



Participatory Educational Research (PER)
Vol.9(4), pp. 92-110, July 2022
Available online at <http://www.perjournal.com>
ISSN: 2148-6123
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17275/per.22.81.9.4>

Id: 996881

Teaching Practices Under the Shadow of COVID-19

Serkan Keleşoğlu*

Turkish and Social Sciences Education Department, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-1208-6919

Alper Yetkiner

Department of Educational Sciences, Kilis 7 Aralık University, Kilis, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0001-8213-9732

Article history

Received:
17.09.2021

Received in revised form:
12.01.2022

Accepted:
23.01.2022

Key words:

teaching practices; teacher training; distance teacher education

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started to be seen around the world at the beginning of 2020 and affected all the countries of the world in a short time, has severely affected all social systems, health being in the first place, and forced change. In this period, transformations that can be called reforms took place in education. The effect of distance education in formal education necessitated changes in teacher training processes, as well. This study aimed to evaluate the action plan designed to minimize the adverse effects of teaching practices, an essential pillar of the teacher training system. The participants of the study intended as action research, are mentor teachers and student teachers taking part in teaching practices in the 2020-2021 Academic Year. At the end of the research, three themes were reached from the views of the participants: the effects of the action on professional life, the obstacles encountered and suggestions for improvement. In light of the data obtained, it is suggested that teaching practices should be supported with tasks suitable for distance education, innovative technological material development should be given importance among these tasks, and student teachers should go through the teaching processes in which they can prepare these materials.

Introduction

The Covid-19 outbreak has led to new experiences that have not been experienced before worldwide. Each country has been affected by this pandemic and embarked on a quest to continue living close to normal. Educational models, carried out face-to-face in schools and offering the opportunity to touch every student's life, had to change due to the pandemic. Education was carried out online both in institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and universities. Teaching practice courses, in which students can experience their future professions for the first time in the faculties of education, undertaking the mission of training teachers, had to be conducted via online platforms.

* Correspondency: skelesoglu@ankara.edu.tr

It is a standard view that theory and practice-oriented courses should be included in a balanced way in teacher training models. School Experience I, School Experience II and Teaching Practice are practice courses included in the faculty of education programs to gain teaching experience (Ünlü Saratlı, 2007). In 1994, the "National Education Development Project" was initiated in cooperation with the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and the World Bank to increase the quality of the teaching profession in Turkey. In the continuation of this project, aiming to develop faculty-school cooperation, teacher training programs implemented by education faculties were revised in 1997, and the time spent by student teachers in practice schools was increased. These practices in schools are grouped under School Experience I, School Experience II and Teaching Practice courses. In the 2006-2007 academic year, due to the insufficient number of practice schools, School Experience I and School Experience II courses started to be applied as a single course under the name of School Experience (Alkan, Şimşek, & Erdem, 2013). The school experience course, one of the practical courses, which are the primary basis of a functional teacher education program (Ekinci & Tican Başaran, 2015), is an essential step in the recognition and understanding of the teaching profession and has been very useful in terms of contributing to the professional development of student teachers with good planning (Kırçiçek & Yuksel, 2019). With the update in the Teacher Training Programs by CoHE in 2017, it was decided to remove this course and expand the Teaching Practice course from one semester to two semesters.

As the world order enables people to become connected, the risks encountered have increased at the same rate. The Covid-19 pandemic has not remained at national borders but spread over a wide area. It has affected all people regardless of their race, educational level, income, or gender (Schleicher, 2020). Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, many governments worldwide have started implementing measures limiting the number of people gathered in public places. Such precautions have disrupted the functioning of schools and universities. Along with these implementations, alternative methods have been put into practice for the continuation of education. Private schools and universities around the world have urgently launched online learning and teaching applications, and it has been underlined that this initiative is also an efficient application suitable for the natural environment of the classroom (Blankstein, Frederick & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020, Moyo, 2020 Reimers, Schleicher, Saavedra, et al. Tuominen, 2020).

The sudden transformation from the traditional classroom model to online distance education with the pandemic has radically changed the primary working model of Higher Education worldwide. According to UNESCO, schools and higher education institutions were closed in 185 countries on April 1, 2020, and this affected more than 1.5 billion students, accounting for 89.4% of the total enrolled students worldwide (ElAref, 2020). When traditional face-to-face classes were cancelled, and schools switched to distance learning methods, face-to-face field experiences became impossible for teachers. Teachers in practice schools have started to use video conferencing platforms to help student teachers gain practical school experience skills and maintain real interaction. Some mentor teachers further stated that those online practices were as effective as traditional face-to-face lessons (Koch & Vu, 2020). Ersin, Atay, and Mede (2020) also underlined in their research that teachers had positive feelings about the online teaching experience. They stated that after the online sessions with the e-mentor and their peers, the student teachers who had anxiety at the beginning of the e-traineeship quickly got used to the new experience, enjoyed the e-class atmosphere, and felt like they were in the actual classroom. They expressed that their e-mentors played an essential role in overcoming the anxiety of student teachers by making them feel competent about effective classroom practices. They explained that there were some problems related to classroom management and

infrastructure during this process; however, with the suggestions and guidance of e-mentors, solutions were found to such problems experienced in online courses.

