate with the mentors reported, “as time goes on, my mentor meets my needs less and less. I am much busier with teaching and have less time to contact and meet with my mentor” (p. 530).

Similarly, Mann and Tang (2012) found that timetabling was not novice-friendly in schools, so novice teachers didn’t have much time to observe experienced people’s classes and learn from them. For example, one of the novice teachers in the case study stated that she could observe her mentor only once in the whole year. Mann and Tang (2012) asserted that novice teachers should be given priority in timetabling to be able to observe mentors and be observed by them. Mann and Tang (2012) stated that induction is not obligatory, and mentoring is not always implemented in some schools. The only official document stated in the article is the *Induction Tool Kit*, and whether to use it or not depends on the policy of the school. Therefore, not all novice teachers have the chance to get help from a mentor. In her study, Baecher (2012) also found that novices did not have enough time and opportunity to share experiences and collaborate with experienced teachers around. In particular, ESL teachers stated that the school was expecting too much from them, and they were overwhelmed by the high academic demands of the school. However, there was little “building-level support such as physical space, materials, or administrator-allocated time for collaboration” and all these things made everything more difficult for these novice teachers (p. 584).

Regarding the purpose of the lesson observations, Mann and Tang (2012) found that in some schools, the aim was not contributing to novice teachers’ development but assessing their performance. However, as suggested by Mann and Tang (2012), these observations should be “developmental and reflective in nature rather than mechanistic and evaluative” (p. 489). In addition, if the aim is to facilitate the development of novices, both parties should be willing and eager to participate in this procedure. Otherwise, it becomes a burden for both the novice teacher and the mentor. There were four mentors in Mann and Tang’s case study (2012) and none of them had been formally invited for their role. Instead, the school administration had chosen these “experienced” teachers and asked them to mentor the novice teachers. Mentoring was not based on voluntary participation. Out of 4 mentors, only one of them had received mentor training and the other mentors knew little about the support they would offer to novice teachers. The relationship was based on the fulfillment of the duty. This is why some of the mentors could only establish a *procedural* mentoring relationship rather than a *reflective* one, which is the desired one.

The role of educational leaders in mentors’ effectiveness is also important to consider. In this regard,

Mann and Tang (2012) stressed the importance of the role mentors play in supporting novice teachers and stated that the principal has a very important function in this process. If the principal does not recognize and support the mentors, this may limit mentors' effectiveness. In addition to valuing and supporting mentors, the principal should create opportunities for their training as well. In this way, mentors can contribute to novices' development process.

#### *Coworkers as Support providers: Interactions with Other Staff*

The study Mann and Tang (2012) conducted showed that interactions with other staff are helpful and important for novice teachers. Interestingly, the physical setting such as furniture and seating arrangements in the staffroom were reported to affect these interactions. In one of the novice teachers' case, because of the physical separation between a more senior group and the novices, the novice teacher found it difficult to overlook the hierarchy and approach the mentor. Clearly, if there is a barrier between the novice teachers and the experienced ones, the novice ones may find it difficult to approach the experienced teachers easily.

Brannan and Bleistein (2012) also discovered that novices found support from colleagues useful. There were two main types of support novice teachers were offered: pragmatic and affective although it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Collegial support in the pragmatic realm included "sharing ideas about teaching, classroom management, school policies, or logistics, as well as peer observation and sharing resources" (p. 531). In the affective realm, teachers reported that they were able to listen and share experiences, and offer encouragement. Participants appreciated the emotional support they received and wanted to have more. These novice teachers also asked for "unsolicited help" and they reported that they sometimes hesitated to ask for help, so they wanted to receive help without request (p. 532).

Farrel (2012) also emphasized the role of colleagues in novice teachers' adaptation period. In a reflective analysis of his own novice teacher experience, he described how a director while observing his class stood up and told him he was not doing it correctly. Farrel reported having felt like leaving his job since he believed that he was not suited to be a language teacher. However, thanks to the support he received from some of his colleagues, he continued teaching. He says, "thank goodness that, at the very beginning of my career, a few colleagues decided to act as my "guides and guardians" These colleagues boosted my morale and provided wise counsel" (Zeichner, 1983, as cited in Farrell, 2012, p.436). This experience clearly shows how important support from colleagues is and how it may relate to one's identity.

