



Being a Primary School Teacher during the Pandemic: A Phenomenology Study *

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected every aspect of life. In this sense, education was also negatively affected, interrupted and changed. Radical measures were taken for the education process in Turkey as in most countries of the world. Therefore, education shareholders experienced very different practices and instructional activities compared to time before the pandemic. Apart from the general measures in primary schools, different practices were implemented from time to time (such as distance teaching in city centers and face-to-face teaching in villages), and accordingly, primary school teachers had different experiences in the same period of time and attributed different meanings to teaching. This study aimed to make sense of the teaching experiences of primary teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants of the study, which was designed as descriptive phenomenology, were determined by snowball sampling methods. Nine primary school teachers, varying in terms of education level, location of the school, level of teaching class, gender and seniority, participated in the study. Qualitative data obtained through interviews conducted via online methods were analyzed with the phenomenological data analysis approach. In accordance with the analyses, primary school teachers' experiences during the pandemic process and the meanings they attributed to these experiences created the themes of "Being Development Oriented", "Guidance", "Instructional Designer", "Being Solution Oriented", "Collaborative Process Management" and "Social Responsibility". It was concluded that primary school teachers developed a digital literate identity during the pandemic process, provided social and educational guidance to parents and students, experienced new technology-oriented methods-techniques, and produced individual solutions to the problems they experienced in the process, showed more solidarity with their colleagues than in the past, and provided service to different parts of the society.

Keywords

COVID-19
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Introduction

In critical times such as war, crisis and pandemic, change and transformations may occur at an extraordinary speed. The recent COVID-19 pandemic had a worldwide impact and it deeply affected every aspect of life. Education was also negatively affected in this process. As in many countries, the education in Turkey were interrupted many times, and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) tried to continue education with different practices throughout the country. In order to ensure the continuity of education in Turkey, as in the world, the Ministry of Education decided to maintain the education process with distance education practices. In this process, education started to be provided through the Education Information Network (EIN) and with the help of television channels, and distance education was implemented. Thus, education shareholders experienced very different practices. At this point, apart from general measures in primary schools, different practices were implemented from time to time (such as distance education in city centers, hybrid education in villages), and accordingly, primary school teachers had different experiences in the same period of time and attributed different meanings to teaching. In this sense, this compulsory change and differentiation process in education on a local scale during the pandemic period can be considered as an opportunity for educational practices in primary schools in the short and long term. In the short term, exploring how online education environments serve the interests of primary school teachers and students and ensure high levels of student participation and results will be effective in seeing the process in action. In the long term, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for how we work in primary schools, what we prioritize, and what we allow to disrupt institutional settings may be significant (Allen, Rowan, & Singh, 2020). According to Flores (2020), this health crisis brought about opportunities to reshape education, teacher training and educational institutions. It became very important to understand the experiences of primary school teachers during the pandemic process and to transfer them to prospective primary school teachers.

Distance Education

Current literature includes a wide range of concepts for distance education applications, such as online learning, virtual education, emergency distance education, emergency e-learning. Although these concepts have slightly different meanings, they are often used interchangeably (Mankki & Riih , 2022). In this study, the concept of distance education was used to describe non-face-to-face education that was generally maintained during the pandemic period. Although distance education is defined in different ways in the literature, it can generally be defined as a teaching method in which the learner and the instructor are taught synchronously or asynchronously, independent from time and place, with rich digital teaching materials and communication technologies (Boz, 2019). When designed carefully, distance learning can be highly effective in overcoming many traditional barriers to learning associated with place and time (Murray et al., 2020). The place and time elements largely depends on whether it is designed to be presented using an approach synchronous (i.e., through videoconferencing or live chat, where students can ask questions or request instructions in real time) or asynchronous (i.e., through videos, materials, and assignments posted online that students can self-study at a time of their own choosing) (Murphy, Rodr guez-Manzanares, & Barbour, 2011).

Distance education does not require the instructor and the learner to come together, and it eliminates the time and transportation costs spent on coming together and also prevents health problems as seen in COVID-19 global pandemic (Davis, Gought, & Taylor, 2019). It provides the opportunity for individuals who cannot benefit from traditional education and cannot spare time for personal and educational development to participate in the education system and work individually ( zy rek & Bedge, 2016). Distance education, which brings alternative solutions that reduce the limitations caused by formal education and provides equal opportunities, also provides enriched learning environments (Fidan, 2016). Despite these advantages of distance education, it also has some limitations. These limitations include the following: not being able to easily establish relationships formed during the face-to-face education process, preventing the student from socializing with their peers, being insufficient in terms of reaching the student who needs help and suggestion in the learning

process, students working in one place taking up their rest time, being insufficient in courses that require practice rather than theory, and being insufficient in terms of benefiting students (Aktay & Keser, 2023). Moreover, effective distance education inherently requires teachers to understand how to use digital teaching tools, unlike many face-to-face classroom environments where the use of digital technologies is not a prerequisite (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Scully, Lehane, & Scully, 2021).

Teachers' Transition to Distance Education

In most lines of business, professionals are constantly asked to adapt their skills and knowledge to changing environments. These expectations also apply to professionals in the field of education: various changes in societies and educational reforms require teachers who can adapt and improve themselves throughout their careers (Jansen in de Wal, den Brok, Hooijer, Martens, & van den Beemt, 2014). The rapid and unexpected transition to a distance learning environment at the beginning of the pandemic created an unprecedented challenge for teachers worldwide (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Kim & Asbury 2020). Teachers served on the "front line" during this difficult process. During this period, they went through an extremely uncertain period in terms of their professional lives. The rapid transition to online lecture format in distance education not only moved teaching content and materials to the online environment, but also brought significantly intense workload for teachers. In many schools, teachers struggled to adapt to what may be the "new normal" for a long time, along with the challenges of transitioning to the online area (Allen et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused teachers to organize their classes online. Although most educational institutions did not have fully prepared digital learning environments and support systems, educators had to start distance education in a short time. The rapid transition from face-to-face education to distance education created an urgency for teachers to become competent in terms of digitalization. OECD (2020) states that the COVID-19 crisis emerged at a point where most education systems were not ready for the world of digital learning opportunities (as cited in Mankki & Rähä, 2022). Some studies showed that rapid digital change during the pandemic, including the adoption of a significant number of new digital tools and pedagogical solutions, increased sources of teacher stress (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020). The lack of physical, temporal or psychological boundaries between work and home (MacIntyre et al., 2020) and the responsibilities that educators had to carry out in parallel with teaching, such as helping their own children with homework and caring for family members in need of help, made it a very stressful situation for them (Kim & Asbury, 2020). In his research with teachers in different disciplines, Tunegaru (2021) revealed that most teachers rarely used teaching methods adapted to the online environment and had difficulty in guiding students in this regard.

Distance Education in Primary Schools

During the pandemic, primary schools in most countries carried out their teaching activities through online distance education. The necessary feature for the success of a distance education student is autonomous (independent) learning ability. This skill is at different levels in primary school students and upper level students. While most adults have some degree of autonomy in learning, younger students need support in their distance learning experiences. Adults gain expertise in independent learning skills as a result of their long-term experience. Primary school students are relatively novices in this skill. Students who are proficient in this skill organize and interpret information differently than novices. These differences affect students' ability to remember and solve problems. Primary school students, on the other hand, develop their metacognitive skills gradually and with guidance (Cavanaugh, 2007). The second feature that distinguishes younger students from older students in distance education is focus of control. Older students have more internal control than younger students (Gershaw, 1989, as cited in Cavanaugh, 2007). In their study with primary school students, Burdina, Krapotkina, and Nasyrova (2019) revealed that students need not only a home teacher as a mentor to achieve their course goals, but also a teacher who will help them with critical thinking, problem solving and self-motivation.

