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The Comparison of the Adaptation of Public and Private School Teachers to Distance Education during the COVID19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This phenomenological study aims to reveal the adaptation of public and private school teachers in Turkey to distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Purposeful sampling was used to form a study group. The study group consisted of 30 teachers working in Istanbul. A semi-structured interview form was prepared to collect data and interviews were conducted through phone calls or online meetings. The collected data were analyzed by phenomenological analysis. According to the findings, private school teachers were found to try more to acquire alternative skills and competencies and receive online vocational training to adapt to the novel situation and school administrators' performance demands. Participants from public schools did not get enough feedback from their students and parents about the courses they taught and were largely deprived of the support of their colleagues. For them, adaptation to distance education turned into a process carried out with individual efforts. Studies can be conducted in this direction with a view to investigating the relationship between environmental uncertainty, job security and career adaptation based on the findings of this research.

Keywords: COVID-19, distance education, face-to-face education, adaptation, career adaptability

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La Comparación de la Adaptación de Docentes de Escuelas Públicas y Privadas a la Educación a Distancia durante la Pandemia de COVID-19

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Resumen

Este estudio fenomenológico tiene como objetivo revelar la adaptación de los docentes de escuelas públicas y privadas a la educación a distancia durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Se utilizó un muestreo intencional para formar un grupo de estudio. El grupo de estudio estaba formado por 30 profesores que trabajaban en Estambul. Se preparó un formulario de entrevista semiestructurada para recopilar datos y las entrevistas se realizaron a través de llamadas telefónicas o reuniones en línea. Los datos recopilados se analizaron mediante análisis fenomenológico. Según los hallazgos, se encontró que los maestros de escuelas privadas intentaban más para adquirir habilidades y competencias alternativas y recibir capacitación vocacional en línea para adaptarse a la nueva situación y las demandas de desempeño de los administradores escolares. Los participantes de las escuelas públicas no obtuvieron suficientes comentarios de sus estudiantes y padres sobre los cursos que impartían y se vieron privados en gran medida del apoyo de sus colegas. Para ellos, la adaptación a la educación a distancia se convirtió en un proceso llevado a cabo con esfuerzos individuales. Se pueden realizar estudios para investigar la relación entre la incertidumbre ambiental, la seguridad laboral y la adaptación profesional con base en los hallazgos de esta investigación.

Palabras clave: COVID-19, educación a distancia, educación presencial, adaptación, adaptabilidad personal

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact at the global scale, following a different course from the previous health crises in world history. Social life has come to a halt worldwide and economic activities have reached the point of collapse due to social distancing and quarantine practices. This crisis had a two-fold effect on public services. Activities in areas, such as education, have been largely disrupted while efforts have been made to provide public services more effectively in the fields of health, security, social services, and information-communications (Wang et al., 2020). Governments have been torn between the purpose of diminishing potential losses by closing educational institutions and the aim of providing continuous education services. Most governments have chosen to end the activities of educational institutions at all levels in the said dilemma. Formal education has been replaced by distance education on a scale unprecedented in the past. Student assessments have also shifted to distance education platforms. This sudden transition has led to many trial and error attempts, mistakes, and uncertainties. A fair number of educational activities and assessments were cancelled on account of the difficulties experienced in the very process. More importantly, the transition in question is not temporary viz. a short break from formal education. Instead, it is a sudden change that catches all stakeholders of education unprepared and often has negative effects on education systems owing to its long duration (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020).

Turkish government decided to suspend formal education at all levels at the end of March 2020. Distance education option has come to the forefront in order for the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to continue its services and to reach other education stakeholders. The Education Information Network (EIN), which was established in the 2011-2012 academic year, was selected by the MoNE as a service provider in distance education. Distance education activities have started to be carried out through the EIN platform and Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) Institution infrastructure (Özer, 2020). Accordingly, specific TV channels were launched targeting primary school, secondary school, and high school levels, and course broadcasting initiated. Furthermore, teachers were provided with the opportunity to teach through distance education and share the content they prepared. Parents were also given the opportunity to enroll in EIN and follow the status of students

(EBA, 2020). Private schools have also proceeded with their educational activities through their distance education infrastructures (Özer, 2020).

To this end, this study aims to determine the adaptation experiences of teachers working in public and private schools during the transition to distance education. We argue that such studies can help reveal the current global status of the education process in detail, where the COVID-19 crisis is ongoing. In other words, it will be possible to observe the dissimilar accounts of experiences arising from individual outlook of varying sort regarding the effectiveness of distance education activities. It can also be accentuated herein that the results obtained in this study may give ideas about the strategies to be implemented in possible future crises. At this point, it would be fair to state that teachers' experiences of a sudden transition to distance education may vary according to their unique levels of adaptability and readiness.

