

**Review Article**

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**INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION INTO DISTANCE  
EDUCATION: A HYBRID MODEL PROPOSAL****SOSYAL HİZMET EĞİTİMİNİN UZAKTAN EĞİTİME ENTEGRASYONU:  
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**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to understand the distance education method in the context of its historical background and today's applications, and to determine the limitations of distance education in social work education and to develop a new approach that is optimally applicable and sustainable. In this direction, a hybrid model for social work education has been developed within the scope of the paper. The standards in the report titled Technology in Social Work Practice were used in the development of the mentioned model. The authors also benefited from the results of a survey conducted by academics and students of social work programs, with the participation of 50 faculty members and 767 students, by Turkish Association of Schools of Social Work. As a result, the hybrid model proposed at the end of the paper displays that the distance education method in social work education can be applied in formal education in a way that can be carried out within certain standards and processes. However, it was understood that the competencies related to student and academician interaction should be reviewed in order to carry out a praxis-oriented social work education built on distance education methodology at an optimal level in the future.

**Keywords:** Distance education, formal education, hybrid model, social work education

**ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, uzaktan eğitim yöntemini tarihsel arka planı ile günümüz uygulamaları bağlamında anlamak, sosyal hizmet eğitiminde uzaktan eğitimin sınırlılıklarını belirlemek ve optimal düzeyde uygulanabilir ve sürdürülebilir yeni bir yaklaşım geliştirmektir. Bu doğrultuda çalışma kapsamında sosyal hizmet eğitimine yönelik hibrit bir model geliştirilmiştir. Söz konusu modelin geliştirilmesinde Sosyal Hizmet Uygulamasında Teknoloji başlıklı rapordaki standartlardan yararlanılmıştır. Ayrıca bahsi geçen modelin geliştirilmesinde Türkiye Sosyal Hizmet Okulları Derneği tarafından 50 öğretim üyesi ve 767 öğrencinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilen anketin sonuçlarından da faydalanılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında önerilen hibrit model, sosyal hizmet eğitiminde uzaktan eğitim yönteminin belirli standartlar ve süreçler dahilinde yürütülebilecek şekilde uygulanabileceğini göstermektedir. Ancak gelecekte uzaktan eğitim metodolojisi üzerine inşa edilmiş uygulama odaklı bir sosyal hizmet eğitiminin optimal düzeyde sürdürülebilmesi için öğrenci ve akademisyen etkileşimine ilişkin yeterliklerin gözden geçirilmesi gerektiği anlaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler;** Uzaktan eğitim, örgün eğitim, hibrit model, sosyal hizmet eğitimi

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Educational activities, which can be extended to the first intergenerational transfer of knowledge in human history, have been discussed in many different intellectual systems in the historical process. In the light of these discussions, the formal education model, in which teachers and students come together and continue educational activities within a certain curriculum, is a widely used education method today. In addition to formal education, distance education has become an important education method, especially with the development of technology and the shaping of the understanding of human rights thanks to making education more accessible and more affordable for wider masses.

Distance education is defined as “institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors” (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019). As can be understood from its definition, the most distinctive feature of distance education is that training activities are carried out by beneficiaries and trainers who have a geographical distance between them. At this point, distance education and formal education methods are similar in that educational activities are carried out within a certain institutional structure and based on a specific curriculum. The features that distinguish these two methods from each other are the geographical location of the instructor and students relative to each other and the communication channels through which educational activities are carried out. In this respect, the term 'formal' used in this paper corresponds to face-to-face education traditionally conducted within the institutional structures of universities (Simonson & Seepersaud, 2019).

Training methods are of greater importance for practice-based sciences, such as social work, than for other fields. As a matter of fact, social work education corresponds to what Aristotle categorizes as '**Praxis**'<sup>1</sup> which he came up with regarding his classification of knowledge and sciences. Aristotle divides knowledge, sciences, and ways of thinking into three: *seeing* (theoretics), *making and producing* (poetics), and *acting* (practice). According to Aristotle, these three categories can be associated with *theoria*, *poesis*, and *praxis*. *Theoria* refers to theoretical sciences, which are related to the observation of things that already exist and which we cannot influence. *Poesis*, on the other hand, is the production with the help of someone's various skills, and Aristotle exemplifies this with the work of artisans. The last distinction, *praxis*, is an activity that is related to morality and politics, does not produce anything as its result, and is related to the guiding of a person's behavior. At this point, the observations made with *theoria* and the information obtained as a result are used in the regulation of human behavior with *praxis*. (Satıcı, 2013).

