

# Primary Teachers' Views of Distance Education During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

*After the suspension of face-to-face education activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic, distance education was used as an important method for continuing education activities. Due to the sudden transition to distance education, it is also a matter of curiosity how this process is carried out and what kind of effects it has caused (Karahana, Bozan, and Akçay, 2020, p.1). This study aims at determining teachers' views on distance education implemented during the pandemic. The phenomenological research design was used as a qualitative research method. The experimental group consists of 52 primary teachers from various regions of Turkey in the 2020-2021 academic year. The questionnaire developed by the authors was used as a data collection tool. The obtained results revealed that teachers had both positive and negative views of distance education implemented during the pandemic, they experienced difficulties based on internet connection issues, lack of devices, and inadequate participation, and they tried to produce solutions for these issues. Teachers believed that distance education would be present in the future education processes; however, it is important to eliminate the current problems regarding distance education. Teachers also mentioned that this period had both positive and negative reflections on their professional lives.*

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Covid-19, Distance Education, Primary Teachers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important phenomenon for the future of societies and should continue uninterrupted. Societies may change their educational activities from time to time due to the problems they face. In order to solve emerging problems, societies can make changes in educational methods from face-to-face education to distance education in these processes (Karatepe et al., 2020, p.1262). Distance education is a form of education where the teacher and learner communicate through different methods, space-independent but time-dependent, -independent, or semi-independent with the help of technological developments (Koloğlu, et al.,

2016, p.54). Greenberg (1998, p.36) defined distance education as “a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning.”

Information technologies are developing very rapidly in the 21st century, which is also defined as the information age. These developments make significant contributions to the development of both global communication networks and distance education practices. In the current age, communication has become an essential need for all individuals in society. Distance education practices, which were seen as a utopia in past societies, became globally applicable today through communication networks, with the latest developments in information technologies (İşman, 2011, p.2). It is known that the first practices on distance education were made via mail in 1728. However, with the technological developments, it has become more qualified and featured with teleconferencing and internet-based applications (İşman, 2011, p.3).

Distance education's history in Turkey stretches back to 1960 from 1923, and it was discussed conceptually in the past. After 1970, distance education was tried to be implemented starting from secondary education through different practices, some experience has been gained, and although limited, some progress has been made. Since 1980, after the establishment of Anadolu University, Faculty of Open Education, these practices have started being used in higher education. In the 1980s and 1990s, distance education reached a particular level of maturity in all levels of education and became a system that appeals to large masses. With the achieved success with the practices implemented in those years, distance education has attracted great attention and acceptance (Bozkurt, 2017, p.86). With the mandatory school closure decision to control the spread of COVID-19 and to protect public health, all education systems across the world are faced with an unprecedented challenge. Currently, more than 5 billion students are affected by this school closure. As a solution, many governments in different



regions of the world are trying to rapidly implement distance education methods in order to ensure continuity of curriculum-based education and learning for all (UNESCO, 2020).

Since new-generation internet technologies are being used widely in distance education, internet-based education, virtual education, web-based education, e-education, and online education terms are also used to refer to distance education (Yorgancı, 2014, p.1402). Regarding web-based education, the interaction between teacher and learner comes to the fore. Accordingly, synchronous and asynchronous methods are used (Karatepe et al., 2020, p.1263). In synchronous education, although the teacher and the learner are physically in different places, there is two-way communication and mutual interaction. On the other hand, asynchronous education refers to a flexible education method independent of time and place in which course contents are prepared in advance and shared with students via the internet (Yorgancı, 2014, p.1402). Synchronous education allows the use of some advantages of face-to-face education, as it enables teachers and students to interact in different ways, and there is no need to be in the same place. However, asynchronous education offers students the opportunity to learn independently from the teacher (Karatepe et al., 2020, p.1263).

