

Being a Teacher without Entering Classrooms: Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences in Online Teaching Practicum¹

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To prevent the disruption of education and training activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, distance education was started, and applied courses were continued with online methods. The aim of this study was to do in-depth examination of the experiences of pre-service teachers regarding the online Teaching Practicum course they took during the Covid-19 pandemic. For this purpose, the phenomenological design was adopted in the study. The study group consisted of 15 pre-service teachers determined with maximum variation sampling and three different focus group interviews were conducted. Content analysis was used to reveal the experiences of the pre-service teachers. The views of the participants were grouped under three themes: (i) benefits of online teaching practicum, (ii) limitations of online teaching practicum, and (iii) ways to deal with difficulties.

Keywords: teaching practicum, pre-service teacher, emergency remote teaching, covid-19 pandemic, teacher training

INTRODUCTION

Education faculties train future teachers, or pre-service teachers, and are considered as institutions offering initial education to teachers to prepare them for the teaching profession. The course of teaching practicum, which is taken by senior pre-service teacher in teacher training faculties, is one of the most important dimensions of teacher education (White & Forgasz, 2016). The teaching practicum course, which we can consider as a pre-service training aiming to increase the professional competencies of teacher candidates by providing them with content knowledge, general culture, and pedagogical competencies, which are all the pillars of the teaching profession (Eti & Karaduman, 2020), functions as a bridge by establishing a balance between theory and practice (Allsopp et. al., 2006). Thus, this course helps them step into the profession by being equipped and by integrating theory and practice during the teacher training process (CoHE, 2018).

According to Darling-Hammond (2017), the teaching practicum provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to develop themselves. In addition to putting into practice the content and pedagogical

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knowledge they have learned through the teaching practicum (Barton et. al., 2015), pre-service teachers also develop strategies to cope with the problems that arise in real classroom environments by breathing the air of the school environment (Lawson et al., 2015). The aforementioned dimension of gaining hands-on experience makes the teaching practicum an integral and compulsory part of teacher training (Varela et. al., 2019). Schulz (2005) states that with the teaching practicum, pre-service teachers implement new ideas by using their critical thinking skills. The fact that pre-service teachers think deeply about the quality of their teaching practices allows them to recognize their weaknesses and strengths. Arnett and Freeburg (2008) point out that pre-service teachers develop their sense of self-confidence as well as their knowledge and skills before taking full responsibility for teaching in the classroom thanks to practice. Singh (2017) states that pre-service teachers who encounter real-life examples thus begin to feel more comfortable and more competent. These dimensions are a kind of proof that the teaching practicum, which we can describe as the first truly independent intersection between preparation and practice (Reeves, 2017), offers pre-service teachers many different experiences so that they can discover their professional identities (Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

However, the closure of schools and the transition to distance education due to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), has brought about an unprecedented change in the way of implementing the teaching practicum, which is conducted face-to-face at schools, and which basically depends on practice. After that date, there have been some changes in the field of education, as well as in many other fields. The question of how educational institutions will continue their activities was one of the first questions which came into mind, and which constituted one of the first agenda items of the countries (Karadağ & Yücel, 2020). The closure of schools owing to respiratory infection of the virus can be described as the first important step to prevent the spread of the virus (Abdulmir & Hafidh, 2020) and as the most important change in the field of education. With the interruption of face-to-face education in many countries due to the Covid-19 pandemic, classes at schools have started to be given with online methods.

In this process, distance and digital teaching opportunities have come to the fore instead of traditional teaching environments. The fact that traditional teaching environments had to be abandoned in the current crisis environment such as the Covid-19 pandemic was an unexpected situation for both teachers and students. This application, which was implemented in order to continue educational activities in the crisis conditions, was called emergency remote teaching (ERT). This name was used because it was a quick response to the pandemic, unlike a well-planned online learning experience (Hodges et. al., 2020). Emergency remote teaching, which offers a fast and reliable way to provide educational services in this crisis environment, has become a necessity in the education system of almost every country (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

As a result of the closure of schools at all levels, face-to-face education in the traditional classroom environment was replaced by emergency remote teaching, which means that applied courses were maintained with online methods. Accordingly, besides the theoretical courses carried out at universities, applied courses were also give with online methods (Koç, 2020), and the teaching practicum course is among those courses carried out with online methods. In this respect, one of these difficulties is that pre-service teachers cannot carry out the lessons they teach within the scope of the teaching practicum course in a real classroom environment. Pre-service teachers had a different experience by conducting the teaching practicum within the scope of university-school cooperation in a virtual environment with online methods and by carrying out educational activities with students in real classroom environments based on the principle of learning by doing. In this respect, the purpose of this study was to do in-depth examination of the experiences of pre-service teacher regarding the course of Teaching Practicum they took during the Covid-19 pandemic and to reconsider the teacher training in the post-Covid-19 period.

