Faculty Support in Higher Education Provided by University Administration during Emergency Remote Teaching: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 caused a global crisis and influenced approximately 1.5 billion students. Due to the threat of COVID-19, schools and universities suspended all the face to face classes and faced a mandatory transition to online learning to continue their teaching and learning. Teachers and students did not have time to prepare or get supported for emergency remote teaching. This study aims to examine the support services provided by the university administration to the faculty in Turkey. So it is designed as a case study, which is one of the qualitative methods in education. Regarding the findings related to support systems in the time of emergency remote teaching provided by the universities, it can be seen that *administrative* and *technical supports* were well-provided. However, it can be said that the universities ignored their faculties' needs regarding *academic support* as well as counseling support, which faculty needed most. Although *library support* is one of the support systems in the literature, faculty mentioned that they did not need any support in this regard. Peer support can be shown as the most prominent type of support in the emergency remote teaching, although it is not included in the open and distance learning literature for faculty.

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INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 12, caused a global crisis and forced approximately 1.5 billion students to interrupt their formal education (UNESCO, 2020). Due to the threat of COVID-19, schools and universities suspended all the face to face classes and faced a mandatory transition to online learning to continue their teaching and learning.

Distance learning is more than simply uploading and delivering learning resources to learners, rather, it is a learning process that provides learners autonomy, responsibility, flexibility and choice. It is a complex process that requires careful planning, designing and determination of aims to create an effective learning ecology (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Accordingly, distance learning and educational practices during the global crisis differs from each other. Aydın (2011) defines distance learning as a learning process in which learners are distant from both each other and continue their interactions and learning activities through communication technologies. Within the scope of this study, current educational practice is called as emergency remote teaching. Emergency remote teaching (ERT) is defined as a method of instructional delivery by educational institutions (Hodges et al., 2020).

What is currently being done is limited with content delivering to the remote learners. For this reason, it should be considered as a temporary solution to a global crisis and different from distance learning. While distance learning has always been an alternative and flexible option for learners, ERT is an obligation, which means that we have to use different strategies and approach the case with different priorities (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

SUPPORT SERVICES IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Well-planned open and distance learning systems offer some support to their stakeholders including learners, faculty members, and administrative staff in higher education. The support services provided in well-planned distance learning experiences have not been thought as a priority during crisis. Based on Lee (2003), these support systems have some elements including academic/tutorial, administrative, technical, counseling and library supports.

In distance learning programs, academic support means the chance of learners to interact with faculty who can advise learners' academic progress and help with their problems to solve them (Sahoo, 1993; Watkins & Wright, 1991). Those academic supports aim to increase the interaction between learner and faculty/learning resources. It also refers to "the kind of support the institution provides for faculty members to develop and improve their instruction" (Lee, 2001, p. 153). According to Frieden (1999), administrative support services maintain basic program functions such as admissions, registration, course planning, student records, and financial services. It starts with promoting the program and continues with registering learners into the courses. It also includes keeping learner records and financial services.

Abate (1999) defines Technical Support as "monitoring the efficient operation of delivery media and offering technical assistance." In this context, it is important to analyze what kind of technologies learners have and what kind of infrastructure is available for the institution (Tait, 2000). Counseling support includes various aspects of guidance and advising. In many online learning programs, counseling support services also address ways to improve communication skills and increase interactivity, help learners to create network with alumni and build a sense of community (Aoki & Pogroszewski, 1998). Lastly, Stephens (1996) explained library support as providing opportunities for learners to help them conduct independent library research. This support is also important for providing the same opportunities that on-campus students have to online learners.

Faculty and students could not have time to prepare or get supported for ERT (Tobin, 2020). For this reason, learners and faculty members should be supported by their institutions regarding academic/tutorial, administrative, technical, counseling and library supports. Although higher education institutions attempted to provide support for faculty members, the majority of them had limited experience with distance learning because face-to-face teaching and learning has always been the main practice.

During the pandemic, there are a number of studies in the literature stating the importance of support for faculty members in emergency remote teaching. Maatuk et al. (2021) highlighted

that in the implementation of online learning in higher education, issues such as technical and financial support, training, improved working conditions, technological background, skills, copyright protections, and professional development are always important and faculty members should be supported in this regard. Korkmaz et al. (2021) also stated that faculty experience some difficulties in emergency remote teaching including inability to observe their students' improvement, inability to use technology well and spending too much time on both lecturing and answering student questions. Lastly, Aytaç (2021) stated that the most common problems faced by the teachers during COVID-19 pandemic is the technical and hardware problems related to the internet connection. They also believe that their colleagues lack the necessary technological skills and are unmotivated to use distance education technologies.

