



## EVALUATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PRACTICE IN 2020 COVID 19 PANDEMIC PROCESS

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### Abstract

As a global pandemic problem, Covid-19 virus has caused huge losses globally and brought about serious change to the human life, especially in the field of education. In order to reduce losses worldwide, several measures have been taken in the fields of health, economy and politics, especially education, in addition to the importance of medicine. The effects of Covid 19, which many experts consider as a global threat, still continue. It is obvious that it will cause a significant change in the following processes. In this time period, it is aimed to stop face-to-face education in the classroom in universities and other educational institutions, thereby maintaining the social distance as much as possible. In this context, education of more than 800 million students was interrupted. This research covers the evaluation of distance education application of universities in TRNC according to student opinions. Qualitative research method was used in the study and the data obtained were explained by the descriptive analysis method.

*Keywords:* Education, distance education, Covid 19, higher education, TRNC.

### 1. Introduction

The transition from the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the information society, and the use of education and technologies in a variety of ways, has been anticipated by experts. Covid 19, which has become a global epidemic since 2020, has been a serious threat in human history. While the Covid 19 epidemic threatened the world at the point of health, it also affected the economies of the country in different directions and brought alternative applications with it (Crawford at al., 2020). For example, almost all international flights have stopped and quarantines have been implemented worldwide. Every country, which has taken security precautions like the foregoing, has ensured the sustainability of the system by making some alternative decisions to maintain its existing management systems.

The proliferation of MOOC and similar systems known as distance education systems continues to be used as a practical training method from past to present. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that distance education applications started for the first time under the name of Steno Lessons in the United States in 1728. Turkey introduced the application under the name Open University under the auspices of Anatolia University in the '80s (Kilinc, 2017).

Distance education systems, which started to operate with the internet towards the end of the 1990s, later changed towards mobile devices. The implementation of distance education systems is expressed as a practical method for both educational institutions and school administrations (Gunawan, Suranti & Fathoroni, 2020). This system, which is easy to access, has become a fast and interesting media compatible with technology networks. Today, the classical education system is rapidly being replaced by distance education system. Classical

classroom education applications, which have lost their currency with the development of technology, have now become old fashioned. Especially if we consider the concept of lifelong learning, distance education systems will make considerable contributions. Distance education systems, exempt from time and space limits, eliminate the limitations of material and physical conditions.

In this study, it is aimed to evaluate the distance education application applied in two different universities that provide higher education in TRNC after the Covid-19 outbreak, according to student opinions.

### **1.1. Purpose of the Study**

This research aimed to evaluate the effects of the educational environments in the Covid 19 pandemic process in 2020, and accordingly, the application of distance education at the higher education level according to the views of students. Answers for following questions were sought for this purpose:

1. What are the positive aspects of distance education application?
2. What are the negative aspects of distance education application?
3. Would you prefer distance education or classroom education in your future education life? Why?

### **1.2. Importance of Study**

It is possible for students to be academically successful by determining the factors affecting their success. In this sense, the methods chosen in the application of a course play an important role among the factors affecting success. In the research, the effect of distance education method on students, the problems they experienced and how their motivation about the course affected their academic success was found important. This research aims to determine the effect of distance education application on student success, and positive and negative aspects of implementation. It is believed that the results obtained in this context will be decisive in the education and training methods in the future.

## **2. Method**

In this section, information about the model of the research, the universe and sampling, data collection tools, data analysis and interpretation are included.

### **2.1. Research Model**

In this research, which was conducted using qualitative data collection techniques, semi-structured interview technique was used.

### **2.3. Study Group**

Purposeful sampling method was used to determine the study group of the study. Accordingly, a total of 30 students studying at different levels of two different universities in the TRNC constituted the study group of the research.

### **2.4. Data Collection Tool**

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was developed by the researchers in order to evaluate the distance education practice according to the opinions of the students. In order to prepare the interview form for distance education applications, the literature was reviewed firstly and the current situation was tried to be determined.

## 2.5. Implementation

The application of the study was carried out on 30 students who took courses in distance education (Moodle) at two different universities in the spring term of 2020 academic year. Accordingly, in the implementation of interview questions, interviews were made with the students through the moodle system. Each student answered the questions in the interview form with the voice response method and their opinions were recorded.

## 2.6. Analysis of Data

Qualitative data analysis was performed on the data obtained at the end of the application. In the interviews conducted with the students through the Moodle system, sound recordings were listened and the interview forums were analyzed in depth. The answers to each of the three questions asked in the interview form were divided into pieces according to the students. Themes were created on the separated answers. These themes were categorized and coded. Opinions of 30 students were compared and evaluated on the themes prepared.

