Evaluation of the reflections of pandemic (COVID-19) on university education from the perspective of faculty

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COVID-19 pandemic has caused dramatic and rapid changes along with some problems in education. Analysing the situation in question and making suggestions on the subject are important for the ongoing process. It is aimed to evaluate the changes in the education system during COVID-19 pandemic process from the perspective of academicians. In-depth reviews were conducted with 20 academicians working in Faculty of Sciences and Arts in Kirsehir Ahi Evran University. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed with computer based program, Maxqda 2020.4. The analysis indicated that the motivation of the academicians was negatively affected by the pandemic process. Not being able to get feedback on distance learning or communicate with the students and students' being inactive during the courses have been put forward as problematic areas. Academicians also emphasized that the measurement and evaluation process did not work well, but they made attempts to improve it. It was also observed that there exists the idea that distance education and technological elements would be more involved in education even after the pandemic is over. This study helps us to understand how technology has become a fundamental part of our lives. It also unearthed how we could fight against the problems, including educational ones, which a worldwide pandemic caused. Firstly, with the distance education system we were able to continue to carry out educational activities. Later on, we have come to realise that distance education has so many advantages that it should be integrated with face-to-face education and used more often even after the pandemic.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic first appeared in Wuhan, China on 1st December, and quickly affected other countries (https://covid19.who.int, accessed on 28th February 2021). With the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020, it

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was deemed necessary to start a global struggle. With the epidemic, a new world order has begun to emerge. In the new world order, the most fundamental issue has been to meet the health and fundamental need with the new normal (Egger, et al. 2021, p. 1; Gerard, et al., 2020, p. 282; Imran, et al, 2020, p. 97).

Countries have experienced changes in macro, mezzo, and micro scales during the epidemic. Many systems and institutions including education have experienced dramatic changes (Rashid and Yadav, 2020, p. 343). In order to narrow down face to face contact and to keep the epidemic under control, curfews have been imposed in many countries and the risk of getting infected has been tried to be prevented with the call 'stay at home' (Piryani et al., 2020, p. 28; Gautam and Gautam, 2021, p. 94).

When the schools are closed, countries with different levels of income use different distance learning methods including broadcast, online learning on such platforms as the conference platforms and learning management system platforms (Irfan, et al, 2020, p. 147; Tadesse and Muluye, 2020, p. 159; Dreesen, et al., 2020, p. 4-5; Wajdi, et al., 2020, p. 97). For exam,ple in most of high-income countries education was delivered online while some of them bound broadcast and online learning. Most of the upper-middle-income and the lower-middle-income countries also bound broadcast and online learning (Tadesse and Muluye, 2020, p. 159). On the other hand, in such lower income countries as North and Middle East Africa, education was delivered via television and radio; thus, resulting in not reaching all the students (Wajdi, et al., 2020, p. 97; Barua, 2020).

As for Turkey, after the first COVID-19 case was seen on 11th March 2020, face-to-face education was intermitted beginning from 14th March, 2020. In the first place, education was thought to be suspended for a few weeks period; however, distance education had to be applied for the whole fall semester. In order to ensure the continuity of the education and training activities, distance education was started up hastily and lessons were taught by using various online programmes (Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc.) Distance education, an education method, was first used as a term in the 1700s. However, it is debatable what kind of reflections this system, which has become a valuable part education during the pandemic, will have in the past and future periods (Eken, Tosun and Tuzcu Eken, 2020, p. 115).

The reflections of pandemic on education should not be evaluated only through students. Educators were affected as much as students during the pandemic, and they were involved in the new adaptation processes because of the changes experienced. These reflections can be evaluated in different ways by the teachers and students who are the major parts of the education system. In this paper the reflections of the pandemic on university education were analysed from the view of academicians.

Literature Review

Impact of COVID-19 on Education System

Nowadays, distance education has become a system used for every education level (Gunawardena and McIsaac, 2013, p. 355). The term distance education was first encountered at Wisconsin University's resources in 1892, and it has been widely used since the 1960s (Bier, 2012, p. 316). Although the very emergence of the education system in its current sense coincides with the 1920s, it is known that it has a background dating back to the 19th century (Clarke, 2020, p. 410). Distance education is a form of education in which the teacher and the student do not have to share the same physical space and these two parts are in different places (Gunawardena and McIsaac, 2013, p. 357). This type of education has brought some

advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of distance education can be listed as eliminating the difficulties in time, transportation, and many situations such as space, place, age, health status, physical disability and providing access (Adıyaman, 2001, p. 92). However, it may be disadvantageous considering the economic inequality experienced on a global scale, the lack of opportunities to have the necessary technological devices (phones, tablets or computers), paid internet network in many countries, the inability to get in touch with the teachers directly and decline in socialization.