METHOD

Research Design

This study was carried out with the phenomenology design which focuses on understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences, how they structure their inner world and what meanings they attach to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). In this respect, the present study aimed to reveal the experiences and perspectives of pre-service teachers regarding online teaching practicum courses.

Study Group

The study group was determined using the maximum diversity sampling and made up of 15 pre-service teachers who were in their final year in the academic year of 2020-2021, who were conducting the teaching practicum online and who volunteered to participate in the study. Maximum diversity sampling aims to achieve heterogeneity in small samples by capturing common dimensions and experiences from individual differences (Patton, 2014). In order to provide diversity in this study, while determining the participants, the intention was to have differences in their genders and departments. Table 1 presents information about the participants.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Department
Erhan	Male	Special Education Teaching
Ali	Male	Special Education Teaching
Sinem	Female	English Language Teaching
Melih	Male	English Language Teaching
Bilge	Female	English Language Teaching
Rabia	Female	English Language Teaching
Çiğdem	Female	Primary School Teaching
Hande	Female	Primary School Teaching
Orhan	Male	Mathematics Teaching
Mehmet	Male	Mathematics Teaching
Mercan	Female	Early Childhood Education
Murat	Male	Early Childhood Education
Ekin	Female	Instructional Technologies- Early Childhood Education
Öykü	Female	Science Teaching
Aylin	Female	Science Teaching

Table 1 shows that 6 of the participants were male, and 9 were female. Of all the participants, 2 of them were from the department of Special Education Teaching; 4 from the department of English Language Teaching; 2 from the department of Primary School Teaching, 2 from the department of Mathematics Teaching; 3 from the department of Early Childhood Teaching and 2 of them were from the department of Science Teaching. The student whose pseudonym is Ekin is studying double major in Instructional Technologies.

Data Collection

In the study, the data were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Interviewing is the most appropriate data collection method to learn how individuals

express their unobservable behavior, emotions, and intentions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants who experience online teaching practicum course during Covid-19 pandemic. The questions in the interview form were determined by taking expert opinion after reviewing the related literature. Following the pilot study carried out with two senior students, the form was finalized with five main questions and probing questions. The interviews were conducted in groups as three focus group meetings over Zoom and Teams, two of them with 6 people and one with 3 people. A focus group interview is an interview with a maximum of 10 people with similar past experiences (Patton, 2014). This data collection method, which is frequently used in qualitative research (Patton, 2014), would help reveal the experiences of the pre-service teachers in the online practicum process so that it could be possible to learn how consistent or how diverse the participants' opinions were and to collect good-quality data depending on the interaction between the participants. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. Each focus interview lasted approximately one hour. For the purpose of protecting the privacy of the participants, they were given code names.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the study were analyzed with content analysis. Content analysis is defined as extracting meaning from qualitative data and presenting it systematically by combining them under themes (Patton, 2014). The interview transcripts prepared for analysis by converting them into written texts were coded considering the code, category, and theme hierarchy. In the first phase, the free codes created by coding each line were subjected to a higher level of analysis and linked to the main categories. Each researcher analyzed the transcribed interviews herself. Following this, the free codes and categories were compared, and the analyses were finalized. After this process, by establishing connections between the categories, three themes were identified: (i) benefits of online teaching practicum, (ii) limitations of online teaching practicum and (iii) ways to deal with difficulties.

Validity and Reliability

Validity

Internal validity can be defined as establishing relationships between different pieces of data, associating patterns of results, obtaining findings and interpretations from data transparently, and basing causal explanations on evidence (Cohen et al., 2011). To overcome the internal validity Yin (2013) suggested presenting an explanatory structure. The researchers can increase the internal validity of the research by presenting the research process in detail. In this study, the creation of the data collection tool, the participants and the data analysis processes were presented in detail. On the other hand, external validity means that the results of the research can be generalized to similar studies. In this study, in order to increase external validity of the research, diverse participants were reached as Yin (2013) suggested.