After suspending educational activities in schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many countries have implemented various distance learning practices through communication tools such as the internet, TV, and radio to keep students connected in educational activities. According to the results of a study conducted by UNESCO with the participation of 61 different countries, in most of the countries (82%), distance learning is implemented using traditional communication tools such as TV and radio, on the other hand, internet-based distance education applications are also used (TEDMEM, 2020; as cited in UNESCO, 2020). As in many other countries, the traditional communication tools and internet-based applications are being used together in Turkey, and distance learning practices are carried out through Education Information Network (EBA) and television channels (TEDMEM, 2020).

In this pandemic period, which affects students at all educational levels, it has been quite difficult to manage the process and to continue educational activities even in countries with developed information technology infrastructure. In countries where the infrastructure is not sufficient, or it is impossible to provide distance education services to all students, such difficulties have made the process even more difficult. Nevertheless, despite all these issues, all means were used to overcome these difficulties and to support students and teachers, and distance learning activities have been tried to be implemented in various ways. Although some countries reopened schools by analyzing current pandemic conditions, the 2019-2020 academic year

was completed through distance education practices in many countries (TEDMEM, 2020). In the 2020-2021 academic year, education activities in Turkey were primarily carried out with a hybrid method starting from pre-schools and 1st grades gradually. Despite the fact that full-time face-to-face education started in 8th and 12th grades, as of 23 November 2020, distance education was re-implemented at all levels except the pre-school level.

The purpose of this study was to determine primary teachers' views of distance education implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this context, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the primary teachers' views of distance education implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the challenges faced by primary teachers regarding distance education and the solutions they produced to these challenges?
3. What are the primary teachers' opinions about the effects of distance education on the future of education?
4. What are the primary teachers' opinions about the continuity of distance education?
5. What are the primary teachers' opinions about potential reflections of distance education on their professions?

## II. METHODOLOGY

### *General Background*

The phenomenological research design was used as a qualitative research method. Phenomenology focuses on events that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and thorough understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2012, p.72). Participants' feelings, perceptions, and thoughts about their experience and how they structured such emotions and gained an insight are examined with phenomenology studies (Günbatar, 2019, p.294; as cited in Patton, 2002).

### *Research Group*

The experimental group consists of 52 primary teachers from various regions of Turkey in the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample group was determined using convenience sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods. The convenience sampling technique provides speed and practicality to the research as the researcher chooses a situation that is close and easy to access (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2012, p.113). The demographic characteristics of the primary teachers who participated in the current study are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of The Participants**

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	40	77
	Male	12	23
	Total	52	100
Age Range	21-30	28	54
	31-40	10	19
	41-50	12	23
	51 and above	2	4
	Total	52	100
Professional Experience	1-5 years	11	21
	6-10 years	22	42
	11-15 years	3	6
	16-20 years	6	12
	21 years and above	10	19
	Total	52	100

A total of 52 primary teachers participated in this study, of which 40 female and 12 male; 28 teachers were between 21 and 30 years of age, 10 teachers were between 31 and 40 years of age, 12 teachers were between 41 and 50 years of age, and finally, 2 teachers were 51 years old and above. Regarding the professional experience of the primary teachers, 11 of the participants had 1-5 years, 22 of them had 6-10 years, 3 of them had 11-15 years, 6 of them had 16-20 years, and finally, 10 of them had 21 years and above professional experience.

#### **Data Collection**

Data analyzed in this study were obtained using a questionnaire developed by the authors. The questionnaire consists of 5 questions and was finalized after obtaining expert opinions from two experts in educational sciences. The primary teachers were asked to express their opinions on

distance education implemented during the pandemic in writing using digital channels.

