

Opinions of Teacher Candidates on the Special Education Course Conducted by Distance Education

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to contribute to the field with the content of the course and the problems that the pre-service teachers have about the special education course, and the solutions for these problems. In the study, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research models, was used. The participants of the study are university students studying at a private university in the 2022-2023 academic year. In line with this scope, 45 pre-service teachers constituted the participants of the study. In the study, a semi-structured interview form created by the researcher was used to collect data. The opinions of the pre-service teachers were shown with the determined themes and sub-themes and quotations were made when necessary. As a result of the study, the majority of the participants claimed that they were satisfied with the special education course through distance education. They stated that they experienced difficulties due to internet connection problems of the special education course taken with distance education, and from this point of view, it can be concluded that distance education courses are not effective compared to face-to-face education. Another result of the study emphasized the importance of the participation of those who took the special education course with distance education. The participants stated that even if it is a distance education course, it is important to attend the course in terms of course success. The majority of the participants stated that they recommend the distance education system. From this point of view, the distance education system is important for those who work in a job. A limited part of the participants also emphasized that individuals have the practicality of using technological tools due to the opportunity to meet with technology. The participants also stated that they recommend distance education because it does not force individuals economically. In addition, another result obtained from the study was emphasized that students had difficulties in their education due to the lack of technology/material in distance education courses.

Keywords: Distance education, Special education, Education, Digitalization.

Öğretmen Adaylarının Uzaktan Eğitimle Yürütülen Özel Eğitim Dersine İlişkin Görüşleri

Özet

Çalışmanın amacı, öğretmen adaylarının özel eğitim dersine yönelik, ders içeriği ve bu dersle ilgili yaşadıkları sorunların neler olduğuna ve bu sorunlara yönelik çözüm önerileriyle alana katkı koymaktır. Çalışmada, nitel araştırma modellerinden biri olan fenomenolojiden (olgubilim) yararlanılmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcılarını 2022-2023 eğitim öğretim yılında bir özel üniversitede eğitim gören üniversite öğrencileri oluşturmaktadır. Bu kapsam doğrultusunda 45 öğretmen adayı çalışmanın katılımcılarını oluşturmuştur. Çalışmada, veri toplamak amacıyla araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının Görüşleri belirlenen tema ve alt temalarla gösterilerek gerekli durumlarda görüşlerden alıntılar yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda katılımcıların çoğunluğu özel eğitim dersini uzaktan eğitimle aldıklarından memnun olduklarını savunmuşlardır. Uzaktan eğitimle alınan özel eğitim dersinin internet bağlantı sorunlarından dolayı sıkıntılar yaşadıklarını belirtmişler ve bu açıdan bakıldığında da uzaktan eğitim derslerinin yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla etkili olmadığı sonucunda varılabilir. Araştırmanın diğer bir sonucu da özel eğitim dersini uzaktan eğitimle alanların derse katılımlarının önemine vurgu yapmışlardır. Katılımcıların kesinlikle uzaktan eğitim dersi olsa bile ders başarısı açısından derse katılımın önemli olduğu görüşünü belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğunun uzaktan eğitim sistemini önerdiğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında uzaktan eğitim sistemi bir işte çalışanlar için önemlidir. Katılımcıların sınırlı bir bölümü de teknolojiyle tanışma fırsatının olmasından dolayı bireylerin teknolojik araçları kullanma pratikliğinin olduğunu vurgulamışlardır. Katılımcıların ayrıca uzaktan eğitimde ekonomik olarak bireyleri zorlamadığı için önerdiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca çalışmadan elde edilen bir diğer sonuç uzaktan eğitim derslerinde Teknoloji/materyal eksikliğinden dolayı öğrencilerin eğitimlerinde güçlük yaşadıkları vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: uzaktan eğitim, Özel eğitim, Eğitim, Dijitalleşme

Introduction

Today, with the development of technology, digital technologies are used in all areas of education. The use of digital technologies in education is very important for both students and teachers. Due to the pandemic, lessons were held with distance education by providing an emergency transition to the distance education system. Here, many experienced and inexperienced teachers have conducted their lessons with distance education throughout the pandemic. After the pandemic, some courses continued to be given with distance education. While distance education has many benefits, it also has disadvantages.

