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The Opinions of Classroom Teachers on Remedial Training of Students Who Have Been Out of Education Process During the COVID-19 Pandemics

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SUMMARY

This study aims to examine the opinions of classroom teachers about the remedial education of students who were out of education process during the covid-19 pandemics. The holistic single case pattern was adopted in the study. Personal information form and semi-structured interview form were used as the tools for data collection. The work group of this study consists of 11 teachers assigned as classroom teachers. Descriptive and content analysis techniques were applied for the analysis of the data, and the data were analysed and examined in the MAXQDA program. When the results obtained from the study are examined, teachers stated that the attendance rates for the classes were low and that there were students who could not attend the lesson constantly and frequently in the distance education process. In order to increase attendance to class, teachers stated that they used methods such as utilization of the zoom application, making efforts for the provision of donations of the PCs and tablets, and ensuring communication and giving homework assignments via whatsapp. Regarding students who cannot attend the class, problems such as lack of technological equipment, low level of motivation, parents going to work at the same time period, financial difficulties, family problems and irresponsibility of parents were stated besides the literacy problems for the foreign students. Regarding the practices applied, teachers stated that they carried out practices such as sending videos, sharing homework on WhatsApp, trying to provide motivation, making family visits, informing parents about the condition, providing private lessons for free, and offering gifts. Regarding the remedial education, the teachers presented solutions such as repetition of the course, conducting study sessions, offering copies of the texts, face-to-face education and offering rewards, etc. Regarding the possible suggestions, they state that there is a need to strengthen the technological infrastructure, to provide teachers training on web 2 tools, on the effective use of EBA, to develop cooperation with the parents/families, and to take the views of the students and the school administration regarding the pandemic process.

Keywords: COVID-19, remedial education, students out of education.

INTRODUCTION

First seen in Wuhan city of Hubei Province of China in December 2020, Covid 19 spread rapidly throughout the world in a very short time and affected many continents and countries. The Covid-19 virus had a strong effect on the whole world, therefore World Health Organization declared this situation as pandemic in March 2020. With the Covid-19 pandemic process, the whole world has entered a period of fighting against epidemics in many fields in 2020. Many countries have developed practices to hold up in many areas such as economy, sociology and psychology, and particularly public health (WHO, 2020). The virus has caused changes in the services provided by institutions by affecting the functioning of institutional systems as well as daily life in the countries where it prevailed. In this process, education was suspended in 192 countries around the world, and the main purpose was to protect students from Covid-19 and to fight with the pandemic by minimizing their interpersonal connections. By the way, the Covid-19 pandemic turned into a major education crisis. Measures have been taken to prevent the Covid-19 pandemics in all educational institutions. The most important of these measures was to interrupt face-to-face education and to provide education and training services through distance education (Demir and Özdaş, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). As a result of the global epidemic, the education process has also been tried to be carried out by distance education through the internet. While various definitions of distance education have been put forward, United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) describes it as follows: "It is the delivery of education to distant students with the help of electronic tools such as satellite communication, video, audio graphics, computer, and multimedia technology. In the Distance Education applications, electronic equipment or written and printed materials shall be used in the education programs as the teacher and the student are geographically away from each other. Distance education consists of two main parts: teaching that includes teachers and learning that includes students." In other words, distance education is also described as an education model in which the classes may be held as live in a completely virtual environment by

using information technologies without the time and place restrictions for the teachers and students (Horzum, 2003). Moore and Kearsley (2012) defined distance education as the learning and teaching process in which the teacher and the learner are in different places and designed by a private institution via communicating with technology. When we consider the characteristics of distance education based on the relevant definitions, the fact that it is performed in an electronic environment, that the teacher and the student are geographically far away, and that the process of teaching takes place on a virtual ground are among the remarkable points.

