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Weaknesses in Emergency Remote Teaching in Higher Education Within the Context of the ODL Learning Component in Turkey

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Abstract

In critical situations caused by crises such as a pandemic, emergency remote teaching (ERT) practices might not be effective because they depend mostly on on-the-spot decision-making. On the other hand, open and distance learning (ODL) has its own dynamics and is a well-planned system. In order to put quality ODL plans into practice in crisis situations, contingency plans, created before any crises, are required. Past crises ought to be examined in order to cope with future crises effectively. This study aims to identify weaknesses in ERT practices in higher education within the context of the learning component of ODL system by focusing on COVID-19 and using it as an example of a past crisis. Exploratory case study was the method used. The study group consisted of 14 faculty and 14 learners from 14 higher education institutions. Qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews and documents. The data were analyzed using descriptive and content analysis. Research findings revealed that ERT has many weaknesses in several themes within the context of the learning component of the ODL system; these include teaching method, course structuring, and e-learning materials, among others. In light of the findings, it can be concluded that many factors influence challenges in ERT. Accordingly, to be able to move from ERT to ODL in the next crisis, these weaknesses need to transform into solutions in advance.

Keywords: weaknesses in emergency remote teaching, ERT, open and distance learning, ODL, higher education, crisis, COVID-19

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In crisis situations like pandemics, although positive steps are taken toward ensuring continued delivery of education, the abrupt switch to using distance education technologies may also involve initiating poorly planned instructional practices. In these situations, the solution to ensure the continuity of education might be emergency remote teaching (ERT), where rapid solutions are produced with sudden decisions, instead of the more ideal open and distance learning (ODL), which is well planned and accounts for contextual dynamics (Hodges et al., 2020). Pre-crisis planning is thus needed to implement proper ODL practices in crisis situations (Burns, 2020). To achieve emergency preparedness for other potential crisis situations, the limitations involved in the ERT processes will determine any proposed solutions first, and then the instructional design of higher learning will be revised by analyzing how the educational transformation will be made and how distance education can be implemented more effectively during the post-crisis period (YÖKAK, 2020). In addition, considering that ODL is a system composed of management, learning, interaction, technology, assessment and evaluation components, and each of these affects the whole system, ERT practices should be systematically evaluated as well. However, a review of the literature shows that the studies examining ERT practices have not been carried out within a systematic framework—for example, a systems approach—and the study groups are mostly limited to individuals in a program or an institution in qualitatively designed studies (Alasmari, 2021; Kaya & Işık, 2021; Lassoued et al., 2020; Valsaraj et al., 2021). The purpose of this study is therefore to identify the weaknesses embedded in ERT in higher education within the context of the *learning* subsystem of ODL. The following research question guided this study: What are the shortcomings of ERT implemented in higher education regarding the learning component of the ODL system?

Related Studies

Various studies have revealed weaknesses in ERT. Valsaraj et al. (2021) showed that most faculty feel that they lack skill-based knowledge needed to deliver online education. Dhawan (2020) revealed that learners and instructors in various universities had not previously experienced online learning, and most were content with traditional education methods. In the study by Kaya and Işık (2021), learners reported that instructors needed to improve their technology skills and engagement of learners through interactive lectures, that they could not acquire skills in applied courses, that they did not take distance education as seriously as traditional education, and that they lacked motivation. Song et al. (2020) showed that inexperienced instructors needed training in using online technologies and integrating asynchronous discussions into online teaching. Lassoued et al. (2020) reported that some of the barriers to quality ODL were learners' low motivation to participate in distance education, faculty's disbelief in the effectiveness of distance education, learners' and instructors' reluctance to practice distance education, and inadequate skills needed to use technology. Alasmari (2021) found that 42.2% of the participants had low skill levels for using computers and the Internet, and this had a negative impact on their full inclusion in the course. Frangou and Keskitalo (2020) revealed that learners in ERT needed help in reducing their workload. Valsaraj et al. (2021) determined that the most important challenge in ERT was to engage learners. In addition, some studies have reported the inability to effectively carry out clinical and laboratory practices