It is clear that while designing distance education activities, many variables that have a dynamic relationship with each other, such as the form of communication, the quality of the material and the transfer of information to the student, need to be carefully planned (Tuncer & Taşpınar, 2008). Therefore, the importance of how this process is planned and implemented by primary school teachers is important in ensuring that distance education processes are carried out in the desired quality for primary school students. During the pandemic period, teachers had to acquire new skills such as designing and conducting online courses, online exams, using virtual boards, providing classroom management in virtual classroom, designing courses suitable for digital environment or blended learning, time management in online teaching and motivating students for online courses that they had not used frequently before. They also faced the challenge of integrating face-to-face and online courses according to time and location. Although traditional pedagogical technologies such as smart boards or PowerPoint are widely accepted and used, the integration of technology-supported teaching with pedagogical purposes is at another level (Romeo, Lloyd, & Downes, 2012). Therefore, primary school teachers encountered and became acquainted with many innovations that they had not experienced before in terms of learning-teaching, assessment-evaluation, and classroom management. In this sense, it is expected that teachers will have developed teaching skills and values in different ways and gained new experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importance and Purpose of the Research

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education is significant. During this period, the sustainability of education in educational institutions became an important problem to be solved for all countries. Teachers played a key role in solving this problem. For this reason, the responsibilities that teachers undertake in distance education are important for the sustainability and quality of education. The effects of the pandemic in education still continue. Although distance education has a history of almost two centuries, distance education practices became widespread on a global scale and became an important part of our lives during this period. Distance education applications, which entered our lives with the pandemic, are becoming increasingly widespread in formal and informal education environments. For example, in many universities, some master's and doctoral courses are given via distance education. Similarly, some of the in-service trainings prepared by the Ministry of National Education for teachers, the increase in distance education practices in different areas such as foreign language learning through private institutions, effective communication skills, and computer usage skills are remarkable. Every study on distance education, which is increasingly widespread, is an important contribution to the literature for the efficient progress of this process and future applications. It is especially important to pay attention to the opinions of primary school teachers, who are one of the most important shareholders of the process, in order to continue the process more effectively in the future. The role of the teacher in the learning-teaching process is at least as important as the content of the educational programs. Primary schools were more affected by this process due to the high level of teacher dependency of primary school students (Gamage, de Silva, & Gunawardhana, 2020). At this point, how primary school teachers make sense of their teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic emerges as a question that needs to be answered. Therefore, there is a need for studies that will reveal what the teachers experience in this process.

There are many studies in the literature revealing teachers' opinions on distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Most of these studies are based on higher education (Akdemir & Kılıç, 2020; Almazova, Krylova, Rubtsova, & Odinokaya, 2020; Düzgün & Sulak, 2020; Er-Türküresin, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020; Yavuz, Kayalı, Balat, & Karaman, 2020) or carried out with mixed study groups involving teachers working in different disciplines at the K-12 level (Alan & Can, 2021; Alper, 2020; Arslan & Şumuer, 2020; Chaichaowarat, 2023; Kurnaz, Kaynar, Şentürk- Barışık, & Doğrukök, 2020; Küçükakın, Demir, & Gökmenoğlu, 2022; Marshall, Shannon, & Love, 2020; Tunegaru, 2021; Türker & Dündar, 2020; Weldon, Ma, Ho & Li, 2021).

It is seen that there are few studies conducted with primary school teachers on distance education during the pandemic (Beattie, Wilson, & Hendry, 2022; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Heikkilä & Mankki, 2023; Ugur-Erdogmus & Albayrak, 2022; Yüzbaşıoğlu, Yüzbaşıoğlu, Tekkol, & Kaymakçı, 2023). Although there are some similarities with the results of these studies analyzing primary school teachers' views on the distance education process during the COVID-19 pandemic, these studies generally highlighted what teachers' distance education activities were, the problems they experienced in the process, and their suggestions for future practices. In this study, focusing on the teaching experiences of teachers during the pandemic process, how they interpreted these experiences was analyzed in detail on the basis of context. It was evaluated that teachers interpreted the different situations such as designing and conducting courses suitable for online learning, evaluating learning in online courses, using virtual boards, classroom management and interacting with students in online courses, time management, motivating students for online courses, cooperating with families and colleagues, difficulties experienced and coping with these difficulties. It is thought that a detailed analysis of primary school teachers' experiences during the pandemic will contribute to teacher education and distance education applications at primary school and will provide a data source for future distance education applications.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to make sense of the teaching experiences of primary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this purpose, an answer to the question: "How do primary school teachers make sense of the teaching they experience during the COVID-19 pandemic?" was sought in the study.

Method

Research Design and Model

A qualitative research approach was adopted in the study. This study focused on the primary school teachers' experiences and the meaning of their experiences. Therefore, the study was designed as phenomenology. Phenomenology is basically a qualitative research design that tries to reveal what and how personal experiences regarding a phenomenon are (Ersoy, 2017). Experience here is the state of consciousness that occurs as a result of individuals' purposeful relationship with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1970) states that human consciousness and perceived experience are meaningful together. This study focuses on what and how the experience is, and what it means as an element of consciousness, rather than the meaning of primary school teachers' teaching experiences. Therefore, it was aimed to describe the experiences and perceptions of the teachers during the process. In this direction, the descriptive phenomenology research design, which is to describe the perceptions and experiences of individuals within the phenomenological pattern, was adopted in the study (Ersoy, 2017; Husserl, 1970).

Participants

Institutional permissions were obtained before the study. Then, the researchers followed a gradual process to determine the participating teacher group and obtain the data. In the first stage, the researchers contacted the teachers around them to reach the participating teachers and form the group. At this stage, snowball sampling, one of the purposeful sampling techniques, was used. In phenomenology research, snowball sampling can be used to reach the common experiences of a group (Creswell, 2007). In this study, researchers focused on the teaching experience of primary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Diversity was sought by taking into account the nature of primary school teaching and the social differences of the teacher's working place. The snowball sampling technique was used as a starting point to achieve this desired situation, and after obtaining data from the teachers they reached around them, the researchers learned who they could interview to ensure diversity. With the references they received from the teachers, they reached out to other teachers and completed the participant group of the study. Diagnostic information about the nine primary school teachers who comprised the participants of this study are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants

*Teacher	Gender	Work place	Seniority/Year	Grade	Education level
Burak	Male	City	15	4.	Bachelor's degree
Çağan	Male	City	22	1.	Bachelor's degree
Nevra	Female	District	8	2.	Doctorate
Nursima	Female	City	29	1.	Postgraduate
Mustafa	Male	District	9	3.	Bachelor's degree
Tekin	Male	Village	17	Multi-grade classes (3-4)	Doctorate
Ekin	Female	Village	1	Multi-grade classes (1-4)	Bachelor's degree
Pelin	Female	City	26	4.	Postgraduate
Kağan	Male	City	13	3.	Bachelor's degree

* Pseudonym

Four of the participants are female and five are male teachers. All of the teachers work in public schools affiliated with the Ministry of Education. The schools where teachers work vary in location, with four teachers working in different city centres, two teachers working in different district centres, and two teachers working in different villages. Teachers' professional seniority years vary between 1 and 29 years. Teachers work in different school practices of the primary school (Multi-grade classes or independent classroom practices) and at different grade levels (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades). They also vary in terms of education level, with five teachers having a bachelor's degree, two teachers having a postgraduate degree and two teachers having a doctorate degree.

Data Collection Process and Tool

The data of this study was obtained by interview technique. The interview process was carried out between the researchers and the participants on the planned dates via online methods. The interviews, which were held using the ZOOM platform, were completed between March and April 2021. The interviews were recorded as video with the permission of the participants.

In the first stage of the two-stage interviews, a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used. The semi-structured interview form was composed of six open-ended main questions, alternative questions and probe questions (the semi-structured interview form was presented as an attachment). In order to determine the suitability of the interview questions for the purpose of the research, the evaluations and opinions of seven experts (three instructors from primary school teaching department, two instructors working in the field of education programs and teaching, two primary school teachers with postgraduate level and more than 10 years of experience) were taken. A form with three categories ("Appropriate", "Needs Correction" and "Not Appropriate") was used to evaluate the questions. Experts independently evaluated the interview questions through the form. While deciding on the appropriateness of the interview questions, the opinion of the majority was taken into account, experts stated that four of the questions were appropriate (n=5; 71% to n=7; 100% agreement) and two of them needed to be corrected (n=4; 57% to n=5; 71% agreement). The questions suggested for correction were evaluated by an online panel organized after the independent evaluations of the experts, and the semi-structured interview form was finalized. Using a semi-structured interview form, a pilot study was conducted with a primary school teacher other than the research participants, the anticipated interview duration was determined, and the clarity and understandability of the questions was checked.

