

## EARLY EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR DEBUTANT TEACHERS

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**Abstract:** *The study focuses on the transition of debutant teachers from theoretical training to teaching practice. It also identifies significant challenges they face in their first career years and examines the experiences of debutant teachers in their initial teaching years, exploring sustainment opportunities, adaptation methods, and support measures. The research investigates resilience strategies developed by these beginner teachers, which include stress management techniques and innovative approaches to building relationships. It also proposes solutions to enhance institutional support, which could enhance job satisfaction and to retain debutant teachers within the educational system. The primary methodological tool is an anonymous questionnaire distributed online in the Cluj and Sibiu counties, structured around four key areas: identifying main challenges, exploring opportunities, analyzing adaptation methods, and proposing solutions and recommendations in order to support the integration and professional development of teachers in their early career, in accordance to the needs of the early education for children. Among the general conclusions of the survey, it is highlighted the importance of mentorship and both initial qualification and continuous training, addressing specific topics such as communication with parents, managing administrative tasks, and supporting children with special needs. Therewith, the research emphasizes that a healthy organizational culture, focused on collaboration and continuous development, increases the efficiency of the educational process, enhances the well-being of the school community, and reduces the risk of early-career teacher abandonment.*

**Key words:** *debutant teachers; teaching practice; early career integration; teacher abandonment risk; communication with parents; mentorship; initial qualification; continuous training.*

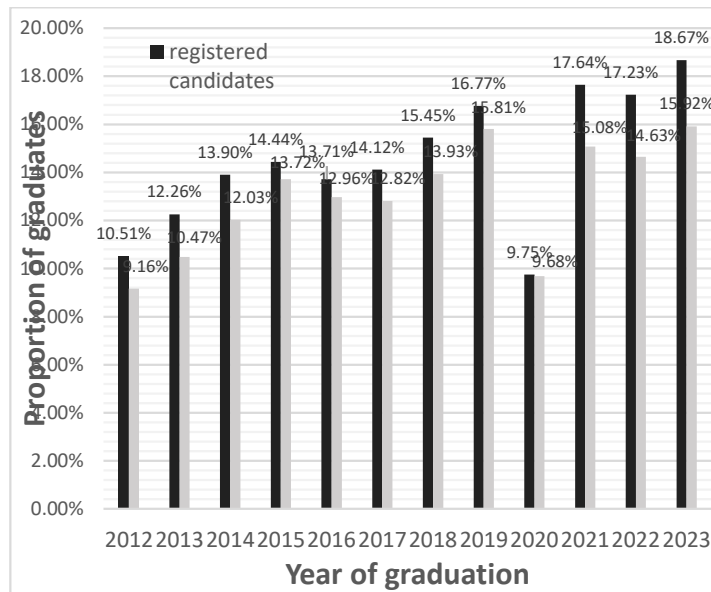
### **Introduction**

The transition from theoretical preparation for teaching to the practical execution of educational activities represents a major challenge for teachers at the starting stage of their careers. Debutant teachers begin their professional way driven by ambition and enthusiasm, many of them being within formal contractual relation for the first time in their life. In this context, a series of determination factors could influence their professional evolution, the retention rate into the educational system, as well as the development of their creativity, performance and innovation capacity that they will demonstrate in the future.

The professional integration of debutant teachers in the early education domain is, therefore, an essential process, not only for their professional success, but also for providing quality education to preschoolers. Debutant teachers need constant and appropriate support to build solid careers and provide quality education.

### **Context and justification**

Although not always the first option for graduates and, in some cases, perceived as a compromise solution, in Romania, the teaching profession continues to attract interest in the labor market, due to its stable program and predictable income. According to statistical data provided by the Ministry of Education (2021, 2022, 2023), there is a significant increase in interest in the teaching career, seen in almost doubling the number of graduates participating in the annual national tenure competition. A possible explanatory factor for this increased interest could be the temporal proximity between the moments of graduation and job competition for the young teachers.



Note. The proportions of graduates who registered for the tenure competition and the proportions of graduates who participated in the evaluation tests each year are presented.

Figure 1. Participants in the preuniversity school teaching tenure competition, current series (% of total)

There is a discrepancy between the number of those interested in accessing a job in pre-university school system and the number of those who complete the selection process, in other words, between those who just manifest a wish for a teaching job and those who really take the exam and are evaluated and graded. However, the data does not indicate statistically significant differences in the results achieved by candidates from current cohorts in comparison with the candidates from previous cohorts.