Here, it can be said that social work conforms to *praxis* because it is a field of science that tries to understand natural phenomena without interfering with them, or instead of producing something, to come up with practices within the scope of basic principles, and aimed at complex phenomena that cannot be easily analyzed within the framework of cause-and-effect. As a result, social work education cannot be considered separately from the *praxis* philosophy, where practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge is acquired, and practice adds to the theory (Yiğit, 2017). Indeed, it is a fact that the information framework in professional education consists of theoretical knowledge, factual knowledge, local knowledge and practical knowledge. This situation shows that it is not possible to maintain vocational education only with unilateral information sharing activities and it reveals the importance of practice in social work education (Ife, 2015; Yiğit, 2018).

Discussions on the effectiveness of distance education emerge precisely here. The advantages of distance education from being exempt from various limitations compared to formal education and the fact that it has been experienced widespread with the pandemic process also makes it necessary to understand and resolve these discussions.

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<sup>1</sup>**Praxis**: A philosophical expression that has the meanings of practice, action, and the importance of practice.

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At this point, the aim of this conceptual paper is to understand the distance education method in the context of its historical past and its applications today, thus determining the limitations of distance education in social work education in order to develop a new approach to it. In accordance with this purpose, a hybrid education model for social work education was proposed within the scope of our paper.

This model approach is considered important as it provides an optimal perspective regarding the adaptation of social work education to the transformation in educational practices, both in accordance with the opportunities and conditions of the age and in a way that is not separated from the nature of vocational education. Furthermore, the developed model proposal is based on calculations related to the distribution of courses by National Core Curriculum which developed by Turkish Association of Schools of Social Work (Türkiye Sosyal Hizmet Okulları Derneği - ASSW) in 2020.

### **Social Work Education and Distance Education as an Education Method**

Distance education is perhaps the most controversial issue for practice-based sciences such as social work, especially about skills acquisition. Despite these discussions, distance education methods in social work education are being increasingly used by a wider community. In this situation, it is necessary to understand the place of distance education in social work education, to develop suggestions on this issue, and to define sustainable structures for the future (Kurzman, 2019).

In order for these methods to be defined in accordance with the nature of the subject, it is necessary to understand the historical development of distance education method, the role of distance education method in professional education, and the diversity of distance professional practices.

### **Historical Development of Distance Education**

Although today there are different opinions as to when and why the first practices of distance education occurred, it is considered to have a history dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this paper, the historical development of distance education, in parallel to the body of literature, will be dealt with as *First Generation: Correspondence Studies*, *Second Generation: Multimedia in Distance Education*, *Third Generation: Computer Assisted Distance Education*.

In the period also called First Generation distance education studies, educational practices were usually carried out by the method of correspondence. The history of this generation can be traced back to the news on the Boston Gazette on March 20, 1728 that 'Steno<sup>2</sup> lessons would be taught by the method of correspondence. This generation's practices are very important, especially in terms of the technological possibilities of the era and the fact that various members of society were deprived of educational opportunities. Followed by this, in England, Isaac Pitman began teaching Bible studies by letter in 1840, and with the example of these distance learning practices that became widespread in England, the University of Correspondence was established in 1883 in the United States, followed by some Canadian, Japan, Australian and European universities (Kırık, 2014; Summer, 2000).

While the first generation, which can be called Correspondence Education, was still prevalent, the technological advancements accelerating due to the competitive environment caused by the Cold War era like developing computer technology in the Soviet Union, USA and Germany (Doing, 2010) and other countries and developing of internet technology especially in the USA (Mowery & Simcoe, 2002), as well as the understanding of basic human rights in the West led to both formal and distance

<sup>2</sup>Stenography: A quick writing system that uses symbols and abbreviations instead of letters, punctuation marks, or words.

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education practices becoming more widespread. Here, especially thanks to radio, television and teleconference becoming widespread, being able to use different channels for distance education practices has made a breakthrough in the world of education. The second generation of distance education studies has started to be represented by an institutional structure with the establishment of the Open University in the United Kingdom in 1969.

The third generation emerged with the renewed distance education practices, especially thanks to the discovery of computers and the Internet. In this generation, thanks mainly to the Internet-based education opportunities that had CDs and DVDs that helped make it more holistic and modular, distance education became more accessible. Because the CDs and DVDs included in the course recording videos prepared by the teachers and alternative learning resources supporting the education process. The main difference of third generation distance education from previous generations is that, it offers a wider interaction opportunity through television and especially simple internet networks (Summer, 2000; Banas & Emory, 1998)

These practices can be tackled in the context of the discussions on the quality of the education, and by extension, the validity of the diplomas and certificates said education offers. However, distance education is considered important in the sense that it provides educational opportunities to people who would otherwise be at disadvantage if they only had other education methods available, that the students are relatively more independent, and that distance education contributes to public education (Kırık, 2014).

The development of distance education in history is not limited to these generations. As a matter of fact, fourth generation distance education practices are the subject of discussion today. In particular, virtual reality is an important factor for fourth generation practices. However, since these activities have not yet been as widely experienced as the educational activities in other generations, there have been ongoing debates about their consequences (James & Gardner, 1995).

