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A Review of the New Normal Education World

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| Makale Bilgisi | ÖZET |
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| <i>Geliş Tarihi:</i> 31.05.2021 | <p>Throughout world history, people have been affected by many epidemics and made efforts to get rid of the negative impact of them with minor damage. Outbreaks have slowed and sometimes stopped the usual flow of life, causing people to seek new ways. The Covid-19 virus, which the whole world encountered and was exposed to as it entered 2020, has affected many areas, including education. Educational institutions have been gradually closed worldwide, and the distance education process has been included in our lives. With the closure of the schools, the process started to be managed with different distance education practices both in our country and in the world for education sustainability. The ministries of education and the units responsible for education have determined the steps to be taken, informed the educational institutions, and initiated the distance education process. Distance education has affected all education levels from the pre-school period, in which schooling starts, to the higher education level, including primary and secondary education. This research, which touches on how distance education takes place in preschool, primary education, secondary education, and higher education with the closing of schools around the world, the practices conducted, the positive and negative aspects of distance education, was carried out to explain what happened in the education world and what could be done in the period called the new normal. At the end of the research conducted with the literature review method, suggestions for the country and education administrators were presented.</p> <p>© 2021JMRFE. All rights reserved</p> |
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Yeni Normal Eğitim Dünyası Üzerine Bir İnceleme

| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>Received:</i> 31.05.2021 | <p>Dünya tarihi boyunca insanlar birçok salgından etkilenmiş ve salgının olumsuz etkisinden en az hasarla kurtulabilmek için çaba sarf etmiştir. Salgınlar, hayatın olağan akışını yavaşlatıp ve bazen de durdurup insanların yeni arayışlar içine girmelerine neden olmuştur. 2020 yılına girerken tüm dünyanın karşılaştığı ve maruz kaldığı Covid-19 virüsü eğitim de dâhil olmak üzere bir çok alanı etkilemiştir. Dünyanın her yerinde kademeli olarak eğitim kurumlarında kapanmaya geçilmiş ve uzaktan eğitim süreci hayatımıza dâhil olmuştur. Okulların kapanması ile birlikte eğitimin sürdürülebilirliği için hem ülkemizde hem de dünyada farklı uzaktan eğitim uygulamaları ile süreç yönetilmeye başlanmıştır. Ülkelerin eğitim bakanlıkları ve eğitimden sorumlu birimleri atılacak adımları belirlemiş, eğitim kurumlarını bilgilendirmiş ve uzaktan eğitim sürecini başlatmıştır. Uzaktan eğitim okullaşmaya başlanan okul öncesi dönemden ilköğretim ve ortaöğretimi de kapsayacak biçimde yükseköğretim kademesine kadar her eğitim kademesini etkilemiştir. Dünya genelinde okullarının kapanması ile birlikte okul öncesi, ilköğretim, orta öğretim ve yükseköğretimde uzaktan eğitimin nasıl gerçekleştiğine,</p> |
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yapılan uygulamalara, uzaktan eğitimin olumlu ve olumsuz yanlarına değinen bu araştırma yeni normal olarak adlandırılan dönemde eğitim dünyasında neler olduğunu ve neler yapılabileceğini açıklamak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Doküman incelemesi yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilen araştırmanın sonunda ülke ve eğitim yöneticilerine yönelik öneriler sunulmuştur.

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Keywords: Yeni normal; uzaktan eğitim; uzaktan eğitim uygulamaları.

1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease, which the whole world has encountered as starting 2020 and has to deal with for more than a year, and its spreading power affecting every area has become a significant problem. The virus, with its effect, caused the Covid-19 pandemic to occur and a period called the new normal to enter our lives. Thus, people have to adapt to the new process. Each field and institution has been affected by the pandemic and has embarked on a quest. The education system has also been affected by the pandemic and continued to pursue its goals with new insights.

