



Teaching Practicum Courses in COVID-19 Pandemic Period: Example of Preschool Teaching Undergraduate Program

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the results of lecturing the Teaching Practicum I and II courses included within the curriculum of the final year of Preschool Teaching/Education undergraduate programs of various universities in Türkiye through distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic period according to experiences and viewpoints of preservice teachers. The research is a phenomenological study among qualitative research designs. The study group is comprised of 93 preservice teachers in the final year of the 2020-2021 education year who receive their teaching practice lectures through distance education. The results show that although the pandemic period has some positive effects on the personal lives of preservice teachers, the negative effects of this process are more distinct. Almost all of the participants mentioned that they performed online practices with preschool children, and more than half of them mentioned that they had difficulty performing practice lessons. Results concerning the questions about the knowledge of field and profession showed that preservice teachers considered their level of competence for all items in the pandemic period to be a middle level; and that they would have had much higher levels of competence if the pandemic period did not exist.

Key Words

Teacher education
Distance education
COVID-19
Preschool teacher
Preservice teacher

About Article

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Introduction

The new type of coronavirus pandemic, which is also known as COVID-19, caused significant arrangements and changes in education in a very short period. The pandemic emerged, and one of the practices to slow down the spreading speed of the disease was closing the schools. Transition to an emergency distance education happened in higher education (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020; Lau et al., 2020). The universities in Türkiye had a 3-week break on March 13, 2020, then it was announced on March 26, 2020, that there would be a transition to distance education in universities (COHE, 2020a); this period was extended to cover the 2020-2021 education year. In this period, sustainability in education was tried to be provided through using digital technologies in Türkiye, like in many other countries. Universities continued lectures on online platforms for online education, which happened unexpectedly, was a difficult period for the education of teachers, which especially included applied courses in higher education (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; Flores & Gago, 2020). Difficult and unexpected periods both required examining teacher roles and competencies and showed the need for arrangements with the quality of bringing knowledge and skill to preservice teachers concerning distance education period of teacher training programs (Yıldız et al., 2022).

It is commonly accepted that the basic component of teacher training programs is practicum experience at educational institutions (Allen and Wright 2014). Practicum experience is seen as a component in developing the professional identities of preservice teachers (Caires, Almeida & Vieira 2012). Experience is tried to provide through Teaching Practicum I-II courses in undergraduate programs. Teaching Practicum I - II courses are mandatory courses under professional knowledge courses in the preschool teaching undergraduate program and aim to enable preservice teachers to be present in the schools of The Ministry of National Education and do teaching practicum (COHE, 2018). Preservice teachers have the possibility of directly experiencing knowledge, skills, attitude, and behaviors that they will use in their professional lives in a secure environment under the guidance of mentor teachers through the courses included in teacher training programs which are included in teacher training programs within the scope of "Faculty-School Collaboration" at the end of the period of restructuring of faculties of education in 1998 (Ramazan & Yılmaz, 2017; COHE, 1998). The teacher practicum course contents, which were renewed in 2018, is presented by COHE (Higher Education Institution). Accordingly, in the course of Teaching Practicum I, it is expected to realize practices such as "Making observations concerning field-specific teaching methods and techniques; performing individual and group micro-teaching practices in which field-specific special education and techniques; developing field-specific activity and materials; preparing education environments, managing classrooms, assessment, evaluation and reflection" and to acquire skills. Performing practices such as "Making observations concerning field-specific private education methods and techniques; performing micro-teaching practices using field-specific private teaching methods and techniques; the ability to plan a course individually; developing activities and materials concerning the course; preparing teaching environments; classrooms management, assessment, evaluation and reflection" and acquiring skills are expected in the program in Teaching Practicum II course.