Applications of distance education are used by many universities, public institutions and private institutions. Many of the higher education institutions provide certificate, associate degree, undergraduate and graduate education through distance education applications, and they carry out their education using printed materials, radio-TV programs, computer-assisted and face-to-face education. Students are able to access trial exams, pre-recorded course videos and digital course books on the internet. Moreover, the Education Information Network (EIN) was created by the Ministry of National Education within the scope of the "Provision and Management of Educational E-Content" component and a distance education center (DEC) that utilizes the infrastructure of EBA was established (Özbay, 2015: 387). The distance education process is carried out in two basic ways in Turkey: (a) Education Information Network (EIN), the national distance education platform, with an infrastructure which has been created before, and of which the content is updated and new content is added within this process, (b) TV channels where video lessons are broadcast in line with the curriculum adjusted for grade levels (Çelikkemir, 2020). The biggest goal in the distance education process is to reach all students in order to ensure that they are not kept away from the educational environment, and to continue the active participation of the students by managing the teaching process even from a distance. In this sense, it is aimed that all students are not kept away from the educational system and they are not allowed to break away from the teaching process. The main principle was the continuation of the process as in face-to-face education, without moving the students away from the environment and atmosphere of a classroom. Care was taken to provide remedial education for students who could not participate in distance education during this period. Considering the covid-19 pandemic conditions, the relevant regulation on distance education was published in the official gazette and the provision which states that "The classes that cannot be taught through face-to-face education shall be planned and carried out by school administrations, provincial/district national education directorates or the Ministry, including on weekends when necessary, as per the types and levels of the schools" was established (Republic of Turkey Official Gazette, 8 May 2020, No: 31121). As stated in the official letter, the lessons which could not be held in face-to-face education should be held including weekends and that the education process should be carried out effectively. For the distance education process, it is important that remedial trainings are provided for students who have been out of the education process, that students take an active part in the teaching process, and that they are not moved away from the classroom atmosphere and the sphere of student, teacher and education. Accordingly, the practices that are held with regards to the epidemic in the education process are of great importance. There are various studies examining the distance education process in the literature: Abuhammad (2020), Anderson (2020), Arat and Balkan (2011), Avcı and Akdeniz (2021), Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020), Can (2020), Çakın and Akyavuz (2020), Demir and Özdaş (2020), Giannini and Lewis, (2020), Karaduman, Ertaş and Baytar (2021), Kırmızıgül (2020), Pınar and Akgül (2020), Yılmaz et al. (2020), Zhang et al. (2020). In the relevant studies, distance education period in the Covid-19 pandemic has been tried to be examined within aspects such as teachers, students, parents, teaching staff and with the review of the documents. The aforementioned studies have aimed to reveal the practices carried out in the distance education process by assessing the process through many aspects. When the relevant literature is examined, it is noteworthy that there is no study on what has been done for remedial education for students who were out of the institute of education in the process. For students who were out of the institute of education in the distance education process, it is essential, for the efficiency and quality of the education process, what teachers think and what practices they implement. In this context, this study "Aims to examine the opinions of the classroom teachers about the remedial education of the students who were out of the institute of education during the Covid-19 process." The main problem statement of the study in line with the purpose is specified as "What are the opinions of the classroom teachers about the remedial education of students who were out of the institute of education during the Covid-19 process?". The sub-problems developed as per the problem statement are as follows:

- 1) What are the practices or measures taken by the teachers to ensure participation of students in distance education?
- 2) What are the reasons of students who cannot attend distance education?
- 3) What practices did the teachers think to do for their students who could not attend distance education?

4) What kind of supplemental training did the teachers conduct for students who could not participate in distance education?

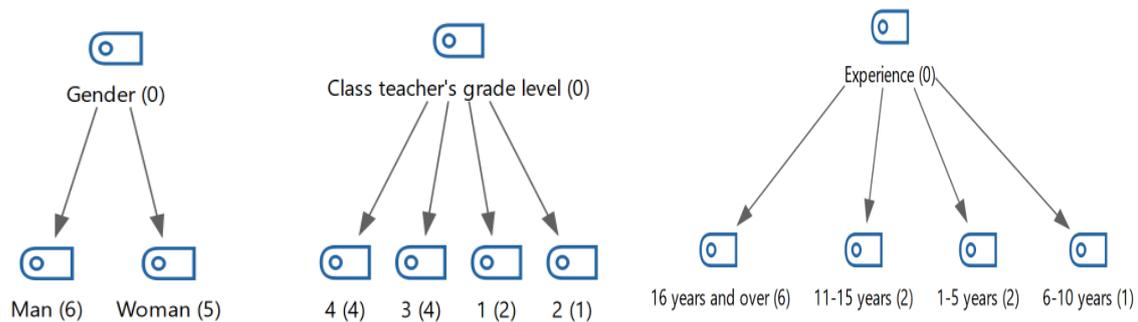
5) What are the teachers' suggestions for students who could not attend distance education during the covid-19 process?

METHOD

The study was prepared with a qualitative approach. In qualitative studies, it is important to reveal the participants' interpretation of experiences and events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In the study, a qualitative method was adopted to reveal and examine the opinions of classroom teachers about the remedial education of students who were out of the institute of education during the Covid-19 process. Case studies, which are a part of the qualitative studies, are one of the qualitative research methods in which the researcher reveals one or more conditions in detail (Christensen, Johnson and Turner, 2014). Among these methods, it may be observed that various classifications related to case studies have been made in the literature (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 2003; Stenhouse, 1985; Yin, 2003). In this study, a holistic single case design, which is one of the case study types, was adopted. In the holistic single case pattern, there is only one unit of analysis (an individual, an institution, a curriculum, a school, etc.) (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013; Yin, 1984). A holistic single case design was selected for this study, as it was tried to be examined within the framework of the opinions of classroom teachers regarding the remedial education of students who were out of the institute of education during the Covid-19 process.