Cases of pneumonia of which etiology, was not fully understood began to be heard on December 31, 2019, in Wuhan, Hubei Province of China. It found out that there was a clustering of employees of the Wuhan's South China Seafood City Market (a wholesale fish and livestock market selling different animal species) located in the south of Wuhan. On January 13, 2020, it became definite that a Chinese woman reported from Thailand was the first importing case. In the following days, the number of countries where imported patients were reported gradually increased. By February 2020, countries with domestic contamination started to spread rapidly. As of March 2020, the pace of the pandemic slowed down in China, while an increase in COVID-19 cases and deaths due to this infection was observed in Iran, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), and Italy. Severe case increases have been experienced first in Europe and then in North America with the ongoing process. In Turkey, the first case was seen on March 11, 2020, and case reports have continued to come, as in all countries in the world (T.C. Ministry of Health, 2020). As of April 2021, the number of cases in Turkey was over 4 million, while the number of deaths approached 40,000. Worldwide, as of April 2021, the number of cases approached 145 million, while the number of deaths is over 3 million (WHO, 2021).

2. Pandemic and School Closure

With the introduction of the pandemic in our lives, it has been inevitable to experience changes in the education world as in every field. Because of this sudden situation, educators and students have worried about how the process will progress. With the onset of the pandemic both in Turkey and in other countries of the world, steps have been taken towards the progress of the education process.

In the 21st century, when science and technology have come to the fore, the coronavirus has reappeared as an epidemic disease in the historical process. The frequent occurrence of such diseases caused by bacteria and viruses in specific periods is due to the negative consequences of ignoring the natural balance and the ambition to gain more income and rent. For this reason, the Covid-19 pandemic has created changes in health, education, and sociocultural areas, especially in socio-economic life (Cinel, 2020). With the Covid-19 pandemic, most educational

institutions worldwide have cancelled face-to-face education and switched to distance learning and teaching as of March 2020. Students at all levels had to continue their lessons with distance education from their homes (Di Pietro, Biagi, Costa, Karpinski & Mazza, 2020). With the pandemic, education systems collapsed, approximately 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries and all continents were adversely affected, and 94% of the schools were closed (United Nations, 2020). Along with the lockdown and social distance measures due to the pandemic, closures of schools, educational institutions, and higher education institutions came into question (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The Covid-19 outbreak is, above all, a health crisis. Its violent influence has shaken and deeply affected the world to its core. Hence, education systems worldwide have been affected; schools, colleges, and universities have become almost entirely closed. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions to control the spread of Covid-19. This situation has caused significant interruptions in students' learning (Balwan, Saba, Rasool & Sharma, 2020).

The Covid-19 outbreak has affected human activities in many ways, including education, research, sports, entertainment, transportation, worship, social meetings/interactions, economy, businesses, and politics. On the other hand, the education sector has become one of the sectors worst hit by the pandemic (Onyema et al., 2020). UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore emphasized that children's education should not be interrupted for another year on January 12, 2021. As the Covid-19 pandemic enters its second year with the increase of cases worldwide, it has been stated that no effort should be avoided to keep schools open or reopen them. With the announcements made, the closure of schools around the world and, therefore, many students being deprived of educational opportunities is a crucial problem (Akçay, 2021). With the spread of the virus among people and the increase in deaths, countries have taken rapid steps to the point that schools should be closed worldwide. Thus, the functioning processes of educational institutions have continued from home. The figure below demonstrates the closure of schools from 2020 March to 2021 February (UNICEF, 2021).

