

## Chapter #26

### PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT MEASURES FOR NOVICE TEACHERS IN LATVIA

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#### ABSTRACT

Retention of novice teachers in education system is a serious problem in Latvia. Mentoring, in-service training and emotional support are crucial for novice teachers to remain and continue working in school. The aim of this research is to explore opinions of Latvian teachers about professional support measures that are available and needed to be introduced for novice teachers. The research results were obtained during an on-line survey (N=1258) conducted by the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees in 2018, and document analysis. The questionnaire comprised the statements on methodological, financial, material and technological support which were assessed by using 5-point symmetric Likert scale. The results witness about regional disparities mainly between the capital city Riga and other regions. There are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences in opinions of the teachers representing different regions of the country. The respondents agree that there is a lack of well-structured and uniform support system for novice teachers at national level. In general, the teachers are positive about availability of an emotional support and in-service training. The most critical opinions are about material and financial support that novice teachers can access. The authors conclude that policy makers should focus on national teachers' support guidelines.

*Keywords:* mentoring, novice teachers, professional support.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

First years of teaching are the most determining in a teacher's professional life influencing, for example, job satisfaction and the length of career. Understanding and definitions of a novice teacher are ambiguous. In most of the studies, a novice teacher is considered as the one with less than three years of teaching experience (e.g. Huberman, 1993; Petty, Good, & Putman, 2016), whereas, for example, in TALIS 2018 survey a novice teacher is defined as an educator with less than 5 years of in-service experience (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). As it has been revealed in previous studies (e.g. Buchanan et al., 2013; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014), many novice teachers leave teaching soon after their first in-service experience. Retention of educators, especially novice teachers, in education system is a serious problem in Latvia as well as in many other countries. According to Eisenschmidt, beginning teachers in school need support in professional, social and personal dimensions (Eisenschmidt, 2006). It means that teachers need to acquire their roles, develop self-confidence, professional skills and knowledge as well as become members of a school community through integration into a school and profession in general. Colleagues can help to understand internal norms, values, and structure of a school, and more experienced teachers normally contribute to developing professional identity of novice teachers and their teaching approaches. Most of

the novice teachers face so called 'reality shock' (Blakley, 2006), because their expectations are often confronted by reality when working in the real classroom changes their initial conceptions and own philosophy. Successful induction programmes such as mentoring and nationally or locally organized support systems are offered to strengthen coping ability of novice teachers. In different countries newly qualified teachers are offered different support (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice, 2015; Parker, 2010); lack of support is often reported as one of the factors influencing teacher's professional future. In almost two-thirds of the countries in Europe beginning teachers have access to structured induction phases of many different organizational patterns, however, Latvia is among those countries where the induction phase for fully qualified teachers does not exist (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) even though mentoring in Latvia is available. Novice teachers who had a mentor have better organizational skills and they cope with their responsibilities more easily (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Hauksdottir, Steingrimsdottir, & Svanbjornsdottir, 2018) what in turn leads to greater possibility of teacher retention in a school (Feiman-Namser, 2001; Kelley, 2004). According to TALIS 2018 survey, school leaders in all OECD countries believe that mentoring is important for both teachers' work and students' performance; nevertheless, only 22% of novice teachers in OECD countries and 16% in Latvia have had a mentoring (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). The most widespread types of professional development in OECD countries are courses and seminars. In Latvia, 95% of teachers have participated in that kind of activities, and 61% of the teachers have been involved in coaching activities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Still, the teachers have pointed out that in certain areas an offer of professional development opportunities should be improved and expanded, for example, there is a demand for additional knowledge and skills in communication and information technologies, teaching in multicultural and multi-language environment, and teaching children with special needs. From all above mentioned, Latvian teachers consider improved skills in information technologies as the most required. In general, according to the OECD data teachers in Latvia are satisfied with their professional development and 89% of them admit its practical usefulness.

The aim of this research is to explore opinions of Latvian teachers about professional support measures that are both available and needed to be introduced for novice teachers.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE PRESENT STUDY**

Professional support measures such as mentoring, in-service training or emotional support are crucial for novice teachers to remain and continue working in school. As Garipov, Nasibullov, Yarullin, and Nasibullova (2019) emphasize, teachers today "need to be mobile, flexible, able to adapt to social changes, prepared for constant development and innovative challenges, capable of being achievement-oriented and demanding towards one's own reflective, intellectual, ICT and communication competencies" (Garipov et al., 2019, 8). Support is of a multidimensional nature in the following areas: organizational socialization, classroom management, learning management, educational differentiation and personal and psychological aspects (Mukamurera, Lakhali, & Tardif, 2019). Paula and Grinfelde (2018) have revealed that novice teachers faced following challenges during their first years of in-service: establishing teacher's authority and self-positioning as a teacher, time management, problems with discipline in a classroom, lack of skills to develop curriculum and lesson plans, difficulties in communication with parents. Beginning teachers expected that their mentors would explain school traditions and internal rules, and advice on discipline in a classroom (Paula, & Grinfelde, 2018).

