

## Private School Teachers' Experiences with Distance Education: Mixed Methods Research

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**Abstract.** This study was carried out to understand and interpret the solutions produced by the teachers working in private schools by revealing the problems they faced in distance education. The research was in convergent mixed methods design with the data-transformation variant. As a sample, criterion sampling technique, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods used in qualitative and mixed methods research, was used. The population of the research was selected as a sample of 13 teachers who met the criteria and wanted to voluntarily participate in the study, among the secondary and high school teachers working at the Campus College within the borders of Antalya province in Muratpaşa District in the 2021-2022 education year. The data in the study were collected by individual interview technique. The interviews done with semi-structured interview forms for 30-45 minutes were recorded and in qualitative strand, the text data were subjected to theme, descriptive and content analysis, and the opinions were categorized under the top and sub-themes. In quantitative strand, after quantifying the qualitative findings based on themes, the frequency of the themes coded were analysed descriptively so as to determine whether it differed according to opinions of the teachers working in secondary school and high school. The results of the research included findings reflecting the views of teachers under the specified themes, and these findings provided clues about understanding the problems experienced by private school branch teachers in distance education, whether those problems differed in terms of types of schools and how to solve these problems.

**Keywords:** Distance education, private schools, branch teachers

### Introduction

Education system in Turkey was reconsidered with the "National Education Basic Law" numbered 1739, which was accepted in 1973, and necessary arrangements were carried out. All education levels, including primary, secondary and high school, received their share from this regulation. After the general goals, specific goals and 14 principles were determined by this law, education was divided into "formal" and "non-formal education" and the implementation process was started (Resmi Gazete, 1973).

After it was accepted in the General Assembly of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the 4+4+4 Education System system was enacted, and its implementation started in the 2012 – 2013 education year. With the amendments in the laws "No. 222 and No. 1739", the eight-year compulsory education period was increased to 12 years and the compulsory education process was designed as three levels formulated as "4+4+4" (Resmi Gazete, 2012).

Teaching is a field profession that undertakes education, training and administrative duties in schools. Teaching is a profession that must be done with patience, understanding, flexibility and adaptability, and with the expectation of success from students. The main task of teachers is to raise individuals who know and adopt the culture of the national and universal society, find solutions to problems, transform

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the aims of the national education curriculum into behavior and learn to learn, taking into account the needs of each individual (Şişman, 2011).

The classroom is the setting where learning takes place, which is defined as permanent behavioral change as a result of educational activities. The problems faced in the classroom setting are increasing day by day. The responsibility for the solution of these problems belongs to the learning to a great extent (Küçükahmet, 2003). Some of the problems faced in classroom education can be listed as follows: indifference caused by students and parents, education being exam-oriented, indiscipline of students and inadequacy of school administration in this regard.

The COVID-19 virus epidemic, which started in Wuhan, China in December 2019, became a global epidemic in a very short time, and as a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this epidemic as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, which has gained a global dimension, has led to a crisis period in which unexpected, unpredictable and uncertain situations are faced in all fields from individual and organizational, national and international, micro level to macro level. In general, infectious diseases and epidemics, natural disasters, major accidents, medical practices and problems experienced in the functioning of the health system, which can be faced in all countries at the national and international level, have taken their places among the types of crises that cause a crisis in the health sector (Panos, Dafni, Kostas, Zacharoula, 2009). Therefore, the period of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has been affected by health, education, economy, politics, etc., all over the world. Many measures have been taken to protect public health, such as curfews, closure of workplaces and schools. Therefore, the period of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, especially health, education, economy, politics, etc. all over the world. Many measures have been taken to protect public health, such as curfews, closure of workplaces and schools. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many national and international institutions and organizations published school and public health guidelines, comprehensive reports and recommendations. Some of these include "Interim Guidance for Prevention and Control of COVID-19 in Schools" (UNICEF, WHO, 2020), "Measures to be Taken in Schools within the Scope of COVID-19", "Administrator and Teacher Information Guide" (MEB, 2020a), "Student Information Guide" (MEB, 2020b), "Parent Information Guide" (MEB, 2020c) and "Control Guide for The Improvement of Hygiene Conditions and Prevention of Infection in Educational Institutions" (MEB, 2020d) can be given as examples. When these documents are examined, there are usually a series of regulations and decisions on how distance education should be done in this process. Although the necessary changes have been made to adapt to today's changing conditions and conditions in education, many problems brought about by the implementation of distance education as well as face-to-face education during the pandemic period are still waiting for solutions, as well as the problems arising from the physical conditions of students, parents, schools and teachers.

In this study, it was aimed to understand and interpret the solutions produced by the teachers working in private schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education by revealing the problems they faced in distance education. In this context, it is thought that the results of the research will reveal the problems faced in distance education, and the solutions produced to these problems will contribute to the field of education management, and will shed light on both the top policy makers in the planning and programming processes and the school administration in their implementation. For this purpose answers to following questions for both qualitative and quantitative strands were sought:

1. Qual: How do branch teachers working in private schools define distance education?
2. Qual: What kind of problems do branch teachers working in private schools face in distance education?  
Quan: What is the frequency of the themes of the problems faced by branch teachers working in private schools in distance education, and does the frequency of themes of these problems differ according to the type of school in which the branch teachers work?
3. Qual: What are the main reasons for the problems faced by branch teachers working in private schools in distance education?

- Quan: What is the frequency of the themes of the main reasons of the problems faced by branch teachers working in private schools in distance education, and does the frequency of themes the main reasons of these problems differ according to the type of school in which branch teachers work?
4. Qual: What kind of solutions do branch teachers working in private schools offer to the problems they face in distance education?  
Quan: What is the frequency of the themes the solutions to the problems faced by the branch teachers working in private schools, and does the frequency of themes of the solutions to the problems they face differ according to the type of school the branch teachers work in?
  5. Qual: How do branch teachers working in private schools compare distance education and face-to-face education?  
Quan: What is the frequency of the themes of the differences between distance education and face-to-face education by branch teachers working in private schools, and does the frequency of themes of the differences between this distance education and face-to-face education differ according to the type of school the branch teachers work in?
  6. What do branch teachers working in private schools think distance education is like? Why?  
Quan: What is the frequency of the types of metaphors branch teachers working in private schools produced?