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research means consistency or robustness (Neuman, 2006). Reliability means reaching the same result when another researcher does the same study. In order to increase the reliability of the study, Creswell (2007) suggested using the "blinding" method while analyzing the data and analyzing the data by other experts besides the researcher. In this study, the analysis was made by using the blinding method without knowing who the expressions belong to.

FINDINGS

In this study, which focused on the experiences of the pre-service teachers regarding the online teaching practicum during the Covid-19 pandemic, three themes were obtained: (i) benefits of online teaching practicum, (ii) limitations of online teaching practicum, (iii) ways to deal with difficulties.

Benefits of Online Teaching Practicum

Online teaching practicum became a facilitator for the pre-service teachers in many ways and provided different advantages. According to the interviews with the pre-service teachers, it was noteworthy that the online teaching practicum provided advantages in the dimensions of (i) implementing the instruction, (ii) monitoring and evaluating, (iii) classroom management and (iv) saving time, money, and energy. The categories belonging to this theme are presented in Figure 1.

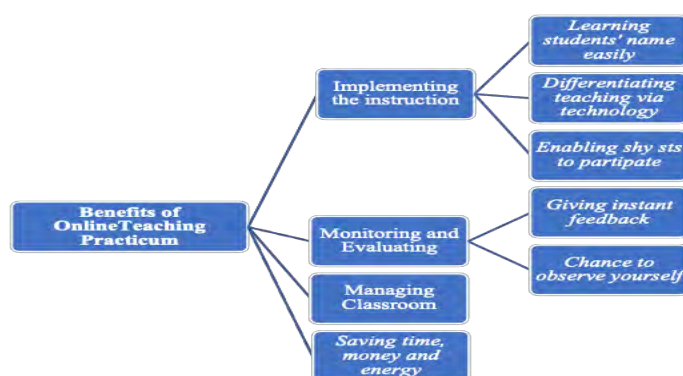


Figure 1
Benefits of online teaching practicum

Implementing the Instruction

The course of online teaching practicum had positive results in terms of getting the pre-service teachers learn the names of the students more easily, differentiating teaching via technology and enabling especially the shy students to get involved in the lesson.

Learning students' names easily

In the online lessons, the pre-service teachers had the opportunity to learn the names of their students more easily because they constantly saw the names on the screen. A participant who reported that one of the most important advantages of online education was the students' names constantly written on the screen.

Differentiating teaching via technology

Another positive aspect of online teaching practicum is the differentiation of teaching through technology. The pre-service teachers emphasized that the use of Web 2.0 tools in this process was effective in attracting students' attention to the lesson and that it was easier and faster to reach students with different characteristics through the differentiation of teaching.

Enabling shy students to participate

It is seen that the use of Web 2.0 tools and technology had an important place in increasing the students' interest and participation in classes. In this respect, the pre-service teachers underlined that the students who would hesitate or not attend classes if the lessons were face-to-face, participated

more actively in the online lessons with the help of the chat function or with the support of their families.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The online teaching practicum made positive contributions to the pre-service teachers by providing instant feedback in monitoring and evaluating the teaching process and by creating the opportunity to let them evaluate themselves with the help of the recorded lessons.

Giving instant feedback

The pre-service teachers drew attention to the fact that the process of giving feedback to the students' works in face-to-face lessons took longer than in online lessons, and they pointed out that they could give faster and instant feedback in online lessons by using different tools such as telephone or e-mail.

I gave them homework and wanted them to send their homework via my number. I was checking them one by one. It was easier for me that way from distance because I had to allocate a different time for that when face to face. When they sent it directly here, I was immediately confirming their mistakes and sending their homework back to them. We provided feedback in this way, which was very easy (Aylin- Science Teaching).

Chance to observe yourself

One of the biggest benefits of the online courses for the pre-service teachers was that they could watch themselves again by recording the courses. As a teacher, the participants, who, by watching themselves and seeing their mistakes, had the opportunity to evaluate how they taught the lessons, how they communicated with the students and how they managed the classroom, expressed their awareness they raised thanks to this situation.

Managing Classroom

The online teaching practicum provided the pre-service teachers with the opportunity to use different tools while applying the instruction and to watch themselves again by recording the lessons. In addition to the advantages it provides in teaching, the pre-service teachers frequently emphasized that it was much easier to manage online classroom environments than face-to-face classrooms. The pre-service teachers who mentioned that it was difficult to manage the unwanted behaviors of the students in the classroom pointed out that the ability to mute the students made it easier to manage the online classes.