### **The Role of Distance Education in Social Work Education and Online Professional Practices**

Distance education, as a method of education that is widely used in many parts of the world, has also found a place in social work education in the 20th century (Dash & Botcha, 2018). Distance education method in social work education was used for the first time in United States, Canada, and Australia, where the said method originated from. In 1977, the University of Madison and the University of South Dakota in the United States began distance social work education. Following these developments, distance social work education began in the early 1980s with the Caledonian Social Work Program, which was supported by six universities in the United Kingdom and became widespread in the following years (Dash & Botcha, 2018). In addition, some universities in Canada and Australia have followed this trend and social work education has been carried out in these countries for 30 years with the distance education method. Especially until the end of the first decade of the 2000s, distance education studies, which were mainly printed materials, started to be carried out gradually full online since this date. With this historical development process, 12 different social work distance education programs are accredited as of 2019 in Australia. One of the conditions for these programs to be accredited is that students must attend at least 20 days face-to-face education in order to improve their practical and communication skills (Afrouz & Crisp, 2021; Crisp, 2018).

In 2002, the first graduate-level social work education program was opened at Florida State University. Regarding the quality of this education, according to various studies, researchers have put forth that for theoretical and practical courses, distance education students were only significantly behind regarding communication skills, but both groups were similar in the context of other qualifications (Cummings, Foels, & Chaffin, 2013). These findings on communication skills are remarkable when considering the practice-oriented basis of social work graduate education in the United States and several other Western countries.



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The preference for distance education method has also affected professional practices. Thanks to the developing technology, there have been remote or, in other words, online professional interventions. These are the practices, originated first in 1982, of online self-help and support groups with the help of digital tools. The first professional digital social work practices were conducted with the help of Sommer's works, such as the first fee-based internet mental health service, in 1995 and later. Digital social work consulting services, which have become widespread nowadays, can be provided through various means such as consulting practices on common online platforms, via telephone and video conference individually and as a group, consulting practices called '*cybertherapy*' which are carried out with the help of virtual characters (avatars), practices on social network, and services offered via email and text messages (Reamer, 2013a).

Today, distance education has an important place in both bachelor's and master's degrees social work education, and by extension, its practice (Reamer, 2013b). A study conducted by Council on Social Work Education only three years after the first distance education master's program was offered showed that 41% of undergraduate-level education, and 52% of graduate-level education in the social work departments were provided with the help of some form of technology (Kurzman, 2019). These statistics show how much distance education has become widespread as a result of the influence of computer-aided studies, especially radio and television, and that it has transformed formal education as well as it becoming the sole preference for some universities. According to Bright, in addition to the economic conditions, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly increased the place of digital mechanisms in social work education. As a result of these developments, the basic questions in social work education carried out in digital environments today, it is about establishing a learning environment and providing praxis (Bright, 2021).

### **Problems of Distance Education in Social Work Education and Basic Principles**

Distance education, like almost every new development, has various positive and negative aspects. Despite the positive effects like education opportunities for the disadvantaged groups, making life-long education easier, and minimalizing the amount of time and money spent for education, this method has also brought various problems along. These problems have become clear in Turkey with the transition to distance education in all universities, starting from the third week of March 2020 in accordance with the decision of the Council of Higher Education in Turkey as the result of the global pandemic. With the aim of identified the aforementioned problems, ASSW has surveyed 767 social work students and 150 social work academicians across 24 universities to assess the distance education applications.

The percentages of problems encountered during the distance education activities have taken are as follows: various technical and administrative problems (54%), problems related to competency-based approach in education being partially- or non-applicable (83.68%), problems about students not being in similar conditions in terms of infrastructure facilities (88%), problems regarding students not being active enough, and the uncertainty about whether they really participate in the lessons or not (70%), problems about failure to achieve the learning outcomes in courses that require skill acquisition (82%), problems regarding practice lessons being taught in the form of distance education (78%) and assessment and evaluation procedure problems (72%). and problems related to the inability to benefit from auxiliary elements such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language in order to help with interaction (90%). More than half (57.14%) of the academics involved in the study stated that they needed training related to distance education. In the said study, social work academics stated that distance education can be applied to the vast majority of basic science courses, and a part of social work professional and scientific courses as well as sub-specialization courses. As for practice courses, half of social work academics agree that the

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theoretical counseling section of said courses can be provided in the distance education format.

767 students from 20 different universities also participated in the survey conducted by ASSW aimed at students.

According to the survey, the percentages regarding the problems stated by the students, and the conditions these problems occurred in are as follows; technical problems that occur occasionally or continuously during distance education (85.71%), problems related to lack of contribution to professional practice skills (64.12%), problems about distance education not being as effective as face-to-face education (78.60%), problems related to information being more easily forgotten when it is learned in the form of distance education (57.49%), the problems regarding distance education causing there to be less teamwork (57.49%).

