



Primary School Teachers' Experiences in the Distance Education

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Abstract

As in other countries, schools in Turkey have had to switch to distance education due to COVID-19 spreading worldwide and becoming a pandemic. The quality and future direction of education during the pandemic is a matter of debate, particularly at the primary school level, which is always essential for pupils to acquire life skills. The purpose of this research is to determine the situations experienced by primary school teachers in the distance education process and their inferences regarding this process. The sample of the research employing the phenomenology design consisted of 20 primary school teachers serving in state schools in seven different regions in Turkey which are determined via maximum variation sampling. We collected the data using a semi-structured interview technique and subjected the data to content analysis. The findings revealed that the participants' views were clustered under four major themes: teaching, stakeholders, recommendations, and future projection of the pandemic. In the first theme, the participating teachers uttered that their students could not fully acquire the desired outcomes in distance education, which was mediated by the drawbacks experienced in the use of technology. In addition, they reported that the low participation rates among students also influenced failures in teaching. In the second theme, they drew attention to the significance of parental involvement. In the theme of "Recommendations," the participating teachers offered some recommendations for the goals and objectives, teaching-learning process, and measurement and evaluation. In the last theme, they highlighted the topics related to distance education, the effects of the pandemic, and compensatory programs. Based on the results obtained in the research, suggestions were made to provide technological tools and internet support to students, and to provide training for possible crisis situations during the training of teachers.

Keywords

Distance education
COVID-19 pandemic
Primary school
Primary school teachers
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Introduction

In late March 2020, many teachers and students may have thought that their lives were exactly characterized by the title of the album, "Everything You Know Is Wrong," released by the Firesign Theatre, reaching fame with its surreal performances in the United States in the second half of the 20th century. It was because the familiar framework for education was suddenly replaced by new constraints and assumptions. Yet, unlike the album, this process was not fun (Jeffery & Bauer, 2020).

The pandemic of COVID-19 in December 2019 and it's becoming a global pandemic in March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020) have mandated to take a series of measures, and the authorities have attempted to alleviate the pandemic by reducing physical contact among individuals due to the unprecedented contagiousness of the virus. In this context, a total of 191 countries have decided to shut down educational institutions at all levels, including primary, secondary, and higher education, directly interrupting the face-to-face education of 1.6 billion students (about 90% of the total student population) (UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, educational institutions have been forced to perform their activities remotely and employ emergency remote teaching practices. Then, emergency remote teaching, which is also denoted as a temporary solution against a sudden challenge to education, was set on as a response to the global education crisis (Golden, 2020).

Recently, it has been considered noteworthy to reveal the experiences gained by teachers through various activities within the practices mandated by the transition to emergency remote teaching and in relevant teaching environments in Turkey. Particularly, such practices performed at the primary school level, a critical period for students, have been considered to bear greater importance. Thus, there will be an opportunity to reimplement and develop effective practices in possible adverse situations, while those going wrong will be revised and altered. Ultimately, we investigated teacher experiences in emergency remote teaching under specific themes in the present research. Although the literature is substantially occupied by studies exploring teachers' views on distance education (Bayburtlu, 2020; DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022; Julie, Rianasari, & Apriani, 2022; Kesik & Baş, 2021; Sönmez, Yıldırım, & Çetinkaya, 2020), it still lacks a comprehensive approach to primary school teachers' problems in and recommendations for this process. In this context, the teachers inferences regarding this process were considered important and therefore the research focused on this subject.

Distance education is defined as a web-based education embodying students thanks to advanced internet technologies through computers. (Newby, Stepich, Lehman, & Russell, 2006). This definition of distance education implies that students and teachers do not need face-to-face meetings for educational purposes anymore (Holmberg, 2003). Thus, it would be prudent to propose that distance education practices appear as the most appropriate practices to prevent the disruption of education during the pandemic. It should also be noted that the term "distance education" needs to be perceived within the scope of emergency remote teaching since it has not been optional but driven by compulsory reasons during the pandemic. Contrary to pre-designated education, emergency remote teaching emerges following an epic disaster (Mohammed, Khidhir, Nazeer, & Vijayan, 2020). Besides, this pandemic-driven process has mandated teachers to review their competencies in instructional technologies and close their respective gaps quickly. Initially, when teachers have shifted their teaching processes to online environments, they have confronted unfamiliar situations, such as recognizing videoconferencing tools, guiding the participation of their students, and creating new teaching plans compatible with synchronous and asynchronous environments through novel tools. In addition, they needed to establish effective communication with parents and monitor their students' emotional, social, and psychological states (Jimoyiannis, Koukis, & Tsiotakis, 2021).

Measures against the pandemic were implemented on March 11, 2020, when the first case was reported in Turkey (Ministry of Health, 2021). Undoubtedly, educational activities took their share of these measures, and face-to-face education was suspended in all institutions as of March 14, 2020. Moreover, the increase in daily cases and mortalities have forced compulsory education to shift to emergency remote teaching across the country (Eken, Tosun, & Tuzcu-Eken, 2020). In this process, the

Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has taken a series of measures and put various remedying practices into effect. Such measures and practices are explained below:

Education Information Network (EBA)

The MoNE previously initiated the Movement of Enhancing Opportunities and Improving Technology (FATİH) in 2011 to ensure equality of opportunity in education, improve technological infrastructures in schools, and ensure the effective use of information technology tools in lessons in the way of appealing to more senses in the teaching-learning process. The e-content portal, Education Information Network (EBA), was launched for the use of both students and teachers in 2012 as a deliverable of the project. The portal is an education-oriented social platform that hosts various learning materials, including videos, documents, e-books, tests, and activities, based on preschool-secondary education curricula (MoNE, 2022). In the COVID-19 pandemic, the infrastructure of EBA, which has been in practice within the MoNE since 2012, has been boosted so that it can be used more efficiently in emergency remote teaching. Online live classes have first been performed via Zoom and then Skype and Google Meet applications on this platform. In addition, the MoNE has cooperated with GSM operators to provide a free 8 GB data package for students to access the EBA portal (Özer, 2020). In addition, the platform has been enriched with the subject- and outcome-matched video or interactive teaching, practices, subject reviews, infographics, project documents, and teacher-specific content (MoNE, 2021a).

EBA TV

The cooperation between the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation and the MoNE has enabled students to be able to follow classes designed on specific curricula at EBA TV Primary School, EBA TV Secondary School, and EBA TV High School. The broadcast stream of these channels could be followed on the EBA website, as well as on television (Tatlı, Er Nas, Turan, & Yaman, 2021). A total of 1000 experienced teachers from 112 different areas of expertise have taken part in these broadcasts. In addition, students who missed their classes for various reasons can access all the class records on the platforms www.eba.gov.tr and <https://www.trtizle.com/> (MoNE, 2021a). These TV channels continue to broadcast after face-to-face education.

EBA Support Centers

“EBA Support Centers” have been established at schools and relevant institutions for students who cannot access the EBA platform for several reasons. A total of 13,650 centers and 133 mobile EBA support centers have put efforts into preventing students from falling behind in their online educational activities (MoNE, 2020a).

MoNE Assistant ve EBA Assistant

There is a smiley icon in the lower right corner of the web page of the MoNE, and it connects to MoNE Assistant, an artificial intelligence-based virtual assistant (MoNE, 2021b) responding to any inquiries about the MoNE 24/7. The EBA assistant, on the other hand, has been implemented to instantly respond to user inquiries, resolve problems, and maintain the effectiveness of the system. EBA Assistant is a virtual assistant with the ability to instantly respond to nearly 100 FAQs under ten main categories at the first stage (MoNE, 2021b).

In-service Online Seminars

Moreover, an online professional development program has been designed in cooperation with UNESCO. The program covers 17 different informatics-oriented topics and has been made available to teachers through distance education. The seminars include Introduction to Computer Networks, Coding with Python, Introduction to Cyber Security, Internet of Things, Basic Information Technologies, Coding with Java, Database, Fundamentals of Digital Entrepreneurship, Teaching Computational Skills with an Interdisciplinary Approach, Android Software Development with Flutter, Software Development with Kotlin, Computer-Aided Design, “Everyone Can Write Code,” Productivity and Creativity Practices, Project Consultancy, Museum Education, and School-Based Disaster Education (MoNE, 2020b).

