

A qualitative study on successfully sustaining online teaching: Teachers needs in online education

Sıla Koçak ¹, Recep Çakır  ²

¹ Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology, Amasya University, Amasya, Turkey; ² Department of Instructional Technologies, Amasya University, Amasya, Turkey

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CORRESPONDENCE

Recep Çakır, recepcaKir@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

For a teacher to provide a good education, he/she is expected to develop himself/herself professionally, be open to innovations and follow these innovations. This also applies to the online teaching process, which has entered our lives rapidly with the pandemic period. Teachers are expected to carry out this process successfully. The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' professional development, field competencies, the support they receive from their institutions or organizations, and the motivation they have to successfully continue online teaching and to determine what teachers need in this process. This study is a qualitative research study, and the interview technique was used to collect data. The study's sample group consisted of 10 experienced teachers who had previously taught through distance education. As a result of the research, it was concluded that to continue online teaching successfully, teachers' needs should be taken into account, the online teaching platform used should be appropriate and sufficient in terms of content and pedagogical content, institutions should provide sufficient financial and moral support to teachers, and not only teachers but also students should improve the opportunities they have in this process; when these factors can be provided, the negativities that may occur for online teaching will be minimized.

Introduction

Throughout history, teaching has become one of the most respected professions as it has been instrumental in transferring social values to future generations and sharing knowledge. The ability of education systems to fulfill their basic functions is related to the qualifications of teachers (Oygm, 2017). For a teacher to provide a good education, he/she is expected to develop himself/herself professionally and professional development practices offered to teachers are of great importance (Ilgan, 2013).

In-service training activities are carried out by the ministry to provide teachers with field competencies. In-service training is the education and training activities carried out to support the professional adaptation, skills, and development of the workforce employed by a public organization (Aytac, 2000). Nowadays, learning is not only face-to-face but also online and it is

expected that the professional development characteristics of the teacher are also used in online environments. Online teaching and e-learning are frequently on the agenda, especially during the pandemic period. E-learning is defined as "conducting teaching activities in electronic environments or transferring knowledge and skills through electronic technologies" (Gulbahar, 2009) and imposes some responsibilities on teachers. The success of teachers is related to the qualifications of their competencies and the conditions of the environment in which they can use these qualifications and improve themselves (Yaylaci, 2013). This is tried to be achieved through professional development activities in our country.

When some of the professional development studies in the literature are examined, Kahyaoglu and Karatas's (2019) study examined the opinions of teachers about the professional development training seminars held twice a year and negative statements such as "formality, waste of time and money, empty process, paperwork, gossip, and meetings" were made about the seminars. On the other hand, some of the teachers made positive statements about the seminars by stating that they made educational preparations, necessary plans, and programs for the seminars. In Akhan's study conducted in 2021, some of the participants stated that the seminars they received in-service contributed to their personal development and professional knowledge, while others stated that the practices in the seminars were insufficient and that the seminars had limited or no effect on their professional development because they were not given by field experts. Bag and Ceviker Ay (2017), in their study, concluded that teachers consider themselves competent in all areas of development, but the area of ensuring professional development is the area where they consider themselves the least competent, and that teacher competencies increase as professional experience and age increase.

Since teachers' self-development is a learning process, professional development training should be organized in a way to simplify teacher self-development and focus on the teacher (Yaylaci, 2013). Guilbaud et al. (2021) examined the readiness of faculties to provide online courses to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities. At the end of the study, it was seen that the materials and contents prepared for online teaching were inadequate, and faculty members should receive institutional support to be more effective and efficient in online teaching. It was concluded that institutions should provide appropriate support and technological equipment for online teaching and emphasize the importance of supporting faculty members.

In their study, Baran et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of supporting faculty members at various levels for online teaching and proposed a holistic professional development framework for online teaching. The support to be provided to faculty members in the proposed framework is as follows:

Support at the teaching level

- Technology support
- Pedagogical support
- Design and development support

Support at the community level

- Communities of practice
- Peer support

Support at the organizational level

- Organizational culture

The proposed framework offers support for online faculty at the instructional levels and community and organizational levels. Unlike previous models of technology integration, is specifically created for online teaching in higher education settings. It suggests that for online teaching to be integrated and adopted by faculty, higher education institutions need to provide faculty with a variety of opportunities to find support and ongoing assistance when needed; and that quality in online teaching and learning can be ensured through concurrent professional development and support efforts.