Opinions about applied courses in education faculties vary for sure. Ping, Fudong, and Zheng (2020) emphasized that the Covid-19 pandemic indicated that teachers and students using all kinds of teaching practices gave an idea about the feasibility of online teaching and instilled the idea of suspending teaching and learning. Gonzalez-Calvo, Barba-Martin, Bores-Garcia, and Gallego-Lema (2020) stated in their research that distance teaching practice courses caused anxiety in forming the professional identities of student teachers. The role of student teachers' practices in shaping their professional identities is quite clear. It is also apparent that the practices that cannot be fulfilled, especially during the pandemic, have different effects. Eti and Karaduman (2020) stated in their research that the distance education experience of student teachers during the pandemic process did not affect their motivation negatively. However, they emphasized that some student teachers felt inadequate and thought they might have difficulties when they started the profession. Koç (2020) stated in his study that the views on teaching practice through distance education were also related to the different types of schools that student teachers attended. He expressed that the student teachers' opinions who perform their practices in schools providing education at primary, secondary and high school levels differ. Holdheide (2020), on the other hand, emphasized that the 2020-2021 academic year had some uncertainties in the new process experienced with the pandemic and that it was necessary to ensure new teachers were ready to cope with the challenges awaiting them. Scott and Harper (2020) pointed out that teacher educators faced many unknowns during this period of uncertainty. They stated that especially teacher educators had to switch to online and hybrid applications quickly. In addition, they drew attention to the importance of providing student teachers with the opportunity to practice teaching through online platforms. They emphasized that student teachers should be supported in online areas and allowed to experience teaching experience.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused sudden changes and transformations in the education world. The continuation of teaching practice courses, which have an important role in the pre-professional experience of student teachers continuing their education in education faculties, through online platforms has created a surprise for both teacher educators and student teachers. The practices and experiences of the student teachers in a face-to-face manner in practice schools have left their place to online interaction. Student teachers experienced inadequacy and anxiety at first, for sure, yet they tried to accept the undeniable situation and continue the process in the most successful way. The effects of these courses, including the last pre-professional practice experiences of student teachers, are clear and vital for them. Therefore, it was aimed to determine the opinions of the student teachers continuing their education in education faculties and their mentors helping them about the teaching practice course during the distance education process.

The primary purpose of this research is to evaluate the action plan created for teaching practices that were tried to be carried out under the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, answers to the following sub-questions were sought.

- (1) What are the student teachers' opinions about the teaching practices that have been attempted to be conducted through distance education?
- (2) What are the mentor teachers' opinions about the teaching practices that have been attempted to be conducted through distance education?



Methodology

Research Design

This study aimed to provide a professional experience to student teachers via the action plan prepared for teaching practices carried out through distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, the classical action research design was preferred. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2010), action research is researchers and participants' identifying a problem and synthesizing new information within the cycle of planning, action, and evaluation for this problem (as cited in Gürgür, 2017). Within the framework of pandemic measures, student teachers had to carry out the practices through distance education, and this situation was revealed as a problem. A pragmatist approach was followed to find a solution to this problem and enable student teachers to have the best experience under the conditions.

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) explain action research as a research approach conducted by a practitioner who is involved in the practice directly or together with a researcher and uncovering the problems related to the practice process or including systematic data collection and analysis to understand and solve an already emerging problem. Ocak and Akkaş Baysal (2019) expressed that action research was a frequently used method recently and underlined that it was an essential dimension of both the quality of education and the professional development of teachers, with the information provided in-depth. Within the scope of this study, it was tried to determine the effectiveness of the practices of the faculty members conducting the teaching practice course to solve the problem identified.

Within the context of this research, the Action-Reflection Cycle in Figure 1 was acted upon before the action research in accordance with the McNiffi Model. As of March 2020, in the Spring Term of the 2019-2020 Academic Year, various measures were determined since teaching practices had to be carried out through distance education. After these studies, evaluation studies were carried out on the determined measures with the student teachers, mentor teachers and the instructors conducting the course, and an action plan was prepared for the next term.

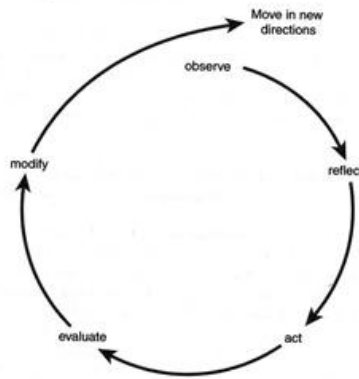


Figure 1. An Action-Reflection Cycle

With the improvements made from the previous term, the following stages were carried out for the Fall Semester of the 2020-2021 Academic Year: 1. Determination of the action plan, 2. Sharing the action plan with the student and mentor teachers, 3. Implementation of the action plan and 4. Evaluation of the action plan. The action plan was submitted to the Validity

Committee's evaluation before implementation and was communicated to the relevant stakeholders after obtaining approval. In the research, seventeen tasks were determined for twelve weeks, and these tasks were carried out by student teachers between October 19, 2020 - January 15, 2021.

The weekly sub-tasks of the designed action plan and the objectives of the tasks are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Weekly Practice Tasks and Rationales Designed for Distance Education

Week	Practice Task	Practice Task Rationale
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the annual plan of the applied grade level • Article analysis on distance education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To check whether the annual plans are arranged according to the distance education process and raising an opinion in the student teachers about the applicability of the prepared plan • What is distance education? What are the conditions to be considered in distance education? To raise awareness about teacher behaviors supporting distance education and teaching materials that can be used
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with the mentor teacher about the distance education • Examining the contents of the relevant grade level in the EBA (Educational Information Network) system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make them realize the situations that they may encounter in the distance education process by using the mentor teachers' experience • To make them be aware of the effects of the applications made on EBA TV, which stands out in the distance education process in terms of the teaching profession and field knowledge/education • To ensure that they have information about the materials in the EBA system, which includes the resources they can benefit from during the process
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of virtual classroom management • Analysis of the behaviors of questioning, answering, and using reinforcement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make them determine the situations that should be considered in their practices and the precautions to be taken by observing how the teacher-student interaction and the process are carried out by the teacher in the virtual classroom environment • To make them recognize the appropriateness of the teacher's questioning behaviors, the relationship and level of the acquisition of the questions asked, as well as the response behaviors of the students and the reinforcements used by the teacher, and to ensure that they adapt them to their practices
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of teaching methods and techniques applied in the virtual classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make them establish the relationship between the teaching methods and techniques preferred by the teacher in virtual classrooms with the learning outcome, to make them realize how they are applied, what they should pay attention to when applying and what kind of arrangements they should make
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining course materials • Analysis of the use of the textbook and other teaching materials in the virtual classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make them be aware of the characteristics of the course materials used by the teacher and how they can be prepared, unlike face-to-face education • To make them be aware of how teaching materials are used in virtual classrooms and to provide ideas on how to use the materials they will prepare

