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An investigation of distance education activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic

Betül Balkar

Abstract: This study investigates the distance education activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the field of education in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic. The distance education activities of NGOs, practices of NGOs assisting distance education, and principles adopted by NGOs in the distance education activities during the pandemic were examined in the study. In this qualitative descriptive study, the distance education activities of NGOs during the pandemic were evaluated through document analysis. The activity reports of ten NGOs for the year 2020 were analyzed as part of the document analysis. The NGOs whose activity reports were addressed were selected using maximum variation sampling, thus reports from NGOs operating in various educational areas were examined. Activity reports were subjected to content analysis using an inductive approach. According to the results, distance education activities of NGOs during the pandemic mostly focused on the creation of digital content and materials, as well as the development of online education programs. The notion of decreasing inequalities in terms of access to education has guided the majority of distant education initiatives of NGOs during the pandemic. The activities of NGOs have been especially effective in preventing digital use divide in society and providing teachers with pedagogical agility.

Keywords: distance education, non-governmental organizations, COVID-19 pandemic, transition to distance education, document analysis

Highlights

What is already known about this topic:
- The emergency transition to distance education with the COVID-19 pandemic has caused various problems in accessing distance education.
- In the emergency transition to distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many educational institutions did not have the institutional capacity to respond effectively to emerging needs. This situation necessitated the involvement of various actors such as NGOs in meeting these emerging needs.

What this paper contributes:
- This research clarifies the role that NGOs can play in reducing inequalities in access to distance education. Thus, the research will contribute to the prevention of inequalities arising from digital divide in education.
- The research may contribute to disseminate the activities of NGOs for various stakeholders in education by identifying the activities that are effective in improving the quality of distance education.

Implications for theory, practice and/or policy:
- NGOs should carry out the trainings of distance education competencies they developed for teachers in cooperation with schools. Such collaborative practices can help solve the problems arising from the lack of teacher competencies.

- Groups that need support in distance education should be inclusively determined from social, economic, cultural and professional perspectives to strengthen the role of NGOs in reducing inequalities in access to distance education.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a global transition to distance education at all levels of education. Since the transition to digital education due to COVID-19 cannot be called online education, the concept of emergency remote teaching is used to describe this new situation (Hodges et al., 2020). While there is an institutional infrastructure for the realization of teaching in online education, it is tried to provide teaching in emergency remote education without an existing or appropriate infrastructure support (Rapanta et al., 2020). While teaching takes place as a result of instructional design and planning in online education, in emergency remote education, there is a temporary transition to an alternative delivery mode in education depending on the crisis and distance solutions are used in education (Hodges et al., 2020). Therefore, the transition to distance education in the pandemic is considered as part of emergency remote education.

Many educational and societal concerns have arisen as a result of the unprepared transition to distance education in many nations. Among these issues, students', and institutions' lack of readiness for distance education (Rehman et al., 2021), infrastructure deficiencies such as poor internet connections and lack of computers (Bokayev et al., 2021), and the inability of parents to adequately support students' learning at home (Azhari & Fajri, 2021; Kruszewska et al., 2020) have come to the forefront. Comparable to the global issues, problems such as infrastructure inadequacies due to a lack of internet connection and computer (Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020; Seyhan, 2021), insufficient support from families and insufficient communication with students and parents (Avcı & Akdeniz, 2021; Demir & Özdaş, 2020), unsuitability of course materials for distance education (Altınpulluk, 2021), the inadequacy of course resources (Seyhan, 2021), and teachers' inexperience in distance education (Avcı & Akdeniz, 2021) have been encountered in Turkey.

The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in the social and educational systems (Williamson et al., 2020). In addition to the difficulties that families faced in financing distance education, the fact that poor families directed their children to work due to economic reasons during the pandemic caused school dropouts, whereas families who sent their children to private schools required more government assistance due to the income shock (Khan & Ahmed, 2021). However, the rapid transition to distance education has prevented governments from responding swiftly enough to put up the necessary financial resources and implement the necessary transition arrangements (Azhari & Fajri, 2021). As a result, regulations that stimulate economic activities and initiatives are required to ensure that the pandemic does not negatively impact society, particularly the ones experiencing socioeconomic disadvantages (Khan & Ahmed, 2021). A holistic vision should be adopted with the collaboration of all stakeholders in order to support disadvantaged children and schools through such policies (Williamson et al., 2020). As a result, to carry out distance education in terms of equal opportunity during the pandemic, other actors who can contribute to education should be included in cooperation policies, and effective practices should be implemented at the local level under the central level guidance (Gray & Jourdan, 2021).

Williamson et al. (2020) highlighted that digital disparities cannot be remedied merely by giving access and that this issue has a social dimension. Accordingly, they argued that social work is required to organize, develop, and promote an inclusive digital future with long-term and holistic thinking. At this point, it is expected that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the field of education will be effective in supporting the distance education process in terms of being an important stakeholder in education and actively participating in social development in order to shape an inclusive digital future. Since educational programs of NGOs are primarily focused on children and schools, they are viewed as a tool for realizing social development (Park et al., 2015). The active engagement of NGOs in education may guarantee greater funding for education, promote equality in access to educational opportunities,

and lower the financial burden of the government (Gali & Schechter, 2021). Since NGOs may fulfil both their autonomous advocacy and service-providing roles, the support of well-structured NGOs in the provision of educational services, particularly in challenging conditions, should be received (Batley & Rose, 2010). Thus, NGOs are expected to contribute to satisfying societal requirements by taking an active part in meeting the urgent demands that occur during crisis situations such as pandemics.

According to the statistical data of the Information System for Associations (DERBİS) of the Directorate General for Relations with Civil Society (n.d.), there were 117,980 NGOs operating in Turkey in 2019, and 121,213 NGOs in 2020. In 2021, there are 121,354 NGOs operating in Turkey (Directorate General for Relations with Civil Society, n.d.). Consequently, the number of NGOs in Turkey tends to grow despite the pandemic. According to the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TÜSEV) survey on "the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on non-governmental organizations operating in Turkey" issued in April 2020, the demand for the operations of roughly 62% of NGOs has grown, and 43% of NGOs will engage in various fields in addition to their primary activity (TÜSEV, 2020a). Online education, online volunteering, online working systems, and education with digital technologies are among these emerging fields (TÜSEV, 2020a). According to the second report of TÜSEV, issued in September 2020, the necessity for the operations of 65% of NGOs has risen, and 32% of NGOs will work in diverse fields in addition to their primary activity (TÜSEV, 2020b). Digital transformation (16.28% of NGOs that will operate in different fields besides their main field of activity) and education (4.65% of NGOs that will operate in different fields besides their main field of activity) are two of these emerging fields (TÜSEV, 2020b). At the same time, 52% of NGOs work directly to empower disadvantaged communities (TÜSEV, 2020b). Thus, these statistics demonstrate that the demand for online and digital activities of NGOs has grown in Turkey as a result of the pandemic.

