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Türkiye Report on Digital Literacy and in Distance School Education

Hakan ÖZCAN, Serkan AYDOĞAN- Efeler İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü-AYDIN

Dr. Murat YILMAZ, Dr Esin ÖZER, Akan ÇAĞLI, Selda MANAV-ADU-AYDIN

Dr. Kemal ÇELİK, Dr. Harun BAYTEKİN, Şevval GENCER-COMU-
ÇANAKKALE

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Introduction

In today's world, where the world discusses the new and the traditional, access to information resources has created different environments where literacy skills are considered as a separate skill. Being able to adapt to the change and transformation experienced through digital literacy has necessitated many countries to carry out different studies on this issue and to inform their citizens in this direction. (Karabacak and Sezgin, 2019).

Digital literacy is perceived in society only as the use of online tools. While this information is correct, it is somewhat incomplete. Digital literacy includes accessing, organizing, restructuring, evaluating and presenting information effectively and critically in the digital environment. (Martin and Grudziecki, 2006; Onursoy, 2018).

In today's internet usage, digital information literacy is a common problem of all countries. The digital world is like a door to every country. Countries are struggling to use digital technology well in every field. The Internet and digital technology have entered the field of education in recent years and have become an integral part of the process. With the Covid-19 pandemic process, the emphasis on the use of this technology, especially in the field of education in schools, has also increased the European Union Project Support in this field.

The results of the “Digital 2020” report prepared in cooperation with “We are Social” and “Hootsuite”, two global brands in the social media field, numerically express the current view of Turkey in the digital field. According to the report, the population of Turkey spends an average of 7 hours and 29 minutes on the Internet per day. Again, according to the data of the same report, the number of internet usage increased by 2.4 million, the number of mobile phone users increased by 2.6 million and the number of people using social media actively increased by 2.2 million in the last year in Turkey. (Global Digital Overview, 2020; Sezgin and Karabacak 2020).

In the digital age we live in, it is understood from exam results, homework, seminars and theses that students cannot use the internet properly despite having computers or smart mobile phones with internet connection. It is known that students who continue to university continue to experience the same problems due to these skills that cannot be gained in secondary education.

Students think that the information on every page that comes to Google or another search engine in response to a question they wrote to learn is correct. Therefore, millions of correct, incorrect, incomplete, erroneous and harmful information are used without thinking. Teaching students

that all kinds of information resources, all digital publications and all digital libraries are available on their mobile phones and showing them how to access these resources is the best and shortest way to teach learning.

Distance education applications in primary, secondary and high school education during the pandemic period in Turkey

This decision of Turkey, which forces all student youth at the university, starting from the pre-school period to stay at home and affecting their education, falls within the scope of "education in emergencies". Considering the impact of the pandemic process on education, according to UNESCO data, while schools were closed in 161 countries around the world, 1.86 billion students were affected by this situation. Again, according to UNESCO data, 24,901,925 students in Turkey were affected by this situation (UNESCO, 2020). In our country, there are 7.5 million students affiliated to YÖK (YÖK Information System, 2020a) and over 18 million students affiliated to the Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2019). When evaluated in general, it is seen that over 25 million students in Turkey are directly affected by this situation. After the preparation made in the education community in the compulsory interim period that started on March 12, 2020, public schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education started to carry out teaching activities by switching to distance education via television, through EBA TV (Education Informatics Network) established by the Ministry on March 23 and private schools continued their education with their own systems. (YÖK Uzaktan Öğretim Anketi, 2020; Zan and Zan, 2020).