in the field of nursing and medicine via ERT to be a negative factor (Kürtüncü & Kurt, 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021; Sarı et al., 2022; Sindiani et al., 2020). According to a study by TÜMA (Karadağ & Yücel, 2021, p. 15), most learners did not find the e-learning materials offered in ERT to be engaging and of high quality. Oliveira et al. (2020) found that learners were burdened by a high level of cognitive load in ERT, as online lessons were taught without a break. Omodan (2020) revealed that technological inadequacies and inexperience resulted in the use of teacher-centered methods. Arayüz Kampanyası (2020) showed that some instructors viewed the process as temporary and therefore had low motivation toward ERT, and some participants did not approve of the time limit for access to course recordings on the grounds that it reduced the possibility for learners to review them later. The study also revealed that institutions were offering their online course recordings late or not at all, and lecture presentation varied between synchronous lectures only, online course recording, or document sharing. Additionally, there were practices in which the instructor was informally substituted by assistants.

Conceptual Framework of Study

Perraton's theory of distance education consists of elements from existing theories of communication and diffusion, as well as philosophies of education. One of the 14 statements asserted by the theory is "a systems approach is helpful in planning distance education" (Simonson et al., 2015, p. 49). Considering that ERT needs to be transformed into ODL in the next crisis, using a system approach will be helpful in examining ERT as well. By reviewing the literature, ODL components are considered as management, learning, interaction, technology, and assessment and evaluation by the researcher (Eby, 2013; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). The focus in the current study is on the *learning* component of ODL under the sub-components including learners, faculty, learning materials, teaching method, and course structuring.

Methodology

Research Design

An exploratory case study design was used in the current study. Creswell (2007, p. 73) defines *case study* as a qualitative research approach in which one or a few situations with certain boundaries are discovered over time by collecting in-depth information with multiple data collection tools such as observation, interview, audio-visual materials, documents, and reports; additionally, the situation and themes related to the situation are defined. Depending on the purpose for which it is carried out, Yin classifies case study into three categories: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (Yin, 1981, p. 110; 1994, p. 38; 2003, p. 3). Focusing on the question of "what?" makes a case study exploratory (Yin, 2003, pp. 5–7). In the current study, an exploratory case study was used to seek in-depth answers to the question of what the weaknesses of ERT in higher education are as part of the learning component of the ODL.

Participants

The study participants were 14 faculty and 14 learners from 14 higher education institutions in Turkey. The criterion sampling method was used in the study. In the selection of the higher education institutions, the

following criteria were used: (a) representing all seven geographical regions in Turkey, (b) representing both foundation and state universities, and (c) representing universities that have above- and below-average distance education satisfaction scores reported in the *Distance Education Turkey University Satisfaction Survey [TÜMA]* (Karadağ & Yücel, 2021), which collected quantitative data from 42,353 learners studying at 198 universities, including 125 state and 73 foundation universities. The criterion of having taken a course in the ERT process was used to select the learner participants who formed the study group. The criteria of having given lectures in the ERT process or having taken part in administrative processes were used to determine the faculty participants. From among the institutions meeting the determined criteria, institutions where the researcher could easily contact faculty and learners were included in the research. To keep the identity of the higher education institutions included in the research confidential, codes 1 and 14 were assigned to the institutions. The characteristics of the selected higher education institutions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Higher Education Institutions

Institution code	Region	Type	TÜMA (Karadağ & Yücel, 2021) distance education satisfaction average
1	Mediterranean	State	Above average
2	Mediterranean	State	Above average
3	Eastern Anatolia	State	Below average
4	Marmara	Foundation	Above average
5	Southeastern Anatolia	State	Below average
6	Marmara	State	Below average
7	Central Anatolia	Foundation	Above average
8	Aegean	State	Above average
9	Central Anatolia	State	Below average
10	Eastern Anatolia	State	Below average
11	Southeastern Anatolia	State	Below average
12	Black Sea	State	Above average
13	Aegean	State	Above average
14	Black Sea	State	Above average

After selecting institutions, 14 volunteer faculty and 14 volunteer learners representing each were included in the study.

Data Collection

In case studies, data can be collected through interviews, records, documents, visual materials, and observations (Yin, 1981). The data in the current study were collected through interviews and review of documents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 28 participants, including 14 learners and 14 faculty. The ODL literature was reviewed during preparation of the interview questions (Eby, 2013; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). To increase the clarity of the questions, the subcomponents of the learning component, such as the learner, the faculty, the course structure, the teaching method, and the e-learning materials, which were created by the researcher by reviewing the literature, were also included in the research question. Before the interviews, experts were consulted for their opinion on the questions, and a pilot interview was conducted with a learner and a faculty member. The same interview questions were used both for the faculty and learner participants. The interviews took place between February and May 2022. All interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded with participants' consent.