Online education is viewed as an essential component of the future normal in education because it lowers the marginal cost of education, lowers the cost of operating educational institutions, and provides flexibility by being sensitive to the constraints and demands of learners (Xie et al., 2020). Although technical difficulties arise during the transition to distance education, the ability of both students and teachers to adapt to this rapid change in teaching methods demonstrates the long-term potential of online education (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020). It is anticipated that distance education will provide additional education alternatives after the pandemic, and it will promote equality and increase innovation in education (Xie et al., 2020). Therefore, in the course of transition to distance education during the pandemic, it is critical to establish what has been done and what may be done not only by central actors but also by those actors who can contribute to education, in order to enhance distance education (Bokayev et al., 2021). NGOs included in these non-state actors carried out distance education activities due to lack of infrastructure and socioeconomic inequalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These activities of NGOs are considered within the scope of supporting emergency remote education. The active role of NGOs operating in the field of education in ensuring equal educational opportunities, and the fact that receiving assistance from NGOs in times of crisis is an accepted policy indicate that the potential of NGOs to contribute to the transition to distance education during the pandemic should be determined. As a result, the aim of this study is to investigate the distance education activities of NGOs engaged in the area of education in Turkey in the course of the transition to distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the answers to the following questions were sought:

1) What are the distance education activities of NGOs during the pandemic?
2) What are the distance education supportive practices of NGOs during the pandemic?
3) What are the distance education principles adopted by NGOs during the pandemic?

The Importance of the Study

Educational inequalities and inequities were among the primary problem areas of education systems at the global level even before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, inequalities in education have increased

even more during the pandemic (Toquero et al., 2021). The widened digital divide due to the COVID-19 pandemic has made inequalities and injustices in education more obvious (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Children of low-income families had difficulties in accessing quality education during the emergency remote education (Toquero et al., 2021). As families have become the providers of learning conditions due to online education in the pandemic, the effect of families' capital on these conditions has been strengthened and the achievement gap between students from different economic backgrounds has increased (Tarabini, 2021).

Social inequalities have increased not only among families but also among schools during the pandemic (Tarabini, 2021). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased educational inequalities, putting the school's role in ensuring social justice and equality at risk (Drane et al., 2021). Therefore, reducing inequalities and inequities in education is no longer a mission just for schools. Educational inequalities and inequities, which have deepened due to the pandemic, have reached the level of a problem that cannot be solved only with the efforts of educational institutions. The global society needs to focus on reducing inequities, injustices and inequalities deepened by the digital divide in education (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

Responding effectively and quickly to a crisis such as a pandemic requires cross sectoral working, innovation and cooperation (Renfrew et al., 2021). In line with the understanding of intersectoral and collaborative work, the needs for providing equal opportunities for students in the education system and increasing the quality of education have enabled actors such as NGOs to be more active (Gali & Schechter, 2021). Considering the role of NGOs in ensuring social and educational justice and equality, it is expected that NGOs will be active in combating educational inequalities and inequities that have exacerbated in the pandemic. Therefore, examining the activities of NGOs in emergency remote education during the pandemic in this study can help define the role that NGOs can play in combating educational inequalities and inequities in a crisis. Thus, awareness will be raised on how to reduce the educational inequalities and inequities amplified by the digital divide, in line with a collaborative civil society approach.

In the relevant literature, there is a need to examine the activities of NGOs in different countries during the pandemic in connection with the support of emergency remote education. In the current study, revealing the potential of NGOs to produce solutions specifically related to distance education in a crisis such as a pandemic will contribute to filling the mentioned research gap.

Literature

NGOs

NGOs are non-profit organizations that operate in areas such as health and education with a non-profit and value-oriented approach and engage in communal and social activities in the public interest (Gidron & Hall, 2017). NGOs, whose role in local and global authority has expanded, can operate in political, economic, and sociocultural contexts (Hasmath et al., 2019).

According to Gordenker and Weiss (1995), NGOs have three distinct roles: operational, educational, and advocacy. They explained these roles are as follows: As part of their operational roles, NGOs provide technical advice and resource allocation while running assistance and development programs. Advocacy NGOs have the role of setting the national and international agenda and supervising the activities of the organizations in the field in which they operate. Educational NGOs work to raise awareness by carrying out activities for the society or a specific segment of society, as well as providing training and consulting services. According to Gordenker and Weiss (1995), the roles of education and advocacy NGOs can be handled together, as they both collect and disseminate information involving high-level expertise and emotional appeals.

Within the scope of their roles, NGOs fulfil the main functions of setting agenda to raise social awareness and ensuring that decisions taken and agreements made are put into practice by acting as an external monitor (Hasmath et al., 2019). While the target audience of operational NGOs is beneficiaries, the target audiences of advocacy and educational NGOs are the public and decision-makers who are their contributors (Gordenker & Weiss, 1995). The fact that NGOs have public and private donors ensures that they have material power, while the fact that their activities are considered legitimate by the public ensures that they gain symbolic and interpretive power (Hasmath et al., 2019).

Educational Activities of NGOs and Their Role in Distance Education

NGOs are gradually becoming essential actors in implementing education programs and policies with the increase in decentralization, privatization, and commercialization of education (Gali & Schechter, 2021). NGOs play a supportive role in providing educational services. Within the scope of these supportive roles, they attempt to increase the quality of education service with school adaptation programs or offer direct education services to provide educational opportunities for students who cannot go to school (Rose, 2009a).

NGOs are trying to contribute to the fight against inequalities in education (Kumar, 2019; Roberts & Chittooran, 2016) by playing an active role in education (Lingenfelter et al., 2017). They assist children, teenagers, and adults who have limited access to educational opportunities in gaining access to educational services because they cannot effectively or adequately acquire these services (Rose, 2009b). Although NGOs cannot adequately contribute to reducing poverty, they organize informal education programs for children coming from poor families and especially for girls (Ahsan Ullah & Routray, 2007). NGOs have started opening more schools in order to remove the barriers to the education of girls originating from traditional values and economic inadequacies (Roberts & Chittooran, 2016). NGOs also play an important role in the education of disadvantaged and migrant children utilizing their informal education activities (Xiong & Li, 2017). With the NGO activities carried out for orphans and unprotected children at the secondary education level, the attendance rate of these students in higher education is increasing (Lingenfelter et al., 2017).