In Turkey, distance education has been used and discussed as a concept from 1923 to the 1960s. After the 1970s, there are some attempts to implement it at the secondary level of education. Since 1980 and 1990, it has advanced at a level covering higher education and has become a widely used system during recent pandemic (Bozkurt, 2017, p. 86).

With the transition to distance education, there have been differences between universities. Although there was a more used infrastructure for the distance education system in some universities, it was the first time to switch to distance education in all universities, departments, and levels. The program (Zoom, Skype, etc.) and method (online, offline and both mixed) preferred and used in this application differ (Kurnaz and Sercemeli, 2020, p. 265-266).
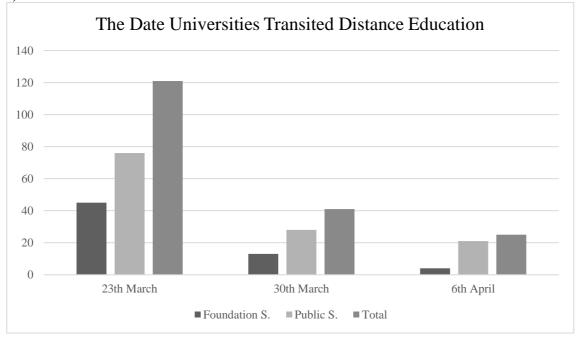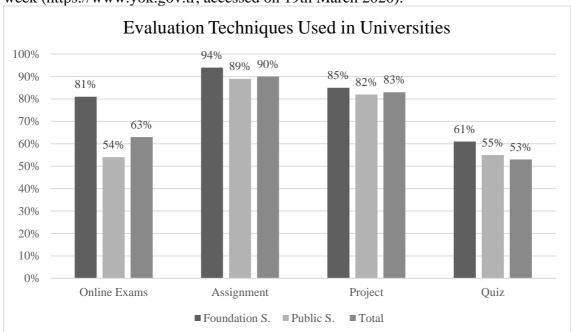

Figure 1. Universities' Transiting Distance Education Process, (https://www.yok.gov.tr, accessed on 19th March 2021).

As of 3rd May 2020, there are 189 universities in Turkey, including 127 state and 62 foundation universities. In this context, when the data of the study carried out by High Education Board to analyse the transition to distance education with the global epidemic is examined, it is seen that 121 (64%) of 189 universities started distance education applications on 23rd March 2020. 41 of them, in other words 21,66 % of them, started distance education applications after 30th March 2020, that is two weeks after the suspension of university education. 25 of universities, in other words 13,2 % of them, started distance education applications on 6th April 2020. When the data examined more in detail, it is seen that more than half of the universities have transited to distance education applications in the very first

week (https://www.yok.gov.tr, accessed on 19th March 2020).

Evaluation Techniques Used in Universities

Figure 2. Evaluation Techniques Used in Universities during the Pandemic, (https://www.yok.gov.tr, accessed on 19th March, 2021).

The distance education activities in universities have brought the problem of how to do exams along. The techniques universities have decided upon evaluation during the epidemic are online exams, assignments, projects and quizzes. Generally speaking, it is seen in Figure 2 that the majority of the universities preferred assignments (90%) and projects (83%) applications (https://www.yok.gov.tr, accessed on 19th March, 2021). Different studies have been carried out on distance education during the pandemic. While some of these studies see the pandemic as an opportunity to evaluate and question in terms of the new perception of education and use of technology (Sarı and Nayir, 2020, p. 970-971), some of them draw forth that it has increased inequalities in education (Başaran, Doğan, Karaoğlu and Şahin, 2020, p. 395).

According to the paper titled 'Academicians' Perception of COVID-19' conducted at Atatürk University in April 2020, academicians strongly agreed with the idea that epidemic spread from a virus that was produced and that the upper mind was managing the process, which would lead to a midlevel economic crisis in long term. Furthermore, they stated that they and their families comply with the epidemic measures at a very high level (Küçükkali and Çınar, 2020, p. 1650). According to Şen and Kızılcalıoğlu (2020, p. 250), in the context of the lessons taught during the pandemic period, the students found the lessons boring and they were not satisfied with the distance education system due to the interruption of socialization. It was also revealed that the students did not consider the advantages of distance education in terms of time and space concepts and were negatively affected by the process in terms of academic performance and motivation.