Activity Books

The MoNE has engaged in preparing activity books at the primary and secondary school levels to respond to students' requests for supplementary materials. Accordingly, 17.5 million books have been distributed to students free of charge. These books have also been published online on EBA (Anadolu Agency, 2021).

Practices for Students with Special Needs

The classes on cognitive skills, self-care skills, daily life skills, Turkish, and Math have been held for students with special needs (MoNE, 2020c). In addition, two different additional materials consisting of 350 activities have been shared with students receiving inclusive education and high school students to compensate for their comprehension deficiencies (Anadolu Agency, 2021). Moreover, sign language-supported materials have been integrated into the EBA portal (Özer, 2020). Instructional videos and informative videos prepared by experts for families have been broadcasted on EBA TV. Besides, video content on teaching basic skills has been designed and released in cooperation with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Furthermore, the MoNE has released a mobile application, "I am special, I am in education" which includes educational content and activities for students with special needs and their parents (Öpengin, 2020).

Psychosocial Guidelines for Students and Parents

The MoNE has prepared psychosocial guidelines to promote the psychological resilience of students and parents and protect their affective states. These guidelines include information for students and parents about the impacts of COVID-19 and recommendations for parents to promote their children's well-being. Considering the differences in the target groups, the guidelines are presented in three editions: for families, adults, and the young (Özer, 2020).

The pandemic inevitably has mandated to shift to distance education in Turkey. Now, primary school-level institutions have reshifted to face-to-face education. However, the uncertainty of how long the distance education process will be called for duty and the idea that distance education can be a part of the standard educational procedures at the end of the pandemic seem to necessitate eliciting teachers' views on this subject. Therefore, we aimed to explore the experiences of primary school teachers and reveal their outcomes in the distance education process.

In line with this major purpose, we sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are primary school teachers' views on teaching in distance education?
2. What are primary school teachers' views on stakeholders of education in distance education?
3. What are primary school teachers' recommendations for distance education?
4. What are primary school teachers' views on the future projections of distance education?

Method

The present study employed a phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research approaches. Phenomenological research primarily focuses on people's experiences and the meanings they derive from these experiences (Patton, 2014), including their firsthand life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In the phenomenology design, a researcher attempts to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). Creswell (2013) proposes two significant types of phenomenological designs: descriptive and interpretative. The descriptive design only describes participants' perceptions and experiences about a phenomenon. In interpretive phenomenology, on the other hand, a researcher investigates how participants make sense of a specific phenomenon based on firsthand experiences. The present study utilized the interpretive phenomenology design since we explored teachers' experiences and recommendations for distance education during and after the pandemic.

Sample

The sample consisted of 20 primary school teachers of diverse experiences who were teaching at different grade levels in seven different regions in Turkey. We identified the sample using the maximum variation sampling among purposive sampling techniques. The rationale behind selecting maximum variation sampling originated from its features, such as a consideration of any common or shared phenomena among the diverse situations and revealing the distinct dimensions of the problem (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Table 1 presents the relevant information on the sample.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Characteristics

No	Gender	Seniority (years)	Appointment Region	Appointment Location	Grade Level
1	Male	7	Marmara	District center	4th grade
2	Female	16	Black Sea	City center	2nd grade
3	Female	11	Black Sea	Rural area	Multigrade class of 1-2nd grades
4	Male	1	Southeastern Anatolia	District center	1st grade
5	Female	1	Marmara	City center	1st grade
6	Female	21	Marmara	City center	3rd grade
7	Female	2	Eastern Anatolia	Rural area	Multigrade class of 3-4th grades
8	Female	14	Mediterranean	Rural area	1st grade
9	Male	28	Mediterranean	Rural area	1st grade
10	Female	1	Southeastern Anatolia	Rural area	1st grade
11	Female	3	Southeastern Anatolia	Rural area	2nd grade
12	Female	24	Central Anatolia	Rural area	1st grade
13	Female	18	Aegean	City center	4th grade
14	Male	2	Eastern Anatolia	Rural area	Multigrade class of 3-4th grades
15	Male	21	Marmara	City center	1st grade
16	Female	25	Central Anatolia	Rural area	1st grade
17	Female	5	Eastern Anatolia	Rural area	4th grade
18	Male	30	Aegean	District center	2nd grade
19	Female	11	Black Sea	City center	2nd grade
20	Male	27	Black Sea	City center	1st grade

As shown in the table, seven of the participating teachers were males, while thirteen were females. The professional seniority of the teachers ranged from one to thirty years. We held interviews with 20 primary school teachers who work in the rural area, district center and city center which work four from the Black Sea and Marmara regions, three from the Southeastern Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia regions, and two from the Central Anatolia, Aegean, and Mediterranean regions. The participants taught first, second, third, and fourth graders, as well as in multigrade classes.

Data Collection Tool and Its Development Procedure

In the study, we collected the data through semi-structured interviews. As expected, it is rather challenging to directly observe people's firsthand experiences and how they make sense of these experiences. Thus, one may only be informed about such experiences by asking questions through interviews (Patton, 2014). The research focused on the distance education experiences of primary teachers during the epidemic process. In this process, semi-structured interview was used in the research because it allows the number and order of the questions asked to be changed in order to reveal the experiences gained by the teachers and it is suitable for the nature of the phenomenology method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Regarding the data collection technique above, we collected the data using an “Interview Form for Distance Education.” Initially, we developed a draft form upon reviewing the relevant literature (Akyavuz & Çakın, 2020; Bayburtlu, 2020; Duban & Şen, 2020; Türker & Dündar, 2020). Next, we performed a pilot study to reveal the validity, reliability, and practicality of the draft form. We consulted three experts in terms of its linguistics, conception, clarity/intelligibility, and content-related compliance with the research subject. According to expert opinions, we added questions about physical education and games, visual arts and music lessons and the distance education process experiences of students with special needs to the form and apply to two primary school teachers who were not included in the study group. Finally, we finalized the form following some adjustments upon feedback.

Data Collection

Data related to the research were collected from teachers who voluntarily participated in the study from seven different regions of Turkey. Before the data collection process, an application was made to Kastamonu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee for the ethical evaluation of the research, and the ethics committee document (dated 25.03.2021 and numbered 44) was obtained. The interviews were held online with the teachers at predetermined times and were recorded with the permission of the participants. Before the interviews, the participants were informed about the overall purpose of the research, the confidentiality of their data, and the ethical principles followed. The interviews lasted for a total of 22 hours, between 25 and 120 minutes for each participant.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed utilizing the content analysis technique. Content analysis is rather preferred among researchers since being deemed a suitable technique for processing multifaceted textual, visual, and audio data (Stemler, 2015). First, we initiated the analysis process by transcribing the interviews. Next, we generated the codes using the words or phrases uttered in line with the research purpose. Then, sub-themes and themes emerged upon bringing together the codes linked with each other.

Concerning internal reliability, we clearly and consistently presented the research questions at all stages. In addition, we collected the data from the participating primary school teachers as required by the research questions and submitted the findings consistent with the data obtained in the interviews. In this research, we adopted the “agreement percentage” suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) to calculate the reliability of the study: $[\text{Reliability} = (\text{Agreement}) / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement})]$. According to this formula, the cases where researchers use an overlapping code for the expressions of the participants are recognized as “agreement,” while different codes for the same statement are accepted as “disagreement.” After comparing our codes, we calculated the agreement percentage in the study to be .84. As a rule of thumb, a percentage of 70% is considered reliable in the terms of a concluded agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To increase the internal reliability of the research, we recorded all the interviews with the participants. Besides, we all clearly defined the interview technique used in the research and its stages to ensure external reliability. In addition, we referred to studies on collecting data through an interview form, analyzing the data with the content analysis technique, interpreting the findings, and reaching implications. The findings were presented about the data, and necessary adjustments were performed on relevant expert opinions on our data collection tool, data, and findings. Furthermore, the findings were discussed concerning the previous research to implore the reliability of the study. Demographic information of the participants to whom the quotes belonged was presented in parentheses at the end of the quotes (e.g., T2).

Findings

We concluded the following findings as a result of the research, aiming to explore what the primary school teachers overall experienced in the emergency remote teaching process during the pandemic. We discussed the interviews with the participants under the themes of teaching, stakeholders, recommendations, and the future projections of the pandemic (Figure 1). The themes and their sub-themes are detailed in this section.