The advantages of NGOs in education are that they are democratic, flexible, and less hierarchical (Gali & Schechter, 2021). Due to these advantages, NGOs are stated to be innovative and effective (Gali & Schechter, 2021), and also sensitive to the needs of different groups in society (Roberts & Chittooran, 2016; Xiong & Li, 2017; Zarestky & Ray, 2019). NGOs operate to improve the learning outcomes and economic expectations of school students with their alternative pedagogical visions, programs, and instructor behaviors (Kumar, 2019). The fact that NGOs have additional resources, have flexible budgets, and can develop customized/structured curricula contribute to their teaching processes (Gali & Schechter, 2020).

The ability of NGOs to work with an innovative and flexible approach in education leads them to take an active role in distance education processes. Distance education is "the organizational framework and process of providing instruction at a distance" (Eastmond, 1994, p.88). Distance education aims to meet the learning needs of more people in a less costly and flexible way (Rumble, 2007). Rice et al. (2020) stated that distance education has revealed three fundamental concepts: democratization, encounter, and openness, and they describe these concepts as follows: Individuals may now select for themselves what they will learn, how they will learn, and who will assist them in achieving their goals in the framework of democratization. Distance education allows students and teachers to engage in formal and informal encounters that transcend physical, social, political, and intellectual borders. In line with the concept of openness, distance education reaches a large audience by guaranteeing that knowledge and education are available to everybody. Thus, these concepts enhanced by distance education demonstrate that NGOs may play a more active role in the delivery and development of distance education.

NGOs can function both independently and in collaboration with governments (Batley & Rose, 2010). A partnership approach based on government, corporation, and NGO cooperation is advocated for promoting education for sustainable development, particularly in countries with centralized education systems (Lee, 2010). Conducting mass distance education, which results in a shift in educational thinking and, as a result, educational and societal issues, in accordance with sustainable development requires strong collaborations. The participation of NGOs in education aids in the resolution of educational issues by facilitating public-private sector partnerships in terms of expertise, power, and resources (Gali & Schechter, 2020).

Methodology

Research Design

The current study adopted a qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative descriptive design allows to obtain comprehensive data about little-known facts (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Therefore, it is not constrained by a theoretical framework (Sandelowski, 2000). There is no comprehensive framework regarding the distance education activities carried out by NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to adopt a qualitative descriptive design. The distance education activities of NGOs during the pandemic were evaluated through document analysis in the current study. When it is wanted to disclose meaning or obtain insight about a subject, document analysis is regarded as an effective qualitative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data can also be obtained through document analysis in qualitative descriptive research (Sandelowski, 2000).

NGOs Whose Activity Reports Were Analyzed

Distance education activities of ten NGOs were investigated within the scope of document analysis. Maximum variation sampling was used to select the NGOs whose activities were investigated. Maximum variation sampling allows the subject of the research to be examined from different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Distance education activities of NGOs during the pandemic are expected to differ depending on the field in which NGOs work. To assess the distance education activities of NGOs from various viewpoints, it is aimed that the NGOs examined in the research differ according to their field of operation. Although there are comparable training activities, the actions of NGOs, who primarily operate in ten different educational areas and whose public reports on distance education activities during the pandemic can be accessed completely, were analyzed in this regard.

The following are the primary areas of activity for the NGOs whose distance education activities were investigated: Providing parent training in the context of early childhood education (NGO A – Mother Child Education Foundation [AÇEV]), financially supporting disadvantaged students (NGO B – Turkish Educational Foundation [TEV]), supporting primary education (NGO C – Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey [TEGV]), supporting students in rural schools (NGO D - Aid Foundation for Elementary Schools [İLKYAR]), providing teachers with professional development (NGO E - Teachers Academy Foundation [ÖRAV]), monitoring educational developments and presenting policy recommendations (NGO F - Education Reform Initiative [ERG]), supporting children needing special education (NGO G – Tohum Autism Foundation), improving education in villages (NGO H – Rural Schools Transformation Network [KODA]), providing education services to disadvantaged students (NGO I - Darüşşafaka Society), supporting adult education and non-formal education (NGO J – Yuva Association).

Data Collection

The research data were obtained through document analysis. The 2020 activity reports of NGOs were evaluated within the scope of document analysis since the aim is to examine the distant education

activities carried out by NGOs throughout the pandemic. Activity reports were accessed through NGO websites. The activity reports of ten NGOs were first reviewed in general, and the sections that needed to be investigated in each activity report were determined. As a result, within the scope of the activity reports to be analyzed, a total of 402 pages were identified.

After the collection and reading stages of the documents are completed, the classification of the structures of the documents (Gee, 2011) and the suitability of the documents to the research questions (Bowen, 2009) should be considered in order to decide on the size of the documents to be analyzed in the document analysis. As a result of preliminary investigations of the activity reports in this study, it was discovered that the reports were constructed similarly in terms of content and structure and could be evaluated under the same themes due to structural similarities. In this study, the distance education practices of NGOs during the pandemic were examined in the context of the studies they have carried out and completed. These practices were also thoroughly detailed in the activity reports of NGOs. As a result, by examining NGOs' activity reports, finding answers to the concerns addressed in the study is possible.

Data Analysis

Activity reports of NGOs were subjected to content analysis. An inductive approach was used for content analysis. The concepts in the inductive approach are totally determined based on the data set to answer the research questions (Bengtsson, 2016). Since there is a constant emergence of new concepts in the inductive coding process, this process has a dynamic structure (Bengtsson, 2016). A coding scheme can be established to conduct content analysis using an inductive approach, and codes, code definitions, and expressions exemplifying the code can be added (Bender et al., 2011; O'Connor et al., 2020). In this study, a scheme was developed at the theme and concept levels, and coding investigations were guided by making necessary changes to the scheme during the analysis. Sentences and paragraphs were used as analysis units to determine concepts during the coding process. In relation to the questions of the study, the concept determination process was carried out under three key themes (distance education activities, distance education supportive practices, and distance education principles). The concepts determined independently for each NGO were then examined collectively, and the designation of concepts was reviewed once more. Hereby, the concept lists for the themes were completed. In order to systematically determine the concepts connected to the themes based on the data set, the following definitions were created about the scope of the themes during the analysis process:

Distance education activities: It demonstrates the practices of NGOs in the production of educational content and materials, and also in the supply of education services, and the methods they employ in the delivery of distance education in the process of transitioning to distance education.

Distance education supportive practices: It demonstrates the supportive practices provided to students, teachers, and parents in order to carry out distance education in a healthy manner.

Distance education principles: It demonstrates the principles of instructional, social, and administrative design and implementation that determine how distance education activities are carried out.