Hanusova et al. (2020) have analysed the reasons of drop-out intentions of novice teachers in the Czech Republic. Their main findings have focused on the key significance of the influence of school culture and climate, cooperation with colleagues and leadership. The authors concluded that teachers tend to stay in a well-functioning school with cooperative colleagues and good head teachers (Hanusova et al., 2020). The professional support from the colleagues and collegiality is crucial especially in the initial phases of a teaching career development (Bakieva, Such, & Alvarez, 2019). Importance of professional collaboration and collegiality is emphasized also in the study of Hauksdottir et al. (2018) who discovered that the school culture in upper secondary schools is not supportive compared to elementary schools due to little tradition for collaboration, and they believed that novice teachers need more robust and more organised support. Novice teachers in Iceland have referred to a heavy workload and a long workweek in their first year of in-service as well as difficulties to separate work from their personal lives; they needed both informal and formal support to improve their teaching skills and ability to cope with the reality of the classroom (e.g. students' use of technology, students' mental problems) (Hauksdottir et al., 2018). According to Mukamurera et al. (2019), novice teachers experience task diversity and heaviness, as well as differences between recognized workloads and actual teaching loads on a daily basis.

Antoniou, Efthymiou, Polychroni, and Kofa (2020) have researched relationship between occupational stress and self-efficacy among primary school teachers working in mainstream and special education schools in Greece. They concluded that the specific stress factors for teachers were favouritism of government and school administration, time pressure and pupils' character, pupils' improvement, resources and equipment, support from parents and society (Antoniou et al., 2020). Another study has focused on factors of job satisfaction among second-career teachers in their initial period at school; the authors concluded that availability of support was the most powerful predictor of high job satisfaction, and experience acquired before teaching career provided a repertoire of helpful strategies, thus improving ability to cope with stressful experiences (Bar-Tal, Chamo, Ram, Snapir, & Gilat, 2020). In their research, Bettini and Park (2017) have investigated novices' teaching experiences in high-poverty schools. They concluded that more research is needed to explore differences in working conditions in high- versus low-poverty schools, and their implications for teacher development and retention (Bettini & Park, 2017). Addressing four major themes (teacher characteristics and personal factors, teacher qualifications, work environments, and teachers' affective reactions to work), Billingsley (2004) has carried out a thematic analysis of studies focusing on factors that contribute to special education teacher attrition and retention.

Spencer, Harrop, Thomas, and Cain (2018) have examined the needs of early career teachers in England, and the extent to which these needs are met through professional development activities in a context in which local authority support has been largely removed from schools. They concluded that teachers needed emotional support and help with behaviour management, and reflective conversations about teaching; they also looked for ideas how to organize interesting classroom activities (Spencer et al., 2018). Informal conversations with colleagues responded to these needs, however, partially. Within-school continuous professional development and mentoring was acknowledged as useful. The authors have revealed that novice teachers found help from social media and the Internet (Spencer et al., 2018, p.33).

The literature review leads to conclusion that majority of the recent studies focus on mentoring and induction programmes as the main forms of support for novice teachers; however, other measures of professional support such as financial, material, technological,