The first interviews were held with the participants sequentially on the planned dates. These interviews lasted between 19 minutes 48 seconds and 75 minutes 13 seconds. All participants were interviewed for a total of 364 minutes and 44 seconds. After these interviews, the data transcription and analysis process was started. Second interviews were held with four participants in order to obtain in-depth information about some of the findings obtained after the analysis and to provide participant confirmation. These interviews were aimed after analysis. The second interviews lasted between 9 minutes 49 seconds and 12 minutes 5 seconds. The total duration of the interviews at this stage was 38 minutes and 27 seconds.

Data Analysis

Interview video recordings were transcribed before data analysis. The consistency of the transcripts was examined and erroneous transcriptions were corrected. The consistency analysis was carried out through words and the context in which the words were used. For this purpose, researchers tried to objectively transcribe the words in the video recordings and interpret the context in which the words were used. After the transcript processes were carried out independently, the researchers corrected the erroneous transfers with a common perspective. They discussed the differences in interpretation regarding the context and made interpretations by common decision. During this process, a 97-page interview document was obtained. Interview documents were read three times and analytical notes were taken before analysis. In addition, descriptions and interpretations were tried to be distinguished by phenomenological bracketing. Researchers conducting descriptive phenomenology should distinguish their own prior knowledge and experiences, that is, subjective processes, from the unit of analysis by bracketing them before starting the analysis (Creswell, 2007).

Study data were analyzed with a phenomenological data analysis approach. Phenomenological analysis is the process of describing individuals' perceptions based on their experiences (Ersoy, 2017). The five-stage approach suggested by Moustakas (1994) was adopted in the phenomenological data analysis process. These stages; They are listed as (i) identifying important expressions, (ii) grouping common expressions, (iii) thematizing meaning clusters, (iv) making structural and textural descriptions, and (v) combining descriptions. What is done in these stages is explained below:

Identifying important expressions: At this stage, the interview documents, notes taken during the preliminary reading, comments in parentheses and descriptions outside the parentheses were read and reviewed separately. Then the coding of the documents started. An eclectic approach was used while coding, using a combination of process and descriptive coding techniques. The type of coding that focuses on what people do rather than what they have is process coding, and the type of coding that focuses on the change of actions in the process and establishing a connection between action and context is descriptive coding (Saldana, 2019). By doing process coding, it was aimed to analyze the experiences of primary school teachers from a concrete perspective (designing teaching, using technology, motivating shareholders, etc.), and by doing descriptive coding, it was aimed to reveal the meaning of these experiences (professional obligation, efficient teaching, personal development, etc.). In this context, concepts, expressions or sections that were thought to be important for the research were determined. Coding was continued throughout the analysis with an exploratory approach.

Grouping common expressions: After reaching saturation in the coding, repeating and similar codes were brought together, and different codes were separated. In addition, the suitability and consistency of the codes were examined and simplification and merging processes were carried out. At the end of this stage, clusters of codes were obtained. These sets were reviewed and read repeatedly and analytical notes were taken in the process.

Thematizing meaning clusters: Code clusters were examined within the framework of analytical notes to form a common bond. In this process, reflective thinking actions were carried out and the researchers named the themes based on their own experiences and observations, as well as social and theoretical realities.

Making structural and textural descriptions: Descriptions that indicate what the participants experience are structural, and descriptions that express how they experience are textural descriptions (Ersoy, 2017). Structural and textural descriptions describing the created themes were made, and the similarities, differences and relationships of the themes were explained. At this stage, each theme was structured in a way creating integrity with other themes.

Combining descriptions: Structural and textural descriptions were combined and these descriptions were interpreted with analytical notes. Descriptions and comments were supported with direct quotations. In addition, all the findings were evaluated and integrity was tried to be ensured. At this stage, a diagram was prepared to visualize the findings and see the whole.

Ethics, Validity and Reliability

To fulfill ethical requirements in the study, the necessary institutional and individual permissions were first obtained. Ethics committee permission for the study was received from Kilis 7 Aralık University with the decision numbered 2021/06 and dated 25.02.2021, and research permission was received from the Ministry of Education with the decision numbered 22820487 and dated 22.03.2021. First of all, the participants were informed about the research, their permission was obtained, and the data collection process was carried out on a completely voluntary basis. In the research report, statements that would describe or introduce the participants were avoided, and the reporting was done by giving false names to the teachers. The research process was conducted openly to the participants.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the credibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used. The procedures performed are explained below.

Credibility: For the credibility criterion, which is defined as whether the data obtained through data collection tools reflect reality (Merriam, 2013), the researchers performed the following procedures:

- What was done during the research process and the role of the researcher in this context was described in detail.
- The statements obtained from the interviews were directly quoted in the research report.
- The qualitative findings obtained in the research were opened to the supervision of expert researchers in the field and the primary school teacher, and the findings were confirmed. At this stage, codes and themes were discussed and feedback was received in the online panel held with and two primary school teachers and two researchers who were experts in qualitative research.
- The analysis process of the qualitative data obtained in the research was explained and described in detail.

Transferability: It is defined as the transferability of the results to similar environments and situations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this study, the researcher took the following measures to increase the transferability of qualitative data:

- During the research process, the data collection and analysis process was described broadly.
- The criteria by which participants were selected were explained.
- The findings obtained were subjected to internal and external examination and were analyzed in terms of suitability to the research questions and the literature.

Consistency: Consistency is related to the qualitative research process being stable across time, researcher and place (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To increase the consistency of qualitative data, the researcher took the following measures:

- While collecting interview data, the same questions were tried to be asked to the participants.
- The audio, video and written raw qualitative data obtained were transcribed by the researchers. During this process, the consistency of the raw data and transcripts was checked by another expert. The transcript document previously created by the researchers and the video recordings obtained during the interviews (only as audio files) were presented to an expert. The expert examined the word and context comments that the researchers transferred to the documents from the video recordings, provided feedback and confirmed their consistency.

Confirmability: The data obtained during the research process must be confirmable by the researcher and must be presented in a meaningful framework (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In order to increase the confirmability of qualitative data in the study, the researcher took the following precautions:

- The role of researchers in the research process was explained and positioned.
- The analysis procedure of the qualitative data obtained during the research process was explained step by step.
- The qualitative raw data obtained during the research process and the findings obtained in their analysis were presented to the approval of the participants and field experts.

Findings

In the study, an answer to the research question was sought: "How do primary school teachers make sense of the teaching experience they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic?" According to the analysis of the qualitative data obtained in this direction, six themes including "Being Development Oriented", "Guidance", "Instructional Designer", "Being Solution Oriented", "Collaborative Process Management" and "Social Responsibility" and 16 sub-themes defining these themes were reached. A diagram of these themes and their sub-themes is presented below. Then, each theme is defined and interpreted.