Study Group

The work group of this study consists of 11 teachers assigned as classroom teachers. Convenience sampling was used in the sample selection of the study. Convenience sampling is defined as the type of sampling that is close to the study group or easy to access (Patton, 1987). In the determination of the study group of this study, the teachers who would express their views on the remedial trainings related to the Covid-19 process were selected in line with the convenience sampling method. The characteristics of the teachers in the study group in terms of gender, seniority and the class they teach are shown in Figure 1. The teachers in the study group work in the province of Karaman.



As indicated in Figure 1, five of the teachers are female and six of them are male teachers when the the study group is assessed in terms of gender. When we consider the classes taught by the teachers, it is seen that there are two teachers teaching the 1st grade, one teaching the 2nd grade, four teaching the 3rd grade, and four teaching the 4th grade. When the seniority of the teachers are examined, it has been specified that there is one teacher in the range of 1-5 years, there are two teachers in the range of 6-10 years, two teachers in the range of 11-15 years, and six teachers in the range of 16 years and above. Regarding distance education during the Covid-19; the Figure 2 included the number of students who cannot attend continuously, who cannot attend frequently and who continue.

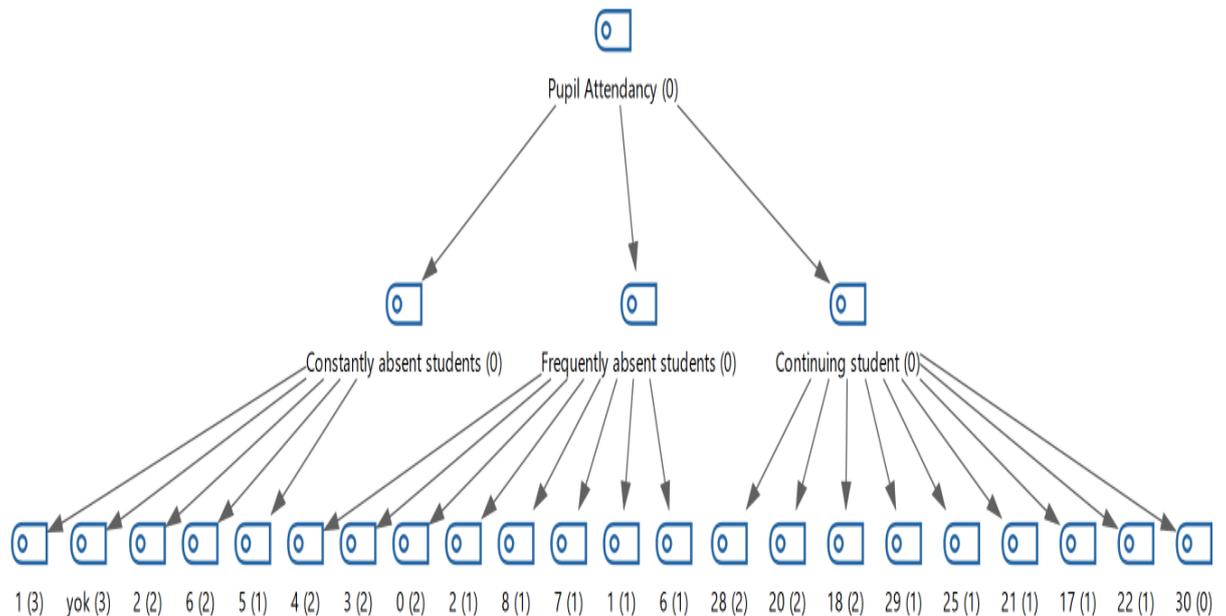


Figure 2: The attendance of students within the Covid-19 process

As seen in Figure 2, with regards to the student attendance in relation to distance education in the Covid-19 process; three teachers stated that they did not have any students who did not attend regularly, one teacher stated that five students did not attend constantly, two teachers have stated their six students, two teachers have stated their two students, and one classroom teacher has stated that his/her one student did not attend the distance education constantly.