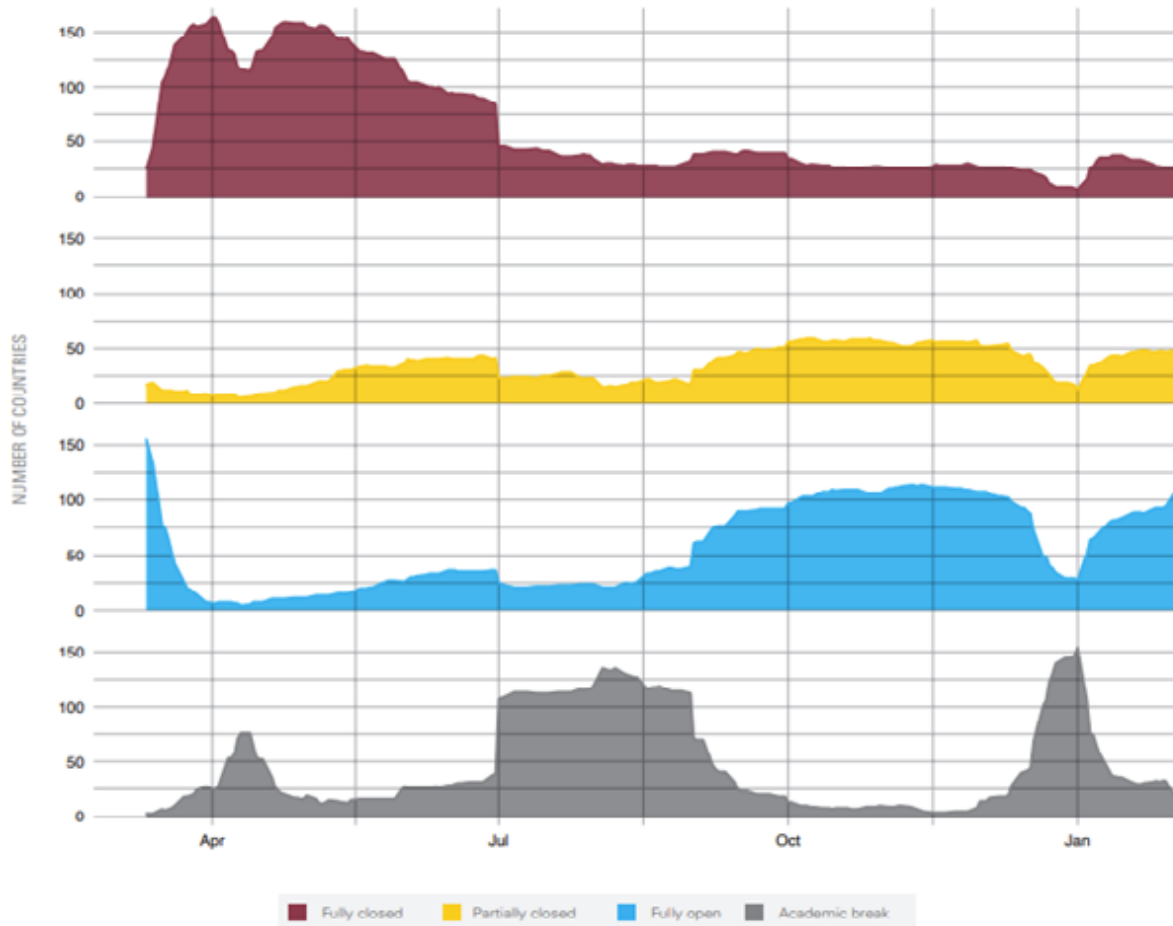


Figure 1. Time-series of school closure from 2020 March to 2021 February (UNICEF, 2021)

Figure 1 shows the trends in school closures from 2020 March to 2021 February. At first, approximately 150 countries closed their schools completely, ten countries partially closed them, and ten countries kept them open. As of May 2020, this situation started to change. The schools began to open, and the number of opened schools increased steadily. From July 2020 to September 2020, there was a decrease in school closures due to the holiday period. As of October 2020, exactly six months after the start of school closures, a reversal in this trend occurred. Approximately 100 countries fully opened schools, 50 countries partially opened their schools and, almost 25 countries closed their schools completely (UNICEF, 2021). Completely closing, partially closing, and keeping schools open the whole world varies according to the epidemic course of the countries. Therefore, it is evident that the numbers vary in the current sense.

3. Commencement of the Distance Education Process

The distance education process, which is the inevitable result of the pandemic, has been one of the first long-term practices in the world. In almost every country of the world, people expected to stay at home and adapt to social distance during the pandemic, with "stay at home" warnings and informative statements by the relevant administrations. Of course, this situation has caused the education world to prefer distance education and set sail for a new journey.

With the pandemic, emergency remote education applications have been put into practice worldwide by taking a quick step by many educational institutions not to interrupt education (Bozkurt, 2020). Distance education is a concept often referred to as online learning, e-learning, distance learning, correspondence training, external studies, flexible learning, and massive open online courses (MOOCs). It involves using media and technology to communicate and exchange in the learning process, regardless of space, time, or both. Printed learning materials or one-way mass broadcast (TV and radio programs) can be provided through web-based exchange using social media channels or learning platforms (UNESCO, 2020).