The NGOs owing the activities, practices, and principles representing by concepts were also indicated in the presentation of the concepts related to the themes. Thus, the comprehensibility of the activities, practices, and principles most important to NGOs has been ensured.

Validity and Reliability

In the content analysis processes of this study, particularly at the beginning of the analysis phase, too many codes were determined. An explanatory note has been created for each determined code in order to minimize confusion in the meanings given to the codes and to keep the coding in line with the same understanding. Thus, the study's dependability can be guaranteed by ensuring that the cognitive knowledge used during the analysis phase does not vary as much as possible (Morse & Richards, 2002). In line with the multiple coding studies proposed by O'Connor and Joffe (2020), 20% of the activity reports in the data set were randomly picked and coded by someone other than the researcher. Cohen's kappa value for intercoder reliability was calculated to be 0.82, indicating an almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). It is recommended for the studies using inductive content analysis that the coding procedure should be completed by a single researcher, and then the suitability of the coding and results to the data set should be examined by an external evaluator (Elo et al., 2014). In this direction, the peer debriefing strategy was used by presenting all of the activity reports, explanatory notes used in the coding process, and coding to an expert who had full knowledge of the research issue and did not have a researcher role in this study. The credibility of the research can be guaranteed using this strategy by examining whether there is any data missing from the study and whether there are any missed or repeated areas in the coding (Janesick, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result of the peer debriefing, feedback was received that the use of the explanatory notes in the coding process was appropriate and that the determined codes reflected the scope of the activity reports.

Findings

Distance Education Activities

Table 1 depicts the activities of NGOs in the course of the transition to distance education during the pandemic.

Table 1. Distance education activities of NGOs during the pandemic

Distance Education Activities	NGOs
Production of digital content/materials	A, C, F, G, H, I, J
Channel broadcasts on YouTube	A, F
Development of mobile apps/games	A, C, G
Delivering education materials to homes	A, G, I
Preparation of online education program	A, C, E, F, H
Activities for teaching English online	B, C, I
Mentoring training/program in digital environment	B, I
Use of a remote/digital education platform	B, C, E
Converting educational content to digital	C, E
Online seminars	A, C, E, G
Online events/training on various topics	C, E, F, I, J
Online workshops	F, I
Programs for digital certificates	F
Television programs	F
Digital publications	C, F
Online conference/panel/workshop	E, F, H, J
Blog publication	E, F
Online exhibition tour	C
Guidance studies	B
One-to-one synchronous study	B, G
Social learning groups	E
Club activities	B
Synchronous and asynchronous lessons	B, C, E, I, J
Synchronous counselling hour	B
Digital sports exercises	I
Digital orientation meetings	B

The design of digital distance education platforms is the most thorough and technical of NGOs' distance education activities. NGOs have been able to implement all educational initiatives in various disciplines in a more methodical manner thanks to these platforms. NGO B, one of the NGOs with a distance education platform, offers systematic and planned use of digital applications such as online evaluation, customized feedback, and a student tracking system via the platform built for its own school's students. NGO C provides distance and digital education programs in the fields of basic science and school assistance programs by making the digital education platform available to all pupils in the country. Through its distance education platform, NGO E provides seminars and training for teachers. Social learning groups and professional learning communities are developed through asynchronous sessions on the distance education platform of NGO E. As a result, social learning groups have become an important component of distance education activities. Volunteer teachers can share their practices with students in the social learning group through the distance education portal as part of NGO E's project operations.

The generation of digital content and materials has been identified as the activity that NGOs value the most. Mostly digital books, course and assessment materials, audio stories, podcasts, and videos were created in this context. For example, NGO A has created various digital contents for children, parents, and the general public in a way that appeals to different target audiences. There were also NGOs that supported formal education by uploading the digital content they created to the Education Information Network (EBA). NGO F's guideline for physical education classes, which includes activities that may be done at home, has been uploaded on EBA. NGO F has also created videos for teacher training on themes such as cyber security. NGO H developed an online professional development course for rural teachers working in multigrade classes through EBA and produced video content for this course. In addition, it created audio educational story content. On the other hand, NGO J concentrated on a different population and created a vocational training video guide aimed at out-of-school youth.

Another prevalent activity of NGOs in the distance education process is the development of regularly conducted online education programs. Among the online programs developed by NGOs, NGO A's program for families and children within early childhood education, NGO C's informatics, science, math, English, reading, social-emotional learning, and school support programs for students, and NGO E's interactive lesson design program in online education for teachers stand out. On the other hand, NGO H has provided online education programs with a new role in terms of contributing to higher education by conducting online education programs for teacher candidates.

In addition to the training programs, they have established for a specific subject and a specific target audience, NGOs also organize online training sessions on various themes at various times. However, unlike traditional training programs, these short-term trainings appeal to a broader audience. For example, NGO C provides students with training in digital security, hygiene, environmental science, coding, and space science, whereas NGO I organizes short-term training in entrepreneurship and coding. NGO E organizes trainings on information literacy, technology integration in education, remote employment, and virtual meetings for teachers.

Online conferences, panels, workshops, and particularly online seminars were among the main distance education activities of NGOs. While online lectures drew a wider audience, panels and conferences were mostly attended by teachers. Looking at the seminars that have been organized, it is clear that NGO A organizes seminars for parents, NGO C for children, NGO E for teachers, and NGO G for the ones interested in special education. The rural education conference, panel, and workshops on distance education conducted by NGO H for teachers and volunteers are among the panels and workshops organized for the growth of distance education. Workshops, in addition to online seminars and conferences, have gained their position among the activities of NGOs. Thinking skills workshop for teachers organized by NGO F and artistic content workshop for students organized by NGO I were integrated into the online education process.

The digital outcomes of NGOs' practices in the distance education process have been mobile applications and mobile games. NGO A created a mobile application to inform parents about child development, whereas NGO C created a mobile game for children in the field of coding education. On the other hand, NGO G created a mobile app to support the learning of people with special needs, and an app to provide counselling services to the families of these individuals. Among the outcomes of NGOs' activities, particularly for educators, are digital publications and blogs. NGO F, for example, has expanded its distance education activities by publishing weekly and monthly bulletins, expert blogs, and a series of articles reflecting the experiences of teachers, students, and parents, and NGO C has expanded its distance education activities by publishing a digital magazine.

NGOs that own a school or have regular scholarship students can provide a broader range of online education services for students at an individual level. These NGOs also organize distance education events, primarily for their students or scholarship students. The one-to-one synchronous study, counselling hours, guidance studies, club activities, digital sports activities, English teaching practices, mentoring programs, and orientation meetings presented in Table 1 are distance education activities carried out entirely for students by such NGOs.

