Implementer Views on Whether Catch-Up Education Program in Primary Schools (Iyep) Could Be Performed Via Distance Education

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Abstract

Face-to-face education in many countries was suspended due to the global pandemic of COVID-19 declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020. The pandemic led to new searches in the academic process, and distance education gained importance in Turkey. However, the Catch-Up Education Program in Primary Schools was not taken into account while it was stated that educational services provided in resource rooms within the scope of inclusive education were to be continued via distance education. Accordingly, it was aimed to examine the views of classroom teachers who had implemented IYEP before on whether IYEP could be performed via distance education and to make an evaluation based on the first-hand experiences of implementers. To that end, the research was conducted with 22 participants in accordance with the ethical principles. Ethics committee approval was obtained for the study with the decision of Agri Ibrahim Cecen University Scientific Research Ethics Committee dated 08.09.2021 and numbered 206. All of the participants are experienced classroom teachers who have experience with IYEP and have performed distance education. The research was performed with the phenomenological design of qualitative research designs. The data were collected with a semi-structured interview form, and the interview questions were finalized after having been reviewed by two academics who are subject-matter experts. The data obtained in the research were subjected to descriptive analysis individually by the researchers and evaluated. It was concluded that IYEP could be continued via distance education when the face-to-face education could not be performed, but there were several concerns about the matter at hand. The participants often mentioned that distance education could not substitute for and be as effective as face-to-face education. Nevertheless, despite certain disadvantages, considering the contributions of IYEP in face-to-face education, it was found that distance education could be utilized so that shortcomings in learning would not accumulate and extend to the next year and that experiencing IYEP via distance education could provide ideas about future practices.

Keywords: COVID-19, IYEP, Distance Education, Primary School, Pandemic

DOI: 10.29329/ijpe.2022.467.18

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INTRODUCTION

The whole world has been trying to adapt to adversities inflicted by the Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic. The pandemic took the world by storm and adversely affected all the countries, especially their healthcare services. There is no doubt that education is one of the areas impacted by the pandemic. As in other countries, a great number of studies have been performed in Turkey for a qualified and quality education. Commonly described as creating an intentional and terminal behavioral change in individuals, education that plays a key role in human life refers to equipping individuals who will attain a place among the society with physical, moral and intellectual instruments, as argued by Durkheim (1956, p.71). This is a long-term process to be built starting from the basic education. Yet, there are students who cannot sufficiently draw on education for several reasons in our country like in several others. For various reasons, from the beginning of basic education, students start education in an advantageous or disadvantageous way according to their socioeconomic and cultural levels, and when these differences are not compensated, the gap in success gradually widens. TIMSS studies show that the differences in success stem from the problems starting from the basic education (Ozer at al. 2020). It is emphasized in the 2023 educational vision that every child needs to have options to become their best possible self and to be provided with adequate means to feel that they have those options at every moment of their academic life and to make a progress in the path of their choice (MEB, 2018, p.33). These opportunities are very important for disadvantaged groups on the basis of equality of opportunity and justice in education. Within this context, Ministry of National Education implements several supportive, catch-up and remedial programs to make up the incomplete learning and reinforce the learning needs. One of those programs is the Catch-Up Education Program in Primary Schools (IYEP).

IYEP

IYEP is a supportive program for primary school third-graders who have been found not to need any special education but to fail to acquire the learning outcomes included in Turkish and mathematics curricula and within the scope of IYEP. It is also aimed with the program to support students psychosocially. This program is not an alternative to the current curricula, and the learning outcomes included in the program are chosen from among the outcomes on the first- and second-grade levels. 3 modules and their associated learning outcomes are included in the program from Turkish and mathematics courses (MEB, 2019). The following table presents the learning outcomes included in the program (MEB, 2019, p.4).