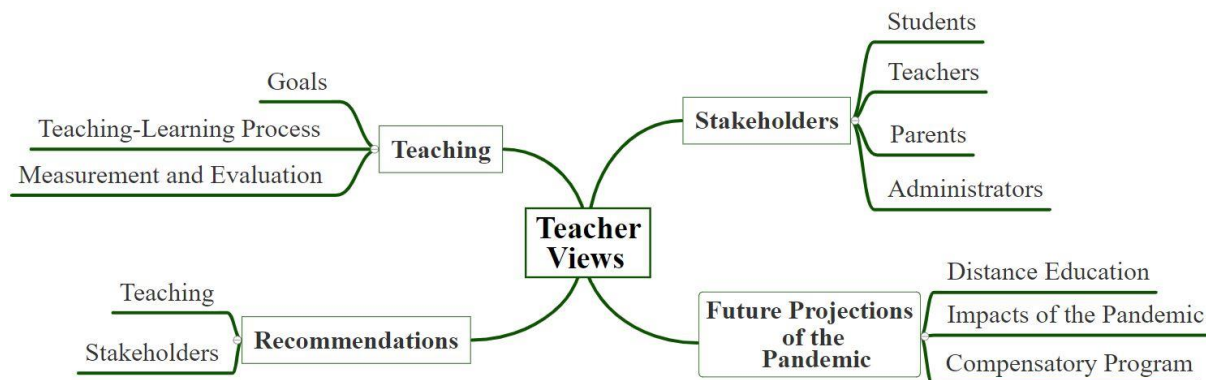


Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes Emerged Upon the Teachers' Views

Theme of Teaching

The theme of teaching consists of the sub-themes of goals, the teaching-learning process, and measurement and evaluation.

Sub-theme of Goals

The sub-theme of goals covered the teachers' views on how the pandemic affected their educational goals. The majority of the teachers ($f=14$) reported that they could not reach the goals set at the beginning of the academic year. They showed the underlying reasons for this situation as poor participation in online classes ($f=5$), the inability to teach as effectively as in face-to-face education ($f=2$), noninvolvement of parents in the process ($f=4$), poor interactions in online classes ($f=2$), and the shortage of materials designed for distance education ($f=1$). Sample teacher responses regarding these views is shared below.

"My goals were not the same. Even the activities are only done if the children participate in them. The participation rate is poor; I cannot achieve my goals and cover the whole curriculum."
(T3)

The teachers reporting being able to achieve their educational goals in distance education ($f=6$), on the other hand, indicated that it was only possible thanks to the involvement of parents in the process ($f=4$), the lack of negativities in the school/friend environment ($f=1$), and students' self-regulation ($f=1$). Sample teacher response regarding the relevant situations is shared below.

"... We have not experienced any negativities due to the facilities, conditions, and physical environment of the school. Children could have quarrels with each other during breaks, which was reflected in classes. Yet, there has been less to distract them in distance education. I can claim that the absence of such distractors has contributed to students' achievement." (T6)

In addition, the teachers' views on the changes in relation to their students' knowledge, skills, and values during the pandemic were also grouped under this sub-theme. In general, the participants reported that despite substantial progress in conveying the subject matter knowledge to their students in distance education (f=6), they still had a hard time with teaching skills and values (f=7). According to the teachers, such issues may have been caused by ineffective discipline rituals in the home environment during distance education (f=2), students' reduced physical activities (f=1) and socialization (f=1) at home, and short class lengths in distance education (f=2). Sample teacher response regarding these views are shared below.

"We have experienced too much regression in values education; it wouldn't be like this if we taught in the classroom. Distance education has set us back. Distance education has failed to enable students to socialize. At least, students with low academic success who remained silent during classes were leading the plays during breaks before the pandemic. This situation surprised me so much that I cannot explain, but they have had no such an opportunity in distance education." (T3)

Sub-theme of Teaching-Learning Process

The sub-theme of teaching-learning process covered the teachers' views on EBA TV broadcasts and experiences in the use of technology in distance education activities, teaching platforms, the content, resources, and documents utilized during online classes, and online activities for students.

While the participants were concerned about how to adopt distance education activities at the beginning of the pandemic, it seemed that they got much experience in using online platforms and computers (f=5), overcame their worries, and gained self-confidence (f=2). Sample teacher response regarding these views are shared below.

"It has been an unusual experience for my students and me. I used to use the internet, but now I have started to utilize it more conveniently. I believe I have gained experience using technology; it is likely to be the case for children." (T1)

In distance education, the teachers taught their online classes via EBA (f=15), Zoom (f=19), and WhatsApp (f=7). Some of the participating teachers reported having to teach their classes through video calls via WhatsApp since their students did not have devices to access EBA and Zoom at the beginning of the pandemic. They cited situations such as an obligation imposed by the ministry (f=6), widespread use (f=2), and convenience (f=2) as the reasons for teaching classes on these platforms. Sample teacher response regarding the relevant situations is shared below.

"We have attended online classes via WhatsApp. They have had difficulties in accessing EBA and complained about the lack of enough memory space on their phones for EBA. WhatsApp has offered such another advantage that I could show whatever is suitable on the camera. I have preferred it because it is more practical." (T4)

Teachers frequently utilized the contents on EBA (f=6), online education platforms of private institutions (f=7), YouTube (f=3), and social media (f=2) during their classes in distance education. They also uttered that they shared authentic documents on WhatsApp groups (f=3). They adopted textbooks (f=20) and activity books from private publishers (f=10) as printed documents. The teachers highly appreciated the textbooks distributed by the MoNE upon the beginning of the academic year, and many of them stated that they would not have used the books from private publishers if they had received the official textbooks earlier (f=7). In addition, some teachers expressed using authentic worksheets in distance education (f=4). Sample teacher responses regarding these views are shared below.

"I utilize different activity books and the internet a lot. I also check EBA content for teaching documents, videos, and songs. I use the activity ideas from teacher groups on social media. Compared to previous years, the MoNE has sent more activity books this year, and they have helped me much." (T3)

Most of the teachers (f=13) followed EBA TV broadcasts when available and advised their students who could not attend distance education to follow these broadcasts. Those (f=7) not following EBA TV broadcasts perceived its content as unsatisfying. They also mentioned the content was unsuitable for the level of their students and the subject matter taught. Some teachers (f=3) stated that they received negative feedback from the parents about EBA TV broadcasts, and it was because their students did not follow them. A sample teacher response regarding EBA TV is shared below.

“My students have been following EBA TV, but I couldn’t always do it. At first, I watched it to grab an idea about how students are taught but have not followed it all the time. I have sent a message to my students to watch EBA TV when they have had no distance education. Yet, I can’t say they have enjoyed it. I think that students have wanted to see their teachers. In addition, the parents have reported that the classes on EBA TV broadcasts have progressed rapidly and that there was not enough waiting time for their children to answer the questions during the classes.”
(T2)

The teachers stated performing different practices in distance education. For example, they assigned homework on the EBA platform and from activity books regarding the topics they covered in their classes (f=4) and shared authentic worksheets on WhatsApp groups (f=7). In addition to these, they followed up on their students’ academic progress using project assignments (f=1). In this process, to keep their students’ interest in online classes, they performed educational games (f=4), introduced online theaters (f=1), made the students listen to online concerts (f=1), told students fairy tales (f=1), performed drama (f=2), organized trips to virtual museums (f=1). There were also teachers (f=3) who ensured the involvement of parents in some practices in online classes. Sample responses regarding the practices of the teachers are shared below.

“I have had them tell fairy tales, complete these tales, and do role play. These have been the things contributing to children’s attention to classes and increasing their motivation. We visited an online museum since we had no such opportunities during face-to-face education. There are not many museums in our city. Even if we have decided to visit one, we have to obtain multiple permissions from relevant bodies, as well as overcome its financial aspect. Yet, we have visited Gobeklitepe online. I’m not too fond of visiting museums since I was a kid because it was nothing more than seeing ancient plates and jugs for me. However, doing drama has made me think differently. Then, I started doing activities like prediction games. I have also tried to make my students listen to many concerts in music classes. I have shown them the flute, and my wife has played the baglama for them. In this sense, distance education has gone well. It was challenging to bring them all to a physical classroom, but one of the advantages of the internet is that we can get them all right away, thanks to only a click.” (T19)

Sub-theme of Measurement and Evaluation

The sub-theme of measurement and evaluation covers the teachers’ views on the measurement and evaluation activities they did in distance education. They uttered that they evaluated their students by their participation in-class activities and did not consider those showing high participation equal to students who did not (f=15). In addition, they received parental support to assess the assignments of students (f=3) or requested video proof to be able to assess students’ readings (f=2). Furthermore, they stated that they observed their students’ academic progress during distance education (f=5). Sample responses of teachers’ views on assessment and evaluation activities are shared below.