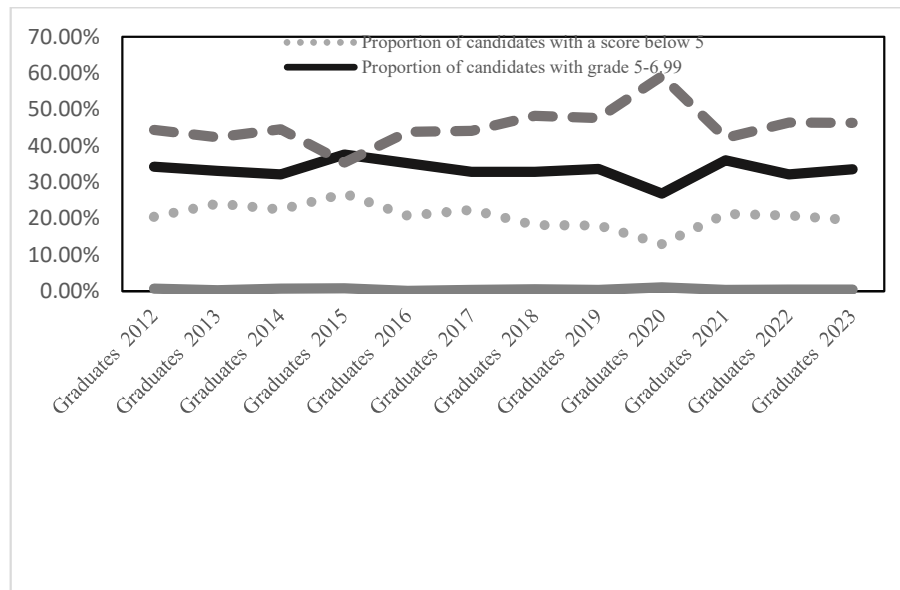
Year	Proportion of candidates with a score below 5	Proportion of candidates with grade 5-6.99	Proportion of candidates with grade 7-9,99	Proportion of candidates with grade 10
2012	17,84%	32,68%	48,63%	0,85%
<b>Graduates 2012</b>	20,51%	34,29%	44,47%	0,73%
2013	18,96%	31,86%	48,63%	0,55%
<b>Graduates 2013</b>	24,13%	33,14%	42,41%	0,32%
2014	18,74%	31,18%	49,47%	0,61%
<b>Graduates 2014</b>	22,51%	32,18%	44,61%	0,70%
2015	23,74%	36,80%	39,26%	0,20%

2016	<b>Graduates 2015</b>	26,85%	37,60%	35,45%	0,90%
	Graduates from previous series	18,67%	34,68%	46,24%	0,41%
2017	<b>Graduates 2016</b>	20,72%	35,27%	43,87%	0,14%
	Graduates from previous series	19,29%	33,07%	47,06%	0,57%
2018	<b>Graduates 2017</b>	22,44%	32,92%	44,19%	0,46%
	Graduates from previous series	16,48%	33,81%	49,13%	0,58%
2019	<b>Graduates 2018</b>	18,19%	32,93%	48,27%	0,61%
	Graduates from previous series	17,32%	34,30%	47,90%	0,47%
2020	<b>Graduates 2019</b>	18,14%	33,71%	47,71%	0,44%
	Graduates from previous series	12,60%	26,61%	59,80%	0,99%
2021	<b>Graduates 2020</b>	12,98%	26,83%	59,13%	1,06%
	Graduates from previous series	18,26%	35,02%	46,19%	0,52%
2022	<b>Graduates 2021</b>	21,24%	36,11%	42,22%	0,43%
	Graduates from previous series	16,31%	32,96%	50,14%	0,59%
2023	<b>Graduates 2022</b>	20,80%	32,21%	46,47%	0,52%
	Graduates from previous series	16,21%	33,40%	49,85%	0,53%
	<b>Graduates 2023</b>	19,50%	33,64%	46,32%	0,53%

*Note.* The data is public (edu.ro) and presents the comparative distribution of evaluated candidates, depending on the year of graduation and the grades obtained.

Table 1. Data of achieved results situation to the written part of the teaching tenure competition for preuniversity school jobs

Competitors who scored at least 7 in the tenure competition constitute the most significant proportion of the total candidates; a result recorded regardless of their graduation year. Thus, annually, over 40% of candidates achieve scores that allow them to choose a position in the education system. The results obtained in the human resources selection process within the education system may indicate a good to very good level of theoretical preparation among debutant teaching staff. However, challenges arise in the practical application of theoretical knowledge.



*Note.* The evolution of the results by grade range is presented. Approximately a quarter of the candidates in a cohort do not obtain grades above 5.

Figure 2. The range of graduates' scores from current cohort achieved in the tenure competition

At the beginning of their careers, debutant teachers get in the education system eager to contribute to the improvement of education both inside and outside the classroom (Levenson, 2014). However, their teaching initial experiences raise concerns about the loss of valuable professional potential, both in terms of the quality and quantity of their contributions to educational practice (Kelchtermans, 2017). Various studies indicate that these teachers' ideas often face resistance from colleagues or are not taken seriously (Correa et al., 2015; Kessels, 2018). Other studies report that a significant percentage of these debutant teachers leave early their profession, with figures ranging from 15% to 40%, with notable differences between countries, urban/rural areas and educational sectors. The highest abandonment rates are recorded in the first year of working (Noordzij and Van De Grift, 2020). This decision is usually driven by factors such as an unpleasant school atmosphere, lack of support, unclear expectations, lack of communication or strained relationships (den Brok et al., 2017).

### Research objectives and questions

Debutant teachers have a crucial impact on the education system, and their first years of activity are decisive not only for their professional development, but also for the quality of education in the long term. The first survey's objective aims to explore *the main challenges* they face at

the start of their careers – from adapting to the diverse dynamics of the classroom and managing administrative tasks to build relationships with colleagues and students. At the same time, the research examines existing *support opportunities*, such as mentoring and in-service training programs, which play a key role in strengthening the careers of these teachers and increasing the quality of the educational process they support. The third objective approaches *the adaptive strategies* that debutant teachers develop to address challenges and capitalize on available opportunities. Their ability to navigate the complexities of their early career years is often supported by resilience and innovative approaches to organizing activities, interacting with students and colleagues, and managing stress. Finally, the research *proposes specific solutions and recommendations* to support the integration and continuous development of these teachers in schools. These suggestions aim to create a more supportive environment better tailored to their needs, ensuring not only their professional success but also a high-quality educational process for students.

The first research question analyzes the most common challenges faced by debutant teachers in the first years of their career. Adapting to diverse classroom demands, managing administrative workload and maintaining a balance between professional and personal demands are aspects that may significantly influence the experience and efficiency of a teacher at the beginning of his or her career.