With the closure of all educational institutions within the restrictions made to prevent the spread of the virus during the Covid-19 pandemic, the subject of necessary distance education has come to the fore. In a short time, in line with the possibilities at hand, educational institutions have attempted to continue the education process (material sharing with learners and communication process, etc.) remotely. In this period, different types of applications such as TV broadcasts, printed material sharing, live classroom systems (Adobe Connect, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.), learning management systems (Moodle, Academic LMS, etc.) stand out. Efforts to continue education remotely due to compulsory reasons such as pandemic are called “emergency remote education” (İzmirli and Şahin İzmirli, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic, which can show as a first pandemic in the history of humanity affecting the worldwide and causing a large part of the world population to be closed to their homes, has given a new impetus to education. In particular, implementations have been made quickly not to take away the right of individuals to receive education and to minimize the inequality of opportunity in education. Distance education has become the first option countries embraced to continue their education during the pandemic. Throughout history, distance education has been dealt with so intensely for the first time, has come to the fore, and has been put into practice worldwide. However, the fact that every country has started distance education does not indicate that they have equal distance education conditions. Even though distance education has quickly started with the closure of schools in economically more vital countries giving importance to distance education over time and having established the necessary infrastructure (Eken, Tosun, & Tuzcu Eken, 2020), it is pretty difficult to state that the process works similarly in countries with a low level of development.

The distance education practices for all ages to students with the pandemic were endeavoured to implement. With the beginning of schooling, all individuals studying till the end of higher education were affected by distance education practices in different ways and were included in the process. Of course, the training activities implemented at all levels are not the same. It is essential to examine distance education applications that vary according to levels.

4. Distance Education in Preschool Period

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected education and everyone benefiting from it. Early childhood education has also been affected by the closure of schools. Children in this period experienced online learning to reduce the spreading of the epidemic since face-to-face learning cannot be achieved (Gayatri, 2020). Most countries have benefited from technology and online learning at varying rates at different levels. The rate of countries implementing this learning about preschool is 60%. The type of technology used in preschool education in the online education

process has generally been using television and radio (UNICEF, 2020). Early childhood education, referred to as the preschool period, differs from other learning levels. It is of critical importance for the development of children (Santos & Lacerda, 2020). The preschool period includes a process in which children play a lot, have fun, and include school preparation education. Its importance for children is indisputable. However, with the impact of the pandemic, the way children in the preschool period were affected by it was generally negative. İnan (2020) also underlined in her research that the children of families with low socioeconomic status were experiencing even more difficulties with the closure of schools. She stated that especially some children had the opportunity to play in the fresh air in the gardens of their homes and that the confinement of children living with crowded families at home had very negative consequences. Yoshikawa et al. (2020) stated in their research that global socioeconomic inequalities worsened the situation of millions of families, and those living in vulnerable geographic areas suffered more.

In the distance education of preschool students' families have been encumbered with much responsibility. Especially children spending time with their family during the day need to throw off their energy and play games due to their age. However, it is evident that the possibilities and potentials of families also affect this situation. Park, Logan, Zhang, Kamigaichi & Kulapichitr (2020) stated that many parents were asked to support their children's learning at home. Despite the opportunities offered by online learning, access to these opportunities and the technical knowledge of parents are fundamental was stated. Especially the families' access to technological devices or having limited access to reliable internet connections created disadvantages. With the pandemic, families also played an essential role in educating their children who had to go through their preschool education process from their homes. It was determined that preschool education institutions and teachers generally communicated with mothers in distance education practices during the stay-at-home process that entered our lives with the effect of the pandemic. It is quite clear that they made activity suggestions and video sharing via online means. However, a comprehensive educational activity such as distance education practice in the institutional sense was not carried out (Zeybekoğlu Akbaş & Dursun, 2020). Considering the age of preschool children, the face to face training at school cannot be associated with the practices at home and that the children cannot be provided with the efficiency of their schools with distance education. In addition, the fact that we faced with not getting the same efficiency from education when economic conditions come into play comes to the fore.

5. Distance Education in Primary Education

Since the pandemic has affected the whole world, students at all school levels have been affected by the process differently. In primary education, as in pre-school education, countries have implemented several measures to carry out the process and ensure that students do not lag behind their learning.

Primary education is a level helping individuals recognize and develop themselves, be sensitive to their country's problems, and become good citizens. It is an institution considered essential in preparing the individual for adulthood. Primary education is a significant turning point in a child's life (Oktay, 2013). EBA TV Primary School channel opened to appeal to a broad audience in cooperation with TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) for the primary education

level after the confusion experienced with the onset of the pandemic in Turkey(Çoruk& Moran, 2021). Via both EBA and preferred different platforms by teachers, lessons were carried out in the spring term of 2020 and have continued afterwards. Thus, it has been tried to ensure that the students continue their education. However, in line with the rate of spread of the virus and the decisions taken, schools opened alternately, and students had their holidays during the summer vacation period. In the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, schools were kept open for a while, and then, with the decisions taken in line with the course of the pandemic, it was switched to distance education.