“We have had to assess the students’ academic achievement by their participation in classes. I have considered the students successful if they could attend distance education, complete necessary assignments, and make needed corrections. I have made the assessments upon having them read paragraphs in reading classes and having their problems done in Math classes.” (T2)

Measurement evaluation was indicated as the most challenging aspect by the participating teachers who could not perform it during distance education (f=7). They had problems in measurement and evaluation due to the lack of regular student participation (f=4) and the lack of measurement tools designed for distance education (f=4), as well as their lack of experience (f=2). In addition, some teachers could not carry out reliable measurement and evaluation activities due to the confusion arising from interferences of the parents with class activities (f=3). A sample teacher's opinion on these issues is given below.

"... I couldn't fully evaluate my students since they were always directed by their parents. When parents guided their children, I couldn't figure out whether ideas, knowledge, and skills belonged to them. I couldn't understand their shortcomings; therefore, I couldn't do measurement and evaluation practices at the desired level." (T12)

We also resorted to the participating teachers' views on the process-oriented evaluation in distance education. Teachers who were able to perform process-oriented evaluations stated that they did this on their students' project assignments (f=1) and in-class observations (f=5). Some (f=3) reported that they could not perform such practices since their students did not participate in classes. Sample responses regarding the practices of the teachers are shared below.

"I do mostly evaluate the process and make observations. For example, I have had the students do dictation in the Turkish language classes and assessed my students accordingly. I have considered their ability to do operations using objects in the Math classes." (T4)

Theme of Stakeholders

In the theme of stakeholders, we explored the dimensions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators based on the teachers' views.

Sub-theme of Students

According to the teachers, about half of their students participated in online classes in distance education. While all of the students of the three teachers showed full participation in online classes, a teacher reported it was vice versa in his/her classes. The teachers often cited the lack of internet or suitable devices at home (f=11) and the indifference of the parents (f=5) as the reasons for poor participation rates among their students. The sample response about the students' attendance at the classes is shared below.

"We call it equal opportunity in education, but one of my students could not attend any classes for ten months since s/he had no such opportunity. His/her family was indifferent, too. When s/he returned to the school, I realized that s/he had already lost the reading skill." (T19)

We asked the teachers about favorable situations for students participating in online classes during the distance education process. Accordingly, the teachers stated that they used more visuals (f=3), got easier access to necessary content (f=5), and could benefit from different platforms (f=4) thanks to online classes. In addition, it turned into an advantage for the students who got an opportunity to attend online classes with low attendance; thus, the classes were conducted in the form of one-to-one lessons (f=5). The teachers also claimed that their students were more self-confident by means of attending classes at their homes (f=2) and that they could easily launch supplementary classes when needed (f=2). Even a teacher indicated that some illiterate parents were able to learn to read and write when following classes with their children. A sample response to the positive situations experienced by the students in this process is shared below.

"In online classes, I have had an opportunity to reach materials that I couldn't find the time for preparing or videos that I couldn't download before. I immediately opened the visual for a subject that students have difficulty in. The ability to type something on the screen is time-saving and quick." (T11)

On the other hand, we asked the teachers about negative situations for students participating in online classes during the distance education process. Accordingly, the teachers showed a lack of internet access (f=4) and suitable devices (f=2) as the greatest disadvantages of distance education for students. These negativities were followed by the divergence of online classes from face-to-face education and no parental supervision (f=3). Even the teachers claimed that some students forgot to read and write due to the lack of parental supervision. It was also uttered that the classes, such as music, arts, and physical education, were completely inefficient since the parents did not take these classes seriously (f=7) and that students dealing with internet-related problems preferred not to attend these classes. According to some teachers (f=2), materials designed for online classes remained insufficient. Another problem was related to parental interference (f=4), parents' getting angry with their students (f=2), and parents' comparing their children with their peers (f=1) during online classes. Some students' problems with their physical environments, such as the lack of desks where they can attend classes and having to stay in the same room with too many people during classes, were shown among the negativities experienced by students in distance education (f=4). Besides, a teacher indicated that foreign students could not benefit from distance education and experienced delays in learning Turkish (f=1). In addition, the teachers reported specific problems associated with group activities (f=1), regression in students' social skills (f=3), and irritable behavior among students (f=1). A sample response to the negativities experienced by the students is shared below.

"Parents don't consider arts, physical education, and music among "authentic" classes and think that they waste their child(ren)'s time. I'm rather worried about it. When I allocate some time for children to draw something, parents perceive it as something that they can do themselves, meaning that they think children waste the data package for nothing. Or they consider children's movements or activities in physical education class unnecessary." (T3)

Six teachers reported having students with special needs. A teacher with a student, who could not be present at her/his school due to his/her physical disability, stated that this process turned into an opportunity for him/her and that the student attended all of the distance education. On the other hand, another teacher with a student with a hearing impairment reported that distance education was not good for his/her student since the student could not follow classes due to her/his impairment. The teacher stated that this student tried to follow the lessons with EBA TV. It was also often stated that inclusive students with autism did not attend distance education classes and that even if they did, their parents did not allow them to watch the screen too much. Some teachers complained that they could not communicate with students due to absenteeism and nor with their parents during distance education (f=3). Besides, it was reported that students attending special education schools did not fall behind academically but had significant social problems (f=1). The sample response regarding the views of the teachers about their students with special needs is shared below.

"One of my students suffers from head-to-toe paralysis and is homeschooled. S/he is good at Math and has shown exceptional participation in classes. In this process, s/he has been very demanding. I have three students with special needs, but the process has been helpful for my homeschooled student. If I had taught face-to-face, I could have done it for 1-2 hours. Yet, in distance education, s/he has attended all of the classes." (T1)

Sub-theme of Teachers

In the study, we asked the participating teachers whether they could not teach any classes in distance education. Some teachers stated that the students often made choices among the classes (f=5) due to their limited data packages (f=14); therefore, physical education, arts, and music classes could not be conducted efficiently. In addition, the teachers cited space restrictions (f=2) and the inability to carry out group work over the internet (f=3) as reasons for the ineffective teaching in physical education classes. For the music class, the teachers had problems such as sound jungle and delays (f=2). Among those teaching in multigrade classes, some (f=4) preferred not to teach arts, music, and physical education classes due to limited EBA class hours. They had almost no problems while teaching other

classes, but the classes progressed more slowly compared to face-to-face education. The sample response of the teachers' opinions about the classes that could not be taught is shared below.

"I just couldn't teach the physical education class. Since having rather limited internet access, 1-2 students with an unlimited data package have been attending the class. Others have only attended the reading, math, and life studies classes, so physical education classes could not be taught." (T8)

While 14 teachers could adhere to their annual teaching plans, it was not the case for six teachers. The latter group showed absenteeism (f=3), teaching at a multigrade level (f=1), and commitment only to teaching students to read and write (f=1) as the reasons for non-adherence to their teaching plans. The first group, on the other hand, proposed that they could compensate for missing subject matter topics with supplementary classes (f=2). In addition, there were teachers (f=2) asking parents following distance education with their children to assist them after the classes. Some teachers (f=1) thought that the negativities at school were directly reflected in the classes in face-to-face education but that there were fewer distractors for students in distance education. Thus, they adhered to their teaching plans more easily in distance education than in face-to-face education. The teachers (f=2), following their annual teaching plans during classes, stated that they would do compensatory classes in face-to-face education for those who could not attend their classes. A sample of teachers' views on the annual teaching plans is given below.

"I have followed the official curriculum plan. We have had to move forward in teaching. Hadn't it been, there would have been chaos." (T15)

In the interviews, the teachers were asked about the positive aspects of distance education. Most of the teachers highlighted the process contributed to their professional development (f=13). Accordingly, they had a chance to participate in fruitful webinars and in-service training (f=4) and improve themselves in digital technologies (f=3). They also reported that they had enriched communication with parents (f=6) and that parents had the opportunity to witness what the teachers did for their children (f=3). In addition, they emphasized that while the events occurring during breaks were directly reflected in classes in face-to-face education, it was not the case in distance education (f=3). Moreover, the teachers learned that the school is not a building surrounded by four walls (f=1), that education may not only be performed in physical settings (f=2), and that they can teach even in adverse situations (e.g., snow holidays) (f=1), and that students can be reached somehow (f=1). The sample response regarding the positive experiences of the teachers regarding the epidemic process is shared below.