The documents examined to inform the research were the senate decisions taken during the ERT process, 2020–2021 internal evaluation reports, 2020 quality assurance in distance education reports, ERT activity reports, and guides and survey results of the 14 institutions. The variety of documents accessed by the researcher were different depending on the institution.

Data Analysis

The data were first subjected to descriptive analysis and then to content analysis. *Descriptive analysis* refers to the summarization and interpretation of qualitative data according to the previously determined themes that form the conceptual framework of the research. The data summarized and interpreted by descriptive analysis are further deepened by content analysis. In content analysis, interrelated data is organized under certain themes (Baltacı, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Pope et al., 2006; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 224). As such, the data obtained were first organized considering the themes of the research: the learner, the faculty, the course structuring, the teaching method, and the e-learning materials. Afterward, the data that were not related to the themes but were related to each other were gathered under certain themes. An additional theme, Traditional Education and ERT, was determined. Finally, content analysis further deepened the themes, and the data related to each other were gathered under subthemes. The participants' statements and the data obtained from the documents are presented with direct quotations. The code (F) for faculty members and the code (L) for learners are used in presenting the quotations. In addition, the institutions were coded as University 1 (U1), and so on.

Results

Based on the themes and subthemes that emerged as a result of the descriptive analysis and content analysis, the weaknesses in ERT are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Weaknesses in Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) According to Themes and Subthemes

1. Teaching method

Failure to adopt learner-centered approaches

- Failure to adopt learner-centered approaches by faculty member and staff
- Learners not thinking that they need to actively participate in online lessons.

2. Traditional education and ERT

Transfer of the traditional education problems into ERT

- Failure to adopt a learner-centered education approach in the traditional education system
- Failure to instill a learning culture in the learner
- Transfer of learner/faculty behaviors in traditional education to ERT (faculty who did not interact with learners in traditional education courses and learners with low learning motivation exhibited similar behaviors in ERT)
- Faculty lacking the ability to use the software/programs related to their major, lack of necessary equipment, and insufficient physical conditions based on the majors, even in traditional education

3. Learners and faculty

The absence of learners' and faculty's ODL readiness

Learners:

- Lack of motivation to learn (not taking lessons seriously with the feeling of being away from authority)
 - Lack of self-regulation skills (attending online classes without creating healthy learning environment, engaging with extracurricular stimuli on the Internet, inability to sustain attention online)
 - Lack of awareness of being a distance learner (not participating in asynchronous activities [discussion forums, etc.], not attending synchronous classes with the understanding that they can watch the course recordings later)
 - Lack of scientific literacy skills (reaching and examining scientific publications)
 - Lack of ability to take responsibility for one's own learning (prefer not to engage due to lack of authority)
 - Lack of experience in distance education (being unfamiliar with the culture of distance education)
 - Lack of technological competencies
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Faculty:

- Lack of pedagogical competencies (increasing interaction in processes such as course presentation, content creation, assignment, enriching course presentation with various media)
- Lack of technological competencies (the need for information on software that can be used in distance education and the use of functional features of these software)
- As a result of the overall negative perception created by the lessons of instructors who do not have sufficient pedagogical and technological competence in distance education, the current ideal course environments are also negatively affected, and the instructors who are already highly motivated experience a loss of motivation as a result of the decrease in learner participation

Learners' failure to embrace distance education

- Belief that distance education cannot be efficient
- Lack of motivation for obtaining distance education proficiency as the ERT is seen as temporary

Failure to follow learners' progress

- Inability to track the extent to which learners have completed their course modules
 - In order for the learners to appear as having watched the course, it is sufficient for them to just click on the relevant link in the system
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4. Course structuring

Arbitrary learning–teaching practices

- The variability of educational practices depending on the instructor, the negative reflection of this complex process on the learners (some faculty deliver or do not deliver synchronous lessons, offer or do not offer asynchronous lesson materials)

Using a single mode of technology in the delivery of lessons

- Completely asynchronous structuring of courses due to reasons such as lack of technological infrastructure (learners without Internet access or institution without distance education infrastructure)
- Fully synchronous or completely asynchronous structuring of the course in line with instructor preferences

Failure to apply course designs in accordance with the philosophy of distance education