Classroom management seemed to be easier in distance education because we could press the mute button when there was a problem, or when there was too much communication between the students, we would only admit the teacher to write in the chat part, reducing the interaction between the students and managing the lesson more effectively (Öykü- Science Teaching).

Saving Time, Money, and Energy

The students and teachers were connected to classes from home, which meant saving time, money and energy for them. The participants, who stated that under normal circumstances, they had to use public transportation and leave home early to go to school, frequently put emphasis on the flexibility of teaching and watching lessons at home and on less tiring and more economical aspect of it.

Limitations of Online Teaching Practicum

Conducting the course of teaching practicum course online in the Covid-19 pandemic brought many limitations to the pre-service teachers besides providing many benefits. The limitations of the online teaching practicum were grouped under four themes: (i) implementing the instruction, (ii) managing

classroom, (iii) using technology, and (iv) collaboration and communication, and the categories are shown in Figure 2.

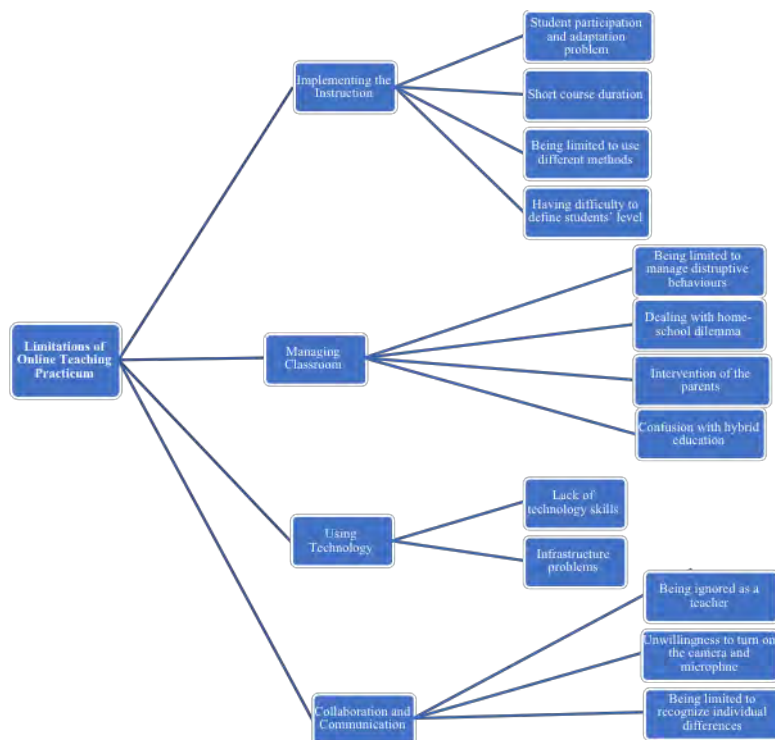


Figure 2
Limitations of online teaching practicum

Implementing the Instruction

The pre-service teachers encountered some problems while applying their activities in the online teaching practicum. These problems were grouped under four categories: (i) student participation and adaptation problem, (ii) short course duration, (iii) being limited to use different methods, and (iv) having difficulty to define students' level.

Student participation and adaptation problem

The pre-service teachers stated that they had problems with student participation and with the adaptation of the students to this process during the online teaching practicum. The pre-service teachers, who stated that they were limited in encouraging the students to participate in the lessons because they were unable to make eye contact with the students, also emphasized that the lesson participation process was adversely affected because they could not see the students who raised their hands on the screen. Sinem expressed this situation as follows:

Since we share a screen, the children's cameras are on the right, and we can't see them all. Because the children raise their hands to the camera, we must look at one by one who wants to answer. As we cannot catch all of them while teaching at the same time, the children might not want to raise their hands again because they cannot answer at that moment. Four or five students were visible on the right. I had to scroll them with the down arrow. Every time I asked a question, I

had to scroll them a few times to find out who's raising their hands (Sinem- English Language Teaching).

Short course duration

According to the pre-service teachers, another important limitation of the online teaching practicum was the lack of time. According to the participants who stated that they had difficulty in keeping up with the syllabus while teaching the lesson subjects, they could not allow all the students to speak due to time constraints who wanted to say a word, and this situation also affected student achievement.

Being limited to use different methods

According to the participants who stated that they were limited in the methods and techniques they used for students in the online education process, they used certain methods in their lessons which were easier to apply in online education and which did not require an individual and synchronous action.