This study aims to examine teachers' professional development, field competencies, the support they receive from their institutions or organizations, and the motivation they have to sustain online teaching successfully and to determine what teachers need in this process.

Problem

Are the opportunities and support available to teachers sufficient for successful online teaching?

Subproblems

- Is the professional development available to teachers sufficient for them to successfully implement online teaching?
- Is the support and assistance offered to teachers sufficient for them to successfully conduct online teaching?
- Are teachers' motivation and enthusiasm sufficient for successful online teaching?

Method

Research design

This study is a qualitative research study. The case study design was selected from qualitative research designs. This study was used to examine the professional development that teachers have and the support they receive while teaching online.

Study group

The study's sample group consisted of 10 experienced teachers who had previously taught through distance education. Teachers in computer and information, geography, religious culture, Turkish language and literature, English, mathematics, preschool, classroom, and history branches participated in the study.

Participants were coded as T1, T2, T3... T10 and expressed in this way. The demographic characteristics of the teachers forming the study group are as in the Table 1.

Table 1. Participants

Participants	Branch	Gender	Age	Seniority Year
T1	Computer Teacher	Female	26	3
T2	Geography Teacher	Female	52	28
T3	Religious Culture Teacher	Female	27	5
T4	Turkish Language and Literature Teacher	Female	36	10
T5	English Teacher	Male	36	11
T6	Mathematics Teacher	Male	27	3
T7	Preschool Teacher	Female	28	2
T8	Classroom Teacher	Female	26	4
T9	Classroom Teacher	Female	44	21
T10	History Teacher	Male	32	8

Data collection tools

In the study, the interview technique was used to collect data. A literature review was conducted, and studies related to teachers' support, motivation, professional development, and competencies while teaching through distance education were examined. Then, the researcher developed an open-ended interview form consisting of 11 questions and revised it in line with the opinions of field experts and directed it to the participants.

Analysis of data

For the semi-structured interview form prepared within the scope of the research, 10 teachers living in different cities were interviewed and the interview results were subjected to content analysis. Content analysis was conducted using Nvivo; as a result of the analysis, 8 sub-themes were found under the theme of "Online Teaching" and the codes belonging to the sub-themes and themes were given together with frequency values. Teacher opinions and explanations were added, and participant opinions were supported with codes.

Findings

After the content analysis, the 8 sub-themes under the Online Teaching theme are given in the Table 2.

Table 2 Sub-themes under the online teaching theme

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	f
Online Teaching	Experience	Obligation	2
		Difficulty	9
		Incomplete Participation	2
		Unpleasant Lesson Process	2
	Online Teaching	Virtual Classroom	3
		Internet environment	4
		At ease	1
		Useful	2
	Platform Used	Zoom	10
		EBA	7
		Microsoft Teams	1
		WhatsApp	1
	Platform Features	Easy to Use	8
		Pedagogical Relevance	7
		Difficult Use	2
		Inadequate Communication	9
	Social Group Participation / Monitoring of Online Teaching Practices	Rich Content	4
		Participate / Follow-up	7
		Not Using Social Media	1
		Waste of Time	3
		No Need	5
		Inability to access information quickly	2
		Keeping track of new resources	4
		Utilization in lessons	4

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	f
Online Teaching	Experience	Adequate	5
		Inadequate	5
		Disinterested Student / Lack of Participation	5
		Enthusiastic Student	5
	Effort	Subject Explanation	2
		Content preparation	7
		Class Dominance	9
		Lesson Planning	3
		Lack of Motivation	2
	Institution Support	Lack of support	7
		Necessity	4
		Dictation	4
	Technological Support Provided	Moral support	3
		Adequate	4
		Inadequate	6
	The expectation of Online Teaching Support / Expectation of Support in Online Courses	Student evaluation	4
		Rich Material / Content	5
		Student Tracking	2
		Easy to Use	1
		Technological hardware support	3
		Financial support	1
		Spiritual Support	3
		Motivation	3

Experience

The experience theme is based on what the participants experienced during the online teaching process.