Table 1. Numerical Distribution of Learning Outcomes Included in IYEP

Course	Field/sub-field of learning	Number of Learning Outcomes in Module 1	Number of Learning Outcomes in Module 2	Number of Learning Outcomes in Module 3	Total Number of Learning Outcomes
TURKISH	Listening-Watching	2	1	-	3
	Speaking	1	-	-	1
	Reading	-	4	2	6
	Writing	-	5	1	6
MATHEMATICS	Natural Numbers	4	3	-	7
	Addition and Subtraction	6	4	-	10
	Multiplication and Division	-	-	5	5
TOTAL NUMBER OF LEARNING OUTCOMES		13	17	8	38

As seen in table 1 presenting the learning outcomes, 5, 72, and 19 class hours are recommended for Modules 1, 2, and 3 of the Turkish course, respectively, accounting for 96 class hours in total. 24, 24, and 16 class hours are recommended for of Modules 1, 2, and 3 of the mathematics course, which add up to 64 class hours in total. Accordingly, total IYEP duration is 160 hours. The target group of the program includes disadvantageous students such as those who have failed to acquire the learning outcomes listed in Table 1, children who are under temporary protection, children of seasonal agricultural workers, and children of refugee-immigrant and semi-nomadic families. Simonez (2016) states that make-up programs generally give priority to main disciplines such as mathematics, reading and science. IYEP can also be evaluated with this approach.

Implemented in the academic year of 2017-2018 for the first time as a pilot practice in 12 provinces, the program started to be implemented for third- and fourth-graders all around the country in the academic year of 2018-2019. For selecting the students to be enrolled in the program, a Student Enrollment Instrument (SPI) is implemented, and at the end of the 160-hour program, a Student Assessment Instrument (SAI) is performed on IYEP students. SPI aims to make an evaluation of student for recognition, monitoring and formation purposes whereas SAI aims to perform an outcome-oriented assessment to determine whether the students have acquired the IYEP learning outcomes. In this context, the SPI was applied to 2,219,315 students in the 2018-2019 academic year. In line with the results, 431.493 students were offered the IYEP program and 302.097 students took courses within the scope of the program. According to the results of the SAI applied at the end of the application, 89.77% of the students successfully completed the program.It was decided that the program would only continue for third-graders as of 2019-2020 (Gencoglu, 2019). The following table presents the learning outcomes included in the program.

Table 2. IYEP Learning Outcomes

	MODULE 1	MODULE 2	MODULE 3
TURKISH	T.M1.1. Apply verbal directives. T.M1.2. Answer questions about what they have listened to/watched. T.M1.3. Talk about a subject within a certain framework.	T.M2.1. Distinguish letters corresponding to sounds. T.M2.2. Recognize and vocalize the letter. T.M2.3. Write down letters in accordance with the technique. T.M2.4. Read syllables and words. T.M2.5. Write down syllables and words. T.M2.6. Write down numbers in accordance with the technique. T.M2.7. Read simple and short sentences. T.M2.8. Write down meaningful and grammatical sentences. T.M2.9. Read short texts. T.M2.10. Do writing practices.	T.M3.1. Guess unknown words and their meaning based on the visuals. T.M3.2. Answer questions about the text they have read. T.M3.3. Write down short texts.

MATHEMATICS	M.M1.1. Determine the number of objects in a group with number of objects up to 20 (including 20) and write down that number in figures. M.M1.2 Count rhythmically forward to 100 (including 100) in ones, fives and tens. M.M1.3. Count within 20 (including) in twos forward and ones and twos backward. M.M1.4. Show a group of objects with an amount between 10 and 20 (including 10 and 20) by dividing it into tens and ones, and write down in figures and read the number corresponding to those objects. M.M1.5. Comprehend the meaning of addition. M.M1.6. Perform addition with natural numbers of which sum is up to 20 (including 20). M.M1.7. Solve problems that require addition with natural numbers. M.M1.8. Comprehend the meaning of subtraction. M.M1.9. Perform subtraction with natural numbers up to 20 (including 20). M.M1.10. Solve problems that require subtraction with natural numbers.	M.M2.1. Determine the number of objects in a group with number of objects up to 100 (including 100) and write down that number in figures. M.M2.2. Name the digits of natural numbers smaller than 100 on models, state the digit values of the numbers in the digits. M.M2.3. Count within 100 in twos, fives and tens; 30 in threes; and 40 in fours forward and backward. M.M2.4. Perform addition with natural numbers of which sum is up to 100 (including 100) with and without carry. M.M2.5. Solve problems that require addition with natural numbers. M.M2.6. Perform subtraction with natural numbers up to 100 that does and does not require breaking apart tens. M.M2.7. Solve routine problems that require addition and subtraction with natural numbers.	M.M3.1. Explains that multiplication means repeated addition. M.M3.2. Perform multiplication with natural numbers. M.M3.3 Solve problems that require multiplication with natural numbers. M.M3.4. Use the meanings of grouping and sharing. M.M3.5. Perform division, use the division sign (÷).