#### *Family as a Source of Support*

Family is another support provider novice teachers identified in Brannan and Bleistein's (2012) study. In general, novice teachers reported that family members provided support such as purchasing supplies or organizing and stapling papers. Moreover, the ones who were married said that they really appreciated the support they received concerning childcare so that novices could work.

#### *Perceived Efficacy*

Faez and Valeo (2012) investigated 115 novice teachers' self efficacy beliefs and how this information played a role in supporting their development as language teachers. The study has implications for teacher development units in that perceived self-efficacy beliefs of novice teachers should not be neglected since

novice teachers build on these beliefs and these beliefs can predict success and commitment to work. Brannan and Bleistein (2012) also examined the connection between three support providers (mentors, coworkers and family) and three areas of perceived teacher efficacy: instructional strategies, student engagement, classroom management. Among the three support providers, coworkers and mentors were reported to be major support novice teachers received, but it was support from family that was more likely to predict high levels of perceived efficacy in general. Support from family members was particularly important when teachers' efficacy beliefs related to instructional strategies were examined.

#### *How to support novice language teachers*

Researchers have underscored the implementation of “*novice-service language teacher development*” in order to bridge the gap between pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher development (Farrell, 2012). In this regard, several recommendations for support were noted by Farrel (2012). First, preparation programs should make clear connections to teaching in the first year by assigning students some reflective activities and assignments so that they can prepare prospective teachers for the challenges they might face in their first years. Moreover, adding a supplementary course called “*Teaching in the First Years*” to give students a chance to “explore the first years of teaching through reflexive practice” may also help (Farrel, 2012, p. 440). Thanks to such a course, preservice teachers would get the opportunity to improve themselves in “reflective practice” so that they can better manage the possible problems they might experience in their first teaching years. Such a course would help novice language teachers to develop their skills in reflective practice and the course would act as a bridge between preservice education and in-service and development. Farrell (2012) suggested that in the proposed course, preservice teachers would determine what kind of school they would like to work at and observe some classes before starting teaching. In this way, they would be able to generate some ideas about working in that kind of environment instead of learning it while teaching.

Farrell (2012) also suggested that novice teachers be encouraged to share the challenges they face in their first years of teaching and tell other people what they experience. He pointed out that Second Language Educators can collect the stories novice teachers share about their first years of teaching. Then, they could create a corpus of them so that preservice teachers in these programs can explore and refer to these experiences. These would help novice teachers overcome the challenges they face and reflect on their own teaching experience. The results of Shin's (2012) study also emphasized the role of sharing stories in the development of novice teachers. The participants in his study reported that by sharing their stories, they were able to reflect on their own teaching practices and this was empowering. Shin concluded by stating that “after all, it cannot be done alone” (p. 562).

#### **2.1.2 Identity**

There are many elements which affect the identity formation of novice teachers. Mann and Tang (2012) stressed the impact of “the principal” on novices' identity. In their study, they found that the appearance of the principal in the meetings made novice teachers feel tense. However, in the absence of the principal, they were able to talk about their problems, mistakes and the areas where they felt uncertain. Not only the appearance but also his remarks were found to have a strong effect on novice teachers' perception of themselves and their teaching. To illustrate, the negative comments of the principal affected one particular

novice teacher, Mary, negatively. The principal's remarks about Mary's being cool made her feel worse and incompetent to socialize with other teachers. Therefore, as Mann and Tang (2012) suggested, principals should be "sensitive to the relatively fragile professional status that novice teachers have" (p. 489). Novice teachers already feel less powerful and competent than more experienced ones, so principal's negative remarks or complaints about the novices may worsen the situation.

Another element that relates to the identity formation for novices is the interactions with other staff. The results of the study conducted by Mann and Tang (2012) showed that in staffroom, novice teachers had a chance to interact with other teachers and the talk about students and teaching in general, and they found these conversations very useful. In addition to these topics, what novice teachers liked was being able to grumble about students' behavior. Mann and Tang (2012) argued that this acted as a kind of emotional support among novice teachers and experienced ones and that this was "an important survival and identity building mechanism" (p. 487). Complaining about the students and confirmations from other teachers in the staffroom in a way convinced novice teachers that they were not necessarily solely responsible for various problems. Having an opportunity to share experiences and interact with other staff depends on the teaching environment novice teachers work in. If novices do not have such opportunities, this may affect their perceptions of their efficacy and may lead to a sense of incompetence.