### **Method and Paradigm of Research**

This research was carried out as a mixed method research that includes both qualitative and quantitative strands. Mixed methods research design is the process of combining, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and a mixed method research can be done in order to obtain results from different methods, to obtain an explanation that cannot be reached with the first method, and to develop a study with a second method (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2018; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, Gunbayi, 2020a). While the paradigm of this research in qualitative strand is interpretive as the interpretative paradigm is based on understanding and interpret subjective and intersubjective views of the individuals and ontologically it is hermeneutics, the paradigm of this research in quantitative strand is functional as the functional paradigm is particularly suitable for scale or survey-based descriptive quantitative research because it is ontologically realistic. (Gunbayi& Sorm, 2018, Gunbayi& Sorm, 2020; Gunbayi, 2020 a,b) In this research a convergent mixed methods design with the data-transformation variant was used.

In the qualitative strand of this research descriptive phenomenological design was used. A phenomenological study is one that focuses on what people experience and the description of how they experience events. The main purpose of phenomenological study is to reveal what is in one's mind, that is, the essence of the perception of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). Accordingly, a phenomenological study defines the meaning of the experiences lived by various individuals of a concept or phenomenon. In other words, it focuses not on the phenomenon, but on the experience of that phenomenon. As a result, phenomenology researchers investigate and reveal conscious structures in human life. (Polkhorne, 1989). In quantitative strand, after quantifying the qualitative findings based on themes, descriptive statistics based on the frequency of the themes of qualitative findings which was quantized were used. Frequency distributions are descriptive statistics that provide informative and summarized data sets. A frequency distribution provides categorical information on number of occurrences, constructing frequency distribution tables and creating graphical depictions (Allen, 2017).

### ***Sampling***

In the research, criterion sampling technique, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods used in qualitative research, was used on a voluntary basis. This sampling technique covers the inclusion of individuals who meet the criteria in accordance with the purpose of a particular research (Palys, 2008).

The population of the research was 44 teachers working at Kampüs High School and Secondary School in Muratpaşa district of Antalya province (Table 3.1.). Among the 44 branch teachers, 13 volunteers who met the criteria (who were permanent staff in High School and Secondary School) were selected as the sample. While determining the participants, they were determined to be volunteer teachers from different branches (social, science, physical education and visual arts) meeting the criteria and the sample consisted of 13 branch teachers. (Table 3.1.)

**Table 1.**

*Distribution of demographic variables of the participants*

Participant	Age	Seniority	Gender	Branch	Type of Schools
<b>A</b>	33	5 years	Female	Physical education	High School
<b>B</b>	28	6 years	Female	Biology	High School
<b>C</b>	32	8 years	Male	Geography	High School
<b>D</b>	43	10 years	Female	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	High School
<b>E</b>	47	20 years	Female	Science	Secondary School
<b>F</b>	30	7 years	Male	Science	Secondary School
<b>G</b>	36	9 years	Female	Visual arts	High School
<b>H</b>	37	13 years	Female	English	Secondary School
<b>I</b>	25	2 years	Female	Maths	High School
<b>J</b>	36	7 years	Female	Social studies	Secondary School
<b>K</b>	25	1 year	Female	Social studies	Secondary School
<b>L</b>	28	6 years	Female	Turkish Language and Literature	High School
<b>M</b>	33	10 years	Male	History	High School

### ***Data Collection***

In order to increase the internal validity of the research, the study data was obtained by using the semi-structured interview form, which was finalized after the pilot interviews, and a theoretical framework was created based on the literature review. With semi-structured interview forms, the opinions of branch teachers working in secondary schools about the problems they experienced regarding distance education were collected with 30-45 minutes of interviews to find answers to the sub-problems.

### ***Ethical Procedures***

Scientific research ethics were followed at all stages of the research. Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee Approval Certificate was obtained from Akdeniz University Institute of Educational Sciences and Department of Education for the research. Necessary permissions were obtained from the Antalya Provincial Directorate of National Education for the implementation of the research. An informed consent form was obtained from the participants before the interview. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, its confidentiality and safety, and the absence of physical and psychological risks. Prior to the interview, permission was obtained from the participants to record the audio and they were informed that the interview recordings would be kept for seven years. Participant confirmation was obtained immediately after the interviews were transcribed. The results of the research were shared with the participants who requested it.

### ***Validity and Reliability of the Research***

In qualitative strand, due to the interpretative nature of qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the findings of a qualitative study were tested instead of testing for conventional validity and reliability used in quantitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) The following practices were carried out to increase the internal and external validity and reliability based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative data:

a) In order to increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, an interview form was developed by creating a conceptual framework related to the subject as a result of the literature review; In the theme analysis made to form the basis for content and descriptive analysis, the themes, sub-themes related to these themes and their relations with other themes were checked for integrity. The collected data was confirmed by obtaining the consent of the participants before the analysis, and the consent form signed by the participant regarding the confidentiality of the information recorded in the interview would only be used for scientific purposes, and the data collected during the interview process reflected the real situation.

b) In order to increase the external validity (transferability) of the research, the research process and the steps applied in this process were explained in detail; generalizing the theory by making comparisons with the studies in the literature by using the research model, study group, data collection tool, data collection process, data analysis and analytical generalization method of the research. It was defined in detail and interviews were conducted with the participants on a voluntary basis, using the purposive sampling method to reveal the different characteristics of the events and phenomena based on the perspectives of the participants.

c) In order to increase the internal reliability (confirmability) of the research, the inter-coder reliability of the themes created to test the internal reliability of the study was tested with the "kappa" analysis, and the kappa value of 52 sub-themes belonging to 6 main themes was 0.92, which indicated that there was a perfect level of agreement between the codings.

d) In order to increase the external reliability (dependability) of the research, all data collection tools, raw data, the coding done by the researcher during the analysis phase and the main perceptions, notes, writings and inferences that make up the research were subjected to a dependability examination by an external expert (Landis and Koach, 1977; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2007, Gunbayi, 2018).

### **Data Analysis**

In qualitative strand, the text data based on transcripts gathered via semi structured interviews were subjected to theme, descriptive and content analysis, and the opinions were categorized under the top and sub-themes. In quantitative strand, after the themes of qualitative data the inter-coder reliability of which was confirmed and demographic data of the type of schools merged into numbers, the frequency of the themes was analysed descriptively in terms of frequencies by constructing frequency distribution tables and creating graphical depictions so as to determine whether it differed according to opinions of the teachers working in secondary school and high school. (Kelle, 1995; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007, Gunbayi, 2019). In this context, qualitative research "NVIVO 12 Pro" software for qualitative strand and excel for quantitative strand were used in the analysis of the data obtained in the study.