## 3. Findings

In this section, the findings obtained from the opinions of students at higher education level regarding distance education application in Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 are given. Accordingly, the findings obtained from student views are organized and presented according to the sub-objectives of the research.

### 3.1 Students' Views on the Positive Aspects of Distance Education Practice

In the research, besides the opinions of students about the positive aspects of the Moodle system within the scope of distance education application, it was aimed to determine the effect of the application on their academic success. While determining the opinions of the students on the subject, the functionality of the application was tried to be identified. The qualitative data obtained from the research was organized by analyzing, and themed and listed in Table 1, ranging from high to low frequency.

**Table 1.** Students' Views on the Positive Aspects of Moodle System Application

No	Code	f
1	Economic	9
2	Practical	7
3	Allowing repetition	5
4	Timing	4
5	Visual attractiveness	2
6	Homework system	2
8	Positive motivation	1
Total		30

According to the data presented in Table 1, student views are supported by direct quotations and interpreted below.

Almost all of the students participating in the research stated that distance education is economical. Students stated that they found distance education economical in terms of factors such as transportation to school, stationery expenses and personal needs. Secondly, the students stated that the distance education system is practical. They said that there were no problems such as getting up early in the morning, traffic, being late to class, carrying

textbooks, taking notes, and they also argued that it was much easier to connect to the course from their homes instead. Some of the students stated that the opportunity to listen to the lesson repeatedly is very important which had a positive effect on their academic success. They stated that the subject explained could be forgotten after the class ended in the classroom environment, but they underlined the importance of listening to the subject whenever they wish through the Moodle system. Another group of students, who said that the timing issue was also important, mentioned the possibilities of listening to the lesson at any time if they miss the lesson from their normal time. On the other hand, a group of students stated that the richness of the visuality with the opportunity created by the technology tools makes the distance education attractive. Another group of students stated that it is easier and more permanent to upload the given assignment to the system and that they are not exposed to situations such as loss or tear. Some students stated that the use of technology positively affects the course topics. They said that it was especially exciting for them to be able to attend the class outside the home environment, as well as to connect to the class over the phone.

*“I think distance education is very economical because I don't spend money on school. For example, I go to school every day from “Güzelyurt” area, I used to give a lot of gas money, now I don't spend money like this”.* (S.23)

*“In the past, when I was listening to the class in the classroom, I could miss some topics, but now the lesson is being recorded and I can enter it and listen to it again and again whenever I want”.* (S.15)

*“I used to print my homework on paper before the pandemic, sometimes it would wear out or get lost, but now I write on the computer and upload it to the system immediately. Less possibility to get lost or make mistakes than before”.* (S.7)

*“I love to use computers and electronics, now all our lessons have been through the computer and I think it's fun to be this way, and it motivates me more than classroom environment”.* (S.29)

**Table 2.** Students' Views on the Negative Aspects of Moodle System Application

No	Code	f
1	Internet Connection	10
2	Virtual communication	6
3	Socializing	4
4	Negative motivation	3
5	Application	3
6	Difficulty of control	1
7	Learning difficulty	1
8	Feedback	1
9	Timing	1
Total		30

According to the data presented in Table 2, student views are supported by direct quotations and interpreted below.

The vast majority of students participating in the study stated that they had internet connection problem. All of the students complained that they experienced connection problems from time to time, that they could not catch the lesson on time and failed to participate in the activities within the lesson. Emphasizing that another important issue is not being able to be face-to-face with the teacher, the students stated that the absence of situations such as art, communication, facial mimics or expressions affects them negatively. The students stated that it is much more impressive to see the presence and hear the voice of the teacher in the classroom. A group of students, on the other hand, said that there was no socialization they had caught in the school environment, and attending classes in the home environment made them lonely over time. It was also stated that occasional connection problems and inability to see the teacher live affect the students negatively who experience a motivation disorder. Some students criticized the delivery of the classes over the Moodle system and not in the workshop setting. The students underlined that it is ideal to perform one-to-one practical lessons by observing, hearing and feeling, and that this opportunity is extremely weak through the distance education system. In the answers to be given about the course over the internet, students who experienced difficulty in control and learning difficulties stated that these two conditions follow each other and they have difficulties especially in crowded courses. Some students said that the question-answer method was difficult and that the teacher was not able to give feedback until it was too late due to problems such as connection or voice. Two students, on the other hand, stated that the possibility of doing different things in the timing of class participation disappeared and they entered an environment of obligations.