- Lack of modular course designs allowing the learner to progress at their own pace
- Online classes kept too short or too long

Failure to ensure course integrity due to the fact that the same course is taught alternately by different instructors (incompletely covered topics due to instructor switches)

Not presenting synchronous course recordings to learners in an organized manner

- Late or incomplete uploading of course recordings to the system
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- Instructors who never upload their course recordings for personal reasons (copyright, arbitrary reasons)
 - Not recording or uploading courses due to technical issues (the tools used do not offer free course recording, the speed of uploading to the system is slow)

Ineffectiveness of applied courses

- Ineffectiveness of the lessons requiring methods such as demonstration
- Inability to obtain efficiency in situations where physical intervention with the learner is required
- Not allowing learners to have sufficient practice time in the synchronous lessons where the show-and-make method is used
- No later makeup lessons for applied lessons that were not effective

5. E-learning materials

Negative consequences of policies related to the accessibility of e-learning materials

- The content for which access is limited to a semester cannot be revisited when needed
- Lesson participation in synchronous classes is lower when course recordings are offered without access restrictions

Insufficient variety of e-learning materials

- Misconception that the scope of asynchronous course material is limited to synchronous course recordings
- Lesson materials mostly limited to presentation/Microsoft Word formats
- Lack of instructor competence regarding the provision of rich media in the presentation of the content

Lack of sufficient discipline-specific, Turkish language–supported OER that instructors can offer learners

- Learning materials limited to presentations due to lack of OER

Note. ERT = emergency remote teaching; OER = open educational resources.

Teaching Method

Most of the learners and faculty stated that teacher-centered methods were used in the ERT process. In this regard, U6 F noted that “The philosophy of distance education was definitely not implemented, only distance education technologies were used.” The U3’s institutional internal evaluation report (2020) stated that “theoretical instruction, mostly in the form of instructor presentations, was applied as a teaching technique.” Additionally, according to U14’s online attitude evaluation report (2021), nearly half of the learners who answered the survey did not think that they should actively participate in online courses.

Traditional Education and ERT

Some learners and faculty stated that traces of the traditional education system were evident in ERT practices. For instance, U14 F stated that ERT shows them they failed to instill the culture of learning in

learners: “These 60 learners not attending online classes will be reluctant teachers in the future because we failed to instill the culture of learning in them. Online education has made that clear as well.” U13 F stated: “We still cannot model the constructivist approach in our system. We have observed a learner profile that repeats their offline behaviors in the online classroom.” U4 F noted that “the lazy [learners] will be lazy, no matter what, and the hardworking [learners] will be still hardworking. But you have to set up the online system. If you do not, eager learners will not learn online either.” In addition, U5 L stated: “We have shortcomings even in our face-to-face system. I do not have a studio in my cinema and television department and faculty who can use Adobe Premiere, or After Effects. Online learning is yet another set of problems.”

Learners and Faculty

Learners were observed to have various inadequacies in areas such as learning motivation, self-regulation skills, distance education experience, awareness of being a distance learner, being an independent learner, scientific literacy, and technological competence. Instructors were found to have pedagogical and technological inadequacies. U14’s survey form findings (2020) document reported that “the readiness levels of learners and faculty members are quite low due to reasons such as lack of equipment and tech skills, Internet shortage, and self-efficacy in learning.”

Regarding the low learner motivation, U11 L stated: “We were used to the comfort at the time. While we attended classes, some learners left in the middle.” In addition, U14’s distance education learner satisfaction survey results report (2020) stated that “learner responses about the courses show that they are negative about the effectiveness of distance education courses and unwilling to participate in them.”

Regarding the lack of self-regulation skills of the learners, U11 F stated: “They write that they are on the minibus right now and cannot answer. The learner should sit at the desk as if they were attending a regular face-to-face lesson.” As U1 L stated, “There is a bed on one side and food on the other. You can access other Websites as well. So, there is no motivation.”

Regarding being an independent learner and the distance education experience, U11 F stated: “Online education is still foreign to our culture. There are many learners getting online just to pretend to be participating in classes.” As U13 L stated: “We express our ideas more easily in face-to-face learning. Or we feel compelled to participate. We did not participate because there was no such obligation when it was remote.” U12 L added: “We were raised with traditional teaching methods throughout elementary, middle, and high school. When we started classes on such a [distance] platform, we were surprised at what happened.” In addition, as reported in U14’s online attitude scale evaluation report (2021), “25.77% of the learners answering the questionnaire stated that they could make up for the lessons they could not understand by themselves via online learning, while 46.84% stated that they could not.”