Based on these arguments, it can be said that we know little about the transition process of faculty members to emergency remote teaching and how they have been supported by their institutions, in terms of academic, administrative, technical and social support. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to an understanding of transition process of faculty members to online courses, which is also called forced distance learning or emergency remote teaching in the literature and examine the support services provided by the university administration to the faculty members in the context of leadership. The results may provide an overview of the evidence-based best practices of emergency remote teaching and pragmatic guidelines/principles for the institutes to integrate those strategies into their programs successfully, even though online learning does not have a one-size-fits-all nature.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Due to the threat of COVID-19, schools and universities suspended all the face to face classes and made a mandatory transition to online learning to continue their teaching and learning. Turkey as many other countries, followed strict protocols and shut down schools and universities.

> "In Turkey, there are roughly 18 million students and 1 million teachers in compulsory education levels and 7.5 million students and around 170 thousand faculty members in higher education. In primary and secondary education, the total student population constitutes 21% of the overall students while students in higher education constitute 10%. Roughly, 30% of the citizens are students and they have been affected by Covid-19 pandemic" (Bozkurt et al., 2020, p. 83).

To minimize the impact, higher education institutions have started distance learning immediately; 121 (64%) of them on March 23, 2020; 41 (21.6%) of them on March 30, 2020, and 25 (13.2%) of them on April 6, 2020 (Higher Education Council of Turkey, 2020). In Turkey, there are three dual mode universities; Anadolu, Atatürk and stanbul, and those universities offer fully online courses before the pandemic and familiar with the distance learning. Other universities in the country have not seemed to be ready to offer fully online programs and support their faculties and learners regarding academic/tutorial, administrative, technical, counseling and library supports.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the support provided by the university administration to faculty members during the period of transition process to online courses, which is called as emergency remote teaching in the literature of distance education. For this purpose, answers to the following research questions (RQ) were sought:

1. What were the support services provided by university administration to faculty members and how have they been provided?

2. What kind of support services did faculty members need in the time of emergency remote teaching?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is designed as a case study, which is one of the qualitative methods in education. According to Creswell (2008), case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher examines a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. A case study includes

a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis, the characterization of the case and the events (Starman, 2013). The method is appropriate for the examination of the experiences of the faculty during emergency distance education.

Because the case study method has been criticized for its lack of robustness as a research tool, crafting the design of case studies is critical. Depending on the issue, researchers can use a single-case or multiple-case design. Through replication rather than sampling logic, the multiple-case design can be used with real-life events that show multiple sources of evidence (Zainal, 2007). In our case, multiple-case design were adapted to show more evidence in terms of support services provided to faculty during the emergency remote teaching.

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Participants of the study have been chosen from eight different state universities in Turkey via purposive sampling. They were chosen from institutions equally. The participants were academicians working in the field of educational sciences. When recruiting participants for the research, the purpose was to choose faculty who taught at least one online course during the emergency remote teaching. Professional experience (such as years of experiences they teach online) or teaching fields were not taken into account because the only criterion considered was teaching online courses during emergency remote teaching.

Prior to the study, an application for research permission was submitted to and approved by the institutional review board. Following that, participants' consent was obtained, and the purpose and goals of the study were explained before the interview. Their consent was recorded. It was also highlighted that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could prefer out of the study at any time. Data were collected from 16 participants during the data collection process. In order of participation in the study, participants were assigned a number beginning with one (P1, P2, ..., P16).

The data of the study were collected with semi-structured interviews (annex 1) from faculty members. The semi-structured interview included questions prepared in line with the purpose of the research and probe questions. Thus, more specific or in-depth information could be obtained when the answer was not fully received or when the answers were unclear. Interviews were carried out with video conferencing via Google Meet and recorded because the pandemic made it hard to come face to face. The data were analyzed via content analysis.

RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

Validity and reliability of qualitative research can be ensured through different approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Golafshani, 2003) and researcher triangulation is one way of ensuring the validity and reliability of the research (Denzin, 2017). It refers to using multiple researchers from different backgrounds. To do that, one researcher with a distance education background and the other one with an educational administration background coded the interview transcripts and formed themes individually. Lastly, they created common themes together.

