Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi *Ereğli Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 5/2 *(2023), 210-236 | Araştırma Makalesi*

Acil Uzaktan Öğretimde ve Sonrasında Ölçme ve Değerlendirme: Yükseköğretimdeki Deneyim ve Uygulamaların Nitel Bakışla İncelenmesi

Beyza AKSU DÜNYA [1], Mehmet Can DEMİR [2], Sema SULAK GÜZEY [3], Eda AKDOĞDU YILDIZ [4], Evrim GÜLER [5]

[1] Bartın Üniversitesi, Eğitimde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme Anabilim Dalı, Bartın, Türkiye, baksu@bartin.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0003-4994-1429

[2] Bartın Üniversitesi, Eğitimde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme Anabilim Dalı, Bartın, Türkiye, mehmetdemir@bartin.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0001-7849-7078

[3] Bartın Üniversitesi, Eğitimde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme Anabilim Dalı, Bartın, Türkiye, semasulak@bartin.edu.tr, 0000-0002-2849-321X

[4] Bağımsız Araştırmacı, Melbourne, Avustralya, akdogdueda@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0003-4374-4379

[5] Bartın Üniversitesi, Bilgisayar Donanımı Anabilim Dalı, Bartın, Türkiye, evrimguler@bartin.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0002-7226-4748

Öz

Bu çalışma, acil uzaktan eğitim sırasında ve sonrasında değerlendirmeye ilişkin akademisyenlerin algılarını ve uygulamalarını araştırmayı ve karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında, iki farklı zaman dilimindeki akademisyen deneyimlerini, zorluklarını ve ihtiyaçlarını anlamaya odaklanılmıştır. İlk aşamada, pandemi nedeniyle acil uzaktan eğitimin uygulandığı Temmuz ve Ağustos 2020'de çeşitli disiplinlerden 54 öğretim üyesiyle 19 yarı yapılandırılmış odak grup görüşmesi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonraki aşamada, pandemi koşullarının ortadan kalkmasının ardından ayrı bir grup öğretim üyesiyle (4 kişi) görüşülmüştür. Görüşmelerden elde veriler MaxQDA yardımıyla nitel tematik analiz yaklaşımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları, acil durum uzaktan öğretimi sırasında değerlendirme uygulamalarının akademisyenleri mesleki gelişimi, öğrenci motivasyonu ve Öğrenme Yönetim Sistemlerinin işlevselliğinden güçlü bir şekilde etkilendiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, çalışma, akademisyenlerin değerlendirme alışkanlıklarının ve uygulamalarının acil uzaktan öğretim sürecinden sonra değiştiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, yükseköğretim kurumlarına mesleki gelişim fırsatlarını artırmaları ve değişen değerlendirme uygulamalarına uyum sağlamada akademisyenleri desteklemeleri için

önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

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Assessment Practices in and Beyond Emergency Remote Teaching: Exploring Experiences in Higher Education through a Qualitative Lens

Beyza AKSU DÜNYA [1], Mehmet Can DEMİR [2], Sema SULAK GÜZEY [3], Eda AKDOĞDU YILDIZ [4], Evrim GÜLER [5]

[1] Bartın University, Department of Educational Sciences, Bartın, Türkiye, baksu@bartin.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0003-4994-1429

[2] Bartın University, Department of Educational Sciences, Bartın, Türkiye, mehmetdemir@bartin.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0001-7849-7078

[3] Bartın University, Department of Educational Sciences, Bartın, Türkiye, semasulak@bartin.edu.tr, 0000-0002-2849-321X

[4] Independent Researcher, Melbourne, Avusturalya, akdogdueda@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0003-4374-4379

[5] Bartın University, Department of Computer Engineering, Bartın, Türkiye, evrimguler@bartin.edu.tr, orcid.org/0000-0002-7226-4748

Abstract

This study aims to investigate and compare faculty perceptions and practices regarding assessment during and after emergency remote teaching. The research focuses on understanding faculty experiences, challenges, and needs in these two distinct time frames. In the initial phase, 19 semi-structured focus group meetings were conducted with 54 faculty members from various disciplines during July and August 2020, when emergency remote teaching was implemented due to the pandemic. In the subsequent phase, a separate group of faculty members (4 persons) were interviewed after the resolution of pandemic conditions. The study specifically examines faculty perspectives and practices related to assessment. The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis approach with the assistance of MaxQDA. The findings of the study indicate that assessment practices during emergency remote teaching were strongly influenced by faculty professional development, student motivation, and the functionality of Learning Management Systems. Moreover, the study reveals that faculty members' assessment habits and practices were modified after experiencing emergency remote teaching. Based on these findings, recommendations are provided for higher education institutions to enhance professional development opportunities and support faculty in adapting to

changing assessment practices.