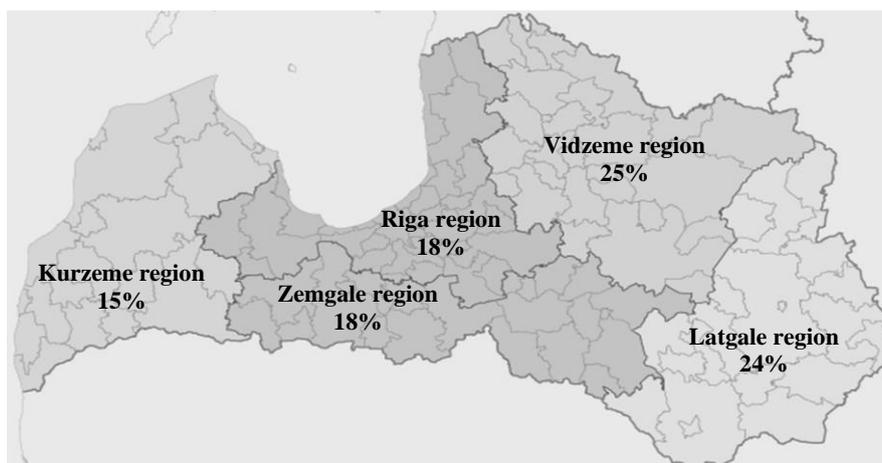
methodological, and societal are also important. In their study, Zhukova, Pipere, Ilisko, and Badjanova (2018) concluded that support for novice teachers in Latvia is systemic and fragmentary, and this is one of the reasons why novice teachers leave their work within the first three years of teaching as they find demands too high and workload sometimes unmanageable (Zhukova et al., 2018). The novelty of this particular study is justified by the attempts to find an evidence on importance of multiple support measures.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper focuses on support for novice teachers by presenting a part of the research results which were obtained during an on-line survey conducted by the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (LIZDA) in November, 2018. The questionnaire comprising statements on methodological, financial, material, and technological measures of professional support was developed and posted on the webpage *visidati.lv*. Information about the survey was disseminated via LIZDA homepage, trade union's member organizations in schools, social media, and website *eklase.lv*. The respondents were offered to assess the statements by using symmetric 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, slightly agree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly disagree, strongly disagree). The research was conducted according to the methodological and ethical principles of the online survey (Toepoel, 2015). The data were processed and presented solely in an aggregated way thus ensuring anonymity of the respondents. Standard deviation (SD) and mean (M) was calculated for the descriptive analysis of quantitative data by using statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science v21). Independent samples t-test was calculated to analyse differences in opinions of the respondents representing different regions of Latvia.

The research sample was made of 1258 teachers representing all five statistical regions of Latvia (Figure 1).

*Figure 1.*  
*Research sample.*



As the questionnaire was not specifically designed for the novice teachers, educators of different age groups and seniority were asked to participate in the survey. Also, the main focus of the survey was not problems of novice teachers. However, the questionnaire

comprised statements related to the needs and support of early career teachers and all teachers were asked to assess the situation either from the perspective of novice teacher, mentor, or colleague. More than half of the survey participants (68%) are LIZDA members. Most of the respondents (60%) represent rural municipalities, whereas 40% are from cities. Among the respondents, 94% are women and 6% are men. The respondents represent all levels of general education system in Latvia (preschool, elementary school, primary school, secondary school) and positions (e.g. teachers, school leaders); they are with different seniority and represent different age groups.

Additionally, a qualitative document analysis was conducted to understand what institutions are involved and what policy measures are undertaken to attract and support novice teachers in Latvia. Analysis was carried out from the perspective of a trade union and social dialogue as LIZDA is one of the most significant social partners in the process of education policy. Therefore, education policy documents and LIZDA initiatives were chosen for the analysis (International Summit...; LU Profesionalas ievirzes...; Visi LIZDA dokumenti; Valdibas ricibas plans...; Latvijas Brivo Arodbiedribu...; ES lidzfinansets projekts...) to investigate what steps have been made so far or what measures are intended in the future to improve retention of novice teachers as well as respond to their professional needs.

#### 4. RESULTS

The survey results are outlined according to the statement groups related to methodological, financial, material, and technological measures of professional support. Generally speaking, the results show regional disparities mainly between the capital city Riga and other regions: there are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences in opinions of the teachers representing different regions of the country. For example, contrary to the comparison of all other regions, there are statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in teachers' opinions representing Riga and Latgale regions in assessment of importance of all support measures: methodological support (Riga  $M = 2.24$ ; Latgale  $M = 1.97$ ), financial support (Riga  $M = 1.90$ ; Latgale  $M = 1.92$ ), material and technological support (Riga  $M = 2.11$ ; Latgale  $M = 2.05$ ). Methodological support as very important was mostly emphasised by the teachers in Latgale (51%) and Kurzeme (47%) whereas material and technological support was mostly assessed as the most significant by the respondents in Latgale region (43%). This can be partially explained by different regional socio-economic situation, wealth of local municipalities, and other specifics such as number of pupils in the classroom, workload and age of teachers.