The vast majority of students (83%) believe that distance education can be a partial or complete alternative when formal education is not available. In contrast, the majority of students (57.75%) disagree with the idea that distance education should become more widespread.

As can be seen from the results of the study, both faculty members and students faced a wide range of problems in the distance education process. It is not possible to explain this situation only by the current unusual circumstances, or by the conditions in Turkey. It is significant that what Reamer learned in his interview on October 4, 2012, with J. Kanter, who is an experienced academic in the areas of distance education and social work master's programs, was that similar issues are experienced in different areas of distance education as well. According to Kanter, the course materials prepared for students consist of content that is not sufficiently comprehensive and intellectually compelling. In addition, technical difficulties during distance learning activities have been an issue for everyone. Again, it was often not possible to take advantage of auxiliary elements such as facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, nor was it possible to measure students' participation and interest in the lesson. In addition, Kanter noted that often only several students participate in the lesson, while many students cannot be encouraged to do so (Reamer, 2013b).

In a study (Afrouz & Crisp, 2021) conducted in 2021 on the quality of social work distance education programs, the results of 18 different studies which carried out in the USA, Australia and Canada in 2009 and beyond are assessed. In the studies examined, it was concluded that there was no overall difference between formal and distance education students regarding the level of satisfaction of students with the education they received. Also, interactive online materials in distance education facilitates the learning process and increases student satisfaction. The most fundamental factor that reduces the satisfaction of distance education students is the workload that coincides with other responsibilities in life. In some studies, emphasized that distance education requires 40% more time than formal education due to the factors of effective interaction in distance education, instructor experience and so on.

The investigated studies have shown that distance education students' self-efficacy, interpersonal skills and practical skills are not less than formal education students, but distance education students do not feel ready for field application.

Among these studies, both the study conducted with the participation of 376 deans and social work undergraduate and graduate program officers in the USA and the study carried out with employers showed that formal education students are considered more qualified by non-students. Similar results with this study were obtained in the study conducted by Knowless (2007). In the study conducted with thirty faculties and program managers, the participants drew attention to the lack of effective policies and a well-functioning organizational structure in social work distance education programs. Based on this, Dawson and Fenster (2015) argued that various policies, especially the strategic plan, regarding distance education activities should be determined in advance and informative activities should be carried out to increase the quality of educational activities

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for students and lecturers. The satisfactory feedback of the participants for the 5-week educator training held at Columbia University School of Social Work reveals the necessity of training specialists with technical knowledge (Baez, Marquart, Chung, Ryan, & Garay, 2019).

Another study on this issue is related to social work distance education programs in India. The related study has shown the inadequacy of social work distance education in India regarding fieldwork and supervision mechanisms of students. It has also been determined that studies that support student interaction and practical skill acquisition and standardize learning resources are needed in same study (Dash, 2018).

Online studies that support social work education such as various seminars and events have an important place here. According to an analysis carried out with activity data, students who participate in online discussion groups more score higher than their criticism articles (Secret & Pitt-Catsoupes, 2008). Stanley-Clarke et al. (2018) argued that various social networks such as Twitter can be used to support students' learning in online education (Stanley-Clarke, English, & Yeung, 2018).

As can be seen, distance education activities carried out both in Turkey and in different parts of the world lead to various problems. But in the usual, and especially unusual, flow of life, distance education methods and techniques are needed partially, or sometimes completely, in social work education in accordance with the conditions of the time.

Kurzman (2019) argues that practical skill acquisition, which is an important disadvantage of distance education, can be overcome with new technological opportunities such as 5G or avatar technology. Studies such as simulation home visits in the addiction field in the USA support Kurzman's predictions. According to Kurzman, social work distance education is an activity in accordance with professional ethical values in terms of both its compliance with the conditions of the age and providing education opportunities to disadvantaged segments (Kurzman, 2019).

Therefore, it is suggested that instead of abandoning this structure completely due to some potential disadvantages, it will be appropriate to adopt and maintain the standards related to it (Goldingay, Epstein, & Taylor, 2018). Miles et al. (2018) revealed the need for coeducational models on the basis of the harm that being a distance education graduate does to students' career and the negative effects of being away from campus on learning activity (Miles, Mensingab, & Zuchowskia, 2018). Walsh and Bayton (2012), supporting this judgment, argued that the mixed education models will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process in terms of stay from the learning environment and developing a flexible learning process in line with the opportunities provided by technology (Walsh & Baynton, 2012).

The standards and principles of distance education are of great importance in the development of these models. In this context, four basic principles are mentioned in the literature in order to perform distance education activities in a qualified manner. These principles can be explained as; devotion to students, adherence to the distance education system, commitment to the profession as a professional educator, commitment of those who set the education plans in the distance education system (Farahani, 2012).