Source: Catch-Up Education Program in Primary Schools (2019, p.5)

The ministry prepared activity and guidance books to enable students to acquire the learning outcomes in Table 2 and provide psychosocial support. These books were sent to students and teachers and offered to the disposal of relevant parties on MEB's website.

METHOD

Purpose

It was aimed to explore the views of classroom teachers who had implemented IYEP before on whether IYEP could be implemented via distance education. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are your views on whether IYEP could be implemented via distance education?
2. What could be the advantages of implementing IYEP via distance education?
3. What could be the disadvantages of implementing IYEP via distance education?
4. What could be the alternative practices for IYEP students if the pandemic would be extended?
5. What would you like to add within the context of distance education and IYEP?

Research Design

The research was performed with the phenomenological design of qualitative research designs. Phenomenology focuses on human experiences through which social reality is formed and gives weight to semantics revealed by the experience to understand the social reality (Ersoy, 2016). In phenomenological studies, the main point which researchers concentrate on is the shared experiences of participants about a given incident, concept, or phenomenon (Güler, Halıcıoğlu, and Taşğın, 2013, p.234). All the participants are classroom teachers experienced both in implementing IYEP and exercising distance education during the pandemic.

Study Group

Data sources in phenomenological studies are individuals who have experienced the research subject and are able to reflect it (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006, p.74). Therefore, the study group consisted of 22 classroom teachers with IYEP experience.

Table 3. Demographic Information of Participants

Personal Information		f
Gender	Female	14
	Male	8
Professional Seniority	5-10 Years	9
	10-15 Years	9
	15-20 Years	4
IYEP Experience	1 Year	18
	2 Year	2
	3 Year	1
	4 Year	1
Training Level	Bachelor's Degree	20
	Master's Degree	2

The criterion for selecting participants in the study using the criterion sampling of purposive sampling methods was to have served with in IYEP. 5, 1, 1, 2, and 13 of the participants work in the provinces of Sivas, Balıkesir, İstanbul, Niğde, and Yozgat, respectively. As seen in Table 3, of the participants, 63.64% are women and 36.36% are men, and their professional experiences varied between 5-10 years (40.91%), 10-15 years (40.91%), and 15-20 years (18.18%). Of the classroom teachers, 90.91% have a bachelor's degree while 9.09% have a master's degree, and they had 1 year (86.37%), 2 years (9.09%), 3 years (2.27%) and 4 years (2.27%) of IYEP experience.

Data Collection and Analysis, and Ensuring Data Credibility

In phenomenological studies, interviews are performed to explore experiences and semantics about the phenomena in question (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013, p.20). The data were accordingly collected with semi-structured interview forms. In the forms, the participants were explained that their names would not be used, codes such as Teacher 1 (T1), T2 would be utilized, the data would not be used outside the research, ethical principles would be observed, the research was totally on voluntary basis, and their consents were received. Ethics committee approval was obtained for the study with the decision of Agrı Ibrahim Cecen University Scientific Research Ethics Committee dated 08.09.2021 and numbered 206. Interview forms were e-mailed to the participants, and they responded via e-mail. The interview questions were reviewed by two academics who are specialized in their fields and finalized upon their feedbacks.

The data obtained in the research were subjected to a descriptive analysis. As stated by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2006, p. 224), in a descriptive analysis, data are interpreted and summarized in a framework set by prespecified themes or research questions. Direct citations are often utilized to provide the reader with information more explicitly in descriptive analysis. Establishing causation and making comparisons among findings can improve the quality of interpretations.