### **Findings**

#### **1. Definition of Distance Education**

Branch teachers were asked what they understood from distance education, what distance education meant to them and how they could define distance education. The definitions of the participants regarding distance education are:

*Online or offline training on digital platform. (A1 )*

*I think it is the education model where the teacher and the student are the farthest from each other and it is difficult to understand. (B1)*



*The type of education that students and teachers perform visually and audibly, regardless of time and place, wherever there is internet.(C1)*

*Distance Education has advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage is not to understand the course due to poor internet setting. The advantage is that the knowledge comes to the child's feet. (D1)*

*To teach in a virtual setting without communicating face to face with the student. (E1)*

*Providing educational activities online (F1)*

*It is a form of education in which students and teachers perform video and audio, regardless of time and place. (G1)*

*A setting where we can attend classes wherever there is internet.(H1)*

*Implementation of education with various communication tools (television, internet and similar) (I1)*

*Providing the course with communication tools as online education (J1).*

*It is a form of education using online tools. (K1)*

*It is an educational activity that is carried out with different methods and techniques without any place and time limitations. (L1)*

*It is an educational service that can be done wherever there is an internet setting. (M1)*

When we examined the definitions of the participants about distance education in general, the majority of the participants defined distance education at the conceptual level without commenting; participant B and E defined distance education by commenting on the limitations of distance education, and participant D by mentioning both its positive aspects and limitations.

## 2. Problems in Distance Education

### Qualitative Findings

In Table 2 the themes related to the problems faced by branch teachers working in private schools and the distribution of themes are given.

**Table 2.**

*Problems Faced by Branch Teachers in Distance Education*

Problems faced in distance education	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Difficulty in accessing the internet		√		√		√	√		√		√	√	
Lack of computers		√	√									√	√
Inability to make eye contact				√	√			√		√			
Inability to ensure active participation					√					√		√	
Inefficiency	√						√						√
Increased workload			√										
Difficulty of online exercise	√												

As seen in Table 2, when we analyzed the opinions of branch teachers about the problems they faced in distance education, the difficulty of accessing the internet was seen as the most mentioned problem by the participants. They stated:

*Of course I think. At first, internet broke downs was the main problem itself. (B2.1)*

*Yes, I think. When internet connection is lost (D2.1)*

*I haven't had any problems with the internet. (F2.1)*

*There may be a connection problem. (G2.1)*

*I sometimes couldn't attend class due to poor internet (I2,1)*

*Yes, I met. Internet-related problems, insufficient infrastructure (K2.1)*

*I couldn't complete the course due to disconnection (L2,1)*

Then, they mentioned about the lack of a computer and the inability to make eye contact. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

*Apart from this, technological problems (absence of computers, etc.) also created problems. (B2.2)*

*Lack of technological hardware (C2.2)*

*Insufficient digital tools (L2.2)*

*Technological problems (M2.2)*

*The student's screen is off. (D2,3)*

*Of course, there are problems in distance education, especially since there are no lessons in the classroom setting, it is very difficult to make eye contact with children and not to see if they understand. (E2,3).*

*Since we could not see exactly what the students were doing, it was not a very reliable setting. (H2,3).*

*There is a communication breakdown problem (J2,3).*

After that, they mentioned about the inability to ensure active participation and inefficiency. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

*Not being able to actively involve students in the lesson is one of the biggest problems. (E2,4)*

*Student intervention (J2,4)*

*The reason for this is that students and parents do not see distance education as a necessity (L2,4)*

*It was not very productive to teach children online in physical education class. (A2,5).*

*The communication between the student and the teacher does not give the desired efficiency. (G2.5).*

*Difficulty in controlling the lesson from time to time... Difficulties experienced in intervention (meaning that the lesson cannot be understood) (M2,5).*

Finally, they mentioned about the increased workload and the difficulty of online exercise. The opinions of the participants on this theme were:

*Increased workload (C2.6)*

*Since the age group is older, it is very difficult to exercise on the screen anyway. (A2.7)*

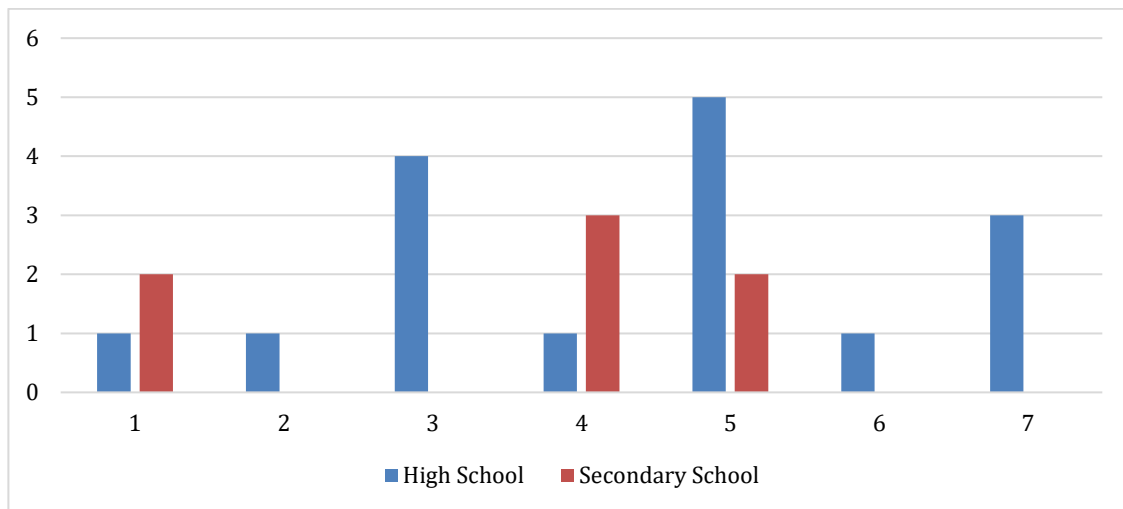
### **Quantative Findings**

The frequencies of the themes on the problems faced by branch teachers in distance education according to the type of schools are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*The frequency of the themes of the problems in distance education according to the type of schools*

<b>Problems in distance</b>	<b>High School (f)</b>	<b>Secondary School (f)</b>
<b>1</b> Inability to ensure active participation	1	2
<b>2</b> Increased workload	1	0
<b>3</b> Computer shortage	4	0
<b>4</b> Inability to make eye contact	1	3
<b>5</b> Difficulty accessing the internet	5	2
<b>6</b> Difficulty of online exercise	1	0
<b>7</b> Inefficiency	3	0



**Figure 1.** *The graphic of the frequencies of the themes of the problems in distance education according to the type of schools*

As seen in Table 3 and Figure 1, when we analyzed the opinions of branch teachers about the problems they faced in distance education according to the type of schools, branch teachers working in secondary school expressed their opinions more frequently, especially on the theme of inability to eye contact. We can say that this is due to the difficulty and importance of getting eye contact in order to not only draw students' attention to the lesson, but also to ensure the continuity of active participation in the lesson when teaching online lessons, since secondary school students are in the younger age group.