As already mentioned previously, mentoring and support of more experienced colleagues is crucial for novice teachers to remain in teaching profession after their first years in school. Regarding integrated *methodological support*, the survey respondents agreed that there is a lack of well-structured and uniform support system for novice teachers at national level. As research results reveal, mentoring is not provided in many schools. This was indicated by 26.2% of the respondents while 13.2% of the respondents were not even informed about availability of mentoring in their schools as they could not answer this question. 44% of the teachers admitted that mentoring is not a paid activity for those colleagues who support novice teachers and 51.7% pointed out that teaching and regular workload for mentors is not decreased due to mentoring responsibilities. That in turn does not motivate teachers of greater seniority to become mentors. Another challenge is providing a mentor of the same school subject what novice teacher delivers. 78.4% of the respondents agreed (strongly agreed or slightly agreed) that mentoring for novice teachers

is available in their schools during their first year of in-service. In general, the teachers were positive about availability of emotional support and in-service training in the school they worked. Opinions of the respondents on additional knowledge that novice teachers need are shown in the Table 1.

*Table 1.*  
*Statements in the questionnaire on additional knowledge that novice teachers need in starting their careers.*

Additional knowledge/ support that novice teachers need	Strongly agree		Slightly agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Slightly disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Mentoring on the basis of respective regulations in every school	545	43.3	413	32.8	126	10.0	43	3.4	18	1.4	113	9.0
Knowledge on rights and responsibilities of teachers, parents and children	632	50.2	401	31.9	101	8.0	24	1.9	12	1.0	88	7.0
Knowledge on better cooperation with colleagues in a school	485	38.6	453	36.0	170	13.5	45	3.6	17	1.4	88	7.0
Knowledge on establishing positive communication with pupils and their parents	576	45.8	460	36.6	106	8.4	26	2.1	15	1.2	75	6.0
Knowledge on how to prepare teaching materials effectively	591	47.0	430	34.2	116	9.2	24	1.9	19	1.5	78	6.2

The survey revealed more critical opinions about *material*, *technical* and *financial support* that novice teachers can access. The teachers were asked to assess the statements related to remuneration and impact of the lower salary rate on the motivation of young people to engage in teaching profession. Nearly all teachers agreed (90%) that the lowest rate of wages for teachers set out in the regulatory enactments does not increase the prestige of the profession (92% of Riga teachers supported this statement). They also believed that the salary rate of the teacher cannot be lower than the average salary in the country, multiplied by a factor of 1.2 (93% of Riga and 94% of Vidzeme respondents). Regarding this statement, opinions of teachers in Riga and Latgale regions differ significantly ( $p < 0.05$ , Riga  $M = 1.36$ , Latgale  $M = 1.55$ ), as well as those represented by the respondents from Riga and Zemgale regions ( $p < 0.05$ , Riga  $M = 1.36$ , Zemgale  $M = 1.46$ ). In comparison to the respondents from other regions, the teachers from Vidzeme region more frequently strongly agreed or slightly agreed (97%) that teacher remuneration does not motivate young people to choose a job in this profession. Zemgale teachers more often (81%) than teachers in the country on average (75%) agreed with the statement that when students with special needs are integrated in general education institutions, teachers are not paid for any additional duties. Regarding this statement, regions of Riga and Latgale have statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ , Riga  $M = 1.36$ , Latgale  $M = 1.64$ ).

In Latgale, teachers more often (64%) than average in Latvia (58%) strongly agreed and slightly agreed that the costs of their professional development activities were covered by themselves during the period of the last three years. The regions of Riga and Latgale,

contrary to the comparison of all other regions, had statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ , Riga  $M = 2.87$ , Latgale  $M = 2.42$ ) regarding this statement. Normally in Latvia costs of the seminars and professional development courses for teachers are covered by municipalities. If this is mostly done by teachers themselves, it indicates on limited possibilities of municipalities. In relation to the already available support measures, opinions of the respondents are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2.