We generally preferred to use individual games, and we preferred to play individually when there were actually collective games... I used the same activities for two terms. ... They didn't even come across another game in which they could act... but we couldn't use the drama at all (Mercan- Early Childhood Education).

Having difficulty to define students' level

According to the pre-service teachers, another important limitation of the online practicum was the inability to determine the students' levels on the online platform and thus failure to arrange the lesson plan according to the student's level.

You may not be able to do this (lecturing according to the student's level) on the first day because the plans are prepared in advance. Actually, you don't really know the children. Maybe 1-2 weeks after getting to know those children, they (lesson plans) should change according to their level. The children may not understand (Mercan- Early Childhood Education).

Managing Classroom

The pre-service teachers stated that they had difficulties in classroom management as well as the difficulties they experienced in relation to the lessons during the online practicum. The difficulties experienced by the participants in classroom management were grouped under four categories: (i) being limited to manage disruptive behaviors, (ii) dealing with home-school dilemma, (iii) intervention of the parents, and (iv) confusion with hybrid education.

Being limited to manage disruptive behaviors

The participants who stated that the education they received on classroom management was suitable for face-to-face education reported that they were limited in what they should do for students who exhibited inappropriate behaviors in the virtual classroom where they continued online education. This limitation became even more palpable in the field of special education. Ali, a special education preservice teacher, expressed his experiences on this subject as follows:

The children had some problematic behaviors that needed to be changed...Yes, I prepared the plan, but how much I could use it in online education was debatable...So I don't think online education is very effective for special education (Ali- Special Education Teaching).

Dealing with home-school dilemma

During the online practicum, the pre-service teachers had difficulties in managing the home-school dilemma as well as managing the negative behaviors of the students. According to the participants, the students could not distinguish whether they were at home or at school during the online lesson; they were more distracted at home; and the pre-service teachers had difficulty in managing this situation. The participants reported that especially the subject of the lesson was scattered and that it was not possible to teach the subject due to time constraints in the lesson. In this respect, the participants expressed their experiences as follows:

The lesson of the 3rd graders went well, but I also had such a problem: I put a gif from Harry Potter in order to attract the attention of the students at the beginning of the lesson, so I would create a discussion environment. It caught the attention of the students, and they were distracted from took a break from the lesson for a moment. Everyone tried to bring their Harry Potter stuff and books, and the class was distracted. This is running into the time constraint, I've noticed that. My class time started to pass as everyone was bringing their stuff and talking about it. (Sinem- English Language Teaching).

Intervention of the parents

According to the pre-service teachers, the parents of the students interfered with the lesson during the lesson. The participants reported that the parents directed the child to give the correct answer when the teacher asked a question and that the parents put the child under pressure with their looks or behaviors when the child did not know the answer. Emphasizing that parental intervention had negative impact not only on classroom management but also on children's learning, the participants pointed out that they had difficulty in coping with this. In addition to the intervention, the parents did to ensure that their children answered the questions correctly, the parents also intervened in the responses of the teachers to the children in a protective manner. The participants who stated that the constant presence of the parents in the class and teaching under this presence were a new situation for the pre-service teachers expressed their experiences.

We learned classroom management, but we did not learn how not to manage children in their rooms or when their families are behind them. We say something to the child, the parent's head is seen behind, as if we said something bad to her child. The child then listens to his family or just as he is comfortable at home. While we were trying to teach at school there, we were now trying to teach new rules at home. Classroom management has obviously become much more difficult (Rabia-English Language Teaching).

Using Technology

The participants thought that another limitation of the online practicum was technology. Accordingly, two categories were evaluated under this heading: (i) lack of technology skills and (ii) infrastructure problems.

Lack of technology skills

When it comes to online education, the use of technology skills of the individuals involved in the online education process gain more importance. The pre-service teachers stated that the technology skills of the students were insufficient from time to time during the online practicum process, which caused time loss in the lesson. Although the pre-service teachers stated that they improved their technology skills with online education during the pandemic process, they stated that they had problems with technology from time to time, saying:

They cannot fully use iPads or computers because of their young age. We constantly say 'you will do this; you will do this'... The child needs to do screen sharing, it gives an error, he did something wrong, and we need to intervene. We were having a hard time in that respect, and we were wasting a lot of time in the lesson. It was a 30-minute lesson, and the topics had to be taught, you know, superficially (Ekin- Instructional Technologies- Early Childhood Education)

Infrastructure problems

According to the participants, another important limitation was related to the technological infrastructure. Both the students and the pre-service teachers stated that they had Internet connection problems from time to time, and accordingly, they reported that online courses could be conducted with applications like BigBlueButton different from Zoom in order not to waste time. According to the participants, it was an important limitation that the lessons were not recorded in Zoom and that the students were thus unable to re-watch the lesson.