FINDINGS

The current study sought to investigate faculties' experiences with emergency remote teaching (ERT) as well as the support they received from their institutions during ERT. We interviewed 16 faculties who taught at least one online course during ERT. Following the transcription of the interviews, both authors coded the data and then developed themes. As a result, the following two major final themes emerged: (a) *support services provided by university administration to faculty members during ERT and (b) support services needed the most by faculty members during ERT.* In this section, we present the findings under the themes.

SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION TO FACULTY MEMBERS DURING ERT

When the literature on open and distance learning is examined, administrative, academic, technical and social support systems, also known as learner support services but offered to all stakeholders in the open and distance learning ecosystems, can be seen as important for well-

planned online learning activities (Lee, 2003). In this section, the support systems provided by the institutions to the faculties during the emergency remote teaching, is examined and categorized under these support systems.

Administrative Support Provided

Creating courses, registering learners in these courses, preparing exam schedules and delivering these schedules and other announcements to learners in well-planned open and distance learning systems are handled under administrative support. When the supports regarding the administrative processes received by the faculty from their institutions during the emergency remote teaching have been investigated, it is observed that some institutions provided administrative supports.

P4 stated that he did not receive any support from his institution in this regard by saying "Unfortunately, we did not receive any support in this regard. We tried to complete the process in the most problem-free and completely individual way, through teacher-student interaction.", while P5 and P8 explained the support they received as follows: "The university administration created the courses and registered students very quickly. There was no problem. If there are students missing, I directed them to enroll in classes. … Exam schedules are prepared and announced to us." and "Our university quickly planned the online trainings for the system to will be used and enabled all faculty members to benefit from these trainings. Also, a quick transfer of all courses and students to this system was completed within a week." Based on these statements, the creation of the courses in the institutions, registration of the students in these courses and the preparation of user guides to help both learners and staffs to use the new online system can be listed as the administrative support services in this period.

On the other hand, P6 and P11 shared their opinions on this issue by stating "If we talk about the administration now, the administration is novice, too. Infrastructure is nice, it wasn't too time consuming and tiring, obviously, but there were some things the administration didn't know about the process. When you ask something, they don't know either. Or they learn if once, they share it later and say you have to do it like this." and "Of course, they were also confused at the beginning for 1–2 weeks, but after that it has been recovered. Nobody knows what to do and how to do it", and stated that university administrations were not ready for these emergency remote teaching processes and they learned many things in the process.

Academic Support Provided

Provision of course contents, preparation of learning materials and delivering it to students, and assessment of students are explained as academic support in the literature. Regarding the academic supports received by the participants from their institutions during the emergency remote teaching, P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P10 and P11 stated that they did not receive any support from their institutions in terms of academic supports.

However, some institutions have provided support to faculty on the preparation of learning materials and assessment of learners. While P5 defines the support on this subject by saying "We created the course contents ourselves. As I said, I have already preparations for the lessons I have been teaching. We have presentations. We just uploaded them to the system. Faculty administration also shared information about how these contents can be prepared. … In the evaluation, information was given on how to do online exams and assignments.", P12 defined their experience on that as "UZEM (Open and Distance Learning Center in their institution) shared publications on the website. They had guidance on which online supports and learning materials we could use in our courses. They wrote and posted the names of the websites about it". So, it can be said that universities are insufficient in terms of providing academic support to the faculty. When the different needs of instructors of various subjects such as mathematics, engineering and business administration are taken into account, the importance of providing academic support becomes indisputable.

P9, on the other hand, stated that the academic support they received in these processes was provided by their peers, not by the institution: "I can explain the academic processes as follows. We run it with an informal approach. … I'm talking to my friends. And ask them if they have presentations for the lessons on subject matter. We exchange our presentations with each other and if we cannot find one, we prepare our own presentations and upload them as pdf for

students. As I said, in this process, we act completely on our own." Based on this, it can be said that both institutions and peers provide academic support through informal ways.

Technical Support Provided

Technical support is defined as "monitoring the efficiency of delivery media and providing technical assistance." In this context, it is critical to examine the types of technologies available to learners as well as the infrastructure available to the institution. When the technical supports received by the participants from their institutions during the emergency remote teaching process are examined, it is seen that this happens in two ways. First of all, it is seen that institutions provide support to faculty with pre-prepared video guides for the problems faculty members may encounter in the preparation of learning materials and assessment of learners. Secondly, technical support is provided by representatives who are selected from faculties or departments for the possible technical difficulties.

P7 explained the technical support provided as "There are some videos on the website, explaining the simple things about how to create online classes and how to upload learning materials.". P8's experiences also support this as: "A training we received during the transition to emergency remote teaching worked for me. My prior knowledge has been updated. I did not need extra technical support."