*Statements in the questionnaire on availability of support measures for novice teachers.*

Availability of support measures at school / municipality level	Strongly agree		Slightly agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Slightly disagree		Strongly disagree		No opinion	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Freely available methodological materials	236	18.8	363	28.9	236	18.8	208	16.5	145	11.5	70	5.6
Professional development courses and seminars	635	50.5	406	32.3	81	6.4	20	1.6	18	1.4	98	7.8
Emotional support provided by senior colleagues	431	34.3	508	40.4	144	11.4	47	3.7	27	2.1	101	8.0
Additional and paid working time for preparation teaching materials	57	4.5	62	4.9	166	13.2	132	10.5	486	38.6	355	28.2
Video training for getting started	34	2.7	70	5.6	163	13.0	119	9.5	503	40.0	369	29.3
Service apartments provided by local municipality	56	4.5	102	8.1	120	9.5	82	6.5	482	38.3	416	33.1
Transport compensation provided by local municipality	70	5.6	58	4.6	117	9.3	81	6.4	569	45.2	363	28.9

It is obvious that in most of the schools, particular material and financial support measures are rather poorly provided. Regarding provision of health insurance there are statistically significant differences between the regions of Riga and Latgale ( $p < 0.05$ ); in the region of Riga 75% of the respondents have received health insurance, while in Latgale there were only 21%, which is the least result in comparison to all other regions. Approximately 40-50% of teachers in all regions had free catering in school; there were no statistically important regional differences in this. More than half of the respondents believed that novice teachers should have lower work load at the beginning of their career (28.7% strongly agreed and 29.7% slightly agreed) in order to complete all responsibilities duly and professionally. In general, the survey results revealed that in the regions of Latgale and Riga teachers were more likely to assess all forms of professional support as important, so they felt the need for aid. There are no statistically significant differences in opinions of trade union members and other respondents.

Within the framework of the research, an analysis of documents was performed (Table 3) in order to find out what has been done in Latvia in the period from 2018 to September 2020 to support and attract novice teachers.

*Table 3.*  
*Support and attraction activities for novice teachers in Latvia 2018 – 2020.*

Year	Organisation/ document	Support measures/ activities	Assessment
2018	Youth Council (YC) of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS)	YC of LABS was established in 1997 to protect and represent the common labour, economic and social rights and interests of young trade union members both in the workplace and in national and international institutions	The union represents the interests of young teachers
2018	School of young teachers and psychologists in University of Latvia	At the School of young teachers and psychologists, secondary school students additionally acquire knowledge and improve their skills in order to understand themselves better; they realize their interests and abilities, as well as suitability for their future profession	The university attracts secondary school students to choose the teaching profession
2018	LIZDA research	Evaluation of support measures for novice teachers	LIZDA analyses the available support measures for novice teachers
2019	Government Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers headed by A.K. Karins	It is declared that government will (1) raise the prestige of the teaching profession by strengthening the teacher mentoring, (2) continue to implement the teacher professional development strategy and provide support for the development of teachers' initial education	The government agreed on the tasks to be performed, which affect the attraction of novice teachers in Latvia
2019	Education International document	The World Teachers' Day theme in 2019/2020 was "Young Teachers: The Future of the Profession."	Attraction of novice teachers was actualized at the international level
2019	Minutes of the International Summit for Teaching Profession (in Finland)	Agreement between LIZDA and Ministry of Education and Science: to renew the teacher training model, to develop a support system for novice teachers, to improve the professional development of teachers, to involve trade unions in the planning and implementation of new education policy reforms	LIZDA has repeatedly emphasized the problem; however, support system for novice teachers has not been developed in Latvia
2019	LIZDA essay competition "I will be a teacher"	It aims to find out, summarize and disseminate the rationale of pedagogy students and pupils on why to choose a teaching profession that is attractive, exciting and interesting in the teaching profession	LIZDA analyses motivation of pedagogical students and pupils to choose the pedagogical profession

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Year	Organisation/ document	Support measures/ activities	Assessment
2020	LIZDA research	By the end of 2020, LIZDA plans to conduct a study on the quality of professional life of novice teachers in Latvia	LIZDA will prepare proposals for a support system for young teachers
2020	EU co-financed project "Teacher" (implementers: University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, Liepaja University, initiative "Mission Possible")	The aim of the new teacher education project is to attract capable and motivated professionals from various fields to the work of a teacher, providing the necessary education and practical training (100 selected candidates will be given the opportunity to become a teacher in one year and continue their professional development Latvian schools)	The government is interested in retrain in industry professionals for pedagogical work by providing state-funded studies, scholarships and supervision

Before 2018, when LIZDA conducted a study on the evaluation of teacher support measures including a block of questions related to the support for novice teachers was included, the only youth support and attraction measures were provided by the Youth Council of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia and the School of Young Teachers and Psychologists organized by the University of Latvia. Later, in 2019, the national government, inspired by LIZDA, agreed upon activities which will have future impact on attraction of novice teachers in Latvian schools:

- 1) increasing the prestige of the teaching profession;
- 2) strengthening the mentoring institutions for novice teachers;
- 3) improvement of professional development strategies;
- 4) support for the development of initial teacher education.

