Opinions of Social Studies Teachers about Distance Education

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Abstract: The Coronavirus (Covid-19), which emerged in the city of Wuhan, China towards the end of 2019, adversely affected Turkey as well as the whole world. As a result of this event, our country's health, economy, social life etc. As in many other fields, it has also experienced problems in the field of education. Schools were temporarily closed due to the epidemic, and distance education was used to continue education after the closure of schools. However, since distance education is an unfamiliar and lacking infrastructure in Turkey, it has brought different problems with it. For this reason, this study was conducted, and distance education was evaluated in order to increase the quality of the distance education put into practice and to find solutions to the problems that may occur by referring to the experiences of the teachers who apply this education. In this study, which was conducted to evaluate the distance education process, teachers' opinions were also consulted. The study was conducted with the phenomenology model, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The sample of the study consists of social studies teachers working in Nizip district of Gaziantep province. While creating this sample, 20 teachers were reached with easily accessible case sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods. In order to get the opinions of 20 teachers in the sample about distance education, a semi-structured interview form created by the researchers was used. Content analysis method was used to analyze the data of the study. With this method, questions were asked to determine the opinions of the teachers, and the statements expressing the same opinion were gathered under a common theme. The findings obtained from the opinions gathered under the common theme were tabulated and these tables were interpreted. According to the findings of the study, most of the participants state that the opportunities and internet infrastructure of the students are insufficient in the distance education process and that some subjects are more inclined to concrete learning.

*Keywords:*Distance Education, Student Opportunities, İnternet İnfrastructure

Introduction

Mankind has sought ways to increase its knowledge since the day it started to exist in this world. These searches have led to the development of technical possibilities. Technology is developing at a rapid pace with each passing day, and this development brings serious changes in many areas of life. Today, various fields, from finance to culture, from employment to production, are undergoing a transformation with the increase in technical possibilities. Education emerges as one of the institutions that have been affected/most affected by this transformation. As a result of these changes, some differentiations are observed in educational environments, teaching approaches, course materials, learning methods and techniques. In addition to the previous education concepts, concepts such as e-learning, web learning, web 2.0 tools, online education, distance education have started to be used and have taken their place in the literature (Demir, 2014, p. 205). Thus, traditional education methods are on their way to taking a different view in the information age. With the coronavirus, more online education tools and programs have been used instead of traditional education methods. In these times when distance education entered our lives, we need to look at the history of distance education. Clark (2020, p. 411), referring to the history of distance education, has actually used this method in letters, radio, books, newspapers, etc. since the past. reminds that it is carried out with tools. Therefore, distance education is not a concept that has emerged in recent years. The development of information systems has diversified the environments in which distance education is offered. Uşun (2006) defines distance education as an educational technology application in which the sources and recipients are located far from each other, individuality, flexibility and independence, communication and interaction are provided by technical means.According to Ateş (2010), distance education, developed as an alternative to traditional face-to-face education, is the biggest change that information and internet technologies have brought to educational environments. The coronavirus, which started to spread in 2019, once again brought distance education to our agenda. As of March 2020, Turkey has decided to close schools to reduce the impact of this spreading virus. Again, since this date, the Ministry of National Education has decided to continue education remotely by taking precautions. Teachers and students have entered a new educational process since this date. In this process, teachers and students tried to carry out this process by using various internet-based programs. Distance education, which started to be implemented more in Turkey as of the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year, Kaya (2002) is the learning-teaching process, which is carried out by providing communication between teachers and students in different places, due to the limitations of the traditional education-teaching process, by means of various technological products. (2011) defined that it is necessary to use information technologies in order to solve educational problems and it is a new teaching model that emerges with this use. Kaya (2002) stated that distance education provides many benefits such as providing the student with a rich educational environment, providing

individual learning, eliminating the necessity of being in a certain indoor space at a certain time, and facilitating mass education.

In addition, he stated that there are limitations such as not being able to provide face-to-face education relations easily, preventing students from socializing, being dependent on transportation opportunities and communication technologies. Arat and Minister (2011) stated that distance education cannot replace traditional education and stated that traditional education has many more advantages, but distance education is also necessary. In addition, Arat and Minister (2011) stated that the most important element of distance education is communication infrastructure, and accordingly, technological infrastructure should be developed, internet speed should be increased, and connection interruptions should be reduced.On the other hand, there are some problems with distance education, which has many benefits. One of these problems is the limited interaction between learning and teaching individuals (Döş & Teres, 2019). Wang (2004) emphasizes that we are in the 4th generation distance education period with the developments in the technical field, but despite the advances in computer technologies, distance language education is still not at the desired efficiency. Elcil and Şahiner (2014), in their study with Istanbul University Faculty of Communication students, stated that university students have weak student-teacher interaction in distance education, problems such as distraction and lack of motivation are experienced, and therefore, the effect of distance lessons is lower compared to traditional education.