Execution of applied courses in faculties of education changed after recovering from the first shock of the pandemic period, and COHE (2020b) first decided that applied courses were required to be executed through digital means, and then an arrangement was required to be made in the calendar. In the process following this decision, the institution stated that preservice teachers undergoing training should be provided convenience, and practical training should be executed through preparing lessons, assignments, and preparing files (COHE, 2020c; 2020d). As the course of the pandemic in the fall term of the 2020-2021 academic year, both universities and the schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education transitioned to distance education. Lectures were performed via various practices such as distance access to practice classrooms and distance access to an online classrooms of preschool teachers in the proceeding time. While certain universities taught a lesson theoretically, certain universities expected the students to attain preschool training classrooms online as long as the practice schools were open and to execute the process by joining online groups of practice classrooms when the schools were closed.

Having examined the experiences of the preservice teachers within such periods, it was seen that they stated that the identity of the profession of teaching was negatively affected as they were

obliged to perform teaching practicum online (Eti & Karaduman, 2020; González-Calvo et al., 2020); that they cared practice lessons in the process of professional preparation (Karadüz et al., 2009; Kılıç, 2004, Ramazan & Yılmaz, 2017); that they preferred classical education to distance education (Karatepe, Küçükgençay & Peker, 2020) and they think that the period required the ability to use technological tools and devices and strong technological infrastructure and that they have serious deficiencies concerning practice experience as they had problems in accessing (Karahana, Bozan & Akçay, 2020; Yurdakal & Susar Kırmızı, 2021).

Many difficulties experienced concerning teacher training during the pandemic period were examined in various researches by the side of preservice teachers, and it was seen that especially the problems experienced at the point of practice were emphasized. It was aimed to examine the experiences thoroughly within the scope of Teaching Practicum I-II courses within the scope of this research. Therefore, it is aimed to evaluate the process in terms of their professional competencies from the viewpoint of preschool preservice teachers accessing practice classrooms online and doing online practices within the scope of the research. Answers to the following questions are sought for this purpose:

- (1) What are the effects of the pandemic period on the individual lives of preschool preservice teachers?
- (2) Do preschool preservice teachers have difficulty in Teaching Practicum I-II courses that they receive by distance teaching? What are the reasons?
- (3) On what level do preschool preservice teachers receiving Teaching Practicum I-II courses by distance education affect field and professional knowledge competencies?
- (4) What are the preschool preservice teachers' views on the effects of their receiving Teaching Practice I-II courses by distance education on their field knowledge and their command of field education, their knowledge of children and their approach to children, their establishing a convenient learning environment, child evaluation, activity planning, and practice, professional attitude and value approach?

Method

This research examining the views of the preservice teachers receiving teaching practices courses by distance education in the COVID-19 pandemic period on the course process is phenomenology among qualitative research methods. Within qualitative research, phenomenology looks to understand a particular phenomenon within the lived experience of participants (Creswell, 2017). Therefore, in this study, the researchers used phenomenological research, and as suggested by Creswell (2017), gather the data from the participants to obtain direct responses on the topic.

The participants are comprised of preservice teachers in their final year in the 2020-2021 education year who study in the preschool program of state universities and who receive their teaching practicum courses through distance education. This group was not able to realize the lessons face to face in classrooms with children in teaching practicum courses due to the special condition caused by pandemic conditions. Therefore, they were required to be examined in their special cases.

Study Group

93 preservice teachers studying in the preschool teaching program in the 2020-2021 academic year participated in the research. All of the participants study in state universities, and they are final year students receiving their teaching practicum I and II courses distancely. Of the participants, 71% are female, and 29% are male. 92 participants declared their ages, while 1 participant did not declare his/her age. Accordingly, the ages of the participants vary between 21 and 73, and the average age is 23.51.

Data Collection Process

The research data was collected through an online form between June and July 2021. The form was developed by the researchers, and an expert's opinion was primarily taken concerning the created

form. According to feedback submitted by the experts, it was understood that the form as applicable and the data collection stage was started.

Data Collection Tool

The developed form is comprised of 4 sections. Questions about the personal lives of the participants during the COVID-19 period are included in the first section. Questions about their gender, age, whether they had experienced COVID-19, whether their close relatives had the illness, and the positive and negative effects of the pandemic conditions on their lives are also included.