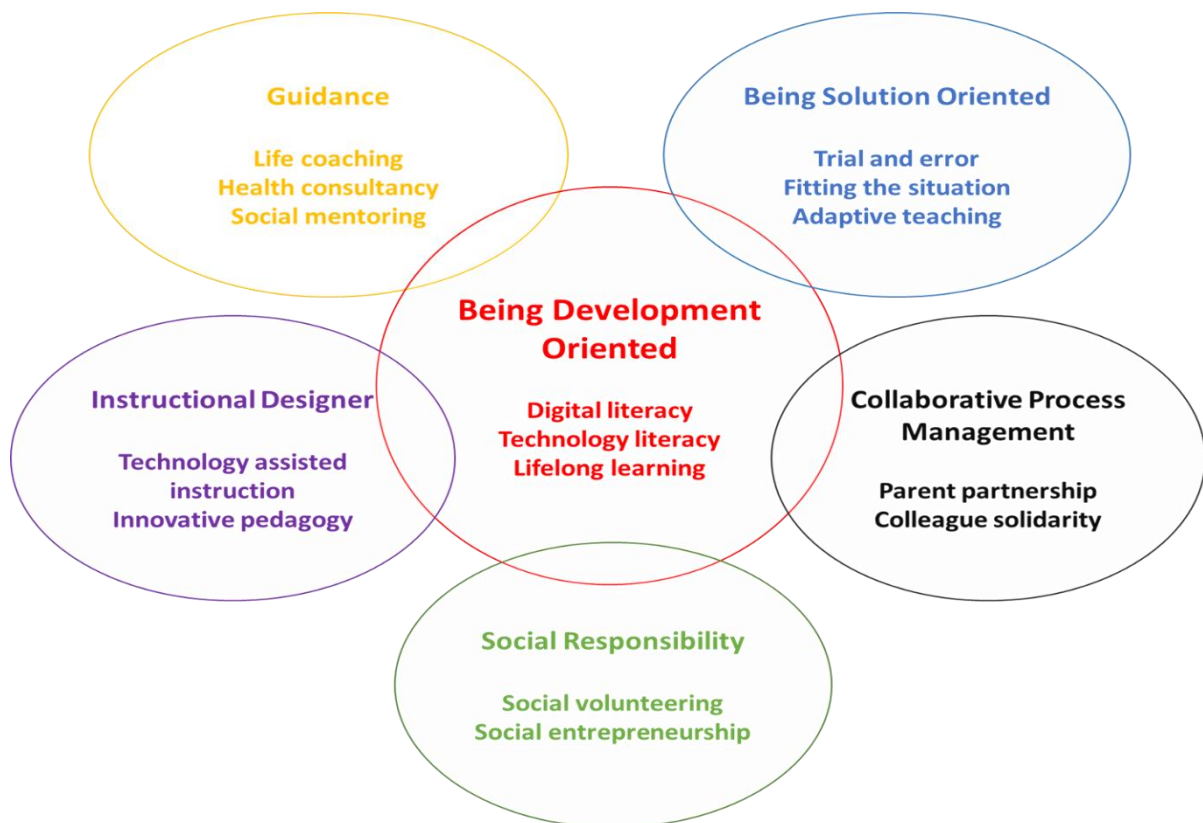


Figure 1. Themes and Subthemes

Being Development Oriented

This theme describes primary school teachers' experiences in improving their teaching skills during the pandemic. In the data analysis, it was found that the teaching process carried out remotely or in hybrid form during the pandemic enabled teachers to take their technological and pedagogical skills to a higher level or led them to acquire new skills. In the interviews, teachers stated that developing new skills in terms of educational technologies became a necessity in this process. They stated that they improved themselves with individual efforts, professional solidarity and in-service trainings organized by the Ministry of National Education in the process. They also mentioned that they tried to develop their technology use skills together with pedagogical skills in accordance with the nature of primary school students. Sample statements regarding the development of primary school teachers' technological and pedagogical professional skills as a result of the conditions are presented below:

... During this process. I came across the question of how I could teach an online course. And you know about Web-2 tools. I started looking for ways to use them. I learned new things by taking advantage of my environment and the internet... I used these in my classroom... I used to see some teachers using them, and I was wondering how they did it. When I started doing it myself, I felt like it could be done and I started to look a little more positively towards technology (Ekin).

This distance learning... is getting very boring. Because we always read, watch and write the same things. We need other games and entertainment, these should be played by children... but it doesn't work... I thought we should play the game online too, so I started researching online educational games. I have access to new programs such as Kahoot, Wordwall, and H5P. I never needed these before, now it's like a necessity. Every day our lessons are with technology (Tekin).

It is understood that primary school teachers accepted the obligations brought by the pandemic process in terms of their profession and tried to improve themselves. In this context, it can be said that the pandemic process gave teachers a digital-technological literacy identity. Ekin, who experienced teaching in the pandemic and in the village in the first year of her profession, stated that she started searching during the process and learned and used Web 2.0 tools by getting help from digital platforms and colleagues, and that these experiences gave her self-confidence. It is understood that Ekin was teaching in a disadvantaged environment (village school with multi-grade classes). Another disadvantage is that she experienced the teaching profession for the first time. However, despite the negativities of the pandemic process and the disadvantages of the environment, she made an effort to acquire some skills that she could not acquire in her education life or that were difficult, according to her observations, and she was successful in this. Additionally, in the interviews, some primary school teachers stated that they were able to use technology opportunities in and out of teaching before the pandemic, and that this provided them with convenience in terms of using technology during the pandemic. Nevra, who had eight years of teaching experience and a doctorate degree and worked in the metropolitan district center, expressed her opinions as follows:

I was not very far from technology before. My biggest advantage was that I did not have difficulty with technology in this process. We did not use very large technological devices. But at least I didn't have any difficulty, I learned easily (Nevra).

It is understood that primary school teachers' experiences with technological tools such as computers and the internet are an important factor in their professional development during the pandemic process. From another perspective, the readiness of teachers became important during the pandemic process, especially in the education with technology which turned out to be a necessity. If teachers are ready to use technology, it can be thought that they accept teaching more easily and make more efforts to improve themselves in the process. Some primary school teachers emphasized that the use of technology became a necessity as a result of the age, and that the pandemic had an aspect that facilitated the transition to this process. They stated that the segment that primary school teachers

address is the segment that is most prone to technology, and therefore teachers should use technology in every way to adapt to their students. Pelin, who works in the metropolitan city center with 26 years of teaching experience and a postgraduate degree, explained this issue as follows:

The children adapted immediately. Most of them were using computers, phones, tablets and the internet very actively. To be honest, I didn't know as much as they did. I had difficulty in the beginning with distance education... But I had to improve myself as a matter of necessity... I received a lot of help from my students in this process. In fact, using technology in teaching is a necessity, the pandemic taught me this... I can now say that I have caught up with my students (Pelin).

It is understood that primary school teachers think that using technology in the education environment is a necessity in line with the requirements of the age and the characteristics of children even without the pandemic, and the pandemic makes it easier for teachers to acquire these skills. In this process, it can be said that primary school teachers try to become technology teachers. Kağan, who works in the metropolitan city center and has 13 years of teaching experience, explained this situation as follows:

We always tried to teach our lessons via the internet and computer. In fact, I sometimes used technology in the classroom. But it was a tool there, now it has become a purpose for me... During this process, I realized that there are a wide variety of technologies that I can use in teaching (Kağan).

Primary school teachers stated that they were students as well as teachers during the pandemic process, that they learned and experienced many digital programs in this context, that they enriched the teaching process with these programs and made the work of both the students and themselves easier. Mustafa, who has nine years of teaching experience working in the metropolitan city center, explained this issue as follows:

I can say that I especially benefited from technology in courses such as art and music. I used programs like Padlet and Canva for the first time. I even created a Google Classroom and Facebook page. I initially directed the homework to the children from there... I included the online sudoku game a lot in mathematics... (Mustafa).

It is understood that primary school teachers remembered and accepted this during the pandemic process that they are lifelong learners due to their profession. Nevra, who has eight years of teaching experience and a doctorate degree and works in the metropolitan district center, stated the following:

...If we look at the definition of the teaching profession, from my perspective, a teacher is a teacher when he learns. You know, he needs to learn something. He needs to reflect this in his class. Today, the pandemic gave us an opportunity. Especially when it comes to learning and using technology. To give a current example, today I played Perceverance's videos in my classroom. We talked about why the vehicle going to Mars has six wheels. Maybe if it wasn't for the pandemic, I wouldn't have searched for this. I was going to teach a routine lesson again... (Nevra).

Nevra stated that she was constantly searching for a better education to her students due to changing conditions, that this was already a requirement of teaching, and that the pandemic reminded this again and that it was necessary to constantly learn. From another perspective, some primary school teachers stated that they voluntarily participated in many vocational courses and certificate programs to improve themselves and to show that they were a learner as well as a teacher. During the meetings, the following dialogue took place on this subject with Kağan, who has 13 years of experience working in the metropolitan city center:

Researcher: You mentioned that you had difficulty in the beginning, especially with technology, and that you improved yourself over time. How did you improve yourself in terms of technology? ...I mean, what did you do for this?