Keywords

Student assessment, emergency remote teaching, faculty development

Citation

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Introduction

Following rapid spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) globally, World Health Organization (WHO) defined the situation as pandemic on March 11th, 2020 and called countries to take significant measures due to the virus's highly contiguous nature (WHO, 2020). The countries' emergent response to slow down the spread included shutting down schools at all levels which resulted in almost 90% of the global student population shifting to online classes (UNESCO, 2020). Pandemic is defined as the greatest challenge that national education systems faced in the history (Daniel, 2020). The global interruption to school due to pandemic was an extremely unexpected and first-time experience for both students and educators (Williamson et al., 2020) which brought many issues including fairness and equity in learning and assessment forefront (Chapman & Bell, 2020). Among the debated issues, assessment has been one of the most controversial and challenging topics in all levels of education (Bozkurt, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020).

Two Separate Terms: Distance Education vs. Emergency Remote Teaching

To better understand the situation in terms of assessment, two terms should be distinguished properly: distance education and emergency remote teaching. Distance education is defined as 'any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner, with the effect that all or most of the communication between teachers and learners is through an artificial medium, either electronic or print' (UNESCO, 2002, p. 22). Emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a term proposed by Hodges et al. (2020) to define type of instruction being delivered under pandemic conditions. It is a temporary and sudden shift of classes to an alternate format due to a crisis and includes fully online delivery of instruction that are normally taught face-to-face or hybrid (Hodges et al., 2020). The goal in ERT is to provide temporary access to instruction that is feasibly and reliably available during crises (Hodges et al., 2020). In emergency remote teaching, it is planned to switch to the regular instruction format once the crisis has been controlled. While distance education is a systematic and well-planned activities, emergency remote teaching seeks for temporary solutions for unexpected problems (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Throughout this paper, we avoid using the term of distance education and opt to use emergency remote teaching (ERT) to describe the face-to-face classes that were moved to online rapidly.

While there were faculty members who had substantial experience with distance education before, many others had to use online systems for teaching and assessment fully for the first time which associated with some challenges

(Parthasarathy & Murugesan, 2020). Assessment has been mentioned as the most challenging part of the transition to distance teaching for both faculty and students in higher education institutions that used to conduct face-to-face exams (Rapanta et. al., 2020). One significant challenge was about faculty's professional development in using technology for assessment purposes. As mentioned in Bozkurt et. al. (2020) 'Even if the infrastructure is put in place, if teachers are not prepared for assessment using technology, all we have is the uploading of content online without a way to assess the learning taking place' (p. 42). Although campus support teams such as Offices of Distance Learning helped faculty to learn about teaching through a designated learning management system (LMS), such services were available to a small subgroup of interested faculty (Hodges et. al. 2020) and did not include assessment help provided by experts. Another challenge was related to beliefs and attitudes about distance education such as students' expectation of lenient grading (Flaherty, 2020) and increased workload due to volume of assignments (Unger & Meiran, 2020). Reportedly, tasks were more frequent and larger than regular face to face education times due to misunderstanding about assessment of learning in distance environments (Bozkurt et al., 2020). The challenges faced during emergency remote teaching (ERT) and the subsequent experiences in higher education during the post-pandemic era highlight the importance of understanding faculty experiences. This understanding is crucial for updating faculty development programs and implementing relevant policy changes.

Significance of the Study

Despite the growing body of research on various aspects of higher education during and after the pandemic, there is a limited amount of literature specifically examining faculty experiences and changes in assessment practices. Existing studies have predominantly focused on student experiences, institutional decisions, and faculty experiences in online instruction delivery. However, there is a need for comprehensive research specifically exploring faculty experiences and changes in assessment, which is a highly debated topic in ERT.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate and understand faculty experiences, challenges, and practice changes related to assessment during and after ERT. The study aims to address the following research questions in the initial phase through 19 semi-structured online focus group meetings involving 54 faculty members from diverse disciplines:

1. What remote assessment methods did faculty employ during emergency distance education?

2. What were the challenges encountered by faculty in terms of assessment during emergency distance education?

3. What resources did faculty utilize for assessment purposes during emergency distance education?

In the subsequent phase of the study, the following additional research questions were addressed:

1. What differences in assessment practices were reported by faculty between the ERT period and the post-pandemic period?

2. Did faculty adopt any new assessment habits or practices as a result of their experiences in emergency remote teaching?

By exploring these research questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights into faculty experiences and changes in assessment practices during and after ERT, contributing to the existing literature and offering recommendations for improving assessment approaches in higher education.

Method

Research Design

Qualitative descriptive design was employed to deeply understand experiences and needs of faculty. The goal of qualitive descriptive analysis is to examine meaning and describing reality through creation of themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Specifically, we adopted a theoretical thematic analysis approach to analyze data and identify themes, aligning our methodology with the overarching purpose of our research. Our study sought to explore faculty experiences in assessment within the context of specific research questions. As articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis serves as a method to uncover, summarize, and report patterns within the data, making it a suitable choice for our research objectives.