With the introduction of the pandemic into our lives, different practices used in parts of the world to support the learning processes of primary school students, and the teaching process continued. Especially televisions became the first technological equipment preferred in the distance education process. Preparing the programs' content on TV were suitable for young children, and supported the learning process was declared by authorities(Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2020). The distance education practices carried out in all countries of the world are, of course, related to the economic conditions of the families, as well. The family's technological equipment, internet infrastructure, and the level of caring for their children have also been determinant in the efficiency of the education received. With the pandemic process, the levels of being affected by distance education have changed, and the problems experienced have also come to light. Çoruk and Moran (2021) examined the problems encountered during distance education practices at the primary education level; they summarized them as uncertainty problem, assessment and evaluation problem, access problem, inequality problem, a technology addiction problem, focus problem, communication and interaction problem, lack of application problem, social and emotional development problem and problems caused by parents. In his research, Fidan (2021) stated that there were social, inequality of opportunity, and psychological problems in primary education during the pandemic process and the main reason was the effect of the pandemic on individuals. He also expressed that face-to-face training might be carried out in a limited way to increase the equality of opportunity.

6. Distance Education in Secondary Education

Another level that is in the inevitable sphere of influence of the pandemic is secondary education. Secondary education, which is the last stage before students start their university life, is vital in making sense of an individual's life. The transition from primary education to secondary education (Jaramillo, 2020), in which the rate of dropping out of school is relatively high, is also known as the period in which individuals experience adolescence. It has been progressing excruciatingly with the effect of the pandemic.

Secondary education includes all general, vocational, and technical education institutions based on primary education, providing four-year compulsory, formal or non-formal education. The children who are complete these schools considered being secondary education graduates. Secondary education aims to provide a minimum common general knowledge and to prepare students for higher education both professional and life/business fields (EURYDICE, 2021).Secondary distance education practices have been implementing through EBA and the internet in Turkey, as in primary education. According to the course of the pandemic, schools opened on certain days of the week in specific periods face-to-face training provided, and education through online and television continued in the remaining days.

During the pandemic period, distance education was carried out in our country and worldwide through online platforms. Both the economic conditions of the families and the distance education models and approaches preferred by the countries during this process have created different effects on the students. Çoruk (2021) stated the problems in secondary education during the pandemic as uncertainty, the existence of inequalities between students, access problems, problems encountered in assessment and evaluation, problems due to lack of implementation, and problems related to social and emotional development. Pinar and Dönel Akgül (2020) stated in their research that secondary school students had problems in distance education due to software-related problems, and therefore, they could not find the practices very efficient. They stated that the error warnings, system density, entrance restrictions, time allocated to live lessons, and insufficient internet quotas of the students, especially encountered in live course applications, caused significant problems in the process. However, they also stated that some secondary school students felt like they were at school with the distance learning models used, could get answers instantly by asking questions they could not solve, could review and reinforce the topics, were more motivated, understood the subjects better in this way, could see their friends thanks to these practices, and even preferred these practices to education at school. Helbling, and Moser (2020), investigating the experiences of primary and secondary education students in Switzerland during the pandemic, found out that secondary education students were not affected by school closures and that this situation did not have many negative consequences on their learning speed.

7. Distance Education in Higher Education

Another level of education that had to continue the distance education process in the shadow of the pandemic was higher education. Higher education, which is the final pre-vocational education level of individuals, is a crucial and critical stage of professional development. With the pandemic, distance education practices were preferred in higher education, similarly to other education levels. With the pandemic onset, universities had to do their classes online to complete their academic semesters. Academic, administrative staff, and students coordinated quickly. Students quickly adapted to learning management systems such as Moodle, Blackboard, Brightspace, Google Education, and communication software products for distance education such as Zoom, Adobe Connect, Skype, and Teams (Champagne & Granja, 2021). Considering the age of students at the higher education level, it is possible to state the diversity of platforms used in distance education. International Association of Universities (2020) findings indicated that countries' governments, universities, and faculties preferred their own distance education approach. Laboratory studies, applied fields, and studies requiring cooperation were quite difficult to perform with distance education. Agormedah, Henaku, Ayite & Ansah (2020) found in their research that university students used some platforms such as UCC Moodle, Alison, and Google class. In addition, various social media platforms and smartphones also used in the process. The age ranges of university students are effective in using different platforms. Xiao and Fan (2020) also stated in their research that approximately 200 countries started online lessons not to interrupt education with the pandemic. They expressed that distance learning technologies, virtual and augmented reality, and 3D printing were included in online learning, together with robot teachers supported by artificial intelligence.