T10: *"I can say that it was a difficult and a little strange process for me, starting with Zoom and ending with Zoom. I would not want to give a course with distance education again."* (Difficulty)

T2: *"With the pandemic, we switched to distance education as our high school, or rather, we had to do it. It was as if everyone suddenly became agitated and entered a war, there was such a rush..."* (Obligation)

T4: *"... the lesson was a process in which only I was active, far from the activities, and therefore it was unpleasant."* (Unpleasant lesson functioning)

T5: *"... Our students had deficiencies such as internet, phones, tablets, and computers, so participation in the lessons was low. Although this situation improved over time, this negative situation continued for our students in rural areas, students who had the opportunity but were not interested in the lessons did not attend the lessons..."* (Missing Participation)

Online teaching

The theme of online teaching is based on how the participants defined online teaching and their views on online teaching.

T6: *"It is the realization of the courses that students will take over the internet from devices such as phones, tablets or computers with video and audio."* (Internet Environment)

T9: *"I guess I would say that students and teachers are in a virtual environment. Everyone participating in the lesson online on the internet with a technological device."* (Virtual Classroom)

T1: *"... It takes less time than face-to-face because there you silence the students and only you speak, it is more comfortable for me..."* (Comfortable)

T4: *"It is a useful activity as long as it is used effectively. It is one of the short ways of accessing information without being bound to time and space."* (Useful)

Platform used & platform features

The theme of Platform Used & Platform Features was created based on which platforms the participants used during the online teaching period and the features of the platforms used.

T5: *"We preferred Zoom and EBA system."* (Zoom)

T8: *"We used EBA and zoom."* (EBA)

T3: *"We used Microsoft teams and zoom."* (Microsoft Teams)

T7: *"EBA, Zoom, WhatsApp."* (WhatsApp)

T7: *"There were times when the system performance was insufficient. When the system collapsed, both teachers and students could not access the system..."* (Inadequate Communication)

T1: *"...There was no difficulty in use. It was a platform that all teachers used without any difficulty..."* (Easy to Use)

T10: *"It was very difficult to use, I had a lot of difficulties until I learned it. Sometimes I could not create the connection, or it did not open. My voice went out, my image went out, the screen froze, I could not share my computer screen, I fell out of the system..."* (Difficult Use)

T3: *"...Other than that, I can say that it was pedagogically appropriate, there was no problem or harm for children."* (Pedagogical Appropriateness)

T6: *"...The system was both easy to use and rich in terms of content. There were life lessons for students, subject content videos, exercises... Homework and tests were available..."* (Rich Content)

Social group engagement & monitoring of online teaching practices

The theme of Social Group Participation & Following Online Teaching Practices was formed based on whether the participants participated in the social groups in which their colleagues took part, whether they followed their colleagues' online teaching practices, and if not, why not.

T5: *"I do, of course, I was looking at who teaches how they teach, how they teach, how they teach this subject, how they teach it, I was in constant search to see if I could find something similar."* (Participating /Following)

T1: *"This kind of sharing is more on Facebook, I stopped using this platform at university..."* (Not using social media)

T10: *"I don't feel the need, it is history after all. What can I see that is different from what I know? Besides, I cannot easily find what I am looking for in such a crowded environment, so I don't like it very much."* (Not needing / Not being able to access information quickly)

T7: *"I implement the shared activities in my class. According to the feedback of the children, I increase similar practices or turn to other activities."* (Utilizing in lessons)

Motivation level

The theme of the Motivation Level was created by considering the motivation of the participants during the online teaching period and the factors affecting their motivation.

T5: *"I had it because I was a teacher who loved his students, and I was interested in them. The child did not leave them unrequited, and our lessons were always very fun. My motivation was also high."* (Sufficient)

T1: *"...I was very eager to teach 1st graders because they were an audience that took whatever I gave them, when I turned on the broadcast that day, there was an excited audience asking me what we were going to play, they were really fun, they were the most motivating thing for me."* (Enthusiastic student)

T3: *"I did not have enough motivation, and some days I did not even want to attend the lessons because, as I said, it was very difficult for me to teach a lesson without seeing eye to eye with the students, without direct communication, without being able to interact with them. Maybe if the students were a little more willing, I could have carried it out more easily, but most of the time they were reluctant and uninterested, and as a teacher, I could not respond to this more positively..."* (Uninterested Student / Lack of Participation)

Effort

The effort theme was created based on the effort and effort that the participants spent on online teaching compared to face-to-face education.