Data Collection Tools

The process of designing the data collection tools began with the collaborative effort of the research team, where we formulated preliminary questions for both the semi-structured focus group sessions (Study 1) and the interviews (Study 2). These questions were carefully crafted to align with our overarching research questions and were discussed during brainstorming sessions. As we concluded these sessions, we had in hand preliminary drafts of the data collection instruments. For the focus group meetings in Study 1, these instruments included four open-ended questions aimed at exploring

participants' multifaceted experiences related to their assessment practices, challenges faced, and specific needs in the context of emergency remote teaching. In Study 2, the data collection tool focused on experiences and changes in assessment practices.

To ensure the quality of our data collection tools and enhance validity of our results, we subjected them to an extensive expert review process. In Study 1, we sought feedback from two experts, one specializing in educational technology and the other in distance education. Additionally, we engaged a language expert to ensure clarity, coherence, and precision in the items. In Study 2, we maintained a similar review process, with input from two assessment experts, followed by a language expert's evaluation of the interview questions.

Data Collection Procedures

The research and interview protocol for this study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of a public university in Turkey prior to the commencement of data collection. The initial phase of data collection involved conducting focus group interviews during the months of July and August 2020, when emergency remote teaching (ERT) conditions were prevalent. Focus group interviews are described as 'carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 2). Synchronous focus group interviews were extremely feasible way of data collection given the social distancing protocols in pandemic. With the help of technology, participants could take part in group discussions without having to sit in the same room and violating social distancing rules. After getting a tentative list of volunteers, a Doodle (2019) link which includes potential time slots by discipline was sent to faculty. Each faculty picked suitable times on the doodle calendar and replied. Then, the research team constructed each focus group by considering each participant's academic discipline and availability and send the meeting details (time, Zoom meeting ID, password etc.) to the participants. At the beginning of each meeting, moderators welcomed the participants, restated purpose of the focus group interviews, and reminded the participants that they could withdraw from the meeting at any point. Two researchers co-moderated the focus groups while two research assistants took field notes and managed technical issues if emerged. The meetings lasted between 40 minutes-75 minutes. Characteristics of the focus group participants were summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Participants' Characteristics

		N	%
Gender	Female	21	38.88
	Male	33	61.11
Discipline	Arts/Humanities	11	20.37
	Social Sciences	13	54.16
	STEM*	16	29.62
	Health/Medicine	10	18.51
	Sport Sciences	4	7.4
Academic Rank	Professor	3	5.55
	Associate Professor	9	16.66
	Assistant Professor	24	44.44
	Instructor/Lecturer	15	27.77
	Research Assistant	3	5.55
Total		54	100

**STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*

The table provides a breakdown of participant demographics in the study, displaying key characteristics of the sample. Specifically, it reveals the gender distribution, the distribution across different academic disciplines, and the distribution of participants based on their academic rank. In terms of gender, the table shows that 38.88% of the participants are female, while 61.11% are male. Regarding academic disciplines, the majority (54.16%) fall within the Social Sciences category, followed by STEM (29.62%), Arts/Humanities (20.37%), Health/Medicine (18.51%), and Sport Sciences (7.4%). Additionally, the academic rank distribution is as follows: 5.55% are Professors, 16.66% are Associate Professors, 44.44% are Assistant Professors, 27.77% are Instructors/Lecturers, and 5.55% are Research Assistants.

Data Collection in Phase 1: Recruitment of Focus Group Participants

The inclusion criteria were having to taught at least one undergraduate or graduate level course remotely for the first time due to pandemic. Faculty members from four public universities were invited to the focus group meetings through e-mail. The aim was to recruit at least two faculty per college who had taught online for the first time in emergency distance education and one faculty per vocational school to obtain a diverse and representative sample. Persons who were replied to the e-mail with interest to the research topic, had

availability within the allocated time for data collection and met the inclusion criteria were selected. As suggested by Kruger and Casey (2009), number of participants in each focus group session was kept within the range of 4-6 but due to scheduling and time restrictions, some groups included fewer participants. All four universities included in Phase 1 shared the common characteristic of being established after 2007, categorizing them as relatively new institutions. However, while they share this founding date, there are notable distinctions that provide diversity within the sample. For instance, two of these universities have a medical faculty, while the other two do not. Additionally, the universities vary in size and faculty composition, offering unique institutional contexts and perspectives that contribute to the diversity of the sample.

Data Collection in Phase 2

Phase 2 of data collection took place after the regulations of emergency remote teaching (ERT) had ended completely in Fall 2022. To gather this data, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with a randomly selected group of faculty members who had previously participated in the focus groups. A virtual meeting was scheduled for each faculty member based on their availability. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of three open-ended questions, focusing on the faculty members' post-pandemic assessment experiences, changes in their assessment practices, and any habits they adopted during the ERT.