#### **Data Analysis**

The obtained data were analyzed by the content analysis method. The main purpose of content analysis is to obtain concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. Therefore, at first, the obtained data should be conceptualized, then classified based on the obtained concepts, and finally, the themes explaining the data should be determined accordingly (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p.227). The analyzes made using Nvivo 11 statistics software. The opinions obtained from teachers were read in detail and coded based on the content of the question. Similar and relevant views were grouped under the same codes. Data obtained from analyzes were presented in descriptive statistics tables with codes and frequencies of these codes. To support the achieved findings, direct quotes from teachers' answers were presented in the following sections. Instead of real names, coded names (e.g., S1, S2, S3) were used in these quotes. As a generally accepted rule, similarity level is important for a dataset that different coders were applied (Baltacı, 2017, p.8; as cited in Fidan & Öztürk, 2015a). This similarity, which refers to the agreement among coders, is called internal reliability in Miles and Huberman's model and can be calculated using the following formula:  $\text{reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{(\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement})} \times 100$ . When using qualitative coding techniques, to establish intercoder reliability, the agreement among coders should be 80% or higher (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Baltacı, 2017, p.8; as cited in Patton, 2002). The reliability was calculated by coders, and the agreement ratio was found to 98%.

### **III. RESULTS**

The results obtained in this study are given below.

#### **Question 1:**

The teachers' views of distance education implemented during the pandemic were grouped into two categories as positive and negative views and given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Primary Teachers' Views of Distance Education Implemented During The Pandemic**

Category	Views	f
Positive	It was the best solution in the current situation	12
	It prevented students from disconnecting from school	9
	It was a productive process	8
	EBA TV was beneficial	4
	It made technological contributions to both students and teachers	2
	It made information independent from space and time	2
Negative	There were problems caused by poor infrastructure	11
	Participation of all students could not be realized	10
	There were challenges caused by financial inadequacies-impossibilities	9
	It was not efficient	7
	It was understood that it could not be a substitute for face-to-face education	7
	There were inequalities of opportunity	7
	It was not a suitable method for the primary education	6
	It was superficial, and the lessons were not enjoyable	3
	It was a difficult/challenging process	3
	Academic differences emerged	2
	There were too many live lessons	2
	Education aspect was insufficient	2
	EBA TV was not beneficial	1
	There was too much technology exposure	1

The analysis of primary teachers' views revealed that some participants had positive opinions towards this process. The teachers who had positive views stated that the distance education practice was productive, and it was useful in preventing students from disconnecting from educational activities, their teachers, and friends. The teachers' arguments such as "It was the best solution in the current

situation," "It prevented students from disconnecting from school," and "It was a productive process." support such views.

In this context, the teacher S1 expressed his/her statement saying, "In such a period, it prevented students from disconnecting from education. The best practice here was that primary school children had lessons with their own teachers through the screen. It positively affected the students". Similarly, another primary teacher, S6, said, "Considering the current situation, of course, distance education was one of the best solutions," and teacher S40 said, "In my opinion, the best available practice is giving live lessons through EBA Tv-supported distance education." Furthermore, primary teachers stated that this period made technological contributions to both students and teachers and made information independent of space and time. The teacher S9 expressed his/her feeling saying, "I believe that it contributed to the development of students' technological skills. It contributed to a flexible education regardless of place and time".

Besides, it was found that some primary teachers had negative views towards the distance education process. The teachers who had negative views stated that the distance education practice was not productive; there were problems caused by poor infrastructure and low student participation. Teachers' statements such as "There were problems caused by poor infrastructure.", "Participation of all students could not be realized," "There were challenges caused by financial inadequacies-impossibilities" and "It was not efficient" can be considered as sources of such decision. We found that most of the teachers had negative opinions towards this process. Regarding the negative opinions, the primary teacher S4 expressed his/her negative thoughts saying, "Although the distance education practices implemented seem to be successful theoretically, there were practical problems. In particular, the failure to ensure the participation of all students in the classroom prevented the achievement of integrity in education. Children of families with limited income could not participate in the distance education practices as they did not have sufficient technological infrastructure".