Questions about teaching practicum courses executed distancely during the pandemic period are included in the second section. Questions about the examples of the practices conducted during the practice course and the process are also included among these questions.

The questions in the third section were formed to evaluate the field knowledge and professional knowledge and to evaluate the effect of the pandemic period on these competencies. While the questions were formed, preservice teacher evaluation criteria included in the Ministry of National Education Practice Student Evaluation System were grounded on (uod.meb.gov.tr). In this section, the preservice teachers were first requested to evaluate themselves, then their views concerning whether their knowledge of subject areas, field training, and planning information would change if the pandemic period did not happen and teaching practice courses were taught face-to-face. In this section, the evaluations are formed of 5-point Likert-type answers. The expressions are “1-Insufficient” and “5-Very sufficient”.

The fourth section includes open-ended questions concerning pedagogical content knowledge and professional competency. Questions “What is the effect of executing this course through distance education on your field knowledge and your field education competency?” “What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on the child recognition knowledge and your approach to a child?”, “What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on your forming convenient learning environment?”, “What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on your child evaluation processes?”, “What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on your planning and applying activities?”, “What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on your professional attitude and your approach to values?” are included.

Data Analysis

An integral data set was formed of the answers submitted by all of the participants. A code was given to each participant. The answers of the preservice teachers were examined thoroughly, and frequency and percentage calculations were made for the formed categories. The data obtained from open-ended questions are completed objectively and systematically and approached by the content analysis method, including generalizations. The content analysis method is a method that is used frequently in the analysis of data obtained from observations and interviews (Büyüköztürk et al., 2015). The data set was open-coded both individually and together by the researchers. The consistency between the categories formed by the coders is determined as 96%. This coefficient shows that those data were coded in a quite reliable manner. A coefficient at the level of 70% is stated to provide consistency between coders (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Findings

The results of the research are discussed in four sections.

First Section

78 of the participants declared that they did not have COVID-19, and 15 declared that they had the same. 17 of the participants stated that their family did not have COVID-19, and 76 stated that their family had the illness at various levels.

When the participants were asked whether the pandemic period had positive effects on the lives of preservice teachers or not, 68 participants stated that the period had positive effects and 25 participants stated that the period had no positive effect is observed. The answers of the participants

who stated that the pandemic period had positive effects include sparing more time to themselves and their beloved ones, enhancing academic success, and developing new hobbies.

When the participants were asked whether the pandemic period had negative effects on the lives of preservice teachers or not, 3 participants stated that the period did not have negative effects, and 90 participants stated that the period had a negative effect. The subjects related to the negative effects is observed that physical and psychological health, academic difficulties, socialization problems, family problems, economic changes, and problems in accessing the Internet based on their order of frequency.

Second Section

When the participants were asked whether they had difficulty in having teaching practicum I and II course through distance education, 37 (39.8%) of the participants answered “no,” while 56 (60.2%) answered “yes.”

When the preservice teachers who stated that they had difficulty were asked in which subjects they had the difficulty with, they stated that the most difficult subjects for them were online activity planning and classrooms management. The second order was comprised of the difficulties they had in connecting to the Internet and computer hardware.

91 (97.8%) of the participants answered “yes,” and 2 (2.2%) answered “no” to the question “Did you have any chance to perform an online practice with preschoolers within the scope of “Teaching Practicum I and II” course which you take through distance teaching?”.

When the participants were asked about the practices that they performed with preschoolers within the scope of the "Teaching Practicum I and II" course, it was observed that they planned and applied activities in different types of activity under a monthly plan. Considering their frequency of preferring activity types, it was observed that the preferred activities were Turkish, science, art, play, music, preparation for reading/writing, mathematics, motion, and drama, respectively.