Data Analysis

Focus group data were analysed using the thematic analysis approach following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), data analysis process was not a linear line of stages moving from one to another. Yet, a recursive process was performed where back and forth between stages involved as needed. The stages followed to analyse data included identifying codes, sorting, and grouping codes based on similarity, and combining similar codes under pre-determined themes. Our analysis was driven by our research questions, and it was these questions that guided the identification of three overarching themes. These themes encompassed the various aspects of assessment methods, challenges encountered, and the resources employed by faculty during this period, aligning closely with our research inquiries.

Similarly, in Phase 2, which aimed to investigate changes in assessment practices, our analysis was shaped by the specific research questions we posed. As a result, two prominent themes emerged, directly reflective of the content we sought to explore. These themes pertained to the reported differences in

assessment practices between the ERT period and the post-pandemic period and the adoption of new assessment habits or practices by faculty due to their experiences in emergency remote teaching. Throughout our analysis, any data that did not directly relate to these emergent themes were thoughtfully deliberated among the research team to assess the potential need for the identification of additional thematic categories. In this manner, our analysis remained firmly rooted in the research questions posed at the outset of the study, affirming the role of our research inquiries in determining the thematic framework. The text that could not fit into an existing theme were discussed among the researchers to examine whether a new theme was needed. The analysis was driven by the researchers' analytic interest in the topic and research objectives so it can be defined as 'researchers-driven' rather than data-driven.

Using MaxQDA (VERBI Software, 2020), focus group recordings were transcribed and coded by the research team. Reading through the entire data, initial codes were identified and sorted into pre-determined themes. This aspect of the study leaded to obtain semantic sub-themes in which the analysts looked for patterned responses in relation to the research questions within the data. To test intercoder agreement between coders, the agreement of each coder was tested on the coded document segment. A thematic map was developed as a visual aid to organize codes into themes and summarize relationships between codes and themes more effectively (see Figure 1).

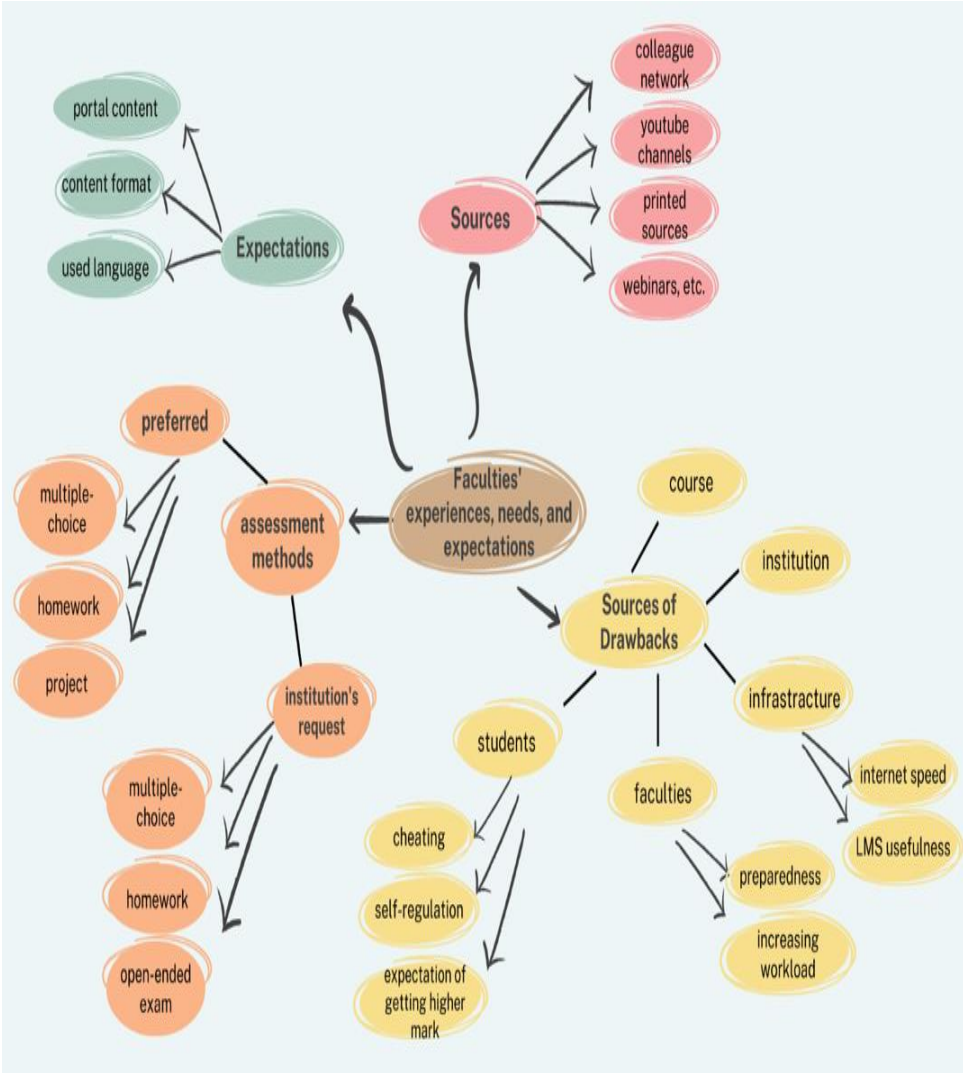

Figure 1.