The second question aims to identify the professional opportunities perceived by debutants as the most useful for their integration and development. In this context, mentoring programs, continuous training courses and access to educational and pedagogical resources become key elements for developing a sustainable career.

The third one explores the adaptation and resilience strategies that these teachers develop in order to address the challenges. Depending on the level of support and resources available, novice teachers can develop their own methods of managing stress, organizing activities, and maintaining motivation. Finally, the study focuses on the relationship between the support provided by school institutions and the level of satisfaction and retention of debutant teachers within the educational system. To the extent that support and resources are available and tailored to teachers' needs, the debutants may feel greater job satisfaction and an increased likelihood of remaining in the educational system for a prolonged period.

These questions provide an overview of the experiences of debutant teachers, contributing to the initiation of more effective support strategies for their integration and development in the teaching career.

### **Methodology**

**The practical aim** of the study is to identify and analyze the challenges, opportunities and adaptation strategies of debutant teachers in their first years of teaching. The research wants to provide relevant information for improving their integration process in the education system, offering solutions to support their professional development and for creating a more supportive environment in schools.

**The data** were collected through an anonymous *questionnaire* comprising 17 questions distributed online through the professional associations of early education teachers in Cluj-Napoca and Sibiu. The questions were structured around the four objectives of the research: identifying the main challenges, exploring opportunities, analyzing adaptation strategies and proposing solutions and recommendations to support the integration and development of debutant teachers within schools. The factual data collected includes years of teaching experience, chronological age of respondents as well as the type of educational institution where they currently work (nursery/kindergarten, public/private). Questions 5, 6, and 7 focus on understanding specific challenges and their impact on the daily activities of debutant teachers, which is essential for evaluating their professional context. Questions 8, 9, 10, and 11 allow for an analysis of the diversity of professional development activities and an evaluation of their impact on the professional growth and satisfaction of debutant teachers. Questions 12 to 15 aim to understand how debutant teachers adapt to challenges and identify the types of resources or measures that could contribute to their more effective integration into the educational system. Questions 16 and 17 address professional satisfaction and the motivational factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in the profession.

This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of debutant teachers, providing actionable insights for enhancing their support systems and integration processes in the educational system.

### **Data analysis and main findings**

The sample consists exclusively of female participants. (Note: according to “Report of the status of preuniversity education in Romania 2022-2023”, the share of female teachers in the early educational system is 99.7%). Teachers aged between 25 and 30 years represent the largest category within the sample, also having up to 3 years of teaching experience. The distribution of respondents by age and years of experience in education is as follows:

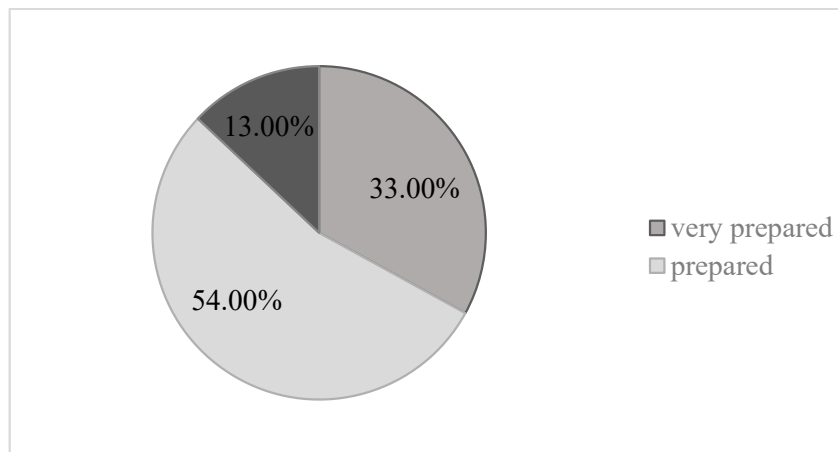
Age	
< 25 ani	19,51%
25-30 ani	46,34%
31-35 ani	14,63%
> 35 ani	19,51%

Table 2. The respondents' age

Experience in teaching (years)	
0-1	7,32%
1-2	19,51%
2-3	73,17%

Table 3. The number of teaching experience years

Respondents declare themselves prepared to address professional challenges in early education (Figure 3).



*Note.* We considered the answers to the question: To what extent do you feel prepared to face the challenges of early childhood education?

Figure 3. Assessment of the level of professional preparation for a teaching career in early education

As a first dimension of the present study, the following section details the statistics derived from the responses of the interviewed subjects regarding the main challenges faced by debutant teachers during their first years of activity. These include both a general overview of the issues and the distribution of specific aspects frequently encountered



during this period.

General Assessment of Issues Faced by Novice Teachers		Specific Aspects Encountered by Novice Teachers	
Aspect	Percentage	Percentage	Aspect
High volume of administrative tasks	66.70%	28.21%	Relationships with parents
Classroom and discipline management	56.40%	25.64%	Administrative documents and activities
Adapting to children's educational needs	51.30%	23.08%	Children with special educational needs (SEN) and behavioral problems
Communication with parents	35.90%	17.95%	Classroom management
Creating engaging and educational activities	33.30%	17.95%	Others (e.g., class size, children's age-specific characteristics, absenteeism, teaching creativity, etc.)
Other: _____	26.00%	10.26%	Material and teaching resources
Managing teaching resources	20.50%	7.69%	Horizontal collaboration relationships
Integration into the institution's team	10.30%	2.56%	No issues encountered

*Note.* These tables complement each other by showing both general trends and specific issues faced by novice teachers. The first table provides a holistic view, grouping challenges into broader categories.

