

Gateway to Europe in Education: eTwinning Projects

Sema Acar*, Bilge Peker**

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Abstract

This research was conducted in a basic qualitative research design to examine the advantages, disadvantages and limiting factors of eTwinning projects. The study group of the research consisted of 15 volunteer teachers from different branches working in public schools in Konya province in the 2019-2020 academic year, who had experience in eTwinning projects. The data were obtained through a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers. A descriptive analysis technique was used for data analysis. The findings obtained in this study showed that eTwinning projects had advantages, such as improving learning/teaching, cultural interaction, self-confidence and language development. It was also concluded that the projects positively affected teachers' professional and personal development. Regarding the disadvantages of the projects, half of the participant teachers stated that there were no disadvantages, while half of them stated that the projects had disadvantages, such as taking too much time and requiring sacrifice. When the factors limiting the development of eTwinning projects were examined, the negative attitudes of the school administration, time problems and students' lack of technical infrastructure drew attention. According to these results, it can be suggested that school administrators should support eTwinning project applications and project activities should be disseminated in schools.

Keywords: eTwinning, project, information and communication technologies, cooperation, teacher.

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*  Teacher (PhD student), Necmettin Erbakan University, Institute of Education Sciences, Türkiye, s.acarr94@gmail.com

**  Corresponding Author, Assoc. Dr., Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education, Türkiye, bpeker@erbakan.edu.tr

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Introduction

As Albert Einstein stated the “Future of a country depends on the education of the people of that country”; education is the most important element of society. The quality of education that the people of a society have is the measure that determines the level of development of that society (Aydın, 2003). Çolak (2010) states that education is an important element that determines the level of development of society as an investment in human beings. Countries aim to raise a qualified workforce and ensure social development through education systems (Yılmaz Özelçi, 2020). Thus, education has been one of the most discussed, criticized and constantly renewed fields from the past to the present. However, due to the rapid technological transformation, schools need strategies to balance the education of students with the trends of society (Crişan & Albulescu, 2018). Because in a rapidly developing and changing world, it is not possible to consider the concepts of education and technology separately from each other (Çalışkan & Çoklar, 2019). With the development of technology, learning environments have become more dynamic and the roles of teachers and students have changed. Today, the educational requirements of the age, the differentiated needs of students and new approaches to personal education impose new professional responsibilities on the teacher. This situation requires teachers to be experts in their subject area, to plan education effectively, to create positive learning environments, to be open to innovations and technology, to have strong communication skills, to work toward the development of analytical and creative thinking in students and to be individuals who are open to continuous development (Ministry of National Education [MONE], 2017). In this context, eTwinning offers a very effective platform for teachers to acquire these skills.

Launched in 2005 as a core activity of the European Commission’s e-learning program, eTwinning is a platform that provides support tools and services for schools through the use of “Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)”, leading to collaboration between schools in Europe and offering continuous online Professional Development opportunities for educators free of charge. The Central Support Service is managed by “European Schoolnet”, an international collaboration of 34 European Ministries of Education. The portal includes news from eTwinning countries, professional development opportunities, various learning activities, online seminars, professional development workshops and examples of successful projects (eTwinning, 2020). Therefore, eTwinning offers unique opportunities for the continuous development of teachers. The eTwinning platform offers a wide range of opportunities for teachers and students (YEĞİTEK, 2019):

- Teachers have “the opportunity to communicate and share professional experiences with colleagues working in different settings,
- Producing projects with different education and training practices,
- Integrating the use of technology into the education and training process,

- Provides opportunities to actively benefit from the technical and technological support provided by the ongoing FATİH (Movement for Increasing Opportunities and Improving Technology) project launched in Turkey.
- Students will be able to work with their peers in Europe without the obligation of mobility and improve their foreign language skills,
- It offers the opportunity to use information and communication technology tools purposefully and effectively and to experience learning in a more fun and motivating environment.”

eTwinning is an innovative European project that promotes lifelong learning and whose main objective is to network schools with the help of new technologies (Galvin et al., 2007). Manfredini (2007) sees eTwinning as a tangible chance for teachers to improve their language skills, to learn new things about Europe, and to interact cross-culturally with colleagues from other countries. By participating in eTwinning projects, students have the opportunity to share experiences and decide together what steps to take toward a common goal. They gain experience in international cooperation in authentic learning environments (Αλεξίου, 2019). Furthermore, by participating in eTwinning projects, students become members of a digital online learning community (Cachia & Punie, 2012; Song, Petrushyna, Cao, & Klamma, 2011). Papadakis (2016) stated that eTwinning is an open, secure, cost-free educational network that brings together the entire European educational community (teachers, students, schools) under one roof, enabling innovation in learning and teaching practices. Gajek and Poszytek (2009) stated that the eTwinning platform aims to improve the language and intercultural skills of teachers and students. Erzurum, Demir, Yıldız and Gezer (2023) described eTwinning as a platform with great potential for educators to collaborate internationally, support their professional development, and provide students with a global learning experience.

In short, the eTwinning activity aims to create an online environment for teachers, students and administrators working in participating schools in European countries to share experiences, collaborate and exchange ideas. For this purpose, the most important activities of the eTwinning platform are eTwinning projects. Projects strengthen learning through the use of new technologies. Students and teachers experience innovative teaching methods and innovative teaching practices (Vlada, Jugureanu, & Istrate, 2009). In addition, through projects, learning goes beyond the classroom environment and becomes independent of time and space. Projects are activities where students and teachers from different schools and different countries generate project ideas together, work in cooperation, use technology effectively, develop language skills and learn to respect differences. Therefore, eTwinning projects offer project-based learning opportunities to teachers and students. Erdem (2002) states that project-based learning is a powerful approach that can transform an individual into a person who can think analytically and critically, research, be determined, responsible and work in cooperation. In addition, teachers who organize very good quality eTwinning projects are rewarded with a quality label. Quality labels consist of the “National Quality Label (NQL)” and the

“European Quality Label (EQL). Crişan (2013) stated that the National and European Quality Label Awards for eTwinning projects are a source of motivation for teachers. It can be said that quality labels are a document that shows that a project has the specified qualifications and that the teacher has carried out a quality project process.