### 3. The Main Reasons of Problems in Distance Education

#### Qualitative Findings

In Table 4 the themes related to the main reasons of the problems faced by branch teachers working in private schools and the distribution of themes were:

**Table 4.**

*The main reasons of the problems in distance education faced by branch teachers in private schools*

Main Reasons of the Problems in distance education	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1 Class attendance	√			√	√				√			√	
2 Internet connection			√			√			√		√	√	
3 Lack of technology knowledge					√		√	√		√	√		
4 Not being able to focus on the lesson	√	√							√				√
5 Younger age group					√								
6 Professional dissatisfaction												√	
7 Lack of homework												√	
8 Inability to use board					√								
9 Inability to practice													√

As seen in Table 4, when we analyzed the opinions of branch teachers working in private schools on the main reasons of the problems they faced in distance education, it was seen that the most mentioned reasons were class attendance, internet connection and lack of technology knowledge. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

*Children's participation in the lesson (A3, 1)*

*Not meeting with the student one-on-one. (D3, 1)*

*Lack of active course participation (E3, 1)*

*Students did not turn on audio and video in the lesson. (I3, 1)*

*Not getting feedback from the students... Due to the small number of students attending the course, the current students also do not want to attend the course (L3, 1)*

*Internet connection problem (C3, 2)*

*Infrastructure (F3, 2)*

*Internet interruptions. (I3, 2)*

*Insufficient internet-based infrastructure. (K3, 2)*

*Various connection problems. (L3, 2)*

*Inability to use technology. (E3, 3)*

*Low level of technological literacy. (G3, 3)*

*Teachers' sudden entry into an unfamiliar situation and not having been trained for it before. (H3, 3)*

*Being unfamiliar with the system and lack of experience in preparation (J3, 3)*

*Lack of clear understanding of technology use. (K3, 3)*

Then they mentioned about not being able to focus on the lesson. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

*Children's difficulty in concentrating on the lesson. (A3, 4)*

*The fact that students and teachers were not face to face made it difficult for us to reach students, so it became difficult for students to understand the subject. (B3, 4)*

*Students had problems focusing on the lesson. (I3, 4)*

*The teacher's difficulties in the discipline of his own lesson. (M3, 4)*

Finally, they mentioned about the younger age group, professional dissatisfaction, lack of homework, inability to use the board and practice. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

Young age groups (M3, 5)

Inability to achieve professional satisfaction (L3, 6)

Not doing homework and homework follow-up regularly (L3, 7)

No use of board. (E3, 8)

Online education does not allow practical applications. (M3, 9)

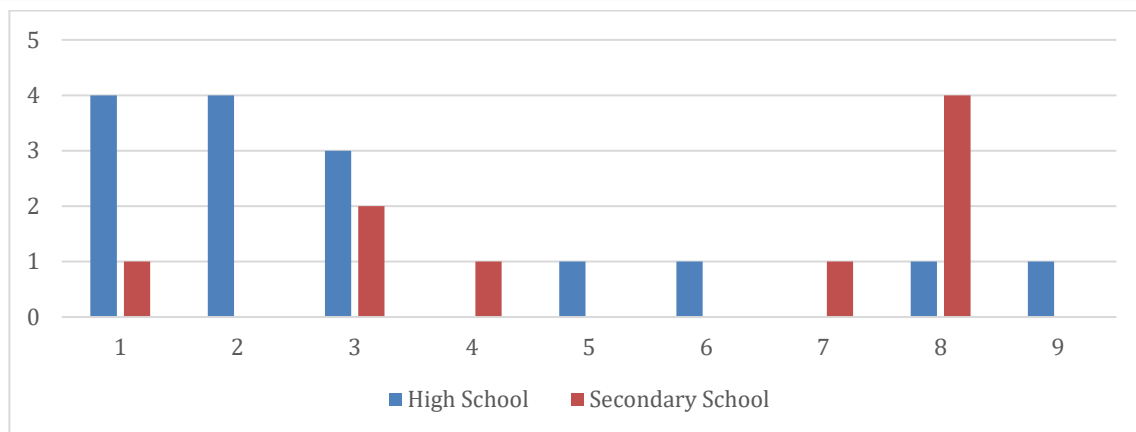
### ***Quantative Findings***

The frequencies of the themes of the main reasons of the problems faced by branch teachers in distance education according to the type of schools are presented in Table 5 and Figure 2.

**Table 5.**

*The frequencies of the themes of the main reasons of problems in distance education according to the type of schools*

Main reasons problems in distance	High School (f)	Secondary School (f)
1 Class attendance	4	1
2 Not being able to focus on the lesson	4	0
3 Internet connection	3	2
4 Younger age group	0	1
5 Professional dissatisfaction	1	0
6 Lack of homework	1	0
7 Inability to use board	0	1
8 Lack of technology information	1	4
9 Inability to practice	1	0



**Figure 2.** The graphich of the frequencies of the themes of the main resons of problems in distance education according to the type of schools

As seen in 5 and Figure 2, when we analyze the opinions of branch teachers regarding the main reasons of the problems they faced in distance education according to the type of schools, especially high school teachers expressed their opinions more frequently on the themes of class attendance, not being able to focus on the lesson, professional dissatisfaction, lack of homework and not being able to practice. This may be due to the fact that high school students were in the older age group, had lower parental control, their attendance to distance courses was not compulsory, and students in this group were mostly studying for university exams. Secondary school teachers, on the other hand, expressed more frequently on the problems of the younger age group, inability to use the board, and lack of technology information. The reason for this may be due to the fact that secondary school students were in younger age group and had not yet fully gained the ability to think abstractly, so teachers had difficulty in managing the classroom in distance education compared to face-to-face education in the classroom setting. On the other hand, both high school and secondary school teachers agreed on the main reason for the problem they faced in distance education, about internet connection. This situation may be caused by the infrastructure, internet shortage and technological deficiencies of the education system, which was caught unprepared due to the sudden transition to distance education as a result of compulsory reasons based on the pandemic.