Thematic Map

To analyse interview data, a directed thematic analysis approach was employed as the themes were pre-determined based on research questions. In directed thematic analysis, researchers start with a predetermined set of themes derived from research questions, and the analysis focuses on identifying and organizing data relevant to these predetermined themes. This approach allows for a more focused and targeted analysis of the data aligned with the study purpose.

Results

Results of the Phase 1

Three pre-determined themes and emerged sub themes are described in detail below with relevant quotations from the transcripts. The percentage of agreement between the coders which represents the share of the matching area in relation to the total area of two coded segments was found 95.11%. This value is well above the default value of 90% (MaxQDA 24-Teamwork, 2018). The pre-determined themes were “Assessment methods”, “challenges”, and “resources”.

To prevent identifying information associated with the quotes, participants whose direct quotes were included within the text are coded and information related to their discipline and academic title are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Participants’ Codes

Code	Interpretation	Code	Interpretation
P1	Arts/Humanities, Assistant Professor	P11	Sport Sciences, Assistant Professor
P2	STEM, Assistant Professor	P12	Health/Medicine Assistant Professor
P3	Social Sciences, Lecturer	P13	Arts/Humanities, Assistant Professor
P4	Social Sciences, Lecturer	P14	Arts/Humanities, Assistant Professor
P5	STEM, Lecturer	P15	Health/Medicine Assistant Professor
P6	STEM, Professor	P16	Arts/Humanities, Assistant Professor
P7	Social Sciences, Assistant Professor	P17	Sport Sciences, Assistant Professor
P8	STEM, Associate Professor	P18	Social Sciences, Assistant Professor
P9	Arts/Humanities, Assistant Professor	P19	STEM, Assistant Professor
P10	STEM, Professor	P20	STEM, Assistant Professor

Assessment Methods

The first theme was assessment methods employed by the faculty in the ERT. Two sub themes have been identified under this theme: assessment methods that the faculty determined by her/himself completely and assessment methods that were mandated by the institution. When discussing the assessment methods employed, homework assignments were mentioned most frequently, followed by multiple choice online exams. As one faculty pointed out, students also preferred these assessment formats:

> P1. We surveyed students to ask which assessment methods they would prefer, and they elected both homework and multiple-choice tests for my courses.

In addition to these methods, formative assessment approaches including projects and portfolios have been used to assess student performance in ERT. However, some faculty stated that they faced further problems using these methods for assessing student performance:

> P2. At the beginning, we were free to choose our own assessment method depending on the content and nature of our courses. Since the Faculty of Sport Sciences offered many applied courses, we elected to use performance-based methods such as performance tasks and projects for midterms. Yet, some of the faculty who taught similar courses used a different method, let's say multiple choice exams which was easier for students. When the students complained about this, provost sent an e-mail asking us to conduct final exam. Thus, I had to switch to multiple choice exam for the final.

Challenges

Under this theme, five subcategories were highlighted: student-related challenges, faculty-related challenges, institutional policy-related challenges, infrastructural challenges, and course-related challenges. Below each subcategory was described.

Student-related challenges

Cheating was repeatedly mentioned as the major challenge for all assessment types in ERT. Faculty stated that some students intentionally cheated (i.e., copying each other's work, lying about missing a deadline, helping another student) while to many of them, some behaviours were not viewed as cheating (i.e., plagiarizing or collaborating on assignments requiring individual work). One faculty linked this situation to students' lack of knowledge on ethical standards and procedures:

> P3. Sometimes it was clear that the student had cheated yet I could not find a concrete evidence based on a Google search. I felt helpless when it came to grading such work. In some cases, two students submitted exact same content for an assignment, and they were not even aware that it is a red flag. Students had not gone through any ethical training before, so we had to review all of this via written guidelines in pandemic.

Students' unfair expectations of leniency for grading in ERT was another challenge that the faculty faced. Faculty agreed that the students could not receive the same level of instruction remotely in pandemic. Thus, they lowered their expectations from student performance and treated as flexible as possible in terms of deadlines and attendance:

> P4. I tried to be lenient as we were not teaching in normal conditions.