Third Section

In this section, the preservice teachers were asked their opinions on whether there would have been any difference in their competencies concerning their field and professional knowledge or not if the pandemic period did not happen and teaching practice courses had been taught face to face. Questions were developed in a Likert-type structure in this section. In this structure, number 1 expresses “insufficient”; number 5 expresses “very sufficient.” Frequency and percentage values concerning the answers of the participants are shown in the table.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of preservice teachers' opinion about competencies

Questions	1 Very insufficient	2	3	4	5 Very sufficient
At what level is your competency in knowing basic principles and notions concerning preschool education?	-	2 (2.2%)	23(24.7%)	49(52.7%)	19 (20.4%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	1(1.1%)	22(23.7%)	70 (75.3%)
At what level is your competency in associating basic principles and notions in the preschool education program with their plans on logical coordination?	-	-	19 (20.4)	53 (57%)	21(22.6%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	2 (2.2%)	29(31.2%)	62(66.7%)
At what level is your competency in using verbal and visual language (figure, diagram, graphic, formula, etc.) required by the program (activity plan)?	1(1.1%)	2 (2.2%)	25(26.9%)	40(43%)	25(26.9%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	4(4.3%)	22(23.7%)	67(72%)
At what level is your competency in knowing special teaching approaches, methods, and techniques in the activity plans which you prepare?	-	4(4.4%)	28(31.1%)	45(50%)	13(14.4%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	1(1.1%)	4(4.3%)	36(38.7%)	52(55.9%)
At what level is your competency in using teaching technologies in your activities?	2(2.2%)	2(2.2%)	22(23.7%)	37(39.8%)	30(32.3%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	2(2.2%)	16(17.2%)	40(43%)	35(37.6%)
At what level is your competency in determining wrongly developed notions in children?	2(2.2%)	4(4.3%)	43(46.2%)	31(33.3%)	13(14%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	1(1.1%)	6(6.5%)	37(39.8%)	49(52.7%)
At what level is your competency in giving appropriate and sufficient answers to questions of children?	1(1.1%)	1(1.1%)	15(16.1%)	67(72%)	9(9.7%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	1(1.1%)	3(3.2%)	38(40.9%)	51(54.8%)
At what level is your competency in providing the safety of the learning environment for your children?	1(1.1%)	2(2.2%)	25(26.9%)	40(43%)	25(26.9%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	4(4.3%)	26(28%)	63(67.7%)
At what level is your competency in writing activity plans in an open, clear, and ordered manner?	-	1(1.1%)	14(15.1%)	40(43%)	38(40.9%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	3(3.2%)	26(28%)	64(68.8%)
At what level is your competency in expressing the learning process which you form by outcomes and indicators clearly?	-	-	15(16.1%)	37(39.8%)	41(44.1%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	3(3.2%)	26(28%)	64(68.8%)
At what level is your competency in determining methods and techniques appropriate to the learning outcomes which you treat?	-	-	23(24.7%)	47(50.5%)	23(24.7%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	1(1.1%)	3(3.2%)	34(36.6%)	55(59.1%)
At what level is your competency in choosing and preparing appropriate equipment and material?	-	1(1.1%)	19(20.4%)	45(48.4%)	28(30.1%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	-	-	2(2.2%)	19(20.4%)	72(77.4%)
At what level is your competency in determining evaluation forms appropriate to the learning outcomes which you choose?	1(1.1%)	4(4.3%)	16(17.2%)	49(52.7%)	23(24.7%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	1(1.1%)	-	2(2.2%)	36(38.7%)	54(58.1%)
At what level is your competency in associating the learning outcomes which you choose with the previous and next learning experiences?	1(1.1%)	5(5.4%)	20(21.5%)	44(47.3%)	23(24.7%)
At what level would it have been if the pandemic did not happen?	1(1.1%)	-	2(2.2%)	31(33.3%)	59(63.4%)

Upon reviewing Table 1, it was found that the level of competence of preservice teachers for all items in the pandemic period was at the middle level; and that they would have had much higher levels of competence if the pandemic period did not exist. It was seen that they had difficulty in

distance education especially planning and, selecting, evaluating appropriate equipment and material and that they felt less sufficient in such fields due to the pandemic period. It can be said that they considered that they would have felt more sufficient, and their competencies would have increased if the pandemic period did not happen.