In their study with novices, Faez and Valeo (2012) found that in general novice teachers felt moderately prepared to teach, and gaining experience helped them feel safer later. However, a closer look indicated that the variation among the group members' efficacy beliefs resulted from the context, the nature of the employment and classroom experience. Faez and Valeo (2012) concluded that "novice teachers' assessment of their abilities to succeed in the classroom appears closely linked to their experience of the classroom during the practicum and their abilities to adjust to the new reality once teaching in the field" (p.464). If these novices start working in a school where they can have opportunities for mastery experiences, this could affect their self efficacy beliefs and identity formation positively. Clearly, contexts have substantial influence on the experiences of novice teachers. Furthermore, the social circles in the work environment around novices may influence novice teachers' identities.

In his three-year longitudinal case study, Xu (2012) examined the transformation of the professional identities of four Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language during the first years of teaching in China. According to Xu (2012), in the pre-service stage, although prospective teachers have limited experiences, they create unlimited images of the world and themselves, and construct their identity based on imaginations. Therefore, their identity depends on both who they are in reality and who they are in their images of themselves. This in turn leads to the construction of "an imagined community" as Anderson (1991) and Norton (2001) points out (as cited in Xu, 2012). As for practiced identity, on the other hand, teachers value their practices, add to or abandon them. They are formed through the interaction in the real world. However, most novice teachers start teaching without constructing little or no practiced identity. Instead, they refer to their imagined identity. Xu (2012) explored more about their imagined identity, their differences from practiced identities and how imagined one turns into the practice identity in order to understand this reality shock from the point of view of teachers. To illustrate, the first participant, Ingrid, starts her teaching career with the cue-based imagined identity of language expert and believes that the most important thing for an English language

teacher is to become an expert in the field. However, actual practices in her school surprise her and she feels frustrated when she experiences that a teacher is highly appreciated and awarded in her school although she can not speak English well and she does not have expertise in the field. Two years later, she reports that that “there’re so many things that are far more important than a teacher’s real teaching competence” (Xu, 2012). She experiences transformation from the cue-based imagined identity to the schema-based practiced identity. Another example is Carol who starts her career with an exemplar based identity as a teacher who helps students consolidate what they have learned. After some time, when she has a lot of things to do at school, she only tries to catch up with the program and neglects consolidating. Her responsibilities at school and her fear of not being able to catch up with the program seem to facilitate her identity transformation from an exemplar based identity to a rule-based one.

### **2.1.3 Pedagogy**

Instructional procedures and pedagogical decisions also pose various challenges for novice teachers. In a qualitative case study, Mann and Tang (2012) found that novice teachers were especially worried about the flow of the lessons and students’ negative reactions. They focused more on maintaining appropriate classroom environment. Citing Tsui (2009), Mann and Tang (2012) noted that when the classes progressed as novice teachers planned, novice teachers felt relatively comfortable, but they did not have “a repertoire of pedagogical routines” to deal with the unexpected problems in the classroom. Especially the diversity in the classroom makes teachers’ work difficult. Novice teachers find it hard to cater for diversity in the class and this leads to more stress.

While novice teachers typically possess sufficient knowledge based on preservice teacher education, researchers noted that they sometimes imitated the practices of experienced teachers just for the sake of becoming a member of the team. In a study investigating factors influencing the socialization of new language teachers, Shin (2012) found that the teaching methods learnt during university education were replaced by the recreation of methods novices observed in their current schools. In a sense, novices had observed the teachers around and tried to replicate their teaching practices. Shin (2012) observed that novice teachers with near native proficiency in English replaced their instructional language with Korean. Although they were not asked to use Korean, these novice teachers gave up TETE (Teaching English through English) when they observed that none of the other teachers were using English. Instead teachers used students’ first language: Korean for instructions. Shin (2012) interpreted this behavior of acquiring the characteristics of existing teachers “teacher socialization” (p. 543). If novice teachers quickly learn and implement existing teaching practices in their school, they believe they would be able to socialize and as pointed out by Feiman-Nemser et al., they will “be recognized as competent members” (ac cited in Shin, 2012, p.543). In brief, the pedagogy of novice teachers is affected by the institutional constraints, school culture and beliefs of the existing teachers in the schools.