#### 4. The solutions to the problems in distance education

##### Qualitative Findings

In Table 6, the themes related to the solutions suggested by branch teachers working in private schools to the problems they faced in distance education and distribution of the themes are given.

**Table 6.**

*The solutions to the problems in distance education suggested by branch teachers working in private schools*

The solutions to the problems in distance education		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Making the lesson easier to understand	√	√								√			√
2	Fast internet connection		√				√				√			√
3	Making eye contact with the image				√				√					√
4	Increasing student motivation			√	√								√	
5	Reducing lesson time					√		√						
6	Reducing the number in groups					√								
7	Homework check				√									
8	Training teachers											√		
9	Raising awareness about health	√												
10	meeting with parents								√					

As seen in Table 6, when we analyzed the opinions of branch teachers working in private schools on the solutions they suggested for distance education, it was seen that making the lesson easier to understand and fast internet connection were the most suggested solutions. The suggestions of the participants on these themes were:

*I gave simple exercise methods (A4, 1)*

*I prepared many slides and presentations and enriched them with visuals so that students could better understand the subject. (B4, 1)*

*We recorded videos, downloaded new programs (J4, 1)*

*I had to produce new materials. (Map etc.) (M4, 1)*

*I searched for faster internet packages and tried to switch to them. (B4, 2)*

*I found a solution by connecting the phone to the internet. (F4, 2)*

*We strengthened the internet connection (J4, 2)*

*I had to make up for my technological deficiencies. (M4, 2)*

Then they suggested making eye contact with the image and increasing student motivation. The suggestions of the participants on these themes were:

*As in all matters, I say that if there is a problem, there is a solution. We created a solution. We visualized the screen. (D4, 3)*

*By having them turn on their cameras. (H4, 3)*

*Because of the microphone excuses of many students, I had to move the question-answer training to the online question-solving platform. (M4, 3)*

*Doing motivation work with students as a solution...Reminding frequently that this process is a part of education (C4, 4)*

*We shared our troubles and sorrows together. Because this is a difficult time for all of us. (D4, 4)*

*I caught the attention of the students by bringing more interesting visuals in the lessons. In this way, I increased the participation in the lesson... I kept the students who did not participate in constant communication and participate through various applied games.(L4, 4)*

After that, they suggested the reduction of lesson time. The suggestion of the participants on this theme was:

*Reducing lesson times. (E4, 5)*

*Failure to reach the desired level in terms of performance in some courses... For example, the opportunity to conduct experiments for science is very limited. (G4, 5)*

Finally, they suggested reducing the number in groups, homework control, training teachers, raising awareness about health and meeting with parents. The suggestions of the participants on these themes were:

*Teaching in small groups. Reducing the number of classes. (E4, 6)*

*We checked the homework. (D4, 7)*

*Teachers can be trained. (K4, 8)*

*I increased their participation in the lesson by explaining its importance for their own health. (A4, 9)*

*I solved it by using online education effectively by meeting with the parents of the children. (H4, 10)*

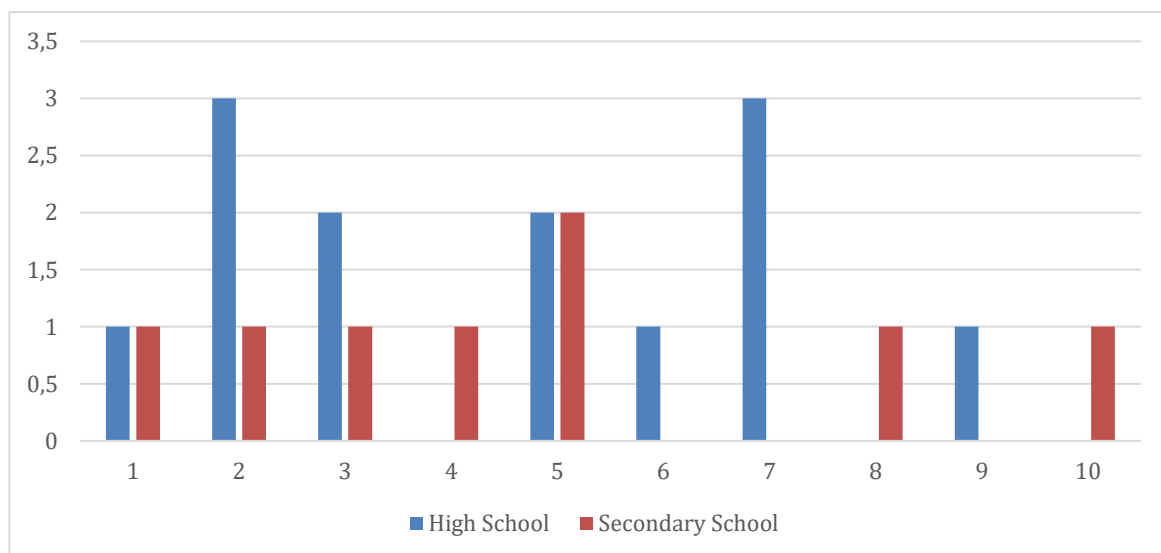
### Quantitative Findings

The frequencies of the themes of the solutions to the problems in distance education by branch teachers in private schools according to the type of schools are given in Table 7 and Figure 3.

**Tablo 7.**

*The frequencies of the themes of the solutions to the problems in distance education according to the type of schools*

The solutions to the problems in distance education	High School (f)	Secondary School (f)
1 Reducing lesson time	1	1
2 Making the lesson easier to understand	3	1
3 Making eye contact with the image	2	1
4 Reducing the number in groups	0	1
5 Fast internet connection	2	2
6 Homework check	1	0
7 Increasing student motivation	3	0
8 Training teachers	0	1
9 Raising awareness about health	1	0
10 Meeting with parents	0	1



**Figure 3.** The graphic of the frequencies of the themes of the solutions to the problems in distance education according to the type of school

As seen in Table 7 and Figure 3, when we analyzed the suggestions of branch teachers about the solutions in distance education according to the types of schools, it was seen that in parallel with the findings of

the problems faced in distance education and the main reasons of these problems, solutions to those problems were suggested. In this context, while high school teachers most frequently offered solutions for making the lesson easier to understand, making eye contact with the image, homework check and increasing student motivation, secondary school teachers offered solutions to reduce the groups in order to increase the attention of the students in the younger age groups and to train teachers to manage the class more effectively. and in order to increase parent control, they suggested meeting with parents. On the other hand, fast internet connection regarding the internet connection problem, which was the most frequently mentioned by the teachers in agreement with the problems faced in distance education in the 2nd sub-problems and the main reasons of these problems in the 3rd sub-problems, was a common solution proposal of both high school and secondary school branch teachers.