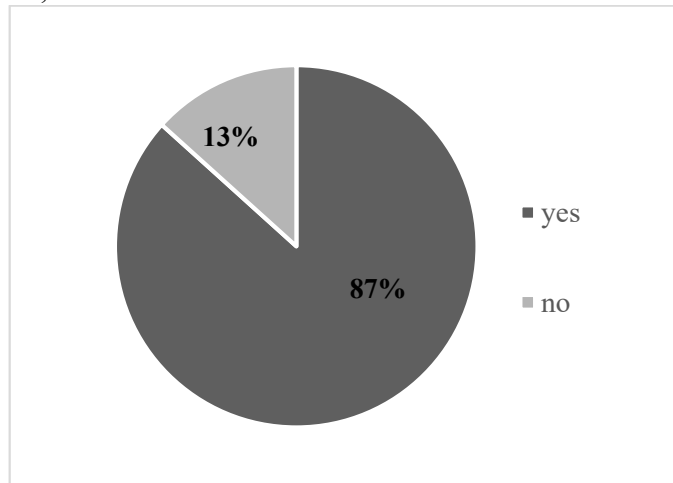
The second table focuses on detailed, specific aspects of challenges, offering a more granular breakdown.

Table 4. General and specific challenges during the starting teaching period

The second dimension of our study focuses on the opportunities that debutant teachers in early education believe they have to advance in their careers and achieve the best results in their work.

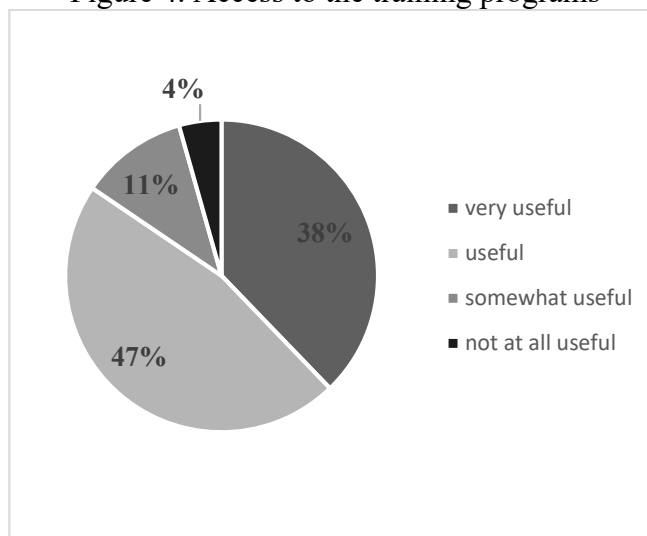
87% of the respondents to the question "Have you had access to training

programs or mentoring sessions specific to early education?" reported that they had access to various training or mentoring programs in their professional activity, considering them for the most part. Additionally, nearly all respondents (97%) believe there is a connection between participating in continuing education programs and performance and satisfaction in their professional work. The most appreciated support activities are methodology courses dedicated to early education and training sessions on highly practical topics: language development, educational alternatives, tailored approaches for children with special needs, etc.



*Note.* These are the answers to question no. 8 "Did you have access to the training programs or mentoring sessions specific to early education?"

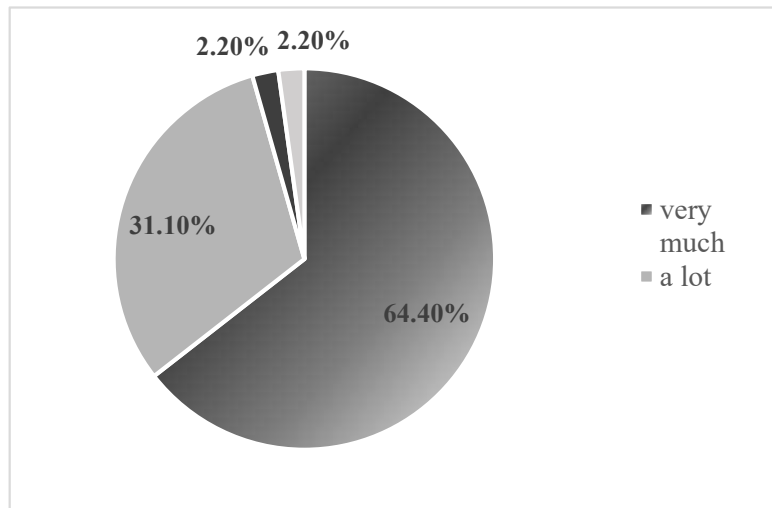
Figure 4. Access to the training programs



*Note.* These are the answers to question no. 9 "How useful do you

consider these opportunities to have been for your professional development?"

Figure 5. Training sessions' utility



Note. These are the answers to question no. 11 "To what extent do you think that access to these opportunities influences your satisfaction and efficiency in your work?"

Figure 6. Access to the training and professional satisfaction

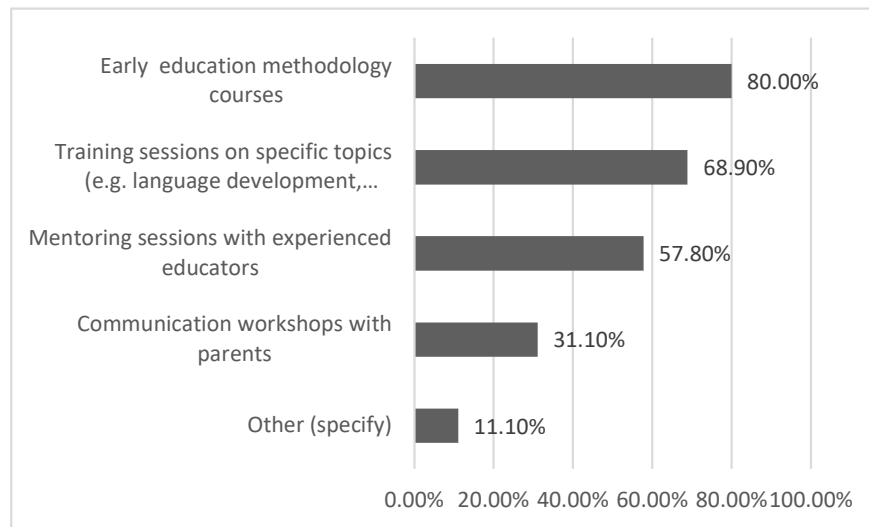


Figure 7. Types of the development activities needed

Note. These are the answers to question no. 10 "What type of professional development activities do you consider would be necessary to support you in early childhood education?"