On the technical support provided through representatives selected from faculties or departments, P9 has been quoted the process as "Every faculty and every unit in each faculty has a representative. It has a technical representative. You reach them by phone or by e-mail. They can support you wherever you are in trouble. In other words, each unit has a representative rather than calling the distance education center for each problem. You can reach them easily. Students also do it the same way.". The experience of P12 in this regard is "Our distance education unit representatives are two teachers in our school. When we have a problem, we reach them directly and if they cannot solve the problem, we can reach the distance education manager."

Last but not least, P11 draws attention to the digital tools they used during emergency remote teaching and cost of some online materials that are not open access. "There are a lot of programs to record online lectures. How do we pay for these programs? How are we going to have them? In other words, since the recording programs provided by the system are not very functional, we turn to alternatives. There are programs to show the desktop, work faster and more functional, but payment is required for them. They are not open access" Based on this, it can be said that the institutions do not provide any support to the instructors in this regard, and the instructors generally use the tools chosen by the institution even if they do not work as faster and functional as others.

Social Support Provided

Social support services are also addressed in many online learning programs as ways to improve communication skills and increase interactivity, as well as to assist learners in creating networks with alumni and building a sense of community. When the experiences of faculty regarding social support, which includes the consultancy related to the difficulties experienced in this period and the creation of platforms that enable the faculty to communicate with other faculty members in the emergency remote teaching, it is seen that these processes are carried out through informal tools.

While P5 conveys his experience on this subject as "Yes WhatsApp groups have been created. Those who were curious asked their questions there. Administrators also answered the questions quickly.", P6, P7, P9 and P12 also support this. Lastly, P9 emphasized that communication takes place in informal groups and there is no institutional structure for communication by saying "When we come to our relations with other faculty, we do something by sharing informally on what we do, how we make presentations, and what we pay attention to design our learning materials. But, unfortunately, there is no institutional structure that will really gather experiences in a pool, share good examples or empathize."

P7 added that the communication groups actively set up and continued at first but they were not sustained later by saying: "In our WhatsApp group that we created for our department,

experiences were shared with in the panic of the first week. Then, since everyone could continue their courses smoothly, we had nothing to share. We could improve ourselves in friendly conversations among colleagues, we learnt something."

Peer Support Provided

Peer support can be shown as the most prominent type of support in the emergency remote teaching, although it is not included in the open and distance learning literature for faculty. As a result of the interviews with the participants, it is seen that the participants firstly contact with their peers regarding administrative, academic, technical and social support and then apply to the university administration if they cannot solve their issues.

While P1 states his experience on this subject: "Everyone has learned things from each other. It was an important support to ask and talk privately, especially with our colleagues who have previous experience on online learning.", P3 supports that by saying "Generally, the ones who had prior knowledge helped the others who didn't." P10 also emphasized the technical support provided by peers by saying "I heard that support was provided to our faculty who had difficulties in terms of technology. Our faculty, who are good at this, helped them in some way and an environment of solidarity was created in this way.".

SUPPORT SERVICES NEEDED THE MOST BY FACULTY MEMBERS DURING ERT

When faculty members were asked what kind of support services they needed and how they would provide them if they had a leading position in the institutions they worked in this period, the findings were grouped as the recommendations made to administrative, academic, technical and social support systems.

Administrative Support They Needed

When the administrative supports desired by faculty members are examined, it is seen that the faculty should be assisted in the tasks such as creating courses and registering the learners into these courses, in other words, reducing faculty's paper workload. P1 has expressed his opinion on this issue as "I would pay attention not to overwhelm academic staff with procedures that require excessive bureaucracy such as student enrollments because I had more work in this period when comparing to face to face teaching. We were unprepared. For this reason, at least I would ensure that paperwork was done by administrative staff, so that academic staff would focus on their already busy academic tasks."

In addition to that, P8 stated that "I would prepare questionnaires in terms of administrative support and try to identify the working and non-working points of online learning for both faculty and students. Since students are not obliged to attend the synchronous classes, we couldn't understand if they are watching the course records later. I would like to get technical support from the university management to understand this. In this way, we could be sure what percentage of the students watched the synchronous lectures." Based on his statements, it can be recommended that the university management should check the learners periodically and take steps about the non-working points of the system, if any. It also suggests that learner data would be shared with faculty members so that faculty members make data-driven decisions.