Turkey joined the eTwinning platform in 2009. The use of the eTwinning platform is becoming widespread through introductory seminars, regional and national conferences organized by the Ministry of National Education, and the number of participants from Turkey is increasing day by day. The eTwinning Portal attracts the most interest from Turkey in the world (See Table 1).

Table 1.

Number of eTwinning Platform Users by Country between January 1, 2017 and October 30, 2019 (YEĞİTEK, 2019)

Country	Number of Users	Country	Number of Users
1. Turkey	14.696.747	11. Czech Republic	279.138
2. Italy	1.983.772	12. Lithuania	228.251
3. Spain	1.700.217	13. Serbia	216.706
4. France	1.275.009	14. Bulgaria	214.484
5. Poland	973.221	15. Belgium	200.216
6. Greece	708.494	16. Albania	198.729
7. Germany	582.149	17. Ukraine	189.173
8. Romania	569.458	18. Azerbaijan	188.392
9. Portugal	559.102	19. England	171.032
10. Croatia	321.305	20. Slovakia	170.076

A study on the benefits of eTwinning was conducted by the Turkish National Support Service in 2013, in which 770 teachers participated. The study found that eTwinning has a wide range of benefits for teachers and students. Teachers reported that eTwinning projects increased their ability to use technology, encouraged them to use different teaching methods, improved their foreign language skills, increased their computer skills, collaboration skills and motivation, and encouraged them to produce new and creative projects. In addition, teachers stated that eTwinning enabled their students to be more active in the lessons, increased cooperation among students, developed students socially, improved their foreign language skills, their ability to use technology and their critical thinking skills (eTwinning Turkey, 2020). Acar and Peker (2021) examined the impact of the eTwinning platform on teachers and concluded that the eTwinning platform is very useful for teachers, contributes to their professional and personal development and changes their perspectives on the profession. Akdemir (2017) investigated the advantages and disadvantages of eTwinning from the perspective of teachers. The results showed that eTwinning projects offer valuable opportunities for both teachers and students in terms of improving the teaching process, enabling cross-cultural exchange, increasing student engagement and developing language skills. On the other hand, it

was concluded that teachers and students experienced some challenges when conducting eTwinning projects, such as the technical shortcomings of schools, a lack of ICT skills, and inconsistencies between eTwinning practices and the curriculum. Crişan (2013) examined the impact of teachers' participation in eTwinning on their teaching practices. Although the teachers who participated in the study acknowledged that eTwinning had challenges, such as lack of support from the school, difficulty in establishing collaborations at school, and lack of time for participation, they stated that the use of eTwinning was motivating and encouraging for both themselves and their students, and also contributed to their professional development.

As a result of the literature review, it is obvious that eTwinning projects are very beneficial for teachers and students. However, there are also some disadvantages and factors that limit the development of the projects. In this context, this study aims to examine teachers' views on the advantages, disadvantages and limiting factors of eTwinning projects. Examining the advantages as well as the disadvantages and limiting factors of the projects in the research reveals both the difference and importance of the research compared to other studies in the literature. Knowing the disadvantages that teachers will face in projects and the obstacles in front of their projects will both make an important contribution to the relevant literature and guide what needs to be done to eliminate these obstacles. In line with the determined purpose, the problem statement of the research is stated as "What are the opinions of teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of eTwinning projects and the factors limiting the projects?". Within the scope of this main problem, the sub-problems of the research are as follows.

1. What are teachers' views on the advantages of eTwinning projects?
2. What are teachers' views on the disadvantages of eTwinning projects?
3. What are teachers' views on the factors limiting eTwinning projects?

Method

Research Design

In this study, a basic qualitative research approach was adopted to examine the advantages, disadvantages and limitations of eTwinning projects. Merriam (2009) defined basic qualitative research design as a type of research that focuses on how experiences are interpreted by individuals, what meanings are attributed to them and how they construct them in their inner world. In qualitative research, it is essential to examine human events and perceptions in depth in their natural environment. Therefore, qualitative research has a holistic perspective that combines different disciplines (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In light of this information, it was decided that it would be appropriate to use the basic qualitative research design since it was aimed to examine

the participant teachers' perceptions of the advantages, disadvantages and limiting factors of eTwinning projects.

Study Group

In accordance with the purpose of this study, the study group was selected by the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods. The purposive sampling method is a method in which information-rich situations are selected in accordance with the purpose of the research to make a detailed examination (Patton, 2014). The basic understanding of the criterion sampling method is to study all situations that meet a set of predetermined criteria. These criteria can be created by the researcher or a ready-made list of criteria can be used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this context, care was taken to select teachers who volunteered to participate in the study and had experience in eTwinning projects. The study group of the research consists of 15 volunteer teachers working in public primary, secondary and high schools in Konya province in the 2019-2020 academic year. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used instead of teachers' full names. The demographic characteristics of the study group and the codes given to the teachers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

The Demographic Characteristics of the Study Group and the Codes Given to the Teachers

Codes	Professional seniority	Branch	Types of schools	Number of quality labels
Ayşe	11-15 years	Preschool	Primary schools	1
Emre	16 years or more	Classroom	Primary schools	29
Esin	11-15 years	Classroom	Primary schools	20
Ravza	16 years or more	Turkish	Secondary schools	9
İbrahim	11-15 years	Mathematics,	Secondary schools	2
Sena	6-10 years	Social Sciences	Secondary schools	7
Seher	6-10 years	Science	Secondary schools	3
Mehmet	0-5 years	English	Secondary schools	20
Efe	6-10 years	Visual Arts	Secondary schools	2
Aylin	0-5 years	Turkish Language and Literature	High schools	5
Hakan	6-10 years	Mathematics	High schools	2
Bayram	11-15 years	History	High schools	1
Rıdvan	6-10 years	Chemistry	High schools	6
Fatma	16 years or more	English	High schools	3
Dilek	0-5 years	Biology	High schools	4