Again, with respect to those who cannot attend frequently, they have stated that one, two, three, four, six, seven, and eight students in their classrooms cannot attend the class frequently in distance education, and two teachers stated that there were no students who did not attend their class frequently. Regarding the number of students continuing education, they stated that 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29 students continuously attend in distance education. In line with the opinions expressed by the teachers, they have stated that there are students who cannot attend continuously, who cannot attend frequently and who continue their education regularly regarding the classes held through distance education during the Covid-19 process.

Tools for Collecting Data

Personal information form including teachers' personal information and a semi-structured interview form were used as the tools for collecting data in the study. Personal information form contains information on the gender, years of seniority of classroom teachers and on the grade they are teaching. In the semi-structured interview form, there are questions for revealing the opinions of the classroom teachers about the remedial education of students who were out of the institute of education during the Covid-19 process. Semi-structured interview forms are preferred to enable the participants to explain their perceptions and thoughts, as well as to create a subject boundary based on the questions or problems that are required to be clarified, and to convey the participant's views in detail (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2014, Merriam, 2009). In this context, the opinions of the classroom teachers about the remedial training of the students who were out of the institute of education during the Covid-19 process were taken with a semi-structured interview form. While preparing the interview questions, expert opinion was taken and the questions were rearranged. The final form was decided with the support of expert opinion.

Data Analysis

The basic idea of data analysis in case studies is that each condition shall be analysed separately and intensively. In the analysis process, in addition to the analysis of a system consisting of parts, the operations performed after the analysis shall also be combined. The question(s) of the researcher shall also be relevant to the condition. For the reporting of the study, the report of the study shall reflect the insider's view from the objective perspective of an outsider, providing a deep understanding of each condition. It shall also present a rich and holistic definition that covers each component (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2014).

During the analysis of the data related to the case study in this study, the data about the opinions of the teachers were arranged. In order to better interpret the data obtained from the data sources, the relevant data were read

and evaluated repeatedly. Content analysis technique was applied for the interviews obtained from the classroom teachers, and the views were analysed and reviewed in the MAXQDA software. As Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) stated, data is subjected to a more detailed process in the content analysis, and it is aimed to discover concepts and themes that cannot be noticed in a descriptive analysis. In this study, the words and sentences obtained from the opinions of the classroom teachers were arranged, the relations between them were interpreted and categories were created by structuring them during the content analysis process. It was tried to make the opinions obtained during the analysis process more understandable. Co-observer method was used to ensure the reliability of the study.

FINDINGS

The data obtained in the study were analysed and presented in the findings and comments section. The opinions of classroom teachers about the remedial education of students who were out of education process during the Covid-19 pandemics were assessed and interpreted within the framework of data.

1) Arrangements Made for Attendance in Distance Education

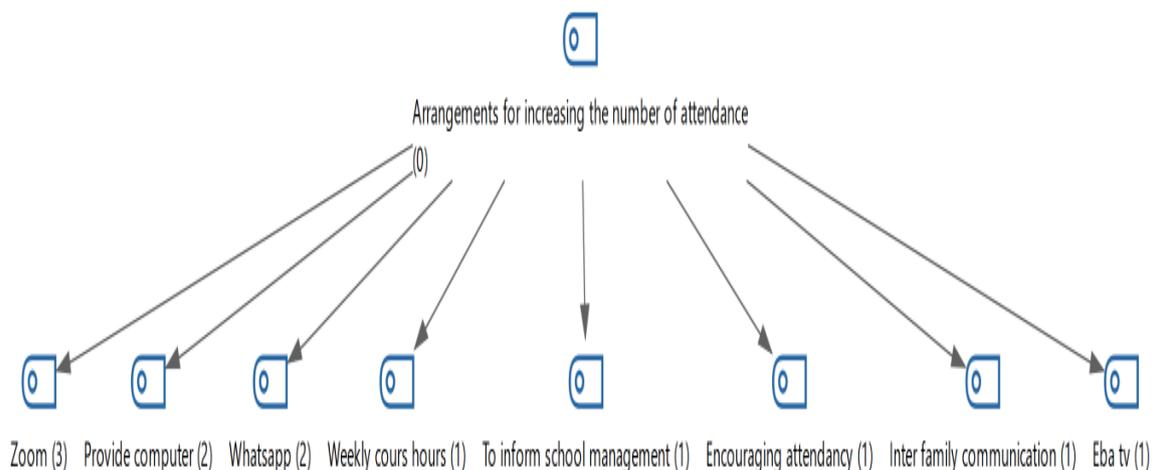


Figure 3: Arrangements made for students' attendance in distance education

As shown in Figure 3, most of the classroom teachers stated that they made arrangements such as "Utilization of the Zoom software, provision of PC and tablet assistance, communication via WhatsApp" regarding the practices that they carried out for their participation in distance education; In addition, teachers also stated that they prefer practices such as organizing their classes according to the hours when the attendance will be high, informing the school administration about the condition, rewarding the students' participation in the class by awarding points such as "+, **", getting information by contacting the family of the student or using Eba TV to achieve more attendance.