In general, these principles are very important for the sustainability of distance education activities in a qualified way. Here, it is possible to mention specific standards regarding distance social work education in addition to general principles. In 2017, National Association of Social Workers, Association of Social Work Boards, Council on Social Work Education, and Clinical Social Work Association have come together to publish a report called 'Technology in Social Work Practice'. In the said report, the standards regarding use of technology in social work education were specified (Reamer, 2019).

These standards serve as an educative guide in developing other stakeholders' competences for the ethical use of technology in social work education. Besides, these standards determine the principles of online course processes in social work education, the necessary conditions for the construction of the learning environment, and the basic issues regarding measurement and evaluation. In addition, the standards generally adopted an approach that allow the improvement of academician competence

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in solving potential technology-related questions, problems and risks in the education process and gives importance to the efficient use of technology (National Association of Social Workers & Council on Social Work Education & Association of Social Work Boards & Clinical Social Work Association, 2017).

These standards, which are quite general and inclusive, are an important guide for maintaining social work education by taking advantage of distance education method without breaking away from the requirements of the time, as well as without contradicting work ethics.

### **Social Work Education with Distance Education Method: A Model Proposal**

As mentioned in this paper, distance education is a phenomenon today within the framework of the problems it poses, and the various advantages it offers. At this point, it is necessary to develop a model to avoid the problems that distance education might cause. In other words, both the results of the researches, which examine in this paper and opinion of various researcher, shows the need for such a hybrid model. However, said model should be suitable for the advantages of and the growing demand for distance education. In relation to this requirement, a hybrid education model has been presented in our paper. This hybrid (mixed) model, is a model which include distance and formal education method in social work education. Both the results of the researches, which examine in this paper and opinion of various researcher, shows the need for such a hybrid model. In addition to this researches, the quantitative research studies conducted by ASSW in Turkey also reveals the need for this hybrid model. Regarding this model, the minimum conditions and basic assumptions, basic principles, and methods of providing courses in the generalist social work curriculum that are in accordance with the hybrid education model are presented below.

### **Minimum Conditions and Basic Assumptions**

At many different universities in Turkey and around the world, social work education is progressing within the framework of curriculums and practices that are not completely the same but are prepared based on some common standards. Regarding this, when the standards established by the higher professional organizations for distance education, and the recent distance education practices with global pandemic taken into account, there is the minimum conditions for the form of hybrid education. The first of these minimum conditions are the necessity of a guide for hybrid education. This guide should include the hybrid education ethics standards and professional practices principles.

Another minimum requirement required by hybrid education is the necessity of continuing education in accordance with local and regional dynamics (cultural differences, religion, etc.). Here, activities aimed at increasing the personal, professional and cognitive development of students should be carried out by taking into account the current conditions. In this context, requirements regarding assessment and evaluation studies, in-class and out-of-class activities and field application should be regulated carefully.

Another minimum requirement required by hybrid education is related to the platform where the education will be continued. Distance education applications to be carried out within the scope of hybrid education should be accessible, easy and rich-content digital platforms (Blackboard, LMS etc.) for all students. In addition, these platforms should be in a structure that allows students to interact with students inside and outside the field. Accordingly, the access and active use of students and faculty members to relevant platforms should be supported.

National and international sharing networks should be established for all activities carried out within the scope of hybrid education. These networks should also be managed by national and international authorized organizations and the sustainability of the hybrid education system should be ensured by developing solutions for the problems that arise as a result of these shares.



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### Basic Principles

Distance education studies have not only brought about challenges related to the teaching of courses, but have also required a review of ethical principles and access to education in social work education. In this context there is need the standards for ethical considerations about distance education activities in the hybrid education model.

On the basis of these standards, there is the requirement that the social work education to be continued in the hybrid education model should adhere to national and international standards. It is also essential to provide resources that support educational activities with a student-oriented approach. At this point, measures should be taken to ensure effective communication, which is one of the most important requirements of the learning environment, and to prevent discrimination, abuse and violence. Providing the necessary technical support for continuing education is another requirement of the hybrid education model.

The hybrid education model also requires standards for education processes as well as for assessment and evaluation. This is required because of evaluation of the effectiveness of the education program. As a matter of fact, it is necessary to carry out these processes in an effective way in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

The social work program takes care to develop mechanisms that comply with a common solution-oriented understanding of governance within structure of the student, academic and university administration for issues that are unethical and likely to lead to legal consequences. In addition, students should be informed about absenteeism and the legal problems it may cause. In addition, faculty members should be encouraged to develop a transparent and accountable approach to measurement and evaluation methods, and structures should be established to provide technical support to them. In this context, measurement and evaluation standards should be determined in advance and announced to students, and alternative measurement and evaluation methods should be developed, which will also include distance education practices.