Kağan: ...MoNE had dozens of in-service trainings during this period. I mean online courses. I attended courses together with my wife [her wife is also a primary school teacher]... In-service training continues constantly.

Researcher: Is there a course you are currently taking?

Kağan: For example, V-Factory, we attended it last.

Researcher: What did you take before V-factory?

Kağan: I took courses such as digital content production, robotic coding and sign language.

....

Researcher: I could not associate the sign language course with the pandemic process. Did you choose this course due to your interests and professional development?

Kağan: In this process [distance education], sometimes we even need sign language. Because we constantly experience technological problems on the other side, the child's voice cannot be heard or our voice cannot be heard. He doesn't know chat [online texting]. The kid obviously doesn't know how to write on ZOOM. Sometimes we may need to communicate through sign language on camera, so [I bought it] and we saw its benefits in in-service training.

Kağan observed that there were deficiencies in using instructional technologies during the pandemic. In order to overcome these deficiencies, he participated in the courses provided by the Ministry of Education. He improved his professional skills through courses. At this point, it is understood that teachers voluntarily participate in learning environments where they can develop new skills in order to adapt to the new instructional processes brought about by the pandemic. Therefore, it can be said that teachers are also trying to change themselves along with changing conditions.

Guidance

This theme describes the social and educational duties that primary school teachers had to carry out for their students and parents during the pandemic process. It was found that teachers gave adaptation training to parents, had to intervene in the daily routines of their students, tried to motivate their shareholders and provided information about the pandemic, attempted to provide protection measures and developed protective measures for the face-to-face teaching process. In the interviews, teachers stated that they needed intense parental support in order to structure and carry out the education process of their students during the pandemic period. They stated that they frequently conduct parent training in line with this need. They mentioned that they provided training to parents on topics such as using technology, following lessons, and providing a suitable teaching environment at home during this education process. Sample statements of primary school teachers about parent education are as follows:

We provided parent training and cooperated with parents to organize the lives of children. They should not get up too early in the morning, they should not go to bed late in the evening, and they should go to bed early. We tried to follow them frequently so that they could create lesson plans and so on, and we made great progress with the children of the parents who followed and walked with us (Nursima).

We tried to provide parent training through parent meetings. We tried to do it face to face, but since it was the beginning of the pandemic, it was not allowed. At the beginning of this year, for example, in September, we held a meeting with parents in groups of three or four people. We started planning this process in August about what we could do in terms of guidance. We also held meetings with the parents via internet connection (Burak).

It is understood that primary school teachers need more parental support than before the pandemic. Especially, students and parents experiencing the distance education process for the first time led teachers to search for new ways, and teachers tried to ensure that students experienced this process in the most efficient way through parents. At this point, teachers conducted parent training and carried out an applied process other than routine parent meetings. Ekin, who worked in a village school in her first year of teaching, stated that she made it easier for her students to acquire this skill by making parents literate, especially in primary literacy teaching. Ekin expressed her views as follows:

I didn't just give the homework to the child, I was taking two homework assignments to him. I was giving one to his mother. I was giving one to the child... So, I discovered that the parent is more important in online education, and I can say that I included and educated the parent in the education (Ekin).

On the other hand, some teachers stated that they structured the entire process of students' stay at home. During the structuring process, daily plans were also created for activities other than education according to the students' levels. Different processes such as playing, reading, doing homework, and carrying out activities with the family form the content of these activities. Sample statements of some teachers on this subject are as follows:

Well, you are not only a teacher, you also do different jobs such as, and how can I say it, education coach, and life coach. It was necessary to organize everything from what the children ate and drank to the games they played. You know, at this stage, the goal is for the child not to gain weight. We intervened in many things such as, do you exercise at work? Do you eat healthy? We also saw the home environment of some families... We gave the task of arranging their homes... Unfortunately, we were not just teachers. In other words, we became like the student's life coach... (Pelin).

I held parent-teacher meetings for mothers and fathers. I've said it many times on ZOOM. I said, look, if these children wake up early in the morning and come to school, try to motivate your child in that way. On the days when I had a morning lesson, I scheduled lessons at half past eight, finished the lesson at twenty past twelve. So that the children could have their lunch at one o'clock, play outside from one to four, socialize and do other things. I planned the evenings so that they could send their homework to me via Whatsapp after seven, and most of my parents followed this (Burak).

It is understood that teachers also planned the daily lives of their students and took on the role of a life coach. In these plans, it can be seen that they tried to minimize the effects of the stay-at-home period brought about by the pandemic, and they also supported the social and emotional aspects of their students. From another perspective, they stated in the interviews that primary school teachers tried to relieve the intense academic and health anxiety and stress environment created by the pandemic process for parents and students. Teachers said that they tried to improve the morale of parents and students during this process. In this context, they stated that they provided general information about the process, held one-on-one meetings when necessary, and provided support to every parent and student in need. Mustafa, who has nine years of teaching experience working in the metropolitan city center, explained this as follows:

Parents were very worried. They were very concerned about both children's education and health. ...we were also very concerned about health problems. I reduced their anxiety in terms of education by constantly meeting them... For example, if a student's family in my class had coronavirus, I called them, talked to the child and tried to reassure them. I also caught the disease... That's why I know that anxiety, it is very important for someone to call. I relieved my student when his mother and father were sick... (Mustafa).

It was understood that primary school teachers tried to ensure the academic, social or individual motivation of their shareholders during the pandemic process. It was also seen that they organize additional activities for students who were bored during the academic process, tried to motivate students with different activities and technological tools, provided information about the COVID-19 pandemic process socially, made explanations about the ways of protection and the course of the disease, tried to relax parents and students and to motivate students individually and supported the student or parent in need both regarding the disease process and academically. It can be said that primary school teachers made positive contributions to their shareholders in getting used to the new lifestyle brought by the pandemic process. In the interviews, teachers emphasized that they tried to give their students experience and awareness about contactless teaching during the face-to-face education process. At this point, they stated that they tried to protect their students from COVID-19 contamination and to teach them how to live and socialize safely. Kağan, who has 13 years of teaching experience working in the metropolitan city center, stated his opinions as follows:

Hybrid education was more difficult for me. The students came to school for two days... These children want to play, they missed each other very much. I had to keep them under constant control. I taught them practically, how we can play without contact, how we can talk to each other by keeping distance... How to wear a mask, wash hands constantly... I was already being a role model, how can we wear a mask, how can we socialize in the classroom without contact or by reducing contact, when I did it, it was easy for them to do it too (Kağan).

It was understood that primary school teachers took on the role of consultants, life coaches and organizers in the distance education process, and security guards in the face-to-face education process. It was seen that they provided academic, social and psychological support to students and parents with their roles as consultants, life coaches and organizers, and as security guards, they raised awareness and helped students gain habits on how they could play games and socialize without contact, and how they could protect themselves and others from the disease with masks, distance and hygiene in crowds.

Instructional Designer

This theme describes the innovations and different methods-techniques that primary school teachers experienced during the teaching process during the pandemic. In data analysis, it was revealed that teachers carried out teaching with a focus on technology, used many new teaching technologies that they were not aware of or used before, created more flexible programs in instructional design, developed innovative pedagogies in line with the opportunities and abilities they had according to the situation and environment, they experienced distance and face-to-face education process together for the first time, and tried to provide individualized education. Teachers defined teaching on the basis of technology during the pandemic period as a necessity brought about by the circumstances. Therefore, they stated that they experienced many digital technologies for the first time that they were not aware of or experienced before. They stated that they used technology to make the teaching process fun, to motivate students and increase their participation in classes, to ensure parent-teacher, student-teacher cooperation and to facilitate educational tasks. Kağan, who has 13 years of teaching experience working in the metropolitan city center, explained this situation as follows:

I prepare the lessons in advance on EBA. I match the lessons I prepared on ZOOM with the lessons on EBA. I share these in parent groups in advance... I prepare the lessons name by name, but filling them in is the main job. For example, I'm looking for a video, image, game related to the subject... If I can't find it, I look for an animation on Powtoon, otherwise I make a short animation. I am constantly preparing games on Wordwall... We are in constant communication with parents via WhatsApp, we provide the feedback of homework, lessons and homework from here (Kağan).