The most important areas that are affected by globalization are education and training institutions. One of the reasons for this is that nation states see educational institutions as tools. The biggest factor in this is that technology and knowledge, which are concepts that accelerate globalization, are related to education (Yılmaz & Horzum, 2005). When people talk in their daily lives, they form interrelated sentences when they tell something (Aksu, 2021). With the introduction of technology into the classrooms, especially in higher education, faculty members or educators are directed to use technology in the classroom, but while some accept new teaching methods, some show resistance (Göktalay, 2006).

When the main features that distinguish the distance education issue from the traditional education system are examined; In the teaching process, the geographical separation of the teacher and the student, that is, they are not in the same environment, the use of media tools that will increase the communication of the teacher and the student and transfer the course content to the other party, the effective communication of the teacher and the student, the absence of space and time barriers, the student's own learning speed and It is an effective tool that allows students to learn according to their learning style, to take the course synchronously or asynchronously, and to provide continuous education (Yurdakul, 2011).

According to face-to-face education, distance education provides flexibility in terms of time and space, provides access to many people at the same time, gives independence to the individual in learning speed during the educational stage, allows low cost, unbiased and flexible measurement evaluation, can be planned in the context of learner requirements, allows lifelong learning, provides equality of opportunity (Elitas, 2017; Gregory and Lodge, 2015). Distance education provides flexibility, especially in terms of time and space, and facilitates access to information for people in different geographies in the same time period; in addition, thanks to distance education, people who are different in terms of knowledge and characteristics can easily come together and have information Decently. It provides students with the opportunity to perform activities in accordance with their own learning speeds (Rovai and Downey, 2010). Distance education, being independent of time and space, is the provision of students and faculty, learning and teaching with communication technology (Isman, 2008).

According to Uşun (2006), distance education; “the age, goals, time, place and method of teaching, etc., to the recipients where the source and the recipient are located in separate (remote) environments for a large part of the learning–teaching processes. in the learning – teaching processes, which allows the possibility of “individuality”, “flexibility” and “independence” in terms of; it is a planned systematic application of educational technology in which materials, tools and technologies and methods such as written and printed materials, auditory tools, technologies, face-to-face education are used, and communication and interaction between the source and recipients are provided with interactive integrated technologies.”Dec. Looking at the definitions, distance education is an educational system in which there is independence of time and space, an individual way of working, a personalized education, learning and teaching using digital technologies. However, distance education is limited in providing group work and therefore causes a lack of interaction, interest and motivation, preventing individuals from socializing and causing digital technology addiction. Measurement and evaluation, feedback, the fact that it causes reliability problems in teaching content leads to the emergence of many problems in education (Sezgin, 2021). In distance education, on the other hand, visual impairment, posture impairment, etc. the fact that it causes health problems such as can be counted among the Deciciencies of distance education (Kandemir, & Sezgin Nartgün, 2022). While distance education has many benefits, there are also harms besides it. When considered as a whole, it is an undeniable fact that distance education has a lot of benefits in our lives. One of the courses given by distance education is that prospective teachers are taking a special education course by distance education.

