

Effective ways of teaching in distance education

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to obtain the opinions of primary school teachers about effective teaching methods in distance education. In this study, the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research models, was used. The participant group of the research consists of 32 primary school teachers who gave education in various primary schools in the Astana, Kazakhstan, in the 2021–2022 academic year. Research data were collected with the semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Descriptive analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data. As a result of the research, it was determined that the vast majority of primary school teachers found distance education somewhat effective. The difficulties faced by primary school teachers in distance education applications are inefficient courses, limitations on the internet and computer, low motivation and high level of anxiety and communication problems. Primary school teachers' views on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective has been categorised as providing proficiency training in educational technologies, providing blended learning opportunities, creating interaction

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opportunities, involving the family in the learning process and creating an effective assessment and evaluation environment. In addition, primary school teachers include effective teaching methods in distance education as creating a blended learning environment, creating a simultaneous and divergent learning environment, creating a simultaneous learning environment and creating a different time learning environment.

Keywords: Distance education, teacher opinions, primary school teachers;

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic, which has become a global pandemic, shows its effects not only in the field of health, but also in the economy, education and social fields (Susana, Helena, & Valeria, 2021). The rapid spread of COVID-19, which was first seen in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, has caused social concerns and concerns in many countries of the world. Therefore, many countries have temporarily suspended face-to-face education and accelerated distance education activities. In almost every country, live lessons and online courses have started to be carried out by educational institutions in addition to existing applications to ensure communication with students and parents (Lin, 2020).

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

In order to deliver education services to wider student masses in a higher quality manner, it is necessary to make effective use of all the opportunities of contemporary education technology (Julia, 2020). Meeting all the needs created by the transformations in knowledge, society and culture is only possible with the development of communication techniques and technology and the widespread use of these developments in the field of education (Perraton, 2020). In the most general sense, distance education is defined as a teaching method based on the active use of information technologies for the processing of lessons and facilitating learning, since instructors and students are in different times and places (Demir & Demir, 2014; Yates, Starkey, Egerton, & Flueggen, 2021).

Planning, implementation and evaluation of distance education may differ according to the distance education platforms used. It is important at this point to determine and use the appropriate model from distance education platforms (Williamson, Eynon, & Potter, 2020). Distance education platforms are generally maintained in the form of synchronous and asynchronous distance education. While synchronous education applications are a platform where individuals in the role of learners and instructors take part in the mutual education process by sharing audios and videos at the same time, as in face-to-face education. In asynchronous education applications, the learner can take part in the education process at any time, regardless of the instructor (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020).

Distance education is a discipline that provides an important solution to the inequality of opportunity, provides lifelong education to individuals who desire, contributes to the fulfilment of social and individual goals of education, is based on the benefit of educational technologies and is mostly self-learning of individuals (Syauqi, Munadi, & Triyono, 2020). Learning in online

environments is facilitated and supported through the use of information and communication technologies (Lucu, 2021).

Learning in these environments takes place by distributing course material with tools such as text, sound, video, graphics and animation through the use of communication technologies based on the Internet. Online environments have carried educational practices beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom and made the online interactions between student–student and student–teacher a part of education (Bryson & Andres, 2020). Thus, students have started to interact with teachers/instructors and classmates using both synchronous and asynchronous online communication tools (Simamora, 2020).

The impact of the education and training process, which has been reshaped during the COVID-19 epidemic, is not equal for every student (Kim, 2020).

Undeniable facts are that the importance of developing distance education infrastructure, equipment and education and training practices in order to keep students from being disconnected from education, to minimise the effects of individual and socio-economic differences in education, and to benefit from distance education at the maximum level (Celik & Uzunboylu, 2022). In this direction, determining effective teaching methods in distance education is important for our research (Tartavulea, Albu, Albu, Dieaconescu, & Petre, 2020).

1.2. Related research

Tsipianitis and Groumpos (2018) examined the opinions, expectations and satisfaction levels of 32 undergraduate and graduate students from various geographical and scientific fields about distance education. They stated that distance education offers students a learning environment independent of place, time and place. Students expressed their satisfaction as they were able to access information independently. Marjerison, Rahman, and Li (2020) aimed to determine the perceptions and attitudes of university students who now had to switch to distance education during the global COVID-19 epidemic. In the study, no significant difference was found between the types of universities compared to distance education and it was concluded that their views on distance education were at a positive level.