Collaboration and Communication

Another limitation that the pre-service teachers encountered during the online practicum was related to cooperation and communication. There were three categories under this theme: (i) being ignored as a teacher, (ii) unwillingness to turn on the camera and microphone, and (iii) being limited to recognize individual differences.

Being ignored as a teacher

The pre-service teachers stated that they were ignored by the practicum teachers during online education and that they were not given enough opportunities. The participants who stated that the lack of cooperation with the practicum teachers negatively affected their development.

Unwillingness to turn on the camera and microphone

According to the participants, another communication limitation during the online practicum was that the students did not want to open their cameras and microphones. The pre-service teachers stated that most of the students were reluctant to open cameras and microphones, so they could not understand which student was listening to the lesson or not, saying:

...For example, 20-25 people attend the lesson, but the number of students with open cameras is limited. For example, if ten or fifteen people turn on their cameras, we are not aware of where the remaining 5-10 people are, whether they are listening to the lesson or not. Everyone seems to agree with us. But those with closed cameras cannot attend (Aylin- Science Teaching).

Being limited to recognize individual differences

According to the participants, the pre-service teachers could not contact the students one-on-one during the online practicum process, could not communicate with them due to time constraints, and therefore had difficulty in knowing the students better. This situation became more evident especially at the pre-school level. The pre-service teachers stated that they had difficulty in understanding the speech of the children or problems of the students because they could not get to know the students closely, saying:

Most of all, we had communication problems. For example, I did not understand what the student was saying. Preschoolers were using different words while talking a little bit more. For example, I did not understand one of my students in the class, and most of all, I did not understand him. Because the teacher of the class was with him all the time, she understood at once what he was saying, but I did not understand the student. Then the teacher was sending a message again, and

when it appeared as a notification at the bottom, we were reading it and solving it from there (Murat-Early Childhood Education).

Ways to Deal with Difficulties

Emphasizing that the online teaching practicum, which started to be implemented with the Covid-19 pandemic, had limitations as well as benefits, the pre-service teachers tried to follow various ways to cope with these limitations, such as (i) getting support, and (ii) considering students' needs. The categories under this theme are presented in Figure 3.

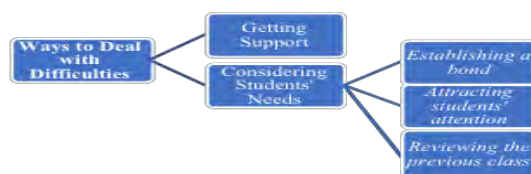


Figure 3

Ways to deal with difficulties

Getting Support

Another way that the pre-service teachers followed to overcome their difficulties was to get support. The participants stated that they received support from the practicum teachers, from the instructor who conducted the practicum course, from their friends and parents so that they could learn the ways they followed when they faced similar difficulties to better present the curriculum to the students. In relation to this, the participants said:

I talked about this situation a few times with my teacher in the teaching practicum class, I asked her what I could do, I talked to her. I followed her advice and was always consulting my friends. We had our practicum group. In this practicum group, we sometimes discussed how we could solve our problems (Melih- English Language Teaching).

Considering Students' Needs

It was noteworthy that the pre-service teachers considered the students' needs in order to cope with the difficulties they encountered during their online practicum. In order to meet the needs of the students, the participants (i) established bonds with the students, (ii) tried to attract the attention of the students especially at the beginning of the lesson, (iii) used reinforcement during the lesson, and (iv) tried to revise the old lesson subjects.

Establishing a bond

According to the participants, one of the most important needs of students was to establish bonds. Since eye-contact in online education focuses only on the lesson plan rather than on the student's experiences, students' lack of communication with their teachers and classmates arises. Emphasizing that when they tried to meet this need to communicate with the students at the beginning of the lesson, the participants stated that most of the already insufficient lesson time was spent with in-class chat, and they tried different ways both to keep up with the lesson plan and to meet the communication needs of the students.

Attracting students' attention

The participants stated that they overcame the difficulties they experienced especially in attending the lesson during the online practicum by planning the lesson in a way that would attract the attention of the students. The participants pointed out that they increased their participation in the lesson in this way.