FINDINGS

In the research, the participants were firstly asked about their views on whether IYEP could be performed via distance education, and the following findings were achieved: While 8 of the participants said that it could be realized, 5' said it could not be realized, 2 of them said that it could be done for some modules, and it could not be done for some, while 7 participants said that it could be done, but it would not be efficient. Some of those views can be found below:

"IYEP can be performed via distance education. This should be supported all the way and put on the agenda. Due to this pandemic we are going through, this opportunity should be offered to students under equality of opportunity in education. When we will be back to face-to-face education, parents who do not want to send their children to school due to coronavirus and students should have this right." (T9)

"I think IYEP can be carried out via distance education. While activities of Resource Rooms are provided via distance education, I reckon that it would do no harm to carry IYEP which is a quite abbreviated version with respect to learning outcomes via distance education." (T19)

Some of the views on the fact that IYEP could not be performed via distance education are given below:

"It could not be performed. Because such students need to be kept under constant control as they become distracted quickly. You cannot make it happen via distance education." (T17)

"IYEP could not be performed effectively via distance education. Because students that are enrolled in IYEP are generally those who failed to express themselves in the classroom and could not receive the necessary help from the parents. Those students should be trained through face-to-face education." (T22)

The following views are about how IYEP could be performed via distance education, but it would not be effective and efficient:

"As a classroom teacher, I think that IYEP would be difficult via distance education, and the desired outcome might not be achieved. For example, when there was a transition to distance education, a planning could have been made for IYEP and it could have continued through face-to-face education like the Educational Support and Catch-Up (DYK) courses. But they did not do that, and if it were to be performed via distance education, it would not be as successful as face-to-face education. Distance education would be insufficient to enable a student who has fallen behind to catch up with the level of their peers. IYEP could be conducted via distance education to a certain extent, but it should be regarded as the last resort." (T2)

One of the views are about how IYEP could be performed via distant education for some of the modules and not be performed for some others:

"Since it is difficult to conduct IYEP with students in need even face-to-face, I do not think it would fit the purpose via distance education. It might depend on the module. For example, in mathematics, module 4 students could be taught via distance education. But I think that module 1, either for Turkish or mathematics, could not be provided to module 1 students via distance education." (T21)

In light of the views given above, majority of the participants thought that IYEP could be implemented via distance education and based their views upon the following foundations: Students who have fallen behind with respect to equality of opportunities in education should be given this opportunity. It could be done successfully with continuous participation of students, attitudes of parents and efforts of teachers. Distance education could be executed in IYEP as successfully as in other courses. In this period during which services of resource rooms can be provided via distance education, it is okay to implement IYEP via distance education as well. Secondly, the participants were asked about the possible advantages of implementing IYEP via distance education; and the findings on their answers are summarized in the table below.

Table 4. Views on possible advantages of implementing IYEP via distance education

Views	f
Technological interest and skills might be increased.	1
Parents might monitor their children and notice their deficiencies more easily.	3
It could enable continuity in courses and make students not be estranged from courses and increase interest in courses.	4
Different senses of students could be addressed through computer environment.	2
It might be an opportunity to fill the gaps in the subjects learned incompletely.	5
It might be advantageous in terms of cost, time, and health.	4
Distance education is better than no education at all.	1
It has no advantages.	2

Views on the possible advantages of implementing IYEP via distance education, as presented in the table, can be exemplified with some of the views below:

"If full participation of students can be ensured, especially in the case of students in rural areas who have no internet access at schools, students can be supported online with visuals and videos in multiple ways of instruction so that they can achieve retentive learning; this is among its advantages. Rather than the fact that a student does not continue IYEP and falls behind compared to the class level, they can make a progress to some extent when IYEP is implemented via distance education. This is also an advantage." (T3)

"It would prevent students from falling behind the gains they should acquire in the educational life. It would make students feel valuable. Since face-to-face education is not much possible during the pandemic, it would prevent students from falling behind their peers greatly." (T16)