Distance Education Supportive Practices

The practices of NGOs to support distance education during the pandemic are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distance education supportive practices of NGOs

Distance Education Supportive Practices	NGOs
Providing internet package	A, B, I
Providing computer	B, D, I
Providing tablet pc	C, G, I
Needs assessment / situation analysis	B, E, H
Education and orientation for parents	G, I
Online parent interviews	A, B, I
Volunteer training and orientation	C
Trainings on using online platforms	B
Pilot program for distance education	C
Teacher competency training in distance education	E, H, G
Training on tablet use	I
Evaluation of distance education practices	C, G, H
Online chat/experience sharing meetings	B, E, F, H, A
Guides for distance learning activities	F
Technical assistance for students	J
Interactive course design program and trainings in online education	E
Creating and disseminating digital resource recommendation lists	G
Distribution of educational materials	J
Preparation of informative content	H
Participation in international conferences and programs	C, E
Project activities to assist students in transported education	D
Telephone counselling for families	G
Designing a distance education model	C
Providing synchronous and asynchronous feedback to families	G

NGOs implement distance education-supporting practices to help students benefit from the distance education services they offer and to improve the efficiency of these practices. NGOs provided computer, tablet pc, and internet support to students as part of these supportive practices. NGO D, one of the NGOs that provides technical assistance to students, collected second-hand computers for village children, had them maintained, and distributed them to those in need. NGO B assisted its scholarship students with computer and internet access, while NGO I assisted students that are getting educated at its school. NGO C provided and distributed tablets to disadvantaged children, whereas NGO G provided tablets to students benefiting from its education services.

Needs analysis research has been conducted by NGOs to ensure that distance education activities can respond to needs and be delivered effectively. NGO E, one of the NGOs that conducts such research, conducted a study on educational needs involving teachers and parents, while NGO H conducted situation analysis studies to identify problems and needs in rural areas. While NGOs conduct needs analyses to better organize distance education activities, they also conduct research to assess the quality of the education services they provide. As a result, they make the necessary arrangements and improvements in education services based on the opinions of those who benefit from the education services they provide. For example, NGO G conducted a survey to assess family satisfaction with distance education services, while NGO C has prepared a general situation assessment report on distance education.

Trainings organized to increase teachers' distance education competencies are among the most notable practices carried out by NGOs to support their distance education activities in terms of quality. NGO E organized trainings for teachers on distance education methods and tools to ensure the professional development of teachers in distance education. NGO G developed and implemented an online training program to improve teachers' distance education competencies. As an NGO that carries out activities for teachers, NGO E has taken an active role in the development and implementation of training programs that serve to ensure the development of teachers. The NGO developed an interactive course design program in online education for teachers working at the primary and secondary levels, with synchronous and asynchronous modules, and organized teacher trainings for the program's implementation. Online education design, digital literacy, and distance classroom management are all part of the program.

NGOs have placed a high value on activities aimed at increasing parental involvement in educational activities and informing parents. The NGO G, which is well-known for its work with parents, provides feedback to parents both synchronously and asynchronously and through the videos parents shoot while studying with their children. As a result, it offers trainings to ensure that families are more aware of and prepared for the distance education process. It also offers telephone counselling services to families. NGO I organizes programs for digital parent education and orientation. Online parent meetings, in addition to parent trainings, are among the NGO activities carried out to raise parental awareness during the distance education process. As part of these activities, NGO A actively conducts online parent chats and NGO B synchronous student-parent meetings.

Online interviews or experience-sharing meetings where teachers, families, students, and experts gather play an important role among the activities carried out by NGOs to enrich distance education. In the distance education process, such conversations, and meetings both provide an opportunity to socialize and share information. NGO E organizes online chat events for teachers, NGO F online events where teachers share their experiences, NGO A chat groups for mothers and fathers, and NGO B online interviews for its scholarship students.

Some of the activities carried out by NGOs to support distance education are aimed at ensuring educational equality. For example, NGO D engages in practices that support distance education by prioritizing student participation in the distance education process under equal conditions. Students' access to educational materials and motivation are attempted to be increased, particularly within the scope of project activities for children in rural areas getting transported education. On the other hand, NGO J tries to support distance education in terms of technical and material needs by providing technical support, particularly for refugee students' access to EBA, and by distributing student training kits.

Some NGOs take initiatives to become better equipped by participating in international events, projects, and programs to carry out distance education, which has become widespread with the pandemic, in a more qualified manner. NGO E, which has initiated practices in this regard, has played a role in fostering contact among teachers from across the world by serving as Turkey's delegate at a worldwide education conference for teachers. NGO C, which has similar initiatives, took part as a participant in an

international program to be implemented so that students can receive a quality education without interruption throughout the crisis, and was therefore included in the online accelerated program with professional support. NGOs' developing their own distant education models has also been a method of increasing the efficacy and performance of distance education. NGO C has developed its own distance education model by demonstrating an example of entrepreneurship in this area and has established volunteer and learning management systems, as well as an integrated information system within the boundaries of this model. The NGO continued implementing distance education activities on the digital education platform after piloting the distance education programs at various grade levels and assessing the outcomes of the pilot implementation.

Distance Education Principles

Table 3 shows the guidelines used by NGOs when undertaking distance education operations during the pandemic.

Table 3. Principles adopted by NGOs in conducting distance education activities during the pandemic

Distance Education Principles	NGOs
Supporting the child's growth at home	A
Providing equal opportunity	A, B, C, D
Interaction	C, E
Active learning	C, E
Digital transformation	C, F, I
Activity-based learning	C
STEAM and project-/problem-based learning	C
Designing a sustainable system	E
Maintaining the well-being of individuals	A
Implementation of programs suitable for individual characteristics	G
Implementation of programs suitable for family home life	G
Sustainable and secure digitalization	I
Empowering the home as a learning setting	A
Making children feel safe	C
Expanding the spheres of influence	F
Critical thinking and creativity	C
Finding solutions to rural needs	H
Social and emotional learning	C
Raising a productive youth using digital resources properly	I

The most interiorized principle by NGOs in the preparation and presentation of distant education activities is to offer students equal chances and to minimize disparities. NGO A, which has a working principle in this direction, intends to contribute to studies on educational disparities in the distance education process and to decrease the inequalities that children face in this process. NGO D aims to guarantee that children in rural areas who engage in transported education are treated equally with other students in the educational process. NGO H strives to identify and solve the issues of rural schools and students to decrease inequality in distance education. It creates novel educational activities, including home activities, in response to the educational requirements of rural regions, and it conducts activities for the professional development of village teachers in this regard.