Teacher S17 expressed his/her thoughts, saying, "Many challenges emerged related to the distance education. These challenges were poor technological infrastructure, difficulties in using technology, security problems, problems in distance education with disadvantaged children and young children (kindergarten and primary school). Teacher S19 stated, "Not all students can participate in the distance education practices. There were many students who do not have internet, so education could not be carried out in a very healthy way." and teacher S27 said, "In my opinion, it has created some inequalities of opportunity. While students with responsible family support did not face any challenges in this period, it was difficult for those who had some problems

such as internet access, family support, and learning difficulties.”.

Furthermore, the teachers stated that other difficulties they faced are it is not a suitable method for primary education, there were too many live lessons, it was a difficult practice to carry out, education aspect was insufficient, and there was too much screen exposure. Regarding these difficulties, the primary teacher, S2, said, “It was really a difficult process and naturally, not efficient as face-to-face education.”, teacher S23 stated, “I believe that 6 live lessons daily are too much for distance education. It is already difficult to hold students' attention on the screen, and it is more difficult looking at the screen during 6 lessons.” and teacher S28 said, “Distance education is a method that should be applied to certain age groups. Because it is very difficult to hold primary school children’s attention on the lesson through the screen”.

### Question 2:

The challenges faced by primary teachers regarding this process and the solutions they produced to these challenges were discussed under two categories, challenges, and solutions. The findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: The Challenges Faced by Primary Teachers During This Period and The Solutions They Produced**

Categories	Views	f
Difficulties	Internet access/connection problems	26
	Problems related to lack of devices	21
	Inadequate student participation	13
	Absence of family support in the process	5
	Problems related to technical issues	5
	Lack of children motivation and kids are getting bored quickly	5
	Problems caused by inexperience	4
	Lack of EBA Support Points	1
	Lack of interaction	1
	Unable to check homework assignments	1
	Problems caused by students' indiscipline behaviors	1
	Unable to comply with programs	1

Solutions	I didn't have any difficulties	1
	I contacted with parents and ensured their active participation	10
	I directed them to EBA Tv-EBA Support Points	10
	I established parent groups and gave homework assignments	9
	I tried to make lessons through different applications	4
	I provided source support to students	3
	I gained information regarding the solution to technical issues	2
	I preferred applications that consume less data	2
	I could not provide any solution	2
	I tried to make lessons entertaining and interactive	1

Analysis of the primary teachers’ views showed that they experienced some difficulties related to internet access/connection problems, lack of devices, and inadequate student participation. The views of the teachers such as “Internet access/connection problems,” “Problems related to lack of devices,” and “Inadequate student participation” support this finding.

Regarding the difficulties experienced, the primary teacher S3 said, “The most obvious problem was the connection.”, teacher S6 stated his/her opinions saying, “There were some students that I couldn’t communicate during this period. We were generally unable to make lessons with students who could not or had limited internet access.” and teacher S8 said “Some students could not participate in distance education because they don’t have technological devices and internet infrastructure. This situation led to inequality of educational opportunity among students.”.

Furthermore, primary teachers mentioned some other distance education-related problems such as students' could not become motivated, unable to check homework assignments, students' indiscipline behaviors, and unable to comply with the live course schedule. Regarding such views, teacher S18 said, “I observed lack of motivation in my students since they are not used to this process,” teacher S19 expressed his/her thoughts, saying, “Homework assignments are very problematic. Since there is no continuous participation in the classes, the same excuse is

always said for assignments such as ‘I did not participate in that lesson so, I did not have information about that homework.’ The control of the homework was not very healthy through the camera.” and teacher S21 said, “Since children are distracted quickly due to too many stimuli around, and there was no face-to-face education, making lessons became difficult.”. Finally, teacher S50, who stated that he/she did not encounter and problem said, “I didn't have any difficulties.”.