The common assumption is that when novice teachers enter the classroom, they have to implement all the things they have learned during their preservice education. However, it takes a lot of time to balance lesson content and delivery as Faez & Valeo (2011) argued (as cited in Farrell, 2012, p. 441). This process does not occur automatically. Instead, novice teachers go through some steps to construct and reconstruct “new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p.4).

Regarding the effectiveness of preservice education, some novice teachers note that they feel incompetent in class despite prior teacher preparation they had completed (Baecher, 2012). A number of participants complained about the redundancy of the information presented during preservice teacher education and the gap between theoretical knowledge and practice in class. Another important consideration concerning the pedagogy of novices is related to teachers' perceptions of the concepts of prior knowledge. In her comparative case studies of preservice and first-year teachers' and expert teachers' conceptions of prior knowledge, Meyer (2004) recruited six science teachers<sup>1</sup>. The study found that novice teachers had insufficient understanding of the importance of prior knowledge and its role in effective teaching. The observations of novice teachers' lessons showed that novices asked students explicitly to tell them when they had covered a particular topic or structure. However, they did not want them to express what kind of a connection there was between the previously learned material and the new material or what they understood from the previous material. For novice teachers, "prior knowledge was like a building foundation and new knowledge was like bricks of information added to the construction" (Meyer, 2004, p. 976). In brief, their conceptions of prior knowledge were limited and superficial.

In order to engage teachers in the process of pedagogic exchanges, Winter and McGhie-Richmond (2005) discussed the use of case studies in teacher education. In their study, they examined the collaboration between novice and expert teachers through special needs case studies in an asynchronous computer conferencing system. Despite some problems related to the nature of the medium of communication and absence of social cues, the findings showed that the case study method contributed to both novices' and experts' learning. Lee (2009) also investigated the effectiveness of threaded discussions to encourage pedagogical exchanges between experts and student teachers. The findings suggested that these discussions fostered collaborative learning and scaffolding.

### **3. AN EXPLORATORY INQUIRY**

As "interviews enable participants ... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view," we interviewed a novice teacher at a university in Cyprus to have a deep understanding of particular challenges experienced in the work of a novice language teacher (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 349). The participant was purposefully selected within a criteria-sampling frame. The interview was semi-structured. After the initial determination of key questions, the interview protocol was revised based on expert consultation. Interview data were transcribed. The analysis of the verbal protocols relied on open coding. The interpretive process focused on the challenges experienced.

#### **3.1 Experiences of a Novice Language Teacher in Cyprus**

The novice teacher's imagined identity of a good English teacher changed when she started teaching and her perception of the today's language teacher was different from that of the past. When she was asked how she would define "*an effective English teacher*" before starting teaching, the answer was:

*A teacher who would give a lot of homework, teach grammar in a very organized way using the board and ask his/her students take proper notes was an effective teacher for me. However, now, it has changed a*

---

<sup>1</sup> Although this paper does not focus on science teachers, we present this example as it provides relevant insights for reflection among language teachers.

*lot...How to make lessons fun... We have shifted our focus from grammar based teaching a bit. We are trying to fill the lesson with entertaining activities.*

The novice's imagined identity started to transform into an identity aimed to meet the needs of the changing world and the learners. What was emphasized here was that making lessons entertaining has become very important for this novice teacher.

Another issue that needs to be elaborated on is when the novice teacher feels safe and successful in class. In this regard, the participant stated: *"If everything I am supposed to cover is definite and I am prepared for the lesson."* She feels safe and successful in class when everything is specified and the instructional procedures are completed accordingly. As can be understood from the response, the flow of the lesson is very important for this novice teacher. Richards and Pennington (1998) also found that novice teachers focused on "covering the essential material efficiently and thoroughly" in their first years (p.186). As Pitton (2006) also underscored, the primary focus of novice teachers is to complete the "day-to-day work of teaching" (p.36).

The participant also noted that when the pace of the program is slow and there is nothing to do, she experienced anxiety. She said: *"When there is nothing in the program, I cannot decide what to do in class. ...And I feel weak those times... You have to follow something..."* Mann and Tang (2012) had also referred to such feelings. When the classes progress as novice teachers plan novice teachers feel relatively comfortable, but the situation would change since they don't have "a repertoire of pedagogical routines" to deal with the unexpected problems in the classroom. This might be the reason why the participant in this exploratory study also continuously drew attention to the need for being ready for class and how she felt weak when there was not much to do.