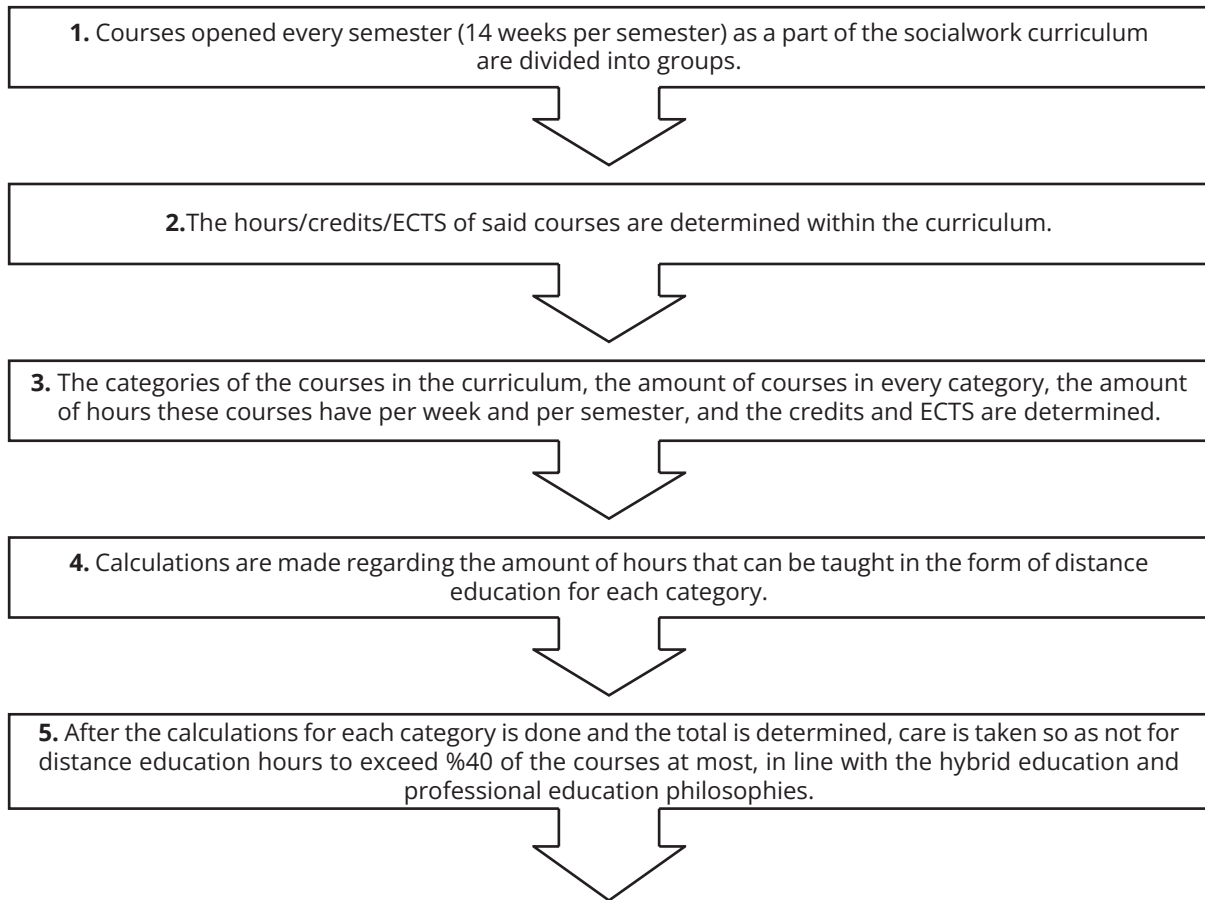
### Methods of Teaching Subjects / Courses in Generalist Social Work Curriculum

The generalist social work curriculum aims to enable students to assimilate social work on the basis of knowledge-skill-values in terms of science, profession, and art. In addition to courses aimed at developing theoretical knowledge, the curriculum includes courses focused on the development of the student in terms of skills and value. Courses in the generalist social work curriculum are covered in the categories of basic science courses, courses that teach the scientific and professional foundations of social work, courses that include sub-specializations of social work, social work research courses, and social work practice courses.

Although this situation offers an easily developed and applied system for programs that offer a solely theoretical education, it creates complications regarding areas that offer education programs with sub categories, are based on the principle of praxis, and are integrative of theoretical and practical work, such as social work. Regarding this, it is recommended that social work programs follow the steps in Figure 1. The distance education proportion in the courses within each category are designed based on the principle of applying distance education in theoretical courses at the maximum level and in practice courses at the minimum level.