Examining Adaptation to Distance Education

We attempt to put forth that an adaptation-oriented approach should be embraced so as to examine the efforts of teachers to adjust themselves to a sudden transition to distance education. Furthermore, experiences in the use of innovative technologies lie at the core of this adaptation process. Accordingly, the construct of career adaptability, developed by Savickas (1997) as a component of career construction theory, and the construct of technology acceptance model, developed by Davis et al. (1989), were employed.

Career Adaptability

Savickas (1997) developed career construction theory by considering the salient qualities of business life, such as unexpected changes, uncertainty, complexity and flexibility. Career was usually defined as an upward mobility within a single organization in the past. Howbeit, this conceptualization is insufficient to fully define the careers of most people; because job and organizational changes, transitions between occupations and upward as well as downward movements have widely been witnessed in business life (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Further, professional identities of individuals constantly

change as they interact with their constantly changing external work environment (Bozak & Fidan, 2019).

The three main pillars of career construction theory can be pinpointed as vocational personality, life themes, and career adaptability. Vocational personality is ascribed to the skills, needs, values, and interests of individuals related to their careers. Life themes, on the other hand, are patterns that guide individuals to make meaningful choices and adapt to their roles in work life. Career adaptability is attributed to how individuals build their careers (Bozak & Fidan, 2019). Savickas (1997) uses the concept of adaptation to put together the components of career construction theory in a meaningful fashion. Adaptation is based on the ability to learn or understand in a relatively short time. That is, it refers to teachers' having the flexibility to react to the changes in their work environment, such as sudden transition to distance education, in a short time in this context (Kurt & Fidan, 2021). Career adaptability emphasizes the interaction between teachers and their environment. Thereby, teachers adapt by interacting with the historical and cultural characteristics of their work environment with the difficulties and advantages it poses and constantly rebuild their professional personalities and create their careers (Arastaman, 2019).

Career adaptability covers the dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and self-confidence, according to Savickas (1997). The concern here is teachers' prioritizing their professional future and willingness to prepare for potential future obstacles. Teachers with high(er) career concern possess the ability to plan and are aware of the obstacles and opportunities they may encounter. Indifference to the professional future increases as the level of concern decreases. Control is teachers' having control over their professional future and ability to make independent decisions about their choices. Teachers who have control over their careers are determined individuals and own the ability to make their own decisions without being influenced by others. They are willing and disciplined to overcome the obstacles they face. The level of indecision increases as the level of control decreases (Koç, 2019). Curiosity is teachers' willingness to learn about the tasks they want to undertake and the opportunities they want to take advantage of. Teachers who are curious about their careers are inquisitive in nature and like to explore opportunities. They do not hesitate to try new things and take risks whilst overcoming the obstacles they come across. The likelihood of unrealistic expectations and goals

increases as the level of curiosity decreases. Self-confidence is teachers' belief that they can prevail over the difficulties and obstacles they confront. Teachers with self-confidence have problem-solving skills and the capacity to easily influence other people. They are stubborn about overcoming obstacles. The level of inactivity increases as self-confidence decreases (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012).

Technology Acceptance Model

Technology acceptance model (TAM) seeks to portray how information technologies, i.e., distance education infrastructures, are adopted by users. Within this scope, it endeavors to explain factors influential in the adoption of such technologies. According to TAM, two beliefs are effective in teachers' adaptation to distance education technologies: (1) perceived usefulness and (2) perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness denotes the increase at teaching performance by using distance education technologies whereas perceived ease of use refers to the usability of these technologies by teachers with minimum effort (Davis et al., 1989; Han & Sa, 2021). These two beliefs are shaped by individual differences, such as readiness, previous experience and willingness, and external factors, like social influence, societal and organizational expectations, performance expectations of school administrators and perceived organizational support (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Teachers' Adaptation to Distance Education

Teachers constantly face changes throughout their careers. Some of these changes, such as changes in education programs, are spread over a relatively long period of time, and others occur suddenly, as in the COVID-19 crisis. The duration of changes indeed has a decisive effect on the adaptability of teachers. Teachers usually have enough time to acquire the knowledge and skills required by relatively slow changes. That said, sudden changes, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, often do not give any adequate time to education systems and teachers for adaptation. Such changes come to the agenda with their negative effects on teachers as well as the new opportunities they might create (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020).