T6: *"...the subject that I would teach face-to-face in 1 hour, I teach online in 3 hours. I cannot see whether all the students understand, who has questions, which parts are settled as I want..."* (Lecturing)

T5: *"Finding content... this was the most difficult process for me. I sat for a while and prepared it myself, what you can do in the classroom with a photocopy of paper, here you are trying to transfer it to the online environment, whether it has a picture, sound, or video so that it will attract attention. I think this was difficult and required extra effort."* (Content preparation)

T3: *"... you have to fill 40 minutes second by second, by yourself, as if you were in a box, and you have to explain something to the students, you have to attract everyone's attention and reach everyone. Of course, during this time, you have to avoid showing your inner conflict and lack of morale..."* (Lack of motivation)

Institutional support & technological support provided

The theme of Institutional Support & Technological Support Provided was created based on the support provided by the institutions to the participants in the online teaching process.

T5: *"For my institution, support was a troublesome issue, if you are not a struggling teacher, there was a situation where you would be left halfway. It would have been surprising to have these when even the most basic technological support was not available. There was more of an imposition, a superior-subordinate relationship."* (Dictating)

T1: *"... The institution did not give us any support or motivation because in their eyes, we were the ones who were going to gas them, not them. I provided all the support; the support never came to me."* (Lack of support)

T4: *"They suggested that we had a difficult task, but we could overcome it with professional competence and experience."* (Spiritual Support)

When the technical support provided by the institutions to the participants was examined, it was found that some of the participants found the support provided by their institutions insufficient, while others found this support sufficient, and these results were expressed as follows:

T10: *"It was not enough because there was no such thing. I was told to tinker with it a little bit and will learn, I was not obliged to do this, no one told me how to use it, and I spent hours. This should not have happened, for example, because it was a waste of time."* (Insufficient)

T8: *"It was enough, the institution showed us how to use the system. There were minor setbacks from time to time, but they were solved before they got too big."* (Sufficient)

Expectation of online teaching support & expectation of support in online courses

The theme of Expectation of Online Teaching Support & Expectation of Support in Online Courses emerged based on how appropriate online teaching support should be according to the participants and what kind of support can be provided in online courses.

T3: *"It should be an easy application. People should be able to see for themselves how to make it work without the support and it should help a teacher as if they were having a face-to-face lesson. There should be activities, exams, and quizzes. I think teachers should not prepare these because one of the biggest things I needed was content..."* (Easy to use, Student evaluation, Rich Content)

T8: *"It was more important for me as a teacher in a village school that every student had the same opportunity because, as I said, participation was very low. I believe that the process would have been more productive if everyone had an internet connection, a tablet, or a computer. I guess I can say that for this."* (Technological Hardware Support)

T6: *"I think there should be a support that offers more content not only to the student but also to the teacher, that guides and motivates the teacher. Sitting in front of a computer like a robot until the evening, one inevitably expects something in return, you cannot get the reward for your efforts financially, and you do not have the chance to measure the student properly anyway, so it is not clear whether you can get that reward from the student."* (Spiritual Support, Motivation)

T10: *"...I can say that the material part of the job is not satisfying at all, you spend hours in front of the screen, you spoil your eyes, even if you are sick, he was lecturing with your tea in his hand, you work extra, but the material part is very disturbing. Health workers received all that money, but wasn't that their job anyway? What if they had given additional salaries and incomes to teachers? Did teachers work less than them? I think something could have been done at this point..."* (Financial Support)

Conclusion, discussion, and suggestions

This study aims to find an answer to the question of whether the opportunities and supports available to teachers are sufficient for them to carry out online teaching successfully. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with teachers of different ages, genders, and branches living in different cities, and information was obtained about the opportunities and supports available to teachers.