6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation, application, and evaluation of modules suitable for an outcome or a learning group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make them experience how to benefit from a module in virtual classrooms
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation, application, and evaluation of an online worksheet for a learning outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make them experience how to use the online worksheet in virtual classrooms
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation, application, and evaluation of a performance evaluation tool for a learning group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make them experience how to use the performance assessment tool in virtual classrooms
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation, application, and evaluation of a test for a learning area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make them experience how to use test type tools for evaluation in virtual classrooms
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Micro teaching practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain them the ability to design and implement virtual classroom management and a constructivist teaching process suitable for learning outcomes
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation, application, and evaluation of a lesson plan for a learning outcome 	
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation, application, and evaluation of a lesson plan for a learning outcome 	

Participants

The study group of the research consists of the mentor teachers working in the practice schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education and the student teachers participating in the practices. In the determination of the study group, the criteria of having a Teaching Practice Certificate given by the Ministry of National Education for mentor teachers and attending teaching practice in schools were determined for student teachers. Therefore, criterion sampling was preferred from the purposive sampling method. Within the scope of the study, research data were collected from four mentor teachers working in four different schools and sixteen student teachers conducting their practices under the mentorship of teachers among fifty-four student teachers and thirteen mentor teachers who carried out teaching practices in the 2020-2021 academic year. Information about the participants forming the study group is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Information and Codes of the Study Group

Participant Group	School	Teaching Seniority	Seniority of Mentorship	Teaching Practice Certificate	Class Level of Practice	Code
Mentor Teacher	A	25	5	Available	6-7	M1
	B	22	5	Available	6-7	M2
	C	15	3	Available	5-6	M3
	D	12	3	Available	5-6	M4
Student Teacher	A	-	-	-	6	ST1
	A	-	-	-	6	ST2
	A	-	-	-	6	ST3
	A	-	-	-	6	ST4
	B	-	-	-	7	ST5
	B	-	-	-	7	ST6
	B	-	-	-	7	ST7
	B	-	-	-	7	ST8
	C	-	-	-	5	ST9
	C	-	-	-	5	ST10
	C	-	-	-	6	ST11

C	-	-	-	6	ST12
D	-	-	-	5	ST13
D	-	-	-	5	ST14
D	-	-	-	5	ST15
D	-	-	-	5	ST16

Data Collection Tool

In the study, the interview technique was preferred to collect data. With semi-structured interviews, participants are asked to describe the world they perceive with their thoughts. Therefore, it is preferable that the questions are generally open-ended (Merriam, 2013). One of the most important conveniences of this meeting logic is that the negotiations align with a particular protocol. Thus, systematic, and comparable information is obtained (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

The semi-structured interview form to be used in the interviews was prepared by taking the opinions of people from different fields of expertise. The form was finalized in line with the feedback and made suitable for the interview. After the finalization of the form, a pilot interview was conducted with a student teacher and a mentor teacher. The responses received were transcribed and written down. At the last stage, the content validity of the form was provided, and it was determined that the questions were sufficient. The questions in the interview form are as follows:

Interview Questions for Student Teachers:

- (1) What are your opinions on the tasks expected from you in your practices carried out through distance education?
- (2) What other studies or tasks could be included in the distance education process regarding preparation for professional life?
- (3) How would you evaluate the practices carried out through distance education regarding preparation for professional life?

Interview Questions for Mentor Teachers:

- (1) What are your opinions on the tasks required from student teachers within the scope of the practice carried out through distance education?
- (2) What other studies or tasks could be included in the distance education process regarding preparation for professional life?
- (3) How would you evaluate the practices carried out through distance education in terms of preparing student teachers for professional life?

Interviews were conducted online between 18-22 January 2021. Interviews were held individually with the mentor teachers and in a focus group format with the student teachers. Each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes on average. At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were informed, and the interviews were conducted accordingly. During the process, weekly meetings were held with student teachers and their portfolios were examined at the end of the term. It was seen that the student teachers completed the scheduled tasks.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed according to the deductive content analysis approach. The data of the research were coded first, and categories were created according to the coded data. Codes



and categories were placed under the relevant themes; the themes were interpreted and turned into findings. The themes and categories obtained in the study are presented in Figure 2.

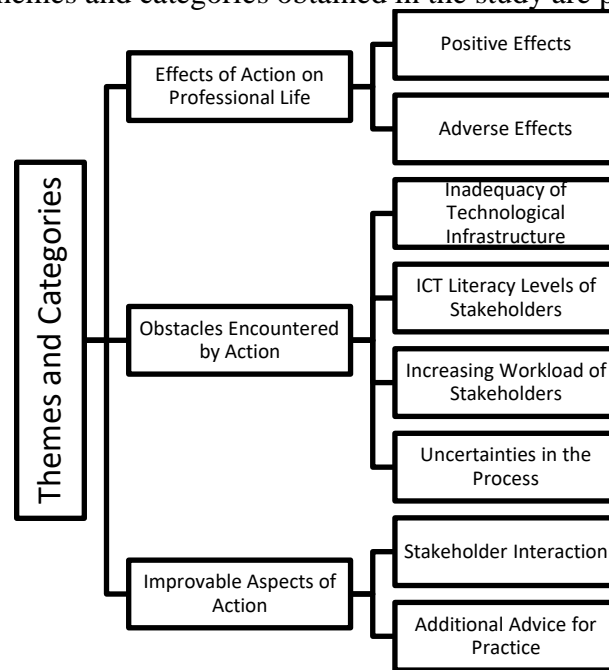


Figure 2. Themes and Categories Reached as a Result of the Analysis

As a result of the research, three themes were reached: "Effects of Action on Professional Life", "Obstacles Encountered by Action", and "Improvable Aspects of Action". The categories under each theme were interpreted by giving the opinions of teachers and student teachers together and presented with direct quotations.