Another concept highlighted by NGOs in the presentation and preparation of distant education practices is the implementation of digital transformation. NGO I, one of the NGOs that emphasizes digital transformation, stated that it aims to enhance efficiency in corporate operations by implementing digital transformation and that it is working with the idea of sustainable and safe digitalization in educational activities. NGO F announced that it is attempting to diversify its operations by increasing its digital activity in accordance with its digital transformation goal, therefore broadening its area of impact. NGO I seems to have chosen a working concept that specifies the nature of digital transformation as well as the objective of digital transformation in the distance education process. It seeks to educate young people

as productive persons who can use digital resources appropriately and efficiently to serve both society and nature through distance education. NGO E and NGO I have both stressed the need of sustainability in distance education. NGO E highlighted the need of building sustainable systems by experimenting with new models in distance education while accounting for unpredictability.

Among the NGOs, there are those who share the principles they adopt in the organization of distance education services, as well as those who share the principles they adopt regarding learning and teaching in distance education activities. For example, NGO C has stated the principles it has embraced for how distance education should be carried out from a pedagogical standpoint. It stated that interaction is important in remote education programs for accelerating learning, active learning is assured by embracing the student as the main actor, and activity-based learning, with the student at the center, is aimed for. Meanwhile, it shared its aim of students' emotional and social well-being, and project- and problem-based learning by focusing on real-life challenges with a supra-disciplinary perspective in distance education programs. The NGO acknowledges that student motivation may be improved when students feel comfortable in technology-supported learning environments and can exhibit their creativity via critical thinking.

NGO G has outlined its operation principles for the differentiation and diversification of distance education activities, taking into consideration the differences in individual and family-based variables in distance education. It has emphasized the development and implementation of personalized programs in the distance education process based on the unique characteristics of the children and the families' home life. On the other hand, NGO A focuses on creating a home environment conducive to learning through remote education activities. It attempts to use houses as a learning setting to empower people, particularly those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. In accordance with this goal, studies are being conducted to promote the growth of the kid in the home setting by emphasizing the well-being of the families during the distance education process.

Discussion

The activities carried out by NGOs in Turkey in the course of the transition to distance education during the pandemic, as well as the supportive methods they developed to carry out these activities and the principles they embraced were investigated in this study. It is understood that a significant part of the educational activities of NGOs aims to reduce inequalities in access to distance education. The fact that ensuring equal opportunity is one of the principles adopted by NGOs in the presentation of distance education activities supports their distance education activities.

Due to neo-liberal policies, the competition between the priorities of societies in the Covid-19 pandemic has caused the inequalities faced by students to be overlooked and these policies have produced imbalances in online learning experiences (Toquero et al., 2021). As a result, the implementation of emergency remote education in the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in education (Yang et al., 2022). Distance education was initially considered as the least costly and most effective way to provide access to education for more people, especially the socially disadvantaged population (Bergmann, 2001; Rumble, 2007). Depending on the development of education financing, distance education is considered as a solution to ensure educational equality in underdeveloped regions and therefore, investments are made in distance education (Li et al., 2014). However, difficulties in accessing digital technologies and financing education over time have led to educational inequalities and inequities in distance education. The limited public financing resources necessitate the use of private financing resources in the struggle for reducing educational inequalities and inequities in distance education. Particularly in a crisis such as a pandemic, it is necessary to act with a sense of shared responsibility at the community level in order to carry out emergency distance education effectively and voluntary organizations such as NGOs need to become increasingly active stakeholders in education. Xiao (2021) stated that stakeholders from different sectors in the society should make a joint effort in order to ensure

equity in education and "all stakeholders in education should be equity-literate and equity-minded" (p. 148). He stated that social justice can only be achieved by removing the obstacles to equity. In this study, it has been revealed that educational NGOs in Turkey have taken an active role in the execution of distance education during the pandemic and have carried out comprehensive activities that support different education stakeholders. Therefore, it has been understood that the distance education activities of NGOs in the pandemic have contributed to the elimination of inequities and inequalities in education.

NGOs also carry out activities to reduce inequalities in access to education not only in crisis periods such as pandemic, but also in standard activity processes. NGOs aim to enhance the access of disadvantaged groups to formal and informal education opportunities by establishing education centers and providing education materials (O'Sullivan, 2008) in order to reduce inequalities in access to education due to factors such as gender and class (Zarestky & Ray, 2019). The emergency transition to distance education during the pandemic led to a greater awareness of educational inequalities. There are differences in access to distance learning opportunities of students during the pandemic. A digital divide, which is related to the education level and socioeconomic status of families, occurs based on these differences (Azubuike et al., 2021). Therefore, the pandemic has brought along the digital inequalities. The insufficient digital access of students, the inadequacy of digital skills of students and families, and the difficulties in ensuring the sustainability of short-term solutions such as the availability of computer and internet packages reveal these inequalities (Williamson et al., 2020). Studies conducted in different countries show equality problems caused by the insufficient access to information technologies (Kruszewska et al., 2020) and limited accessibility to internet (Azhari & Fajri, 2021; Ennam, 2021) in distance education during the pandemic. Similarly, several studies (Altınpulluk, 2021; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020) show that the problems arising from the insufficient access of technology and digital during the pandemic have revealed the inequalities in access to distance education in Turkey. With the aim of reducing such inequalities, the NGOs examined in this study implemented practices that support disadvantaged students and their families during the transition to distance education.

Students with a lack of access to information and communication technologies in the pandemic faced the risk of not being able to continue their education and return to their schools (Avanesian et al., 2021). Although digital technologies seem to be at the center of inequities in emergency remote education, educational inequities in the pandemic were not only due to economic reasons. During the pandemic, inequities in education emerged in terms of place of residence, gender, socioeconomic status, personal characteristics including special education needs and age, and school characteristics (Shi et al., 2022). Practices for ensuring justice and equity in education during the pandemic have prioritized students who constitute the dominant majority groups, but the minority population of special education students has not been sufficiently taken into account (Protonentis et al., 2021). Therefore, in order to ensure equitable remote learning during the pandemic, accessible and inclusive education should be provided for all students with different backgrounds (Avanesian et al., 2021). It has been determined that the NGOs examined in this study have carried out activities for education stakeholders with different characteristics and have not limited their activities only to providing support for information and communication technologies.