Methodology

The Scope of the Research

The COVID-19 (Corona Virus) epidemic, which emerged in 2019 and affected the whole world in a short while, caused disruptions and changes in many areas, including the education system (Daniel, 2020, p. 96). Due to the epidemic, it was decided to suspend traditional education on 16th March 2020 in the field of education and different solutions had to be produced in accordance with the conditions at each level of education. Considering universities, the institutions that had distance education units the epidemic planned their educations programs in their own infrastructure and implemented them in a short time (Durak, Çankaya and İzmirli, 2020, p. 790). Carrying out the education synchronously and asynchronously in higher education institutions has undoubtedly changed the lives of the all stakeholders of the system and forced them to adapt to an education system that they have perhaps never experienced before (Zan and Zan, 2020, p. 1369). Plentiful research on the subject has revealed that students and teachers at almost all levels, including higher education levels, have had many positive and negative experiences in the process of adapting to the distance education system (Çakın and Akyavuz, 2020, p. 165; Hebebci, Bertiz and Alan, 2020, p. 279; Karadağ and Yücel, 2020, p. 190-191; Özer, 2020, p.1128). In this paper, how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected the education system in universities; in this context, the positive and negative experiences of distance education system in the academy have been tried to be found out via academicians' opinions. Due to ethical requirements of a scientific research, the ethics committee approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Bursa Technical University, with the decision dated 31.12.2020 and numbered 2020-10/ 5 during the data collection process.

The answers were sought to the following questions in the scope of the research:

- How has the education system been affected by the pandemic?
- How has the changing education system affected academic life?
- What are the positive and negative experiences of the academicians regarding the effectiveness of distance education system at universities?
- What kind of a process awaits the education system of universities after the epidemic from academicians' point of view?

Target Population and Sample

The population of the research in Kirsehir Ahi Evran University and the sample is academicians working at Arts and Sciences Faculty. Kırsehir Ahi Evran University started distance education applications as a pilot scheme at Education Faculty within the scope of Ahi-community Competence Based Education Project (ACBEP) in 2018. The Big Blue Button software, used by the majority of the universities in our country, is used in the ACBEP system. With the onset of the COVID-19 (Corona Virus) epidemic, it was decided that all theoretical and applied courses would be taught via distance education over the ACBEP system as of 16th March 2020 in Kirsehir Ahi Evran University. Thus, in a very short time, it was possible to adapt to theve changing conditions and to prevent lack of communication between the academicians and the students.

The sample of the research is comprised of 20 academicians working at Arts and Sciences Faculty. The main concern in determining the sample as the Arts and Sciences Faculty is the inclusion of both physical and social sciences at Arts and Sciences Faculties. In other words, in this faculty, where both theoretical and practical courses are taught, it was possible to compare the experiences of academicians regarding distance education. In order to determine

the participants, maximum diversity and criterion sampling methods were used. The main purpose of the maximum diversity sampling method is to find out the common aspects of different situations. This sampling method enables to evaluate the diversity of a situation altogether (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016, p. 20-21). Totally, there are 12 departments, 4 of which are in the field of physical sciences and 8 of which are in the field of social sciences at Kirsehir Ahi Evran University Arts and Sciences Faculty. In this context, it was aimed to include participants from almost every department for the research. Therefore, it was possible to determine the points where the distance education experiences of the academicians from different departments differed and show similarities.

Criterion sampling method was also used to determine the participants of the research. Criterion sampling method enables to determine situations according to predetermined criteria (Neuman, 2007, p. 322). The qualification taken into consideration within the scope of this research is that the participants have taught at least one semester via the ACBEP system. Since there are departments that do not have active students in Arts and Sciences Faculty, the academicians were expected to have given lectures for at least one semester, regardless of their academic titles.

Data Collection Tools

The data of the research were gathered from in-depth reviews with 20 academicians working at Ahi Evran University. The interviews were conducted in the participants' offices using masks and in accordance with the social distance rules. Based on voluntariness principle the interviews were audio-recorded with participants' knowledge. In this context, 19 of the participants agreed to the audio-recording of the interviews. The answers given during the interview with 1 participant, who did not agree to have their voice recorded, was noted down. At the end of the interviews, the audio-recordings and notes were transferred to word files in computer environment. The 1 participant who did not want to be audio-recorded during the interview was contacted again when some parts were felt to be missed in the notes and asked to read the whole interview again. Due to confidentiality principle, real names of the participants were not used, and instead abbreviations IA1 (interviewed academician 1) and IA2 (interviewed academician 2) were resorted to.

Data Analysis

There are two basic strategies in the analysis of the data collected in the qualitative research process (Bryman, 2008, p. 539); analytic induction and Grounded Theory. In the coding process of the analysis phase of the research, while some researchers follow an inductive path and form a category based on the data, some researchers have some pre-determined themes or categories and create sub-categories (Kuş, 2009, p. 23). In this study the analytical inductive approach was adopted as the qualitative data analysis strategy.

Grounded theory, which is a both research model and an analysis technique, was also used in the analysis of data gathered from in-depth interviews. The fundamental purpose of grounded research is to create a theory as a result of a research (Kuş, 2009, p. 23). The questions prepared around certain themes were directed to the participants without any order and were coded and categorized during the data analysis phase.