It can then be argued that the sudden transition from formal education to distance education on the grounds of the COVID-19 pandemic creates adaptation pressure on teachers in this frame of reference; since they had to move teaching activities to a virtual environment that they were not familiar with or did not use very often in the past. Teachers who are not competent in using technology have difficulty adapting to such immediate changes (Neuwirth et al., 2020). On this point, teachers' career adaptability comes into play, because career adaptability constitutes a strong psychological basis for teachers to overcome the obstacles they face. As teachers' career adaptability increases, their self-efficacy levels also increase, and they have a more optimistic attitude about their professional future. Furthermore, career adaptability leads to higher self-efficacy in the use of technology in education, more openness to change, and allocating more time for professional development (McLennan et al., 2017).

However, this process can be shaped by the individual characteristics of teachers and the impact of the work environment. To cite an example, belief in the usefulness and effectiveness of information processing technologies, such as distance education platforms, can facilitate the adaptation process. In addition, the level of readiness to use technology positively affects the adaptation process. Teachers with experience in using such educational tools in the past can adapt more easily (Holden & Rada, 2011). Factors arising from the work environment, such as environmental expectations and the frequency of use of such technologies in the work environment, can force teachers to adapt to the new situation (Teo et al., 2008) as well. To illustrate, private school teachers are under severe pressure of effectiveness stemming from the attitudes of school administrations and parents. This may lead them to make more efforts for adaptation (Koç, 2019). Similarly, it becomes easier for teachers to adapt to new technologies when the use of technology is an integral part of school culture. Moreover, trainings on the use of new technologies can assist in teachers' developing more positive perceptions about the ease of use (Teo et al., 2008).

In that event, we proffer that the process of adaptation of teachers to distance education is influenced by the interaction between individual characteristics and environmental factors caused by the sudden change. In light of these discussions, this study aspires to reveal adaptation experiences of public and private school teachers to distance education during the

pandemic. For this general-purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How has the sudden transition from formal education to distance education affected public and private school teachers?
2. What are the methods, techniques, and materials used by teachers in distance education?
3. What kind of professional concerns did teachers experience during the transition to distance education?
4. How did the sudden transition to distance education affect teachers' control over their work?
5. What kind of new interests did the sudden transition to distance education lead teachers to develop in terms of professional development?
6. How did the sudden transition to distance education affect teachers' self-confidence in professional issues?

Method

A phenomenological study design, a type of qualitative research, was deployed for the major aim is to explain and interpret how teachers experience adaptation to distance education phenomenon. Phenomenological studies are oriented toward attaining the essence of an experience via questioning how people experience phenomena. Paradigmatically speaking, in phenomenology, individual subjectivity emerges as a result of the interaction of individuals with life and world which is a social, cultural and historical product (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Participants

The study group consists of 30 teachers working in primary and secondary schools in Ümraniye district of Istanbul in the 2019-2020 academic year. Of these participants, 15 work in public schools and 15 in private schools. The maximum variation sampling strategy, one of the purposive sampling types, was used in the research. Both the differences in the phenomenon investigated and the diversity observed in the participants experiencing the phenomenon are taken into consideration with the maximum variation sampling strategy (Sandelowski, 1995). Utmost care was taken to ensure that their professional

experience and gender were divergent when selecting participants in this framework. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

No	Nickname	Gender	Experience (Years)	Subject
1	PU-CLS-1	Male	20	Classroom Teacher
2	PU-CLS-2	Male	19	Classroom Teacher
3	PU-SOC-3	Female	8	Social Studies
4	PU-CLS-4	Female	12	Classroom Teacher
5	PU-TUR-5	Male	7	Turkish
6	PU-TUR-6	Female	14	Turkish
7	PU-MAT-7	Female	5	Math
8	PU-SCI-8	Female	8	Science
9	PU-MAT-8	Male	5	Math
10	PU-ENG-9	Male	8	English
11	PU-CLS-10	Female	13	Classroom Teacher
12	PU-ENG-11	Female	7	English
13	PU-SCI-12	Male	5	Science
14	PU-ENG-14	Female	17	English
15	PU-CLS-17	Female	4	Social Studies
16	PR-CLS-1	Female	13	Classroom Teacher
17	PR-CLS-2	Female	11	Classroom Teacher
18	PR-ENG-3	Male	5	English
19	PR-SOC-4	Male	12	Social Studies
20	PR-MAT-5	Female	7	Math
21	PR-SCI-6	Male	3	Science
22	PR-CLS-7	Male	3	Classroom Teacher
23	PR-CLS-8	Female	16	Classroom Teacher
24	PR-CLS-9	Female	2	Classroom Teacher
25	PR-CLS-9	Male	4	Science
26	PR-MAT-10	Male	9	Math
27	PR-SOC-12	Female	13	Social Studies
28	PR-TUR-13	Female	10	Turkish
29	PR-ENG-14	Female	7	English
30	PR-TUR-15	Male	11	Turkish

As shown in Table 1, 18 participants were male and 12 were female. Each participant was entitled a pseudonym in the study to warrant anonymity. The abbreviation "PU" was used for public school and "PR" for private school to share the type of organization.