According to some participants, the awareness of being a distance learner was not at a sufficient level. U4 F stated the following:

A group of instructors not knowing how to go about it were trying to support a group of learners not knowing what distance education is about, how to manage their time, access resources, prioritize courses, prepare for the exam, handle this job when they are by themselves.

U6 F stated: “While we were building the LMS [learning management system], we included discussion forums for each course, but they were not used much. Faculty members and learners did not seem to know the purpose of these” U6 L said: “Learners do not attend the synchronous class with the understanding that they can watch the recorded version of it later.” In addition, the online attitude scale evaluation report (2021) of U14 stated that “21.68% of the learners answering the questionnaire think they are aware that they should come to the online lesson more prepared, while 49.2% do not think so.”

Regarding the scientific literacy of the learners, U12 F stated the following: “I’m not sure about the learners’ ability to read academic texts. Some of the prerequisite skills that they should have for distance education are critical. I don’t think they have these skills.” Additionally, U12 F stated that some learners did not have technological competencies: “There were many learners having trouble even getting on Google.”

Some faculty stated that they did not have sufficient pedagogical competence in distance education. For example, U13 F said: “We need examples, models and impositions on how our existing course contents, teaching styles, or assignment styles can be enriched more interactively.” As stated by U12 F: “The distance education process requires a different set of instructional competencies. All faculty members need training on learner participation, course presentation, and giving assignments in ODL.”

Some faculty stressed that they lacked technological competence for distance education. For example, U14 F reported the following: “You do not know which program to use, the features of the program and you get stressed. It also affects efficiency.” Some learner participants also stated that faculty did not have technological competence. For instance, U2 L noted: “I realized that the faculty did not understand much about technology in this period. There were people who couldn’t even use a computer.” In addition, U2’s document about education monitoring and guidance commission decisions (2020) pointed out the deficiencies in the technological competence of the faculty:

Instructors’ inability to use Adobe Connect application effectively (not knowing how to transfer the image to the screen, activate learner voices and images, use the blackboard) to use the Learning Information System effectively (not knowing how to enter exam dates into the system, having problems uploading documents, failure to upload documents on time).

Furthermore, U3 F stated the following:

A faculty member may be very enthusiastic, but if another faculty member does not know anything, the learner gets bored after a while, which has a demotivating effect, triggering learner absenteeism. When the instructor sees a decrease in the number of learners attending the course, the motivation of the eager faculty member also plummets. The management takes no steps in this regard either.

Some of the participants reported that learners did not adapt to distance education well. As noted by U5 L: “There is a problem with learners’ acceptance of the distance learning method. The administration may have campaigns to encourage its use.” U1 L made the following comment: “In our subconscious, we have the idea that distance education cannot replace face-to-face education. I don’t think I can adapt to it.” In addition, U2’s document about education monitoring and guidance commission decisions (2020) reported

some sources of learner dissatisfaction with the ERT as follows: “Disliking and not embracing distance education, nor viewing distance education as a substitute for face-to-face education.”

U14 F stated that learners’ digital footprint could not be tracked during ERT: “I think most of the recordings are not watched by the learners because it was enough to click on the link to prove that they have watched it. If we had a minute-by-minute tracking system, it would be better.”

Course Structuring

The lessons were observed to be under-planned and arbitrarily structured. For example, U5 L made the following comment: “There were those who sent PDF, there were those who did not. There were those who taught live lessons, and those who did not. It wasn’t very healthy. It was completely personal.”

In the period of transition to ERT, there were institutions where the courses were structured completely asynchronously due to technological infrastructure inadequacies. For instance, U6 L said: “At the first time, I was at the point of dropping out of the course. It was always asynchronous. In the summer, the system became better.” U11 F stated: “As our learners do not have Internet access, we only held the lessons by uploading PDFs. But we have been running it through UZEP [LMS] for the last year.” In addition to these, U5 F pointed out: “At first, live lessons were not required, but later on, they became compulsory.”

Some faculty were observed to limit the presentation of the courses to the use of a single type of technology. As reported by U12 L: “We used to watch the videos shot before taking the exams. The instructor wouldn’t do the online sessions.” As in the words of U5 L: “There were those who taught live, and there were those who just uploaded PDF files. There were also those who sent both a PDF and lecture notes and gave live [lectures] at the same time.”