Maxqda Plus 2020.4 computer program was used in the analysis of the data. In the program, data were coded in open, axial and selective coding stages (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 70). In open coding, the data were read line by line and grouped according to their similarities and

differences. In axial coding, these data grouped according to their similarities and differences were associated with each other within the context of the research problem. In the final step selective coding, the primary question sentences of the research were associated with the axial codes in the previous step. Eventually, the themes of the research were assigned through the relationship between selective codes.
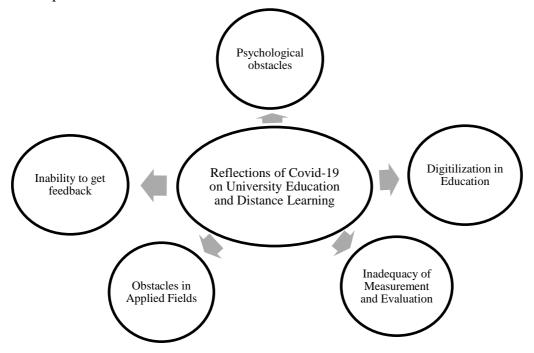

Figure 3. Themes

All in all, these five themes, obtained from the participants mostly and mainly emphasized in the interviews, have enabled us to make sense of and interpret the reflections of the COVID-19 pandemic on university education.

Results

Distance education, emerging as a requirement of social isolation, which is among the first and priority measures in the fight against the COVID-19 (Corona virus) epidemic, has an important place in terms of continuing and supporting education. On the other hand, as many countries have been caught unprepared for distance education, it is obvious that the system has brought some problems and obligations along with it. In the context of this research, 5 themes, in other words problems and obligations, are assigned as a result of data gathered from the interviews with the participants.

Theme 1: Psychological Obstacles

The measures taken to protect against the epidemic brought a very difficult process with it. While people try not to get infected by protecting themselves from the epidemic, they are exposed to many social restrictions. This situation causes many psychological disorders, especially fear and anxiety (Bozkurt, Zeybek and Aşkın 2020, p. 304). In this study, the first and foremost issue that the participants focused on was the psychological impact of the epidemic on both students and academics. Some participants stated that with the epidemic, there was a significant loss of motivation in many areas, especially in education:

> IA1: Negative… I can say 'motivation'. So, motivation, in the beginning... It's difficult for home-office workers, isn't it? You can imagine its difficulty, right? So, you're home. You're having a very comfortable time. But suddenly you say that you have a class and you have to attend the class in the same room where you play. Even these physical conditions are one of those difficulties in motivation for that class.

IA16 also stated that with the epidemic there was a significant loss of motivation in students as follows:

> First of all, all the motivation was lost. S/he didn't have any motivation anyway. It's completely lost. The students weren't studying properly anyway. They got used to this distance education issue… You'd   force a student to take an exam at a school s/he had never attended. You'd take a test on something that you didn't understand. This isn't acceptable. When this didn't happen, the students eased off a lot…

Moreover, some participants stated that this loss of motivation in students will have negative consequences in the long run. For example, IA5 thinks that students, going to universities especially in rural areas, will begin to question the existence of the school with the epidemic. According to the participant, when face-to-face education has started again, students, inevitably, will have a perception that they were able to learn the same thing in the distance learning. So, there is no need for formal education in universities that cannot offer sufficient social opportunities to students. For this reason, the participant emphasized that it would be appropriate for small universities with limited social opportunities to take precautions regarding this issue in the context of post-epidemic education processes.

As for the points the COVID-19 have caused academicians to lose motivation, it has been observed that the inability to be mentally comfortable has produced negative effect on academic studies although social isolation and the transition to distance education have slotted in for academic studies. In this context, IA6, stating that he had an administrative duty and had to come to institution regularly, thinks that the process caused him a loss of motivation and negatively affected his performance:

> So, could it actually be considered an opportunity? Yes. But of course, you also need to be mentally comfortable. We have to come to the institution because we're also administrator. Even though we keep the social distance with the people here some friends around us were kept in quarantine. I think this uneasiness affected our work performance a little bit negatively.

IA8 also stated that his psychology was negatively affected by constantly trying to protect himself during the epidemic and he could not study efficiently. The participant also stated that the lack of workload as before the epidemic caused a loss of motivation with the following words:

> …Or psychologically it happens in society in general. Your willingness to work declines a little. This is a fact. I mean the more your load increases, the more your work performance increases. On the other hand, the less your load decreases, the less your work performance decreases. Even if you have a heavy load, you try to find an opportunity to work. But you see when you get rid of these loads, your desire to work also decreases…

Similarly, IA19 stated that there have been significant changes in her daily routine with the

epidemic; she thinks that this has had a negative impact on her academic studies:

> … I'm not usually working much. I used to work better at school. I guess it may be the same for most women… It seems as if the housework is more important than university. So, housework has come forth... Therefore, I feel like a housewife who gets paid. You know I get a monthly salary... But now I know that I am home. Thereupon, I have a tendency to postpone everything thinking that no need or rush to do it now, can do it later... To be frank it is not very productive in terms of academic studies for me right now.