Validity and Reliability of the Research

Within the scope of the study, validity and reliability were tried to be ensured by transferability and consistency. The participants' views were tried to be presented with direct quotations under the heading of the relevant theme and category. At the stage of interpretation of the findings, the literature support was limited due to the insufficient number of studies on teaching practices through distance education yet.

The Role of Researchers

In qualitative research, researchers' approach to the study and their prejudices can affect the research process and outcome (Creswell, 2005). The individuals conducting this research carried out courses such as School Experience and Teaching Practice in different majors at state universities and took part in Faculty-School Cooperation boards in their institutions. Besides, they researched communication between the mentor teacher and student teachers and practice courses.

Findings

Effects of action on professional life

Most of the actions taken differently from the face-to-face practice in the practice course conducted through distance education because of the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to contribute to the professional life of the practice students at the highest level, were evaluated by the mentor and student teachers as having positive effects on their professional life. However, some of the students stated that some practices had adverse effects on professional life.

Positive effects

Both mentor and student teachers were faced with the emergency distance learning process, not a planned situation. During this process, everyone tried to reach the best possible in the existing conditions rather than realizing the ideal. When evaluated from this point of view, both groups stated that the expected studies had positive effects on professional life.

Both mentor and student teachers who had to conduct lessons through distance education expressed that they gained a new experience in this process, which they would not carry out with face-to-face education. Mentors also stated that they were caught unprepared for this process, had not carried out distance education before and applied different tools, especially online course platforms, by trial and error. Additionally, within the scope of the tasks requested from them and applying these in the class, student teachers stated that they learned many tools by using.

ST5: "Since the only source enabling us to reach the student was online environments, we prepared materials such as modules, worksheets, and tests via different applications. I had heard the names of programs such as Wordwall, LearningApps, Kahoot and Mind Master before, but I understood better how to use them when I had the opportunity to practice in the course."

ST8: "I had heard of many applications in the material development course and learned how to use them, but at first, I had a hard time using them to develop content directly for the social sciences course. I had problems applying the first worksheets I developed, but I can say that I produced better works towards the end."

Adverse effects

Although it is not foreseen that the practices planned to eliminate the negativities of the emergency distance education and realize the most appropriate process may have adverse effects on professional life, some situations were evaluated under this heading by the student teachers. On the other hand, mentor teachers did not share an opinion that could be included under this category. Student teachers stated that they encountered performances below their expectations in examining the annual plan, watching, and evaluating a sample lesson on EBA TV, and analyzing how course books were used. This situation negatively affected their perspectives on the profession and caused them to worry that they would have difficulty transferring theoretical knowledge into practice. In this regard, some of the student teachers expressed their opinions as follows:

ST3: "I was shocked at the annual plan review, the first task of the term. Everything was stated in general in the annual plan shared with us. Assessment and evaluation were covered the same everywhere; methods and techniques were not mentioned. For a long time, we could not know how to analyze the annual plan."



ST4: "I watched a social sciences lesson on EBA TV and saw nothing but lectures. There was not a sign of the constructivist approach we were taught. Of course, since it is distance education, it may not be right to expect different methods to be applied, but I fell asleep while watching it."

ST7: "We were taught not to make students read a chapter from the textbook, but this was how the textbook was used in distance education. I could not find anything to comment on how the textbook was used. It was nothing more than an object for giving homework and reading."

Obstacles encountered by action

The main negativities brought by the distance education process also negatively affected the level of realization of the action, which was considered a precaution. Distance education dependent on technology can only be successful to the extent that this technology is accessible. The implemented action plan and the main negativities were directly affected within the framework of the following dimensions.

Inadequacy of technological infrastructure

Both student teachers, mentor teachers, and primary school students had problems from time to time in internet connection, accessing and effectively using computer/phone/tablet tools and so on regarding online classes. Mentors and student teachers participated in the lessons at a rate of almost 100%, but there were problems in the participation of the students due to the problems of infrastructure and access to tools. While some groups had to practice with the participation of 5-6 middle school students on average, this number increased to around 15 in some groups. Mentor teachers stated that there are many different variables related to this situation. Some of the mentor teachers' opinions on the subject are as follows:

M2: "Since our student profile is from low socio-economic level, the number of students having a quality connection at home is very few. Therefore, we cannot say anything when the student does not attend the lesson. We try to inform their parents about homework through applications such as WhatsApp as much as we can."

M3: "Most of our students connected to the classes via their parents' mobile phones. Many of them had difficulty using the camera and microphone for this reason. They had to attend the lectures only as listeners."

ST1: "The internet connection at our house was feeble. I had a hard time attending even my regular faculty classes, but I attended my practice classes no matter what."

While student teachers were required to attend practice courses for 6 hours per week, some students had to attend only their own practice due to the internet quota problem. Because of this issue, student teachers had to choose between the faculty and the practice courses from time to time, and they preferred the practice course.