In the interview form, a teacher stated that "*I contact the families. If the child has not attended the class or is interested in other things during the class, I inform the family at that moment and make an intervention*" (Teacher no: 4) about the practices carried out for participation in distance education. Another teacher expressed their opinion as "*I have determined the most appropriate class hours for students' participation in distance education. I informed that students who do not have the tablet or phone required for access may also take lessons at school.*" (Teacher no: 12). Another teacher stated her thoughts as "*By asking the people around me who have good fortune, I delivered two tablets and two computers that are not used at home to my students in need*" (Teacher no: 10). When we examine the views of the teachers, we may see that arrangements such as intervening in the situation by informing the families, rescheduling the class hours, attempting to help by providing tablets, etc. are made to improve attendance to the distance education process.

2) Information on the Students Who Cannot Attend Distance Education Continuously

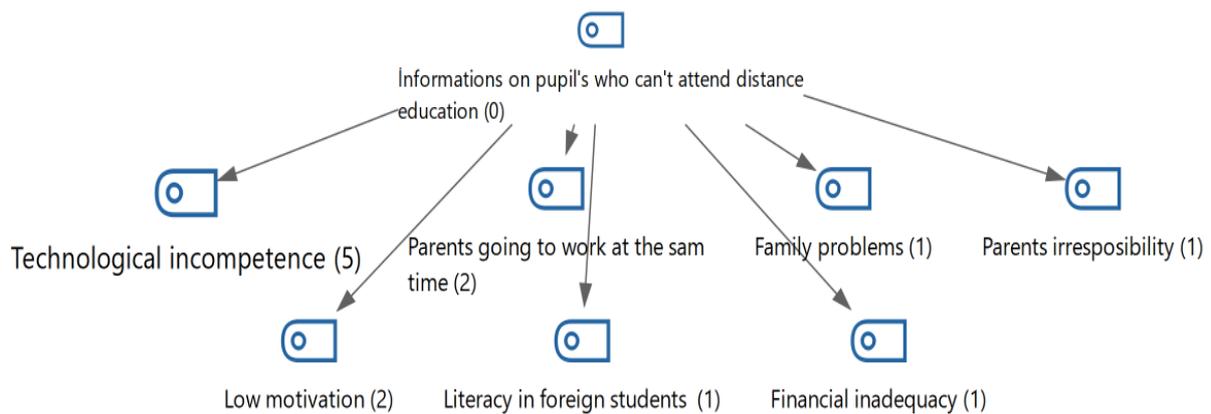


Figure 4: Information on the students who cannot attend distance education continuously

As stated in Figure 4, the reasons stated by the teachers about the reason of the non-attendance of the students who could not attend distance education continuously during the process include inadequate technological resources, low motivation, parents going to work at the same time, literacy problems in foreign students, financial difficulties, family problems and irresponsibility of parents. In line with the opinions, one teacher expressed their opinion in the interview form as “We usually have a problem of not attending the class due to low motivation” (Teacher no: 9). Another teacher expressed their opinion as “I have students with very poor financial means. Since their parents do not have a permanent income, some of them do not have internet connection and some do not even have a smart phone” (Teacher no: 5). Another teacher shared the reason of non-attending students as “There are reasons such as lack of internet connection. 4 students were absent frequently. There were two main reasons for this. The first one is inadequate contracts for internet connection. Second one is that the students experience difficulties in communication when both parents are working at the same time” (Teacher no: 8). When the opinions expressed are examined, the teachers stated that there are reasons such as inadequacy of technological resources, low motivation, parents working at the same time regarding the situation of students who cannot continue to attend their education during the distance education process.