Based on the statements of the participants, we can conclude that the epidemic has caused a significant loss of motivation. It is generally thought that there is a decrease in the students' interest in the courses with the distance education system. While this situation hinders students from getting sufficient knowledge and skills during the epidemic, it causes a concern that the same problem will be faced after the epidemic. As for academicians, although distance education system seems to create more time academic studies, it is thought that such situations as high fear and anxiety caused by the process prevent this time from being used as efficiently as desired.

Theme 2: Inability to get feedback

From the data obtained, it was observed that academicians focused mostly on the distance education system only allowing one-way education. To put it more clearly the academicians think that they teach their lessons for a limited time in front of a screen without seeing the students and hearing them in terms of education process. Participant academicians stated that they could not receive feedback from students due to this one- way communication in the distance education system. Therefore, they were concerned about how much the students learned; more importantly whether it was learned or not.

> IA7: … In the very beginning I had to use teacher centred instruction. Because we didn't know how it worked. Of course, when there is no eye contact during these verbal expressions, you yourself get bored at some point. So, is the other person listening or not? When you tell, can you get a confirmation or not? It had its problems. You are talking to a screen. Sometimes you wonder if I'm talking nonsense. You have to check the screen from time to time.

> IA12: The most difficult thing for me to teach as if there is no one listening to me. Because there is a communication process when teaching a lesson. Making eye contact with a student… Asking or answering a question. This is a habit that has been built over the years. Apart from that lecturing as if you are teaching on a blank board. This is of course difficult…

> IA14: The biggest problem with distance education is the lack of communication with the student. We cannot interact… When we look at it from the point of the students, how can I say? I think it is like listening to a fairy tale. It is also boring for us. Why? You are asking questions. But you do not get any answers. You cannot tell whether the student has learnt or comprehended.

Moreover, some academicians stated that due to this lack of communication in the distance education system, students do not attend the class even though they appear online:

> IA9: Class participation for example… 30 people seem to be attending the class there.

Let's assume that I say Ahmet, are you here? Ahmet is not. Ahmet has opened the system and gone. In other words, Ahmet does not listen to the lecture and does not do anything. Put simply, he just logged into the system because we take attendance, he left the system open and disappeared. So, we do not know how many people are actually listening to us.

IA4: … And observing the students is very, very important. Unfortunately, we cannot observe the students. They can only see us… It is very tragic, but unfortunately the reality. We cannot follow whether our students listen to us or not. Because even though they appeared online there, we can see from their WhatsApp status postings in the later process that they were actually stuffing grape leaves. They only seemed online during the course or entered the system because the system takes attendances. I mean, I have had students that I have certified this.

The participant IA4 also stated that she was trying to make her students more active in her classes in order to avoid this problem. To put more clearly, the participant gave performance assignments to the voluntary students in her classes giving them opportunities to make presentations. In this way she helped other students to take active roles in the lessons. It was also concluded that some other participants complaining about the same problem produced solutions in their own ways:

IA19: Well… At first, I thought that students were not listening. I also thought that they were leaving the system open and not listening to the lesson. But now I am checking it too. To make joke I ask them whether they are here and to write that they are here. Later on, they write 'I'm here', 'I'm here' one by one.

Some participants stated that with such arrangements as seeing the students and checking IP made in system this problem could be overcome:

IA10: We should be able to see the students. When I ask the students to show their books, the students should be able to show their books. Or are there any students in system listening to me actively? I have experienced all of them. I ask students a question. But there no students and answers. Opened the system and gone.

IA8: We are having lesson. You see 60 or 70 people online in the system. Someone asks a question. I have come across a lot. I answer. There is no student. He asks a question. Normally s/he seems to be in the system. However, it is not clear what s/he is busy with or where s/he is actually. I mean those who have left even before we answer their questions. We do not have a chance to see them. Is s/he really with me or not? As I always say we are giving lesson to the screen. I mean I wish we could have an opportunity to check students' IPs and see whether they are actually in the system.

As can be seen, the distance education system in higher education falls short of mutual interaction. This situation, first and foremost, hinders the feedback phase of learning activity. And almost all the participants complain that they cannot understand how much of the subject has been learnt since they cannot receive immediate feedback from the students. Moreover, it was stated that the fact that instructors cannot see the students are abused by some students. To put it more clearly, the student opens the system during the lesson but does not follow. As a result, participant academicians are trying to find solutions for this issue which poses a serious problem for the main purpose of educational activities. Some academicians think that

these problems can be overcome with some changes made in the system.

Theme 3: Obstacles in Applied Fields

Research on the distance education system has revealed that one of the main problems of the system is the inability to provide practice and theory together (Koçoğlu and Tekdal, 2020, p. 539; Yılmaz İnce, Kabul and Diler, 2020, p. 343). Piryani et al. (2020, p. 30) stated that as for medical schools in South Asia one of the challenges had to be dealt with during pandemic was applied lectures. The students were assigned with projects, or they tried watching online physical examination videos.