The adaptation and resilience strategies developed by debutant teachers

in response to these challenges were coded in questions 12, 13, and 14. Thus, the most popular strategy is consulting with more experienced colleagues, chosen by 73.3% of respondents. This is followed by three medium-level strategies: advance planning, seeking additional resources, and adjusting teaching methods to meet children's needs – each having over 60% of respondents. The strategy represented by participation in continuing education courses has a selection rate of 51.1%. The respondents' own preferred methods represent the least common strategy, chosen by 2.2% of them. In terms of potential and future trends, the highest response rate for consulting experienced colleagues suggests a strong preference for peer-to-peer support. The equal percentages for planning, resource-seeking, and adaptive teaching methods indicate that these approaches are similarly valued, possibly implying that respondents view them as complementary strategies. While participation in training is relatively popular, it is not as common as informal peer support, possibly due to time or resource constraints. Very few respondents selected the "Other" option, indicating that the listed strategies sufficiently cover their approaches.

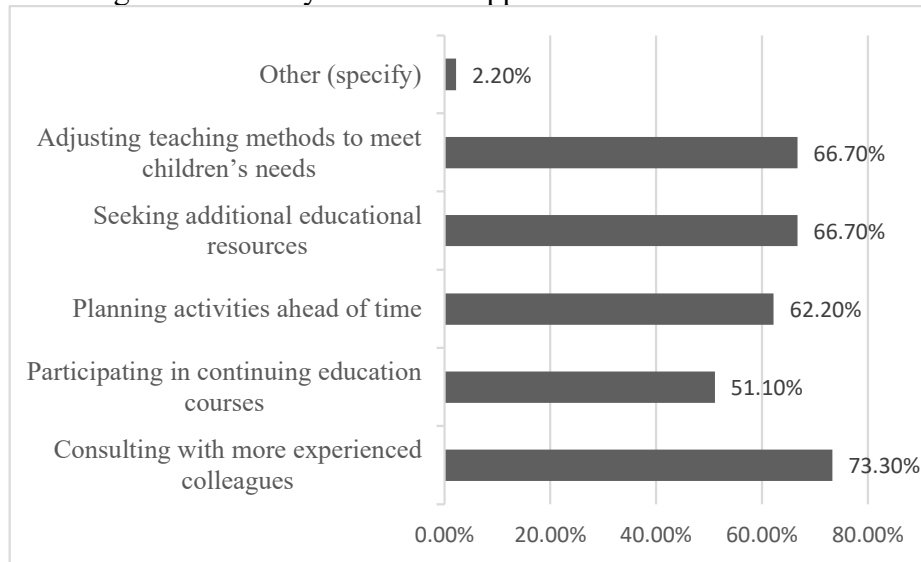


Figure 8. Strategies for addressing the challenges met during professional activity

*Note.* These are the answers to question no. 12 "What strategies do you use to manage challenges encountered at work?"

Analyzing the responses of debutant teachers, we can observe a diversity of strategies and approaches. We grouped them into main categories to highlight trends and priorities:

- professional development and continuous training (examples: "online videos with open lessons," "in-person training

*courses," "webinars," "online courses," "seminars," "participating in courses," "individual study");*

- support and collaboration with colleagues (examples: *"discussions with more experienced colleagues," "consultation with colleagues, even those without experience," "consulting with more experienced colleagues," "collaborating with colleagues from other educational units," "open communication with colleagues");*
- building a positive relationship with children (examples: *"affection for children is the most important," "children respond very well when they are loved," "continuous communication with children," "monitoring and assessing progress," "constant adjustment to the children's needs");*
- collaboration with parents (examples: *"talking with parents," "building a harmonious relationship with parents," "planning counseling sessions with parents");*
- consultation with school specialists: psychologist, counselor, principal (examples: *"help from the deputy principal," "communication with the kindergarten psychologist," "approaching sensitive topics with the school counselor");*
- modern methods and adaptative strategies into the teaching process (examples: *"modern methods," "different means for conducting activities," "experimental methods," "continuous adaptation to daily challenges");*
- self-awareness (example: *"patience and self-awareness").*

The solutions and recommendations collected from the debutant early education teachers who completed the questionnaire have been organized into themes and notable suggestions:

- a. *support and guidance from experienced colleagues:* dedicated mentoring (a mentor or an experienced colleague providing guidance, counseling, and practical support is a frequent suggestion. This includes help with teaching and administrative matters, as well as emotional support); collaboration and open communication (encouraging open communication within the team and a friendly attitude, where beginners are not discriminated against for their lack of experience); constructive feedback (experienced teachers providing regular feedback and sharing resources and ideas, even assisting during the early weeks in the classroom).