ICT literacy levels of stakeholders

As stated before, the emergency distance education process caught all stakeholders unprepared. Online environments such as Zoom have suddenly settled in the center of life. Being able to use these environments effectively also requires specific information and communication technologies literacy. A certain level of improvement has been achieved in teachers for the more effective use of these applications, primarily through online workshops

held by the Provincial Directorates of National Education. The opinions of the mentor and student teachers evaluated under this title are as follows:

M1: “We did not know what to do after the decision taken in March. I had never heard of zoom until that day. We completed that period with a bit of groping. In the summer, I attended a seminar of District Directorate of National Education. I learned how to use Zoom more effectively, but the actual problem was that the student did not know how to use it.”

M2: “We did not receive such an education at the university. Therefore, it was not very easy at first. Afterwards, we started using it at a basic level, but this time we started to have difficulties because of the students' not knowing how to use it.”

ST1: “We adapted to Zoom very quickly, but we had difficulties while conducting lessons in that environment. First of all, since we carried out our lessons from the teacher's zoom account, there was much time lost in the processes of granting host authorization and accepting students to the course.”

ST13: “Since I am already interested in technology, it was not difficult for me. However, it was challenging to use with children during the class.”

ST16: “In fact, the only issue is how to use an application more effectively than just using it. I know how to let the children speak out, but when they open their microphone and say something without permission, things get complicated.”

Increasing workload of stakeholders

As in most sectors, working from home has negatively increased the workload of people. In particular, teachers had to update their lesson plans and materials suitable for online environments, and they tried to increase their students' motivation by contacting through communication tools. This situation led to the disappearance of the concept of working hours during the day, the evening classes to be held, and the parent or student to see their teacher as accessible at any time in the evening. The increase in the workload of teachers negatively affected their mentoring duties, as well. The steps of examining the lesson plans of the student teachers, giving feedback, doing interviews after the lesson, and evaluating the practices were conducted more ineffectively compared to face-to-face teaching.

M2: “Previously, we would give feedback to the student teachers at the end of the lesson at school. We could talk while drinking tea in the teachers' room. In this process, as soon as one class was completed, we started another lesson. So, we had to do our evaluations later.”

M3: “We have no free time left. Students ask the same question one by one repeatedly. We try to answer each time. However, if the student does not understand, this time the parent writes us at night.”

M4: “We had to change our lesson plans. It became more difficult to find tables, graphs, and presentations suitable for the course. Our presentations, which worked well while sharing in the classroom, were not functional in distance education. They seemed small on the screen. The order of the pictures changed.”

On the other hand, student teachers stated that requested homework and readings in the courses they were responsible for in their faculty negatively affected the process.

ST6: "Each professor demanded homework. Because we had to prepare homework from 10 different courses, we had difficulty being creative and allocating time to our practices."

ST11: "We read from different sources so that our teachers will like our assignments, and we try to make connections. An exam that I can normally finish in 1 hour lasts ten days when it is homework."

Uncertainties in the process

With the decision taken on March 16, 2020, schools were closed for three weeks due to the pandemic, and it was announced that education would continue online. From that period, decisions regarding face-to-face teaching were made at specific grade levels from time to time, depending on the course of the pandemic, and were implemented for a short time. Additionally, the statements made by the official authorities regarding the evaluation of the students, their attendance status, and the date of the national exams created uncertainty. In this uncertain environment, situations such as making lesson plans in schools, conducting some course hours online and some face-to-face in diluted classes in schools within the framework of pandemic measures adversely affected all education stakeholders. Unanswered questions in this process prevented the establishment of a system. While face-to-face education is carried out in institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, the decision of universities to continue distance education led to situations such as the student teachers had to try to practice face-to-face education remotely. The effects of this uncertainty and the opinions of mentor and student teachers are as follows:

M2: "At the beginning of this term (2020-21), we conducted courses face-to-face in some classes; then we continued remotely. We had a hard time adjusting teachers' schedules for these changes. I wish it had been a straightforward decision so we would not have wasted time with constant planning."

M4: "We were caught unprepared last term, but at the beginning of this term, everything could have been more planned. Therefore, we could not know how to support the trainees (student teachers). Constant uncertainty, changing lesson plans, trainees had their own courses, too. Clashing classes with those..."

ST6: "Some weeks were very ineffective. Face-to-face education started at the school, but I was not in the city. Some of my friends wanted to go to schools and participate in face-to-face education, but I could not do so even if I wanted to. Therefore, this uncertainty caused us not to follow the process effectively."

ST9: "We tried to keep up with a plan with our teacher constantly. The teacher said that two lessons of Social Studies were face-to-face, one was online, but instead of that course, he/she would direct us to elective courses. So, things got complicated. My major is social studies, I need to practice, but we meet online in students' elective courses. After a while, when the process turned to distance education again, things seemed to work out."

Improvable aspects of action

With the start of distance education in the 2019-2020 academic year, practical precautions were taken by the faculty implementation coordinator. These measures were to make the process as effective as possible and were evaluated with the opinions of student teachers and faculty members at the end of the semester. This evaluation also guided the measures to be taken for the teaching practices of the 2020-2021 academic year. Stakeholders

made suggestions for implementing the action plan realized in this direction and its implementation in the following years. While some of these suggestions were for the functioning of the teaching practice, the other part was for the tasks to be carried out by the student teachers.

Stakeholder evaluation meetings

The Ministry of National Education conducts the practices to be carried out by the student teachers in schools according to the Clinical Counselling Model. In this model structuring, each faculty member mentors eight students and each teacher mentors four students. Student teachers must practice for twelve weeks, and at least four of these practices are evaluated by the mentor teacher and instructor. To evaluate these courses, tasks such as holding meetings with stakeholders and analyzing the videos, if any, were expected. Mentor teachers, who conducted this process face-to-face before, stated that instructors were able to participate more effectively in the distance education process and find time to evaluate over the programs like Zoom. Regarding this, the opinions of the teachers are as follows:

M1: "In previous years, we could not find time to meet with the instructors coming for the teaching course. At the end of the lesson, either I had another class, or the instructor had to return to the university. Even if we found the time, it was constrained. It is not like that now. Even though we do not have time when the lesson is over, we can meet at an hour in the evening and evaluate comfortably. I think that was the only good thing about this process."