Data Collection Tool

The interview method was preferred to collect data. In order to develop a semi-structured interview form, the literature on career adaptability and technology acceptance model was reviewed and preliminary interviews were conducted with four teachers. It was assured that the questions prepared in the interview form were open-ended. We conducted interviews with each participant one-on-one online or over the phone in view of obligatory social distancing on those days.

Data Collection

We arranged online appointments with the school principals after selecting the schools to conduct the study in and asked the principals for permission to make interviews with teachers. Afterwards, we made a contact with teachers through phone calls or other online platforms and gave detailed information about the research. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time without stating any excuse. One-to-one interviews were carried out with all participants. Voice-recording or note-taking options were offered to the participants and the interviews with all participants were voice-recorded upon getting their approval.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological analysis generally follows the processes of analyzing significant expressions, creating meaning units and developing descriptions of the essence of experiences. The phenomenological analysis method proposed by Moustakas (1994) was chosen in this study. This method first requires the researchers to read the interview texts several times. In the next stage, the expressions (codings) related to the experience investigated are enlisted (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This process is also called

horizontalization. It alludes to giving equal importance to each expression related to the experience researched and to each participant from whom data are collected. The reduction and elimination stages come after horizontalization. At these stages, each expression, listed at the previous stage, is re-examined according to the criteria as to whether it contains necessary and sufficient parts of the experience to understand the experience and whether it can be categorized. Expressions that meet the mentioned criteria can be described as the horizon of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Recurring expressions can also be regarded as indicators of data saturation. As a matter of fact, saturation refers to the moment when new information or theme is no longer observed in the data (Sandelowski, 1995).

After this stage, the components of the experience are clustered and transformed into themes. For this, it is necessary to confirm the data saturation in the previous stage and to wholly diagnose the expressions pertaining to the experience. It may be suggested to conduct iterative questionings, which is one of the techniques to address trustworthiness in qualitative studies in this regard. Researchers can make use of this technique to identify conflicting and suspicious data and to reach in-depth descriptions of the experience as clustered and classified components constitute the core of the themes related to the experience (Arastaman et al., 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Fixed components and themes should be finally diagnosed after the clustering and thematization stage is completed. Put differently, it is crucial to verify the validity of the components and themes. This process is performed by testing the compatibility of the components and themes with the interview texts. Components and themes are accepted as valid provided that they are fully and clearly expressed. In the event that they are not clearly expressed in the interview texts, they must be consistent with the interpretations and experiences indicated in these texts. In the next stage, the components and themes that are formerly validated are transformed into textual descriptions by each researcher. Textual descriptions comprise the meaning and essence of the experience and are more about the content. Subsequently, structural descriptions that are associated with the conditions affecting the emergence of the experience are prepared. Textual and structural descriptions are combined to developed composite descriptions at the last stage (Moustakas, 1994).

Analyses and descriptions were made separately by the researchers in this study and it was found out that the components and themes overlapped 85%.

Frequent sessions were held to arrive at a common opinion on the components and themes that could not be agreed upon by the researchers beforehand. What is more, two expert field members of Educational Administration and Supervision were asked to scrutinize the research process so that their opinions and criticisms could be received. Addedly, the early results of the study were presented at an international congress and submitted to the opinion of field experts. With an eye to insure participant check, interview transcripts were also sent to the participants to get their approval about the congruence between the transcribed versions of the interviews and what they meant to convey (Arastaman et al., 2018).

Results

Results are presented as six themes. These themes were named as follows: (1) an obligatory farewell to classrooms, (2) methods, techniques, and materials used in online teaching, (3) concerns over professional competencies, (4) losing and regaining control over career: what was noticed during the pandemic?, (5) finding the way out of the chaos: curiosity about professional development, and (6) rebuilding self-confidence after shock.

An Obligatory Farewell to Classrooms

The sudden transition to distance education was an experience that aroused negative feelings for the participants working in public schools. They punctuated that they were negatively impacted by the sudden departure from the classroom environment (f=10), because the pessimism caused by the sudden change (f=9) and the sense of emptiness (f=9) resulted in anxiety about adapting to the new situations (f=17). That means, the idea of not being efficient in providing education to students (f=4) got materialized for these individuals.