Baek, Zhang, and Yun (2017) aimed to examine the attitudes of Korean teachers on mobile learning. Looking at the results of the research, it was determined that the attitudes of Korean teachers on mobile learning were generally low, while at the same time, it was concluded that the attitudes of female teachers were more positive than male teachers. Foti (2020) aimed to reveal the perceptions, possibilities and limitations of distance education in kindergartens in Greece, together with the COVID-19 epidemic. The data of the research were collected using a questionnaire and it was concluded that distance education is beneficial but cannot replace face-to-face education.

Dong, Cao, and Li (2020) conducted a survey during the COVID-19 pandemic to determine the attitudes of families of young children learning online rather than in face-to-face classes. It was concluded that parents reject and resist online learning because of young children's inability to

control themselves, the deficiencies of online learning and the lack of time and knowledge about their child's education. The study showed that online learning is a difficult process for parents of young children. Alea, Fabrea, Roldan, and Farooqi (2020) tried to determine the awareness of teachers in the Philippines regarding the COVID-19 epidemic and their views on the readiness of their schools for distance education, as well as the difficulties experienced in distance education. With the 'Teachers' Guide to COVID-19 Awareness, Distance Education Experiences and Institutional Readiness and Challenges', the perceptions of the people was developed. With the questionnaire, it was concluded that the awareness levels of the teachers about the epidemic were high.

1.3. Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to obtain the opinions of primary school teachers about effective teaching methods in distance education. In parallel with the purpose of the research, the following sub-objectives were established:

1. What are primary school teachers' views on the effectiveness of distance education?
2. What are the difficulties faced by primary school teachers in distance education practices?
3. What are the opinions of primary school teachers about the methods to be followed in making distance education effective?
4. What are primary school teachers' views on effective teaching methods in distance education?

2. Methods and materials

2.1. Research method

In this study, the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research models, was used. In phenomenological studies, it is tried to document in their own terms how individuals subjectively experience their own conditions from their own perspectives. Phenomenology studies can make important contributions to both scientific literature and practice. In phenomenology research, data sources directly experience the phenomenon that the research focuses on, i.e., individuals or groups who have lived experiences about the relevant phenomenon and can express or reflect this phenomenon (Patton, 1990). Therefore, in this study, primary school teachers' views on effective teaching methods in distance education were evaluated in accordance with the methodology of phenomenology studies.

2.2. Participants

The participant group of the research consists of 32 primary school teachers who gave education in various primary schools in the Astana, Kazakhstan, in the 2021–2022 academic year. Teachers agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. Of the primary school teachers participating in the study, 12 were female and 20 were male. In addition, 9 of the teachers have 1–10 years of professional experience and 23 of them have 11 years or more professional experience. The teachers participating in the research were selected among primary school teachers with distance education experience.

2.3. Data collection tools

In order to develop the data collection tool, information about the subject was collected by scanning the literature and a draft form consisting of four open-ended questions was created. The draft form was applied to three primary school teachers within the scope of the pilot study. As a result of the pilot study, the semi-structured interview form was given its final form in line with the opinions of primary school teachers. The semi-structured interview form consists of two parts. In the first part, there are two demographic questions aimed at learning the gender and professional experiences of primary school teachers who constitute the study group of the research. In the second part, there are four open-ended questions to obtain the opinions of primary school teachers about effective teaching methods in distance education. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are your views on the effectiveness of distance education?
2. What are the difficulties you encounter in distance education applications?
3. What are your views on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective?
4. What are your views on effective teaching methods in distance education?

2.4. Data collection process

Research data were obtained from the participants in writing. However, the process of collecting the data in writing was carried out in the schools where primary school teachers work, under the supervision of the researcher, with explanations, guidance and comprehensive information about the research. In the process of filling the semi-structured interview form of primary school teachers, interviews were conducted in a quiet environment in a one-on-one time with the researcher and primary school teacher. It took approximately 30–35 minutes for the primary school teachers participating in the research to answer the questions in the semi-structured interview forms. It took approximately 5 weeks to complete the interviews with all teachers.

2.5. Data collection analysis

Descriptive analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to bring together the data collected as a result of interviews and observations with the reader in an organised and interpreted way. Descriptive analysis refers to a four-stage process: (1) creating a framework for descriptive analysis, (2) processing the data according to the thematic framework, (3) identifying the findings and (4) interpreting the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The answers given by the primary school teachers participating in the research to the semi-structured interview form were evaluated by considering the stages of the descriptive analysis method and given in the findings section with frequency and percentage tables.

3. Results

In Table 1, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the effectiveness of distance education are evaluated.