As seen in Table 2, eight (53%) of the participant teachers were female and seven (47%) were male. When the professional seniority of the teachers is analyzed, three (20%) of them have 0-5 years, five (33%) of them have 6-10 years, four (27%) of them have 11-

15 years and three (20%) of them have 16 years or more. When analyzed based on branches, this study was conducted with teachers from Preschool, Classroom, Turkish, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Science, English, Visual Arts, Turkish Language and Literature, History, Chemistry, and Biology branches, thus trying to provide diversity. When the types of schools where the teachers work are examined, three (20%) of them work in primary schools, six (40%) in secondary schools and six (40%) in high schools. In addition, the number of teachers' quality labels varied between one and 29.

Data Collection Tool and Process

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used to examine teachers' views on eTwinning projects. A semi-structured interview is a data collection tool in which the questions are flexible, specific information can be obtained from each participant and there is an interview guide with interview questions (Merriam, 2013). In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used to examine teachers' views on eTwinning projects. The purpose of semi-structured interview forms, which are frequently used in qualitative research, is to understand the feelings of the interviewees, to help them make sense of events and concepts, and to obtain information about all dimensions of the subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

The study's data were obtained using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers and consisting of two parts. The first part consisted of five questions to determine teachers' personal characteristics and the second part consisted of three open-ended questions to determine teachers' views on eTwinning projects. Open-ended questions were prepared based on a literature review and expert opinion. While preparing the interview form, the focus was on the advantages and disadvantages of eTwinning projects and the factors limiting the projects. To ensure the validity of the research form, the expert opinion of two academicians from the faculty of education of a state university in Turkey was consulted for the questions in the form. The research questions were found appropriate by the experts. In addition, the appropriateness of the language used in the interview form was arranged in line with the opinions of a Turkish Education expert. Accordingly, the question is, "Are there any advantages of eTwinning projects? If any, please specify." was changed to "Are there any advantages of conducting an eTwinning project? If any, please specify." Moreover, another question "Are there any disadvantages of eTwinning projects? If any, please specify." was changed to "Are there any disadvantages of conducting an eTwinning project? If any, please specify.". Afterward, the questions were asked to two teachers from different branches to test whether there was a problem in understanding the questions, and the teachers stated that there was no additional or missing situation. Utilizing all these opinions, the interview form was finalized.

In the 2019-2020 academic year, teachers working in primary, secondary and high schools and conducting eTwinning projects were reached and interviews were conducted in line with the interview form. The teachers in the study group were selected on a voluntary basis, and the teachers were informed about the study before they started

filling out the interview form. Since this research was conducted during the pandemic period, the interview form was first created on Google Forms and the link was sent to the teachers. It was emphasized in writing at the beginning of the form to achieve the purpose of the research that the interview form should be filled in sincerely since the researcher could not be face-to-face during the first answering phase of the questions. After receiving written opinions from the teachers, interviews were planned with each teacher using Zoom, as there was a need to examine what was written in detail. The duration of the interviews with the teachers varied between 30-45 minutes. In these interviews, the written opinions previously received from the teachers were elaborated with the Zoom interview.

Credibility and Ethics

The first condition for ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research is to conduct the study ethically (Merriam, 2013). To conduct the study in an ethical manner, care was taken to ensure that the participating teachers volunteered and were informed about this research. The teachers were informed that their names and the institutions where they worked would not be disclosed, that the data to be obtained would be used for scientific purposes, and their consent was obtained to record the interviews. Pseudonyms were used instead of the teachers' full names, and the steps followed in this study were reported in a detailed and clear manner. To ensure the validity and reliability of this study, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) strategies of credibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability in qualitative research were utilized.

To ensure credibility in this study, detailed information about the research process and the characteristics of the participating teachers was provided. In addition, this study was organized in line with the opinions of an expert experienced in qualitative research. To ensure transferability, as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), each stage and finding of the study were explained in detail and a comprehensible language was used in the research. To ensure consistency in the research, the opinions of two independent and experienced experts in qualitative research were utilized. The coding created by the experts was compared with the coding created by the researchers and necessary arrangements were made. The consistency ratio between the coders was calculated according to Miles and Huberman (1994) formula and found to be .85. Finally, all stages of the research were computerized and filed for the confirmability of the research. In addition, approval was obtained from the "Necmettin Erbakan University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee" for this research (Decision dated November 13, 2020 and numbered 2020/83).

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique, one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. According to the descriptive analysis technique, the data are summarized and interpreted according to predetermined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Before starting this study, the themes were determined as

advantages of eTwinning projects, disadvantages of eTwinning projects, and factors limiting the development of eTwinning projects. Necessary adjustments were made by comparing the coding created by two independent experts with experience in qualitative research with the coding created by the researchers. For example, while examining the advantages of eTwinning projects, the advantages stated by the participants within the scope of foreign language were coded as foreign language by the researchers and then edited as language development in line with the expert opinions. The consistency ratio between coders was found to be .85 according to Miles and Huberman (1994) formula. In the first stage of the analysis, teachers were given a pseudonym. Afterwards, direct quotations were presented from time to time to convey the views of the teachers in accordance with the characteristics of descriptive analysis. In the presentation of the data, the criteria of appropriateness to the theme, clarity and strikingness were considered for selecting direct quotations (Ünver, Bümen, & Başbay, 2010). In the findings section, pseudonyms were used to indicate which teacher the interview belonged to and the interview notes were given in quotation marks. Finally, the data were interpreted by considering the data in the literature.