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**Figure 1.** Steps for Integration into Distance Education



In accordance with the structure created in the context of all these basic assumptions and ethical requirements, the calculations done for both semesters through the National Core Curriculum which developed by ASSW in 2020 are as shown in Table 1. As can be seen in the table, the percentages of all compulsory and elective courses offered by the department are as follows: basic science courses (36.73%), basic scientific and professional courses for social work (28.57%), social work sub-specialization courses (24.49%), social work practice courses (8.16%) and social work research courses (2.04%). A total of 49 courses are opened during the year: 18 basic science courses, 14 courses that teach the basic scientific and professional courses for social work, 12 social work sub-specialization courses, 4 social work practice courses and 1 social work research course. In the department, 2,730 hours of courses are taught in two semesters. Students earn 261 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) and 161 credits from these courses offered during the academic year.

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**Table 1.** Distribution of Fall and Spring Semesters Courses by Category

Category	Rate	Number of Courses	Weekly Course Hours	Annual Course Hours	ECTS	Course Credit
Basic Sciences Courses	36.73%	18	47	658	69	46
Social Work Scientific and Professional Courses	28.57%	14	46	644	76	44
Social Work Sub-specialization Courses	24.49%	12	36	504	59	36
Social Work Practice Courses	8.16%	4	60	840	52	32
Social Work Research Courses	2.04%	1	6	84	5	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>2.730</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>161</b>

Table 2 shows the distribution of courses offered in the fall semester for all classes in the Social Work Department.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Fall Semester Courses by Category

Category	Rate	Number of Courses	Weekly Course Hours	Semester Course Hours	ECTS	Course Credit
Basic Sciences Courses	40%	10	26	364	38	25
Social Work Scientific and Professional Courses	28%	7	23	322	38	22
Social Work Sub-specialization Courses	24%	6	18	252	29	18
Social Work Practice Courses	8%	2	26	364	21	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>1.302</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>79</b>

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The percentages of compulsory and elective courses offered by the department in the fall semester are as follows: basic science courses (40%), basic scientific and professional courses for social work (28%), social work sub-specialization courses (24%) and social work practice courses (8%). A total of 25 courses are opened during the semester: 10 basic science courses, 7 courses that teach the basic scientific and professional courses for social work, 6 social work sub-specialization courses, and 2 social work practice courses. During the semester, there are 93 hours of lessons per week, which means a total of 1,302 hours of lessons for 14 weeks. These courses include 26 hours of practice per week, and 364 hours of practice per semester. Said practice lessons include 24 hours of field work, and 2 hours of theoretical supervision. Students earn 126 ECTS and 79 credits from these courses offered during the semester. It is possible to say that a similar distribution is observed for the spring term.

### **Subjects / Courses to Be Completely Taught in the Form of Formal Education**

Integration of generalist social work education into distance education depends on the availability of courses in the categories detailed in the curriculum above. At this point, the application and research courses, consisting of theoretical and practical parts, are carried out by a completely formal method, except for theoretical supervision, which is 1 hour per week for the social work program. As a science and profession, assimilation of social work skills and values is important for understanding the theoretical knowledge being realized in practice. On this basis, the parts of the related courses that will be given by the formal education method should not be less than 90% of the course for practice courses, and 80% of the course for research courses. Accordingly, the sections of social work practice courses that will be taught in the format of formal education should not be less than 24 hours per week (336 hours per semester) for the fall semester, and 31 hours per week (434 hours per semester) for the spring semester. The sections of social work practice courses that will be taught in the format of formal education should not be less than 5 hours per week (70 hours per semester) for the spring semester.

### **Subjects / Courses to Be Completely Taught in the Form of Distance Education**

In social work education, the supervision that students receive from their teachers for field application is very important to support the development of students professionally. Supervision parts of practice and research courses in which professional knowledge will be used in practice, and basic skills and values will be assimilated can be provided entirely by distance education, given the technological opportunities of our time and the demand for distance education. On this basis, the sections of these courses that can be taught in the format of distance education should not be more than 10% of the course for practice courses, and 20% of the course for research courses. In this context, the sections of social work practice courses that will be taught in the format of distance education should not be more than 2 hours per week (28 hours per semester) for the fall semester, and 3 hours per week (42 hours per semester) for the spring semester.

Considering the advantages of the hybrid education model, and opportunities presented by distance education, all basic science courses can be taught in the form of distance education. On this basis, 26 hours of basic science courses per week (364 hours per semester) for the fall semester, and 21 hours of basic science courses per week (294 hours per semester) for the spring semesters are carried out in the form of distance education.

### **Subjects / Courses to Be Taught in the Form of Hybrid Education**

Courses that are about the scientific and professional foundations of social work can be considered as a part of this category. Here, considering the importance of the said courses in terms of understanding the ethical and theoretical foundations of the profession, the contribution of the 'role-play' practices and in-class discussions carried out within the scope of these courses to the learning process, it can be seen that these courses should be taught in the form of hybrid education model. At this point, no more than 10% of the courses should be offered as distance education. Accordingly, at least 21 hours per week and 294 hours per semester of courses that are on the scientific and professional basis of social work must be offered as formal education for both semesters. 20% of the courses that, compared to the courses that teach basic scientific and professional information, teach more specific issues of social work sub-specialization areas can be taught via distance education as a more flexible approach. Accordingly, at least 15 hours per week (210 hours per semester) of social work sub-specialization courses are taught in the form of formal education.