Regarding the solutions produced by primary teachers for the challenges they faced during this period, some of them were contacted with parents and ensured their participation in the process, directed students to EBA Tv and EBA Support Points, established parent groups on WhatsApp, and gave homework assignments and obtained feedback. The teachers’ statements such as “I contacted with parents and ensured their active participation,” “I directed them to EBA Tv-EBA Support Points,” “I established parent groups and gave homework assignments” can be referenced here. About the solutions produced by teachers, teacher S6 stated his/her thoughts saying, “Generally, we could not teach students who could not or had limited internet access. I directed these students to EBA Support points.”, the teacher S7 said, “I shoot photos of lessons made on EBA and shared via WhatsApp. I encouraged them to watch EBA tv.”, S39 said, “I send homework assignments to the parents via WhatsApp and controlled through their feedback.” and teacher S52 expressed his/her opinions saying “With the EBA support point we established in our school, most of my students participated in the lessons.”

Furthermore, some of the solutions produced by teachers regarding the difficulties they experienced were making live lessons through different applications, providing source support to students, and trying to gain information about technical issues. The primary teacher, S11, said, “The most frequent problem I experienced during distance education was connection problem to EBA. I overcome this problem using other meeting applications in addition to EBA.” S27 said, “There were internet access and source problems. I discussed with parents to overcome these issues, and I provided sources, books, etc. for their homes.” and S35 stated his/her thoughts, saying, “I send lesson videos and lecture notes to my students who could not participate in live lessons.”. Finally, the teachers who stated that they could not produce any solutions expressed their thoughts with the following phrases: S10 said, “Unfortunately, we couldn’t find any solution to this problem.” and S48 said, “I couldn’t produce a solution.”

### Question 3:

The primary teachers' opinions about the effects of distance education on the future of education are listed in Table 4.

**Table 4: The Effects of Distance Education on The Future of Education Practices**

Views	f
I think it will affect negatively	14
It will increase its influence and continue to exist	12
It will contribute positively if inequalities of opportunity are eliminated	10
It will provide individual learning time and space independent	5
Asynchronous lectures will positively affect academic success	4
It will create a contemporary education model	4
It will lead to inequality of opportunity	3
It will affect teaching positively and education negatively	3
It will be used actively at the higher levels of education (secondary school-high school-college, etc.)	3
I think it will affect positively	2
It will cause an extra workload for teachers	2
It will cause students to be disconnected from educational activities	2
It will create a screen-dependent generation	1
It will shorten the time spent in school	1
I can't foresee	1

The analysis of primary teachers’ views revealed that some had negative beliefs towards the effects of distance education on the future of education practices; some think it will increase its influence and continue to exist and will contribute positively if inequalities of opportunity are eliminated. The teachers’ following arguments can be considered as a source to this finding “I think it will affect negatively.”, “It will increase its influence and continue to exist.” and “It will contribute positively if inequalities of opportunity are eliminated.”.

In this regard, some believed that it would be a nonproductive process as the primary teacher S5 said, “*I know that it cannot be a substitute for face-to-face education and it will affect negatively.*”, teacher S30 stated his/her thoughts saying “*Although we consider distance education as an opportunity during the pandemic, it can never be an alternative to face-to-face education.*”. Different from these

opinions, some teachers had positive views of the effects of distance education on the future of education practices such as teacher S1 said, *“I think that distance education did not start with the pandemic, it has existed since the screen was invented, and if we can use the screen efficiently, it will be effective in this period as a contemporary teaching model.”*, teacher S14 expressed his/her opinions saying *“The distance education did not start and it will not end with a pandemic. It will always exist in further education processes. In my opinion, this system, which the MoNE (the ministry of national education) had planned from the very beginning, will be developed further and shape the education system.”* And finally, teacher S52 said, *“I believe that it will be beneficial for students as today is the technology age, but with the condition of providing equal opportunities and equal education and training opportunities.”*

Question 4:

The primary teachers' opinions about the continuity of distance education are given in Table 5.