It was understood that primary school teachers focused on technology-oriented teaching during the pandemic, gained experience in using digital programs, and gained self-confidence in the use of technology in education. During the pandemic process, using educational platforms such as EBA and

ZOOM was a necessity. Teachers made an effort to enrich and make fun the process that started with this necessity and benefited from various digital environments. In this context, they experienced different applications such as Powtoon, Wordwall, Pixton, Canva and Kahoot. Therefore, it was seen that primary school teachers generally regarded the use of technology in education positively and thought that it was beneficial for their students. In the interviews, teachers said that they developed innovative pedagogical practices in response to the new education approach brought by the pandemic. They stated that their own competencies and skills, the requirements of the relevant curriculum, the opportunities they had and the characteristics of their students were effective in developing innovative applications. Teachers stated that they created their own pedagogies especially in digital environments, in order to create a classroom atmosphere and control, attract attention, motivate, give reinforcement, give feedback and correction, carry out physical and social activities, and improve the reading and writing skills of their students. Sample statements of teachers regarding the new pedagogy they developed according to the situation are as follows:

For example, in each lesson, I choose a student assistant... I give simple tasks with the idea that the children will not get bored or overwhelmed in front of the screen... For example, they follow those who enter and leave the class. Since the class is crowded, I give them tasks as if they take some kind of attendance... for example, the assistant asks a riddle at the end of each lesson. After that, the whole class thinks about this during this 10-minute break. That's what parents say; children are much more enthusiastic and willing to attend live lessons (Nursima).

For example, students want to draw something on the screen a lot. One day in a week, on Tuesdays... After the last lesson is over, I assign a student as the host at the end of the lesson, I say the children, you won't stay long, I leave. Children chat and socialize there (Pelin).

Since I was teaching first graders, I had to incorporate different things into distance education... Adaptation to school was difficult here, I can say that I made them [the children] accept this process a little more by doing activities... We did something every week in art and free activities classes... We painted eggs, made pictures, we made dolls and toys from waste fabrics, plastic bottles and caps. I used digital games a lot, these activities provided entertainment for us (Çağan).

It is understood that primary school teachers used new techniques in response to the changing education habits during the pandemic. Teachers developed different practices depending on the conditions in the fields of classroom management, instructional planning, teaching process, assessment and evaluation. It can be said that necessary situations such as the lack of teaching programs suitable for distance education and the lack of experience of students and teachers in distance education were effective in introducing these pedagogies. On the other hand, teachers stated that the innovative pedagogies they developed were useful in motivating their students, ensuring classroom management and providing efficient teaching. In the interviews, they stated that teachers were required to create flexible programs and plans in the teaching process carried out with distance education, hybrid and technology, and in this context, they had to go beyond the formal teaching programs and develop applications in line with their own skills and competencies, students' characteristics and opportunities. Views of the teachers about the teaching practices they carried out by making flexible plans are as follows:

What did we do differently? We created social tasks other than lessons. Such as taking care of flowers, helping with the housework, interviewing the father, mother, or other adults at home if there are, following the weather and news and sharing them with the class every day in the first lesson... We changed these tasks every week so that students could do something at home differently. (Kağan).

We did something like this to read books in distance education. Our school is in the neighborhood, I had parents buy certain books. We met in the school garden once a week and exchanged these books. After reading these books, those who read the book shared on ZOOM... We used classic books mostly... (Nevara).

It is understood that teachers carried out individualized teaching practices for their students during the pandemic process according to the changing conditions, tried to make different practices from some formal teaching practices in the traditional teaching process, and made efforts to adapt the conditions to the situation. Teachers aimed to increase student participation, motivation, and ensure the efficiency of teaching with the formal non-teaching activities they carried out.

Being Solution Oriented

This theme describes primary school teachers' search for and solutions to the educational problems they experienced during teaching during the pandemic. It was found in the study that teachers had problems with themselves, their students and the teaching process, and they tried to find solutions to these problems, and they used trial and error method, and adaptive teaching techniques in their solutions. Primary school teachers stated that they were confused about how education would continue at the very beginning of the pandemic process, and that they were looking for solutions to resolve this uncertainty in the face of anxious expectations of parents and students regarding education. Teachers emphasized that they generally reached the first solutions they produced regarding the process through their own efforts. Sample statements of teachers on this subject are as follows:

I remember very well that the school closed on March 13 last year. A week passed...we had closed the school with the hope that we would have a holiday for about a week. We brought the midterm break forward... Parents were worried, they were constantly calling and asking: What will happen, how it will happen? There was a chaos... Then I did something for the parents and children, I held a meeting via ZOOM... Then I continued these meetings (Nursima).

As soon as the pandemic started in March, for example, I immediately started doing live broadcasts on YouTube, even though it was not an obligation. So at least I didn't break the connection with the students. Because I predicted, I thought schools would remain closed for a long time. Meanwhile, keeping my students connected significantly reduced the problems we experienced in the first weeks (Burak).

At the beginning of distance education, of course, we had difficulties technologically, in terms of expression and equipments. Some students do not have the necessary equipments, some have two siblings or three siblings. There is only one computer or mobile phone. We made arrangements for them... We tried to provide devices for some of them. We gave homework to some of them who could rarely attend classes... (Kağan).

It is understood that some primary school teachers perceived the period when education was suspended at the beginning of the pandemic as an acute situation, and in this context, they produced temporary solutions to the first problems encountered and reached the solutions with trial and error efforts. Some teachers could predict the course of the pandemic period and produce solutions to the situation with their existing opportunities. The experience, technical opportunities and socio-economic status of the students were important in the process of finding a solution. It can be said that teachers generally realized their solutions with a technology-oriented approach, and that they accepted these solutions temporarily and made their shareholders accept them. On the other hand, the prolonged break in education due to the pandemic process diversified the problems and solutions faced by teachers. Primary school teachers stated that they experienced problems in their ability to conduct distance education, they observed that students' motivation decreased, parents' support decreased because they perceived the process as a vacation, and various problems such as lack of technical infrastructure and equipment emerged. They emphasized that as a result of these problems, students' participation in classes decreased and they realized that they had deficiencies in structuring the process. Therefore, they stated that they produced solutions according to the situation, conditions and experiences. Sample statements of teachers on this subject are as follows:

We used ZOOM in distance education at the beginning of the pandemic. We still use it. I normally use the classroomboard a lot. A section is opened on the screen in ZOOM, but neither my writing nor my shapes were good at all. I bought a new whiteboard, I bought an external camera to take good videos... It was useful, of course. Some of my students are very attached to the board, it was very useful for them (Kağan).

Some students had computer and internet problems. Some siblings had only one device at home, and it was a problem for them to attend classes. It was necessary to solve these problems. We are a neighborhood school... There are also many relative students... We planned class hours for siblings, and as a school, we tried to organize this. I talked to the parents and planned accordingly so that neighbors and relatives could follow the same course together... (Mustafa).

I encountered many problems during the process. The material problem is just the most basic of these. The other problem is doing homework, I taught first grade last year and I teach second grade this year. We also had difficulty in terms of reading and writing education... I gave great importance to parents in this process. As you know, I made students write and read in class... What did I do? There was a writing homework every day. Thanks to my parents, they sent me photos of what they did in their notebooks. I examined it and gave feedback... During the reading, they took a video and sent it every day... Now I do this once a week... (Nevra).

It is understood that primary school teachers encountered more important problems in the later stages of the pandemic, that they produced structurally different and permanent solutions to these problems, and that they adapted their solutions to the situation in line with their own possibilities and student and parent profiles. The solutions produced increased student participation, parent support and teaching efficiency, especially in distance education. In this context, it can be said that teachers were successful in this process while solving problems. However, during the pandemic, teachers experienced different teaching processes, and during this experience, teaching was interrupted several times and the teaching style was changed. While teachers produced solutions for the problems they experienced in different processes, they tried to overcome the problems by diversifying the solutions they produced in the previous process. In this context, it is seen that teachers adapted the teaching process and format, and carried out operations such as individualized teaching, peer support, sharing and cooperation in the understanding of adaptation.