Academic Support They Needed

When the academic supports desired by faculty members are examined later, it is seen that the faculty members do not have any difficulties in creating digital learning materials, but they need support in online assessment methods. In this regard, P8 expressed her views as "I would do webinars about assessment methods and share them on the school's web page. I would make these supports through voluntarily with experts. In addition to the interested faculty members in the school, other instructors across the country could also benefit from these webinars." P4 also support that statement by saying "First of all, I would get support from someone who knows this topic and ask what we should do." P12 also said "Especially with the live broadcasts of the experts in the field of teaching methodology, it could be any social media tool, for example, using the university's Instagram page, training could be given to all faculty members. Training on time management could be offered because, I think, people in distance learning systems face time management problems at home. When I stay at home, I realize

that I do not manage the time. I think it would be very good." and imply that trainings for faculty can be continued not only in assessment, but also in skills such as time management and creative and critical thinking, which are now called soft skills.

Another suggestion for academic support is to create a platform where good examples and learning materials can be shared. We understood that from P9's words: "First, something about good examples... What good examples do we have during emergency remote teaching? What are students better at? To be honest, I would try to create a platform or online community where these good examples would be shared and where we would have a common mind/sense. The second is for faculty or students to have access to learning resources, material, book, etc. they want to access."

Technical Support They Needed

When the technical supports desired by faculty members are examined, it is found out that faculty members desire to have technical support internally such as unit basis via representatives rather than offered across the university. So, access time to support can be shortened. P8 emphasized this by saying "If there are faculty members in the school who are experts about technology use, I could try to identify them and get help from them. I would also ensure that a few of the administrative staff receive the necessary training as quickly as possible, and provide technical support to the faculty when needed."

In addition to that, P9 added "Where will you be able to arrive in a 15-minute lesson? There are thousands of questions in the students' mind but there is not any interaction. A structure in which students can get an answer to their questions must be integrated into the system's infrastructure." This statement emphasized that technical support is not just a type of support that needs to be offered in a moment of breakdown. It should start with the selection of the necessary tools/platforms at the beginning of the process. Learners should be supported with synchronous applications as well as asynchronous ones for reflection.

Social Support They Desired

Lastly, when the desired social support services are examined, it can be seen that this is the most neglected type of support in emergency remote teaching. P8 talks about the importance of reaching the faculty members who are afraid to ask for support by saying "In terms of social support, I would ensure those who had problems had access to management with regular emails. I would plan to hold online meetings in line with these needs, as the online surveys that I would periodically make would allow me to understand the needs of the employees." P3 reinforces the importance of this type of support by saying "In addition to meeting the technical needs of the lecturers, I think it is also important to meet their emotional needs. I don't think most managers can do this. We found ourselves in a situation that we are completely unfamiliar. What we have to do was sent to us every day via an email. I don't think this was a positive situation. First, what do we need? What do we know about open and distance learning? What is our attitude towards distance learning? these questions should have been answered. At least I would have done so."

DISCUSSION

Due to the threat of COVID-19, schools and universities suspended all the face to face classes and faced a mandatory transition to online learning to continue their teaching and learning. Well-planned open and distance learning systems offer some support to their stakeholders, however the support services provided in those open and distance learning systems have not been thought as a priority in crisis. We aimed to contribute to the understanding of transition process of faculty members to online courses, which is also called emergency remote teaching and examine the support services provided by the university administration to the faculty members in the context of leadership as these support services are the interface among stakeholders in the open and distance learning.

Faculty and learners in traditional higher education systems did not have time to prepare or get support for emergency remote teaching. The data revealed three major findings for this process. The first one is that the preparation process varies according to the open and distance

learning experiences of the faculty. If the faculty had prior experience on teaching online, the transition process went smoothly. Another finding is that faculty members tended to carry their face-to-face teaching methods to distance teaching. There were some differences in the process including course timing, learning resources and interactions, however, it can be said that faculty ignored those and tried to use their face to face teaching habits such as uploading the same teaching materials. Lastly, another finding is the importance of the informal preparations of the faculty. They were anxious and did not wait to get support from the institutions, so they prepared informally. Lee (2003) revealed that faculty motivation, commitment, and satisfaction were even stronger as the faculty members felt they were well-supported by their schools. So, it is highly recommended that support should start at the beginning of the planning process.