Previous studies had also drawn attention to the criticality of classroom management for novice teachers. As Ross et al. (2011) noted, "strong classroom management involves judgment and skills that are developed over time and with practice and novices struggle with finding the balance between nurturing students and being authoritative" (p. 7). The participant also negotiated classroom management strategies. She said:

*Sometimes, I can be very determined and say "no" to students. Then, I think it is not necessary to be that strict with students...However, this leads to problems in the long run because each time, the concessions I make are making the situation worse.*

When asked to clarify these problems by giving examples, the participant described an event in which she did not allow a latecomer to enter class at first. However, when the other students insisted, she called the student. Although she allowed him to come to class, she warned the class not to exploit her goodwill. She said:

*Problems arise since I am a bit tolerant. Sometimes, I get angry with myself and I become determined and strict in class, but then I think that there is no point in being obsessed with this issue. As long as they respect me, understand the topic and listen to me when I teach something important, there is no problem...*

As this vignette revealed, this participant experiences a conflict. On the one hand, she feels that there is no need to be strict and authoritative. On the other hand, she is concerned that students would exploit her goodwill. Students can tend to break the rules and ask for exceptions if they find that she is constantly tolerant.

When asked to give recommendations for induction programs, the participant stated:

*Observing a teacher contributes a lot to me... During the induction period, every two or three days, we could have observed teachers... While observing others, you compare yourself with the teacher.*

These remarks reveal that the novice teacher finds observations crucial and expresses a need for extending the duration of these opportunities for novice teachers. This finding is consistent with the results of previous research. For example, Richards and Pennington (1998) also addressed the importance of observations and noted:

Instruction alone- even instruction that espouses or demonstrates new philosophies or innovative techniques- will not be sufficient to impact teachers' practices substantially and for the long term. What would perhaps more effective is an extended period of classroom experience combined with repeated cycles of guided reflection (p.190).

The participant in our study also emphasized how useful observations were in the reflective thinking process of novice teachers' within their practices. While observing more experienced teachers, novice teachers learn from them. As Good and Brophy (1987) noted, "through observing how teachers conduct their lessons, novice teachers can develop a repertoire of strategies and techniques that they can apply in their own teaching" (as cited in Richards, 1998, p.140). It is assumed that acquiring skill in teaching and improving your teaching involves mastery of certain behaviors and these can be seen in the lessons of good teachers. Therefore, observing experienced teachers can help novice teachers distinguish between effective and ineffective strategies in class and contribute to their development process. Fostering reflective observations are crucial in professional development (Richards, 1998).

When discussing the challenges she encountered, the participant mainly discussed difficulties in preparing materials for the students and managing teacher-student relationships. When asked to talk about her sources of support, the novice teacher stated that she received support from her partners (colleagues), her officemate and her husband. The nature of support was both psychological and professional.

*Psychological support. I also receive professional support from my office mate. Since we teach the same classes and at the same time, my office mate shows the material she prepares for her class... makes my life easier...*

The participant also reported that her husband also provided substantial help for her especially with the house chores. Furthermore, when she experiences a problem with the students in class, she talks with her husband about it at home. She said:

*If I have a problem with students that day- not very big problems but sometimes I believe that my lessons are boring and this affects my life in the evening a lot. When I talk to my husband, he says "there is no point in exaggerating it. Students are never pleased, don't take it personal"*

For this novice teacher, these conversations at home are likened to a "therapy session". With such help, she finds that she can reduce her stress levels and better prepare for the next day.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

If the aim is to help novice teachers bridge the gap between preservice education to inservice development, their needs and expectations should be taken into consideration while constructing the curriculum. As Canagarajah (2006) noted, “curriculum change cannot involve the top-down imposition of expertise from outside the community, but should be a ground-up construction taking into account indigenous resources and knowledge, with a sense of partnership between local and outside experts” (p. 27). A top-down approach in teacher education cannot produce “self-directing and self-determining teachers”, so teacher education programs “require a fundamental restructuring that transforms an information-oriented system into an inquiry-oriented.” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 553) Teacher educators should rethink conducting studies on teachers and reflect on collaborative inquiry with teachers (Baecher, 2012).

