



## Distance Social Studies Courses in the Pandemic Period with the Experiences of Teachers

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### Abstract

The study aims to evaluate how distance social studies courses were conducted during the pandemic, in line with teachers' experiences. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 social studies teachers working in various provinces of Turkey in this study, which was carried out with interpretative phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods. The data were evaluated by the content analysis method. The results show that social studies teachers perceive distance education as a system that allows using different materials and tools, maintaining education, learning technology, and eliminating the need for time and place. On the other hand, teachers expressed some limitations of distance education arising from the lack of internet and technological tools. In addition, the results indicated teachers mostly used direct instruction and question-answer methods for teaching during the distance education period, EBA, Zoom, and some Web 2.0 tools as educational technologies, and tests and question-answer methods for measurement and evaluation. Finally, many problems, gathered under the titles of "technological-systemic", "communication-coordination", "student", "family, and "other" in the distance education process were emphasized. When examining the experiences, all problems are seen to be related to the internet connection, access to technological tools, and how families play a role in their children's education. In this context, compared with other studies in the literature, it is possible to say that teachers working in different branches also experienced similar problems during the distance education period. Therefore, innovative applications that can be developed will be beneficial for all branches.

## Öğretmenlerin Deneyimleriyle Pandemi Döneminde Uzaktan Sosyal Bilgiler Dersleri

### Makale Bilgisi

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### Araştırma Makalesi

### Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, pandemi döneminde uzaktan sosyal bilgiler derslerinin nasıl yürütüldüğünü öğretmenlerin deneyimleri doğrultusunda değerlendirmektir. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olgubilim deseniyle gerçekleştirilen çalışmada Türkiye'nin çeşitli illerinde görev yapan 14 sosyal bilgiler öğretmeniyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yürütülmüştür. Elde edilen veriler, içerik analiz yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitimi farklı materyal ve araçları kullanabilmeye, eğitimi sürdürmeye, teknolojiyi öğrenmeye, zaman ve mekân zorunluluğunu ortadan kaldırmaya olanak sağlayan bir sistem olarak algıladıklarını göstermektedir. Buna karşın öğretmenler, uzaktan eğitimin internet ve teknolojik araç eksikliğinden kaynaklanan bazı sınırlılıklara değinmişlerdir. Bunun yanında öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim döneminde öğretim için daha çok düz anlatım ve soru-cevap yöntemlerini, eğitim teknolojileri olarak EBA, Zoom ve bazı Web 2.0 araçlarını, ölçme değerlendirme için test ve soru cevap yöntemlerini kullandıkları tespit edilmiştir. Son olarak uzaktan eğitim sürecinde "teknolojik-sistemsel", "iletişim-koordinasyon", "öğrenci", "aile" ve "diğer" başlıkları altında toplanan çeşitli sorunlar vurgulanmıştır. İncelenen deneyimler, tüm sorunların temelde internet bağlantısı, teknolojik araca ulaşma imkânı ve ailelerin çocuklarının eğitiminde nasıl rol

oynadıklarıyla yakından ilgili olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda alanyazındaki diğer çalışmalarla karşılaştırıldığında farklı branşlarda görev yapan öğretmenlerin de uzaktan eğitim döneminde benzer sorunlar yaşadıklarını, dolayısıyla geliştirebilecek yenilikçi uygulamaların tüm branşlara faydalı olacağını söylemek mümkündür.

## Introduction

Many global or regional events have occurred in world history and disrupted educational activities. Wars, natural disasters, terrorism, and epidemics have come to the fore. For example, schools interrupted education when students and teachers went to battlefronts as soldiers in World War I. In addition, there were disruptions in education from time to time, primarily due to regional terrorist incidents and natural disasters. For example, epidemics did not interrupt education in Turkey until 2020 (Kahraman, 2020). However, the COVID-19 virus, which emerged in December 2019 and spread all over the world in a short time, was declared a “pandemic” by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2021 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Soon after this statement, the COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide and deeply hit many fields, including health, economy, tourism, and education. One of the most critical areas affected by this process was education. As a result, most countries have decided to close schools temporarily to avoid the effects of the pandemic. Pandemic-related school closures, which affected approximately 91% (about 1.6 billion) of students worldwide, have been considered an unprecedented event in world history (Miks & McIlwaine, 2020).

With the closure of schools, the distance education period started at all levels. After detecting the first case in Turkey, the Ministry of National Education announced the measures to be taken on education and stated that all schools across the country were closed temporarily for two weeks between Monday, March 16 and Monday, March 30, to protect the health of students, teachers, and parents. Therefore, distance education started at home on Monday, March 23, for remedial training. In addition, the renewed Education Informatics Network (EBA) has been activated within the scope of remedial training to bring the class environment to houses and continue education remotely. As a result, the weekly curriculum was restructured in primary and secondary schools, and remedial training began via EBA, over the internet, and through Turkish Radio Television Corporation [TRT] on television screens (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2020a). However, as the losses from the epidemic increased in the following days, distance education was extended first until April 30 (MoNE, 2020b) and then until May 31 (MoNE, 2020c) with new statements. Thus, distance education began on March 23 within the scope of coronavirus measures and continued until June 19 via three new television channels on TRT EBA and EBA, whose capacity was increased (MoNE, 2020d). Although face-to-face education trials were conducted many times in the 2020-2021 academic year, due to the new waves in the epidemic, almost the entire semester continued via distance education (MoNE, 2020e, 2020f, 2020g, 2021a). Finally, face-to-face education was started again at all academic levels in the 2021-2022 academic year (MoNE, 2021b).