NGOs primarily focused on assisting students with socioeconomic disadvantages in accessing distance education in order to reduce inequalities during the transition to distance education. NGOs provided internet connection, computer, and tablet support to students within the scope of their distance education supportive practices. During the pandemic, one of the most damaging factors to the success of online teaching and learning is the lack of access to technological and digital equipment (Ennam, 2021). Poor internet infrastructure and computer inadequacy have negatively affected the teaching processes in the course of the transition to distance education during the pandemic (Bokayev et al., 2021). However, technical infrastructure and support are two factors that ensure organizational readiness in quickly adapting to changing teaching methods during the pandemic (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). Giving out computers or tablets (Kruszewska et al., 2020; Al Salman et al., 2021) and providing internet support

(Al Salman et al., 2021) for the children who are not included in the education not only during the pandemic but also in traditional learning environments are recommended to reduce the digital exclusion. The efforts of the NGOs examined in this study to provide technological and digital support have contributed to resolving these problems encountered in the transition to distance education and reducing inequalities in access to education. The provision of materials and infrastructure is usually given priority in NGO projects since they are observable (Park et al., 2015). However, since pandemic necessitated the emergency transition to distance education, the activities of NGOs to provide materials and infrastructure are required to be prioritized.

According to the study results, there are NGOs that carry out supportive practices for students in villages, one of the disadvantaged groups in distance education, and aim to find solutions to rural needs. During the transition to distance education, teachers had to take special care of economically disadvantaged students and made special efforts to communicate with parents in disadvantaged rural areas with the aim of maintaining student studies at home (Azhari & Fajri, 2021). Therefore, maintaining the distance education in a healthy way in rural areas needs an extra effort. Since they do not have sufficient technological equipment, especially disadvantaged rural areas must be at the center of policies in the transition period to distance education (Bokayev et al., 2021). For this reason, the efforts of NGOs to respond to the needs of students and schools in villages contribute to the inclusive administration of distance education. NGOs play a critical role in providing education services to children who do not have access to formal education services and live under the difficult conditions (Batley & Rose, 2010). The results of the study show that NGOs did not only provide material support to students and schools due to their socioeconomic disadvantages. They also organized teaching activities for rural students and offered professional development opportunities to rural teachers. While less affluent schools expect more financial help from NGOs, affluent schools expect innovative practices that will provide benefits to their teachers and the school (Yemini et al., 2018). However, the fact that NGOs examined in this study carried out material and training support together shows that they are looking for a solution from a multi-dimensional perspective.

During the transition to distance education, socioeconomically disadvantaged students faced not only technological issues such as a lack of access to the internet and computers but also parental inability to participate effectively in the distance education process problem. Socioeconomically disadvantaged parents lack the necessary information and resources to support the learning of the students. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between the socioeconomic background of parents and parental involvement in education (Azubuike et al., 2021). The inability of parents to assist their children in learning (Kalashnikova & Chorna, 2021; Kruszewska et al., 2020) has made distance education difficult during the pandemic. For this reason, in the course of the transition to distance education during the pandemic, the stakeholder support emerged as an important requirement, and parents needed assistance in managing the distance learning of their children (Epps et al., 2021). Among the most critical problems during the distance education period in Turkey are insufficient parental support for distance education and their inability to use technological tools (Avcı & Akdeniz, 2021). The NGOs investigated in this study have implemented practices such as parental education and orientation, online parent meetings, preparing distance education activities guides, sharing digital resource suggestion lists, preparing informative content, providing counselling services to parents by phone, providing feedback to parents about the studies they carry out with their children in order to contribute to the solution of these problems. NGOs organize positive parenting programs for families that are poor, have a low education level, or are in need of social support (Ochaita et al., 2018). Therefore, the activities of the NGOs evaluated in this study for parents can contribute to parental development in a way that supports the effectiveness of distance education.

Students needing special education are another group that should be prioritized in the context of equal opportunity in distance education. Projects for working with special needs children and raising awareness about special education are among the activities of NGOs (Palmer & Birch, 2003). It was determined that supporting the students needing special education in the distance education process is

among the activities of NGOs in this study. Page et al. (2021) found that special needs students have difficulties in accessing their learning materials, adapting to the new system, and ensuring their study during the distance education process. They determined that additional specialist services for these students should be provided by making plans with their parents during the distance education process. One of the preconditions of e-inclusion in special education is to cooperate with the family. However, some families are unwilling to assist in this process or lack the capacity to manage this process (Parmigiani et al., 2021). For this reason, the distance education support provided to socioeconomically disadvantaged families should also be provided to families with children needing special education. There is a need to provide more education for families with children needing special education in the course of the transition to distance education during the pandemic in Turkey (Mengi & Alpdoğan, 2020). The results of this study indicate that NGOs working in the special education field gave feedback to parents about the studies they make with their children, provided counselling services to parents, and shared digital resource suggestions with them during the distance education period. However, more NGOs are needed to work in order to support distance education in the field of special education.

The emergency transition to distance education has forced teachers too as well as students. The insufficiency of the teaching methods and techniques used by teachers in distance education (Fiş Erümit, 2021) and the lack of experience of teachers, particularly those who are elderly and working in rural areas, with the technology made distance education difficult (Kalashnikova & Chorna, 2021). Teachers had to work harder to improve their knowledge of distance education methods and techniques, and to prepare for lessons (Kruszewska et al., 2020). The pandemic period made essential pedagogic agility in educators. Educators needed to make innovations in their previous practices and values to enable them to switch from initial pedagogic discomfort to pedagogic agility (Kidd & Murray, 2020). For this reason, teachers required support in improving their competencies of educational technologies and distance learning (Epps et al., 2021). The NGOs included in this study have carried out various activities in order to enable teachers to adapt to distance education and improve their competencies, thus gaining pedagogical agility.

Since they were not ready to use the new education platforms, teachers needed education support during the distance education period in the pandemic (Kruszewska et al., 2020). One of the most damaging factors to the success of online teaching during the pandemic is a lack of educator training in the use of information technologies in distance education (Ennam, 2021). There should not be a digital use divide as well as the digital divide in distance education. For this reason, necessary training should be given to teachers about using digital tools (Hall et al., 2020). Therefore, providing distance education competency training for teachers by the NGOs examined in this study has been an activity that contributes to solving an important problem of the pandemic period. Those who experienced less stress in the transition to distance education during the pandemic are those who had a positive attitude toward online education, and received consultancy support for the transition to online education (Košir et al., 2020). Therefore, the fact that NGOs provide counselling services to teachers through the trainings they offer has improved the performance of teachers in this period.

The results of the study point out that trainings on interactive course design are among the activities of NGOs toward teacher development. The main reason for the difficulty in transitioning to distance education during the pandemic is the lack of distance learning programs and the inability of adapting education programs to distance education quickly (Shevchenko et al., 2021). The design of teaching content organized according to distance learning and teaching theories is presented as a solution to the problems encountered during the transition to distance education (Al Salman et al., 2021). The need for professional development opportunities for teachers to design and give online courses has emerged in this period (Kurt et al., 2021). Therefore, it is understood that NGOs can help schools in providing professional development opportunities to improve the online course design competencies of teachers.