M2: "We had not met much before as we did this year. I think the evaluations we had made with the students before were not as effective as they were this year."

M4: "As you know, we were rushing around in the previous years. Now, we can meet at 8 pm or on Saturday-Sunday and have a long talk with our students (student teachers). Besides, students have time to express themselves for a long time, too. Previously they just had to listen; there was no time."

Additional practice advice

The actions taken to eliminate the negativities in the teaching practice process were generally welcomed by the mentor teachers and student teachers. In addition to these actions, both mentor and student teachers made suggestions for emerging problems in the field. Mentor teachers stated that it would be effective for student teachers to prepare more materials such as modules, worksheets, tests, and presentations for providing student participation in the distance education process. They expressed that providing supportive training to student teachers in increasing the number of these studies and their better-quality preparation is necessary for the future state of education. The opinions of the teachers regarding this situation are as follows:

M1: "We could not reach the child in distance education. The materials prepared by the student teachers attracted much attention. Even if the children did not attend the lesson, we sent the worksheet; they completed it, took a photo of it, and sent us back. In this way, we prevented our students from being disconnected from the process."

M2: "The prepared materials were very functional. The number and type of these materials can be increased. I can say that it worked very well for both the students and us. When there is a straight lecture, the student does not attend the lesson, but when asked a question or playing

a game, they want to participate. The things prepared by the student teachers on different sites were excellent in this regard.”

M3: “Most of the work done is valuable, of course, but the worksheets and tests worked most effectively. It would be perfect both for the development of student teachers and students to have such applications more. Distance education seems to continue anyway. We need such materials, but support is needed to prepare them.”

M4: “A couple of works were perfect. The students, who were silent and whose cameras were closed, attended the lesson to solve and do them. I realized that such materials were more effective in distance education. I think candidates should do this kind of work more. If it were me, I would give more space to the courses to prepare these kinds of materials at the university.”

Like the opinions above, student teachers also think that the materials they prepared for distance education were more functional during the implementation process. Requests from students when they used and shared these materials also positively increased the student teachers' motivation. For this reason, in their last practices, they tried to include such materials more in their courses and shared their views that the hours of courses for designing those materials in university education should be increased. Some of the opinions are as follows:

ST1: “Unfortunately, I think we could not get efficiency in some work. Lesson observations were limited due to participation, and we observed similar situations. Instead, we noticed that something changed when we used materials activating the student. I think the works we prepared using Web 2.0 tools were more beneficial for students. It would be better to focus on such studies instead of some tasks.”

ST7: “Having to use Web 2.0 tools made me realize that I actually did not fully understand them. After a while, the materials I prepared got better, and I can say that I noticed this from the student's feedback. It would be perfect for us if more time were allocated to develop such tools for distance education.”

ST15: “Technology is my special interest, so tasks of different material development made me feel better.”

ST16: “Preparing lecture videos will also be better for my self-evaluation. Even if the students do not attend the class, they can reach such videos through the systems like YouTube, etc. and keep up with the subject.”

Conclusion and Discussion

Distance education, which was forced into practice due to the pandemic, negatively affected all levels of formal education. One of the dimensions directly affected by these negativities is the professional training of student teachers. Türkan, Lelebici, and Önal (2020) revealed in their research that student teachers' responsibilities and efforts for adequate performance caused stress and anxiety and that they were beginning to be reluctant towards lessons. In Varela and Desidero's (2021) study, it was found out that student teachers were worried about the new process, and they had anxiety about the future. In their research, Atkins and Danley (2020) mentioned the problems experienced by student teachers in the distance education process. They stated that the process was full of inequalities, obstacles, and social and emotional effects for mentor teachers and student teachers. Eisenbach, Greathouse, and Acquaviva (2020) stated in their research that student teachers were in the middle of an unprecedented period of change and uncertainty during the Covid-19 process, and

unfortunately, this situation forced them unimaginably. On the other hand, Maher and Zollman (2021) mentioned the difficulties of the online learning process and emphasized in their research that student teachers faced difficulties in terms of how the experiences they needed within the scope of teaching practice would progress and how they would be supported.

Even if various theoretical and applied knowledge can be conveyed by distance education, it is almost impossible to gain the necessary professional skills, attitudes and values to student teachers who have not practiced teaching face to face with any students. Duncan and Barnett (2009) stated that in order to meet the needs of 21st-century students, student teacher training programs should equip the next generation teachers with constructivist, democratic, content including different learning styles and providing active participation in the online environment. In addition, Noor, Isa, and Mazhar (2020) stated in their research that the minimum level of student participation in online courses impacted student teachers, and instructors helped their students by providing additional online video training and e-mail guidance. Eti and Karaduman (2020) and Gonzalez-Calvo, Barba-Martin, Bores-Garcia, and Gallego-Lema (2020) stated in their research that teaching practice courses through distance education mostly had a negative effect on the professional development of student teachers. They underlined that conducting this course in an online environment rather than face-to-face in a practical way caused student teachers to feel inadequate and inexperienced. Unfortunately, student teachers can regard themselves as inadequate in the professional sense due to this situation.

In this study, in which the action plan that was carried out to overcome these negativities within the framework of the available possibilities was evaluated, three primary results were reached. Both the mentor and student teachers stated that the tasks carried out within the framework of the action plan had a positive effect on their professional lives. A group of student teachers stated that they had a negative attitude towards the profession due to the deficiencies encountered in the annual plan review and observing the distance education process. In the study of Doğan, Yiğit, Alır, Fidan, Özbay, and Tüzün (2019) where they examined the opinions of student teachers on the use of a teacher training simulation, it was found out that they missed the directions while trying to control student behaviors since there were too many texts during the implementation and the tasks given to them regarding the lesson plans were shifted quickly on the screen. It is seen that doing the tasks of plan review and student observation simultaneously in online activities can create negativity for student teachers.