### History of Distance Education in the World and Turkey

Distance education includes educational activities that can be conducted in a virtual environment independent of time and place, without the need for students and educators to be in the same place. This education system, which allows teaching at all levels (Enfiyeci & Büyükalan-Filiz, 2019), includes different processes in the world and in Turkey. Firstly, Bozkurt (2016) discussed the development of distance education in the world by dividing it into three periods and stages:

**Table 1.**  
*Development Process of Distance Education in the World*

Periods	Stages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I. Period- Correspondence</li> <li>• II. Period-Visual-Auditory Tools</li> <li>• III. Period- Informatics Based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1720- Via Letters</li> <li>• 1925- Radio and TV</li> <li>• 1970- Open university</li> <li>• 1980- Teleconference</li> <li>• After 1990- Internet-Web</li> </ul>

This classification made within the bounds of possibilities in the relevant period shows that information and communication technologies (ICT) have a more expansive place. Especially after the 1990s, the use of ICTs and since the 2000s, the use of network technologies have increased a lot. Besides, each period continued by covering the technologies used in the previous period. In addition, the direction of change in these periods has turned from teacher-centered to learner-centered, from distance education to open and distance education (Bozkurt, 2016).

In Turkey, the development process of distance education is divided into four periods according to the standard technological tools used and significant developments (Bozkurt, 2017):

- I. Period- Discussion and Suggestions: Conceptual (1923-1955)
- II. Period-Correspondence: Via Letters (1956-1975)
- III. Period-Visual-Auditory Tools: Radio-Television (1976-1995)
- IV. Period- Informatics Based: Internet-Web (1996-present)

When examining these periods in detail, it is seen that distance education was discussed conceptually from 1923 to the 1960s, conducted at the secondary education level after the 1970s, and some progress was achieved even a little by gaining some experience. These practices took place in higher education with the establishment of Anadolu University Open Education Faculty after 1980. Distance education, which made progress at primary, secondary, and higher education levels in the 1980s and 1990s, has become a system that includes a large student population. This success increased interest in distance education. Educational opportunities offered in parallel with developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) after 1996 have expanded. As a result, this system has started to serve millions of students (Bozkurt, 2017). Having different development processes in the world and Turkey, distance education, which the whole world has experienced closely as of 2020, differs from traditional education with its various features.

### Features of Distance Education

As is every educational activity, the distance education model has many advantages and limitations. First, some advantages of distance education are as follows (Yurdakul, 2020, p. 275-276):

- It offers broader and more effective training opportunities to overcome the inadequacies of traditional educational practices.
- It supports an identifier-educator structure rather than a selective-eliminative system.
- It provides flexibility and freedom in terms of learning place and time.
- It democratizes education and makes it accessible to the large masses.
- It supports both mass and individual education.
- It responds to learners' broad interests, wishes, and expectations with different programs.
- It develops students' learning-to-learn skills.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, distance education has many limitations (Yurdakul, 2020, p. 276-277):

- It is not beneficial for externally controlled people who have not developed the motivation to learn and the habit of studying independently.

- There are some delays in help, guidance, and feedback-correction activities for learning difficulties and inadequacies.
- It increases addiction to communication technologies.
- It is limited in terms of face-to-face communication and interaction.
- It is inadequate to develop the skills of applied disciplines.

In distance education, which should be used by considering its advantages and limitations, there are four models: synchronous, asynchronous, blended learning, and flipped education. In synchronous learning, instructors and students are in a classroom system. In this time-dependent model, sounds and images are transmitted simultaneously via the internet. However, in the asynchronous learning model, students can start and end their courses whenever they want, regardless of the instructor. In addition, courses are recorded, and various course materials are uploaded (Erfidan, 2019). Finally, the blended learning model refers to continuing the courses and activities at school using internet technologies after school or considering the in-school and out-of-school education as a whole. This process includes various synchronous or asynchronous learning and teaching methods at different guidance levels (individual, instructor, expert-led, or group/social learning). On the other hand, in the flipped learning model, the teacher of a course gives his/her students homework, class repetitions (via video, recitation of the course), or activities to do at home. After students do these activities at home, the teacher checks them at school and gives feedback. The aim here is to use the time in the classroom more effectively for learning activities and to eliminate the students' shortcomings (Yaylak, 2019). Various learning management systems (LMS) and virtual classroom applications implement these four models. LMSes can be listed as Moodle LMS, EBA, Edmodo, Google Classroom, Schoology, Blackboard Learn, ATutor, Dokeos, OLAT, eStudy, Bodington, Claroline, Docebo, eFront, Sakai, Drupal (Çelik, 2021; Kavrat, 2013; Solmaz, 2021; Yaylak, 2019). Virtual classroom applications include Adobe Connect, BigBlueButton, Elluminate Live, and Microsoft Office Live Meeting (Çelik, 2021; Kavrat, 2013).