> I was negatively affected. I thought our work would remain unfinished. I realized I wouldn't be useful enough to our students PU-CLS-2

Participants working in private schools reacted to the sudden transition to distance education in two ways. Some uttered that they were caught unprepared (f=13), and others stressed that they made preparations for the process by updating their plans right before the COVID-19 outbreak (f=7). Nevertheless, an excessive effort was required to adapt to the sudden change in both cases (f=12). Although confrontation with a different situation aroused excitement (f=12), anxiety about productivity (f=12) and uncertainty (f=11) had emerged; since the effectiveness expectations of school administrations and parents (f=10) and the lack of readiness about distance education infrastructure (f=9) fed the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.

> I wasn't sure if we were ready for distance education germane to infrastructure. There was an uncertainty in parents and students. Nobody knew exactly what we were going to do. We were not prepared for such a situation PR-ENG-3

Methods, Techniques and Materials used in Online Teaching

Participants working in public schools underpinned that they could not make enough effort to develop methods and techniques suitable for the new situation despite the pressure caused by the sudden transition to distance education (f=10). The participants executed complementary activities viz. giving homework/assignments and they checked these through social media (f=7), maintaining communication with parents and students using the WhatsApp application (f=6), sending presentations via e-mail (f=5), and using software that offers the opportunity to video talk (f=3) bearing in mind that the courses were mainly conducted through the EIN TV and EIN platform of MoNE.

> When I try to use resources other than EIN, I have difficulty in providing successful feedback and security. I try to complete the process by using applications such as Google classroom etc. other than EIN or by creating WhatsApp groups to deal with these challenges. PU-SCI-8

Participants working in private schools highlighted that they oftentimes turned to technology-based methods and techniques in the distance education

process (f=13). Thence, they had to adapt the course activities and subjects to the home environment (f=9) and transform them into outside-class work assignments (f=8). Audio and video recordings (f=9) and presentations (f=9) were resorted to extensively to communicate the activities and topics to the students. Such methods and techniques had been used intensively especially in social science disciplines and counted as factors that could enhance the quality of the teaching process (f=7). On the flip side, problems existed in certain courses by means of the inability to use methods and techniques such as question-answer, discussion and learning by practicing used in face-to-face education during distance education (f=4). For instance, the inability to control students while performing mathematical operations (f=8) and the inability to perform literacy and comprehension studies (f=7) pointed to the need for technological tools and platforms that can provide stronger teacher-student interaction (f=8).

> The materials I use in the distance education process generally include Zoom, audio, video recordings, presentations, and materials in the home environment. I adapted my activities and subjects to the home environment and shifted to the activities that students can do in the home environment, not in the classroom environment. PR-SCI-6

Concerns over Professional Competencies

Most of the participants working in public schools were of the opinion that distance education could not replace face-to-face education (f=15). To put differently, they regarded distance education as a temporary practice (f=9), therefore they did not see any uncertainty about their professional future (f=14) and did not feel anxiety (f=14). Besides, effective and sustained interaction with students and parents (f=1) prevented some participants from having doubts about their professional competencies. With that being said, the problem of prolongation of distance education (f=4) and the question as to how to normalize crowded environments such as schools after the pandemic (f=5) aroused anxiety in teachers. They also brought about a decrease in job satisfaction of some participants (f=4) while such anxieties put pressure on the participants to improve their technology usage skills (f=5).

> The transition to distance education does not mean that there is no education. We enroll in online seminars provided by the MoNE and take steps to further develop our profession in order to improve ourselves. I don't see any uncertainty about my profession. PU-TUR-5

Participants working in private schools italicized that for the most part they realized the weight of information technology skills (f=15). Because teachers, who were unfamiliar with the technology, got involved in difficult experiences during the transition period (f=9) and feared of losing their jobs in case of failures (f=7). Likewise, there was a concern that the need for teachers might decrease providing distance education became widespread (f=4). Concerns about professional competence made the participants make more efforts to raise themselves (f=9). They searched for means to do more professional work and research (f=9) to acquire alternative skills and competencies (f=8), and received online professional training to adapt to the new situation (f=7). Some even included the option of switching from the private sector to the public to reduce uncertainty (f=6). Verily, distance education had also created new opportunities. A number of participants contemplated that they could give private lessons online (f=6).

> I think teachers, who can integrate technology into education, can think analytically, find quick solutions, and keep the student under control in spite of the attractiveness of technology, will become even more qualified than before. In my viewpoint I can handle this process thanks to my age and my predisposition to technology and my other characteristics. I don't know if I can be a much-preferred teacher after this change, but I think I can manage the situation. PR-CLS-1

Losing and Regaining Control over Career: What was noticed during the pandemic?