According to the analysis of primary teachers' views, they believe that it might be beneficial if its inadequacies and difficulties are eliminated, it can be used for lesson repetition or support purposes, and it can be used at education levels other than primary school. The teachers' statements such as *“It might be beneficial if its inadequacies/issues eliminated.”*, *“It can be used for repetition/support purposes.”* and *“It can continue to be implemented at education levels other than primary school.”* support these beliefs. In this regard, teacher S5 said, *“It can be used for support purposes to compensate the missing subjects in the classroom.”*, teacher S6 expressed his/her opinions saying, *“If the access problem is eliminated for all students, I believe that a few hours of repeat lessons per week by distance education will contribute to the students.”*, teacher S10 said, *“In my opinion, distance education should be implemented in higher education levels. Face-to-face education should continue in the first grades.”* and finally, teacher S13 said, *“It can be continued as training, supplement or study time. It can be more successful if supported by visual contents and videos.”*

**Table 5 : The Primary Teachers' Opinions About The Continuity of Distance Education**

Views	f
It might be beneficial if its inadequacies/issues are eliminated	8
It can be used for repetition/support purposes	8
It can continue to be implemented at education levels other than primary school	7
It should not continue to be used	6
It can be used supported with face-to-face education	6
It would be useless due to lack of opportunities	5
It will be an education model	5
It can be used when necessary	5
It can be effectively used if the contents are enriched	4
It can be used for particular courses	3
EBA Tv might continue to run	3
It can be used to prepare exams	3
There should be no live lessons	2
I do not think it will be beneficial	2
Disadvantaged students should also be included in the process	1
It can be used in summer holidays	1

Furthermore, the teachers stated that it should not continue to be used, and if used, it should be supported with face-to-face education, and it would be useless due to lack of opportunities. Teacher S24 stated, *“I do not think it will be beneficial. The students do not take the lesson seriously and do not attend the lesson as in the classroom.”* Similarly, teacher S41 stated his/her feelings are saying *“I think it should not continue due to its inefficiency.”*, on the other hand, teacher S51 said, *“It will be beneficial if implemented with face-to-face education. However, I believe that only distance education will not be sufficient for the education of children.”*

### Question 5:

The primary teachers' opinions about potential reflections of distance education implemented during the pandemic period on their professions were discussed under two categories, positive and negative reflections. The findings are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: The Reflections of Distance Education Process on Teachers' Professions**

Categories	Views	f
Positive reflections	It contributed to our professional development	19
	It contributed to our technological knowledge	19
	It was a different professional experience	6
	It improved our creativity	6
	The importance of our profession has been understood	5
	We have learned to keep up with the developments of the age	4
	We understood the importance of face-to-face education	4
	We have learned what we can do against difficulties	4
	It enabled us to have an active period	3
	It taught us to be planned	2
Negative reflections	We are physically and mentally tired and worn out	4
	It was an inefficient period	4
	It destroyed our communication and relationships with our students	1
	It caused a feeling of inadequacy	1

An examination of primary teachers' views revealed that distance education contributed to their professional development and technology knowledge, they had a different professional experience, and their creativity was improved. In this context, the teachers stated that "It contributed to our professional development.", "It contributed to our technological knowledge.", "It was a different professional experience." and "It improved our creativity.". Accordingly, teacher S5 said, "It was a new experience for us. I should say that I started to use technology more effectively." teacher

S21 expressed his/her opinions saying, "It developed teachers regarding the use of technology. Furthermore, it provided a new perspective into education.", teacher S27 said "It created an opportunity for self-improvement. I got familiar with technological tools that were far from me. I can now be open to innovations. I saw that I could do my best in all kinds of difficulties.", similarly, teacher S40 said, "Our interest in programs with digital content has increased. We try to reach our students by preparing video recordings and presentations. We learn new software. In this regard, in my opinion, it has positively contributed to my profession." and finally, teacher S47 stated his/her thoughts, saying, "Although it seems negative, I think it contributed positively to me. We had a situation where we had no knowledge and gained professional experience about what we should do."