As seen from Table 4 and the participant statements, the possible advantages of implementing IYEP via distance education include that incomplete learning could be remediated, alienation from school and courses could be prevented and students' attention could be drawn by addressing different senses. Next, the participants were asked about the possible disadvantages of IYEP if it were to be implemented via distance education, and findings on their answers are given in the table below:

Table 5. Views on possible disadvantages of implementing IYEP via distance education

Views	f
It is disadvantageous for students who has no sufficient technical infrastructure.	2
Teacher's incompetency in technical matters	1
Classroom management, use of materials, methods and techniques are limited.	3
It could become tiresome for teachers.	3
Looking at the monitor for extended times can adversely affect child's development.	1
Student might attend the course less frequently.	3
Difficulty of distance education over face-to-face education.	3
Difficulty in motivating students for the course.	2
Students would have less chance to socialize.	3
It has no disadvantages.	2
Other views.	3

Some of the views summarized in Table 5 can be found below:

"Since students in need for IYEP are already behind their peers, they are disadvantageous. Assuming that another reason for academic failures is financial problems, IYEP via distance education would present a disadvantage for students with no technical infrastructure. Although all conditions would be met, if the teacher is incompetent in technical

matters (for example, use of Web 2.0 tools), it presents another disadvantageous situation." (T1)

"It would be difficulty for teachers to control what students do in IYEP implemented via distance education. It would be hard to notice and overcome problems in terms of notebook use, punctuation and rules of writing. Materials, methods and techniques are limited." (T5)

"While it is already hard with the difficulty in reaching out to all of those students and attending to them one-on-one, it would be harder with distance education and our students would feel that they fell behind their peers." (T6)

"As IYEP students are those who have fallen behind their friends, they need to be taken care of one-on-one. Therefore, distance education might not be much effective on the student. It would harm their eye health. It would prevent them from socializing. They could have problem in concentrating on the course in computer environment. It might be difficult to receive feedback and make assessment-evaluation via distance education." (T16)

Views on the possible disadvantages of implementing IYEP via distance education are concentrated rather on failure to participate in the course due to lack of technical infrastructure, failure to ensure student engagement, decreased socialization, and increased difficulty of classroom management. Howewer, despite all this, it would be an appropriate approach to minimize the disadvantages as much as possible and to improve the procedures.

Next, the participants were asked about what could be done alternatively for IYEP students if the pandemic were to extend, and the answers are summarized in the table below.

Table 6. Recommendations of alternative practices for IYEP students if the pandemic was to extend

Views	f
IYEP courses could continue on Educational Information Network (EBA).	3
Face-to-face education could be offered.	3
Support could be provided with respect to source books and materials.	2
Only these students could be trained through face-to-face education.	4
Parents could be included in the process for parental support and cooperation.	6
Distance education could be continued on online platforms such as EBA, Zoom.	3
IYEP could be revised to accommodate distance education.	1
If IYEP were not to be possible via distance education, deficiencies could be remediated through IYEP, trainings, etc. for fourth-graders as well.	1

According to the views summarized in table 6, majority of the teachers thought that parents should be included in the process for parental support. Other than that, how face-to-face and one-on-one education could be provided for IYEP students was also mentioned. Some of the relevant views can be found below:

"Since EBA TV channels have the widest network of communication, it could be more useful as it does not require equipment such as internet and tablets, but its efficiency is debatable. Modular courses prepared by the ministry could be given by the teachers on EBA and students could be included in IYEP." (T1)

"At the moment, only the third-graders can join IYEP. If IYEP could not be provided via distance education during the pandemic, I think a training course should be opened for these students to make up their deficiencies in the fourth grade." (T3)

"Face-to-face education could be performed at weekends as in DYK. Given the size limitation of IYEP classes, it does not pose a risk in terms of the pandemic." (T12)

"Individual training with such students has been much more efficient. Therefore, individual training at different times rather than training in the classroom environment would be more appropriate for health during the pandemic and would yield individual success in a short time." (T21)