"I'm happy to have learned to reach children in some way. I think that I've advanced a little bit in technology. I didn't use to use Zoom and didn't know how to share something on Zoom. I only used EBA, but I have started to use EBA and other programs more effectively. I have also recognized that communication is not just touching each other." (T12)

The teachers touched upon some undesirable situations in distance education. They often stated experiencing physical ailments such as eye and neck pain (f=6) and psychological distress (f=5) due to teaching in front of the screen for a long time. They had greater motivation when teaching in face-to-face education (f=3). In addition, the teachers had fewer opportunities to socialize and interact with their colleagues (f=2). Regarding their students, they regretted that they could not help their students get the desirable academic achievement (f=8) due to the low participation rates in online classes. It was also pointed out that students could not fully acquire the school and classroom rules since they stopped attending face-to-face education (f=3). Two teachers complained that some parents wanted them to be more interested in their children or recognize them during classes. Some teachers were distracted by the telephone calls from the parents late at night (f=2). A sample response to teachers' negative experiences regarding the pandemic process is presented below.

“Children this age are pretty active. We became ready for the class in front of the screens at 9, but some students were still sleeping or trying to attend class in their beds. The classroom setting has a particular order; there are some breaks between classes, at least. Yet, it’s like being locked up in a cell at home during distance education. A child was sleeping on the table. This time, I changed the class hours. Another child was connected from the kitchen; the mother was washing the dishes or chopping something. We all experienced such distractions at first. It does not happen in the classroom because I can dominate the class in the classroom setting and have physical touch with students. Distance education is not quite suitable for primary school children.” (T18)

Sub-theme of Parents

In the interviews, we asked the teachers if parents were involved in distance education. In general, the participating teachers noted the significance of parental involvement in distance education. Accordingly, the majority of teachers (f=14) reported that parents were involved in the process and followed online classes with their children, which brought positive or negative consequences for students depending on the parents’ profiles. For example, some parents (f=5) following classes with their children had their children do some follow-up activities. Some others, on the other hand, tended to respond to teachers’ questions instead of their children during classes (f=2) and got angry with their children when they could not answer the questions (f=1). Yet, some parents were reported not being involved in distance education (f=6), not responding to teachers’ efforts to communicate with them (f=2), and not providing their children with a suitable environment to attend online classes (f=1). A sample teacher's view regarding the involvement of students' parents in the distance education process is shared below.

“They have been mostly involved in the process. I can’t teach first-graders without their assistance. There has not been standard coursework stuff through a textbook. While folding paper or doing an activity, their parents should be with them. There have been students who can’t make it, and I have needed to check their work. After classes, the parents have taken a photo or a video of the work and sent it to me. Believe me; the parents have undertaken more responsibilities than a teacher.” (T15)

The teachers emphasized the importance of communicating with parents in distance education and reported that they communicated with the majority of the parents (f=16). They made phone calls with parents (f=10), established WhatsApp groups with them (f=4), and held online or face-to-face parent-teacher meetings (f=3). Yet, some parents were not involved in the process (f=2) and did not respond to communication requests from the teachers (f=2). A sample teacher response on communication with students’ parents is presented below.

“In distance education, it is needed to be in communication with parents. My class has a WhatsApp group. I share videos about how they should treat their children. I also share what interests me with them. I make frequent phone calls. I think this strategy is pretty effective.” (T2)

Sub-theme of Administrators

We also evaluated the teachers’ responses to how they considered the activities of school administrators during distance education. The majority of the teachers (f=11) thought that school administrators did not constrict them in this process and were quite supportive. They always informed the teachers about the developments and what needed to be done in distance education (f=8). Some teachers highlighted that their administrators held frequent meetings (f=3), gave feedback about online classes (f=2), and made school devices and the internet available for them. Yet, four teachers stated that their administrators did not inform them about and supervise distance education practices and left them on their own (f=3). Eight teachers were informed about in-service training and webinars by their administrators. The sample response of the teachers' views on the activities of school administrators during the distance education process is shared below.

"They have been supportive in every stuff. They have helped with the class hours and told us that they are always there for us. Moreover, they have allowed us to use the computers at the school." (T15)

The teachers were also asked if their administrators helped them communicate with their colleagues and parents. The teachers usually communicated with their colleagues through WhatsApp groups (f=8). They also stated that their administrators held meetings via Zoom (f=1) and held meetings with teachers of the same subject matter area on predetermined days (f=4). Although administrators were trying to help the teachers communicate with parents upon their requests, some teachers pointed out that their administrators were not supportive (f=3). A sample response to the views of teachers regarding the support of school administrators in communicating with parents and other teachers is presented below.

"We have thought together about what we can do to communicate with parents. We have thought if we should do home visits, but it has not been possible due to the pandemic." (T11)

Theme of Recommendations

In the interviews, the participating teachers made some recommendations for teaching and stakeholders based on their experiences in emergency remote teaching. These recommendations are discussed in this section.

Sub-theme of Recommendations for Teaching

The teachers' recommendations for teaching are detailed in the sub-headings of goals, teaching-learning process, and measurement and evaluation.

Teachers who participated in the research for the target suggested that not every skill is convenient for distance education and that these skills should be adapted to distance education (f=2). In addition, they stated that to achieve teaching goals, it is of great importance for the students to attend classes to achieve teaching goals (f=6), that teaching plans should be adjusted to distance education (f=2) and that parents should be included in distance education (f=5). Sample responses to teachers' recommendations are given below.

"Not every skill is convenient for distance education. We need to act with tools and goals adapted to distance education. We have to teach something that children can do and will be happy when they learn it." (T1)

Regarding the teaching-learning process, the teachers recommended the creation of Turkish versions of the programs they utilized for their online classes would be helpful so that students and their parents can utilize these platforms more conveniently (f=3). They also thought that teachers, students, and parents should receive relevant training to use the platforms more effectively (f=6). They stated that platforms should be developed to increase teacher-student interactions (f=4) and adapted for reduced data consumption (f=2) to increase students' participation rates. Moreover, they believed that there should be no limit on class hours (f=2) not to experience problems in teaching. To elevate students' participation in classes, it was suggested that students should receive state-level support for data packages (f=2) and devices (f=3), that the technological infrastructures of schools should be improved (f=1), and that EBA support centers should be available in more locations (f=1). Sample responses to teachers' recommendations are given below.

"I'd like the programs to be translated into Turkish. It is one of the first features I consider on the platforms I'll utilize. These programs will also be utilized by my student and their parents. I don't know how to use these programs in the rural area, and nor do my parents. I also prefer these programs to be interactive. Only lecturing remains in performing a class. I'm sure my students will like interactive activities. They text me emojis via the message box in these programs, and they like it." (T3)

The teachers gave some recommendations for content and resources for distance education and EBA TV broadcasts. Above all, they recommended that relevant bodies should develop activities suitable for distance education and share them with teachers (f=13). A teacher recommended that course contents should be made compatible with smartphones since some students attend classes on their smartphones (f=1). According to them, course contents should keep students' interest in online classes (f=5). The teachers also recommended that it would be useful to gather various platforms with their contents under a single roof on EBA and make them available to students (f=29). Finally, a teacher expressed that the MoNE should survey how other countries manage distance education, what kind of activities they implement, and which platforms they use and share the findings with teachers in Turkey. Sample responses to teachers' recommendations are given below.

"I think there are too many platforms; they should be integrated into EBA. We can connect any service via e-Devlet (the only all-in-one digital platform for public services in Turkey), so why not do it for all educational platforms via EBA? Teachers and students must have access to all educational platforms." (T9)

Regarding measurement and evaluation, the teachers believe that it is of great importance to ensure the participation of all students in classes to guarantee fairness in measurement and evaluation activities in distance education (f=2). According to them, educational equality among students would not be achieved in the case of absenteeism. In distance education, they recommended performing process-oriented evaluations on project assignments of students (f=1). In this sense, they relied on parental support (f=2); otherwise, they had their doubts as to carry out reliable measurement and evaluation practices. In addition, they noted that measurement and evaluation can be made through the EBA platform and WhatsApp groups (f=1). They remarked that not only should students be graded but also it should be needed to identify their possible gaps and plan compensatory programs (f=3). To ensure this practice, they recommended that students may be called for face-to-face exams to reveal their academic achievement during distance education (f=1). In addition, they asserted that the MoNE should develop measurement and evaluation platforms for different grade levels (f=1). A sample response to teachers' assessment and evaluation activities is given below.