U14 L drew attention to the necessity of modular course designs that allow learners to progress at their own learning pace: “If the professors prepared all 12 weeks at first. Maybe I could finish the five-week course in one week and learn other things in my remaining time.” Additionally, some learner participants stated that some courses were too short or too long. For instance, U8 L stated that “some lessons were long. There were block lessons lasting 90 minutes.”

U4 L pointed out another matter: “In the same lesson, four or five faculty were teaching certain subjects alternately. When one of them left the subject incomplete, it stayed incomplete.”

Some participants stated that synchronous course recordings were not presented to learners in an organized manner. For example, U13 L noted: “It was said that the lessons were recorded synchronously, but they were added to the system too late. Or a certain part of it was missing.” U13 F, from the same institution, stated: “Some of the learners cannot find the courses of some weeks even this semester.” Additionally, U14 L noted the following: “Course recordings were not presented most of the time. Even if it was recorded, instructors could not upload the recording to the system due to upload speed and copyright problems.”

Other participants reported that synchronous course recordings were not presented to learners in an organized manner. As stated by U10 F: “Whether to record the lessons or not was up to us. It was not enforced or monitored.” U12 L stated: “Google classroom used to allow recording, and it was recorded on

Drive by faculty. It doesn't allow that anymore. It has become a paid one, and those who miss the online lesson cannot watch the recording again."

Some of the participants stated that the applied courses were not effective during the ERT. For instance, U9 F commented that "there were moments where we wanted to see the learner's hands-on application, and tell him that he was not doing it right, so the efficiency decreased." U6 L stated: "Our faculty were sharing screens in courses such as software and MATLAB. While listening to the lecturer, we could not work with him at the same time because we could not catch up." Regarding the compensation for the courses, U10 L noted: "While we should have learned the applied course on-site, we were taught theoretically, and it was inefficient. No compensation could be made because the time had passed." Additionally, according to U13's report on distance education satisfaction survey results (2020), 79.4% of the learners thought that distance education restricts learning applied courses.

E-Learning Materials

Some institutions had a limit on the period of accessibility of e-learning materials offered on the system, whereas some others did not impose a time limit. U9 L noted: "Semester courses are disappearing. I am very sad because quality contents suddenly vanishes." On the other hand, U14 F stated:

I was putting a time limit on a weekly basis, then some students mentioned that they could only access the Internet when they go to the city because they live in the village. Then we removed this restriction. These course recordings also significantly reduced synchronous class participation.

Some learners stated that the e-learning materials presented in the ERT were insufficient. For example, U1 L complained: "The only thing we used was PowerPoint or Word. It was not enough." U4 L added: "We had difficulty in getting PDFs of some courses. They didn't upload it. Some just put videos without any PDFs. There were major shortcomings." In addition, U2's report on an education evaluation survey for 2019–2020 stated the following: "22% of the learners do not think that the teaching materials are sufficient and up-to-date." In the distance education evaluation survey report (2020) conducted in the same institution, the following was reported: "Another often-recurring negative theme is the inadequacy of distance education methods and materials."

Some faculty further stated that e-learning materials were mostly limited to presentations. U1 F stated that "the teaching materials were problematic. You can't teach a class just by preparing slides." U9 F noted: "We shared the PowerPoint presentations that we used in our earlier lessons. I can say that almost none of the faculty members used the e-learning materials that the learners could read and reflect about on their own."

One faculty member stated that instructors needed information on how to provide rich media. U13 F said: "We needed trainings on how to enrich the content." Another faculty member noted there was a misconception that the scope of asynchronous course material was limited to synchronous course recordings. U6 F stated: "Unfortunately, all the lessons were synchronous and their recordings were called asynchronous material."

U14 F emphasized the lack of open educational resources (OER): “Electronic contents such as video or Web pages is very insufficient in in the field of Special Education in Turkish language. Although I tried to show videos and share resources, they were in English, and the class do not know it well. So, you’re left with PowerPoint presentations and your own lecture.”