Participants working in public schools realized the importance of face-to-face interaction during the pandemic (f=13) and that they were more sociable than they thought by dint of social isolation (f=4). They mostly could not maintain the efficiency they were able to enact in face-to-face education in online education (f=11) and endured difficulties in classroom management during

the distance education process (f=5). Notwithstanding, the participants apparently acknowledged that there could be learning environments outside the classroom (f=9). Abilities and characteristics that they had not been able to observe in classroom settings were discovered in their students given the effects of new learning environments (f=4). In a similar vein, the participants unearthed their skills in self-discipline and planning by virtue of the obligation to work independently during distance education process (f=4). It was revealed that the participants should attach more importance to technology (f=11) and engage in an effective dialog with parents to successfully carry on with education in these learning environments (f=12).

> Face-to-face education with my students had a positive effect on me. I'm not satisfied with uploading and sending documents remotely. And when we had math classes, I was able to determine whether the children understood or not through their eyes. Now I just hope they can understand. PU-MAT-9

Participants working in private schools realized that during the pandemic, learning could take place primarily outside the classroom (f=9) and that it was not something to be afraid to address an audience through online communication by going to the screen (f=8). Participants had the chance to compare the positive and negative aspects of working from home and at school in this process (f=7). Discovering the predisposition to online education (f=8) and the ability to adapt quickly to sudden change (f=8) are underlined amongst the positive aspects. Participants' skills in technology usage (f=11), exploration (f=11) and humor (f=5) showed improvement in this frame. Yet, the feeling of inadequacy felt by reason of the sudden transition to distance education (f=7), difficulty in concretizing the subjects (f=7), feeling of loneliness caused by social distancing practice and individualization (f=5), and longing for a school environment full of students (f=4) were voiced among the negative aspects. Obviously, sudden changes demanded the participants to better understand the importance of teacher-parent cooperation (f=13).

> I used to think it took courage to go online and talk to an audience. However, some of the necessities of the process and the fact that we found ourselves in the online education process made me think that

> this was not as difficult an education method as feared. There was a sudden transition to the process that we were expected to pass in five to ten years under normal circumstances. PR-SOC-4

Finding the Way out of the Chaos: Curiosity about Professional Development

A low level of readiness for distance education infrastructure for participants working in public schools emerged as the main problem area. Participants needed to develop their skills in digital resource supply and use (f=12) as well as content and activity production (f=14); because they typically did not have any distance education experience before (f=12). There were even teachers who did not have any ability to use technology (f=8) or the internet infrastructure (f=10) required to maintain distance education. Teachers had difficulty in producing content on a platform they had not experienced before, particularly when the ready-made content (EIN) presented with the distance education infrastructure was insufficient (f=8). The second problem area was the inability of some students to access distance education infrastructure in the wake of financial inadequacy (f=6) and the inadequacy of the readiness of those who could access distance education infrastructure (f=9). This was also closely connected to the third problem area: interpersonal relations. The sudden transition to distance education yielded a weakening of cooperation between teachers in the same group (f=7) and teachers' communication with parents and students (f=9). To rephrase, teachers did not get enough feedback about the courses they took (f=4), they were largely deprived of the support of other department friends, and adaptation to distance education turned out to be a process carried out with individual efforts.

> I wasn’t caught off guard. We continue to work by transferring some responsibilities to parents as much as possible without interrupting our communication. We expect feedback from them. PU-SCI-13

The main problem caused by the transition to distance education for participants working in private schools was that the level of readiness for distance education infrastructure used was insufficient. Adaptation to the platforms and programs in use (f=9) and digital education technologies (f=8) manifested as a challenging task at this point. Because online teaching

experiences of participants working in private schools were often not sufficient (f=12). This led teachers to create professional interests in content (f=10) and activity production (f=11), adapting curricula for distance education (f=9), conveying topics of social science disciplines to students by concretizing them (f=10), and classroom management in distance education (f=5).

> It would be a serious convenience in this process if I had a graphical tablet to write or draw in digital media. Because everyone wanted to buy it, their prices tripled, and they are not available on the market. I also feel insufficient to produce content in the digital environment. PR-TUR-15

6. Rebuilding Self-confidence after Shock

Participants working in public schools pointed out that they had three different experiences about their self-confidence. Some participants brought out that sudden transition had no effect on their self-confidence (f=10). Some participants felt insufficient because they could not use technology (f=8), while some participants interlineated that their self-confidence increased because they managed to teach in a virtual environment (f=2). Anxiety caused by uncertainty (f=5) and lack of knowledge and experience (f=2) were the reasons why these participants went through a loss of self-confidence.