*“The biggest problem I have while connecting to the course is the internet disconnection or similar issues. From time to time, I had problems in hearing the voice of the teacher or the connection was lost”. (S.19)*

*“I think distance learning is boring because I couldn't see my friends at all. We used to sit in the cafeteria and chat or talk after school. Now I think looking at the screen alone at home is very bad”. (S.9)*

*“The worst part of distance education is not being able to communicate with the instructor as in the classroom. Because the teacher constantly lectures on the record and I cannot ask the question I want due to the internet connection or crowded environment and get answers ”(S.2)*

*“We used to do drawing lessons in the workshop, now it is very difficult to do drawing lessons from a distance. Drawing lessons should be in the studio workshop, when the teacher draws we have to see him and we have to draw accordingly”. (S.25)*

**Table 3.** Students' Opinions Regarding Their Choices Between Moodle System and Classroom Environment

No	Code	f
1	Face-to-face education	13
2	Distance education	7

3	Both	5
4	Mostly face-to-face	3
5	Mostly distance	2
Total		30

According to the data presented in Table 3, student opinions are supported by direct quotations and interpreted below.

In this part of the study, all participants stated that they preferred face-to-face education to distance education. Based on the negative aspects of distance education, students said that face-to-face education was more efficient. They highlighted that the face-to-face conversation and the interactive classroom environment facilitate learning, especially with the responsible lecturer. Some students said that they preferred distance education to the classroom environment and the lesson became more attractive with the use of technology. Accordingly, students also added that their practical lessons, visual diversity and economic status facilitate education. On the other hand, a group of students stated that some of their courses could be distant in the four-year education period, and that they preferred the practice and similar courses to be delivered in the classroom environment. When the opinions of a small group of students were examined, it was observed that they wanted to blend the classroom environment with distance education. On the contrary, another group of students said that they wanted the classroom environment to be heavily implemented and distance education should be a limited alternative in the education system.

*“I would definitely prefer face-to-face education, because I would understand the lesson better in the classroom environment, and seeing the instructor and being in contact with him would motivate me better for learning”.* (S.3)

*“I prefer the distance education application to the classroom environment. Because this application is more comfortable, I can connect to the lesson from home or anywhere I want. I think it's very nice”.* (S.17)

*“I think both applications should continue. For example, workshop lessons can still be in the classroom, and some of the other theoretical lessons can be taught through distance learning”.* (S.30).

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

In the research, in the Covid 19 pandemic process, which was experienced in all over the world in 2020, the distance education (Moodle) application implemented by educational institutions as an alternative in order to avoid loss of learning was evaluated. In addition to the pandemic process experienced in the world, with the development of technology, adaptation has been possible to distance lesson applications, which have become widespread in education in this process. This system, which is evaluated according to the opinions of the students within the scope of the research, has been determined to be both advantageous and disadvantageous in close proportions (Kurtuncu & Kurt, 2020).

This study, which examines the positive and negative aspects of distance education applications and how it should be in future education experiences, handles a current topic in the field of study. When considering the 21<sup>st</sup> century living conditions, it is obvious that education on the internet is a more advantageous system compared to the traditional education approach.

When the results of distance education application are examined in the research, it can be said that students are not yet clear about the distinction between distance education and traditional approach. Some students found this application, which they experienced for the first time, economical, less costly, providing opportunity to repeat courses, practical, current, and interesting. The fact that the problems experienced in situations such as transportation to school, being late for class and taking notes while listening to the lesson were not experienced in the internet environment motivated them positively. Considering routine living conditions in daily life, distance education is considered to be more advantageous in terms of traffic, transportation, cost of life and the like (Umek, et al., 2015). A different view is stated that distance education disconnects students from their social environment and reflects not only academically but also as a negative effect on personality development (Karael & Klema, 2006).

When the opinions about the negative aspects of the application of distance education were examined in the research, it was determined that this focused on the problem of internet connection. Access becomes difficult due to internet infrastructure problems in the country. In this case, it can be said that providing internet packages for students by school administrations will facilitate the situation (Carsewell et al., 2000). In another finding, it has been determined that students who are disconnected from their social environments suffer from serious motivation disorders. Students who broke off in the school environment stated that they experienced feelings of loneliness and burnout (Miltiadou & Savenye, 2003). Interaction in the social environment, which is considered as a motivation and driving force in education, gives serious impetus to academic success. In addition, it was determined that there were serious problems in receiving instant feedback, control, asking for the floor, and performing applied workshop lessons, and it has been found out that it complicates student motivation and learning. Some of the students remained reluctant to the subject who stated that they think that the future education model should be equally distant and traditional. This suggests that they are not ready for this new system that has just been implemented and that they have difficulty in adaptation. However, considering today's living conditions, the integration of technology into our lives is inevitable. As a result, it is obvious that education systems will develop rapidly in this direction and that the adaptation of new generation youth will become an obligation.

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