There are different views on whether the use of technology in modern education is beneficial or harmful. In addition to those who state that the use of technology in educational institutions is a loss in terms of money and time, the number of those who state that it increases the success of the student is higher. While technology is spreading rapidly in the field of education due to the positive effect it has on student success, Balcı and Eşme (2001) emphasize that technology should be included in general education programs. It has been stated that life and technology are a whole in education, technology improves the capacity of the student by increasing the critical approach, a good technology education will be complementary to other courses, and this education will support

the student in adapting to the technical life after school life. Aldemir, 2013). With distance education, it is aimed that students can gain various qualifications; It includes the expectation that by improving the field knowledge and performance level, it will introduce the requirements of the profession and gain teaching skills (Varış, 2013). One of these courses is a special education course. An individual in need of special education (MEB, 2006) is an education that ‘significantly differs from its peers in terms of individual and developmental characteristics and educational competencies’ and therefore includes planned educational programs specific to the individual due to its poor needs (Eripek, 2005). It can be defined as inclusion education for children with special needs to be educated in the least restrictive environment in order to meet their needs in accordance with their disabilities (Adar Cömert, 2019). It is called inclusion education for individuals who need special education to receive education in normal educational institutions together with their peers (Sucuoğlu, 2006). For individuals who need special education, school administration, teacher, physical conditions, family, support education service factor is important (Batu and Kardzhali-Iftar, 2010). (Batu ve Kırcaali-İftar, 2010). stated in their research that students with special needs develop academically and socially during the integration education (Sadioğlu, Batu & Bilgin, 2012).

It is seen that it is very important to offer special education courses in education faculties in order to raise awareness of teacher candidates about special needs related to the field of special education, how they should approach children with special needs in their classrooms when they start the teaching profession, and to determine the educational needs of these students (Çitil, Karakoç, & Küçüközyiğit, 2018). The special education course has a content that will ensure that teacher candidates are adequately equipped to meet the needs of both the special education field and the individuals with special needs (Durdukoca-Fırat, 2015). In the special education course; Definitions related to special education are given, detailed information about the principles of special education and individuals with special needs, the historical development of special education, the importance of early intervention in special education, etc. includes topics such as.

Opinions of teacher candidates; It affects their education and training services as well as their approach to their students in their professional lives (Heward, Alber-Morgan, & Konrad, 2017). From this point of view, it is seen that it is important to determine the views and attitudes of teacher candidates from different branches from outside the field of special education.

When the literature is examined, it has been stated that teachers are undecided about distance education and it has been emphasized that the lack of knowledge and experience in line with the practices is a big problem (Ateş & Altun, 2008). It has been revealed in the researches that it is necessary for teachers to prepare more lessons in distance education than traditional education during the lesson preparation stage (McQuiggan, 2012).

When the literature is examined, few studies have been found on the distance education experiences of special education teachers and the views of students on distance education. When the existing studies are examined, it can be directly or indirectly. When the literature is examined, few studies have been found on the distance education experiences of special education teachers and student views on distance education. When the current research is examined, there are limited studies related directly or indirectly to the opinions of students who have taken distance education and special education courses. In this study, it will contribute to the field by applying the opinions of teacher candidates in conducting a special education course by distance education, especially student-teacher course interaction, by presenting the achievements of the special education course and its contributions to this field. In addition, it is thought that the content of the special education course for the special education course and what are the problems that teacher candidates experience related to this course and will contribute to the field with suggestions for solutions to these problems. In this context, the answers to the following questions were sought in the study.

The special education course of the participants;

- a) Whether they want to receive face-to-face/distance education or not,
 - b) The obligation to attend the lesson when they receive it by distance education,
 - c) In case of proposing a course for them to take by distance education,
 - d) Lack of technical/material skills of distance education students
- what are the opinions of the participants?

Method

Research pattern

In the study, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research models, was used. In studies conducted with this design, it is aimed to reveal mental experiences and thoughts by closely following the opinions of individuals about phenomena and events from their experiences (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In other words, it is an in-depth analysis of the experiences and experiences of a phenomenon or situation (Patton, 2014). From this point of view, these

interviews were used to reveal the experiences and meanings of these phenomena and that the phenomenology design would be appropriate in examining the views of pre-service teachers about the special education lesson with distance education (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2012). In this study, semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers were conducted and analyzed.

Working group

The participants of the study are university students studying at a private university in the 2022-2023 academic year. In line with this scope, 45 pre-service teachers constituted the participants of the study. The participants took the special education course for the first time this term. All the students who took the course participated in the study on a voluntary basis.