One day after March 11, 2020, when the first Covid-19 case was seen in Turkey, face-to-face education was suspended in all educational institutions with the decision taken by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). According to the decision taken, from March 16 to March 30, education was suspended for two weeks and it was recommended that students spend the first week of this break at home. As of Monday, March 23, 2020, distance education activities that students can attend from their homes have started. In the first week of distance education, broadcasts started on TRT EBA TV. In the next process, the educational contents were made available to the students via the EBA platform. The fact that the services offered to the students in the first period were not interactive negatively affected the participation of the students in the process and their motivation for distance education. Despite this situation, the Ministry of National Education implemented the live lesson application and started the live lesson application for the students who are preparing for the central exams. In the following process, live lessons were opened for all levels and teachers were given the opportunity to conduct live

lessons. Firstly, the distance education process, which was planned for two weeks from March 23, 2020, continued until June 19 due to the fact that the epidemic could not be brought under control and the number of cases increased. Thus, the second half of the 2019-2020 academic year was completed with distance education. It has been announced that from March 23, 2020, when the distance education process started, to April 30, 2021, 21.8 billion accesses were made to the EBA platform over the internet, and 15,993 hours of broadcasting were made on TRT EBA TV. It was stated that the EBA mobile application was downloaded 18 million 500 thousand times and all EBA content reached 14 million 57 thousand students and 1 million 177 thousand teachers. On the other hand, 1 million 911 thousand students and 265 thousand 497 teachers have had access to the EBA Academic Support platform. In the live lesson application, which makes the distance education process interactive, it was shared with the public that 246 million 640 thousand hours of live lessons were provided. Although these data show that there is a great demand for EBA, which is at the center of distance education, detailed data on regular access, participation and attendance to EBA are needed. (Emin and Altunel, 2021).

Distance education processes, which are applied with the break given to face-to-face education in the corona virus epidemic, are mostly carried out through technology-supported applications. For this reason, the state of having technological devices to follow the course processes of the students stands out as a parameter that directly affects the efficiency of the education and training processes during the pandemic period. Therefore, the difference between students who have digital devices in the distance education process and those who do not, in terms of access to education and benefiting from education opportunities, also increases inequality in education. Studies in the literature point out that this inequality will increase against students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. (Emin and Altunel, 2021). As a matter of fact, according to the 2018 data of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the rate of students in OECD countries to have a computer to follow their school work is 89 percent. In terms of socioeconomic status, this rate is 78 percent for students in the lowest quartile. In Turkey, while the rate of students having a computer is 67 percent, this rate is about 36 percent for students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile. This digital-based increasing inequality is also called “digital cliff” or “digital distinction”. In addition to having digital devices, the services offered by schools, internet access opportunities, digital literacy levels of teachers, students and parents are also important indicators of the digital cliff. (OECD, 2019; Emin and Altunel, 2021).

Although it is important to access and use technology in the distance education process, it is not enough on its own. In this period, when education and training processes are carried out at

home, the suitability of home environments to follow lessons and to study is one of the important parameters. According to PISA data, 89 percent of students in OECD countries state that they have a quiet and suitable environment to follow their lessons, while this rate is around 85 percent for students in the lowest quartile in terms of socioeconomic status. In Turkey, 87 percent of students stated that they have a quiet place to study at home. For students from the lowest quarter of the socioeconomic distribution, this rate is 77 percent. In other words, the status of students' access to education and having quality education environments vary according to their socioeconomic status. (OECD, 2019).

Combination Technologies in Education course in primary, secondary and high school education

The information technology course has changed many times in the last fifteen years. However, this change process is related to the course hours rather than the content of the course. The course content is not set to a standard and it is prepared as “a little bit of everything”. The main reason for this practice is due to the insufficient number of informatics course hours. After primary and secondary schools were combined in 1997 with the application of primary schools, this course was taught in all classes from 1st grade to 8th grade for a while. In this period, the students who started to take the informatics course in the first grade both gained the basics and started to get more up-to-date information in each class they passed. When the primary and secondary school sections were separated again in 2013, it was decided to teach informatics only in secondary schools. Over time, the lessons in secondary school were reduced for various reasons. With the latest decision of the board of education and training the information technologies course is only available for the 5th and 6th grade schools of secondary schools for two hours per week. (https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2022_01/19093950_ilkogretim-hdc-karar-ve-eki-2022-2023.pdf). There are no informatics lessons even in the 5th grades in schools that provide education in English. The fact that the information technologies course is handled in two hours and only in a very limited time of the education life leads the students to insufficient knowledge in the field of informatics.