Researchers Role

After a literature review, a semi-structured interview form was prepared by the researchers. The questions were finalized by taking expert opinions and making the necessary changes and corrections by the researchers. During the interviews, the researcher controlled variables, such as environment and sound to ensure a healthy interview. After the interviews were completed, the first researcher made the research data ready for analysis and the analysis was started independently by both researchers. At the end of the analysis, both researchers discussed the findings in line with the relevant literature.

Findings

In this section, the codes obtained from the descriptive analysis and the teacher to whom these codes belong are presented together. Each of the open-ended questions prepared as a Google document is presented as a subheading in the findings section. One-to-one quotations were made from the written forms filled out by the teachers and the teachers' opinions were detailed as a result of the Zoom interview. These quotations were indicated in quotation marks, and the pseudonym given to the teacher before the quotation was indicated.

Advantages of eTwinning Projects

The first question the research seeks to answer is to explore the advantages of eTwinning projects. The findings obtained from the interviews conducted with teachers for this purpose are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Views on the Advantages of eTwinning Projects

Theme	Codes	Number of Participants
Advantages of eTwinning projects	Improve learning/teaching	5
	Professional-Personal development	5
	Self-confidence-Motivation	5
	Cultural interaction	3
	Language development	3
	Cooperation-Communication	2
	Planned work	2
	Technology knowledge	2

When the teachers' views on the advantages of eTwinning projects were analyzed; all of the teachers stated that there were advantages of doing eTwinning projects. It was seen that the projects "*improve learning/teaching*", contribute to teachers' "*professional-personal development*" and improve their "*self-confidence-motivation*."

Sena: "It contributes to many Areas, such as professional development and personal development and saves you from mediocrity and monotony. It makes even the students you don't teach say "do a project for us too."

Seher: "Of course, it has professional and personal advantages in every way. My English has also improved. I call it lifelong learning. I feel privileged at school, I feel proud, I feel happy and useful because I have improved myself."

Ridvan: "I feel that I have developed professionally. My motivation increased with the awards I received. I got to know different cultures and prepared the ground for Erasmus thanks to the good partners I met in the projects."

Teachers stated that they developed professionally through eTwinning projects. For projects to receive a quality label, they need to be integrated into the curriculum. The interviewed teachers stated that they developed professionally by integrating the projects into the curriculum and that this contributed to their professional development by ensuring technology cooperation in the curriculum. In addition, it is seen that they support their personal development thanks to situations, such as collaborating with colleagues, working with foreign partners, and using technology effectively.

It was concluded that the projects contributed to "*cultural interaction*" and positively affected teachers' "*language development*."

Ravza: "The biggest advantage is that students' interest in the lesson increases and each partner learns something from each other. In addition, our foreign language improves with international projects."

Efe: "It is very advantageous in getting to know different cultures."

As stated in the teacher opinions above, teachers stated that their foreign language skills improved thanks to the foreign partners they worked with on the projects. Teacher Ravza, who stated that her English improved, stated that her foreign language level was zero at the beginning, but thanks to the projects, her speaking and writing skills reached an intermediate level. It was also stated that different cultures were recognized within the country and through cooperation with foreign countries.

In addition to these, there were teacher opinions stating that the projects provided “cooperation-communication” between teachers and students, improved “planned work” and increased “technology knowledge.”

Ayşe: “It contributed to my planned work.”

Esin: “It strengthens planned and collaborative work and communication.”

Hakan: “So to speak, you can be the teacher who is pointed out in the neighborhood of your school.”

Fatma: “I had the opportunity to learn web 2.0 tools and new technologies and to collaborate on international platforms..”

The teachers expressed that working with partners strengthened cooperation and communication. In addition, the fact that eTwinning projects are carried out within a specific plan contributes to teachers’ ability to work in a planned manner. In addition, for eTwinning projects to receive a quality label, they need to be carried out with technology. In this context, teachers stated that their technology knowledge increased. Teacher Fatma stated that she was not familiar with web 2.0 tools before starting the projects and thanks to the projects she was able to use many web 2.0 tools.

Disadvantages of eTwinning Projects

Araştırmanın cevap aradığı ikinci soru, eTwinning projelerinin dezavantajlarını keşfetmektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda öğretmenlerle yapılan görüşmelerden ulaşılan bulgular Tablo 4’te sunulmuştur.

Tablo 4.

Views on the Disadvantages of eTwinning Projects

Theme	Codes	Number of Participants
Disadvantages of eTwinning projects	None	8
	Time	4
	Sacrifice	2
	Low motivation	2

Teachers’ views on the disadvantages of eTwinning projects were analyzed around the codes “none,” “time,” “sacrifice” and “low motivation.”

Ravza: "There are no disadvantages."

Aylin: "No, there are not."

Ayşe: "Being on the phone and computer too much.."

Bayram: "Yes, there is. It takes a lot of time, there is not enough time, you have to take students from other courses. In the busyness of life, sometimes the work you have to do on the project can be a burden."

Eight teachers stated that there were no disadvantages to the projects. Four teachers stated that projects took too much time and that they spent too much time in front of computers and phones. The teachers who mentioned the time issue stated that they spent a lot of time in front of the computer to document each activity in the projects, which was a disadvantage for the projects, and that a more appropriate solution should be found for this situation.

There were two teachers who stated that they sacrificed themselves, their families and their social lives for the projects.

Seher: "I spend more time than anyone else; some nights are spent at the computer. I sacrifice myself.

Rıdvan: "You sacrifice your social and family life.."

In addition, two teachers complained that their projects were not appreciated and that their motivation decreased because their projects were seen as unnecessary efforts

Sena: "When your work is not appreciated by teachers who are not open to innovation, and when it is portrayed as unnecessary effort, it leads to low motivation."