In the distance education process, which is carried out via various platforms, many Web 2.0 tools have been used. The use of these tools has increased, especially after the pandemic period. Besides the teaching process, Web 2.0 tools are preferred for assessment and evaluation purposes. These tools are also used to create mind maps, boards, posters, cartoons, blogs, tests, puzzles, presentations, animations, information posters, infographics, stories, and books (Çelik, 2021). Hundreds of tools such as blogs, Bubbl.us, Canva, Camtasia, Diigo, Edpuzzle, Evernote, Flickr, Glogster, H5P, StoryboardThat, Padlet, Pixton, Powtoon, Prezi, and Voki (Çelik, 2021; Dere & Demirci, 2021; Kavasoglu, 2020; Solmaz, 2021; Tünkler, 2021; Yaylak, 2019; Yeşiltaş, 2020) are used during teaching in virtual classrooms. In addition, various tools such as Bookwidgets, Crowdsignal, Gimkit, Kahoot, Mentimeter, Nearpod, Osmosis, Plickers, Polleverywhere, Quizizz, Quizlet, Qwizdom, Socrative, Wooclap, and Zeetings (Aydoğan-Yenmez & Gökçe, 2021; Çelik, 2021; Lightbody, 2021; Solmaz, 2021; Sütçü, 2020; Yaylak, 2019) are preferred for digital assessment and evaluation. The mentioned models, methods, and tools have become indispensable parts of the education process during the epidemic period. After the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, one of the courses for distance education applications was social studies. Distance social studies teaching, which has individual examples until 2020, has become the 'new normal' at secondary, high school, and university levels.

With the pandemic becoming the 'new normal' in Turkey, distance education, which was conducted in parallel with the developments experienced in 1.5 years, has been discussed in many studies with its various dimensions. The studies evaluated the experiences, perspectives, and suggestions of teachers, who are the most critical stakeholders in the distance education process. These studies have been carried out in many fields such as physical education (Çetin et al., 2021), religious culture and ethics (Çakmak & Uzunpolat, 2021), science (Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Ünal & Bulunuz, 2020), visual arts (Hiçyılmaz, 2020), English (Tümen-Akyıldız, 2020), mathematics (Özdemir-Baki & Çelik, 2021), preschool (Gündoğdu, 2021), classroom (Saygı, 2021; Sönmez et al., 2020), and Turkish (Bayburtlu, 2020; Karakuş et al., 2021) teaching. In addition to these, many studies have also been conducted that refer to

teachers' opinions from various branches (Avcı & Akdeniz, 2021; Balaman & Hanbay-Tiryaki, 2021; Canbolat & Yıldırım, 2021; Çakın & Külekçi-Akyavuz, 2020; Ergüç-Şahan & Parlar, 2021; Karaca et al., 2021; Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021).

Among the studies on social studies teachers closely, the recent study by Uyar (2020) evaluated the distance education process with social studies teachers. As a result of the research, it has been seen that teachers have pointed out that distance education alone is not adequate, is less effective than face-to-face education, and that there is an inequality of opportunity among students. However, on the positive side, it was emphasized that distance education eliminates the time and place limitations and provides access to a broader audience. In another study, Akgül and Oran (2020) examined the views of secondary school students and parents on the distance education process and social studies teachers. As in the study of Uyar (2020), the most significant advantage of distance education has been emphasized is that it is a time and place independent process. On the other hand, most teachers complained about various problems, such as students' motivation toward distance education and low participation in classes, insufficient infrastructure, and disconnection. In the third study, Coşkun-Keskin et al. (2021) focused on the problems experienced by social studies teachers in the distance education process. As a result of the research, it has been determined that social studies teachers encounter problems in various subjects such as students, parents, school management and process, domestic life, and family function in the distance education process. Among these problems, the problems experienced by students were the most prominent. In the fourth study, Aydemir (2021), unlike the other two studies, focused on the communication of social studies teachers with parents and students in the distance education process. As a result of the research, teachers have cared about communication to manage the process well. They establish contact by telephone, messaging, and calling apps to give courses and homework and motivate. In addition, teachers pointed out that they have various communication problems with students and parents based on financial issues. In the fifth study, Korkut and Memişoğlu (2021) examined the opinions of social studies teachers about distance education. Teachers participating in the research stated the positive aspects of distance education, such as facilitating access to rich content in the digital environment, attracting attention, and keeping motivation alive. However, they also mentioned its negative aspects, such as socialization and communication problems. Finally, Tanta (2021) found that social studies teachers faced problems arising from administrators, students, parents, technology, assessment, and evaluation in the distance education process; therefore, they viewed face-to-face education more positively. In addition to the aspects addressed in the studies mentioned above, this study also discusses the perceptions of social studies teachers about Web 2.0 tools they use in the distance education process and their digital competencies. Furthermore, it aims to comprehensively evaluate the social studies courses in the distance education period. In line with these characteristics and purposes, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What are the disadvantages and limitations of distance education?
2. What methods and techniques did social studies teachers prefer during the distance education period?
3. What materials and educational technologies did social studies teachers use during the distance education period?
4. How did social studies teachers perform assessment and evaluation in distance education?
5. What are social studies teachers' perceptions of digital competence?
6. What problems did social studies teachers encounter during the distance education period?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This research was designed and conducted by interpretative phenomenology design. As is known, in phenomenological studies, data are collected from people who have experienced the phenomenon by researchers and made a holistic description that defines the essence of their experience (including

“what” and “how” they experienced) (Creswell, 2013). Since the second author of this study is a teacher who taught social studies courses during the pandemic process and had direct observations about the process, his experiences were not only described but also interpreted in meaning. In interpretative phenomenology, the researchers try to reach the background meanings by interpreting them with their prior knowledge and experiences (Ersoy, 2019).