Conclusion, Discussion, and Implications

The results indicate various weaknesses involved in learning during ERT. Regarding ODL preparedness and distance education perceptions of learners and faculty, the findings in the current study show similarities to those found within the literature. For example, Valsaraj et al. (2021) found that most faculty felt they lacked the skills needed to deliver online education. Arayüz Kampanyası (2020) revealed that some instructors viewed the process as temporary and therefore had low motivation to teach through ERT. Song et al. (2020) showed that inexperienced instructors in online learning have knowledge needs regarding the use of online technologies and integrating asynchronous discussions into online teaching. Lassoued et al. (2020) found that reasons such as low motivation of learners toward distance education, faculty not believing in the effectiveness of distance education, reluctance to practice distance education, and learners’ and instructors’ inadequate technology skills are some of the obstacles to quality distance education. Additionally, other studies revealed learners had low motivation to learn in ERT, and they lacked planning and independent learning skills (Frangou & Keskitalo, 2020; Kaya & Işık, 2021). Some studies have found that to increase the readiness of learners for distance education, it is necessary to include activities that instill responsibility in the learner, such as assignments, small group discussions, or individual tasks (Kauffman, 2015; Tabor, 2021). According to the findings of the current study, some learners do not want to take responsibility and have low motivation to learn. Therefore, motivational factors that can enable learners to take responsibility for the ERT process should be considered.

Regarding the applied courses, Kaya and Işık (2021) revealed that learners could not acquire the skills in the applied courses in ERT, which caused them to feel inadequate. Lassoued et al. (2020) found that the difficulty of learning in some applied courses was considered an obstacle to quality distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some studies have suggested that clinical practices and laboratory courses in the fields of nursing and medicine could not be carried out effectively in ERT (Kürtüncü & Kurt, 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021; Sarı et al. 2022; Sindiani et al., 2020). Regarding applied courses, the findings in the current study are generally similar to those of other studies.

In the context of structuring the courses and synchronous course recordings, which are other themes/subthemes of weakness, Arayüz Kampanyası (2020) showed that there were higher education institutions that limited the access of course recordings to a term, as well as institutions that imposed certain time limits. Some learners did not support the time limit because it restricted their ability to review. Some institutions offered course recordings late or not at all. Also revealed were various approaches to presenting lectures, such as synchronous classes, asynchronous course recordings, and document sharing only. Our research findings have similarities to above-mentioned findings of the study by Arayüz Kampanyası (2020). In addition, a finding of the present study—course recordings without access

restrictions reduce participation in synchronous courses—shows that the services offered cannot be properly used by learners.

Regarding course durations, Oliveira et al. (2020) reported that learners stated they were exposed to a too high cognitive load in ERT, and one of the reasons for this was the lectures delivered without a break. Mukhtar et al. (2020) found that learners considered limited attention span as one of the limitations of online learning. Similarly, the current study revealed that keeping online classes too short or too long is one of the weaknesses in ERT.

Regarding weaknesses in e-learning materials and teaching method, Schlesselman (2020) found that in ERT, faculty transferred their face-to-face courses online without any adaptation. The TÜMA report (Karadağ & Yücel, 2021, p. 15) states that most learner participants did not find the e-learning materials offered in ERT to be original or of high quality. Chierichetti and Backer (2021) revealed that what most instructors did in ERT was teach synchronous classes following the face-to-face schedule, using PowerPoint presentations in the lessons. This study shares similarities with the findings of mentioned studies in terms of insufficient variety of e-learning materials.

Regarding OER, O’Keefe et al. (2020) stated that in an emergency, there may not be sufficient time to create a rich online course environment, in which case, instructors can turn to existing OER such as COOL4Ed or MERLOT. However, the lack of sufficient Turkish-supported OER is one of the weaknesses identified in this study.

Another weakness revealed by the current study was the inability to track the extent to which the learners completed their course recordings and the fact that learners only needed to click on videos in the system to have it appear that they watched the course lesson. Some measures can be taken against these problems. For example, LMSs can statistically present how much of each video is watched, and the digital footprints of learners can be tracked by organizing asynchronous activities.

To conclude, higher education institutions are encouraged to consider the weaknesses in ERT revealed in the study and to create an action plan for ODL so that they are prepared for future crisis situations. Additionally, future studies using larger sample sizes, focusing on identifying weaknesses in ERT within the context of the other components of ODL, should be carried out.

Limitations

Some limitations in the present study include a small sample size and a limited variety of data sources. Even if the data were collected through interviews and documents, most data were collected through interviews. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be easily generalized.

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