Yet, some faculty argued that it was misinterpreted and sometimes misused by students which resulted in higher number of written complaints about faculty and grades ever:

> P5. Interestingly, students were expecting to pass no matter how they performed. These expectations resulted in low faculty evaluation scores at the end. You know that student is normally a low performer, but he is requesting to rescore for a higher grade because it is pandemic.

Lastly, faculty reported that they observed substantial loss of student motivation towards online courses, hardness to self-regulate their own learning and attendance problems in ERT:

> P6. There were many students who e-mailed me to submit their assignments after deadline. Their irresponsible manner towards assignments was a problem.

Students had hard time to self-regulate their learning, adjust personal schedule for meeting deadlines and attend synchronous classes.

Faculty-related challenges

Faculty emphasized that they were not experienced for remote assessment, had difficulties with selecting appropriate item types for ERT, and grading performance tasks. Before pandemic, only common courses such as Language and Literacy, Modern History etc. were taught online by the same group of instructors in undergraduate and graduate programs. Assessment in face-to-face education was mostly relied on summative assessment methods such as timed final exams which included multiple choice and open-ended items except applied programs such as art, physical sciences, and dentistry. Homework assignments, take-home exams, performance tasks, portfolios and other alternative approaches that were highly used in ERT required well-prepared rubrics to evaluate student performance objectively. Participants from various disciplines stated that they were not prepared on how to apply formative assessment approaches and evaluate student performance by ensuring fairness. Only the participants from Colleges of Education mentioned the word 'rubric' which implies that faculty were not familiar with this term and its importance for validity of scores. For example, a College of Education faculty indicated that:

> P7. to justify the score, you assigned, you need to use well-constructed rubrics. Since most faculty did not have rubrics, they gave extra credit to students to avoid complaints which resulted in inflation of scores.

Institutional-policy-related challenges

Following the decision of moving all courses online nationwide, higher education institutions issued emergency teaching and assessment policies. These policies were not prepared by taking stakeholders' opinion since there was no time for this. Many institutions left the decision of eventual assessment format to course instructors by encouraging formative assessment methods while some others urged to conduct unified exams using single item type (i.e., multiple choice exams) and external cloud-based systems for data collection such as Microsoft Office 365 which is not convenient for uploading multimedia files.

A group of faculties also discussed that their institutions determined online exam rules in detail such as how many times that a student could access to an exam which increased cheating behaviour:

P3. I encountered problems due to the institution's policy regarding multiple entry to exams in case of electricity shortage etc. Some students took advantage of this by accessing to online exams multiple times within the given time frame. They first screenshot the questions, found the responses elsewhere and submitted their responses by re-entering to the system. In fact, it was legal given the institutional policy but was not ethical.

In addition, faculty reported that they felt institutional pressure to be lenient and not to fail poor performers in ERT.

Infrastructural challenges

It was evident that higher education institutions were not prepared to the unexpected shift to fully digitalized education in terms of technological infrastructure. The most frequently mentioned challenge was lack of sufficient internet connection by every student:

P8. I wanted to conduct synchronous exams but could not be due to lack of internet connectivity of some students.

In addition to the continuity of internet connection, speed and quota issues posed greater challenge for assessing particular skills such as musicality:

P9. Since human voice is digitalized in distance education, we could not capture details in assessments. Our work is all about transferring emotions through musical instruments. Interruption of performance while playing an instrument due to internet speed and quota was a great challenge in terms of student motivation and concentration.

Learning management systems (LMS) were not utilized fully with paid extensions which limited types and sizes of files uploaded to the system:

P10. We have used Office 365 for assignments, but it does not allow to upload some file types, such as AutoCAD.

File sizes were also restricted due to quotas proposed by LMS which in turn limit the content, length, and complexity of the assignments.

Course-related challenges

Nature of the courses impacted faculty's assessment practices substantially in the pandemic conditions. Assessing student performance in applied fields (i.e., sport sciences, art, physical therapy) was particularly challenging along with quarantine restrictions. A faculty from Sport Sciences indicated that they had to evaluate students' swimming performance through written homework assignments since it was impossible for students to self-record themselves in a swimming pool given the fact that all public places including pools were closed (P11). Another faculty from Medical School complained that their assessment practices had to involve human subject most of the time:

> P12. For example, you want your student to count blood cells on a sample. To complete this task, student must draw blood from a human subject, prepare the sample for microscope and send the image. You cannot expect this from a student during pandemic.

Faculty insisted that applied courses should not be delivered via remote systems in following semesters. Despite technology helps conduct some assessment tasks via *games and simulations* (P12), it cannot replace real life experiences in applied settings.

Resources

Almost two third of the participants sought help to figure out how to conduct remote assessment in ERT and utilized various resources. Among them, asking help from a co-worker was the most common strategy. Faculty stated that they often used informal peer networks and brainstormed either with co-workers or College of Education faculty in their institutions to improve their assessment practices:

> P13. We shared information with co-workers on item writing and conducting online exams.