- b. *continuous training and access to educational resources*: training courses (participating in continuous professional development courses, including those on teaching methodology, is mentioned as essential); access to teaching materials (debutant teachers need both theoretical and practical resources, including supplies, IT equipment, and other teaching materials. It is necessary for all kindergartens to be well-equipped with the necessary materials); further individual study (individual study and reviewing methodologies are recommended as part of continuous training).
- c. *reducing administrative tasks and simplifying processes*: allowing teachers to focus on educational activities and avoid burnout. Clarity of information is another component, aiming at standardized training for methodologists to avoid inconsistent communication that may confuse the debutants teachers.
- d. *active involvement in professional and methodical activities*: participation in projects and committees by encouraging debutants to get involved in activities, projects and committees to develop their experience. Also, debating and discussions in the teacher council, regular meetings between methodical teachers and debutant colleagues to discuss current dilemmas and challenges, are practical proposals of the respondents.
- e. *building a collaborative work environment and emotional support*: support in managing stress and anxiety is recommended, especially in the first year of activity, but also weekly meetings to create a support community, where debutants can share experiences and receive constant help.
- f. *practical learning experience before teaching*: it was suggested that debutant teachers should start their work with a year of teaching assistantship, to learn through observation and practice before taking on full responsibilities.

This analysis highlights a clear need for structural and emotional support, as well as ongoing training and access to resources. Debutant teachers would benefit from strong mentoring, an administrative support system and a collaborative working environment helping them to become more confident in their role.

### **Discussions and proposals. Challenges**

Debutant teachers face a range of challenges at the beginning of their careers, especially in early education, where the demands are often different from those in other educational levels. Some of the most common **difficulties** include **adapting to the school environment**

(teachers must adjust to the dynamics of a classroom with young children, which requires different pedagogical approaches), **managing relationships with parents** (effective communication with parents is an essential part of early education, and debutants may struggle to find a balance between parents engagements and maintaining their professional autonomy), **lack of practical experience in implementing pedagogical strategies tailored to each child** (even if the theoretical preparation is solid, debutants may face challenges in implementing educational strategies that are customized for each child), and **emotional overload** (intense emotional involvement in working with young children can lead to burnout, especially when teachers deal with difficult behaviors or children with special needs).

Many countries have implemented successful programs to support the integration of debutant teachers. For example, in Finland, debutants benefit from a mentoring program lasting several years (Jokinen et al., 2012), while in Australia, there are professional networks dedicated to sharing experience between debutant and experienced teachers (IEU Queensland NT, AITSL).

More than any other school age, the early education stage is a complex process, full of challenges. Each aspect plays an important role in professional success and influences the quality of the educational act.

- 1. Adaptation to the school environment.** For a teacher at the beginning of his career, adapting to the dynamics of a classroom with young students is a significant challenge. The teacher must adopt nuanced pedagogical approaches suited to the different personalities and needs of the children. The educational environment for preschool children is often unpredictable and dynamic, and teachers need to be able to respond quickly to their behavioral changes and emotional. A study by Murray (2019) emphasizes that understanding children's behavior and adapting teaching strategies to these needs is essential for success in early education.
- 2. Managing relationships with parents.** Effective communication with parents is an essential part of early education, but debutant teachers may struggle to balance parental engagement with their professional autonomy. Parents are often very involved in their children's education and may have high expectations of teachers. Debutant teachers may feel pressure to please parents, which can affect their self-confidence in their own abilities. Harris and Goodall (2008) suggest that training in communicating with parents may help teachers develop more constructive relationships and better manage their expectations.

For many debutants, lack of experience can lead to insecurity in interactions with parents, which may create tensions or even bring a lack of mutual trust. Communication with parents thus becomes a critical component, as parents have high expectations from early education, considering this stage as a crucial period for the emotional and cognitive development of their children. Debutants must find the balance between reassuring parents that their little ones are in a safe and stimulating environment while also managing their own fears and doubts related to the profession. Effective communication with parents is essential for building a solid educational partnership. Studies show that parents play an active role in their children's education, and close collaboration between educators and parents can have positive effects on children's behavior and performance. For debutants, developing communication skills is crucial, as they need to manage individual discussions with parents, provide feedback on children's progress, and address any potential problems or concerns that parents may have. Transparent and consistent communication not only gives parents confidence in the teacher but also fosters an atmosphere of cooperation and support. For example, open communication can include regular meetings, informal daily discussions when handing over children, informational letters, or even a wider use of online platforms to facilitate ongoing connection between educators and parents.

3. **Lack of practical experience in implementing pedagogical strategies tailored to each child.** One of the biggest obstacles faced by debutant teachers is applying theoretical knowledge in a practical and effective way. Although their academic preparation is solid, the lack of practical experience can hinder their ability to manage the dynamics of a diverse classroom effectively. Each child has individual learning needs, and standardized approaches do not always work. In this regard, support from more experienced colleagues and access to continuous training resources play a crucial role. Furthermore, observation-based methods and reflection, such as formative assessments and personalized instruction, can help debutant teachers develop the skills necessary to respond to the needs of each student (Hattie & Yates, 2014). The lack of practical experience can lead to uncertainties in teaching and inefficient application of theoretical knowledge. Kelchtermans (2017) highlights that mentoring and support from more experienced



colleagues are essential for overcoming these obstacles. These professional relationships not only enhance teaching skills, but also contribute to teachers' ongoing professional development.

4. **Emotional overload.** Intense emotional involvement in working with young children can lead to burnout, especially when teachers face challenging behaviors or children with special needs. This is a well-known issue in the literature, which underscores the impact that stress and burnout can have on teachers' mental health. Chang (2009) discusses the negative effects of emotional exhaustion on professional engagement and pedagogical performance. Therefore, it is crucial that debutant teachers have access to support resources, including counseling and personal development programs, to better manage these challenges.