### 5. The comparison of distance education with face-to-face education

#### Qualitative Findings

In Figure 8, the distribution of themes related to the comparison of distance education and face-to-face education by branch teachers working in private schools is given.

**Table 8.**

*The comparison of distance and face to face education by branch teachers*

The comparison of distance and face to face education		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Face-to-face education preference				√	√		√	√					
2	Uncertain classroom setting											√		√
3	Communication difficulty									√			√	
4	Student control difficulty							√			√			
5	Difficulty in adapting		√											
6	Low success rate					√								
7	Quick access to information												√	
8	Not taking the lesson seriously		√											
9	Inability to control		√											
10	Homework checkup						√							
11	Negative effect on problem solving skills		√											
12	Immediate intervention to problems							√						
13	Inappropriateness for applied courses			√										
14	Isolating		√											

As seen in Table 8, when we analyzed the opinions of branch teachers working in private schools on the comparison of distance education and face-to-face education, it was seen that the preference for face-to-face education was the most mentioned theme in the comparison. The opinions of the participants on this theme were:

*In comparison, of course, nothing can replace face-to-face training. But even in such a situation, we tried to do our best. Both teachers and students, even our parents. My preference is to be face to face. Hopefully, there will be no events that will return to distance education again. That is our hope. (D5, 1)*

*I think that face-to-face education is more beneficial in terms of development and learning. Because the child should actively participate in the lesson, the teacher should be in mutual communication with the child during the lesson. (E5, 1)*

*Face-to-face education supports social and academic development. (G5, 1)*

*Face-to-face training, of course. You can communicate directly with children. (H5, 1)*



Then they made comparisons about the uncertain classroom setting, communication difficulty, and student control difficulty. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

*Similarities: Teacher and student, curriculum; Differences: Lack of a specific classroom setting, tools used (K5, 2)*

*Both education systems have their own pros and cons. The situation should be evaluated among itself and should be used together in a supportive way... If I had to choose one, of course, I would choose face-to-face education. The biggest advantage of online education is that the concept of time and place is not necessary. (M5, 2)*

*Since we could not communicate directly with the student in distance education, we had difficulty in understanding the missing parts, so I prefer face-to-face education. (I5, 3)*

*Face-to-face education is more functional than distance education in that it receives more feedback from students. (L5, 3)*

*The difficulty of controlling students who do not have the habit of self-study is also related to distance education. (G5, 4)*

*It is not even possible to compare... You cannot reach the student in online education, there is a disconnection, but in face-to-face education, intervention to the situation is healthier. However, it is necessary to adapt to the conditions of the age... Online education can be practical not in secondary and high school education, but in different educations. (J5, 4)*

Finally, they made comparisons about difficulty in adapting, low success rate, quick access to information, not taking the lesson seriously, inability to control, homework checkup, negative effects on problem solving skills, immediate intervention to problems, inappropriateness to applied lessons, and isolation. The opinions of the participants on these themes were:

*There are huge differences between distance education and face-to-face education, the first of which is that it is very difficult to listen to a course in front of the screen. The student finds it difficult to adapt to the lesson. (B5, 5)*

*I always think that face-to-face training will be beneficial. Because they are quite different from each other. The perception of success rate in distance education is quite low, especially in young people. (E5, 6)*

*Due to the structure of the distance education system, it is advantageous (in terms of time) than face-to-face education in terms of accessing information in a shorter time, reaching questions, and taking the online exam instantly. (L5, 7)*

*In general, since there is a more comfortable setting to connect to the lesson in distance education, the student is also comfortable. (B5, 8)*

*In addition, we do not know whether the student is listening to us or not, since the camera is not turned on in distance education. I prefer face-to-face education because the student learns live by seeing, which I think increases success. (B5, 9)*

*It does not matter. Preferably remotely. The only problem is the child's homework checkup. (F5, 10)*

*Since online education for children is a very new structure, the children had a little difficulty. If children are used to this system, it can be productive, but it affects their problem-solving skills negatively (A5, 11)*

He needs to have technological equipment for distance education... The teacher can immediately intervene in the problems that arise in face-to-face education, and cannot with distance education. (G5, 12)

This is not useful in distance education in courses with applications, it is much more useful and easier to do face-to-face. (C5, 13)

...and I think it isolates the children. My preference is face-to-face training. (A5, 14)

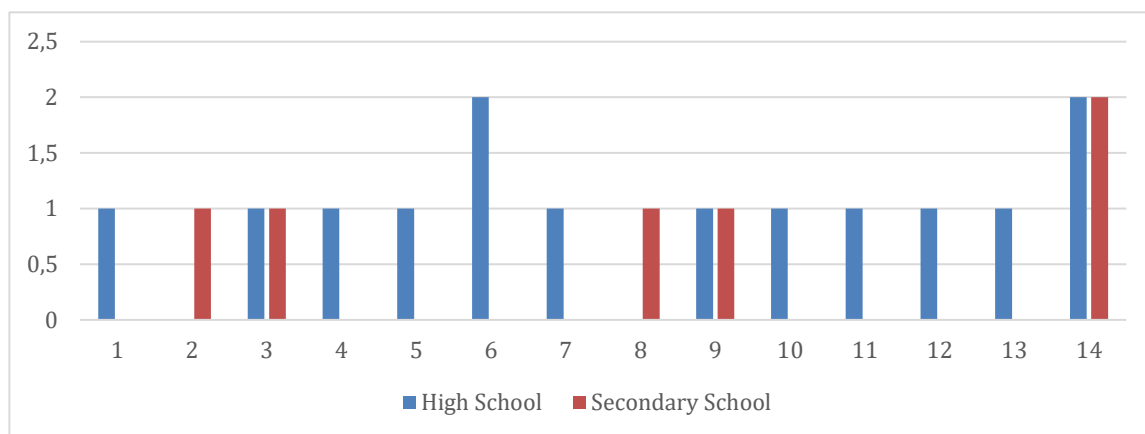
### Quantitative Findings

In Table 9 and Figure 4, the frequency of the themes of the comparison of distance and face to face education by branch teachers are given.