Table 1. Primary school teachers' views on the effectiveness of distance education

Category	Teacher opinions	F	%
I find distance education effective	T-4: I find distance education effective because it creates a learning environment suitable for the technology age for students and teachers.	7	21.9
	T-19: The time savings provided by distance education and the flexibility of the learning environment for learners and teachers transform distance education into an effective education environment.		
	T-30: Of course, there are more difficulties compared to face-to-face training. However, it is no longer possible to isolate technology from education. I think it is an extremely effective educational platform.		
I find distance education somewhat effective	T-9: I am a teacher who thinks that distance education has some limitations as well as effective aspects.	19	59.4
	T-22: I can say that I found it partially effective. It still has insurmountable problems.		
	T-27: I think distance education is a field of education that has pros and cons. So I can say that I find it somewhat effective.		
I do not find distance education effective	T-13: Unfortunately, I think that technology has not shown the expected effect in the field of education. So I can't say that I found it very effective.	6	18.7
	T-14: Distance education is not particularly suitable for primary school education. Student readiness is very low. I do not support.		
	T-32: Distance education; an educational environment in which there is no adequate infrastructure in the field of educational technologies. That's why I don't find it effective.		
Total		32	100

In Table 1, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the effectiveness of distance education are categorised. 21.9% of the primary school teachers participating in the research found distance education effective, 59.4% found distance education somewhat effective and 18.7% did not find distance education effective.

In Table 2, the views of the primary school teachers participating in the research on the difficulties they encounter in distance education practices are evaluated.

Table 2. Opinions of primary school teachers on the difficulties encountered in distance education practices

Category	Teacher opinions	F	%
Lessons are ineffective	T-2: Compared to the lessons taught in the classroom environment, the lessons in distance education are inefficient.	26	81.2

	T-16: I believe that it negatively affects the quality of education in many ways. Lessons are much more efficient in the classroom environment.		
Internet and computer limitations	T-12: Low image and sound quality is among the problems encountered during the training, usually due to problems with internet connection. T-31: Not every student has a computer or there are shared devices at home. Internet outage is also a major problem.	20	62.5
Low motivation and high level of anxiety	Concentrate in distance education. They are quickly distracted. T-26: It is very difficult to keep students interested in the lesson. They are also not as comfortable as in a classroom setting. They are worried.	14	43.7
Communication problems	T-1: Student teacher communication is extremely difficult. No matter how hard we try to create an effective communication environment, it is not very efficient. T-15: I think there is an educational environment that prevents students from establishing friendships with each other. There are communication problems.	8	25

In Table 2, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research regarding the difficulties they encounter in distance education practices are categorised. 81.2% of the primary school teachers answered that the lessons were inefficient, 62.5% of them were limited in internet and computer, 43.7% of them answered low motivation and high anxiety level and 25% of them had communication problems.

In Table 3, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective are evaluated.

Table 3. Primary school teachers' views on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective

Category	Teacher opinions	F	%
Providing competency training in educational technologies	T-4: Teachers have deficiencies in the field of educational technology. These need to be fixed. T-12: Providing professional training on distance education and educational technologies by experts to both teachers and students	25	78.1
Offering blended learning opportunities	T-1: Blended learning opportunities should be created where time is used more effectively. T-19: Blended learning environments should be created in which course materials and topics are pre-recorded and rich learning will take place.	21	65.6
Creating opportunities for interaction	T-13: The interaction between the student and the teacher should be increased. T-32: It should be ensured that opportunities for interaction between students are created.	19	59.3

Involving the family in the learning process	T-6: It should be ensured that family members, who are among the stakeholders of the education process, are included in the learning process.	11	34.3
	T-9: Parents should be given seminars so that they can actively participate in the education process.		
Creating an effective assessment and evaluation environment	T-10: Creative assessment and evaluation methods should be developed in order to increase the effectiveness of distance education.	7	21.8
	T-29: Measurement and evaluation tools should be designed to measure learning.		

In Table 3, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective are categorised. 78.1% of the primary school teachers provide proficiency training in educational technologies, 65.6% offered blended learning opportunities, 59.3% created interaction opportunities, 34.3% involved the family in the learning process and 21.8% of them gave the answer to create an effective assessment and evaluation environment.

In Table 4, the views of primary school teachers participating in the research on effective teaching methods in distance education are evaluated.