Using a reinforce

In order to increase participation in online education, besides attracting the students' attention, the pre-service teachers also used reinforcers. The participants who saw the increase in class participation with the reinforcement explained their experiences as follows:

The students liked it when I said well done. For example, they drew a circuit element. When I said, 'Well done, it was very nice', the other students absolutely entered the race to get well done from me ... Thus, they participated in the lesson more (Aylin- Science Teaching).

Reviewing the previous class

The participants who thought that the 30-minute online education courses were insufficient for students to achieve full learning emphasized that according to their observations, the level of the students was worse than the previous term. The pre-service teachers who tended to repeat their previous learning in order to further the learning of the students followed different ways to re-teach the lesson subject. The participants conducted a survey on whether the lesson was fully understood through Education Informatics Network (EIN), which is an online education platform in Turkey, started the lesson early, reminded students of their previous learning, or repeated the subject on YouTube.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the experiences of pre-service teachers regarding the course of Teaching Practicum they took during the Covid-19 pandemic were examined in depth, and their opinions were determined. In this respect, as a result of this study it was revealed that the pre-service teachers reported views under three themes about (i) benefits of online teaching practicum, (ii) limitations of online teaching practicum and (iii) ways to deal with difficulties.

When the views of the pre-service teachers were examined, it was observed that the online teaching practicum facilitated the pre-service teachers in many ways and provided them with some advantages such as the implementation of teaching, monitoring and evaluation, classroom management and economic processes. When the findings obtained as a result of the study were examined, it was possible to conclude that the pre-service teachers used technology effectively and efficiently in planning and implementation of instruction. Today's world is moving towards a multi-faceted, multi-centered, ever-changing, and increasingly complex structure (Güneş & Deveci, 2021), and as times change, it is of great importance to find innovative ways to use technology to encourage learning (Fullan, 2013). Moreover, different skills are defined for the 21st century, based on the idea that there will be a transition from an information society to a skills society. One of these skill areas is digital literacy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). During the Covid-19 pandemic the importance of integrating technology knowledge with pedagogy and content knowledge (TPACK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) is better understood. In the light of the findings obtained in the study, it is possible to say that the pre-service teachers improved their technology use skills and used these skills more while applying the teaching activities they planned within the scope of the teaching practicum.

The pre-service teachers also drew attention to the economic aspect by expressing that the online teaching practicum saved time, money, energy, resources, and materials. Expressing that it was more economical to teach and to watch lessons at home, the participants put emphasis on the flexibility of distance education. Bozkurt (2020) similarly states that online distance education applications contribute to education in terms of accessibility, openness, and flexibility. Furthermore, according to the results obtained in another study, the fact that it saves time and is less costly besides providing a flexible education opportunity independent of time and place is considered as the advantages of

distance education in the Covid-19 pandemic period (Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020; Torres & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2022).

Conducting the teaching practicum course remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic period not only provided the pre-service teachers with several advantages but also brought some limitations. The previous studies also emphasized the challenges and concerns about remote teaching and learning (Andarwulan et. al., 2021; Hindun et.al, 2021; Rofiah et. al, 2022). While the pre-service teachers stated that they encountered some problems while implementing the teaching activities, student participation and adaptation were the leading problems. The pre-service teachers stated that they were limited in encouraging their students to participate in the lesson especially because they could not make eye contact with the students. Making eye contact with the student is not only a source of motivation but also a means of attracting and maintaining attention. In addition, eye contact, which is one of the ways of non-verbal communication for teachers, creates a comfortable learning environment for students and increases their participation in and contribution to the lesson (Zeki, 2009). However, due to the pandemic the pre-service teachers did not have the opportunity to make eye contact with the students. The pre-service teachers, who would learn to get the students join the lesson effectively by making eye contact with students in a traditional classroom environment, regarded this as a limitation as they could not experience them because they were in front of the screen. These limitations may be due to the lack of direct communication between teacher-student and students (Fulton, 2020). Moreover, during the online practicum process, the pre-service teachers could not have one-on-one contact with the students or could not have the opportunity to get to know the students better due to the limited course time. This situation could also be considered as a communication limitation. A positive communication pattern determines the quality of education. However, the pre-service teachers stated that they were unsuccessful in considering individual differences while conducting their teaching practicum because they could not communicate sufficiently with the students.