Fourth Section

In this section, the questions regarding the preschool preservice teachers' views on the effects of Teaching Practicum I-II courses which they received by distance education on their field knowledge and their command of field education, their knowledge of children and their approach to children, their establishing a convenient learning environment, child evaluation, activity planning, and practice, professional attitude and value approach were asked. Answers from preservice teachers were examined by classification, and the classification was made according to the titles of positive, negative, both positive and negative, and no effect. The cases in which a participant used both negative and positive expressions together were encountered while the statements were classified, and in such cases, more than one option was marked based on the suitability of the expressions to the categories.

Table 2. What is the effect of teaching this course through distance education on your subject field knowledge and your grasp of field education?

	Category	f	Sample expressions
Positive effects	distance education practice	6	*
	field education practice	11	
	teaching in hard times	5	
	increase in communication with children	4	
	using technology	3	
	teacher support	2	
	family attendance	1	
	development of theoretical knowledge	1	
	knowing a child	1	
	other	3	
Negative effects	lack of practice	2	**
	weak interaction	6	
	lack of classroom management experience	5	
	inability to develop field knowledge	4	
	inability to receive teacher guidance and suggestions	2	
	knowing child	1	
	other	1	
No effect		3	***

*k86- "The practice through distance education had a positive and solid effect on my subject field knowledge and field education. I think I had much information and knowledge concerning the subject field and field education through my research and learning in distance education period."

** k21- "It affected me negatively as I learned most of the things theoretically, not through experience."

*** k37- "It had no effect."

Table 3. What are the effects of practicing the course through distance education on child acquaintance knowledge and your approach to a child?

	Category	f	Sample expressions
Positive effects	providing effective communication distancely	4	*
	having the experience of knowing a child	3	
	interaction increases through becoming familiar with children	1	
	teacher support	1	
	other	3	
Negative effects	mutual limited interaction	31	**
	limited time	12	
	lack of observation	10	
	inability to learn individual/personal characteristics of children	10	
	technological problems	6	
	irregular attendance of children in distance education	6	
	classrooms management problems	4	
	limited interaction of children with preservice teachers	2	
	family interference	2	
	other	11	
No effect		9	***

*k39- "Practice courses had positive effects in this subject as our interaction with children increased"

** k12- "I was less acquainted with children because I had difficulty in interacting mutually over pc. And I had difficulty in chatting with them as I forgot their names."

*** k79- "I don't think it has any effect."

Table 4. What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on creating a suitable learning environment?

	Category	f	Sample expressions
Positive effects	creating/practices of virtual classrooms	15	*
	using technology in creating an environment	6	
	increase in family attendance	4	
	diversity of materials	4	
	teacher support	2	
	game-oriented learning environment	2	
	active participation	1	
	other	8	
Negative effects	lack of material and difficulty in preparing materials	5	**
	problems arising from the setting of the participants	4	
	technological and internet-related problems	4	
	passive attendance	2	
	guidance of the process by teachers	2	
	inability/lack of knowledge on forming a virtual classroom	2	
	content that is unsuitable for distance education format	1	
	limited peer communication	1	
	classrooms management	1	
	other	20	
No effect		16	** *

* k20- "I tried to plan activities which can attract the attention of children in an Online environment while creating a learning environment considering that children might be bored using a computer. I tried to plan activities, including music and motion, for the children not to feel bored."

** k31- "It had a negative effect because I had difficulty in providing materials."

*** k46- "I don't think it has any effect."

Table 5. What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on your processes of evaluating children?

	Category	f	Sample expressions
Positive effects	knowing a child	4	*
	increase in the knowledge of distance evaluation methods	4	
	ability to evaluate activities	3	
	teacher support	2	
	using ready evaluation tools	1	
	collaboration with other preservice teachers in evaluation	1	
	other	4	
Negative effects	lack of knowing children	27	**
	time limit	24	
	limited evaluation of activities	14	
	technical problems	2	
	only observation-based evaluation	2	
	irregular attendance of children	1	
	preservice teacher's feeling of incompetency	1	
	other	11	
No effect		8	

* k16- "We had the chance to observe children well and follow their development to obtain information."