For Altiparmak, Kurt, and Kapıdere (2011, p. 323), issues such as the possibility of technical problems, the necessity of a certain information technology infrastructure, the fact that the individuals who will use the system are not prepared for the programs, and the financial inadequacies restrict the access of some students to education are the problems of distance education. Duran (2020), in his phenomenological study conducted by interviewing 12 university students, determined that the anxiety caused by the limited interaction in distance education negatively affects the education perceptions of individuals. Ustati and Hassan (2013) pointed out that students who continue distance education experience problems in interaction and stated that education environments should be reorganized according to student needs.

Valentine (2002, p. 4), as a result of his study in which he evaluated the concept of distance education from different perspectives, underlines that distance education is a method that has a different structure from traditional education and has its own characteristics, problems and opportunities. In these conditions, the transition to distance education is an indication that a process with advantages and disadvantages has been entered, as explained in the studies above. In addition, while determining the characteristics of distance education, the facilities of the school should also be taken into account. (Kara and Bozbayındır, 2019).The aim of this research is to reveal the perspective of social studies teachers on distance education and to identify the problems they encounter in the distance education process; to make suggestions for the solution of the problems, and finally to determine the factors that increase the efficiency of distance

education. As it is known, the fact that the coronavirus continues to affect the world and will last for a long time shows that the distance education process will continue for a long time.

For this reason, the proliferation of such studies will help us to evaluate the process we are going through more accurately. It will also contribute to future studies. Because the most important element in education is teachers, who are the implementers of education. Opinions of social studies teachers about distance education were obtained by preparing an interview form. The following questions were asked to the social studies teachers in the interview form:

1) What does distance education mean to you?

2) What are the most challenging and problematic factors for you in the distance education process?

3) In what ways did you solve the problems you encountered in distance education?

4) What kind of professional contributions has distance education made to you?

5) What are the factors that increase the teaching and efficiency of the course in the distance education process?

6) What are the factors that reduce the teaching and efficiency of the course in the distance education process?

7) If you think that the course subjects are not transferred to the students efficiently in distance education, what could be the reasons? Please explain

In addition, when the literature is examined, it is seen that the opinions of Turkish and science teachers about distance education are taken. On the other hand, there are not many studies in which the opinions of social studies teachers about distance education are taken. For this reason, it can be said that the study was carried out to close this gap and to contribute to the literature.

Method

2.1. Research Pattern

The research was carried out with the phenomenology (phenomenology) pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The phenomenology design focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2018). Phenomena appear in various forms such as events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts and situations in the world we live in. Since the distance education process is also a phenomenon, the phenomenology design provides the best research ground on this subject. Because the phenomenology model is one of the most suitable models for collecting and

interpreting opinions about a subject. Since the opinions of social studies teachers about distance education will be taken in this study, it was deemed more appropriate to use the phenomenology design as a design.

Findings

3.1. Findings Regarding the First Sub-Problem

Table.2

Code	Frequency	Percent
inequality of opportunity in education	10	50
parent indifference	2	10
promising project	2	10
process of technology	2	10
a difficult process	2	10
Continuity in education	1	5
The enabling project	1	5

What are the Meanings Social Studies Teachers Ascribe to Distance Education?

When Table-2 is examined, 10 (50%) of the participating social studies teachers answered inequality of opportunity in education. Again, 2 (10%) of the social studies teachers gave the answer of parent indifference. Other answers are as follows: 2 of the teachers (10%) are promising projects, the other 2 (10%) are a difficult process, 1 (5%) is continuity in education, 1 (5%) 'projects providing opportunity' and 2 (10%) of them gave the answers to the technology-enabled process).

From this point of view, most of the social studies teachers see distance education as an inequality of opportunity in education. This shows that the disadvantages of the distance education process are more than the advantages. To understand the reason for this, the answers given by the teachers are given below:

"The fact that students cannot benefit from distance education expresses the inequality of opportunity in education". (T1)

"A system where there is no equality of opportunity among students". (S7)

"Inequality of opportunity for most students." (S9)

"It hinders equality of opportunity." (T4)

"It refers to inequality of opportunity. Students who do not have financial means cannot take the course." (T13)

3.2. Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Problem

Table.3

What are the factors that force social studies teachers in distance education and cause problems?