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### General Framework for Integration into Hybrid Education

Hybrid education processes related to different course categories in the general social work curriculum are carried out as specified. In this context, the social work program makes a planning suitable for the categories and contents of the courses for the fall and spring semesters.

**Table 3.** Amount of Fall Semester Distance Education Courses in Total Amount Courses

Category	Formal Education	Distance Education	Total	Distance Learning Rate
Basic Sciences Courses	0	26	26	100%
Social Work Scientific and Professional Courses	21	2	23	9%
Social Work Sub-specialization Courses	15	3	18	17%
Social Work Practice Courses	24	2	26	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>36%</b>

In accordance with these principles, Table 3 contains course cluster weights for formal and distance education methods in hybrid education for the fall semesters. As can be seen in the Table 3, 100% of basic science courses, 9% of professional and scientific social work courses, 17% of social work sub-specialization courses, and 8% of social work practice courses are planned to be taught by distance education for the fall semester. In each course category, it is seen that the distribution is handled according to the upper limit for distance education courses, and that 36% of the total of the courses will be taught as a part of distance education. It is possible to say that a similar distribution is observed for the spring term.

According to the information presented in the Table 3, 36% of the lessons can be conducted with the distance education method in the hybrid model which created in accordance with the assumption that distance education is kept at the maximum level for the theoretical courses and the minimum level for the applied courses. The result is rounded up to 40% approximately in the hybrid model.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The quality of an important practice such as education affects any issue in life directly or indirectly. On this basis, it is natural to criticize and question approaches that have emerged as a completely different perspective within the prevailing understanding of education, like distance education. What is important here is to what extent these criticisms are carried out on the basis of strictly maintaining the status quo and resisting change. Indeed, as usual and unusual experiences, especially the ones such as the technological advancements within the past decade, the increasing need for formal education, and the global pandemic that has been a part of our lives in the past year show, today it is possible to talk about different education methods, university structures, and a different world. This situation brings up other forms of interaction, and even makes them inevitable.

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Here, in particular, an emphasis must be put on diversity. In educational activities, diversity related to issues such as materials, student profile, types of interaction, and methods used is important in order to adapt to the development of such new conditions. In environments where said variety cannot be offered, problems will be inevitable. Indeed, the hybrid education model, which also includes distance education activities, is different from the traditional understanding of education. Thus, it is impossible to keep formal education curriculums the same in a new structure where the method has changed dramatically. Different methods require different ways of working. Despite this, the same structures are forced to run with different methods in today's changing conditions. Despite the advantages, some studies show this may affect the quality of education processes negatively and prevent the training of competent professionals specifically in social work education.

In addition, the relationship of these discussions with local and global dynamics shows us the necessity of developing new ways and methods in important areas such as education. As a matter of fact, the global pandemic experienced today has seriously affected education and training activities, and social work education has also had its share as shown in this paper. Although uncertainty regarding the future of the pandemic continues, it is clear that the experiences gained these days will shape the future. At this point, it is possible that distance education, which is widely experienced today, will continue its existence after the pandemic in social work education as in all areas. In addition to all these, this situation cannot be explained solely by the unusual circumstances. In fact, there are financial and political crises in many countries, especially some vulnerable countries such as various Middle East countries and in the United States of America. This situation puts the emphasis on 'do more with less' in almost every field. From this point of view, it can be said that distance education is in a very suitable position for this emphasis and will become a more preferable phenomenon with an evaluation made especially in terms of the cost of education. Under these conditions, both the hybrid education model proposed in the paper and other productivity-oriented studies in social work education are meaningful and valuable in order to be shaped in accordance with the human needs of the future in the changing world (Bright, 2021).

In this context, in our paper we discussed how adaptation can be achieved to changing situations and structures without compromising quality as much as possible and tried to develop a proposal by using the knowledge provided up to this date. The effective implementation of the hybrid model is not only about how the courses to be given with distance education. At the same time, it also requires that some regulations such as infrastructure, accessibility, learning competencies, class participation, assessment and evaluation, and ethical issues be bound to the norm in terms of management. In this respect, each social work program that is implementing the hybrid model application needs to prepare an application guide and share it with lecturers and students.

Without a doubt, it would not be right to say that there will be no further arguments on ensuring this balance. Indeed, considering the future changes in defining the problem, and discussions on existence as an individual and as a society will intensify, this paper has made it clear that the way social work education, and thus professional practices, should be carried out must be discussed right now.

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