Collaborative Process Management

This theme describes the collaboration experiences of primary school teachers in supporting their professional development during the teaching process during the pandemic and producing solutions to the problems encountered in the teaching process. It was found that teachers shared and cooperated with their colleagues in terms of using technology, developing innovative pedagogy, producing solutions to educational problems encountered, and that they were in contact with parents in terms of increasing the efficiency of teaching and the student's motivation, ensuring participation and attendance in the lesson, and supporting the student during the stay at home period. They stated that they shared with other colleagues during the pandemic to acquire professional skills or to introduce the new skills they acquired. They emphasized that teachers supported each other and showed collegiality while seeking solutions to common or specific problems. Sample statements of teachers on this subject are as follows:

In our school, teachers and administrators were already close to each other before the pandemic. I can say that we were all in a fix during the pandemic. Most of us didn't know what to do at first. But over time, we all learned and shared new things. We tried to find solutions to the problems we encountered together. Whenever I tried something new, I shared it with another colleague...we helped each other a lot (Nevra).

There was solidarity and sharing among teachers during the pandemic process. Various social media groups emerged... Fourth grade teachers, sharing groups, and so on. I became a member of social media groups that I had never seen before and used the shared information there. I thanked and tried to upload something. It was very useful (Çağan).

It is understood that primary school teachers generally shared both pedagogical and analytical skills with other teachers before the pandemic, but with the pandemic, this solidarity and cooperation became even more important and increased. In this context, it is seen that teachers tried to benefit from the experience of another colleague while producing solutions to similar problems they experienced. It can be said that the pandemic process created a collaborative environment for primary school teachers. On the other hand, in the interviews, teachers stated that they often had to cooperate with parents in order to ensure control of the student, increase the level of participation and make the teaching effective. They emphasized that they needed more intense parental support than before the pandemic, that they shared tasks with parents, and that their communication and interactions had intensified. Çağan, who works in the city center and has 22 years of teaching experience, expressed this issue as follows:

...and then, of course, the parents had a lot of work to do during this process. Because we cannot always check homework one-on-one. First graders need constant checking. They [parents] checked and made the corrections. We constantly cooperated with our parents and intensified our communication (Çağan).

It is understood that primary school teachers always need parental support in terms of students' educational habits, age levels and developmental characteristics, but they needed parental support more during the pandemic period, especially due to changing teaching habits. Teachers thought that parental support was important. It is seen that they tried to make students gain habits with the help of parents, especially in processes such as student follow-up, class participation, and attendance.

Social Responsibility

This theme describes the voluntary social responsibilities and duties performed by primary school teachers other than teaching during the pandemic. It was found that teachers provided social support and mentoring to families for public health during the pandemic period, took part in volunteer projects that met the needs of citizens in need, took initiatives to eliminate equipment deficiencies of their own students, acted as intermediaries, and even in some cases solved the problems of their students with their own opportunities. It is known that some teachers participated in non-governmental organizations, and with this organization, they provided social support to citizens over the age of 65, who had chronic illnesses or who were subject to quarantine, and provided services such as filiation, mask and medicine distribution with medical teams. Teachers stated that they participated in these duties voluntarily. They also emphasized that when they heard that the people they were helping were teachers, they acted more sincerely and their anxiety decreased. Çağan, who works in the city center and has 22 years of teaching experience, explained this issue as follows:

*I am an educator, I gave my lesson. What did I do other than that? For example, I worked in the **** Social Support unit. I served people there. I encountered difficult conditions. I went to the villages. Sometimes people became aggressive in a negative way. I supported them... when I arrived, I said I was a primary school teacher... So they got relaxed, our communication became easier (Çağan).*

It is understood that primary school teachers, in addition to teaching, took social responsibility and performed community service by supporting different parts of the society during the pandemic process that negatively affected the society. Considering that the people teachers encountered were the individuals most affected by the pandemic, it seems that teachers fulfilled their duty to reduce this anxiety and this was quite welcomed by the society. Therefore, it can be said that these services, which were provided voluntarily with non-governmental organizations, positively affected the perception of primary school teachers. On the other hand, they stated that they made an effort to meet the technological equipment their students needed, especially during the pandemic, that they met with some philanthropists and non-governmental organizations, and sometimes tried to meet these needs with their own resources. Sample statements of teachers on this subject are as follows:

...I did something for them, a little different from other colleagues, I had the opportunity to contact private foundations and arrange tablets. Thus, we were able to continue with online education. I see myself as the savior of my students (Ekin).

At the beginning of the tablet distribution, we tried to find something from private institutions and send it to children. Frankly, if you are a teacher, your job is not to be a teacher anymore, but to take care of everything that the child does and to ensure that he/she participates in the lesson. Is there anything we can do about his/her socio-economic situation? We bought [tablets] from a few private organizations and sent them. It was nice too. Children attended all classes (Kağan).

It is understood that primary school teachers produced solutions to their students' equipment problems, especially through social entrepreneurship or their own means. These solutions contributed to the educational process, student participation and motivation, and teacher professional satisfaction. In this context, it can be said that teachers took responsibility during the pandemic process and tried to contribute to shareholders and society by fulfilling these responsibilities.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, it was seen that primary school teachers turned the new technology-based education methods they encountered in distance education into an opportunity. It was determined that teachers showed dedication in order to achieve professional development, strived individually to provide the best education to their students throughout the process, and acquired different roles and identities for this purpose. In this process variables such as professional seniority, education level and socio-economic level of the school where the student works varied the applications, problems experienced and solutions to the problems. In addition, it was observed that primary school teachers generally exhibited a positive approach to teaching, attached importance to colleague and shareholder solidarity, and approached the social-cultural change brought about by the pandemic professionally beside teaching process. Therefore, they provided support to students, parents and even other parts of society by providing educational and social guidance. Leaving aside the negativities of the pandemic, it was revealed that the pandemic process provided teachers with the opportunity to gain professional, social and personal positive experiences and that teachers had positive perceptions about these experiences.

In the study, the teaching experiences of primary school teachers during the pandemic period were revealed through phenomenological analysis. As a result of the phenomenological analysis, six themes were found. These themes are "Being Development Oriented", "Guidance", "Instructional Designer", "Being Solution Oriented", "Collaborative Process Management" and "Social Responsibility". When the literature on the subject is analyzed, although the titles given to the themes vary, there are many studies revealing that the teacher expressions and experiences they cover are similar. In the discussion part of the study, the research findings conducted in Turkey and in different countries were included together, and this part aims to give an idea to the readers and researchers from a global perspective.

Many of the studies in the literature revealed findings in which teachers evaluated online educational practices in distance education in terms of their professional development. The emergence of results reflecting this theme in the studies is due to the nature of distance education. Because with the rapid transition to distance education, teachers had to step into the digital world. This caused many educators to re-evaluate their teaching methods and focus on the core elements of their teaching processes. In this study, teacher statements regarding this subject are presented under the theme of "being development-oriented". In summary, under the theme of Being Development Oriented, there are statements about primary school teachers accepting the obligations of the pandemic process for their profession and seeking to improve themselves. It can be said that the pandemic process contributed to the digital or technological literacy skills of teachers. Therefore, the continuity of teachers' professional development in this process can be mentioned. There are studies in the literature that reveal results parallel to this finding of the research. Van Der Spoel, Noroozi, Schuurink, and van Ginkel (2020)