### Working Group

The research study group consists of 14 social studies teachers serving in 9 different provinces of Turkey. Demographic information about the participants is given in Table 2 below:

**Table 2.**  
*Demographic Information of Participants*

Gender	Seniority	City
Female	1	İstanbul
Male	2	Gaziantep
Male	4	Bitlis
Male	4	Gaziantep
Female	6	Adana
Female	7	Gaziantep
Female	7	Tokat
Male	8	Adana
Male	9	Van
Male	11	Van
Male	12	Konya
Female	14	Adana
Female	18	Hatay
Female	19	Hatay

As seen in the table, 14 teachers, seven females and seven males, from 9 different cities, who had experiences with the phenomenon, participated in the study. Participants were selected by the maximum variation sampling method to reveal the similarities and differences between teachers' experiences working in different regions and conditions. In this context, the variables of gender, seniority, and the province of duty were used to understand how the social studies courses were conducted during the pandemic period and reflect the differences and similarities between the teachers' experiences. The teachers who agreed to participate in the study signed the voluntary participation consent form. To not reveal the participants' identities, the nicknames (T1, T2, T3...) were used instead of their real names. In addition, the Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences Scientific Researches Department of Necmettin Erbakan University, declaring that this research meets the ethical qualifications, approved the study on 18/12/2020 (Meeting Number: 03, Decision No: 2020/109).

### Data Collection Tool and Process

The study data were collected in semi-structured interview sessions using an interview form consisting of 8 main questions and 12 sub-questions prepared by the researchers. In the semi-structured interview, although the researcher has prepared the questions s/he wants to ask in advance, s/he may add extra questions according to the course of the interview (Kuzu, 2013). In this context, two undergraduate students were first interviewed without recording to test the suitability of the questions in the interview form. Incomprehensible sections were edited. Then, after taking the opinions of two field experts to evaluate the relevance of the questions to the subject, the interview questions were given their final form. After this stage, interviews were made with social studies teachers over the Zoom application and recorded. The recorded interviews were then transcribed.

### Data Analysis

The transcribed interview transcripts were evaluated by the content analysis method. Content analysis is used to describe, analyze, or interpret the content of the data in detail (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). In this evaluation process, all the transcripts were read, then notes were taken on the blank parts of the paper, and finally, codes were determined. Then the codes were reread with the transcripts, and the categories were created. Research questions provided the creation of categories and themes. In the last stage, direct quotations were determined as evidence of the analysis. In addition, frequencies (f) were used to show which subjects the findings and opinions were concentrated on. Moreover, to increase the reliability and validity of the research, two field experts who examined the interview questions were asked to analyze the data analysis and express their opinions. Data analysis was organized in line with the criticisms of the two experts.

### Findings

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed and presented in the following order in line with the research questions.

#### Advantages and Limitations of Distance Education

In the first part of the first research question, the opinions of social studies teachers about the advantages of distance education were examined and presented in Table 3:

**Table 3.**

*Advantages of Distance Education*

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Ability to use different materials and tools	7
Maintaining education	5
Learning technology	4
Eliminating the necessity of time and place	2
Recording and replaying the course	1
Providing convenience to disadvantaged students	1
Reaching more students at the same time	1

Teachers' opinions in Table 3 show that distance education's allowance of the use of different materials or tools has become prominent among the advantages (7). Evaluating the advantages of distance education, T8 said: *"The advantages may be that children can learn to use technology. In addition, it can contribute to the development of digital literacy skills. Furthermore, there are some conveniences such as using maps, interpreting tables and statistics with children, presenting images to children more easily, and having children watch videos."* The teacher refers to using different materials and technological tools in distance education for both students and teachers. At the same time, teachers started to use many materials in this process, which they could not use in schools with no smartboards and material deficiencies during the course.

Another significant advantage of distance education has been that both students and teachers can healthily continue their education activities despite the epidemic. T5 explained her experience: *"I have a positive view about distance education because it allows us to continue education somehow, even during the pandemic period. For instance, we did not disconnect with students and can still contact them, preventing children from being completely disconnected from [education]."* Moreover, T11 explained how distance education, the primary tool that provides communication with students during the pandemic, gave them an experience they were unfamiliar with: *"We can teach our students a certain amount of courses. We are trying to prevent them from falling behind in education. At least, distance education allowed conducting courses without the time and place limitations..."* The expression of "eliminating the time and space limit" used by the teacher was also included in the findings of this research as one of the typical features of distance education. Apart from these, the teachers mentioned

the advantages of distance education, such as recording and watching the courses, providing convenience to disadvantaged students, and reaching dozens of students simultaneously.