Since novice teachers can experience similar challenges, they can be provided opportunities to share their experiences with other novice teachers. In this way, they will be able to better prepare themselves for the challenges in class. In this regard, case studies, short stories and narratives can be used as valuable teacher training resources for beginning teachers in order to foster reflective thinking and facilitate learning (Barkhuizen, 2011) . Analyzing cases gives novice teachers a chance to explore experienced teachers’ way of thinking and their practices (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In addition to learning from others, they can also further develop their understanding of their own practices and beliefs.

The challenges faced by novice teachers require the attention of all stakeholders in educational settings. In this paper, to discuss the challenges novice language teachers experience in their initial years, we identified three main themes based on our review of studies on the experiences of novice language teachers. These were *support*, *identity*, and *pedagogy*. The challenges faced in the initial years mainly relate to novice teachers’ professional identity and pedagogies. Our exploratory case study focusing on the experiences of a novice language teacher in Cyprus revealed challenges this English language teacher faced in her first year in the profession. The results underscore the criticality of addressing challenges faced in initial years of teaching. Since beginning teachers make decisions to either stay in the profession or drop out, instead of alienating novice teachers, educational leaders ought to organize collaborative opportunities with beginning teachers. Such endeavors may help provide the necessary environment fostering safety, belonging, and self-esteem for novice teachers.

#### REFERENCES

- Baecher, L. (2012). Feedback from the field: What novice preK–12 ESL teachers want to tell TESOL teacher educators. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 578-588.
- Burns, A., & Richards, J. C. (2009). *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 1-8). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from: [http://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/60126/excerpt/9780521760126\\_excerpt.pdf](http://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/60126/excerpt/9780521760126_excerpt.pdf)
- Brannan, D., & Bleistein, T. (2012). Novice ESOL teachers’ perceptions of social support networks. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46 (3), 539-541.
- Canagarajah, A.S. (2006). TESOL at forty: What are the issues? *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (1), 9-34.

- Champeau de Lopez, C.L.(1989). The role of teacher in today's language classroom, In Kral, T (Ed.). *Teacher Development*. Washington: USIA, 9- 17.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (Fifth Edition). London & New York: Routledge.
- Faez, F., & Valeo, A. (2012). TESOL teacher education: Novice teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and efficacy in the classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 450-471.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2012). Novice-Service language teacher development: Bridging the gap between preservice and in-service education and development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 435–449.
- Haynes, L. (2011). Novice teachers' perceptions of their mentoring experiences. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT). Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/922678446?accountid=13014>
- Kim, K., & Roth, G. (2011). Novice teachers and their acquisition of work-related information. *Current Issues in Education*, 14 (1). Retrieved from <http://cie.asu.edu/>
- Kramsch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50 (3), 199-212.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 537–560.
- Lee, L. (2009). Scaffolding collaborative exchanges between expert and novice language teachers in threaded discussion. *Foreign Language Annals*, (42)2, 212-228.
- Mann, S. M., & Tang, E. H. H. (2012). The role of mentoring in supporting novice English language teachers in Hong Kong. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 472-495.
- Meyer, H. (2004). Novice and expert teachers' conceptions of learners' prior knowledge. *Science Education*, 970, 983.
- Ozturk, M. (2008). Induction into teaching: adaptation challenges of novice teachers. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Middle East Technical University.
- Paran, A. (2012). Language Skills: Questions for teaching and learning. *ELT Journal*, 66 (4), 450-458.
- Pitton, D. E. (2006). *Mentoring novice teachers: Fostering a dialogue process* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Richards, J. C. (1998). *Beyond training*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., & Pennington, M. (1998). The first year of teaching. In J. Richards (Ed.), *Beyond training* (pp. 173—190). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, D.D., Vescio, V., Tricarico, K, & Short, K. (2011). *Secrets for mentoring novice teachers*. Gainesville, FL: Lastinger Center for Learning.

- Shin, S. (2012). "It Cannot Be Done Alone": The socialization of novice English teachers in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46 (3).
- Winter, E. C. & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2005). Using computer conferencing and case studies to enable collaboration between expert and novice teachers. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 21, pp118–129.
- Xu, H. (2012). Imagined community falling apart: A case study on the transformation of professional identities of novice ESOL teachers in China. *TESOL Quarterly*, 568-578.