Kod	F	Yüzde
İnternet Problem	7	35
Internet infrastructure problem	7	35
student apathy	2	10
lesson plan problem	1	5
lack of students	1	5
Inability to measure and evaluate	1	5
Difficulty in teaching subjects suitable for concrete learning	1	5

When Table-3 is examined, the factors that cause problems for social studies teachers are as follows: 7 of the teachers (35%) answered this question as a communication problem.

Again, 7 of the teachers (35%) gave the answer of lack of internet infrastructure. 2 (10%) of students are indifferent, 1 (5%) of them are lack of students, 1 (5%) of them are not being able to measure and evaluate in a healthy way, 1 (5%) lesson planning problem and 1 (5%) of them gave the answer of having difficulty in teaching concrete subjects. From this point of view, the most challenging issues for social studies teachers in the distance education process were communication problems and internet infrastructure problems. In this period when the distance education process is experienced, these problems are the problems that can reduce the quality of

distance education. In order to understand the reason for these problems, the answers given by the social studies teachers to this question are given below:

"Due to the internet infrastructure, full communication is not established. In a 30-minute lesson, the subject is covered for 10 minutes." (T13)

"There is a problem in communicating with children. Internet is a problem." (T14)

"Sound problems due to internet problems" (S9)

"Lack of internet infrastructure, lack of devices to participate in distance education" (T1)

"Infrastructure problem. Having trouble entering the course". (T5)

3.3. Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Problem

Table.4

What are the Ways of Solving the Problems Social Studies Teachers Face in Distance Education?

Code	Frequency	Percent
I couldn't find a solution to the problem I was facing.	9	45
By contacting the parent	3	15
Using different distance education programs	2	10
Watching Youtube program and finding a solution to the problem	2	10
By turning on my own phone's internet	1	5
By making amends	1	5
By phone	1	5
By giving individual assignments	1	5

When Table-4 is examined, 9 (45%) of the social studies teachers answered that they could not solve this question, 3 (15%) answered by communicating with their parents, 2 (10%) were different distance education teachers.

Using software programs, 2 (10%) replied by watching youtube programs and finding a solution to the problem, 1 (5%) gave individual homework, 1 (5%) by phone, 1' i (5%) made compensation and 1 (5%) gave their answers byturning on mobile data. From this point of view, most of the social studies teachers could not find a solution to the problems they encountered in distance education. In order to understand the reasons for this, the answers given by the teachers to this question are given below:

"The participation was not timely and in sufficient numbers and I could not find a solution to this problem" (T12)

"We couldn't solve most of them, unfortunately, I couldn't solve the problem of sound not reaching students (T5)

"It cannot be said that we have solved the problems we face due to social environmental conditions and impossibilities. (S7)

"We couldn't solve most of them" (T15)

"Even though we tried to communicate with the parents, unfortunately, there was no solution to the problems. (S10).

3.4. Findings on the Fourth Sub-Problem

Table.5

What Contributions Has Distance Education Contributed to Social Studies Teachers

Kod	F	Yüzde
Improved the ability to use technology effectively	11	55
Provided practicality in the transfer of information in terms of time	2	10
Increased my patience level	2	10
Provided the opportunity to experience different teaching methods	2	10
He proved to us that the	2	10

school can be remote.		
It allowed me to gain experience in distance education	1	5

When Table-5 was examined, 11 (55%) of social studies teachers answered this question by improving their ability to use technology effectively.

2 (510) provided practicality in the transfer of knowledge in terms of time, 2 (10%) increased my level of patience, 2 (10%) had the opportunity to experience different teaching methods, 1 (5%) provided experience in distance education and 2 (10%) gave us their answers. From here, most social studies teachers have responded that this process has improved their ability to use technology effectively. To understand the reasons for this, the answers given by the teachers are as follows:

"In technological terms, he taught me how to use programs like Eba and Zoom effectively and differently." (D5)

"I've learned to use information and communication technologies better." (D1)

"He saw my shortcomings in the use of technology and led me to improve on this subject." (D10)

"He taught me how to use technology according to my profession." (D17)

3.5. Findings on the Fifth Sub-Problem

Table.6

What are the factors that increase course processing and efficiency in the distance education process according to social studies teachers

Code	Frequecy	Percent
Supporting the course with various materials	7	35
I don't think there's an element that increases productivity.	3	15
Excess student participation	3	15
Student interest	3	15
Parental support	1	5
Explaining interesting topics	1	5
Focus on the lesson	1	5
Increasing the number of question solutions	1	5

When Table-6 is examined, the answers given by social studies teachers to this question are as follows; 7 (35%) support the course with various materials, 3 (15%) do not think there is an element that increases efficiency, 3 (15%) of them gave student participation surpluses, 1 (5%) to tell interesting topics, 1 (5%) to parental support, 1 (5%) to focus on the course, 1 (5%) to increase the number of question solutions, 3 (15%) to student interest answers. From here, social studies teachers think that the most important factor that increases the efficiency of distance education is to support the course with various materials.