** k20- "I think the course being distance is negative for evaluating the child. Because the time is limited and we cannot see most of the children clearly while they do activities. And this limits our ability to evaluate children."

***k47- "I don't think it has any effect"

Table 6. What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on planning and carrying out activities?

	Category	f	Sample expressions
Positive effects	gaining experience in planning and writing activities	30	*
	I became skillful at adaptation to distance education	17	
	developing creativity	6	
	I improved in choosing and preparing materials	6	
	I improved in using technology	3	
	I became experienced in practice	3	
	planning activity evaluation	1	
Negative effects	I had difficulty creating a diversity of activities in distance education	8	**
	I had difficulty preparing activities according to the needs and interests of the children	6	
	I had technological problems	3	
	problems arising from the incompetency of preservice teachers	3	
	problems in practice due to lack of material	1	
	the problem in keeping the interest of students alive	18	
	lack of practice	1	
	other	6	
No effect		9	

* k12- "I arranged my activities more simply in the first term because I was getting used to it; however, I focused on science experiments in the second term and prepared experiments in which they could both have fun and be informed."

** k37- "I did not have a chance to conduct many methods, techniques, and plans which I wished to carry out primarily being motion activities."

*** k1- "I did not have difficulty in planning."

Table 7. What are the effects of teaching this course through distance education on your approach to professional attitude and values?

	Category	f	Sample expressions
Positive effects	increase in love for the profession	14	*
	Transferring professional attitudes and values in distance education	13	
	transferring values in distance education	3	
	using technology in a professional way	2	
	realizing the skills which should be improved	1	
	other	5	
Negative effects	prevention of the development of professional attitude due to the insufficiency of practice	12	**
	inability to feel like a teacher	4	
	feeling insufficient	4	
	other	9	
No effect		31	***

* k76- "I once again understood how valuable my profession is. I understood that I chose the right job when a student who was suffering from Covid attended the classrooms and said to his/her teacher that he/she missed him/her so much."

** k12- "Generally considering professional attitude and values, I must say that I had an insufficient year because I could not get the efficiency that I wished in my training. And I think that the first years of my job will be hard for me."

*** k13- "The fact that the course was taught through distance education did not change my attitude and love for my profession."

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Within the scope of this research, it was aimed to examine the experiences, feelings, and thoughts of fourth-grade preservice teachers studying in the preschool undergraduate program within the scope of Teaching Practicum I-II lessons during the pandemic period. For this purpose, the preservice teacher participants were first asked about the effect of the pandemic period on their personal lives. Considering the answers, although there were some positive effects of the pandemic period, the negative effects of this period were clearer. While participants stated positive effects such as sparing more time to themselves and their beloved ones, improving their academic success, starting new hobbies; a number of participants stated negative effects such as psychological health, academic difficulties, lack of socialization, family problems, economic changes and difficulties in accessing Internet seems higher. In this sense, it can be said that the pandemic period had rather negative effects on the personal lives of preservice teachers. It was seen that there were researches supporting this result upon reviewing the related literature (Bulguroğlu et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2020; Jiménez-Pavón, 2020). In different researches, which were conducted analogously, it was determined that individuals between 14-33 years of age had problems under different subjects such as the need for computed and tablets, connection problems, domestic conflict and stress environment, problems related to the difficulty to stay at home, fear of infecting/getting infected by the virus, economic problems and these problems increased the level of concern, stress, and depression (Çubuk, 2020; Didin et al. 2022; Ogel-Balaban, 2022). Sever and Özdemir (2020) found, as a result of their research, that university students suffered from exhaustion and pessimism. Doğan (2020) determined that university students expressed that COVID-19 caused positive effects although they were limited as it enabled students to spend more time with their families, it enabled the opportunity to spare more time for their personal development, although the emphasis on the negative effects of the pandemic period was high in his research in which he reviewed the letters written by students to COVID-19.