Data collection tool

In the study, a semi-structured interview form created by the researcher was used to collect data. Semi-structured interview forms provide information for the interviewed individuals to express themselves better and for detailed analysis (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). The interview form was prepared in line with the researches benefiting from the relevant literature (eg Çay, 2020; Çitil et al., 2018; Karakuş et al., 2020;). Opinions were received from three different field experts (Special education, Classroom teaching, Turkish education) for the content validity of the form. In addition, a pilot interview was conducted with two pre-service teachers who took the special education course with the distance education method but were not among the participants. In line with these interviews, necessary changes were made by paying attention to the clarity and clarity of the questions. Finally, the content of the two questions was changed and the interview form was finalized. In order to get the information of the pre-service teachers in the front part of the interview form, items belonging to the demographic information form such as gender, age, whether they took special education courses were added.

The opinions of the pre-service teachers were shown with the determined themes and sub-themes and quotations were made when necessary. In the reporting phase of the findings, 'theme suitability', 'explanatory' and 'striking' criteria were taken into account, and citations were included to support each other and the themes were tried to be explained. (Unver, Bümen and Başbay, 2010). In order to protect the confidentiality of the pre-service teachers while quoting, each pre-service teacher was coded as 'K1, P2, P3'.

Findings and Discussion

When the participants were evaluated according to gender, it was seen that the most female participants were 64.4%. Male participants made up 35.6%. When the ages of the participants are evaluated, it is seen that the majority of the participants are 26 people, between the ages of 22-25. It is seen that there are 13 people in the age range of 26-30 and at least 6 of the participants are in the range of 26-29 years.

Regarding whether or not the participants wanted to take the special education course with distance-face-to-face education, 26 (58%) of them stated that they wanted to take the special education course with traditional education. 19% and 42% of the participants stated that they would like to take a special education course through face-to-face education.

Table 1: Opinions of Those Who Want to Take Special Education Lessons by Distance/Face to Face Education

Theme	Categori	Cod	N	%
Traditional and distance education effectiveness	Traditional Education	Face-to-face training is effective	16	35,5
		Quality education	10	22,2
		Make the lesson understandable	7	15,6
	Distance Education	Limitation of time and space	7	15,6
		Distractibility	2	4,4
		Technical issues	3	6,7

In Table 1, the theme related to the effectiveness of traditional and distance education consists of traditional education and distance education categories. Traditional education consists of 3 codes, face-to-face education consists of 16 (35.5%) effective, quality education 10 (22.2%) and 7 (15.6%) codes for the comprehensibility of the course. Distance education category consists of 3 codes, 7(15.6%) time and place unlimited, 3 (6.7%) technical problems and 2 (4.4%) distraction codes.

It can be concluded that the lessons given in the traditional environment are permanent and effective learning in terms of the qualified learning of the students. It is necessary to make a great effort to overcome the problems experienced in distance education. Apart from some obligatory reasons, it can be said that the conditions for effective learning in distance education are heavy.

K24: 'I think that the teaching of the lessons will be more fluent and the dialogue between the teacher/student can be established more easily.'

K10: 'I would like to take it face to face. Human understanding differs from person to person. It would be better for me to immediately consult my teacher for questions that I do not understand my lessons face to face.'

K4: 'I would like to take special education lessons remotely because I believe that access to information is easier when online and we do not have the opportunity to access lesson repetitions in face-to-face lessons, but when teachers upload lesson repetitions to the system, it is more convenient for me and I can watch as much as I want. . '

K3: 'I think the lessons were very productive on zoom without being in a crowded classroom environment.'

K30: 'I would like to take special education lessons from a distance because recording the lessons is advantageous in terms of repeating and I can watch the lesson as much as I want.'

K9: 'I would like to take face-to-face education because I have distractions in online education and cannot focus on the lesson.'