"Parental support may be requested; the MONE could have created a standard evaluation platform in this process. When the children took their exams on e-Okul or EBA, I could have seen their correct and incorrect answers on my screen." (T19)

Sub-theme of Recommendations for Stakeholders

This sub-theme covers the teachers' recommendations for students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

The teachers uttered that students should have convenient devices and a data package enough to be able to benefit from distance education (f=8). In this sense, it was suggested that the MoNE should provide internet packages and suitable devices free of charge to promote participation in online classes. In addition, they suggested that the number of EBA support centers should be increased and that they should be available for students (f=3). It was recommended to make EBA TV content suitable for students of all grade levels (f=3) and to make sure that broadcasting hours do not coincide with class hours (f=3). Regarding the home environment, the teachers highlighted that a classroom setting should be created at home (f=4) and that parents should follow the students' academic activities (f=4). Parents should be recruited for an awareness-raising activity clarifying what they should do to ensure the above-mentioned condition (f=3). Sample responses to teachers' recommendations regarding students are shared below.

"Children should not attend classes in their beds. I suggested parents use a desk to create an environment where their children would imagine themselves in a classroom setting. They should attend classes in a quiet environment. I suggested that they should provide a better device for their children as much as their financial situation allows it." (T1)

The teachers urged that parents with children with special needs should be informed about distance education (f=2) and that relevant bodies should initiate practices to increase their communication with parents (f=2). Even though students with physical disabilities have difficulties commuting to their schools for face-to-face education, they may attend online classes more easily with the support of their parents (f=4). The teachers also recommended generating content in sign language (f=1) to ensure the efficiency of distance education for students with hearing impairment. In addition, the teachers stated that platforms, course contents, and materials should be generated for students with special needs (f=3) and that broadcasts and content on EBA TV should be accordingly launched for such students (f=1). The teachers deemed it fruitful to come together with their students with special needs on certain days to fortify the ties between them (f=1). Moreover, they desired environments where they can take care of their students (f=3). A sample response to teachers' recommendations for students with special needs is presented below.

"EBA TV could have broadcasted only content for students with special needs. It could be for the sake of improving their skills or their socialization." (T16)

The teachers thought that they need to improve themselves in the use of technology (f=3) to be able to perform effective online classes with their students. They also believed that they should develop appropriate content, activities, and materials for more productive online classes (f=2). While doing this, they can follow social platforms such as WhatsApp, Pinterest, etc. (f=1). Besides, some teachers stated that they should work even harder (f=4) so that students can get through distance education with negligible loss. In this regard, administrators should offer more technological opportunities for teachers (f=2) and flexibility regarding class hours (f=2). Moreover, the teachers thought that participating in in-service training and webinars would contribute to their professional development (f=3). A sample response to teachers' recommendations for their colleagues is presented below.

"In-service training is important to show us what can be done more for education. A newcomer can have excellent educational ideas. It's something they may bring from their families or they may have exceptional imagination or have previously engaged in relevant research. Sharing ideas and educational discussions are essential for teachers. WhatsApp and Pinterest groups for teachers are also valuable professional communities. Teachers may share interesting educational content via these groups. Sometimes, what you couldn't imagine may have come to somebody else's mind. I consider others' opinions and act accordingly. I think it should be so." (T2)

The participating teachers considered parental support valuable in distance education. Therefore, they highlighted that teachers should do their best to involve parents in the process (f=5). They also thought that teachers should be insistent when communicating with parents on matters related to their children (f=2). The teachers were able to involve the parents more in distance education when ensuring frequent communication with them (f=2). It was also stated that it would be helpful to assign a teacher role to parents to maintain their support outside of distance education (f=2). Sample responses to teachers' recommendations about parents are shared below.

"The warmer teachers have a relationship with parents, the more parents are not inclined to disappoint teachers. For example, if I request something from my parents for the next class, they prepare it immediately. I think teachers should hold frequent meetings and do phone calls with parents for warmer communication." (T2)

The teachers noted that administrators should not overwhelm teachers with paperwork during distance education (f=3). The majority of the teachers reported that administrators should supervise teaching activities (f=7). To do so, administrators should have a good command of the distance education process and classwork and attend classes regularly. The teachers thought that administrators should come forward to establish interactions among teachers, students, and parents (f=3). It was also

suggested that administrators should be in the field with teachers (f=1) instead of forcing teachers to deal with paperwork. The teachers had a perception that administrators' meeting with the parents of children with absenteeism would increase the significance of distance education in the eyes of parents. In addition, the teachers suggested that administrators should make computer labs and EBA support centers available for their use (f=4). Sample responses to teachers' recommendations about school administrators are presented below.

"Administrators have to supervise classes and ask us for relevant data. Someone may abuse non-supervised jobs; teachers, too. So, our administrators could have attended and supervised our classes from time to time. They could have come and followed our classes on EBA." (T19)

The Theme of Future Projections of the Pandemic

This section presents the teachers' predictions and views on education after the pandemic under the sub-themes of distance education, the impacts of the pandemic, and compensatory programs.

Sub-theme of Distance Education

All the participating teachers thought that distance education would be an integral part of education at the end of the pandemic. They reported that the teaching profession became virtual during the pandemic and that there may be changes to education systems in the future. Accordingly, distance education can be put to work immediately when there are compulsory breaks or undesirable situations during the academic year (f=7). They also stated that distance education may be helpful for compensatory programs (f=6) and checking academic achievement among students during extended holiday periods (f=3). Not only are online platforms for students' use but also seminars and parent-teacher meetings can be held via such platforms (f=3). The teachers reported that despite the sudden appearance of distance education, it should be utilized in only auxiliary activities since younger age groups should be recruited for face-to-face education (f=2). The sample response regarding the teachers' thoughts about the place of distance education in our lives after the pandemic process is presented below.

"Everything will change the teaching profession since it will become virtual. One day, we won't even need a bank because we can do everything on our phones now. The relevant bodies should create policies by considering the future. Kids have a good command of technology. Imagine them at the age of 20. They will do their banking transactions on their phones. Maybe people won't have to go to school in the future." (T15)

The teachers were asked about their views on education after the pandemic and the future of teaching and schools. The teachers stated that there emerged educational gaps in this process (f=4). They believed that they updated their knowledge (f=2), gained substantial digital experience (f=2), and were ready to project such experience into face-to-face education. In addition, teachers also expressed their satisfaction with the availability of EBA and that the platform would be used more in face-to-face education (f=2). According to the teachers, the pandemic significantly widened the academic gap between rural and urban schools (f=4). In this sense, they believed that they could compensate for the knowledge gap in some way but did not lean toward the idea of permanent distance education (f=3). Besides, one of the teachers promised to practice hygiene practices more in face-to-face education (f=1). A sample response to teachers' views on education and the future of schools is shared below.

"In this process, our students have had a substantial academic gap, and we have to make up for this gap somehow. In my opinion, after this disaster, we will need to rush for our children's calls as if we were a relief team in Red Crescent. We'll need to eliminate the impacts of this shock on the kids." (T4)

Sub-theme of Impacts of the Pandemic

We asked the participating teachers if there would be any positive future implications of the events during the pandemic. Accordingly, the teachers thought that they may overcome or adapt to educational challenges in the future. The adverse situations during the pandemic increased their self-confidence (f=3). They stated that distance education practices contributed to their technology-related skills (f=7) and that they can adapt their experiences in the pandemic to face-to-face education. They also highlighted that they had improved technology literacy (f=2), which would contribute to technological innovations and advancements in the future. Besides, the teachers reported that their students had to assume their learning responsibilities in certain compulsory situations during distance education (f=3) and that it would bring contributions to their achievement. In addition, they stated that parents had a chance to observe their children in this process and to see what teachers did in online classes. The teachers believed that parents would be more interested in their children's education after the pandemic (f=3). They uttered that the pandemic contributed to students' hygiene habits (f=6) and that such practices would be maintained after the pandemic. A sample response to teachers' views on positive situations that may occur after the pandemic is presented below.