The warnings made by the implementers should be taken into account so that students would not continue their education with incomplete learning if the pandemic were to extend. This procedure is especially of importance to IYEP students who have incomplete learning. Finally, the participants were asked about what they would like to add in terms of IYEP and distance education, and their relevant views are given below:

"... The fact that refugee students have been in more need for IYEP has required certain changes in guidance books." (T1)

"Distance education can never substitute for face-to-face education. There should be a sensory interaction with students. Even though courses in classrooms were suspended at schools during the pandemic, IYEP as a program that involves less students could be implemented face-to-face, and by this means, the situation could be turned into an opportunity for students who have fallen behind in reading-writing or in other courses for unforeseen reasons." (T2)

"I want to talk about especially in the case of big schools. Instead of the multigrade class mentality, individual education could be provided for each grade level. This would alleviate the burden of teacher and enable them to work more willingly." (T4)

"I think all our students should acquire literacy and certain mathematical skills... The fact that classroom teachers were not paid when IYEP started, that they were paid for 1 class hour when there was no teacher participation and that subject-matter teachers were paid for 2 class hours in the support courses negatively affected my perspective of this program. Indeed, it is the case for my colleagues. Is the course I teach less important or less valuable than subject-matter teacher's course?" (T6)

"I think distance education will be in our lives for a while more. That is why participation of IYEP students should be ensured without neglecting them further." (T12)

"It is difficult to motivate students at certain times in daily courses. Therefore, daily courses should be as many as the number of courses in which students can be active." (T17)

The participants mostly emphasized in their statements that there should be cooperation with parents during distance education; programs should be accommodated in consideration of students' attention and motivation; participation in the courses should be ensured without allowing for an increase in incomplete learning; one should attach the required importance to IYEP and teachers need to be paid like in DYK; payment and paperwork affect teachers negatively; the priority is face-to-face education, but when it is not possible, educational activities should alternatively continue via distance education without wasting any time.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First of all, the participants were asked whether IYEP could be implemented via distance education. 8 of them thought that it could, 7 stated that it could but it would not be effective and efficient, 5 thought that it could not, and 2 reported that it would be possible for some modules and not for some others. In some research, the students found activities of distance education implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to be sufficient and useful (Pınar and Dönel Akgül, 2020; Yurtbakan

and Akyıldız, 2020). Similar results were achieved in a study on distance education experiences of primary school students with reading difficulty. In the said study, the students and parents argued that the distance education process was helpful (Sirem and Baş, 2020). In a study examining the views of faculty members on distance education practices in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic, while there were negative points such as lack of infrastructure, unpreparedness for the procedure, and inequality of opportunity for students in accessing the system, the participants found distance education to be positive in terms of ensuring the continuity of emergency education, providing technological literacy, and gaining an unlikely experience (Altınpulluk, 2021). Based on the abovementioned studies, it is possible to draw conclusions that support the implementation of IYEP via distance education.

Secondly, the participants were asked about their views on the possible advantages of implementing IYEP via distance education. In the answers received, it was stated that IYEP was an opportunity to eliminate learning deficiencies, to ensure attendance, to enable parents to follow the student better, to increase students' interest and skills in technology, and to be advantageous in terms of health, especially during the pandemic period.

As a follow-up for the second question, the participants were asked about the possible disadvantages of IYEP to be implemented via distance education. Disadvantages that may occur in the answers received: It can be listed as the decrease in students' participation in the lesson, it can be tiring for teachers and students, socialization opportunities may be less, classroom management may be difficult, and it may cause inequality of opportunity for students who do not have sufficient technical infrastructure.