**Table 9.**

*The frequencies of themes of the comparison of distance and face to face education according to the type of schools*

The comparison of distance and face to face education	High School (f)	Secondary School (f)
1 Difficulty in adapting	1	0
2 Low success rate	0	1
3 Uncertain classroom setting	1	1
4 Quick access to information	1	0
5 Not taking the lesson seriously	1	0
6 Communication difficulty	2	0
7 Inability to control	1	0
8 Homework check	0	1
9 Student control difficulty	1	1
10 Negative effect on problem solving skills	1	0
11 Immediate intervention to problems	1	0
12 Inappropriateness for applied courses	1	0
13 Isolation	1	0
14 Face-to-face education preference	2	2



**Figure 4.** The graphic of the frequencies of the themes of the comparison of distance and face to face education according to the type of schools

As seen in Table 8, Table 9 and Figure 4, when we analyzed the opinions of branch teachers on the comparison of distance education and face-to-face education according to school type, consistent with the findings in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th sub-problems. the majority of high school teachers mentioned about the limitations of distance education such as difficulty in adapting, not taking the lesson seriously, communication difficulty, inability to control, negative effects on problem solving skills, Immediate intervention to problems, inappropriateness for applied lessons, and isolation, while only one high school

teacher was aware of the structure of the distance education system. He stated that it is advantageous in terms of time compared to face-to-face training in terms of accessing information in a shorter time, accessing questions, and taking an online exam instantly. All of the secondary school teachers mentioned more about the limitations of distance education, such as low success rate, Student control difficulty, and negative effects on problem solving skills. Compared to face-to-face education in distance education, the choice of face-to-face education was the theme on which both high school and secondary school teachers agreed equally.

## 6. Metaphors related to distance education

### Qualitative Findings

In Table 10 and, the metaphors produced by branch teachers for distance education are given. What the participants said for the metaphors they produced:

*To cats exposed to screens in a cage. (A5,1)*

*I think it's similar to the cat and cheese relationship. When cheese is lessons and information, the cat is a student, while cheese is literal, the cat cannot reach him, of course, many excuses he creates are also effective. (B5,1)*

*I liken it to a key. I think that the answer to every question is in the digital setting and it opens the door to all questions. (G5.2)*

*I can't compare it to anything. Education is a very serious matter. It's not what I compare it to. (D5.3)*

*Similar to a minefield, it cannot be learned without attention. (K5.4)*

*A system where communication is not felt with face-to-face gestures. (C5.5)*

*I think it depends on the point of view. (Teacher, student, state)... - If I look at it from the eyes of a teacher, it is like hunting a lion with a spear. (M5.6)*

*Radio with video. Distance education establishes the sentence "For anyone who can use technology properly, it is no different from face to face". With one's own development, distance education can become less tiring and permanent. (F5.7)*

*It's like chatting on the phone with a distant acquaintance. (E5.8)*

*When we were kids, we used to tie rope to two sticks while we were playing the phone game, we used to play the phone game, so we used to make the neighbors far away near us. We are trying to bring the far closer together, it seems like an effort. (J5.9)*

*I liken it to teaching someone how to paint from far. How much would it be enough to draw something by just hearing and explain, when you can be by your side and learn by paying attention to brush grips, color mixtures, and tonal transitions? (L5,10)*

*It's like watching videos on youtube. (H5,11)*

*It is like a child just learning to walk. Because nothing was quite right yet. (I5,12)*

**Table 10.**

*The metaphors produced by branch teachers for distance education*

Uzaktan Eğitime Yönelik Metaforlar	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1 Cat	√	√											
2 Key							√						
3 Uncertainty				√									
4 Minefield											√		
5 Mechanical system			√										
6 Spear hunting													√
7 Radio with video						√							
8 Phone chat					√								
9 Telephony game										√			
10 Teach drawing remotely												√	
11 YouTube								√					
12 A baby just learning to walk									√				

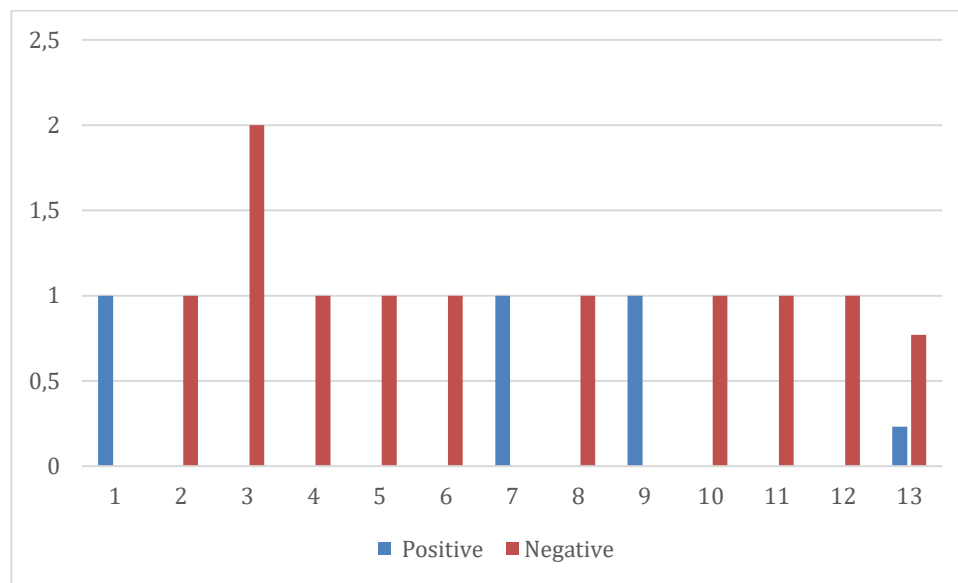
### Quantitative Findings

In Table 11, the frequency and row percentages of the types of the metaphors produced by branch teachers for distance education are given.