"Parents had a misperception that teachers only teach four operations and reading and writing. Yet, they have witnessed the difficulty of teaching during the pandemic. They have recognized that teaching is not easy and that it is challenging to deal with children. In this process, everyone has mastered and benefitted from technology in some way. Moreover, they have learned to maintain their hygiene. I hope that their hygiene practices will be permanent after the pandemic." (T14)

The teachers pointed out that the most prominent issue in the pandemic was learning losses among their students who could not attend online classes (f=5). Moreover, prolonged screen time would adversely affect their and their students' eye health (f=5). Another concern among the teachers was that prolonged screen time would develop screen addiction among students (f=6) and that their writing skills would be regressed because they practiced less writing in distance education (f=1). Other issues included students' inability to go out and engage in fewer physical activities and reduced socialization compared to the past (f=4). In addition, the teachers regretted that children's deprivation of a classroom setting hindered the formation of classroom rules (f=3). A sample response to these views of the teachers is given below.

"I have problems with my physical health. My health problems started in my neck and spread to my eyes. I think that children will have trouble with their eyes too and become technology addicted. Since children are always leaning on their phones, they will have problems with their posture. Moreover, they do not practice handwriting adequately. Distance education has so many negative aspects than its positive aspects." (T12)

Sub-theme of Compensatory Program

In the interviews, the teachers were also asked, "What would be the important points that you would consider if you prepared a compensatory program for your students after the pandemic or in case of any other crisis?" In this context, the teachers would first identify the students who could not attend distance education and their needs (f=3). Then, they stated that they would focus on teaching basic skills more (f=4). Teachers also reported that flexibility would be the major concern while implementing the compensatory program designed with activities suitable for their students' grade levels. Most of the teachers shared that academic knowledge will be gained in some way, so more importance should be given to social skills (f=2). They stated that they would attach importance to activities where cooperation between students and group work could be done. Some teachers uttered additional concerns about counseling activities for their students (f=2). According to them, a compensatory program should cover relieving the psychological impacts of illness or death of relatives/friends during the pandemic. A compensatory program should also include activities and contents (f=3) that can attract students' interest in school when distance education is over. They emphasized that a compensatory program should be prepared considering students at different grade

levels, those studying in multigrade classes, and those enrolled in rural schools (f=2). Furthermore, they stated that they would consider spelling and punctuation (f=2) in a compensatory program since they could not properly check students' writing practices in distance education. Sample responses to teachers' views on the points they consider important about the compensatory program are shared below.

“First, I would focus on those who will attend the next grade level. For grades 4, 8, and 12. I would not prepare a single program but multiple programs. Multigrade classes are ignored, but they exist. What will happen to those kids? How will self-study hours be implemented in distance education? One should consider these issues while preparing a compensatory program. I would like to prepare a program for those attending online classes and a program for those with absenteeism but watching only EBA TV according to their grade levels.” (T14)

All the teachers found a predesigned compensatory program is applicable under all circumstances. They stated that a compensatory program considering individual differences would be pretty fruitful for students. They agreed that student participation in these programs would be essential; therefore, the dates for the implementation of a widely-accepted compensatory program should be set upon considering the regional differences (f=3). A teacher emphasized that school counselors should be more active while implementing the programs. The teachers suggested implementing a compensatory program on weekends or holidays since it might be boring for students during a formal academic semester (f=4). Teachers desired to recruit students for a face-to-face, rather than an online, compensatory program (f=2) and stated that being able to select materials and content for the program would contribute to students more (f=1). The sample response of the teachers' views on the feasibility of a possible compensatory program is shared below.

“If we launch compensatory education in our region in the summer, we may not find any students since they usually herd their animals in the mountains. For example, half of the class will be absent if we do it in June, or there will be adverse weather conditions if it is performed during a semester holiday. Compensatory education would be fruitful for participating students. If it is done in a central location, educated parents will send their children to such a program. It will be fruitful for those who participate in these programs, but nothing will change for those who can't.” (T17)

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

In the present research, we aimed to explore the experiences of primary school teachers and reveal their outcomes in the distance education process. Thus, we interviewed a total of 20 primary school teachers from seven regions in Turkey. In the research, we evaluated the participating teachers' views under four themes: teaching, stakeholders, recommendations, and the future implications of the pandemic.

The first emerging theme, teaching, was discussed under the sub-themes of goals, teaching-learning process, and measurement and evaluation. Accordingly, most of the participating teachers could not achieve their educational goals due to the pandemic. As the major underlying cause of this situation, they pointed out the poor participation rates among their students. The teachers, particularly those serving in rural areas, complained that their students could show poor participation in online classes. Similarly, a previous study concluded a high number of students in rural areas and poor internet infrastructure have a restrictive impact on participating in distance education (Hebebcı, Bertiz, & Alan, 2020).

The teachers also reported that the lack of technological devices adversely affected students' participation in online classes, which overlaps the previous findings (Bokayev, Torebekova, Davletbayeva, & Zhakypova, 2021). In addition, the participants regretted having insufficient educational materials. One of the significant factors affecting the quality of distance education is the quantity and quality of learning and teaching materials (Chao, Saj, & Tessier, 2006). Moreover, the relevant literature frequently refers to the lack of materials in distance education (Hebebcı et al., 2020; Kurnaz, Kaynar, Şentürk-Barışık, & Dođrukök, 2020).

We found out that the participating teachers have gained relevant experience in the use of technology during distance education and are now more self-confident. They reported that they utilized both printed and digital materials while teaching in distance education. However, they complained about the insufficiency and irrelevancy of the content of EBA TV.

The teachers also had difficulties in the measurement and evaluation process in distance education. They specified that they generally went through this process assessing only class participation and homework and making observations. Besides, they complained about parental interference with online classes. Moreover, student absenteeism adversely affected the measurement and evaluation process. Remarkably, students have not used online digital tools for measurement and evaluation. Demir and Özdaş (2020) scrutinized primary school teachers' views on distance education and revealed that the participants found their current evaluations were insufficient. In general, we may assert that the negativities reported under this theme may be related to the sudden emergence of the pandemic and the unpreparedness of the world for distance education. This process, or emergency remote teaching, is defined as a distance education process that is characterized by utilizing alternative practices in teaching due to crisis conditions and switching to usual educational practices after the related crisis or emergency condition disappears (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020).

Within the theme of stakeholders, we addressed the teachers' experiences with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators in distance education. The teachers often highlighted that student absenteeism, the lack of internet connection and devices among students, and the indifference of their parents adversely affected the quality of distance education. They also uttered that students with special needs and students from other nationalities were also adversely affected by this process. Previous studies revealed that students had difficulties in being unable to attend online classes, accessing the internet and technological devices, and parental interest during distance education (Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Gören, Gök, Yalçın, Göregen, & Çalışkan, 2020; Jeffery & Bauer, 2020). It is well-known that harmonious student-teacher-parent interactions and active parental involvement have positive reflections on student achievement (Argon & Kızılcı, 2012).

Two-thirds of the participating teachers successfully followed their annual teaching plans in distance education. They also stated that they updated and improved their technological skills in this process. However, they experienced physical and psychological problems due to prolonged screen time. On the other hand, they were poorly motivated and were concerned about their students' academic achievement. The previous studies suggested that the levels of motivation among teachers were fluctuating during distance education, affecting their lifestyles and professional practices (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). The relevant research also revealed that teachers worldwide were all unprepared for distance education (Zweigbergk, 2021), which may be proposed as an explanation for the poor motivation among the participating teachers and their physical and psychological problems.

We found that the participating teachers deemed it crucial for parents to be involved in distance education. Accordingly, they also reported that most of the parents encouraged their children to attend online classes and followed classes together with their children. Yet, the teachers complained that some parents answered questions asked by teachers instead of their children or got angry with them when they could not answer the questions. These situations often caused some students to lose discipline during classes, parental interference with class activities, and parents' unnecessarily comparing their children with their peers. Regarding communication with parents, the teachers emphasized that distance education was often carried out thanks to document sharing and homework checks on WhatsApp groups. In the literature, it was revealed that parents were highly exposed to stress when having difficulties in supporting their children's learning during the pandemic (Spinelli, Lionetti, Pastore, & Fasolo, 2020), which may be recognized as one of the reasons for parental interference with online classes. Besides, in a previous study, the majority of parents of primary school children complained that their children were assigned too many tasks, that these assignments took too much time to complete, and that their content was too difficult, causing a heavy burden on both children and parents (Lau & Lee, 2021).