3) Practices Performed for the Students Who Could Not Attend Distance Education

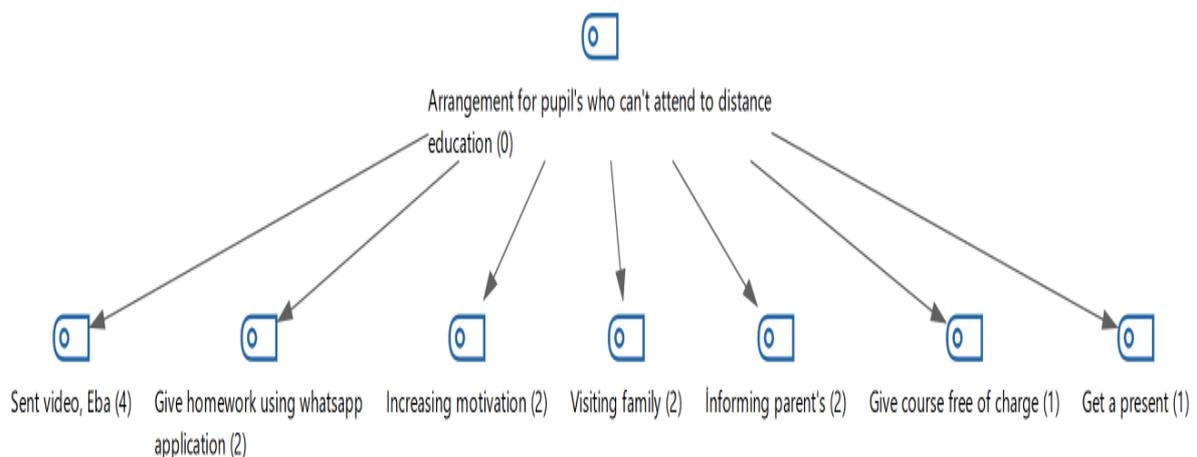


Figure 5: Practices performed for the students who could not attend distance education

As shown in figure 5, teachers stated that they carried out practices, for students who cannot attend distance education, such as sending students videos, sharing homework on WhatsApp, trying to provide motivation, making family visits, informing parents about the condition, providing private lessons for free, and offering gifts. A teacher expressed their opinion on the subject as “I informed the parents. I went to our classroom and left gifts for my students, and they went and received their small prizes individually, such as spinning tops, pens, books, etc. I used practices such as prizes for successful children, etc.” (Teacher no: 3). Another teacher expressed their

opinion as “I visited the students and their families within the pandemic rules when the students could not leave their homes. I had rehabilitative and supportive conversations with the families. I offered solutions to the problems of those who had problems. I tried to help those who needed help. I ensured that students were motivated by checking their homework. I reminded them not to lose their hopes during challenging and boring times. Considering that crises also bring opportunities, I held study sessions on zoom application that we just met. I gave free one-on-one private lessons to students whenever schools were open or face-to-face classes were held. I noticed that the students have learned more through this practice. I gladly participated when students invited me to joint programs that they attended on various platforms over the internet. I participated in their games, contests and conversations. I tried to contribute to their knowledge about safe internet and secure communication” (Teacher no: 6). In the opinions discussed, the teachers emphasized that they had carried out activities, for their students who could not attend distance education, such as informing their families, visiting them, increasing their motivation, rewarding them, and conducting study sessions.

4) Practices performed on Remedial Education

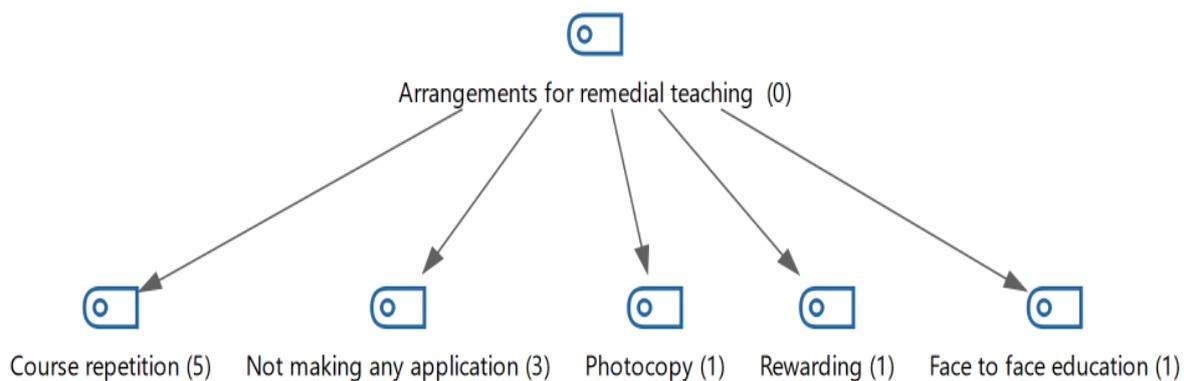


Figure 6: Arrangements made for remedial education

As stated in Figure 6, the teachers provided explanations for the practices they performed for the remedial education they carried out for their students who could not attend the distance education process, such as repetition of the course, organizing study sessions, not carrying out any practice, reaching the students via photocopied materials, offering face-to-face education, and rewarding those who participated in the remedial education. In the interview form about the arrangements made, a teacher expressed their opinion as “I offered remedial education to the students who could not participate in distance education, by providing them face-to-face education as a separate group when hybrid education was started.” (Teacher no: 5), while another teacher stated “I tried to send our worksheets as photocopied material” (Teacher no: 7). Another teacher said, “I transformed our in-class market application into a ‘peddler application’”. I offered rewards to students who did their homework and studies properly. I didn’t reward those who did not work. But I gave them a small gift from the peddler.” (Teacher no: 6). In the opinions expressed, the teachers stated that they made arrangements such as conducting study sessions for remedial education, delivering photocopied materials, and awarding prizes.