Teachers who evaluated the advantages of distance education also highlighted some limitations. The results obtained are given in Table 4:

**Table 4.**  
*Limitations of Distance Education*

<b>Limitations</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Insufficient student participation	8
Financial difficulties	6
Communication problems	6
Insufficient infrastructure	6
Internet problem	5
Inability to evaluate exams and assignments adequately	4
Having learning losses	4
Unsuitable home environment	3
Inability to use the textbook adequately	1

Teachers' views in Table 4 indicate that the most significant limitation of the distance education process is the insufficient class participation of students (8). T7 drew attention to this limitation and said:

*"Since I work in a rural school, most students have trouble accessing the internet. Especially since families are very crowded in number, there is only one mobile phone in a house; however, there are four students, their class hours coincide, one can sign in, one cannot. The internet package of most of them ends after two or three courses. Sometimes there is no internet in the rural school, and there may be a network problem."*

As T7 stated, financial difficulties, disadvantages of the settlement, and inability to access the internet are among the most important factors that negatively affect student participation. In addition, as other teachers have similarly expressed, the fact that distance education requires a high-speed internet connection has brought along many limitations. Due to internet and participation problems, teachers have experienced significant problems with assessment and evaluation in the distance education process. T6 described her observations about the problems experienced in the assessment and evaluation process as follows:

*"We used to easily understand whether the student comprehends the subject, what he was thinking, from his/her looks and facial expressions. However, unfortunately, we do not have such a chance in distance education. At first, exams would be held, but then they repealed them, either. When there was no exam, the student started to think; there will be no exam, then I had many students who thought, why should I join the class...."*

In addition to the limitations of distance education in assessment and evaluation, the uncertainty about the exams during the epidemic period and the complete repealing of the exams after the epidemic caused the students to lose their motivation to study. This situation significantly decreased the participation rate of students in online courses. Furthermore, the fact that the students did not attend classes sufficiently also caused significant learning losses.

**Methods and Techniques Used in Distance Education**

The second research question examined the methods and techniques used by teachers in the process, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.***Methods and Techniques Used in Distance Education*

<b>Methods and Techniques</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Direct instruction	14
Question-answer	10
Problem-solving	2
Brainstorming	2
Case study	2
Discussion	1
Animation	1

As seen in Table 5, teachers mostly use face-to-face education, preferring direct instruction (14) and question-answer (10) methods. T12 justified this situation: *“Necessarily, we have to use only direct instruction. We cannot use a different method anyway. We give a research task, or we will do research, we even have problems with the research subject....”* T7 and T3, who support T12, also think that direct instruction methods are inevitable. T7 explained this preference as follows: *“I use presentation and instruction techniques, I use question and answer technique, I can only use the methods used in traditional education.”* As can be seen, T7 also stated that he had to prefer traditional methods. T9, who did different practices apart from the teacher-centered traditional methods, explained what he did: *“We generally used student-centered methods and brainstorming a lot. We can use the question and answer technique so much to get students’ ideas. Even though our course is a verbal course, we used the problem-solving technique easily.”*

T9 used brainstorming and problem-solving methods in which the student was more active in this process. Apart from these, some participating teachers diversified their courses using case studies, discussion, and animation methods.

**Educational Technologies and Materials Used by Teachers**

The third research question reviewed educational technologies and materials used by teachers, as in the findings shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.***Educational Technologies and Materials*

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Zoom	14
EBA	14
Videos	12
PowerPoint	10
Visuals	7
Textbook	6
Web 2.0 tools	4
PDF and Word files	2
Animation	2
Visual museum	2
Newspapers	1
Z book	1
Map	1
Morpa	1

All teachers used both EBA and Zoom applications to teach in virtual classrooms and share information with students in line with the Ministry of National Education's directive. By this means, teachers had the opportunity to use more materials and educational technologies that appeal to various sensory organs of students during the distance education period since there is no smartboard in every classroom in face-to-face education. T8, one of the teachers, explained the materials and educational technologies she preferred in the process as follows: *"We use PowerPoint presentations, PDFs, Word documents, and various documents. There are also YouTube videos, the contents of EBA and Morpa. In addition, I benefit from visuals, maps, and the live museums of the Ministry of Culture [virtual museums], where we can watch and visit museums from every angle."* As can be seen, the teacher was able to use many audio and visual technologies through learning management systems and tools.

In this process, some teachers familiarized Web 2.0 tools and used them. Despite this, it was determined that most of the participants (10) had never used these tools. Therefore, the Web 2.0 tools used by teachers are given in Table 7:

**Table 7.**

*Web 2.0 Tools*

<b>Web 2.0 Tools</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Wordwall	2
Kahoot	2
Learning Apps	1
Artsteps	1
Google Drive	1
Crossword Puzzle	1
Quizlet	1
Powtoon	1
Scrumlr	1
Word Art	1
Jigsawplanet	1
Voki	1
Padlet	1
Canva	1
Google Forms	1

Four teachers who use the technologies presented in the table have preferred to use various Web 2.0 tools. For instance, T9, one of the participants, explained how he used these tools and their functions as follows:

*"For example, there is a word cloud application called Word Art, which the students have so much fun with while expressing and writing their ideas, and we used it. There is an application called Scrumlr; we log in to the same room together. For example, considering democracy, I ask the children what comes to their minds, and they all write on their digital worksheets. We organized competitions on Kahoot, and the children did voiceovers. We also used puzzle programs and created surveys using Google Forms. I got many ideas from the children. We did voiceovers with Voki, created a school board with the Padlet app, and designed posters and banners with Canva. I also used PowerPoint presentations very intensively."*

The opinions of T9, who mostly used Web 2.0 tools (8), are given below. When reviewing the tools that he used and the purposes of use, it is understood that he had the opportunity to diversify his courses quite a lot. Similarly, T11 used many Web 2.0 tools to prepare and implement games, puzzles, and activities:

*"There is an application called Learning App; games are designed on it. I used to design games and send them to the students via WhatsApp groups. There was a website like Crossword Puzzle, where I used to make puzzles and send them to my students. Moreover, there was a website called Wordwall, on*

which I used to try to design game-style activities and send them to the students. There is an application called Artsteps, a virtual travel application, I also tried to use it once or twice. Sometimes I send some documents via Google Drive.”