Table 4. Primary school teachers' views on effective teaching methods in distance education

Category	Teacher opinions	F	%
Creating a blended learning environment	T-28: I think creating a blended learning environment is an effective way of teaching.	22	68.7
	T-32: I think that the blended learning environment in which distance education is enriched with teaching materials is effective.		
Creating both simultaneous and divergent learning environments	T-3: Making the learning environment suitable for distance education is possible with both simultaneous and different timed courses.	19	59.3
	T-14: I think that simultaneous and divergent learning is an effective way of teaching.		
Creating a simultaneous learning environment	T-15: It can be a simultaneous learning environment. Blended learning environment can be created. I think the methods are suitable for distance education.	12	37.5
Creating a divergent learning environment	T-5:	8	25
	T-8: Learning does not have to take place in the same place or at the same time. A different time learning environment should be created.		
	T-22: I find the divergent learning environment more suitable for distance education. A blended learning environment can also be created.		

In Table 4, the views of the teachers participating in the research on effective teaching methods in distance education are categorised. 68.7% of the teachers created a blended learning environment, 59.3% created a simultaneous and divergent learning environment, 37.5% created a simultaneous learning environment and 25% created a divergent learning environment they have answered.

4. Discussion

The majority of primary school teachers who participated in the study stated that they found distance education somewhat effective. The primary school teachers who participated in the research stated the difficulties they encountered in distance education practices; they stated that the lessons were inefficient, limitations on the internet and computer, low motivation and high anxiety level and communication problems. Primary school teachers' views on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective are providing proficiency training in educational technologies, providing blended learning opportunities, creating interaction opportunities, involving the family in the learning process and creating an effective assessment and evaluation environment.

The primary school teachers participating in the research identified effective teaching methods in distance education, created a blended learning environment, created a simultaneous and divergent learning environment, created a simultaneous learning environment and created a divergent learning environment. In the study conducted by Zhang, Wang, Yang, and Wang (2020), on evaluating the education policies of the Chinese government during the epidemic process, it was mentioned that the inexperience of teachers, the complex environment in the homes of the students as possible difficulties to be experienced in the process were mentioned and it was stated that the government should provide support to students with online learning difficulties.

Kantos (2021) stated that the answers given by primary school teachers to the question of whether you would prefer distance education or face-to-face education were evaluated. In this research, it is revealed that distance education is not suitable for primary school students, and that there are difficulties in communicating with students who lack the internet and technological infrastructure. De Oliveira, Penedo, and Pereira (2018) draw attention to the fact that distance education eliminates the concept of distance and offers alternative ways. Tao and Yeh (2008) conducted studies to determine teachers' views on distance in-service training. As a result of the research, it was revealed that the teachers found the in-service training with the distance education method positive and beneficial, but the teachers' opinions that distance education could not replace face-to-face education due to limited interaction. Yurtbakan and Akyıldız (2020) evaluated the views of classroom teachers, primary school students and parents about distance education activities in their study. As a result of the research, it has been revealed that primary school students and their parents found the distance education applied in the COVID-19 period sufficient because it was instructive, but the classroom teachers found it insufficient due to the superficial explanation of the subjects.

5. Conclusion

Today, a global epidemic is being fought and as a result of this situation, which has spread rapidly to the world, some disruptions have been experienced in education and training activities. Countries had to take a break from face-to-face education and include all students in a system they already use. On the one hand, the students who received the education and, on the other hand, the teachers who gave the education were affected by the methods and practices known as distance education and tried to keep up with the situation. The effectiveness of distance education, which has become the focal point of recent educational practices, has become an issue that the researchers emphasise. Therefore, this research aimed to get the opinions of primary school teachers about effective teaching methods in distance education. As a result of the research, it was determined that the vast majority of primary school teachers found distance education somewhat effective. The difficulties faced by primary school teachers in distance education applications are as inefficient courses, limitations on the internet and computer, low motivation and high level of anxiety and communication problems. Primary school teachers' views on the methods to be followed in making distance education effective; It has been categorised as providing proficiency training in educational technologies, providing blended learning opportunities, creating interaction opportunities, involving the family in the learning process and creating an effective assessment and evaluation environment. In addition, primary school teachers include effective teaching methods in distance education as creating a blended learning environment, creating a simultaneous and divergent learning environment, creating a simultaneous learning environment and creating a divergent learning environment.

6. Recommendations

Various suggestions have been developed in line with the results obtained from the research. The readiness of teachers and institutions that will conduct distance education should be determined and increased. Preparation for content and technical infrastructure should be made. In addition, feedback should be received and necessary adjustments should be made. Pilot applications related to distance education should be made; legal regulations and laws regarding distance education should be prepared in a way that does not leave any gaps. In-service training programmes should be organised for primary school teachers regarding effective teaching methods in distance education. Effective teaching methods in distance education should be added to teacher training policies in universities.

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