It must be concluded that raising the prestige of the profession is one of the most difficult tasks. At present, the motivation to become a teacher in Latvia is decreasing, the number of vacancies is increasing every year, but the salary for full-time work is decreasing in comparison with the other Baltic States and EU averages. Mentors are appointed for novice teachers; however, there is no motivation system for mentors to be interested in performing this additional job. Opportunities for professional development for new teachers are also limited, as first of all, vocational training for the introduction of competence-based curricula, as well as the improvement of digital skills is financed. It is usually used more acutely by experienced educators, as young teachers have recently received vocational training. In order to overcome the consequences that have arisen as a result of the increase in the number of teacher vacancies, the government co-financed the project "Teaching Staff", trying to attract professionals in the field to retrain for teaching. However, the principle of equal opportunities is violated, because teachers in the field pay for their studies themselves and do not receive a scholarship. Experience shows that a small proportion of professionals from other fields involved in Mission Possible remain in schools for a long time.

Education International announced 2019/2020 a year of young teachers. Its leading idea was "Young Teachers: The Future of the Profession." LIZDA, referring to it, organized an essay competition "I will be a teacher" with the aim to find out, summarize and disseminate the rationale of pedagogy students and pupils why to choose a teaching profession.

## **5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Current research has involved teachers of different seniority and age groups representing all levels of general education system in Latvia; however, the authors believe that more specifically opinions of novice teachers should be investigated. Measurements of factors influencing the quality of professional life of young teachers in Latvia could serve as research-based arguments for the development of measures for the support system for novice teachers and for convincing the government of the need to implement them.

It must be concluded that so far, the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with LIZDA, has not been able to develop a support system for novice teachers, which would serve as a basis for attracting and retaining new teachers in schools. In order to find out which areas of support are the most needed for young teachers, LIZDA has launched a study on the quality of professional life of novice teachers in Latvia. This research will be completed by the end of 2020.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

In comparison to the other studies reviewed in the paper, the results of the LIZDA research reveal some similar challenges what novice teachers face in Latvia: lack or limited availability of mentoring (Spencer et al., 2018; Paula, & Grinfelde, 2018; Zhukova et al., 2018), difficulties in communication, problems with discipline in a classroom, need for emotional and psychological support (Mukamurera et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2018), cooperation with colleagues (Bakieva et al., 2019), establishing teacher's authority and self-positioning as a teacher (Paula, & Grinfelde, 2018; Hauksdottir et al., 2018), unexpected workload on a daily basis (Paula, & Grinfelde, 2018; Mukamurera et al., 2019), stress (Antoniou et al., 2020; Bar-Tal et al., 2020). Apart from the professional support what novice teacher receive from the schools and their colleagues, societal and parental help and understanding is expected (Antoniou et al., 2020). As well as in Billingsley (2004) research, also LIZDA study confirms that special education teachers need greater support including financial remuneration. Most of the research call for well organized, structured and comprehensive support system.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

The authors conclude that different professional support measures are available for novice teachers in Latvia, however, there is no support system in place to address which functions and support measures should be implemented at national, municipal and school level. The TALIS 2018 survey indicated following the most common priorities for policy intervention reported by teachers: 1) reducing class sizes; 2) improving teacher salaries; 3) offering high-quality professional development for teachers, and 4) reducing teachers' administration load (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Considering these priorities, Latvian policy makers also should focus on implementation teachers' support guidelines at national level. This would allow schools to ensure the most appropriate environment for novice teachers so that they would like to continue their careers in teaching profession. Even though mentoring is available, still many teachers lack this opportunity. Also, teachers of greater seniority may lack appropriate support and motivation to become mentors as often mentoring is not a paid activity and is not included

in teacher workload. Material and financial support measures such as transport compensation, increased remuneration, adequate professional development seminars would increase retention of novice teachers into education system.

The largest trade union in the education sector LIZDA is currently actively involved in supporting novice teachers, but the tasks set by the government, however, are more relevant for various levels and institutions: the state and governmental institutions, pedagogical program implementers and regional universities, municipalities as school founders and schools themselves.

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## KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

**Novice teacher (also beginning teacher, early career teacher):** a teacher with less than three (in other sources less than five) years of teaching experience.

**Mentoring:** process in which a skilled or more experienced educator teaches and counsels a less skilled or less experienced teacher (e.g. novice teacher) to promote his or her professional personal development.

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