In the face-to-face classroom environment, it was seen that the training using various materials was efficient. To understand why, the teachers' answers to this question are as follows:

"Different courses using internet and information techniques during the course, different tools and equipment." (D4)

"To ensure the active participation of students, to support the course with various materials." (D1).

3.6. Findings on the Sixth Sub-Problem

Table.7

What are the Factors That Reduce Course Processing and Efficiency in the Distance Education Process according to Social Studies Teachers

Code	Frequency	Percent
Internet infrastructure problem	9	45
Low student participation	6	30
Low motivation and interest	4	20
Parental apathy	1	5

When table-7 was examined, social studies teachers answered this question as follows: 9 (45%) answered internet infrastructure problem, 6 (30%) had low student participation, 4 (20%) had low motivation and interest, and 1 (5%) answered parental apathy. From here, most social studies teachers think that the most important factor that reduces efficiency in distance education is the internet infrastructure problem. When this result is evaluated in general, the most important element in distance education is the internet infrastructure. The answers to this question are as follows;

"Infrastructure, internet access, trouble with the sound system have reduced the existing efficiency." (D5)

"Lack of sufficient infrastructure in communication". (D17)

"The internet is problematic, students cannot use applications such as Eba and Zoom". (D16)

3.7. Findings on the Seventh Sub-Problem

Table.8

Social Studies Teachers What can be the reasons if they think that course subjects are not transferred efficiently in distance education

Code	Frequency	Percent
Students do not attend the course regularly	8	40
Parental apathy	5	25
Some subjects are available for face-to-face learning	5	25
No eye contact	2	10

When Table-8 was examined, social studies teachers answered this question as follows; 8 (40%) responded that students did not attend the course regularly, 5 (25%) were available for face-to-face learning of certain subjects, 5 (25%) had 2 parental apathies and 2 (10%) had no eye contact.

From here, social studies teachers consider that the reason for the issues not learned for the student is that the students do not attend the course regularly. Regular course attendance in distance education can be said as an element that will increase the learningability of the subjects. The answers to this question are as follows;

"Yes, it's not. Due to the participation of different students in each course, the subject continuity cannot be ensured." (D1)

"Most students did not have the opportunity to study fully because there was no integrity in the classroom. The students coming to the class piece by piece or not, caused the curriculum not to be given as a whole." (D2)

Conclusion

Since the 2nd semester of the 2019-2020 academic year, distance education has started to be implemented at all levels of education in Turkey due to the pandemic. It is necessary to evaluate the distance education that continues to be applied and to find the problems that arise in the implementation process. One of the best ways to do this is to consult the opinions of the teachers who carry out the educational practices. In this study, the opinions of social studies teachers about distance education were applied. In addition, it is seen that there are not many studies in which social studies teachers are given their views on distance education. Therefore, this study may be a source of resources in order to address this deficiency and to contribute to the literature.

Kocayiğit and Uşn (2020) stated that the attitudes of teachers towards distance education are positive. Heavy (2007) found the attitude levels of teachers to distance education close to medium value but positive. In this study, social studies teachers generally addressed the disadvantages of distance education.

They said that the distance education process causes inequality of opportunity for students who do not have the opportunity in education. At the same time, they stated that the efficiency decreased due to problems in the distance education infrastructure. Arat and the Minister (2011) stated that the most important element of distance education is communication infrastructure, accordingly, technological infrastructure should be improved, internet speed should be increased and connection interruptions should be reduced.

Bilgiç and The Charter (2015) stated that there are administrative/administrative, technical and other problems related to the instructor in relation to web-based distance education and that it is important to establish a robust technical infrastructure in web-based distance education.