In addition, in the 2000s, an informatics class was established in almost all schools and its establishment was supported. However, the established classes were not updated over time. Most of the informatics classes have become idle, and the active ones have not been given an up-to-date informatics education because they are far from current technologies. However, the fastest changing and developing field today is the field of information technologies. When primary and secondary schools were separated in 2013, there was a shortage of physical space

in many schools. Information technology classes, whose doors were kept locked, were closed during this period. This practice has also completely alienated students and teachers who expect "informatics classes will be updated" from informatics lessons. Informatics courses, in which the main gains are reached through practice, are taught theoretically in the majority of schools today. Thus, students with low social and economic levels, who have not had a computer in their life, do not have the chance to meet with computers. In the advancing ages, a generation emerges that only turns to social media in information tools such as mobile phones and tablets. The situation is even worse when students who have not taken an informatics course for two years move on to high school. (https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2022_01/19094445_OrtaoYretim-hdc-2022-2023.pdf) .

Again, with the latest decision of the TURKEY Board of Education, the computer science course, which is a common course in 9th grades, has been included in the elective course area. Students who do not have sufficient IT infrastructure until high school see the content of the informatics course as a chore. These students think that information technologies consist only of social media applications and playing games. Scientific content seems unnecessary to them. In addition, very few students who are interested in information technologies see the curriculum content as too simple and cannot demand a more comprehensive content because they are a minority. In high schools, students who work mainly on exams cannot choose elective informatics courses.

The link for more detailed information about the composition technologies course in the primary education curriculum can be obtained from the following web address:

<http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/ProgramDetay.aspx?PID=374> .In addition, the link for the curriculum for high schools is below: <http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/ProgramDetay.aspx?PID=335>

Distance Education Applications in Universities during the Pandemic Period in Turkey

During the pandemic period in Turkey, more than 99% of both state and foundation universities have applied the theoretical courses digitally through distance education. Many universities have made the decision to teach many courses in distant education that can be applied and digitally taught remotely. (YÖK Distant Education Survey, 2020). Universities in Turkey have made significant efforts to transition to distance education, and many universities have completed these studies in a short time. Out of 189 universities, 121 (64%) were on 23 March

2020 (one week after YÖK suspended education at universities), 41 (21.6%) were on 30 March 2020, 25 (13%) ,2 of them) started distance education applications on April 6, 2020 (YÖK haberler 2020). These results show that universities in Turkey have completed their transition to distance education in a very short time.

It was observed that during the compulsory distance education process, which started with the Covid-19 epidemic, which the whole world started to experience in 2020, students were insufficient in reaching the right information sources and compiling and presenting information over the internet. In other words, it has become clearer with distance education that our students are insufficient in digital information literacy.

In Turkey, especially after the pandemic, research on digital literacy has accelerated. In particular, studies are carried out to determine the digital literacy of students and adult employees of educational institutions. In a study, it was reported that students with higher digital literacy are more ready for online learning (Yurtseven, Saraç and Akgun, 2021).

It is important for Türkiye educational institutions to adapt quickly to digital transformation and complete their technical infrastructure deficiencies in order to be successful in the future and to survive in the new world order formed after the pandemic. for digitalization in education, it is important to reduce costs, outsourcing, digital collaboration and partnerships, digital information resources and more investment in digital libraries. parallel with these, digital literacy courses and courses for digital information literacy education should be given in order for students to effectively use their digital resources from primary school to university and to benefit more students and staff from digital information resources. digital literacy course especially in primary school and high school should be included in the compulsory course. **In the curricula of digital literacy courses, more emphasis should be placed on accessing digital information sources, testing the accuracy of these sources, compiling, interpreting and presenting information in an ethical framework, rather than the technical uses of technological digital devices and device features.**

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