**Table 11.**

*The frequencies and the row percentages of the types of the metaphors produced by branch teachers for distance education*

Metaphors for distance education	Positive		Negative	
	f	%	f	%
1 Key	1	100%	0	0%
2 Uncertainty	0	0%	1	100%
3 Cats	0	0%	2	100%
4 Minefield	0	0%	1	100%
5 Mechanical system	0	0%	1	100%
6 Spear hunting	0	0%	1	100%
7 Radio with video	1	100%	0	0%
8 Phone chat	0	0%	1	100%
9 Telephony games	1	100%	0	0%
10 Teach drawing remote	0	0%	1	100%
11 Youtube	0	0%	1	100%
12 A baby just learning to walk	0	0%	1	100%



**Figure 5.** The graphic of the frequencies of the types of the metaphors produced by branch teachers for distance education

As seen in Tables 10 and Table 11 and Figure 5, seeing the glass half empty, 9 out of 13 of the participants A and B with the metaphors cat, D uncertainty, K minefield, C mechanical system, M spear hunting, E phone chat, L teaching drawing remote, H watching videos on Youtube, I a child just learning to walk expressed that distance education was a negative educational activity for them compared to face to face education, 3 out of 13 of the participants stated that distance education was a positive educational activity for them by seeing the glass half full with the metaphors of F radio with film, G key, J telephony game. To sum up, we can say that for the majority of the participants, distance education is an activity that is limited and cannot be an alternative to face-to-face education.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the focus was on understanding and interpreting the experiences of branch teachers working in private schools in the 2019-20 spring and 2020-21 fall and spring education years regarding the problems they experienced in distance education during the pandemic period. When content analysis was applied to the interviews with participant teachers guided by the semi-structured interview form, the answers composed of the meaning of distance education, the problems faced in distance education, the main reasons of under 6 main themes as the problems faced in distance education, the solutions to the problems faced in distance education, and the comparison of distance education and face-to-face education and metaphors.

In the theme of what distance education meant for the participants, the participants generally defined distance education as “training in a virtual setting with various online or external communication tools (television, internet and similar) without any place and time limitations”. The distance education in Turkish Dictionary is defined as "A form of education made from a certain center by using various communication tools without being face-to-face between the student and the teacher." (TDK, 2020). Accordingly, we can say that it is consistent with the definition what participants defined distance education.

In the main theme of the the problems faced in distance education, the answers of the participants were gathered under 7 sub-themes: difficulty in accessing the internet, lack of computers, inability to make eye contact, inability to ensure active participation, inefficiency, increased workload and difficulty of

online exercise. Especially participants stated that they had intense problems with the sub-theme difficulty accessing the Internet. This finding is in line with the finding in the study conducted by Ünal and Buluz (2020) to examine the distance education experiences of teachers, that teachers experienced internet difficulties in the early days of distance education.

In the main theme of the main reasons of the problems faced in distance education, the answers of the participants were gathered under 9 sub-themes: class attendance, internet connection, lack of technology knowledge, not being able to focus on the lesson, younger age group, professional dissatisfaction, lack of homework, inability to use board and inability to practice. When we examine the answers given by the participants, the main reasons for the problems faced in distance education, especially class attendance, internet connection, lack of technology knowledge, and not being able to focus on the lesson have come to the fore. Lack of technology knowledge, which is one of the main reasons for the problems faced in education and especially expressed by the participants in the first place, is consistent with the finding in a study by Kocayigit and Uşun (2020) to determine teachers' attitude levels towards distance education and in their study, they found that most of the teachers knew very little about distance education, and one-third of them knew about distance education.

It was seen that the suggestions of the participants came together in 10 sub-themes under the main theme, which included solution suggestions for the problems faced in distance education. When the sub-themes were examined, it can be said that the participants primarily suggested making the lesson easier to understand, fast internet connection, making eye contact with the image, increasing student motivation and reducing the duration of the lesson as a solution. In addition, reducing groups, checking homework, training teachers, raising awareness about health, and meeting with parents were other suggestions. Within the framework of these findings, the solution suggestions regarding the problems faced in distance education expressed by the participants are consistent with the finding that teachers and families should support children in the research conducted by Duban and Şen (2020) to determine the views of teachers regarding the epidemic period.

In the main theme of the comparison of distance education and face-to-face education, the preference for face-to-face education came first, followed by the uncertain classroom setting, communication difficulty, student control difficulty. In addition to these, difficulty in adapting, low success rate, quick access to information, not taking the lesson seriously, inability to control, homework check up, negative effect on problem solving skills, immediate intervention to problems, inappropriateness for applied courses and isolating were also brought to the agenda by the branch teachers with equal frequency. Especially when comparing distance education with face-to-face education, the finding that participants preferred face-to-face education in the first place due to the problems they experienced in distance education is consistent with the findings of the study by Sayan (2020) to evaluate the distance education practices of lecturers during the epidemic period. Accordingly, the majority of lecturers in the study stated that distance education would not be useful in applied education and in terms of preparation and motivation for the lesson, all of the lecturers did not like to teach online and they were not satisfied with distance education.

Finally, in the main theme of metaphors for distance education, 12 metaphors were produced by the participants in accordance with the purpose of the phenomenological study, revealing the essence of what distance education meant to them. While the cat metaphor was expressed by two participants, the other participants produced the metaphors of key, uncertainty, minefield, mechanical system, spear hunting, radio with video, phone chat, telephony game, teaching drawing remotely, youtube and a baby just learning to walk and they expressed their reasons for the metaphors. With the metaphors produced by the participants, it was found that distance education is an educational activity with negative aspects for 10 of 13 participants and positive aspects for 3 participants. This is consistent with the research conducted by Fidan (2020) to reveal the views of teachers about distance education during the epidemic period. Accordingly, it was found that distance education was positive in terms of education and social



aspects, but negative in terms of internet, and it had both positive and negative aspects in terms of technology, motivation, comfort and parents.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of this study, which was carried out in order to reveal the problems faced by the branch teachers working in private schools and to understand and interpret the solutions they produced to these problems, the following suggestions can be put forward:

In order to increase students' interest in the lesson and ensure active participation in distance education, more interesting visual materials and games should be used during the lesson.

Crowded classrooms and intensive curriculum are the leading problems based on the education system that make distance education difficult. In distance education, there should be a study to reduce the class sizes compared to formal education. In addition, the curricula of distance education, especially at the secondary school level, should be lightened a little more.

In order to maintain distance education more efficiently, it is important to provide teachers with comprehensive and practical training on what to teach in schools, as well as theoretical knowledge.

With the activities to be done on parents by school guidance services, the necessity of distance education should be explained to parents and their awareness should be raised, especially during periods when formal education has to be postponed.

The contents of the textbooks prepared for distance education as an alternative to formal education should be prepared by commissions with wider participation and it should be ensured that these contents include activities suitable for students' cognitive, affective, psycho-motor and social readiness levels.

In order for teachers to carry out distance education more efficiently, teachers and students should be provided with free and fast internet connection by the Ministry of National Education.

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