As seen above, T11 used five different Web 2.0 tools to support the teaching process, assessment and evaluation, and after-class reading. Both T9 and T11 addressed various intelligence areas of the students by using Web 2.0 tools following their purpose, as predicted by the multiple intelligence theory.

### Assessment and Evaluation Methods Used in Distance Education

The fourth research question examined how teachers do assessment and evaluation during the distance education period, in the findings as shown in Table 8:

**Table 8.**

*Assessment and Evaluation Methods*

Methods	Frequency (f)
Tests	8
Verbal question-answer	7
True-false questions	2
Puzzles	2
Trial tests	2
MoNE's sample questions	1
Alternative assessment tools	1
Quiz	1
Fill in the gap	1
Open-ended questions	1
Homework	1

Table 8 indicates that teachers mainly make assessments and evaluations through tests (8) in the distance education process. For example, T10 carried out an assessment and evaluation as follows: “We did it with questions, tests, and assignments we sent via EBA.” It is understood that many teachers, such as T10, performed limited assessment and evaluation activities using tests and verbal questions and answers. On the other hand, T9, one of the teachers who used alternative assessment and evaluation methods besides traditional assessment and evaluation activities, carried out the assessment and evaluation by using Web 2.0 tools:

*“I sent the puzzles to the children; I could see how much they could do the activities on the puzzle, how many of them responded, and how much interest they showed. Similarly, we did a Puzzle about the basic principles. Two weeks later, I will have a Kahoot contest on this topic. Feedback with Kahoot is very nice and very enjoyable.”*

As mentioned above, T9 tried to ensure that the assessment and evaluation process was both instructive and entertaining by using Web 2.0 tools.

### Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Competence

The fifth research question examined teachers' perceptions of digital competence. Most participants (8) consider themselves inadequate in terms of digital skills. However, they indirectly expressed this situation by saying, “I need to improve myself.” Thus, only 4 of the 14 participating teachers recognized and used Web 2.0 tools. In addition, only two teachers found themselves sufficient in digital skills. At this point, it would be helpful to include the views of 3 teachers who use various Web 2.0 tools and materials. Firstly, T9, who mostly used Web 2.0 tools, said about his digital skills: “I do not see myself as very talented, but I can say that I have improved myself a lot. I can say that the biggest benefit of distance education for me is that it allowed me to be more intertwined with technology.” As it is seen, T9 expresses his strengths and weaknesses more realistically, although he mostly uses Web 2.0 tools (8)

among teachers and spreads these tools to all stages of the courses. T11, who uses Web 2.0 tools (5) the most after T9, also made a very realistic self-evaluation:

*“Of course, we had weaknesses in many ways initially, as it was a process that we did not know about. When I think about my weaknesses, frankly, I had difficulties in reaching my students more at the beginning of the process. I was inexperienced in using applications such as Zoom and EBA. When I think about my strengths, I realize that I discovered many distance education tools or activity tools that I can use for my courses, and I saw that I could use them. Frankly, I did not encounter any major problems in terms of personal competence.”*

As it is seen, T11 explains as clearly as possible how he has identified his shortcomings, and improved himself in the process. T8, who is the third person who uses materials the most, evaluated himself as follows:

*“Web 2.0 tools existed; not using them would be a shortcoming. These may be tools that I need to learn on my own in education. As my strengths, I can say that using the contents of EBA or other portals of which we are members. Apart from that, I do my best to present the video content about the topic to the children before the class or to research it and access current information. I did not have any problems during this process.”*

As seen above, all three teachers realistically explained their strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, when reviewing some opinions of teachers who did not give enough information about benefiting from both Web 2.0 tools and materials or did not use them, it is seen that they did not state their shortcomings enough. Some examples of teachers who indirectly express their shortcomings are presented below:

*“I do not think I am bad at digital competence, I do not think I am adequate either, I have my shortcomings, but I am trying to cover them.” (T10)*

*“I am digitally competent, but I think I need to improve myself even more. Because, with the digitalization of education, I think I need to improve myself more, especially in this pandemic process.” (T13)*

*“Maybe my strong point is my mastery of technology. Because I love using technology. As my weakness, I can say that most of the internet-based applications today, especially the best ones, have English infrastructure. Unfortunately, my English level may not be enough...” (T2)*

Participant teachers are seen to prefer more cautious statements when expressing their shortcomings. On the other hand, some teachers have directly stated their inadequacies:

*“Let me tell you this, I was quite inadequate, especially using the phone, computer, EBA, Zoom or other applications. At least I improved myself a little more with distance education.” (T1)*

*“During the distance education process, we saw that the teacher, who uses the digital platform efficiently, can produce more content and shows that he can be more productive to students. I can also say that I feel a little insufficient in this regard, in other words, I think that I need to improve myself...” (T7)*

Both teachers are diligent in improving themselves but are also aware of their weaknesses. Apart from these, T12, who considers himself sufficient, explained his reasoning as follows:

*“We are ready for this process with the training we received from the school before. Therefore, we are aware of it, and we can adapt to the situation. We were lucky in our school because at least the necessary information and training were given to us on this subject. We did not have any problems since we had already trained in our universities before coming here.”*

When asked the question “Which Web 2.0 tools do you use?” to the teacher who found himself sufficient, he answered, “I did not use Web tools other than EBA and Zoom,” which is quite remarkable. In addition to these, an answer that shadows teachers’ perceptions of competence are noteworthy: “I did not have much trouble.” According to most teachers, not having too many problems is a measure of their proficiency. The core of the question is which tools they use and how they use them. Therefore, when Web 2.0 tools or other tools are not used, and only EBA and Zoom are preferred, it will be usual not to encounter any significant problems. Apart from these findings, the teachers stated that to improve their digital competencies, they watched Youtube videos, got help from their colleagues, and participated in in-service training programs of the Ministry of National Education.