Some negativities of the pandemic have occurred in higher education, just like in other education levels. Notably, 39.16% of higher education students stated that they had to deal with

internet networks and Wi-Fi connection problems. Another group of approximately 17.41% mentioned the problems arising from one-sided communication. They underlined that this situation also reduced the quality of education. They also expressed that having on-screen concentration impairment, limitations in team projects, and decreased academic achievement were other problems experienced (Fatoni et al., 2020). In his research, Muftahu (2020) stated that students and academic staff experienced some primary difficulties such as lack of computer, knowledge, and skills and that both some academic staff and students resisted adopting technology and accepting distance learning.

8. Well, what happens next? What should be done?

With the effect of the pandemic, the transition to the new normal education world has been very rapid. The closure of schools around the world and then a controlled opening led to recent steps in education. Online and distance education will undoubtedly be an integral part of our lives with the developing understanding.

If the prevention of the spread of the virus, it is thought that life will return to normal all over the world in a controlled manner. Perhaps in the next period, diseases that seem possible to be transmitted to people in contagious ways will always exist in our lives. Experts also state that the virus can gain a seat in our lives, and we should get used to this situation. For this reason, education will have to continue to function just like other sectors in the ordinary course of life. Consequently, new understandings will be experienced by all educators and students.

It is possible to say that hybrid (blended) learning has gained a place in understanding the new normal education world that emerged with the pandemic. Hybrid (blended) learning is a learning method that combines distance learning and traditional learning (Liu, Zhang, Ye, & Wu, 2020). The officials responsible for education in almost all countries of the world underline that in the new normal order, and the following period, distance education and face-to-face education will be together, and this situation will become a habit. Thus, the issue of technology literacy in today's societies comes to the fore. While the pandemic revealed our inability to use technological equipment and technology, it also offered us opportunities to improve ourselves. The important thing is that every segment of society should consider the possibility of distance education being an indispensable part of our lives. For this reason, it seems possible to make some suggestions together with the effects of the new normal and possible predictions in the next period:

- Considering the epidemic's impact on educational systems education policies should update, and equality of opportunity education should take into account. In particular, supporting the learning of disadvantaged students and taking the necessary precautions by considering the conditions that pose an obstacle are among the essential issues that should be discussed in the education management system of each country.
- Problems such as internet connection and insufficient technological infrastructure in the distance education process have created significant problems for students and teachers to attend classes. Based on the understanding that distance education will always exist in the next stage of life, the administrative system of each country should provide technological

infrastructure support not only for learners but also for all individuals to ensure their active use.

- To better understand and show the effects of distance education on students' learning, it is necessary to ensure that families also have information about the distance education process. It is necessary to create content for families in the countries' distance education processes and ensure that they observe and understand students' experiences. Of course, if necessary, an alternative can be developed for the countries' governments to provide technical infrastructure support for the internet and create additional packages for families.
- Guidance and Psychological Counseling services should support students and their families' mental health to fight pandemics. Undoubtedly, increasing motivation with approaches that will guide what should be done for the current conditions and experiences will be very beneficial.
- Providing uniform education in the distance education process and presenting the educational content with a particular understanding also affects the efficiency of distance education. Teachers should be enlightened about distance learning methods and approaches and, they should train on how to design online activities to be done in cooperation or with groups. Parents and teachers should support their pupils in creating educational products at home, thus learning permanence may be ensured.
- Assessment and evaluation approaches in education should update to be fit online education, especially with the pandemic. Indeed, only a result-oriented assessment at the end of the course or term will not be beneficial. For this reason, using not only summative but also formative measurement-evaluation tools and approaches will be beneficial for students.
- All students had to spend more time with technological devices, with distance education. This situation has led to the emergence of technology addiction. Students, parents, and teachers should train about the purposeful and efficient use of technological tools.

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