Another common resource was the centres for distance education of the universities although they provided support mostly on delivering instruction via LMS. Internet resources were also utilized by the faculty for planning and conducting assessment activities in ERT. Specifically, faculty referred to YouTube videos, Instagram live videos, webinars on item construction for remote assessment, conducting online exams, and measuring higher-order thinking skills. Print books and scholarly articles in assessment and evaluation also guided faculty to design their remote assessment activities:

P14. I can suggest Online Idea Book, 75 Online Activities and Teaching and Learning at a Distance to grasp the fundamentals of distance education. Every faculty should have them in their library.

P15. I have used the textbooks' exercise questions at the end of each chapter for my classroom assessment.

Participants indicated that train the trainer programs on assessment were not readily available at the beginning of ERT:

P16. I attended some webinars on social media, but they were not designed specifically for our needs. Unfortunately, we could not get any formal training in terms of assessment at that time. So, we googled and shared information with friends in my field.

Results of the Phase 2

Two pre-determined themes; differences in assessment practices and adopted habits are described in detail below with relevant quotations from the interview transcripts.

Differences in Assessment Practices Before and After ERT

Participants reported a shift in their perspective regarding the use of remote assessment tools compared to the pre-pandemic period. They noted that remote assessment can be flexible and adaptable to different conditions. Although face-to-face exams were conducted throughout the academic year after pandemic, the participants highlighted the potential for conducting formative assessment via Web 2.0 tools and exams through Zoom in the future, which would provide flexibility for both students and instructors.

They emphasized the increased recognition of the importance of formative evaluation during the pandemic. They had the opportunity to experiment with and implement measurement tools used in formative assessment. As a result of this experience, the participant mentioned that they now employ these assessment tools more frequently and accurately in their teaching practices for assessment for learning purposes.

Overall, the findings suggested that faculty members experienced changes in their assessment practices and perspectives as a result of emergency remote education. The participants recognized the flexibility and adaptability of remote assessment tools, the increased importance of formative assessment, and the challenges associated with cheating in assessments. These insights provide valuable information for understanding the impact of the pandemic on assessment practices and can inform the development of effective assessment strategies in similar emergency situations.

Adopted Habits in ERT About Assessment

The participants expressed the belief that some exams, particularly the ones that rely on performance could be conducted remotely when students are unable to attend in-person exams due to various reasons such as physical conditions or potential health issues. This highlights the flexibility and adaptability of remote assessment methods, specifically for performance-based assessments such as speaking exams.

They also discussed the time-saving and cost-effective benefits of digitally uploading assignments and tasks through the online education system, even during face-to-face classes. Additionally, the participant mentioned that interactive communication issues experienced during online classes, such as low student participation or limited student-to-student feedback, were partially resolved by using applications like Socrative and Kahoot. They believed that such applications could also be beneficial for formative assessment purposes in face-to-face classes.

Moreover, the participants stated that the performance tasks and assignments developed for grading purposes during the pandemic were also integrated into face-to-face classes as ongoing assessments. This indicates a transfer of assessment practices from online to in-person instruction, emphasizing the usefulness of performance-based evaluations in both contexts.

Overall, the findings revealed that faculty members adopted certain assessment habits during the pandemic that they continue to use. These habits include conducting remote exams, digitally submitting assignments, using interactive applications for engagement, and incorporating performance tasks as ongoing assessments in face-to-face classes. These adaptations demonstrate the potential for integrating effective assessment strategies developed during emergency remote education into traditional teaching environments.

Discussion

This study highlighted experiences and assessment-related challenges of faculty in ERT and identified practice changes in terms of assessment after ERT. Overall, our findings corresponded with recent debates on assessment in pandemic as they indicate assessment practices in ERT were highly influenced by faculty's professional development, student motivation and perceptions, and functionality of LMS that was being used (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Farrington, 2020). In addition, the findings of this study highlight the significant impact of emergency remote teaching (ERT) assessment experiences on faculty members, leading to the adoption of new assessment habits and practices. These changes reflect the adaptability and resilience demonstrated by faculty in navigating the challenges imposed by the sudden shift to remote instruction during a crisis. The findings are consistent with broader trends observed in higher education institutions around the world. Similar to our findings, a significant transformation in assessment measures occurred at the majority of higher education institutions in different regions following the pandemic. According to the Second IAU Global Survey Report (Jensen et al., 2022), in the Americas, the Pacific/Asia, and Europe, more than half of the higher education institutions developed new assessment measures, especially for online exams, applicable to courses across all faculties and departments.