### Problems Encountered in the Distance Education Process

The last research question examined the problems encountered by teachers during the distance education period, as given in Table 9.

**Table 9.**

*Main Problems Encountered in the Distance Education Process (f)*

<b>Technological-Systemic</b>	<b>Communication-Coordination</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Other</b>
Internet connection (12)	Inability to communicate well with students and families (14)	Internet access (11)	Financial difficulties (6)	Lack of class hours and curriculum intensity (7)
Live class programs (10)		Lack of technological tools (10)	Ignoring distance education (6)	Violation of privacy (2)
		Motivation (4)	Interfering with the course (2)	Homework control and assessment difficulty (2)
			Avoidance of responsibility (2)	Lack of informing (1)

As seen in Table 9, the problems faced by teachers are grouped under five categories: technological-systemic, communication-coordination, students, family, and other problems. The most emphasized category among these problems was technological-systemic problems. The main problems are the internet connection and live class applications (such as Zoom and EBA). Some examples of teachers' experiences related to the problems caused by EBA, one of the applications used by teachers, are given below:

*“Due to the intensity experienced in EBA, we experienced some technical problems, which were a big problem. Because EBA had a busy schedule, we often had much trouble signing in and out of the classes.” (T4)*

*“EBA is the most clicked site in the world right now, in this respect, there were many times that we could not sign in EBA and start the courses due to the intensity of the systems at first.” (T13)*

*“There were times when we could not attend the class due to the busy schedule, and the system logged me out of the class, which I think is one of the problems.” (T6)*

In addition to EBA, there were some problems experienced with the Zoom program, which is widely used in the world during the pandemic process, such as its application language being English, the

session duration being limited to 40 minutes, and the students not being able to attend the classes because they entered their ID and passwords incorrectly. T7 explained the problems he had with the Zoom program: *“We were unfamiliar with using Zoom initially because it was something I used for the first time; frankly, I had a hard time. I had a technical problem because most information was in English. Even the students had difficulties. They asked me where is the volume. We cannot turn on the volume. How do we turn on the video?”* Various problems regarding both the EBA and Zoom programs used by teachers in live classes were mostly experienced at first, and many of them were eliminated in the process.

In the second main category, the communication-coordination process, teachers stated that they could not communicate well with both students and families due to the problems arising from internet connections and families. T7 summarized the main problem: *“Parents need to take responsibility here; unfortunately, we cannot communicate well with students because parents do not take responsibility.”*

In the third main category, which is the problems related to students, internet problems (11) and lack of equipment (10) came forward. On this subject, T8 explained the problems faced by the students as follows: *“Children’s internet packages expire very quickly. Some students do not have computers or tablets at home; we had such problems.”* T1 also mentioned similar problems: *“At first, students did not have any pieces of equipment, and internet connection was a problem. I had many students who lacked tablets, computers, or smartphones.”* As can be understood from the quotations, students have experienced difficulties attending classes, mainly due to financial problems in the distance education process.

Financial difficulties of families (6) and their ignorance of distance education (5) came to the fore in the fourth main category, family-related problems. T14 explained the problem she faced: *“Since I work in a rural school, 90% of the students do not have internet access. Many people do not have internet access on their phones and do not have smartphones, so children cannot connect in any way. Families find internet expensive because it is not within the bounds of their possibilities.”* Mentioning another significant problem besides financial difficulties, T13 said: *“I think that families should break their perspectives and prejudices towards this distance education because even in the live classes. Moreover, I also noticed that the parents do not take [distance education] very seriously because I saw their reactions during the class hours.”*

The last category includes other problems such as lack of class hours and curriculum intensity (7), violation of private life (2), homework control and evaluation difficulties; (2), and lack of informing. Especially the limited class hours and the late starting of courses (sometimes not being able to start them) due to internet connection problems resulted in the teachers not being able to complete the subjects in their current curriculum. Apart from this, one of the participants, T12, summarized the result of not having face-to-face education classes during the daytime: *“The biggest problem of teachers is that we are in a position to be called at every hour of the night... We have no private life...”* This problem emerged in the distance education process due to the students and parents trying to communicate with the teachers every hour of the day other than during class hours. Furthermore, teachers who were unprepared for the distance education period complained that both the homework given and the students could not be appropriately assessed.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This research evaluated how social studies classes were conducted during the pandemic period, based on the experiences of teachers working in various provinces of Turkey. The scope of the first research question discussed the advantages and limitations of distance education. First of all, the results of these advantages indicate that it allows using of different materials and tools, maintaining education, and learning technology, and eliminating the necessity of time and place. These results are similar to the findings of studies conducted by Akgül and Oran (2020), Korkut and Memişoğlu (2021), Seyhan (2021),

and Uyar (2020). Participants in the related studies emphasized distance education functions, such as sharing materials, maintaining education appropriately, and eliminating the necessity of time and place.