During the pandemic, the NGOs included in this study supported teachers not only through educational activities but also through activities such as online conversations / experience sharing meetings.

Collaboration among teachers for the exchange of acceptable practices (Nisiforou et al., 2021) and the existence of informal communication channels are among the prerequisites for quickly adapting to changing teaching during the pandemic (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). Practices of sharing experiences carried out by NGOs assist teachers in more effectively managing the distance education process with cooperation and sharing their problems. Cooperation between teachers helps them in designing meaningful learning activities (Parmigiani et al., 2021). For this reason, such NGO activities also contribute to enhancing the quality of distance education.

The NGOs involved in this study have attached great importance to developing online education programs and organizing online trainings and activities on a variety of subjects within the scope of distance education activities. These trainings are for teachers, parents, and students. However, it is mostly aimed at supporting students in basic cognitive and affective domains. The educational programs proposed by NGOs are not part of the curriculum, but rather additional programs such as enrichment and social programs (Gali & Schechter, 2021). Rather than educational activities on academic subjects that are currently taught in schools, NGOs are responding to the needs for original content and educational activities that are not available in schools (Sagie et al., 2016). Therefore, the NGOs that were investigated have enriched existing learning and teaching processes for students through such supportive programs during the pandemic period.

During the pandemic, the NGOs that were examined created digital content and materials for use in their distance education programs. At the same time, they carried out studies on the transformation of educational content into digital. The studies conducted during the pandemic period (Altınpulluk, 2021; Demir & Özdaş, 2020; Seyhan, 2021) had revealed the need for distance education materials. The production of educational materials and releases (books, guides, magazines) is among the activities that NGOs carry out continuously (Palmer & Birch, 2003) and can contribute to formal education (Efird, 2012). However, the most critical factors ensuring the success of distance education during the pandemic are the development of digital education materials and tools, particularly for distance education, and the revision of teaching materials to respond to the distance education environment (Nisiforou et al., 2021). For this reason, creating content and materials suitable for distance education is compatible with the ensuring digital transformation principle of investigated NGOs, which they adopted during the pandemic period.

When the activities of NGOs in different countries related to distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic were examined, it was seen that the NGOs examined in this study carried out activities similar to their activities. As part of NGO activities in Czech Republic, new online learning resources were prepared and support was provided to help disadvantaged families with their children's education at home (Brom et al., 2020). A weekly learning program has been produced in conjunction with a television channel in India (Bhula & Floretta, 2020). While meeting the needs of minority groups who are completely excluded from online education was among the NGO activities in Bulgaria, efforts were made with other non-state actors to develop the digital competencies of teachers and to inform them about online pedagogy in Romania and Moldova (Mitescu-Manea et al., 2021). Support was provided to parents in Botswana by phone messages and calls to improve students' numeracy levels (Bhula & Floretta, 2020). Therefore, NGOs of different countries have worked in line with the understanding of helping various education stakeholders and providing information and teaching support as well as material support during the pandemic.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

The present study concludes that the activities of NGOs in the course of the transition to distance education during the pandemic are supportive of distance education and contribute to the solution of problems during this period. The fact that NGOs carry out activities for various school stakeholders

shows that they aim to provide distance education services to the entire society rather than evaluating distance education solely on the basis of students.

The efforts of NGOs to create digital content, materials and platforms show that they can adapt to the digital transformation process in education. For this reason, even after the pandemic, NGOs can provide distance education services and materials to both formal and non-formal education institutions in order to organize in-house and external educational activities for students and parents. The fact that NGOs are taking a supportive role in distance education can help to advance distance education by increasing its inclusiveness. NGOs have also shown their potential to contribute to the professional development of teachers through the programs they have created for the development of distance education competencies of teachers and the trainings they have given. Therefore, NGOs can play a supportive role in organizing school-centered professional development trainings on distance education for teachers.

The primary aim of NGO activities is to reduce inequalities in access to education, as it was before the pandemic period. During the pandemic, these activities have focused on reducing inequalities in access to distance education. Therefore, it is understood that NGOs can play an important role in ensuring social justice in education in times of crisis. However, focusing on inequalities in access to distance education, which are mostly caused by socioeconomic reasons, shows that there is a need for more detailed studies to identify disadvantaged groups in distance education. For this reason, NGOs should first work to identify disadvantaged groups in distance education in order to prevent the digital divide and the digital use divide. Thus, the activities of NGOs can focus on the prevention of inequalities and injustices in education with a more inclusive understanding.

Only the type of activities carried out by NGOs within the scope of distance education activities during the pandemic was investigated in this study. However, in order to investigate NGOs' role in the delivery and development of distance education in more detail, the outputs of the activities they carry out should also be investigated. Since the emergence of the social, economic, and educational outputs of these activities requires time, these outputs could not be analyzed during the period of this study. Therefore, the results of distance education activities of NGOs for various fields of education and education stakeholders can be investigated in future studies.

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Appendix: Documents included in the document analysis

- 2020 Activity report of NGO A (AÇEV), https://www.acev.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACEV2020_Faaliyet-Raporu.pdf
- 2020 Activity report of NGO B (TEV), https://www.tev.org.tr/uploads/kurumsal/rapor/39d0b952-ac96-436c-8067-77fd110b8e72_TR.pdf
- 2020 Integrated activity report of NGO C (TEGV), https://tegv.org/dosyalar/faaliyetraporlari/2020_faaliyet.pdf
- 2020 Activity report of NGO D (İLKYAR), https://ilkyar.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ilkyar-2020-faaliyetleri.pdf
- 2020 Activity report of NGO E (ÖRAV), https://www.orav.org.tr/i/assets//pdf/2020_ORAV_Faaliyet_Raporu.pdf
- 2020 Activity report of NGO F (ERG), https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/faaliyet-raporlari/2020-faaliyet-raporu/
- 2020 Activity report of NGO G (Tohum Autism Foundation), https://www.tohumotizm.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/FAALI%CC%87YET-WEB.pdf
- 2019-2020 Activity report of NGO H (KODA), https://www.kodegisim.org/static/KODA%202019-2020%20Faaliyet%20Raporu%20.pdf
- 2020 Integrated activity report of NGO I (Darüşşafaka Society), https://cdn.darussafaka.org/c/uploads/reports/60435352f197e41e0deb03f4/attachment-1d51ad41d73cd51f04db4e1c3c1184f1.pdf
- 2020 Activity report of NGO J (Yuva Association), https://www.yuva.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/YuvaFaaliyetRaporu2020.pdf

About the Author

- Betül Balkar (Corresponding author); bbalkar@cu.edu.tr; Çukurova University, Turkey; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4774-9727