Dilek: "The necessary importance may not be given. Sometimes it is sad not to get the support you want."

As a result of the interviews with teachers named Sena and Dilek, these teachers stated that the fact that teachers and administrators who do not know about eTwinning and are not open to innovation look at the projects as unnecessary effort and labor decreases their motivation, and which has a negative impact on the projects.

Factors Limiting the Development of eTwinning Projects

The third question the research seeks to answer is to examine the factors limiting the development of eTwinning projects. The findings obtained from the interviews conducted with teachers for this purpose are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Views on the Factors Limiting the Development of eTwinning projects

Theme	Codes	Number of Participants
Factors limiting the development of eTwinning projects	Administration	9
	Parents	6
	Time	5
	Teacher	3
	Curriculum	3
	Lack of technical infrastructure	4
	None	1

Teachers' views on the factors limiting the development of eTwinning projects were examined under the codes "administration," "parents," "time," "teacher," "curriculum," "lack of technical infrastructure" and "none." Teachers' opinions are given below.

Emre: "Attitudes of school administrators. Computer and internet usage at home. Family and educational structures closed to development negatively affect our projects."

Esin: "Negative perspective of the administration and parents. Parents do not see the benefits we do for students and always look at us negatively."

Sena: "Negative and unsupportive administrative attitudes are the biggest problem."

The majority of teachers cited the negative attitudes of the school administration as a factor limiting their projects. In addition, six teachers mentioned negative parental attitudes. It is seen that these attitudes negatively affect their desire to do projects.

Five teachers mentioned time constraints and stated that projects also took up their extracurricular time. Three teachers mentioned negative teacher attitudes. These teachers stated that their projects were seen as unnecessary by their colleagues and that they could not get support from their colleagues in the work that should be done jointly on behalf of the school and that their enthusiasm was broken.

Mehmet: "It can sometimes be demoralizing when teachers see it as an empty job. Of course, the lack of technology also limits it. In addition, when not all students participate in the projects, they have to arrange time outside the classroom, which is not effective. Also, when we do not receive support from other teachers, especially in the process of getting a label, our enthusiasm can be broken because we do not get the eTwinning school label."

Dilek: "It takes a lot of time. I think it should be allowed to open exercises for those who write eTwinning projects. We find it difficult to find time to train the children. We also have a lot of difficulty due to the lack of technological infrastructure in our school. There is not enough equipment in our school. For example, a smart board."

The teacher Dilek, who mentioned time constraints, suggested opening exercises for those who write eTwinning projects as a solution to this problem.

While three teachers stated that the curriculum limited their projects, four teachers saw the lack of technical infrastructure as a negative factor.

İbrahim: "These projects have an extra workload and are carried out voluntarily. The support and attitude of the administration are very important in their work. Weak internet and lack of technological equipment (e.g., phones, tablets, and smart boards)."

Efe: "Curriculum and time are serious problems; you can only find the time to do projects in the gaps between classes, so there are problems."

Bayram: "The biggest problem is time, keeping up with the curriculum and the teachers from whose classes you take students."

Although it is a necessity to integrate eTwinning projects into the curriculum, there are teacher opinions stating that there are some activities outside the curriculum and that these activities are difficult to do due to the concern of completing the curriculum.

A teacher working at Science and Art Centers (SAC) stated that she had no problems.

Ravza: "I work at Science and Art Centers (SAC). I did not encounter any problems."

Results and Discussion

This study aims to examine teachers' views on the advantages and disadvantages of eTwinning projects and the factors limiting the projects. In line with the purpose of the study, three themes were identified at the beginning of the research. First, the advantages of eTwinning projects were analyzed. As a result of the data analysis obtained for this purpose, all of the teachers stated that doing eTwinning projects had advantages. Teachers stated that the projects had advantages, such as improving learning/teaching, cultural interaction and language development. This result is in line with Manfredini's (2007) views on eTwinning. In projects, teachers and students from different cities and countries come together and work together. The findings that eTwinning projects provide cultural interaction are also found in the literature (Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Manfredini, 2007; Yılmaz & Altun Yılmaz, 2012). Thanks to international projects, teachers can also improve their language skills. The aim of eTwinning is to improve the language and intercultural skills of teachers and students (Gajek & Poszytek, 2009). In addition, the findings that eTwinning improves teachers' language skills are in line with the literature (Akdemir, 2017; Gülnar & Yatağan, 2014; Manfredini, 2007). Through eTwinning projects, teachers not only learn new things but also share their knowledge with both students and colleagues. These projects, being planned activities carried out in cooperation, have been highlighted by teachers for enhancing collaboration and communication skills, making valuable contributions to their organized work. A similar finding was found in the study conducted by Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-Mutka and Punie (2010). At the same time, Erzurum, Demir, Yıldız and Gezer (2023) stated that eTwinning projects improved teachers' communication skills and increased their collaboration and planning skills. In his study, Alireisoğlu (2023) showed that eTwinning projects positively