Considering the limitations of distance education results, issues such as insufficient student participation, financial difficulties, communication problems, and insufficient infrastructure have become prominent. These limitations of distance education have been mentioned in various studies (Akgül & Oran, 2020; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Bayburtlu, 2020; Coşkun-Keskin et al., 2020; Kavuk & Demirtaş, 2021; Korkut & Memişoğlu, 2021; Tanta, 2021; Uyar, 2020). These studies conducted with teachers from various branches have evaluated the inadequacy of student participation and access to the internet/computer as the two most important limitations of distance education. These limitations are not directly associated with distance education but with the economic conditions of families. Whenever the necessary conditions allow, it will be healthier to evaluate the limited aspects of distance education. However, internet and technological tool problems encountered during the emergency remote teaching period are limitations to distance education.

Within the second research question, it was discussed which methods and techniques social studies teachers prefer in distance education. As a result, participant teachers preferred direct instruction and question-answer methods (Dere & Dinç, 2017), which are indispensable elements in traditional education during the distance education period. In addition, other study results (Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Demirtaş & Kavuk, 2021; Uyar, 2020) also indicate that these two methods are indispensable. However, apart from these two methods, some teachers prefer methods, techniques, and activities such as problem-solving, brainstorming, case studies, discussion, and animation.

In the third research question, was examined teachers' educational technologies and materials in the distance education process. All teachers conducted their classes on the EBA and Zoom applications, which the Ministry of National Education requires. Unlike Zoom, EBA has also been used for material sharing, messaging, communicating, and giving homework. Additionally, teachers used many materials, especially videos, visuals, PowerPoints, and textbooks. However, it was determined that only four teachers used Web 2.0 tools, which indicates a significant lack of using Web 2.0 tools. When reviewing other studies in the literature, it is seen that teachers prefer materials such as videos, maps, slides, and textbooks during the distance education period (Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Tanta, 2021; Uyar, 2020). The results show that materials and educational technologies (especially Web 2.0 tools) should be used more in distance education.

Within the fourth research question, it was determined that social studies teachers mostly use tests and question-answer methods for assessment and evaluation. determined that social studies teachers mostly use tests and question-answer methods for assessment and evaluation. Apart from these, although teachers use true-false questions, puzzles, fill-in-the-gap, and open-ended questions, it is seen that the assessment and evaluation methods are not sufficiently diversified. However, it is noteworthy that only one teacher diversified the assessment process using the Kahoot app.

The fifth research question examined social studies teachers' perceptions of digital competencies. Accordingly, almost all teachers (12) do not consider themselves entirely competent. However, they indirectly expressed this situation by saying, "I need to improve myself." In addition, the fact that the two teachers who find themselves competent are the ones who use Web 2.0 tools the most and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses more realistically can be considered an essential indicator in terms of digital competence.

In the last research question was examined the problems encountered by teachers in the distance education process under five headings: technological-systemic, communication-coordination, student, family, and other problems. In the technological-systemic aspect, problems with internet connection and live class programs became prominent; In the communication-coordination aspect, inability to

communicate well with students and families; And in the student aspect, insufficient class attendance due to the failure to access the internet and technological tools were determined. Moreover, in the family aspect, problems such as financial difficulties, ignoring distance education, and avoiding responsibility were emphasized. Finally, the lack of class hours, the curriculum intensity, and the inadequacies in assessment and evaluation were underlined, among other problems. The studies conducted in various branches also highlighted all these results (Akgül & Oran, 2020; Aydemir, 2021; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Bayburtlu, 2020; Coşkun-Keskin et al., 2021; Demirtaş & Kavuk, 2020; Tanta, 2021; Uyar, 2020). In these studies, problems have come to the fore, such as disconnections from the live class programs (EBA and Zoom), inability to access the internet and technological tools, inability to communicate with families and students, financial difficulties, negligence of families, and failure to use many methods and techniques used in face-to-face education. As a result, it is seen that all problems are closely related to the internet connection, access to technological tools, and how families play a role in their children's education. This situation shows that teachers working in different branches experience similar problems during the distance education period. Therefore, innovative applications that can be developed will benefit all branches.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of the research, some suggestions can be made based on the research results to make distance social studies education more efficient:

- For distance education to be efficient and effective for all stakeholders (teacher, family, and student), the problems of accessing the internet and technological tools should be solved.
- Nearly all teachers participating in the research do not find themselves adequate at digital skills and want to receive training. Based on this need, in-service training should be given to increase teachers' digital literacy and media literacy. This training can be given to all teachers in online environments.
- One of the most critical education stakeholders, families need to be informed about the distance education process and be more involved in the process. This involvement process should be planned and carried out directly by school administrators.
- Lastly, the distance education experiences gained during the pandemic period should be utilized in face-to-face education, and the hybrid (mixed) applications should be expanded.

### **Author Contribution Rates**

The authors contributed equally to the study.

### **Ethical Declaration**

All rules included in the "Directive for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions" have been adhered to, and none of the "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" included in the second section of the Directive have been implemented.

### **Conflict Statement**

The author declares no competing interests.

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