Although the tasks in the action plans were prepared by anticipating the adverse effects of the pandemic period, they could not overcome the structural problems exceeding the mentor and student teachers. The lack of technological infrastructure, which is indispensable for distance education, and the low level of information and communication technologies literacy were considered primary problems. In Muhirwa's (2009) research, distance education methods and technologies were also mentioned, and the obstacles to interaction in distance education were listed. These obstacles were stated as disconnection of the internet, limited student access to computers, lack of qualified lecturers, inadequate preparation of teachers, lack of technical support, weak social dynamics, learner-teacher conflicts, and students dropping out of education. Rivera (2020) stated that educational institutions worldwide had to strengthen their digital teaching and learning ecosystems to continue their mission after Covid-19. He underlined those trends would continue to grow and increase the impact of online tools in education. In the report of UNESCO (2020), it was found out that the interest in digital learning technologies increased exponentially with the Covid-19 crisis. In the study of Koçoğlu, Ulu Kalın, Tekdal and Yiğın (2020), it was emphasized that technological infrastructure inadequacies and problems, the inadequacy of resources and lack of concretization were the

educational problems experienced during the pandemic process.

In addition to these problems, it was stated that the increase in the workload of the mentor and student teachers and the uncertainties in the process reduced their motivation and negatively affected them in performing the tasks in the action plan. Kaymaz's (2021) study underlined that the emergency distance education activities put into practice with the pandemic led to changes and transformations, especially in teachers' workloads. Can and Koroğlu (2020) also stated in their research that teachers' workload increased with the pandemic and that distance education would increase the workload more. They stated that the increasing workload of teachers might create a crisis with the emphasis on distance education due to the pandemic in today's life, which is already fast paced. Also, in the study of Aristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj and Tomažević (2020), it was examined how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the learning experiences of student teachers, and it was determined that the increasing workload and their perception of the workload in the process negatively affected their perspective on distance education. Additionally, in the research of Pištav Akmeše and Kayhan (2020), it was stated that the distance education action plans of the student teachers would increase the efficiency in terms of being prepared, the distribution of roles and responsibilities, and the clarity of the workloads.

Mentor and student teachers suggested that the number of tasks of developing and applying materials by using web 2.0 tools specific to social studies should be increased so that the action plan designed for distance education could prepare themselves more effectively for professional life. In addition, it was stated that the elimination of time and place limits for online evaluation meetings held with the participation of stakeholders would enable more detailed evaluations for the professional development of student teachers.

Compared to the pre-pandemic period, the effect of distance education in education systems has increased, and it is considered that it will continue to increase. Even after the pandemic ends, hybrid, flipped, and distance education models will continue to be implemented. Therefore, student teachers should also be offered teaching practice opportunities for distance education. It is suggested that the action plan implemented within the scope of this study should be improved and integrated into the teaching practice course processes. The most important condition of distance education is the provision of technological infrastructure, for sure. As in the FATIH (The Movement to Increase Opportunities and Improve Technology) project of MoNE, it is crucial to ensure that schools and students have access to the necessary technological materials for distance education, improve distance education models in the EBA system and make them available to stakeholders. In this process, student teachers should have the chance to apply their techno pedagogical content knowledge in teaching practice courses. It is considered that conducting and recording the meetings to be held between the teacher, student teacher, and instructor within the clinical counselling practice scope followed during the teaching practice process via online conference systems will provide data for an evidence-based evaluation in the recruitment processes of teachers.

Acknowledgement

This study was presented in the 8th International Congress on Curriculum and Instruction in Burdur on 25-27 March, 2021

References

- Alkan, V., Şimşek, S. & Erdem, A. R. (2013). Suggestions of school administrators and educational personnel in practice schools regarding the school experience lesson. *e-Journal of New World Sciences Academy*, 8(2), 245-260.
- Aristovnik, A., Keržič, D., Ravšelj, D., Tomaževič, N. & Umek, L. (2020). Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Life of Higher Education Students: A Global Perspective. *Preprints*, 12(20), 1-35.
- Atkins, C. & Danley, A. (2020). Supporting Student teachers During COVID-19: Lessons Learned. *Educational Renaissance*, 9(1), 31-40.
- Blankstein, M., Frederick, J. K. & Wolff-Eisenberg, C. (2020). Student Experiences During the Pandemic Pivot. Research Report. Retrieved January, 30, 2021 from <https://sr.ithaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SR-Report-Student-Experiences-During-the-Pandemic-Pivot.pdf>.
- Can, N. & Koroğlu, Y. (2020). Evaluation of distance education, which has become widespread in the period of COVID-19, and its examination in terms of education workers. *Media, Dialectics and Society*, 3(4), 370-380.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2. bs.). New Jersey, NJ: Pearson Ed. Inc.
- Doğan, D., Yiğit, M. F., Alır, A., Fidan, A., Özbay, Ö. & Tüzün, H. (2019). Investigation of Pre-service Teachers' Views on the Use of a Teacher Education Simulation. *PAU Journal of Education*, 46, 150-174.
- Duncan, H. E. & Barnett, J. (2009). Learning to Teach Online: What Works for Student Teachers. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 40(3), 357-376.
- Eisenbach, B. B., Greathouse, P. & Acquaviva, C. (2020). “COVID-19, Middle Level Student teachers, and Colloquialisms: Navigating Emergency Remote Field Experiences”. *Middle Grades Review*, 6(2), 1-5.
- Ekinci, N. & Tican Başaran, S. (2015). The effect of school experience course on students' perceptions of teaching. *Journal of MSKU Education Faculty*, 2(1), 13-24.
- ElAref, N. (2020). Post Pandemic Paradigm of Higher Education. Retrieved January, 31, 2021 from <https://blog.efmdglobal.org/2020/07/07/post-pandemic-paradigm-of-higher-education/>.
- Ersin, P., Atay, D. & Mede, E. (2020). Boasting Preservice Teachers' Competence and Online Teaching Readiness through E-Practicum during the COVID-19 Outbreak. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 2(2), 112-124.
- Eti, İ. & Karaduman, B. (2020). Examining the COVID-19 Pandemic Process in Terms of Professional Competencies of Pre-service Teachers. *Journal of National Education*, 49(1), 635-656.
- Gonzalez-Calvo, G., Barba-Martin, R. A., Garcia-Bores, D. & Gallego-Lema, V. (2020). Learning to be a teacher without being in the classroom: COVID-19 as a threat to the Professional development of future teachers. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(2), 152-177.
- Gürgür, H. (2017). Action research. A. Saban & A. Ersoy (Eds.). in *Qualitative research patterns in education* (2. bs.) (pp. 31-80). Anı Publishing.
- Holdheide, L. (2020). Promising Strategies to Prepare New Teachers in a COVID-19 World. Retrieved January, 31, 2021 from <https://www.air.org/resource/promising-strategies-prepare-new-teachers-covid-19-world>.
- Kaymaz, A. (2021). Teachers' views on the changing workload and its effects in the distance education process. *International Journal of Leadership Training (IJOLT)*, 1(1).