K42: 'I want to take the special education lesson face to face because I agree with the lesson that I can't get enough from online, but there may be internet problems and when we open the camera, etc., our image may go away or our voice may be cut off.'

Table 2: Obligation to attend the course in the special education course with distance education

Theme	Categori	Cod	N	%
Special education to your lesson obligation to participate	Participation must be mandatory	Learn the lesson	21	46,6
		To be successful	10	22,2
	Class attendance should not be mandatory	Inability to have digital tools	5	11,1
		Can be learned from video recordings	5	11,1
		Unimportant to conscious individuals	4	8,8

As seen in Table 2, the theme related to the obligation to attend a special education course consists of categories such as attendance to the course should be compulsory and attendance should not be compulsory. In addition, the category of compulsory participation in the course consists of 2 codes, and the category that the participation in the course should not be compulsory consists of 3 codes. The majority of the participants stated that 21 (46.6%) people should attend the course in order to learn the course, and 10 (22.2%) stated that it should be mandatory to be successful in the special education course. In addition, 5 (11.1%) people stated that it should not be compulsory to attend the course, that they do not have digital tools and that lessons can be learned from video recordings. On the other hand, at least 4 (4%) of the participants argued that people who are conscious are aware of their responsibilities even though they are not obliged to attend the lesson. It can be concluded that learning can take place even if the individual does not actively participate in the lessons due to his desire to learn.

K38: 'The fact that most students do not have the technological devices needed in distance education is a factor that will cause problems due to the obligation to attend the course. In addition, sometimes, but not always, the inability of students to participate due to reasons beyond their control causes various problems within this necessity.'

K9: 'Because pre-service teachers should have information about students with special needs that they may encounter in the future'

K1: 'We can't be sure if everyone has a working phone and a stable internet connection, but it should be mandatory because if you don't attend the classes, all your connection with the school is lost.'

K27: 'I think that participation in any course should not be compulsory because students who are already willing will give the necessary importance to their courses. I do not think that a student who does not want to read can be made to do something even by necessity.'

K12: 'Participation should not be compulsory because I think it is healthier for a university student to decide whether or not to attend the class by considering their own responsibilities.'

Table 3: Opinions of the participants on their recommendation/not recommending distance education

Theme	Categori	Cod	N	%
Distance learning advice	Positive	Effectiveness of education	26	57,7
		Comfort of home environment	8	17,7
		Individuality of education	5	11,1
	Negative	Systemic troubles	4	8,8
		Difficulties in learning	2	4,4

As seen in Table 3, the theme of the participants' recommendations regarding distance education consists of positive and negative categories. The positive category consisted of the effectiveness of education 26 (57.7%), the comfort of the home environment 8 (17.7%), and the individuality of education 5 (11.1) and 3 codes. In addition, 4 (8.8%) people in the negative category consist of 2 codes as difficulties in learning. There are both positive and negative aspects of distance education. Most importantly, difficulties in learning and systemic problems affect learning negatively.

K3: 'Yes, I recommend it. The reason is that I have seen a lot of benefits in distance education, especially when the Corona period is common, and I have personally experienced that it is effective. Today, it is widespread and its application is quite logical.'

K12: 'Yes, I recommend it. While there are many concerns, there are advantages as well. It would not be wrong to say that this model especially supports the development of teachers and students.'

K25: 'Within the scope of distance education, many teachers realized the importance of using technology in education and had the opportunity to meet many technological tools that they were afraid to use. Students, too, began to take on their own learning responsibilities. They tried to reach different sources in order to reinforce the subjects they learned.'

K39: 'As I attend distance education classes from home, the comfort of the home environment makes me feel very good.'

K32: 'I do not recommend distance education. Because it creates a lot of trouble in practical lessons. I have difficulty learning'

K10: 'Distance education should only be used when it is compulsory, for example, the pandemic situation or the ease of communication between countries.'