#### **Facilitating Factors for Teacher Integration**

To address these challenges, it is essential to have adequate and well-organized support. Among key elements that can facilitate successful professional integration, we can find the follows:

- a) **Mentorship and peer support:** Implementing a mentorship program where experienced teachers provide guidance, emotional support, and practical advice to debutants can be extremely beneficial. Supportive collegial relationships provide opportunities for exchanging best practices and learning from real-life experiences. Ingersoll (2001) states that mentoring relationships helps reduce feelings of isolation and increase self-confidence for new teachers. An experienced mentor may offer encouragement and solutions to daily challenges, helping debutants navigate initial difficulties more easily. Another advantage of mentorship is access to practical advice and real-world experiences. Experienced teachers can share effective classroom management strategies, innovative teaching methods, and solutions to specific challenges encountered in the classroom. Feiman-Nemser (2001) highlights the importance of learning through practice, showing that mentors can help debutants transform theory into applicability, adapting to the needs of their students. The mentorship program encourages a culture of continuous learning by offering opportunities for the exchange of best practices among colleagues. Through collaboration with mentors, debutant teachers can discover new teaching techniques and benefit from constructive feedback. Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) demonstrated that the exchange

of experiences among teachers not only improves individual performance but also contributes to the professional development of the entire educational community.

- b) Continuous professional preparation:** Providing continuing professional training programs that address practical aspects of early education, such as classroom management, child-centered teaching strategies, or children's socio-emotional development, is essential. Technology can facilitate access to continuing education, providing flexible options for teachers. Online programs allow teachers to attend courses and training sessions on their own schedule. This makes training more accessible and adaptable to individual teachers' needs and facilitates the creation of common interest communities and participation in professional groups and communities. These groups allow teachers to collaborate, share experiences, and develop common teaching strategies. Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) suggest that these communities can contribute significantly to the development of pedagogical skills and increased professional engagement.
- c) Constructive feedback:** Debutant teachers need regular and constructive evaluations that allow them to continuously improve their skills. Feedback should not only be critical but also development-oriented, highlighting strengths and offering suggestions for improvement. Constructive feedback is an essential component in the training and professional development of debutant teachers. It not only helps improve pedagogical skills but also contributes to creating a positive and supportive learning environment. Effective feedback must be regular, balanced, development-oriented, and highlight both strengths and areas that need improvement. Constructive feedback enables debutant teachers to better understand teaching methods and adjust their strategies according to the needs of their students. According to research by Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is considered one of the most effective ways to improve learning. Regular evaluations help clarify expectations and develop the necessary skills for effective teaching. However, organizational culture, evaluator training, and clear goal setting can affect the proper structuring of constructive feedback. Encouraging beginning teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and identify specific support needs are effective ways to integrate constructive feedback.

- d) Emotional and psychological support:** The teaching profession, particularly in early education, can be emotionally and psychologically demanding. Debutant teachers face numerous challenges, including managing classroom diversity, adapting to administrative demands, and developing relationships with parents and colleagues. For these reasons, emotional and psychological support becomes essential in preventing burnout and ensuring a positive experience for both teachers and students. Often under significant pressure, which can lead to chronic stress and burnout, debutant teachers can benefit from organizing support groups within schools or educational communities, which offer a safe space for sharing experiences and receiving guidance. Participation in support groups can significantly reduce stress levels and contribute to good mental health. Emotional burnout is a common issue among debutant teachers, which can affect not only their personal well-being but also the quality of education they provide. Emotional support, including access to psychological counseling, can help teachers cope with daily challenges and develop effective coping strategies. Maslach and Leiter (2016) highlight the importance of proactive interventions in preventing emotional burnout, thus promoting a healthy work environment. Another benefit of support groups and psychological counseling is the improvement of interpersonal relationships. Teachers who receive emotional support are more likely to develop positive relationships with colleagues, students, and parents. This connectivity can enhance the sense of belonging and support within the educational community (Hattie, 2015).
- e) The importance of attention and concentration in the early education stage.** In his book *“Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence”*, Daniel Goleman emphasizes the crucial role that attention plays in performance and personal success. Debutant teachers, who face numerous challenges in early education, need to develop their ability to concentrate to successfully manage multiple tasks in the classroom. Distributive attention is essential in managing children’s behavior, adapting pedagogical strategies, and responding to the emotional and cognitive needs of each child. Goleman also highlights that a high level of attention not only improves professional performance, but also reduces stress levels, allowing teachers to be more effective and empathetic in their daily interactions.

- f) Emotional self-regulation/adjustment and its impact on relationships with parents and colleagues:** Another important concept discussed by Goleman is emotional self-regulation/adjustment, which plays a vital role in early education. Debutant teachers who do not effectively control their emotions may feel the pressure imposed by parents' demands and relationships with colleagues more acutely, which can affect their performance and self-confidence. In *Focus*, Goleman argues that self-regulation/adjustment allows individuals to maintain emotional balance even in tense situations. For debutants, this skill is crucial, as frequent interactions with parents and unexpected situations in the classroom require a calm and well-managed response. Furthermore, by cultivating self-regulation/adjustment, teachers can avoid burnout and maintain a positive educational environment for children.
- g) Cultivating empathetic attention and a supportive culture in school:** In early education, empathy is one of the most valuable skills a debutant teacher can develop. Goleman introduces the concept of "empathetic attention" in *Focus*, explaining that it involves the ability to understand the needs and emotions of others through focused attention. For debutants, empathetic attention can facilitate managing relationships with both parents and students, helping them respond sensitively to their concerns and needs. In addition to benefits for interpersonal relationships, a supportive culture based on empathy and understanding can encourage collaboration and provide teachers with a safe space for professional and personal development.