In this study, it was observed that academicians working in both social and physical sciences complained about the same problem. Firstly, starting with the problems experienced in the field of social sciences, it has been stated that language courses that require mutual interaction between the student and the academician cannot be taught effectively and efficiently in the distance education:

> IA1: It is not very important for students to turn on their cameras, but their voices… For example, I teach language. It has to be reciprocal. I am on my own… I have a few lessons that I will tell you I do not need many answers for some of these lessons. But there some lessons I teach language. I need my students talk too. To cite an example, the thing that they do not have microphones there is true for some. For the others, this may not be true. I cannot know it for sure. Frankly this has challenged me a little.

> IA7: When we were in the classroom, we were reading a text in Arabic letters. You could see where the students did mistakes there. But in distance education, when I load the Arabic letter text to the system and ask the students to read it, first of all, I hesitate to choose whom to read. If he cannot read there, it is a waste of time for all of us in forty minutes. What are you doing in this situation? You are displaying the text first. Then you are displaying the punctuation. Then you focus on the words in it.

> IA10: We ask the student to come to the blackboard and have the student write. We do not have such an opportunity. So, for example, we start with old-letter text. We cannot have the student write the old letter text. We cannot print, we do not have such an opportunity. In other words, our lesson has a reading, an old-letter text, a writing phase. In the writing phase, the student gets up. It is written in old letters. That's what we can't do.

In distance education system, in terms of some disciplines of social sciences students cannot go to the field or visit museums. This situation prevents students from learning the lesson by experiences, therefore, reduces the effectiveness and efficiency:

> IA2: … Even if it isn't directly applied like a laboratory lesson… We spend some time outside with the students. At least we try to make them have environment experiences. But unfortunately, we didn't have the opportunity to do this. Therefore, I think that it has a negative effect on my own courses and my own science.

> IA11: For example, I was taking my students to the museums once a week when we were in the term. That visual of Ancient History… Every science, every department has its own specific literature. Therefore, this literature was easier for students to learn in face-to-face education. I had hard times explaining these to the students.

It has been stated that in the distance education system, which has been compulsory with the

epidemic, difficulties have been experienced in physical sciences:

> IA3: Mathematics is not a laboratory-based discipline. But it is abstract. No particular material is needed. I mean there are some courses in the medical faculty, they are still done face to face. Maybe they get less students. They're doing a group. Mathematics is not like that. But as I said, when you are face to face with math like this, maybe you teach something, albeit a little. But you are teaching from afar. The student does not understand or perceive what you are saying.

The participants also stated that they had difficulties especially in laboratory courses:

> IA9: To speak for my own department, you need to analyse a circuit. You have to mention about one circuit at a time… For example, I applied the following method in those circuits. I had a practical course. I told the students that everyone should make a circuit like the optional circuit I made and make a video of it for 2 or 3 minutes. Everyone sent their videos. And I examined it. Did he implement that application? Did he do something experimental or not? I had the opportunity to see him...

In physical sciences, it was observed that there were problems especially in the lessons that required solving problems using the blackboard. In this context, IA16 experienced that teaching was inefficient by directly explaining the lesson in terms of the discipline he studied:

> …We also have seminars. It was my own student's seminar. Last year… When this happened for the first time, my student had a seminar. My student just told. We have an associate professor. He said that 'I understand the students better now'. He didn't understand anything from what the student said. Because that's my field. The student explained this. I understood, but did the listeners understand? He didn't understand. It'd already gone so fast…

Participant academician has found a solution in order for his students to learn better in their classes as follows:

> …I prepare my notes by myself. After preparing it, I share my screen by opening blank pages at the same time. I mean I use my tablet like a board. The students can see what I have written. In other words, it is not much different from real classroom environment, but we pass a little faster… So, we can now teach our lessons slowly, as if we are talking on the same board on a tablet.

IA8 and IA9 also tried to increase efficiency in their lessons by using the blackboard with the help of a second camera:

> IA8: … For example, we will solve a problem. I put the board over here. I attach a second camera. Because sometimes it doesn't help if you tell them directly through ppt. In other words, you have to solve the problem somehow, at least, or you have to show certain steps. If you say that you do this and get this result, the student does not understand. After that, we go to the blackboard. Via a second camera…

> IA9: … It's like creating a real classroom environment. It's like talking in class on the board. We are teaching on the board. Here we prepare PowerPoint presentations if necessary. For example, I upload videos that I have found online about the issue. Videos, images…

Theme 4: Inadequacy in measurement and evaluation

One the major impacts of pandemic and closure of the educational institutions is on assessments. According to Tarkar (2020, p. 3814), various errors were reported in online measurement tools in India. Moreover, Tadesse and Muluye (2020, p. 163) emphasized that laboratory, practical, and performance tests were difficult to conduct online regardless of the countries' level of development. They also stated that cheating and plagiarism were the biggest problems they faced up with.