In March 2020, faculty members needed to adapt their assessment practices to the new situation suddenly. Most of them were recommended to employ asynchronous, self-paced, formative assessment methods and switched their multiple-choice exam-focused practices to formative and authentic assessment practices which involved take-home assignments, projects, and portfolios. This was supported by other studies indicating that self-regulation should be part of the online assessment, for example, through self-reflection reports and portfolios (Rapanta et al., 2020). Yet, multiple choice exams were still employed as a low-stakes option in distance education by taking precautions for cheating such as randomized questions, shuffled response options and wide item pools, as suggested by O'Keefe et al. (2020). The findings of phase 2 of the study further support the increased recognition among faculty members regarding the importance of formative assessment strategies, which was consistent with similar research in the field. Faculty members demonstrated a higher frequency of implementing formative assessment approaches after the pandemic, indicating a shift in their assessment practices. This shift towards formative assessment strategies is in line with the findings of another study conducted with 486 undergraduate students from 61 Turkish universities (Şenel & Şenel, 2021). The results of that study revealed the perspectives of these students on virtual assessment tools as well as common assessment practices. Notably, open-ended questions, take-home exams, and project-based assignments were

widely utilized and became the preferred forms of assessment among these students. The alignment of these findings underscores the evolving landscape of assessment practices in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The study findings that shed light on the specific challenges of faculty faced in assessment in the ERT in Turkey were aligned with the findings of the studies summarizing faculty experiences in different countries. One of the major challenges was related to cheating behaviour and student misconduct as supported by earlier studies stating that control shift towards the students in distance education makes it hardy possible to ensure that they are not cheating (Küppers & Schroeder, 2020; Munoz & Mackay, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Cheating behaviour and academic dishonesty, as an 'unexpected Covid-19 side effect for universities' rose globally in pandemic (Rossiter, 2020). Cheating threatens the validity of an assessment task that is designed to measure student performance (National Research Council, 2001). According to Mellar et al. (2018), a common belief among educators is that online tests and assessments facilitate cheating and plagiarism. Instructors experience anxiety during online assessment for various reasons, as reported by Astiandani and Anam (2020), Mirza (2021) and Zhang et al. (2021). In order to prevent cheating, faculty needed to develop alternative test design strategies unless their institutional policy requirements directed them to use certain item types and follow a list of online exam rules such as number of times a student can retake an exam, exam timing etc. Yet, institutional policy decisions such as allowing students to retake online exams unexpectedly brought new avenues of cheating behaviour as limiting the number of time that students can access to an online exam is cited as a factor that helps prevent cheating (Ladyshewsky, 2015). One suggestion that could be given to higher education institutions is liberating faculty to plan their own online assessment procedures by taking cautions to prevent cheating.

Pre-COVID-19 higher education instruction has been repeatedly critiqued for using exam-based summative measures for student performance (Yorke, 2013). In many disciplines, faculty have little formal preparation in assessment (Knapper, 2010). As the study findings showed, assessment literacy of faculty was an important barrier in adjusting to the new situation. The need for developing alternative, self-regulated assessment strategies for ERT required faculty to build additional skills and knowledge on assessment and technology quickly in their busy schedules which were already overbooked with online course preparation and adjusting to LMS. Most universities have already been offering training opportunities for faculty to enhance their regular assessment practices (Taylor & Rege Colet, 2010). Despite the developments in online learning, research on faculty readiness pointed that they still need help on online instruction and assessment (O'Keefe et al., 2020). Higher education institutions should provide faculty broader professional development options

to build their skills in integrating multiple assessment forms (i.e., authentic assessment, formative assessment) that allows students more opportunities to evaluate their performance (O'Keefe et al., 2020).

Within the broader context of evolving assessment practices, it's worth noting that changes in higher education assessment policies, as discovered in a comprehensive systematic review of findings (Chan, 2023), primarily focused on grading. However, our study also reveals that the changes in in-class assessment habits and faculty practices may require further research. The findings of phase 2 of our study, which support the increased recognition among faculty members regarding the importance of formative assessment strategies, indicate a shifting landscape. While these findings align with research conducted with undergraduate students from Turkish universities (Şenel & Şenel, 2021), the extent and nature of these changes, especially in in-class assessment habits, warrant deeper investigation to better understand the evolving dynamics of assessment practices in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this research has provided valuable insight in terms of assessment experiences, challenges and needs of faculty in distance education, there are some limitations in sample selection and extraordinary time of data collection that warrant caution while interpreting results.

First, the findings that identified experiences and needs relied on self-reported data collected through online focus groups and interviews. As stated by Condon et al. (2016), there is a need to go beyond self-report data to identify faculty's changing experiences and needs in assessment in the planned distance education and post-COVID-19 era. Second, phase 1 data were gathered in extraordinary times, right after the final exams of a stressful semester. A significant number of faculty that we reached were either on vacation or did not volunteer to participate. Therefore, sampling design changed a bit in which some disciplines were represented less or more than planned in the focus groups. Despite the stated limitations, this study fills an important gap in the available literature on assessment in and after ERT and have a potential to guide higher education institutions for planning and initiating faculty development resources in short and long term.

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