- Kırçiçek, H. & Yüksel, İ. (2019). Views of Academicians on School Experience and Teaching Practice Course. *Gazi University Journal of Gazi Education Faculty*, 39(3), 1319-1345.
- Koch, B. & Vu, P. (2020). *Virtual Field Experience and Mock Interview Opportunities for Preservice Special Education and Secondary Teachers*. Richard E. Ferdig, Emily Baumgartner, Richard Hartshorne, Regina Kaplan-Rakowski, Chrystalla Mouza (Ed.). *Teaching, Technology, and Teacher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stories from the Field*. Published by: AACE-Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.
- Koç, A. (2020). Teaching practice course of faculty of theology through distance education during the covid-19 epidemic: a sample practice model. *Journal of National Education*, 49(1), 851-875.
- Koçoğlu, E., Ulu Kalın, Ö., Tekdal, D. & Yiğen, V. (2020). Overview of education in turkey during the covid-19 pandemic process. *International Social Sciences Studies Journal*, 6(65), 2956-2966.
- Maher, S. & Zollman, A. (2021). “Into the Unknown” Supervising Student teachers During the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology*, 10, 158-163.
- Merriam, S. B. (2013). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (S. Turan, Translate.). Nobel Publishing.
- Moyo, N. (2020). Covid-19 and the future of practicum in teacher education in Zimbabwe: Rethinking the ‘new normal’ in quality assurance for teacher certification. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(4), 536-545.
- Muhirwa, J. M. (2009). Teaching and Learning Against All Odds: A Video-Based Study of Learner-to-Instructor Interaction in International Distance Education. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 10(4), 1-24.
- Noor, S., Isa, F., Md. & Mazhar, F. F. (2020). Online Teaching Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 9(3), 169-184.
- Ocak, G. & Akkaş Baysal, E. (2019). *Understanding action research*. G. Ocak (Ed.). Action Research and Case Studies in Education. Pegem Publishing.
- Ping, Z., Fudong, L. & Zheng, S. (2020). *Thinking and Practice of Online Teaching under COVID-19 Epidemic*. IEEE 2nd International Conference on Computer Science and Educational Informatization (CSEI).
- Piştav Akmeşe, P. & Kayhan, N. (2020). Experiences of special education teaching students on practicing courses during the coronavirus (covid-19) epidemic process. *Turkish Studies*, 15(8), 3669-3688.
- Reimers, F., Schleicher, A., Saavedra, J. & Tuominen, S. (2020). Supporting the continuation of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Annotated resources for online learning. Retrieved January, 30, 2021 from <https://www.oecd.org/education/Supporting-the-continuation-of-teaching-and-learning-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>.
- Rivera, M. (2020). 5 trends transforming education in the Covid-19 era. Retrieved, July, 11, 2021 from <https://elearnmagazine.com/trends-transforming-education-in-covid-19/>.
- Schleicher, A. (2020). The Impact of Covid-19 on Education. Insights from education at a glance 2020. Retrieved January, 30, 2021 from <https://www.oecd.org/education/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-insights-education-at-a-glance-2020.pdf>.
- Scott, L. & Harper, M. (2020). Teacher Educator Spotlight Series: Online Teaching and Learning in the Time of COVID. Retrieved January, 31, 2021 from <https://education-first.com/teacher-educator-spotlight-series-online-teaching-and-learning-in-the-time-of-covid/>.

- Türkan, A., Leblebici, H. & Önal, İ. (2020). Opinions of Student teachers on Distance Education Implemented During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 7(11), 329-353.
- UNESCO, (2020). Education in a post-COVID World: Nine ideas for public action. Retrieved, July, 11 from https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/education_in_a_post-covid_world-nine_ideas_for_public_action.pdf.
- Ünlü Saratlı, E. (2007). Adequacy of Mentoring Service Provided to Primary Education Science Teacher Candidates in School Experience I Course Application (Siirt Province Example) (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Gazi University, Ankara.
- Varela, D. G. & Desidero, M. F. (2021). Perceptions of COVID-19 pandemic impact on student teaching experience. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 39.
- Yıldırım, A. & Şimşek, H. (2008). *Qualitative research methods in the social sciences*. Seçkin Publishing.