compared teachers' perceptions of online teaching expectations and experiences in their study with 200 Dutch teachers. It was revealed that there is a positive difference in teachers' decisions to use technology in their lessons after their distance education experiences. In his study with 71 teachers at the K-12 level, Alper (2020) concluded that teachers easily adopted the technologies they had to use during the distance education process. In their study, Yüzbaşıoğlu et al. (2023) stated that two-thirds of the primary school teachers who participated in the research improved and updated themselves technologically during the distance education process. Küçükakın et al. (2022), in their study with 22 teachers at the K-12 level, revealed that distance education helped teachers develop new skills so that they could integrate educational technologies into their lessons. Contrary to these results, some studies revealed that teachers had difficulty in keeping up with the changes in the online education environment, content and methods during the transition to distance education. Tunegar (2021) made a research about online education experiences of 30 teachers who were in different disciplines working in rural schools across the country in Romania and who studied online education during the pandemic period. Teachers stated that they were not ready to create and implement activities and strategies suitable for themselves. Similarly, Kim and Asbury (2020) investigated the experiences of 24 primary and secondary school teachers in England in the first 5-6 weeks of the pandemic. The research revealed teachers' statements stating that the transition to distance education during the pandemic damaged their professional identities and made them "not feel like teachers". Unlike our results, the opposite situation was encountered for the teachers in this study rather than professional development. When the results of the research under the theme of "being development-oriented" were compared in general with the results of the studies in the literature, it was seen that some studies have similar results and some studies have different results. While some teachers evaluated this process as a professional development opportunity, some teachers stated that the process damaged their professional identities. There may be many reasons for the differences in teachers' statements, such as the school where teachers work, the city/region where the school is located and the national education institution it is affiliated with, teachers' willingness to learn new methods, and their methods of coping with problems.

The guidance theme describes the social and educational work and procedures that primary school teachers had to carry out for their students and parents during the pandemic process. Under this theme, teachers' statements included that they provided adaptation training to parents, that they had to intervene in the daily routines of their students, that they tried to motivate their shareholders, and that they provided information about the pandemic, attempted to provide protection measures, and developed protective measures for the face-to-face teaching process. There are similar results in the study of Tunegar (2021). In this study, many teachers emphasized that the role of families is very important during distance education and the communication processes with them. They stated that they held meetings to include families in the process and that they made intense efforts to communicate with families. In his study, Watson (2020) shared his experiences in his own classroom and his observations at his school in general during the pandemic period. He stated that he organized online meetings with students to reinforce new concepts learned and to support their socio-emotional development, and with parents to help them adapt to the new situation. The teacher's emphasis on guidance for both students and parents is parallel to the results of this study.

The instructional designer theme is related to the innovations and different methods-techniques that primary school teachers experienced in the teaching process during the pandemic. Under this theme, teachers' statements about using many new teaching technologies that they had not used before, developing innovative pedagogies in line with the opportunities and abilities they had depending on the situation and environment, and experiencing the distance and face-to-face education process together for the first time attracted attention. There are studies in the literature that show similarities with these results. In Tunegar's (2021) study, some of the teachers stated that they transferred traditional methods and strategies to online classes, while others used more creative and innovative methods. Most teachers expressed that they would continue to integrate online applications into their traditional education because of their variety and ease of use. Similarly, in Mankki and Rähkä's (2022) study, some teachers stated that it is important to learn new methods by taking into account one's own teaching practices. They noted that special situations, such as the pandemic, also allow new opportunities to reflect on teaching practices.

The theme of Being Solution Oriented reveals the problems primary school teachers encountered during teaching during the pandemic and their search for solutions to these problems. It was observed that teachers tried to find solutions to the problems they experienced during the emergency distance education process and used techniques such as trial and error, adapting to the situation and adaptive teaching in their solutions. In the literature, it is generally stated that teachers had difficulties and problems such as access to the internet, planning, implementation and evaluation of learning, communication with parents, etc. (Bayburtlu, 2020; Çakın & Külekçi-Akyavuz, 2020; Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Türker & Dünder, 2020). In the current study, unlike these results in the literature, teachers' statements regarding solutions to the problems encountered came forward as an important finding. There are a few studies that contain teacher statements regarding the solutions to the problems experienced in this process in distance education. In their study with preschool teachers, İşikoğlu, Adak-Özdemir, Altun and Ergenekon (2021) stated that some teachers were actively involved in the education process to keep up with changes in educational conditions. Similarly, Watson (2020), in his article, underlined the difficulties he experienced in the process and how he tried to overcome them.

The theme of collaborative process management covers the collaboration experiences of primary school teachers in supporting their professional development during the education process in pandemic and finding solutions to problems encountered in the teaching process. Under this theme, there are statements regarding teachers' sharing and cooperating with their colleagues in terms of using technology, developing innovative pedagogy, producing solutions to educational problems encountered, and their cooperation with parents in terms of increasing the efficiency of teaching and the student's motivation, ensuring class participation and attendance, and supporting the student during the stay at home period. Similar to the results of this study, many teachers in Tunegaru's (2021) study emphasized the support they received from their colleagues during the process and the sharing of information between them. It was stated that the school, the people in the village and the priest tried together to support students' access to online courses. According to these results, it is seen that the collaboration is not only among teachers, as in the results of this study. A similar result appears in the study of Mankki and Rähkä (2022). Their study revealed that teachers used three resources to improve their teaching skills in distance education. The first of these is colleagues teaching different classes at the same grade level, the second is teachers at school, and the third is larger teacher groups operating online and on social media. As can be seen, most of the teachers emphasized sharing and cooperation among their colleagues, similar to the teacher statements in this study. Watson (2020) also emphasized in his article that the support provided by the institution responsible for education in the region where the school is located made the transition to distance education easier than expected. The positive effect of the cooperation among teachers, students, parents and local authorities on the distance education process could be seen.

The Social Responsibility theme covers the voluntary social responsibilities and duties carried out by primary school teachers other than teaching during the pandemic. This theme represents statements about teachers providing social support to families for public health during the pandemic, taking part in volunteer projects that meet the needs of citizens in need, and taking initiatives to compensate for their students' deficiencies such as computers and internet access. Similar to the result of this research, Küçükakın et al. (2022) stated in their study that teachers displayed a great sense of social responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. They revealed that teachers worked hard to find solutions to their students' educational problems and to support families in difficult times. In this context, it is known that the profession that struggles the most during the pandemic is medical staff. However, it was observed that primary school teachers also took social responsibility beyond their educational responsibilities, did voluntary work to solve the educational equipment problems their students experienced during the distance education process, and beyond this, took social responsibility and provided support to disadvantaged groups. It can be thought that this situation made primary school teachers and teaching more crucial for the society during the pandemic period.

Recommendations

Although the results of this study are limited to the perspectives of the teachers who participated in the research, the opinions and experiences they shared, the following suggestions can be made for educators, policy makers and future research:

- Contents that will support technology literacy and digital literacy skills can be developed in teacher education to support the technology-supported teaching process, which was brought about by the pandemic process but is an important phenomenon today as well as in the future. Additionally, applications that will provide prospective teachers with technology-supported teaching skills can be provided in all teaching areas of primary school education. For example, different subject areas such as assessment and evaluation in digital environments, classroom management and guidance in distance education can be included in the course catalogs of education faculties.
- During the pandemic process, the professional experiences of primary school teachers constituted a very important data source. In this context, platforms, interviews, symposiums and meetings can be held where primary school teachers can transfer their professional experiences to prospective teachers.
- It was seen that primary school teachers developed unique and special methods and techniques during the pandemic process. In this context, a selection of exemplary good practices can be created, teachers with good practices can be rewarded by relevant institutions such as MoNE or Higher Education Institution (HEI), and other teachers can be encouraged in this direction.
- Longitudinal studies can be conducted to reveal the continuity of the identities developed by primary school teachers during the pandemic.
- Studies can be carried out to reveal the post-pandemic reflections of the professional, personal and social skills acquired by primary school teachers during the pandemic.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. What does it mean to you to be a primary school teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How do you see yourself as a primary school teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What can you say if you compare being a primary school teacher before the pandemic and during the pandemic?
4. As a primary school teacher, you had to carry out the education process in different ways during the COVID-19 pandemic (distance, face-to-face, hybrid). What did you experience in this process?
 - What do you do in your routine day as a teacher?
5. How did your primary school teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic make you feel?
6. How would you evaluate your primary school teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - How would you evaluate it professionally?
 - How would you evaluate it for your students?