Moreover, it was determined that the primary teachers had beliefs that they were physically and mentally tired, the process was inefficient, they had communication problems with their students, and they felt inadequate during this period. Accordingly, the teachers said, "We are physically and mentally tired and worn out." and "It was an inefficient period." In this regard, teacher S14 said, "It was a different professional experience for me. For the first time, I gave lessons on screen. It was an exhausting process for me. I was physically and mentally tired.", similarly, teacher S34 stated, "It was an experience, I do not think that it was effective and efficient. During this distance education period, I realized that I was more tired and how important face-to-face education is".

### IV. DISCUSSION

The results obtained in this study examining primary teachers' views of distance education implemented during the pandemic period revealed that the teachers had both positive and negative views. The positive views were based on the beliefs such as it was the best solution in the current situation, prevented students from disconnecting from school and educational activities, and was an efficient process. Besides, it was determined that there are some negative views such as there were difficulties due to poor infrastructure and financial insufficiencies, desired levels of student participation could not be achieved, it was an inefficient process, and definitely, it cannot be a substitute for face-to-face education. The obtained findings were similar to those obtained in the study conducted by Yıldız and Vural in 2020. Accordingly, we found that children and young people of low-income families who lack internet access and devices could not benefit from distance education sufficiently during the pandemic period. The results of a study carried out by Başaran et al.in 2020 indicated that some challenges emerged due to students' limited access and lack of active participation in the lessons, being unsuitable for individual differences, and technical issues. Similar to our findings, Özdoğan and Berkant (2020) determined that stakeholders have positive opinions regarding distance

education implemented during the pandemic period since it was independent of time and place, it can be viewed repeatedly, it meets the educational needs during this period, and it offered harmony of technology and education. Different from the findings of the current study, a study conducted by Alper in 2020 showed that teachers adapted to the distance education practices and adopted the technology used, despite some negativities regarding participation in the lessons, students listened to the lessons more carefully, and teachers were able to give lessons faster. In addition to these studies, the examination of the teachers' opinions towards online learning applications for early childhood education revealed that the computer and tablet screens would limit the fine motor skills and physical development of children in this age group since they have short attention spans, they cannot manage themselves, and their kinesthetic and tactile needs cannot be met (Coban, 2020). The results obtained in another study conducted in Germany showed that teachers experienced communication problems with students since some students do not participate or do not want to participate in distance education practices. Furthermore, teachers stated that socially disadvantaged students and insufficient internet access among some students pose a problem for distance education practices (Delcker & Ifenthaler, 2020). In a study conducted with Polish teachers, it was pointed out that the distance education implemented during the pandemic negatively affected some students who do not have information technology equipment at home, as well as students who have communication problems with their families and students with lack motivation (Kruszeska et al., 2020).

Regarding the findings on the difficulties faced by teachers during the distance education process and solutions provided for these difficulties, it was found that the teachers experienced many problems associated with the internet connection, lack of devices, limited student participation, lack of family support, and low student motivation. And it was determined that as solutions to these problems, teachers contacted parents and tried to get their participation in the process; they directed students who have limited opportunities to EBA Tv and EBA Support Points, and established parent groups and tried to perform this period more efficiently by giving homework assignments. Similar to our findings, a study conducted by Bayburtlu in 2020 examining teachers' opinions towards Turkish education showed that students could not attend virtual classes due to lack of device and experienced connection problems in live lessons, parents are unconcerned about the process, teachers did not follow their students in this period, and students became screen dependent. Furthermore, Bakioglu and Çevik (2020) reported that teachers faced some challenges such as internet connection issues, communication problems with students, and low participation in lessons during distance education. Consistent with our findings, Aslan and Şumuer (2020) found that teachers experienced problems such as

noise, internet connection, access to the lessons, limited digital content, low interaction, privacy and security, and short lesson duration. Demir and Özdaş (2020) stated that teachers experienced difficulties associated with infrastructure, student participation, planning, uncertainty, and the EBA platform during distance education. Finally, in the study of Ünal and Bulunuz (2020), teachers stated that the most important problem related to this process is that students who do not have internet, computers, and smartphones could not benefit from the distance education practices.