In this study, we have also noticed that there has been a problem in terms of measurement and evaluation in distance education in our country. Some of the academicians participating in the research give performance assignments, and some carry out the measurement and evaluation process with exams. From the interviews with the participants, it was noticed that there were questions about the efficiency of both methods and that they created problems in themselves. Plagiarism is seen as the most important problem related to the measurement and evaluation made over the performance assignment. In other words, the students copy-paste their assignments from the website without doing any citations:

> IA12: … In some cases, we feel that the homework we give has not been done by the student, but by others. Some students are already saying that: I did it with my sister. I did it with my wife. I did this homework with my Literature teacher. We have such problems. Or we have such a problem as copying the source directly and not using any sources while doing it. Let's say s/he copies that part of the book as it is. Or s/he can copy the side of the PDF and send it to us as an assignment...

In the examination system, it was also noticed that the participants used open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The main problem with the exams in which open-ended question applications are used is that students give the same exam papers by getting answers from each other:

> IA3: … I even have a son who also has a class in college. While he was reading the papers, he realized that the student got it from his friend, he didn't even change his name. Someone else's name. He said he realized that this paper belonged to Ahmet by comparing their writings. Or I read all of them, one of them was left without a name. But you know the number of the students entering the exam. I compared the papers with the previous ones, and saw this paper belonged to this and that. Now there are such problems.

> IA4: … I think exam papers should definitely be analysed with plagiarism programs like Turnitin. Because the brightest student in the class answers the questions. That student distributes it to others via WhatsApp or other apps. You look and you say that you have read this sentence 2 minutes ago. Only the incoming papers name, surname and number are different.

Finally, the participant IA14 stated that he measured the students using the online test technique. The participant stated that the system gave the student a chance to return to the previous questions; and he experienced that this also causes cheatings. Students could share answers with each other from their WhatsApp groups. After discussing this situation with the ACBEP coordinators, they ensured that the questions could not be returned in the system and the order of the questions were changed for all the students, and they put the final exams into practice in this way. The participant underlined that there have been important differences with these minor changes made in the system.

Theme 5: Digitalization in education

Based on the experiences gained in the process with the COVID-19 epidemic, it has emerged as a necessity to use technology more effectively in face-to-face education after the epidemic, to plan the lessons combining face-to-face and online; as a result, to keep the distance education system alive and to carry out studies to directly switch to distance education in case of an emergency (Yıldırım, 2020, p. 9). At this point, it was seen that the academicians who participated in the research thought that digitalization in education should be given more weight as a solution proposal for the post-epidemic normalization period. Some participants argue that the issue of digitalization in education should be evaluated in terms of making education richer:

> IA13: … By analysing what the pandemic has necessarily brought us at work… I mean enriching education further, maybe making libraries more functional in the virtual world… Virtual encyclopedias and libraries have been a source for both children and us. In other words, it is our wish that this virtual world will be used both face-to-face and materially. I think they should be used more...

According to IA7, it was realized that the concept of distance disappeared with the distance education system. The participant exemplified how this awareness can be turned into an advantage after the epidemic as follows:

> It showed us that a combined education system with distance education in some areas should come with classical education… It showed that knowledge is not far away, and it is very nice in that aspect. And it may need to be used now. For example, I think there can be a pool of knowledge of the experts of the field in the lessons. Or there may be a repository of data on specific topics related to that topic. For example, people who have good work in the field may give video conferences. These can be used in a broader sense... In the same course, the student can complete the course by seeing, for example, three or four different teachers in that semester...

The participant IA17 stated that the most important advantage of distance education is the 'time' issue. She thinks that the time constraint in face-to-face education can be eliminated when blended with distance education:

> But online education also has its own advantages. Time especially. If everyone can arrange a common time for the students, a time when they are at home, maybe for discussion when the time is not enough in the classroom. It may be possible to move it to the online platform. It's not about teaching the course completely online, but the activities outside the classroom, such as seminars...

Another participant IA20 evaluates the issue of 'time' in education from a different perspective and argues that the education system will necessarily be transferred to the digital environment due to the increase in people's occupations in today's societies:

> I believe that education will change after the epidemic. Distance education will be adapted to formal education. In the long run, I think that distance education schools will increase. Because today's societies are societies where people's occupations are increasing. That's why it's getting harder and harder to find time. Depending on this process, I think that distance education systems will become widespread in order to save time devoted to education. In other words, people will want to determine their

lesson programs according to the occupations in their daily lives, not according to the program of the teacher or educational institution. In other words, people will want to listen and watch a lesson when they find the right time, not when the teacher teaches it. This demand will popularize distance education institutions.

Finally, it was noticed that some of the participants thought that the distance education system should be kept alive and used together with face-to-face lessons in case of any possible situation:

> IA2: … I think the trend of digitalization in education will continue. As I said, this may be in the form of a hybrid education system. Or even if it is a face-to-face training, I think that maybe the materials used in the lesson or some of the applications made in the lesson will be digital applications. In other words, I think the most important change, whether face-to-face or hybrid, will be that we communicate more closely with digital technologies.

