

Chapter 26

Views of Academic Staff About the Assessment Processes of Online Courses During the COVID–19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine views of academic staff about the assessment processes of online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study, the case study method, one of qualitative research methods, was used. The participants of the study were 42 academic staff teaching in six faculties from nine universities in Turkey. The research data were collected using the semi-structured interview method, and content analysis was conducted on the collected data. According to the research results, most of the participants used more than one method for assessment, and the most common methods were homework, tests with multiple choice questions, tests with open-ended questions, projects, and reports. It was found that the most important problem reported by the participants in relation to assessment was the cheating done by students in online exams. In line with the opinions at the end of the research, suggestions were put forward regarding the academic staff's assessment processes of online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19, which emerged in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019, has spread rapidly all over the world. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared it as a pandemic, which is defined as the

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spread of a disease or an infectious agent in countries, continents, and even in a very wide area such as the whole world (Ministry of Health, 2020). Although there were many epidemics in the world before, none of them had a rapid spread and wide impact as COVID-19 (Erzen & Ceylan, 2020).

The unexpectedly emerging COVID-19 virus has had huge influence on education systems (Eti & Karaduman, 2020). In order to limit the spread of the disease, educational institutions at all levels, from pre-schools to universities, were closed immediately. In this respect, as of March 16, 2020, education in universities in Turkey has been suspended for three weeks. The Turkish Council of Higher Education [TCHE] (2020a), the institution responsible for the regulation of higher education practices in Turkey, stated in its press release decisions on March 26, 2020 that the spring semester education process in universities will continue with distance education, open education and digital education opportunities, meaning that no face-to-face education would be given in the spring semester. Thus, without a serious preparation process, distance education has suddenly become the basic teaching method in all educational institutions (Erzen & Ceylan, 2020).

Distance education is a systematic and planned application of educational technology in which the sources and recipients are in different environments for most of the learning-teaching process (Uşun, 2006). Bozkurt et al. (2020) named this compulsory distance education process during the COVID-19 pandemic as emergency remote education. Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) stated that the emergency distance education, which is being carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a temporary solution to an urgent problem and that it is not the same as online distance education. According to Bozkurt et al. (2020), the differences between normal distance education and emergency distance education, which the researcher defined as the effort to keep education alive with the available opportunities during a crisis, as follows: (1) Distance education is an option, yet urgent distance education is a necessity; (2) While emergency distance education is the process of producing temporary solutions within the existing possibilities, distance education is a planned process that produces permanent solutions; and (3) emergency distance education is an effort to continue the education process with the opportunities available during a crisis, while distance education is a systematic and planned process in line with a specific purpose.

One of the elements that should be considered and carefully planned in the distance education process is assessment (Baran, 2020). Measurement is defined by Magnusson (1967) as giving numbers or symbols to objects according to the degree of having certain properties within the framework of rules that can be tested in valid empirical ways, while Turgut (1995) defines measurement as observing a quality and expressing the result of the observation with numbers and symbols. Measurement is done to determine how much an individual possesses a quality or qualification. In the educational process, measurement is done to determine to what extent they have achieved the desired behavioral change and to what extent they have reached the desired skill and ability (Kan, 2006). The decision to be made as a result of the measurement constitutes the concept of assessment. Assessment is defined as the process of deciding about the measured quality by comparing the measurement results with a criterion (Baykul, 2000; Özçelik, 1992; Turgut, 1995).

One of the most accepted classifications regarding assessment is the traditional assessment and alternative assessment. Traditional assessment techniques are multiple-choice tests, true-false questions, matching, fill-in-the-blank questions, short-answer written exams and long-answer written exams. Alternative assessment techniques are performance evaluation, portfolio, concept, structured grid, diagnostic branched tree, word association, project, drama, interview, written reports, demonstration, poster, peer review and self-assessment (Bahar et al., 2008; Ministry of National Education, n.d.; Turan Oluk & Ekmekci, 2017).

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