5) Practices That May Be Performed for Students Who Cannot Continue Distance Education

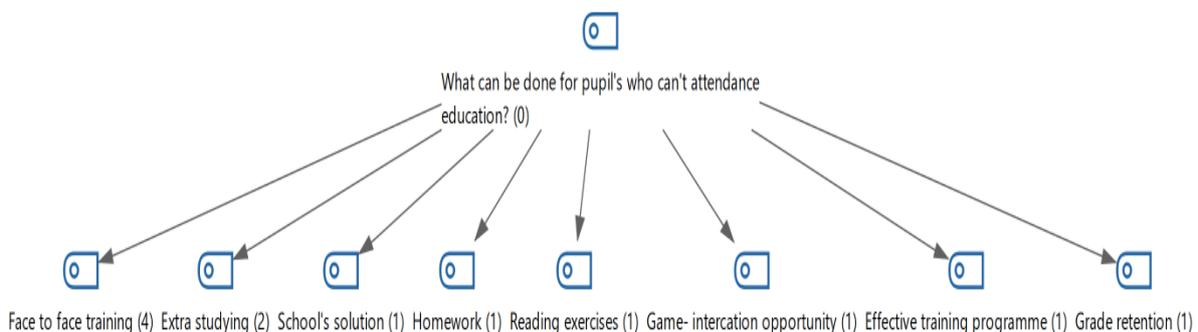


Figure 7: Practices that may be performed for students who cannot continue distance education

As shown in Figure 7, teachers stated that practices such as offering face-to-face remedial education and additional studies, devising their own solution by each school, giving homework, organizing reading activities, offering the opportunity to interact by play, using effective education programs or having the grade repeated, etc.

could be used for students who could not participate in the distance education process. In the interview form on the practices that can be performed for students who cannot continue distance education, a teacher stated that *“Students who could not continue distance education may repeat a grade if possible. Unfortunately, they will pass to the upper class without learning anything. This would affect their education life adversely.”* (Teacher no: 1). Another teacher expressed their opinion as *“For students who could not attend distance education a face-to-face remedial training with volunteer teachers may be held in schools with a maximum class size of 10 students as of August until the start of the 2021-2022 academic year. The content of this remedial training shall also consist of aimed achievements. This is my recommendation for my own school. The conditions are different for each region. Thus, I believe that each school can devise its own solution according to its own conditions, within its own means.”* (Teacher no: 4). And another teacher expressed their opinion as *“About the first grades, those who could not learn to read should have reading exercises all over again. And, those who can read incompletely or incorrectly should be provided fluent reading exercises. It shall be ensured that they read a lot of books particularly.”* (Teacher no: 8). In line with the opinions presented, the teachers stated that the practices that can be done such as repeating the grade, performing face-to-face remedial education, devising a unique solution for each school, and doing study sessions for reading will be effective in remedial education.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the views of classroom teachers on the remedial education of students who could not attend education during the covid-19 process were examined. The teachers' opinions were evaluated under the headings of “the attendance of the students to the class, the arrangements made for ensuring attendance in distance education, information about the students who could not continue their education, the practices performed for the students who could not continue their education, the arrangements made for the remedial education and the practices that could be performed for the students who could not continue their education”.

When the results obtained from the research are examined, teachers in the distance education process stated that they had students who could not attend continuously, who could not attend frequently and who attended the classes normally. This result of this study is in line with the studies of Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020), Çakın and Akyavuz (2020), Demir and Özdaş (2020) and Yılmaz et al. (2020). In these studies, teachers emphasized that they had difficulties in ensuring attendance in classes during the covid-19 process, that the attendance level was low, and students' levels of interest on classes have decreased. In order to increase the attendance to the classes, the teachers stated that they use the zoom software, try to provide students PCs and tablets, and that they offer homework/communication via whatsapp. Moreover, teachers also stated that they prefer practices such as organizing their classes according to the hours when the attendance will be high, informing the school administration about the condition, rewarding the students' participation in the class by awarding points such as “+”, “*”, getting information by contacting the family also student or using Eba TV to achieve more attendance. These findings from the study were similar to the results of the studies of Avcı and Akdeniz (2021) and Çakın and Akyavuz (2020). In the results of the mentioned studies, teachers stated that they preferred to benefit and use EBA and zoom software more actively in order to increase the level of attendance of the students, and they carried out practices such as communicating with students and parents, giving homework, giving stars or plus points in order to increase attendance to the classes. The relevant results can be interpreted as the teachers tried many solutions from the live classes to communication with the parents in order to increase the attendance to the class.