When the first of the findings are analyzed, it is seen that teachers have positive and negative opinions about their experience in distance education. While some of the teachers stated that the distance education process was a necessity and obligation for them and that it was a difficult process, some of them shared that the distance education experience was easy. Similarly, in Canpolat and Yildirim's (2021) study, teachers generally stated that their distance education experience was a positive process for them and that they could easily use the distance education teaching platform. Despite the negative opinions, the similarity of the positive statements in the

two studies can be interpreted as some teachers have developed themselves sufficiently in terms of technology use and some have not yet reached a sufficient level in terms of technology use.

Another result shows that teachers used different platforms and received support from different platforms during the distance education process. The teachers participating in this study stated that the platforms they used were Zoom, EBA, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp, and it was seen that some teachers used more than one platform. In a similar study, Kiziltas and Cetinkaya Ozdemir (2021) examined the platforms used by teachers in the online teaching process and concluded that EBA and Zoom platforms were primarily used in addition to platforms such as Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, and Morpa Campus. When these results are evaluated, it is thought that the higher use of the EBA platform may be due to the alternative content and privileges offered by the platform to the user, simple interface, and easy usability.

At the end of the study, it was concluded that students' incomplete participation in online teaching, communication failures, and technological problems reduced teachers' motivation and enthusiasm for the lesson and the lessons progressed monotonously. The results of the study conducted by Gunes et al. (2022) overlap with this study. In their study, Gunes et al. concluded that undesirable student behaviors caused by factors such as incomplete attendance, communication language, and the use of technological equipment negatively affected teachers' motivation. Considering the two results and teachers' opinions, it can be said that teacher motivation and a productive lesson are in direct proportion to class participation and student motivation.

Another finding was that many institutions do not provide sufficient support to teachers. Teachers stated that they could not always access the technological support they needed and that they did not receive support to develop content and materials. Another similar result was obtained in the study conducted by Gurer et al. (2016). At the end of the study, it is seen that the necessary technological support should be provided by the institution where the lecturers work to develop materials suitable for online teaching and to use the system efficiently; lack of communication in online teaching and incomplete participation in the course negatively affect the attitudes and motivation of the lecturers towards the course. In their study, Baran et al. (2014) underlined the need to support lecturers at various levels and suggested that teachers should receive technological support while explaining support at the instructional level. These similar results suggest that some institutions do not have adequate technical support and the team and equipment to provide adequate technological support, or that institutions are not aware of the need to provide technical support to the instructor for an appropriate online teaching process.

Teachers mentioned not only the lack of technological equipment but also the lack of moral support, and vice versa, as a factor that is needed for the teacher in online teaching. Some of the teachers who participated in the study said that they received moral support from their institutions, while others said that they could not access this support. In his study, Kir (2020) examined the roles of instructors and institutions in online teaching and emphasized that the institution should provide moral support to the instructor and provide technical support to the instructor by giving in-service courses when necessary. Similarly, Baran et al. (2014) underlined the need to support lecturers at various levels and mentioned that institutions should provide moral support to teachers while explaining the support at the institutional level. Considering these similar results and teachers' opinions, it is thought that it is important for instructors to receive moral support from their institutions for their intrinsic motivation and attitudes.

Teachers stated that not only their technological hardware deficiencies but also students' technological hardware deficiencies, technology usage competencies, and unilateral communication by talking to each other affect participation and motivation in the lesson, and

that interactive applications and materials are needed in the online teaching process. Yilmaz and Aktug (2011) reached a similar conclusion in their study. In the study, it was stated that the instructor should have the necessary technology usage competencies to maintain the communication process healthily and that applications and environments that make interaction and communication more possible for both students and instructors should be developed. In a similar study, Kiziltas and Cetinkaya Ozdemir (2021) concluded that the existing infrastructure deficiencies and lack of technological equipment reduce participation in the course and that not every pioneer has the necessary opportunities and support to participate in online teaching. When these results are evaluated, it can be said that not only the instructor but also the student is needed to sustain online teaching and that improving the technological opportunities and conditions for student participation will allow preventing possible negativities.

Considering all these results, it can be said that to continue online teaching successfully, teacher needs should be taken into account, the online teaching platform used should be appropriate and sufficient in terms of content and pedagogy, institutions should provide sufficient support to teachers and not only teachers but also students should improve the opportunities they possess in this process; when these factors can be provided, it can be said that the negativities that may occur for online teaching will be minimized.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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