affected teachers' ability to work together. Gündüz Çetin and Gündoğdu (2022) also stated that projects improve communication and collaboration. In this context, the findings are in line with the literature. In addition, teachers stated that the projects positively affected their professional development. Similarly, teachers participating in Crişan's (2013) study also stated that the use of eTwinning contributed to their professional development. Akıncı (2018) concluded that the eTwinning project contributed greatly to the professional development of teachers by integrating the teaching process with technology. Çavuş, Balçın and Yılmaz (2021) also concluded in their study that teachers participate in eTwinning projects to increase their professional competencies. Therefore, the findings of different studies overlap. Every new information learned through projects contributes to teachers' professional development. Teachers can contribute to their professional development by using the new methods and practices they learn from their peers in the classroom. Teachers also stated that eTwinning projects contribute to their personal development. This result coincides with the findings of Vuorikari, Gilleran and Scimeca's (2011) study. A similar result was found in Kızılaslan and Ersin Başkan's (2023) study conducted with English teachers. Teachers stated that the personal development courses on the platform contributed to them. Teachers who felt that they developed professionally and personally also increased their self-confidence and motivation with the quality labels they received from the projects. This is among the advantages to the projects. There are teacher opinions stating that they increased their knowledge of technology thanks to the projects. The result that projects increased teachers' knowledge of technology was also stated by teachers in Uslu Kaplan and Alkan's (2023) study. Indeed, the fact that the projects are presented in a virtual environment requires teachers to use technology effectively. Online meetings are organized for project partners to meet with each other, banners, posters, slogans, promotional videos prepared for the projects are prepared with various web 2.0 tools and technological tools are used to share them on the platform. Therefore, eTwinning projects enable teachers to increase their technological knowledge. All findings regarding the advantages of eTwinning projects are in line with the results of the study conducted by the Turkish National Support Service in 2013 (eTwinning Turkey, 2020).

Secondly, the disadvantages of eTwinning projects were analyzed. Half of the participating teachers stated that eTwinning projects did not have any disadvantages. This is a very pleasing situation. Because it was stated by the teachers that eTwinning projects provide various contributions to teachers in many areas, such as improving learning/teaching, professional-personal development, self-confidence development, motivation increase, cultural interaction, language development, cooperation, communication, planned work and the development of technology knowledge. Therefore, it is thought that teachers who think that projects do not have disadvantages will be more interested in them. In addition, there were teacher opinions that projects took too much time and that they spent too much time in front of computers and phones. Presenting project activities in a virtual environment and documenting each activity takes teachers' time. In addition, teachers doing projects have to allocate time outside of school hours for their activities. Therefore, teachers stated that they sacrificed themselves,

their families and their social lives. Some teachers complained that their projects were not appreciated by their colleagues and the administration and that their motivation decreased because the projects were seen as unnecessary efforts. In parallel with these findings, Crişan (2013) stated that eTwinning had difficulties, such as a lack of support from the school, difficulty in establishing collaborations at school, and a lack of time for participation. Similarly, in Avcı's (2021) study, participant teachers expressed that they wanted the projects they created on the eTwinning platform to be registered in the "Ministry of National Education Information System" and to be supported by both school management and parents. Unlike this study, the teachers participating in Kızılaslan and Ersin Başkan's (2023) study mentioned the time difference between partner countries and the difficulties in finding project partners. Among the disadvantages found in the literature are the limited duration of the projects, the lack of cooperation and communication between participating teachers, and the small number of activities (Çavuş, Balçın, & Yılmaz, 2021).

Finally, the factors limiting the development of eTwinning projects were analyzed. The majority of the teachers mentioned the negative attitudes of the school administration as a factor limiting their projects. Considering the benefits of eTwinning projects for teachers and students, it is clear that teachers' voluntary work should be appreciated and supported by the administration. Therefore, it is thought that school administrations should be informed about this issue and the importance of the projects should be emphasized by the District and Provincial Directorates of National Education. In addition to this, there are teacher opinions stating that some teacher attitudes negatively affect their projects. These teachers stated that their projects were seen as unnecessary by their colleagues and that they could not get support from their colleagues in the work that should be done jointly on behalf of the school and that their enthusiasm was broken. It is thought that doing projects should be popularized among teachers. For example, the Konya Provincial Directorate of National Education has started "My eTwinning Project in Every School." With this application, it encouraged schools and teachers to start projects by saying that every school should have a project. In this way, dissemination activities can be carried out. However, it is thought that it would be more useful to use incentives, such as certificates of achievement, economic gain, and extra service points, rather than forcing teachers to do projects. One third of the participating teachers mentioned time constraints and stated that projects also take up their time outside of class. Similarly, Αλεξίου (2019) mentioned the problems encountered in the implementation of a project due to a lack of time. One of the teachers who talked about time constraints stated that there could be an exercise for eTwinning project authors so that the projects could be given the time they need. It is thought that time constraints can be overcome in this way. At the same time, since the exercises also provide teachers with financial gain, they can be an incentive for teachers to do projects. There are teacher opinions stating that their projects are negatively affected by the lack of technical infrastructure. Thanks to the ongoing FATİH project initiated in our country, the technical infrastructure problem in schools has been solved to a great extent. In parallel to this, only one teacher stated that there was no interactive board in his/her school. The other teachers who mentioned the

problem of technical infrastructure mentioned the technological inadequacies of the students outside the school or the lack of technological knowledge of the students. This obstacle encountered in the implementation of the projects coincides with the findings of previous studies (Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Kampylis et al., 2013). It was also observed that the curriculum limited the projects. The inconsistencies between eTwinning projects and the curriculum have also been emphasized in the literature (Akdemir, 2017; Αλεξίου, 2019; Crişan, 2013). Consistent with the findings obtained in this study, Camilleri (2016) stated that teachers avoid participating in eTwinning projects because they are not part of the curriculum.

Recommendations

According to the results of the study, the following suggestions were made:

- Among the factors limiting eTwinning projects, the negative attitudes of school administrators were mentioned by many teachers. In this context, school administrators can be encouraged to support eTwinning project implementations.
- Among the factors limiting eTwinning projects, teachers stated that the projects were seen as unnecessary by their colleagues and that they could not get support from their colleagues in collaborative work. In this context, importance can be given to popularizing the projects among teachers. For this purpose, the eTwinning Club, which has recently started to be established in schools, can be established in all schools and the advisor teacher of this club can be changed every year so that all teachers can be informed about eTwinning. In addition, in-service and distance trainings can be organized to overcome the lack of knowledge of teachers on this subject and these trainings can be attended as much as possible.
- Among the disadvantages of eTwinning projects, some teachers complained that their motivation decreased because their projects were not appreciated by their colleagues and the administration. In this context, teachers who carried out successful projects can be presented with a certificate of achievement, and plaque, to show that their work was-- appreciated.
- Among the disadvantages of eTwinning projects, there were teacher opinions that they had time problems. To prevent this, an exercise can be opened for teachers who write eTwinning projects and in this way, it can be ensured that the necessary time is given to the projects.
- Negative parent attitudes were also seen among the factors that limit eTwinning projects. To prevent these negative attitudes, parents can be informed about the projects and their contributions to students.