The participating teachers did generally not have any problems with their administrators; in contrast, they received support from them in distance education. In their study, Aydın-Güngör and Yılmaz (2021) observed that the participating school administrators put forward more constructive and adaptive roles while resolving crises and conflicts. When considering distance education to be a crisis, we may assert that our findings are consistent with those in the study above. The literature hosts some other studies that concluded similar results regarding the roles of administrators during the pandemic (Duman, 2020; Külekçi Akyavuz & Çakın, 2020).

Recommendations from the participating teachers regarding teaching and stakeholders emerged as the third theme in the study. We discussed their recommendations under the sub-themes of goals, teaching-learning process, and measurement and evaluation. Regarding teaching, the teachers recommended that skills and outcomes should be restructured in line with the demands of distance education. Again, they also emphasized the significance of student participation and parental involvement. Daar and Nasar (2021) also highlighted the importance of parental interest in distance education and urged that parents promote student learning at home. When it comes to the teaching-learning process, the teachers suggested that the platforms they utilized for online classes should be available in the Turkish language to allow students and their parents to be able to adopt them. They also mentioned that all stakeholders should receive relevant training to be able to use these platforms more efficiently. Rasmitadila et al. (2020) also emphasized that teachers need to keep their motivation elevated and contribute to their professional and personal development. Thus, we may propose that distance education should include training aimed at improving both the professional and personal competencies of teachers. In addition to professional development, there is also a need for content and class practices for teacher training in distance education (Bozdemir Yüzbaşıoğlu, Yüzbaşıoğlu, & Kurnaz, 2021).

The teachers also suggested that technology should be adopted more efficiently, that online classes should be held without time restrictions, and that EBA support centers should be available in more locations. Moreover, they reported that course contents should be adopted to be able to keep students' interests prolonged in online classes, which is consistent with the findings in the literature (Bozdemir Yüzbaşıoğlu et al., 2021; Çoban, Bayram, & Aşkın-Tekkol, 2021). Regarding measurement and evaluation, the teachers emphasized that adequate and fair measurement and evaluation could not be possible without the participation of all students in classes and that assessments should be process-oriented. In this concern, they acknowledged family involvement and uttered that the MoNE should introduce several other platforms for making evaluations. The previous research also revealed similar recommendations from teachers as in this study (Husain, Idi, & Basri, 2020; Kantos, 2020; Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020).

Among the teachers' recommendations regarding stakeholders, those for students rank first. At this point, they particularly focused on the importance of technological facilities and parental support. They also recommended that the agents in education should always be in touch with students with special needs and their parents. In a previous study, it was also suggested that school counseling services should provide relevant counseling for students during distance education (Supriyanto et al., 2020).

The participating teachers also had some recommendations for teachers in distance education. In general, these recommendations were oriented toward encouraging them to develop themselves technologically with the help of relevant training. Zweigbergk (2021) emphasized the importance of supporting teachers' health, well-being, and teaching experiences in distance education. Again, the teachers suggested seeking parental support in this process. Finally, the teachers expressed that administrators should not overwhelm teachers with paperwork during distance education and suggested that administrators should supervise classes. In addition, they stated that school administrators should perform a pioneering role in establishing teacher, student, and parent communications. In the literature, there are studies in which teachers and prospective teachers desired cooperation with school administration in distance education (Çoban et al., 2021; Daar & Nasar, 2021). Doğan and Koçak (2020) also concluded that teachers, students, parents, school administrations, and affiliated national education directorates worked in cooperation in the distance education process. In this respect, we may claim that collaboration with stakeholders is likely to contribute to the efficiency and success of distance education.

The last theme emerging from the interviews was the future projections of the pandemic. Under this theme, we discussed distance education, the effects of the pandemic, and compensatory programs. Above all, all the teachers thought that distance education would be an integral part of formal education at the end of the pandemic. Emphasizing that education systems would undergo significant changes after the pandemic, they agreed that schools can shift to distance education in the case of unexpected situations during the formal academic year or when compensatory education is needed. Can (2020) also reported that distance education practices may be effective during extended holiday periods and in crises. Moreover, the teachers welcomed the idea that online applications can be utilized for parent-teacher meetings and meetings for professional development or in-service training. According to Akyürek (2020), distance education enables more people to benefit from experts thanks to disseminating knowledge from primary sources. Therefore, more teachers can enjoy well-structured distance in-service training.

The participants argued that younger children should be recruited for face-to-face education as much as possible and mentioned learning gaps among their students in distance education. They believed that compensatory programs should be needed to close their gaps. Some studies concluded that teachers often prefer face-to-face education since they do not find distance education efficient enough (Gören et al., 2020; Haşiloğlu, Durak, & Arslan, 2020). Regarding the impacts of the pandemic, the participants felt more self-confident and competent in technology. Furthermore, the teachers reported that they took their learning responsibilities more and had improved problem-solving skills in this process. The relevant literature touches upon teachers' development in the use of technological devices as a positive aspect of the pandemic (Altıntaş Yüksel, 2021).

During interviews, it was often uttered that parental involvement in distance education raised awareness of education among parents, which may imply that parents will be more involved in education in the future. In addition, the participants thought that the pandemic-related measures contributed to the hygiene habits among students. In their study, Aşkın-Tekkol (2021) sought primary school students' views on distance education and found that students cared about their hygiene more during the pandemic.

Absenteeism was considered the most negative aspect of the pandemic. Another undesirable situation was uttered as prolonged screen time and resulting health problems among teachers and students. In addition, the teachers perceived a likely technology addiction among their students and reduced movement and socialization as other pandemic-related problems. Previous research often indicated that students are more social in face-to-face education and happy due to being with their teachers (Demir & Demir, 2021; Doğrukök, Kurnaz, Barışık, & Kaynar, 2021; Yurtbakan & Akyıldız, 2020). Besides, the teachers were concerned that students had difficulties in learning and adopting classroom rules in distance education and thought that it would cause behavioral problems among students in face-to-face education.

Regarding the future projections of the pandemic, we asked some questions to the participating teachers about compensatory education. Accordingly, we found out that the teachers would first identify students with absenteeism and put an emphasis on their own educational disadvantages to prepare a compensatory program. They wanted to perform practices for teaching the skills that cannot be taught in distance education. Besides, they favored a flexible schedule while doing such procedures. The teachers also stated that not only academically but also psychologically and socially supportive practices should be initiated for their students at the end of the pandemic process. Akoğlu and Karaaslan (2020) expressed that children are significantly affected by crises, such as pandemics and natural disasters, due to their lack of experience and skills in satisfying their own needs compared to adults, which urges the development of psychological support programs for students.

The teachers stated that the end of the pandemic should bring flexible compensatory education prepared following individual and regional differences. They also emphasized that it would be more appropriate to practice such education face-to-face on weekends or during holidays rather than during formal semesters. The UNICEF (2021) report on distance education and learning gaps also touched upon the significance of adopting changes to keep up with the post-pandemic era and the necessity of education to continue face-to-face as much as possible.

Overall, the findings showed that the major difficulties in distance education originated from students' inability to attend online classes due to the lack of suitable devices and internet access. In this sense, the relevant bodies (the MoNE, universities, NGOs, etc.) may give support to students deprived of the above-mentioned facilities and take necessary steps against such possible crises in the future. In addition, we believe that the EBA platform should be developed further and made up of diverse applications for a fruitful distance education experience, as well as being adapted to measurement and evaluation activities. The unexpected emergence of the need for distance education led all stakeholders to start the process without being adequately prepared. Therefore, the stakeholders of education should be recruited for relevant training for possible future crises. We think that the curriculum in undergraduate teacher education should cover scenarios to better prepare prospective teachers for potential crises. Finally, we believe in the significance of developing curricula to be adapted to unexpected situations and designing compensatory education programs to be used when necessary. We carried out the present study with 20 primary school teachers serving in different regions in Turkey. Further research may attempt to reveal the views of teachers of other subject matter areas on distance education. In addition, longitudinal studies on distance education and its aftermath may comparatively investigate teachers' experiences in distance education and face-to-face education.

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