In the literature, there are results on advantages and disadvantages of distance education in line with the data presented above (Tekin, 2015; Şenkal and Dinçer, 2012; Uşun, 2006; Deveci, 2019). In the case of studies performed within the context of IYEP, in a thesis study in which IYEP was evaluated by teachers and administrators, it was concluded that IYEP's principles, type and content of the program, and its approach to assessment and evaluation are quite effective and that the program is partly effective in its special objectives (Avlukyarı, 2019). In another thesis study, it was stated that IYEP reinforcement for Turkish course affected student achievement positively (Sarıdoğan, 2019). In that study, it was also observed that motivation of the students from upper and moderate socioeconomic levels was affected positively whereas the students the from lower socioeconomic level were not affected. In a research reviewing teacher views on IYEP, the positive aspects as reported by the participants included allowing for the remediation of student deficiencies; opportunity to take care of students individually; increasing confidence among students; and appropriate class size for the procedure. The negative aspects suggested by the teachers included inadequate duration for implementing the program; limited materials; tiresomeness of the program; and wearing students down (Dilekçi, 2019). It was reported in another research in which IYEP process was evaluated by teachers that student selection was not proper, there were missing points in the planning, and it fell short of its goal (Yıldız and Kılıç, 2020). Turkish Association of Education (TED) states in its 2018 educational evaluation report that IYEP has the potential to create a long and retentive effect in the remediation of incomplete learning among students within the program and in their achievements in upper grade levels through learning support in earlier year of education (TEDMEM, 2019, p.137).

Fourthly, the opinions of the participants on what can be done as an alternative practice for the education of the students within the scope of IYEP were taken in case the pandemic process continues. At this point, for students within the scope of IYEP; suggestions such as, receiving parent support, continuing face-to-face education, providing resource books, material support, continuing distance education through online platforms eba, zoom etc. were made.

Finally, the participants were asked what they would like to add within the scope of IYEP and distance education, and in the answers they received, it was emphasized that the

parents should definitely be involved in the education process, and that the scope of IYEP could be expanded to include the 2nd and 4th grades. According to the statement made by the Ministry of National Education, as of January 2022, it has been decided to apply IYEP to the 4th grades as well. The main factor here is that IYEP was not implemented due to the interruption of face-to-face education.

In a research that examined how suitable primary school curricula were for distance education which became widespread following COVID-19, it was concluded that most of the learning outcomes in the curricula could be adapted to distance education and some of the outcomes should be revised so that there would be no loss of learning (Koc, 2021). Therefore, in the periods during which face-to-face education cannot be executed, the abovementioned deficiencies and concerns should be removed to continue assisting the IYEP students. As suggested by Gencoglu (2019, p.876), it is an important endeavor to reduce the risk of falling behind for those students by detecting incomplete learning at early stages and providing support at early ages. Moreover, experiences to be gained in the process could be of use to collect data on the topics including more effective use of technology in face-to-face education, educational practices that combine face-to-face and online methods, and preparedness for distance education in case of emergencies (Yildirim, 2020, p.10). It is essential to take necessary precautions considering that it could cause inequality of opportunities in education for socioeconomically disadvantageous students and that lack of individuals who would guide the use of those technologies could further deepen the inequality (Emin, 2020). Despite some of the disadvantages and risks mentioned above, it is possible to minimize the risks and support IYEP students in need via distance education through good planning and infrastructure. Moreover, given the advantages of IYEP in face-to-face education, it is thought that an experience of IYEP via distance education could provide ideas about future practices so that shortcomings in learning would not accumulate and extend to the next year.

As a result, compensation and support programs similar to IYEP are applied to students in also other countries. In many studies in the literature, it has been stated that such support programs contribute to social justice and equality of opportunity in education (Ozer and Suna, 2021; Cam Tosun, 2021; Ozer et al. 2021; Kocak and Ozdemir, 2019; Tomul, 2009). In addition, it has been seen in studies that these support programs provide many positive contributions to students in terms of social and psychological as well as academic success of students (Rai and Penjor, 2021; Yolak et al., 2019; Rai and Yadav 2016; Kasran et al. 2012).

The following recommendations can be made in light of the research findings:

-Efforts could be made towards remediating the shortcomings within the procedure and eliminating the concerns of teachers, parents, and students.

-IYEP could be revised within the context of distance education and accommodated for distance education after inadequacies have been alleviated in line with relevant studies.

-IYEP courses could be provided on EBA TV.

-Programs could be conducted on several platforms for parents to include them in the process and have their support.

-A separate support in terms of infrastructure could be offered for IYEP students.

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