### **Proposals for improving the efficiency of the integration of debutant teachers**

Making the integration of debutant teachers more efficient starts with their initial training, which needs to be more practical, flexible and adapted to the realities of the classroom. Here are some measures that could improve this stage:

- **expanding internship stages:** Starting from the early stages of university education, initial teacher training should include more supervised pedagogical internship periods. These internships would give future teachers the opportunity to experience various school contexts and learn how to manage classes of different ages and physical and cognitive developmental levels. Integrating theory with real practice in classrooms would help debutant teachers to be better prepared for everyday challenges.

- **specific training for managing relationships and stress:** Developing training modules focused on managing relationships with parents, collaborating with colleagues, and managing emotional stress is essential. Emotional intelligence, social skills, and emotional regulation/adjustment are key factors for professional success (Goleman, 2013). Therefore, future teachers should learn self-regulation/adjustment techniques and be prepared to manage complex interactions with parents and colleagues.
- **training through mentorship and observation:** Integrating mentorship into initial training, where trainees are observed and guided by experienced mentors, would facilitate an effective transfer of practical knowledge. Learning through direct observation and constant feedback can improve debutant teachers' ability to apply educational theory in real contexts and adjust their teaching methods accordingly.
- **simulations and role-playing:** During initial teacher training, the use of simulations and role-playing to replicate common school situations—from managing classroom conflict to dealing with difficult parents—would help future teachers be better prepared for the challenges they will encounter. This method provides a controlled setting in which debutant teachers can practice strategies without major risks.
- **flexible and adapted curriculum:** A flexible university curriculum that integrates modern educational technologies and is customized to the needs of each teacher would provide better training suited to real-world requirements. Additionally, courses should include more specific preparation for early education and managing diverse classrooms.

By implementing these measures, initial teacher training could become a more effective process, preparing future teachers to successfully handle the challenges of their first years in the profession and contributing to a smoother and longer-lasting professional integration.

### **Expectations and implications**

In the context of education, debutant teachers often face various challenges: adapting to the demands of the profession, student diversity, implementing effective teaching methods and understanding the school climate. Research in the field of supporting debutant teachers has a fundamental role in identifying strategies that can contribute to their success and longevity in their careers. The expectations and implications of the research target several interested groups, each with their own

objectives and needs: teachers, schools and decision-makers.

(1). *Expectations and implications for teachers*: research has the potential to provide a better understanding of how to manage the challenges specific to the first years of their careers. At this stage, teachers are often able to adapt quickly to a dynamic and demanding educational environment. Research can identify effective ways in which teachers can access the resources needed for professional development and take advantage of training opportunities. The knowledge resulting from the research can provide examples of good practices and innovative solutions to common problems, such as managing student behavior or developing adaptive teaching strategies. Thus, teachers will be able to benefit from more solid training, contributing to increasing the quality of teaching and reducing the feeling of professional burnout.

(2). *Expectations and implications for schools*: For schools, the research can facilitate the identification of strategies to support beginning teachers and the implementation of effective mentoring models. Schools that provide a supportive environment for debutant teachers contribute not only to their retention within the institution, but also to the creation of a climate of collaboration. The mentoring and support models identified by the research can have a positive long-term impact, strengthening support networks and interaction between colleagues. This not only facilitates the continuous development of debutant teachers but can also reduce the rate of early-career abandonment. In addition, schools that invest in such programs become more attractive to future employees, benefiting from motivated and well-prepared teachers.

(3). *Expectations and implications for decision-makers*: research provides a basis for the development of educational policies and training programs that support teachers at the beginning of their careers. In a time when there is a teacher shortage, it is essential that educational policies are formulated based on relevant data and studies. Decision-makers can use research to implement measures that reduce professional burnout and encourage continuity. Thus, initial and in-service training programs can be adjusted to meet the real needs of debutant teachers. At the same time, funding for mentoring and professional development programs can be prioritized, thus contributing to creating a more equitable education system.

### **Conclusions**

The integration of debutant teachers is essential from multiple perspectives. First, they represent a valuable resource for the educational

system, bringing fresh energy and innovative ideas. However, without adequate support, the risk of them leaving the profession is real, due to the difficulties encountered at the beginning of their career, which can lead to a considerable loss of professional potential and instability in the educational domain.

Second, a correct integration of debutant teachers contributes to improving the quality of the educational process. Well-supported and trained teachers are better able to cope with the complexity of early education, to respond to the varied needs of children and to collaborate effectively with parents. At the same time, correct professional adaptation directly influences the well-being of teachers, preventing the risks of burnout and ensuring them a long-lasting and satisfying career. Ultimately, the resources and support provided to debutant teachers are essential for creating a stable and innovative educational environment in which both teachers and students can thrive. A positive organizational culture that promotes collaboration and continuous development contributes to increased educational effectiveness, the overall well-being of the educational community, and the reduction of attrition among young teachers.

The expectations and impact of research in support of debutant teachers are varied and fundamental to a quality education system. Through this, teachers acquire the necessary tools to overcome professional challenges, schools can implement effective support and mentoring models, and decision-makers benefit from essential information for the development of sound educational policies. All these elements point out towards the same goal: creating an education system that values and supports the continuous development of teachers.

### **Possible limitations of the research**

A first factor that may influence the results is the biased response of debutant teachers. They may be reluctant to provide negative details about their experiences, fearing possible professional repercussions or negative evaluation by their superiors.

The diversity of educational contexts also represents a significant limitation. Significant differences between urban and rural environments, as well as variations within different stages of education (nursery, kindergarten) may affect the applicability and relevance of the generalization of the results obtained, given the particularities of each educational environment

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