Another question included in the research is about teaching Teaching Practicum I and II courses online. Upon asking the participants whether they had difficulty attending teaching practicum I and II courses through distance education, more than half of the participants stated that they had difficulty. 56 participants who stated they had difficulty mentioned that they had the most difficulty in subjects of online activity planning and classroom management, connecting to the Internet, and computer hardware. Upon reviewing the relevant studies in the literature, similar matters were stated

as primary difficulties which the preservice teachers mentioned to have during the distance education process (Aslan Altan, 2021; Güven and Uçar, 2021). Except for 2 out of the 93 participants' preservice teachers, 91 participants stated that they performed online practices with children. Although the pandemic period started unexpectedly fast, the ability to perform online activities can be evaluated as the success of both universities and preschools in the matter of being adapted to this period.

In the third section of the research, the preservice teachers were requested to evaluate themselves by a 5-point Likert type grading scale concerning certain skills, which were aimed to be built in Teaching Practicum I and II courses. Concerning the same evaluation of those skills, they were required to grade themselves on how their competency would be if a pandemic did not happen. Based on the results that were obtained, it is seen that all levels of knowledge and skills would have been much higher if the pandemic did not happen and if teaching practice courses had been taken face-to-face. Among these answers, the most interesting answer is the answer to the question about the competency to use teaching technologies in the activities. The participants were asked about their competencies to use learning technologies that they have concerning the mandatory teaching of practice courses and the level that they thought to be at if a pandemic did not happen and teaching practice was conducted face-to-face. It was seen that they stated that these skills would have been higher if the pandemic did not happen, although the rates of answers were close. Considering the research results of Güven and Uçar (2021), it was seen that preservice teachers' opinions theory could not substitute for practice; being together with children and receiving feedback was important for their professional development. In another research, Yolcu (2020) concluded that preservice teachers did not wish to continue distance education after the pandemic period. Karaduman (2020) concluded that preservice teachers prepared lesson plans without practicing at schools and shot their videos considering that they were in the classrooms environment and they felt themselves insufficient at a certain middle level in terms of professional field knowledge and professional skills within the scope of practice lesson however they considered themselves sufficient in terms of attitudes and values. Analogously, changing characteristics of the Teaching Practicum course due to its restructuring by distance education show that preservice teachers were negatively affected in terms of their professional competencies (González-Calve et al., 2020).

In the fourth and last section of the research, the question regarding the preservice teachers' views on the effects of Teaching Practicum I-II courses which were performed by distance education, on their field knowledge and their command of field education, their knowledge of child and their approach to the child, their establishing a convenient learning environment, child evaluation, activity planning, and practice, professional attitude and value approach. The answers of preservice teachers were classified and examined. Their opinions on the effects of distance education on their comprehensive knowledge of the subject field and field education were taken. It was seen that the preservice teachers, who expressed that the effects were positive, stated that they had a special experience in teaching at hard times as their experience in distance education and using technology increased. Considering negative effects, it was determined that they emphasized that they had serious difficulties concerning classrooms management besides the deficiency of practice and interaction. The preservice teachers who stated that the process had both positive and negative effects emphasized that they improved well in a theoretical sense even though they had a lack of practice. The effects on the knowledge of preservice teachers about children and, their approach to children, their experience of knowing a child from a different point of view were stated as a positive effect; the limitedness in terms of time and interaction, difficulty in observing, and knowing the characters of children, irregular attendance to lessons and problems arising from technology was stated as negative effects. The preservice teachers were positively affected in subjects of becoming experienced in creating virtual classrooms and integrating technology into a learning environment, preparing a suitable learning environment by increasing interaction; they were negatively affected by the lack of materials, the problems in the environment of the participants, and the problems concerning technology and the Internet. While preservice teachers had the experience of evaluating and knowing children during distance education in the processes evaluating children, it was seen they had negative lives as they had limited time, and they were able to evaluate only the duration of activity. They stated that their gaining experience in evaluating the duration of activity was a positive effect, although it was not possible to evaluate the process generally. While planning activities and preparing materials suitable for distance