> IA16: … We must always keep our substructure intact. It is unclear what will happen next. This can be applied from time to time to keep the substructure intact. … It would be different for the student and for us to do some of our lessons online. At least, I think he will understand the value of face-to-face education a little bit. It also keeps the system afloat.

Generally, the majority of the participants had problems in the adaptation process to the distance education system, which they had almost never experienced before, and tried to develop solutions in order to overcome these problems. In the days when the study was conducted and we left the second education period behind in the epidemic, the participants made supportive suggestions for digitalization in education.

Conclusion, Discussion and Implications

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused us to settle into very different conditions in our lives both individually and socially. It was inevitable that changing conditions affected individuals' lives and routines. While these new conditions affected the individual in the micro sense, they also affected the institutions in the mezzo sense. One of the most important institutions affected by this process is the education. The compulsory cessation of contact with the epidemic caused face-to-face education practices to change. Thus, a new era has begun in terms of the education system.

With the COVID-19 epidemic, the distance education system was quickly adopted and education units from all levels continued their education activities in the form of distance education. Universities as important units have continued their practices in this process with the distance education system. In this study, it is aimed to evaluate the distance education system in terms of academicians. At this point, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 academicians working at Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Arts and Sciences Faculty. As a result of the interviews, 5 main themes were determined and titles were created in the context of these themes: Psychological obstacles, inability to get feedback obstacles in applied fields, inadequacy in measurement and evaluation, digitalization in education.

In this study we have seen that the academicians focused first and mainly on psychological obstacles caused by pandemic. The academics interviewed stated that both theirs' and the students' motivation were adversely affected during the epidemic. There are academics who think that the loss of motivation experienced by students will lead to failures in the future.

When the motivation situation is evaluated in terms of academicians, there are discourses that the epidemic creates mood disorders such as psychological extreme fear and anxiety in individuals, and as a result, their working life and motivation are adversely affected. As a matter of fact, Sayan's (2020, p. 117-118) study titled 'Evaluation of the Views of Faculty Members on Distance Education in the Process of the COVID-19 Pandemic' similarly states that academicians do not like to teach online, and that they have difficulties in motivation and communication with students.

Knowledge as a system in which the flow of information takes place between education, instructor and learner has changed shape with the pandemic, and has turned into a process where one-way interaction with the internet and students takes place within a certain period of time. Lack of communication problem constitutes a problem area for all academicians. The biggest concern and problem of academics is not being able to communicate with the student and not getting feedback from the student. Desiring to supervise students' participation in classes and attempts to encourage students to participate more actively are other issues emphasized by academics.

As academics mentioned, another point where the distance education system lacks is about applied courses. Courses with applications and activities carried out within the scope of the course (excursions, fieldwork, and alike) could not be carried out in this period. Especially for courses in which laboratory work is carried out, distance education creates a completely different problem area. As a matter of fact, in the study of Kaya, Akyol, Özbek, and Pepeler (2017, p. 1624) titled 'The Opinions of Academics of the Department of Educational Sciences on the Application of Distance Education in Graduate Education Programs', it was stated that distance education is more efficient than face-to-face education conducted in the traditional sense. Topics such as the inadequacy in applied courses and the decrease in the quality of education have come to the fore.

As researchers from other countries (Tarkar, 2020; Tadesse and Muluye, 2020) mentioned pandemic and closure of the educational institutions affected assessments in various ways. In this study, we have also noticed that COVID-19 pandemic caused inadequacies in measurement and evaluation in our country. Along with distance education, the problems experienced in educational activities also make themselves felt in measurement and evaluation. Academicians have concerns about measuring knowledge. Problems experienced in the face of negative situations such as plagiarism and cheating have been expressed in the process, both within the scope of assignments/ projects or the exams.

Within the scope of this subject, academicians evaluated the distance education process in general and presented their suggestions for the future. As a result of the interviews, although the points where the distance education system lacks are emphasized, it has been determined that a process in which education and technological developments are integrated is considered inevitable at the last point. The importance of technology playing a role in making education and training activities richer has been mentioned. Participants such as IA7, IA17 and IA20 especially emphasized time. It was also revealed that concepts such as time and distance have changed with distance education, and this has emerged as positive features.

As a result, it has been seen that digitalization in education, which is inevitable with the developments in technology, has been integrated into the education system in a shorter time than expected with the epidemic. It can also be said that after the epidemic, the education programs will be not only face-to-face, but also in the form of a blending of face-to-face and

online education, and this will eliminate the problems experienced with distance education. Therefore, in order to be prepared for any kind of problems in the future, firstly the negative aspects of distance educations should be found out with the relevant studies and developed further. Later, hybrid type of education should be applied at all levels of the current education system.

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