Regarding the findings on teachers' opinions about the effect of distance education on the future of education, it was found that while some teachers believe that distance education implemented during the pandemic period will affect education negatively, some stated that distance education would increase its influence and continue to exist. In addition to these opinions, some teachers pointed out that distance education might be beneficial if inequalities of opportunity are eliminated, and it will provide an education independent of time and space. Consistent with the results obtained in the current study, Yamamoto and Altun (2020) determined that distance education, that is, digital learning, will not be an alternative to face-to-face education in the future but will become an essential part of education. Moreover, Başaran et al. (2020) found that distance education practices should be developed and improved, considering the possibility that distance education practices may continue in cases such as epidemic diseases.

The analysis of teachers' views of continuity of distance education, the teachers stated that distance education might be beneficial if the issues in the system are eliminated, can be used for repetition/support purposes, can be used at education levels other than primary school, and should not continue to be used. Similar to these findings, a study conducted by Can (2020) revealed that a distance education infrastructure should be established, lessons should be planned, and content should be created, stakeholders should be considered, and necessary improvements should be made. The results of the same study showed that the pandemic revealed the inadequacy of traditional education approaches, and accordingly, the need for distance education was recognized, and formal education should be supported by distance education.

Regarding the findings on teachers' opinions about the contributions of distance education to their professions, teachers stated their positive opinions about distance education, saying it contributed to their professional development and technological information, and provided a different experience. On the other hand, they also mentioned some negative reflections, such as they are physically and mentally tired; it was an inefficient period and caused a feeling of inadequacy. Consistent with our findings, a study carried out by Bakioglu and Çevik (2020) examining science

teachers' opinions towards distance education showed that teachers believe that the distance education process contributed to the use of technology and affected their professional development positively. Regarding the negative views, teachers stated that they felt inadequate during this period and were concerned about the loss of information in students. Similarly, in a study conducted by Kruszkeska et al. (2020), teachers stated that distance education practices implemented during the pandemic period caused some health problems such as back and eye pain, and they had some difficulties such as lack of experience. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Tu Vu and others (2020), teachers pointed out that online teaching activities increased their workload depending on the educational activities during the pandemic and their stress levels increased. According to the results of a study by Ballova et al. (2020), teachers had beliefs that the distance education implemented during the pandemic require more preparation processes for teaching activities, and they had to use different communication channels, and thus their workload increased. Such situations caused an increase in teachers' negative feelings towards the teaching process and a decrease in their positive feelings.

## V.CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

An overall evaluation of the findings obtained from the results of the present paper indicates that distance education urgently implemented at all educational levels due to the pandemic was beneficial as it prevented interruption of educational activities. However, the desired output was not obtained sometimes due to difficulties caused by system and infrastructure issues. Accordingly, it is recommended to overcome these problems by carrying out infrastructure works. Furthermore, it was determined that many students could not benefit from distance education due to inequalities in opportunity; therefore, EBA support points and EBA mobile support vehicles were established by authorities. Besides, to eliminate the difficulties faced by low-income students, within the framework of the strategy prepared by the Ministry of National Education, in the 2020-2021 academic year, 500 thousand tablets were distributed to students with low income. Increasing such activities would make a positive contribution to this process.

Considering the possibility that distance education can be used in future pandemic processes as currently used, it is thought that the inequalities experienced by students should be minimized. Furthermore, necessary improvements should be made regarding technical and infrastructural deficiencies to improve the efficiency of distance education. Professional development opportunities regarding distance education practices that support teachers' competence perceptions should be provided, and activities that increase their motivation should be implemented.

This qualitative study examining primary teachers' views of distance education practices can be repeated as a qualitative study to examine opinions of teachers from different

disciplines or as a quantitative study to examine a larger sample. Moreover, further studies might provide insight into the effects of distance education practices on teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.

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