Another finding related with the faculties' experiences shows that the workload of the faculties was increased. They may have taught the same course but the time for creating an interactive learning resources increased. They also used a new learning management system or a digital tool for the first time and this caused technical difficulties. It can also be said that having less course time than face-to-face courses, design and development of digital content in open and distance learning and the copyrights of the resources used in the content caused problems for faculty. As Ouma & Nkuyubwatsi (2019) stated the faculty is supported inadequately in this regard and the findings related with academic support go along with that. Not getting enough support on these issues can lead to negative consequences such as low motivation and burnout for faculty members. Inadequate support, which makes the process more difficult for faculty, may prevent the achievement of educational goals.

Findings regarding the support systems in the time of emergency remote teaching provided by the universities showed that administrative and technical supports were well-provided by the university administration. Creating courses, registering learners in these courses, preparing exam schedules and delivering these schedules and other announcements to learners worked smoothly. It is found out that institutions provide technical support to faculty with pre-prepared video guides for the problems they may encounter in the preparation of learning materials and assessment of learners. In addition, technical support is provided by representatives who are selected from departments for the potential technical difficulties. However, in the context of academic support received by the participants from their institutions during the emergency remote teaching including provision of course contents, preparation of learning materials and delivering it to students, and assessment of students, it can be seen that the institutions left their faculties alone. It is also same for the counseling support, which faculty and learners needed most. As LaPadula (2003) stated that learners need social support such as chat rooms, student newspaper, or online peer support groups.

CONCLUSION

During distance education faculty members have faced unprecedented challenges. They have worked tirelessly to solve access issues, create meaningful and interactive lessons. This process also wears them down psychologically. Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) stated that people are under trauma, stress and psychological pressure, so they will remember how they felt, how we cared for them, and how we supported them. For this reason, caring and supporting both faculty and learners at such times is important. Higher education institutions should remember this and they need to plan academic and counseling supports as well as administrative and technical supports.

Peer support can be shown as the most prominent type of support in the emergency remote teaching, although it is not included in the open and distance learning literature for faculty. Although not included in previous studies, the current study shows that the support that faculty receive from their colleagues in the distance education process is remarkable. The interviews with the participants revealed that the participants firstly contact with their peers regarding administrative, academic, technical and social support and then inform the university administration if they cannot solve their issues. Peer support has been the most frequent type of support for faculty both in solving the problems they encounter and in overcoming the psychological difficulties of the process.

As Tait (2000) stated, there may not be universal principles for the establishment of support systems in the open and distance learning as they are various across the characteristics of student cohorts, programs of study, educational cultures and geographies in all their complexity; however, the results may provide an overview of the evidence-based best practices of emergency remote teaching and we can create pragmatic guidelines for institutes to integrate those strategies into their programs successfully, even though online learning does not have a one-size-fits-all nature, as mentioned above.

The following are the design principles for support systems in open and distance learning to lead faculty and learners in a time of crisis based on faculties' views:

- System approach should not be ignored when designing the support services for all stakeholders, and all elements of the support systems should be thought at the beginning.

- Faculty may or may not have a prior experience on open, online and distance learning, so no matter what their experiences are, faculty administration should consider them as if they do not have prior experiences. Based on that, formal trainings should be organized on how the new system works and what teaching online looks like.

- Workload may increase for the faculty even the synchronous course time is less than face to face courses.

- Faculty should be supported on how to interact with learners in online systems and how to create learning resources for distance learners.

- The faculty may tend to carry their face-to-face habits to open, online and distance learning systems, so they should get support on the differences between face-to-face teaching and distance teaching.

- University infrastructure and digital tools that learners have should be considered in the context of digital divide and inequality.

- The faculty should be encouraged to use open educational resources (OER).

- Synchronous platforms may not give chance to learners for reflection and interaction with peers, so they should be supported with asynchronous platforms. Those platforms may be integrated with each other.

- University administration should check what works, and why during the semester.

- Last but not least, peer support should not be ignored and a digital platform should be created to facilitate the interaction among peers, i.e. an online learning community could facilitate those interactions among participants of the group.

Some argue that as we transition to the "new normal," we will never return to our old habits (Tesar, 2020), However, due to the accelerated process of transitioning to digital delivery of higher education, we will transform to a "new normality" in which lessons learned from the pandemic will enrich higher education globally (Sümer et al., 2021). As a result, it is clear that faculty need assistance in transforming education with administrative, academic, technical and social needs, especially during a pandemic in which staff are forced to work in an isolated working environment.

DATA ACCESSIBILTY STATEMENT

The datasets used and/or analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

ADDITIONAL FILE

The additional file for this article can be found as follows:

- **Annex 1.** Interview Protocol. DOI: *https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.13.3.131.s1*

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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