Among the information regarding students who cannot attend the class, problems such as lack of technological equipment, low level of motivation, parents going to work at the same time period, financial difficulties, family problems and irresponsibility of parents were stated besides the literacy problems for the foreign students. This result of the study was also emphasized in the work of Abuhammad (2020), Andersoon (2020), Arat and Balkan (2011), Avcı and Akdeniz (2021), Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020), Can (2020), Çakın and Akyavuz (2020), Demir and Özdaş (2020), Giannini and Lewis, (2020), Pınar and Akgül (2020), Yılmaz et al. (2020), Zhang et al. (2020). In the relevant studies, teachers stated that there is a lack of technological infrastructure, that they experience a decrease in their students' motivation, that there are families with insufficient financial means, and that some families act insensitively with regard to the problems they experience in distance education, Teachers stated that they carried out practices, for students who cannot attend distance education, such as sending students videos, sharing homework on WhatsApp, trying to provide motivation, making family visits, informing parents about the condition, providing private lessons for free, and offering gifts. Results of from the study were similar to the results of the studies of Avcı and Akdeniz (2020) and Çakın and Akyavuz (2020). In the findings obtained from the relevant studies, the teachers stated that they send homework to the students, share videos, try to keep the motivation of the students high with games and interaction, and take care to continue communication with the students and parents during the distance learning process.

The teachers provided explanations for the practices they performed for the remedial education they carried out for their students who could not attend the distance education process, such as repetition of the course, organizing study sessions, not carrying out any practice, reaching the students via photocopied materials,

offering face-to-face education, and rewarding those who participated in the remedial education. This result of the study is similar to the study of Karaduman, Ertaş, and Baytar (2021). In the aforementioned study, teachers stated that they increased the class process for remedial training and that they repeated lessons. This result can be interpreted as teachers resorting to various ways to keep the students who cannot attend the class in distance education and not to allow them get away from the classroom atmosphere. Teachers stated that practices such as offering face-to-face remedial education and additional studies, devising their own solution by each school, giving homework, organizing reading activities, offering the opportunity to interact by play, using effective education programs or having the grade repeated, etc. could be used for students who could not participate in the distance education process. This result is consistent with the study of Karaduman, Ertaş, and Baytar (2021). In the study mentioned, the teachers also expressed their views on what can be done for students who cannot attend in distance education as repeating the subjects, organizing the repetitions of classes, and performing remedial training in face-to-face education.

The suggestions that can be made in the light of these findings are as follows:

- In order to increase the attendance and participation of the students in the classes, the school administration may determine the students who do not have a tablet or PC due to the lack of financial resources and carry out work to deliver financial aid to these families.
- Similarly, required steps can be taken for the provision of technological means such as internet infrastructure and against the lack of sufficient internet package during classes.
- Opportunities to meet and communicate with parents more frequently may be created. Thus, the attendance of the students for their participation in the class may be controlled within the framework of the teacher and the parents.
- Trainings can be organized for teachers to make them more competent in digital issues. In-service training can be offered to teachers, especially to enable them to use Web.2 tools more effectively in preparing lessons, homework, and activities, and to make the classes more fun.
- Similarly, in-service training may also be offered to teachers for more effective use of EBA. It may be ensured that parents are more involved in the teaching process. In order for families to take more responsibility in the process, seminars/meetings can be organized with both the classroom teacher and the school counsellor, where the parents may have better access to communication and interaction networks. Moreover, trainings can be provided for families to become more conscious and competent in terms of technology to be offered to their children.
- Again, the opinions of the principal and assistant principals, as the school administration, can be sought in relation to the process. The assessment of the pandemic process by the administrators may be examined.
- This study was assessed within the framework of teachers' opinions. There is also a need to conduct studies on students who cannot attend to the distance education process. In this way, the distance education process would be assessed from the eyes of both the teachers and the students.
- Similar studies may also be performed for the universities, too. The opinions of the academicians in the process and the conditions they face in their classes may be examined. The opinions and thoughts of the teacher candidates in the process can also be reflected within the studies.

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