> I don't think my knowledge or experience are at sufficient levels. This causes a decrease in my self-confidence. Because the education I received and the education we provide have not been prepared according to these conditions. Much more extensive work is necessitated for this situation. I think individual studies are not enough for teachers. PU-TUR-5

A prominent factor affecting the self-confidence of participants working in private schools was the recognition of the need to develop their skills related to distance education infrastructure and software (f=10). It has been a challenging experience for participants who had previously adapted themselves to face-to-face education to teach in an empty room without the intense interaction of the classroom environment (f=7). Aside from this, this

strengthened communication with families over time and facilitated professional development by creating new feedback opportunities (f=5) even though it at first made participants nervous knowing that families watched these lessons during online lessons. Previous experiences with the use of technology, positively affected the self-confidence of the participants. To exemplify, previous experiences with participation in television or radio programs of teachers had a self-confidence enhancing effect during adaptation to distance education (f=5). Participants' belief that they could prevail the technology used in distance education had strengthened (f=9) as they adapted to distance education infrastructure and platforms over time. Participants who discovered that they could help their colleagues, students, and parents with using these technologies strengthened their self-confidence in this process (f=8).

> My self-confidence boosted because I felt equipped with technology. I felt more active in mastering technology, using technology in lessons, guiding students and parents, and even when helping my colleagues. PR-CLS-7

Discussion and Conclusion

The sudden transition to distance education with the COVID-19 pandemic was described as a negative and worrying experience by the participants working in both public and private schools. Correspondingly, Neuwirth et al. (2020) asserted that the majority of educators were reluctant to switch from face-to-face education to distance education, because classrooms are predominantly deemed as unrivaled interaction environments by educators. The participants in private schools had to make more efforts to reach their students and learn methods and techniques suitable for distance education based on the sudden transition to distance education. In this instance, Koç (2019) suggests that job security in the public sector might reduce teachers' willingness to adapt to the sudden change. The fact that private schools appeal to a smaller audience than public schools and the pressures of financial and administrative effectiveness on school administrations might force teachers to make more efforts to protect their jobs (Koç, 2019).

The effects of the public-private school difference led the participants to have different levels of concerns about professional issues. As an illustration, participants working in public schools affirmed that they did not see any uncertainty about their professional future as distance education was seen as a temporary practice. Withal, concerns about professional competence led participants working in private schools to make more efforts to train themselves. It can be proclaimed that this result is consistent with previous research results in the relevant line of literature. Maggiori et al. (2013) concluded that the uncertainty caused by the lack of job security in the private sector might spark professional concerns in employees. More pressure occurs on employees because they do not have enough information about what performance is expected from them and how their performance will be evaluated as the level of uncertainty increases during sudden changes. Private sector employees primarily choose to respond to such situations by elevating their adaptation levels (Urbanaviciute et al., 2020). By the same token, participants working in private schools tried to do more research, acquire alternative skills and competencies and receive online professional training to adapt to the new situation depending on the uncertainty and performance demands of administrators and parents.

Participants reported that the pandemic helped them to realize the importance of face-to-face interaction in education. Equivalently, Aguirre and Selampinar (2020) dwelled on that teachers in the classroom environment could easily detect their students' needs and would know how they could help them through face-to-face interaction, but they lost control over the teaching process during distance education. Anyhow, participants came to realize that there could be learning environments outside the classroom setting. On the basis of the effect of new learning environments, they could get the chance of observing students' different abilities and characteristics that they would not see in classroom settings. To be more specific, highly motivated students were able to continue their education by creating a learning environment outside the classroom environment with their individual efforts (Dhawan, 2020). Additionally, we allege that the distance education process led the participants to better understand the importance of teacher-parent cooperation because teachers were able to regain control over the teaching process they lost during the sudden transition in this way. Uniformly, Bubb and Jones (2020) claimed that distance education had increased parental participation. Parents gained

more knowledge about their children's education and assumed more important roles than they had ever undertaken before in this process (Bubb & Jones, 2020).