Another limitation was related to classroom management according to the pre-service teachers. Although classroom management is perceived as providing discipline or managing students' problematic behaviors when considered from a narrow perspective (Allen, 2010), it is an umbrella concept that includes many elements such as management of instruction, relationship management, time management, behavior management and physical environment management (Prince, 2009). Before graduating from education faculties, teacher candidates take the course of Classroom Management and have the opportunity to experience the theoretical knowledge they have learned in this course in real classroom environments through the teaching practicum. Gray (2020) argues that the experience gained within the scope of the teaching practicum has significant impact on the development of an effective classroom management system in the first years of the profession. The teaching practicum, which also provides the development of skills to cope with the problems that arise in real classroom environments (Lawson et. al., 2015), was conducted online in the pandemic period causing a lack of experience (Güven & Uçar, 2021). However, the pre-service teachers stated that they received a classroom management training valid for face-to-face education and that they had many difficulties in classroom management in the distance education process.

Another limitation mentioned by the pre-service teachers was related to the technological infrastructure. In relation to this, the pre-service teachers stated that they had Internet connection problems. Karadağ and Yücel (2020) similarly emphasized the lack of infrastructure and mentioned the existence of students who could not continue their education due to lack of Internet connection or computer/tablet at home. Van Lancker and Parolin (2020) stated that distance education requires a reliable Internet connection, which comes at a cost; therefore, the researchers pointed out that some students are at a disadvantage due to their economic situation and that this may further increase the gap between students from low-income and high-income families. Similarly, Özüdoğru (2021) stated that pre-service teachers continued their education with limited opportunities due to the lack of

Internet and computers or because they did not have equipment such as microphones and headphones with limited Internet. In this context, slow or poor internet connection is one of the greatest challenge in both remote teaching and learning (Torres & Orteag-Dela Cruz, 2022). This situation could be accepted as an indication that the inequality of opportunity in education has become more evident in the distance education process.

Emphasizing the limitations of the online teaching practicum conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic process, the pre-service teachers followed various ways to cope with these limitations. The pre-service teachers stated that they tried to overcome the difficulties with their own efforts by paying attention to the needs of the students in the lessons they conducted online or by improving their own physical facilities. In addition, another way they used to overcome the difficulties was to get support. In order to prepare the course content and present it to the students in a better way, the participants emphasized that they received support from the practicum teacher, from the instructor who conducted the practicum course, or from their friends who faced similar difficulties. Many stakeholders, such as practicum teachers and practicum instructors, have an important role in the success of the teaching practicum, which enables pre-service teachers to be better prepared for the teaching profession (Lawson et. al., 2015). On the other hand, considering the responsibilities of practicum teachers and practicum instructors regarding guiding pre-service teachers in the practices required by the teaching profession (Barak & Wang, 2020), the support to be received by participants from them could be accepted as a requirement of teacher training.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about change and transformation in the field of education, as in every field. It is also possible to see the reflections of the decisions made quickly and of the new regulations put into practice in the field of education to minimize the negative effects of the pandemic. In this respect, the sudden and unexpected transition from face-to-face education to emergency distance education has made a big difference in teacher training programs, especially in the teaching practicum, which we can define as a pre-service training opportunity for pre-service teachers. This process has brought both challenges and opportunities while enabling us to reconsider teaching and learning activities in different environments (Flores et., al., 2021). It is obvious that pre-service teachers face many difficulties in terms of pedagogical, technological, social, and emotional aspects when the teaching practicum, which we can accept as a journey that causes pre-service teachers to think in more detail about the teaching profession (Grudnoff, 2011), is conducted online rather than face-to-face in real classroom environments (Özüdoğru, 2021). Considering the pandemic as a chance to develop alternative education opportunities (OECD, 2020) may offer a different perspective in the creation of good-quality teacher training policies in line with the needs of the current era. To turning the difficulties experienced in the process into an opportunity for teachers' careers, future studies could examine the threats or opportunities in terms of the teaching careers of teachers who complete their teaching practicum via distance education. For this reason, different courses could be added to teacher training programs in order to increase the techno pedagogical content knowledge competences that emerge from the interaction of concepts together with pedagogy, field and technology knowledge so that teachers can effectively incorporate technology into their lessons. In this respect, for the effectiveness of online education, which is thought to become a part of education after the pandemic, it may be recommended that policy makers reconsider their education faculty programs in a way to include online education. Lastly, considering the need for resources combining online education and pedagogical practices that pre-service teachers can apply in the field, it seems very important not only for practitioners but also for researchers to bring resources into the literature such as online family participation, online classroom management and online teaching process.

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