Table 4: Recommendations for technical/material deficiency of students who took special education course via distance education

Theme	Categori	Cod	N	%
Distance education in a special education course materials	Technical/ material support	The system should be developed	30	66,6
		Internet infrastructure can be improved	6	13,3
		Insufficient technical support service	5	11,1
		Internet should be free	3	6,6
		Digital material support	1	2,2

As can be seen in Table 4, the theme related to distance education materials in the special education course consists of the Technical/material support category. On the other hand, technical/material support consists of 5 codes. Majority of the participants 30 (66.6%) state that the system should be developed; In addition, 6 (13.3%) of the participants emphasized that the internet infrastructure should be developed. On the other hand, 5 (11.1%) stated that technical support services were insufficient and 3 (6.6%) stated that internet access should be free. Only 1 (2.2%) person emphasized the need for digital material support. The inadequacy of the material support for the distance education course causes the education to be deprived of quality. As time goes on, the deficiencies in material will be eliminated with the development of digital technologies.

K38: 'I have always been experiencing difficulties since I took lessons in distance education. I couldn't attend my classes because of some mistakes made by the system.'

K23: 'I had a lot of difficulty connecting to the Internet when I was at home. In my district, the internet is constantly disconnected.'

K7: 'I think the technical service is insufficient. Because while waiting for the correction from the technical service, the lesson is over. This is very sad for me.'

K42: 'I couldn't attend the class because I couldn't get internet due to economic reasons. I want to connect to the internet for free everywhere.'

K45: 'I couldn't attend the distance education courses mostly because I didn't have a computer. I tried to join the classes from my friend's computer.'

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In the study, the views of university students who took the special education course with distance education were evaluated. When the demographic characteristics of the participants are evaluated, it is seen that the most participants are female participants.

More than half of the participants claimed that they were satisfied with the special education course through distance education. In another study, he stated that there are many problems related to distance education and emphasized that there are problems between the student and the teacher (Duran, 2020).

In addition, when the other opinions of the participants were evaluated, they stated that the distance education course was not very effective and drew attention to the effectiveness of face-to-face education. In another study, it was seen that in line with the opinions of prospective classroom teachers who took lessons with distance education, it was seen that they expressed the opinion that distance education is inefficient and boring, and they also stated that they had trouble focusing on the lesson and were distracted because they could not get instant answers to their questions during the lesson (Kaleli Yılmaz & Güven, 2015).

They stated that they had difficulties due to internet connection problems of the special education course taken by distance education, and from this point of view, they determined that the distance education courses were inefficient. As a result of a study, it was emphasized that the students, who generally expressed negative opinions, had technical problems related to the Internet and that they had great deficiencies in feedback (Doğan & Tatık, 2015).

Another result of the research is that when the attendance obligations of those who take special education courses with distance education are examined, they emphasized the importance of their participation in the course and stated that the participants should be conscious. In another study, which examined the self-efficacy perceptions of pre-service teachers in special education and inclusion courses, it was concluded that the approach with inclusion (special education) was positive in the study where the self-efficacy levels were high (Dolapci, 2013).

When evaluated according to the status of the participants to recommend the distance education system, the majority of the participants stated that they recommend the distance education system. A limited part of the participants also emphasized that individuals have the practicality of using technological tools due to the opportunity to meet with technology. The participants also stated that they recommend distance education because it does not force individuals economically. Another result is that the distance education system is not efficient in applied courses and they emphasized that they do not recommend the distance education course. There are also participants who state that distance education is not efficient except for compulsory cases.

In the special education course, the need to improve the system regarding distance education materials, technical/material support, the improvements in the internet infrastructure and the free access to the internet are important factors in distance education. It was determined that the courses were not useful due to the lack of materials related to the distance education course.

Today, when digital technologies are developing rapidly, it can be said that the quality of distance education will increase when all these deficiencies are eliminated. This study was conducted with a qualitative research method. Other studies can be done quantitatively. In addition, this study was limited to 45 participants. Different studies can be done by keeping the sample size larger. In addition, this study is limited to the students who take the special education course with the distance education system. In other studies, it can be applied by taking different courses.

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