Alternately, participants propounded that teacher-teacher and teacher-parent cooperation had not been established at the desired level particularly in public schools. Participants working in public schools did not get adequate feedback from their students and parents about the lessons they taught. They were largely deprived of the support of other colleagues, and adaptation to distance education evolved into a process carried out with individual efforts. Participants working in both public and private schools had difficulties in producing content and activities, adapting curricula for distance education, teaching topics belonging to disciplines of social sciences students by concretizing them, and in classroom management in distance education. This also negatively affected their self-confidence. Consequently, a compulsive curiosity materialized among participants in these fields (Öztürk, 2021; Ayyıldız, 2020). They tried to provide meaningful educational services to students as much as they could. With that being said, the isolation caused by the obligation to work from home deprived participants of the support of their other colleagues and administrators (Kaden, 2020). Consistently, Merril (2020) declared that existing lesson plans and programs remained dysfunctional during the pandemic. Teachers had to cope with their lack of knowledge and adapt to new technologies very quickly. The self-confidence of those who overcome such challenging tasks escalated whereas the self-confidence of others decreased (Merrill, 2020).

The fact that participants had to cover their lack of knowledge and emerging interests with their individual efforts by way of isolation, was mentioned among the factors increasing their anxiety levels and hindering their adaptation efforts during the pandemic (Talidong & Toquero, 2020). One of the methods participants utilized to combat this anxiety was to develop their interaction with students. The inability of some students to access distance education infrastructure as per financial insufficiency and the insufficiency of the readiness of those who could access distance education infrastructure negatively affected the adaptation process of the participants, as demonstrated in this study though. There are researchers who found similar results in the literature. As an example, Mailizar et al. (2020) implied that the most important obstacle faced by teachers during distance education was due to

students. The incapability of some students to access distance education infrastructure due to socioeconomic opportunities, lack of sufficient skills to use the infrastructure, and decreased learning motivation were shared as the pivotal problems faced by teachers in the distance education process (Mailizar et al., 2020). Hall et al. (2020) and Bond et al. (2020) also adduced that distance education practices conveyed social inequalities among students to the digital environment and even deepened existing inequalities due to students with access problems.

Practical Implications

The sudden transition to distance education during and the post-period of COVID-19 will lead to a questioning of educational administration theories and practices; because the chaos and uncertainty caused by COVID-19 have led to forced digitalization by eliminating traditional face-to-face interaction. Administrators, teachers, students and parents as shareholders had to inevitably adapt to the change in space, tools, methods, techniques, measurement, and evaluation, and classroom management caused by the global pandemic. Thereupon, it may not be decent to solely draw on the change theories to describe the effect of such system-level sudden shocks since the readiness of educational employees, students, and parents may not be equal or the impact of the platforms and contents used may be different for each student. Therefore, one can enumerate that theory development studies should focus on explaining system level sudden shocks and forced changes and determining the factors that may lead to the differentiation of people's reactions and adaptations.

On top of these, the sudden transition to distance education led to a multidimensional inequality problem. Differences can be diagnosed in the access opportunities of students to distance education and the level of ability to use distance education infrastructures and content for those who can access it. We could infer that this situation may lead some students not to receive proper education and to fall behind their peers. We insist that the effects of digital equality/inequality should be examined in this sense.

The participants who do not have experience in distance education technologies or who have not participated in such education programs in the past have difficulties in adapting to distance education. Equally, participants

had to deal with their lack of knowledge and emerging interests with their individual efforts caused by isolation. Superior organizations (i.e., school districts, departments and ministries) responsible for governing education systems and public and private school administrations need to designate platforms to make sure that communication between distance education stakeholders is enabled without disruption. It would also be beneficial to organize series of professional trainings for teachers to acquire new skills and competencies key to the adaptation to distance education. Seminars on topics, such as drawing attention, receiving feedback, evaluation techniques in the digital environment and content production for the digital environment can facilitate teachers' adaptation to distance education. It should also be noted that the differences in the adaptation efforts of participants from public and private schools can give clues to public school administrators about in which areas educational improvement is needed. This is because the differences may be caused by the distinctive cultures of individual schools rather than working conditions of teachers in public schools.

Limitations and Further Research Implications

This study was conducted with a small group of teachers working in public and private schools in a district of Istanbul; thusly, its results may not be transferred to larger samples or to other studies conducted with different participants. It is noteworthy to record that studies to be conducted with teacher groups residing in different settlements or with large samples may generate different results.

Studies can be designed to investigate the relationship between uncertainty, job security and teachers' professional adaptation. The effects of sense of loneliness and decreased collaboration with colleagues while teaching in digital environment on education can be scrutinized. Studies can be carried out on how the increasing role of parents and parental expectations affect teachers' professional adaptation in the distance education process. It may also be suggested to conduct studies on inequalities caused by the inability of some students to access distance education infrastructure in consideration of the financial insufficiency and the lack of the readiness of some of those who can access distance education infrastructure.

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