The limitations of this study are that the study group consisted of 15 teachers and the findings were limited to the answers given by the participant teachers to the questions in the semi-structured interview form. It is accepted that out-of-control factors that may

occur due to the researcher, participants and implementation environments may have an effect on the participants' responses, even at a low level.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Günümüzde, çağın eğitim gerekleri, öğrencilerin farklılaşan ihtiyaçları ve bireyin eğitimi konusunda ele alınan yeni yaklaşımlar, öğretmene mesleki anlamda yeni sorumluluklar yüklemektedir. Bu anlayış, öğretmenin konu alanında uzman olmasını, eğitim öğretimi etkin bir şekilde planlayabilmesini, olumlu öğrenme ortamları oluşturmasını, yeniliklere ve teknolojiye açık olmasını, güçlü bir iletişim becerisine sahip olmasını ve sürekli gelişime açık bireyler olmasını zorunlu kılmaktadır (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2017). Bu kapsamda eTwinning, öğretmenlerin bu becerileri kazanabilmeleri için oldukça etkili bir platform sunmaktadır.

2005 yılında Avrupa Komisyonu e-öğrenme programının temel etkinliği olarak başlatılan eTwinning, Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri kullanımıyla okullar için destek, araç ve hizmetler sağlayarak Avrupa'daki okullar arası iş birliğini teşvik eden ve eğitimciler için ücretsiz olarak sürekli çevrimiçi Mesleki Gelişim fırsatları sunan bir platformdur. Portalda eTwinning ülkelerinden haberler, mesleki gelişim fırsatları, çeşitli öğrenme etkinlikleri, çevrimiçi seminerler, mesleki gelişim çalıştayları ve başarılı projelerden örnekler bulunmaktadır (eTwinning, 2020). Dolayısıyla eTwinning, öğretmenlerin sürekli gelişimi için eşsiz fırsatlar sunmaktadır.

eTwinning faaliyeti Avrupa ülkelerinin katılımcı okullarında çalışan öğretmen, öğrenci ve idarecilere yönelik deneyimlerinin paylaşılması, iş birliği ve fikir alışverişinde bulunulabilmesi için çevrim içi bir ortam oluşturmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla eTwinning platformunun en önemli aktiviteleri eTwinning projeleridir. Projeler farklı okullar ve farklı ülkelere öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin bir araya gelip proje fikri ürettiği, iş birliği içinde çalıştığı, teknolojiyi etkin kullandığı ve dil becerilerini geliştirdiği aktivitelerdir.

Yapılan literatür taraması sonucunda eTwinning projelerinin öğretmenler ve öğrenciler için oldukça faydalı olduğu olduğu aşıkardır. Bunun yanı sıra projelerin bazı dezavantajları ve projelerin gelişimini sınırlayan etmenler olduğu görülmektedir. Bu kapsamda araştırmanın amacı eTwinning projelerinin avantajları, dezavantajları ve projeleri sınırlayan etmenlere yönelik öğretmen görüşlerini incelemektir. Araştırmada projelerin avantajlarının yanı sıra dezavantajlarının ve projeleri sınırlayan etmenlerin incelenmesi hem araştırmanın literatürdeki diğer araştırmalardan farkını hem de önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Böylece projelerde öğretmenlerin karşılaçağı dezavantajların ve projelerinin önündeki engellerin bilinmesi hem ilgili alanyazına önemli bir katkı sunacak hem de bu engellerin ortadan kaldırılması için yapılması gerekenlere yol gösterecektir. Belirlenen amaç doğrultusunda araştırmanın problem cümlesi "eTwinning projelerinin avantajları, dezavantajları ve projeleri sınırlayan etmenlere ilişkin öğretmen görüşleri nelerdir?" şeklinde ifade edilmiştir.

Bu araştırmada temel nitel araştırma yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Merriam (2009), temel nitel araştırma desenini, deneyimlerin bireyler tarafından nasıl yorumlandığı, ne anlamlar yüklediği ve bunu iç dünyalarında nasıl yapılandırdıklarına odaklanan araştırma türü olarak tanımlamıştır. Nitel araştırmalarda insana ilişkin olay ve algıların, doğal ortamında derinlemesine incelenmesi esastır (Merriam ve Grenier, 2019). Bu

bilgiler ışığında araştırmada katılımcı öğretmenlerin eTwinning projelerine yönelik algılarını incelemek amaçlandığından temel nitel araştırma deseninin kullanılmasının uygun olacağına karar verilmiştir.

Çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmak isteyen, eTwinning projeleri konusunda deneyimi olan öğretmenlerin seçilmesine dikkat edilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2019-2020 eğitim öğretim yılında Konya ilindeki devlet ilkökul, ortaokul ve liselerinde görev yapan 15 gönüllü öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Görüşme soruları literatür taraması yapılarak ve uzman görüşüne başvurularak hazırlanmıştır. Görüşme formu hazırlanırken özellikle eTwinning projelerinin avantajlarına, dezavantajlarına ve projeleri sınırlayan etmenlere odaklanılmıştır. Çalışma neticesinde toplanan veriler betimsel analiz tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir.

eTwinning projelerine yönelik öğretmenlerin görüşleri; “eTwinning Projelerinin Avantajları”, “eTwinning Projelerinin Dezavantajları” ve “eTwinning Projelerinin Gelişimini Sınırlayan Etmenler” olmak üzere üç tema etrafında toplanmıştır. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin tamamı eTwinning projesi yapmanın avantajları olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenler projelerin öğrenmeyi / öğretmeyi geliştirme, kültürel etkileşim ve dil gelişimi gibi avantajları olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bu sonuç Manfredini’n (2007) eTwinning konusundaki görüşlerini desteklemektedir. Projelerde farklı şehir ve ülkelerden öğretmenler ve öğrenciler bir araya gelmekte ve beraber çalışmaktadırlar. Bu ise kültürel etkileşime imkân sağlamaktadır. eTwinning projelerinin kültürel etkileşimi sağladığına dair bulgular literatürde de karşımıza çıkmaktadır (Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Manfredini, 2007; Yılmaz ve Altun Yılmaz, 2012). Uluslararası projeler sayesinde öğretmenler dil becerilerini de geliştirebilmektedirler. eTwinning projelerinin öğretmenlerin dil becerilerini geliştirdiğine dair bulgular literatür ile paralellik göstermektedir (Akdemir, 2017; Gülnar ve Yatağan, 2014; Manfredini, 2007). Katılımcı öğretmenler projelerin iş birliği ve iletişim becerilerini artırdığını, planlı çalışmalarına katkıda bulunduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Benzer bir bulguya Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-Mutka ve Punie (2010) tarafından yapılan çalışma sonucunda ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca öğretmenler projelerin mesleki gelişimlerini olumlu etkilediğini ifade etmişlerdir. Benzer şekilde Crişan’ın (2013) çalışmasına katılan öğretmenler de eTwinning kullanımının mesleki gelişimlerine katkıda bulunduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Akıncı (2018) ise eTwinning projesinin öğretim sürecini teknolojiyle bütünleştirerek öğretmenin mesleki gelişimine büyük katkılarının olduğu sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Dolayısıyla üç çalışmanın bulguları örtüşmektedir. Ayrıca öğretmenler eTwinning projeleri ile kişisel gelişimlerine katkıda bulduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu sonuç Vuorikari, Gilleran ve Scimeca’nın (2011) çalışma bulguları ile örtüşmektedir. İkinci olarak eTwinning projelerinin dezavantajları incelenmiştir. Katılımcıların yarısı eTwinning projelerinin herhangi bir dezavantajı olmadığını belirtmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra projelerin çok vakit aldığını, bilgisayar ve telefon başında çok fazla zaman geçirdiklerini ifade eden öğretmen görüşleri mevcuttur. Ayrıca proje yapan öğretmenler, yapacağı etkinlikler için okul saatleri dışında zaman ayırmak zorunda kalmaktadır. Dolayısıyla öğretmenler kendisinden, aile ve sosyal hayatlarından fedakârlık yaptıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bazı öğretmenler ise ortaya çıkardıkları projelerinin

meslektaşları ve idare tarafından takdir edilmemesinden ve projelere gereksiz çaba olarak bakılmasından dolayı motivasyonlarının düşmesinden yakınmaktadırlar. Bu bulgulara paralel olarak Crişan (2013) eTwinning'in okuldan destek eksikliği, okulda iş birlikleri kurma zorluğu, katılım için zaman eksikliği gibi zorlukları olduğunu belirtmiştir. Son olarak eTwinning projelerinin gelişimini sınırlayan etmenler incelenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin çoğunluğu okul idaresinin olumsuz tutumlarını projelerini sınırlayan bir etmen olarak belirtmişlerdir. Bunun yanı sıra bazı öğretmen tutumlarının projelerini olumsuz etkilediğini belirten öğretmen görüşleri mevcuttur. Bu öğretmenler yaptıkları projelerin meslektaşları tarafından gereksiz görüldüğünü ve okul adına ortak yapılması gereken işlerde meslektaşlarından destek alamadıklarını belirterek şevklerinin kırıldığını ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcı öğretmenlerin üçte biri zaman sıkıntısından bahsetmiş ve projelerin ders dışı zamanlarını da aldığını ifade etmişlerdir. Benzer şekilde Αλεξίου (2019) zaman eksikliğinden dolayı bir projenin uygulanmasında karşılaşılan sorunlardan bahsetmiştir. Teknik alt yapı eksikliğinden dolayı projelerinin olumsuz etkilediğini belirten öğretmen görüşleri mevcuttur. Bu öğretmenler öğrencilerin okul dışındaki teknolojik yetersizliklerinden ya da öğrencilerin teknolojik bilgi eksikliğinden bahsetmiştir. Projelerin uygulanmasında karşılaşılan bu engel daha önce yapılmış çalışma bulguları ile örtüşmektedir (Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Kampylis ve diğerleri, 2013). Ayrıca müfredatın projeleri sınırlandırdığı söylenebilir. Literatürde de yapılan araştırmalarda eTwinning projeleri ile müfredat arasındaki tutarsızlıklar vurgulanmıştır (Akdemir, 2017; Αλεξίου, 2019; Camilleri, 2016; Crişan, 2013). Araştırma sonuçlarına göre okul yöneticilerinin eTwinning proje uygulamalarını desteklemeleri, proje çalışmalarının okullarda yaygınlaştırılması, velilerin projelerin yararları konusunda bilgilendirilmesi, öğretmenlerin bu konudaki çalışmalarının takdir edilmesi ve eTwinning projesi yazan öğretmenler için egzersiz açılıp bu şekilde projelere gereken zamanın sağlanması önerilebilir.

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Authors

Sema Acar

Bilge Peker

Contact

Necmettin Erbakan University, Institute of Education
Sciences, Trkiye

E-mail: s.acarr94@gmal.com

Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleřođlu
Faculty of Education, Trkiye

E-mail: bpeker@erbakan.edu.tr