education, development of creativity were stated as the positive gains of preservice teachers in planning and process of practice; it was determined that certain preservice teachers stated that they were negatively affected as they were limited to provide a variety of activities suitable for distance education, that they had difficulty in preparing the activities needed by children, and that they rather experienced technological problems. It was found that while Teaching Practicum I-II courses that continue through distance education produced an effect in increasing certain preservice teachers' love towards the profession within the scope of professional attitude and values; it caused certain preservice teachers to think that the development of their professional attitude was blocked due to the lack of practice and that they had difficulty in feeling themselves like a teacher.

There are many types of research in which the views of preservice teachers concerning the Teaching Practicum I-II courses conducted through distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic period were examined. In parallel to the results of this research, Güven and Uçar (2021) found that preservice teachers experienced Internet problems, lack of practice, and the deficiency of being far from the classrooms environment. According to Hill (2021), preservice teachers will have some difficulties when they begin active duty as they are not able to have a quality mentorship, and they experience a lack of practice in distance education. Altan (2021) found that the preservice teachers had the easiness of planning activities through the easiness of preparing digital material in distance education and that they expressed positive opinions in terms of forming interaction with children and practice teachers and gaining distance education experience even though they were before their screen. Preservice teachers expressed that they gained experience in solving problems, made progress in skills such as creativity, teaching at hard times, using technology more efficiently; they emphasized that their having difficulty in classrooms management due to irregular attendance of children to activities, inequality of opportunity and limited communication left negative marks (Ateş Çobanoğlu & Çobanoğlu, 2021; Aygüneş et al., 2022; Gök Çolak and Efeoğlu, 2021; Ünal and Durmuş, 2021; Yıldız et al., 2022). It can be said that preservice teachers who expressed to have difficulty with teacher support and guidance need feedback concerning the practices that they conduct. It can be said that preservice teachers who were unable to get sufficient support from their practice teachers were affected negatively, and this was also effective on their motivations (Long et al., 2021). It was observed as a result of the research conducted by Eti and Karaduman (2020) that preservice teachers had predominantly positive opinions about inauguration during the pandemic period continuing after they graduated, and they believed that they could overcome difficulties. In this research, it was also found that there were preservice teachers who evaluated the experiences that they gained about teaching in hard times as a positive achievement. It can be said that the experiences that they gained during this period would provide a significant convenience when they started to work. It was found that preservice teachers expressed technical problems in subjects of technology and the Internet as negative effects in the categories of the answers for almost all of the questions. As it is analogously seen in the results of the research conducted by Bayındır (2021), preservice teachers experiencing insufficient Internet infrastructure, lack or deficiency of computer/tablets and technology literacy stated technical problems as one of the most basic problems concerning distance education, although they gained experience at the end of the process.

As per pandemic conditions, teaching practice courses were converted online quickly like all other courses. This sudden change caused by pandemic conditions may have permanent effects on the system of education. Except for teaching practices, theoretical courses within a certain quota are continued to be given online in the universities in Türkiye. Therefore, it can be suggested to increase the number of the courses in subjects such as technology and distance education in teacher training programs. It is also suggested to develop new models to perform practice lessons online. It is considered that this research and similar research will contribute to developing these new models. Data of university students studying at two universities in Türkiye were collected within the scope of this research. It is known that there are differences between universities within the scope of teaching practice. It is clear that these different practices may have different effects. It should be stated that only university students performing only teaching course practices online are included within the scope of this research. Effects of different practices can be gathered by contacting preservice teachers in other universities. Furthermore, new research about whether the professional experiences of preservice teachers receiving practice courses online are different from the experiences of preservice teachers

receiving their practice courses face to face. The findings of the research can be used in the in-service training programs to be developed in cases where these teachers have needs that are different from the needs of other teachers within the professional process.

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