In this research, as factors that increase the efficiency of distance education activity, answers such as diversifying the course with various materials, excess student participation, student interest have come to the fore. In addition, in this study, the following has come to the forefront as the factor that reduces the efficiency of distance education activity; answers such as low motivation and interest, problems related to internet infrastructure, lack of student participation have come to the fore. Lack of motivation often leads to a move away from studying and a shift

to activities that are not related to education. Studying for a student in this situation can become a frustrating endeavor (Vulture, 2006:348)

Different results were reached in the studies where the effect of distance education courses on student motivation was investigated. A 2002 study by Wheeler concluded that student motivation was lower in distance education than in face-to-face education. In 2016, he found that the motivations of students studying with distance education increased after the implementation of motivation strategies. In order to minimize the problems experienced in the context of motivation in the distance education process, it may be recommended to use motivational design model strategies effectively in the design of teaching environments (Ucar, 2016: 148).

The findings of this research are as follows: In the findings of the first sub-problem of the study, social studies teachers were asked what distance education means to you and the following answers came to the fore; the process in which technology is effective, the education that provides the opportunity, the promising project, the inequality of opportunity in education, the inability to attend the course, a difficult process are given. From here, we can say that the disadvantages of distance education usually come to the fore in relation to this problem.

The second sub-problem is that social studies teachers were asked what are the factors that challenge you the most in distance education and cause problems for you, and the answers to the most communication and internet infrastructure problems came to the fore. Based on this finding, we can say that communication and internet infrastructure are the most important factors affecting distance education in the distance education process, whether good or bad.

In the findings of the third sub-problem, social studies teachers were asked the question of which ways you solved the problems you encountered in distance education and the following answers came to the fore; I could not solve the problems, by communicating with the parent, making amends, giving individual assignments, opening my own internet, using different distance education programs and watching Youtube programs and finding solutions to the problem. In general, teachers have not been able to find solutions to the problems they face in distance education. From here, the start of the distance education process at once caused teachers to catch them off guard. As we will mention below, it is necessary to expand in-service trainings related to distance education. At the very least, teachers can solve the problem they face. Again, the findings of the fourth sub-problem in the study were answered by social studies teachers who were asked what kind of contributions distance education had to you professionally and improved my ability to use technology effectively.

Again, the patience increased my level and the opportunity to experience different teaching methods were given as well. With this result, distance education is incomplete in improving teachers' ability to use technology effectively before starting this process; we can say that this skill has improved with distance education. In the study, social studies teachers on the fifth sub-problem were asked what are the factors that increase the efficiency of the distance education process and the answer was given to support the most lessons with various materials.

In addition, answers such as student interest, high student participation, parental support and focus on the course are given. Based on this result, it has been determined that supporting the course with various materials not only in distance education but also in face-to-face education is an element that increases efficiency. It can be said that this result is in parallel with the factors that increase efficiency in face-to-face training. In the study, social studies teachers were asked what are the factors that reduce course efficiency in distance education and the following answers were taken: low motivation and interest, internet infrastructure problem, lack of student participation and parental apathy. It turns out that internet infrastructure is an important element in distance education. If it is assumed that the distance education process will continue, this problem should be addressed.

In the findings of the study on the seventh sub-problem, if you do not think that the courses transferred to the student in distance education are transferred efficiently, the question was asked what the reasons might be and the answer was given to the absence of the most student course attendance. Other answers are: Answers such as lack of eye contact, parental apathy, lack of time and some subjects are more suitable for concrete learning have come to the fore. To solve such problems; Interactive odev control methods should be developed and used in distance education applications. In addition, students should be interviewed one-on-one in order to avoid the problem of continuing in distance education, and recommendations should be taken and implemented from the guided and psychological counseling service to increase the student motivation to continue the course.

It is also estimated that in the future distance education will become the main basis of education, rather than being a secondary alternative or support function for face-to-face learning (Yamamoto & Altun, 2020).

Therefore, entrepreneurs in the MEB and private sector (internet service providers) need to focus on infrastructure services Web 2.0 tools to improve the quality of distance education as a result of this study, preparing distance education activities, student teacher relations in distance education, teachers' qualifications should be improved with in-service trainings, internet infrastructure should not have connectivity problems for all students and teachers must be provided. The readiness of teachers and institutions that will conduct distance education should be determined and increased. Preparation should be made for content and technical infrastructure.

In addition, feedback should be received and necessary arrangements should be made. (Peace & Cankaya,2016). Pilot applications related to distance education should be made, legal regulations and laws related to distance education should be prepared in such a way that there are no gaps (Gurer, Tekinarslan, & Yavuzalp, 2016). In addition, student continuity is a problem in distance education and stronger connections should be established with students to solve this problem.

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