

Social Work Education in Türkiye: Opinions of Students, Academics, and Social Workers

Social work practices around the world began to take root in the West from the second half of the 19th century. Social work started to be institutionalized from the beginning of the 20th century and social work education spread throughout the world following the opening of the first social work schools in Western countries. In Türkiye, university education, which was organized under the name of Social Work Academy in 1961, continued to be conducted within the Social Work Department of Hacettepe University. As of today, social work undergraduate education is given in seventy universities in Türkiye. In this study, it is aimed to look at the current situation and future of social work education from the perspective of students, academicians, and social workers. The participants of the research, which was designed in a qualitative method, consist of four students, four academicians, and four social workers. It was planned to conduct interviews with the participants using semi-structured questionnaires. The data obtained were subjected to content analysis and thematic coding was done first, and then main and sub-themes were created. The findings of the study were discussed in the light of current literature.

Keywords: Social work, undergraduate, education, strengths, and weaknesses qualitative method.

Introduction

One of the most important processes of human life is the period of education. While the concept of learning refers to permanent behavioural changes that are the product of experience, the concept of education covers a much broader scope. The philosophy and methods of education have been in constant change, from traditional approaches to modern understandings. Nowadays, the emphasis is on the fact that education - or rather learning - is a lifelong phenomenon (*lifelong learning*). Regardless of its content and scope, the process called education always maintains its critical importance, starting with the function of preparing the individual for life from an early age and extending to the function of providing a profession during youth.

The education process that serves the purpose of gaining proficiency in a profession includes different dimensions. At this point, university education undoubtedly comes to mind first. In order to be able to practice a profession that requires a certain level of competence, both in the world and in Türkiye, it is necessary to receive education at university level. The concept of occupation and the concept of profession differ from each other at this point. In order to be eligible to receive a diploma, which is considered a prerequisite for the profession, four or more years of academic education must be received/ completed, with a minimum of two years. At this point, each profession requires the fulfilment of educational conditions at distinct levels depending on its field of expertise or the discipline in

1 which it is involved. Some occupations, commonly known as self-employment
 2 (barbering, hairdressing, carpentry, etc.), include separate vocational training
 3 processes within themselves. The social work profession, which is the main
 4 subject of this study, and professions such as medicine, teaching and engineering
 5 involve a minimum level of university undergraduate education. Following
 6 undergraduate education, more advanced education levels such as master's degree
 7 and doctorate may also be possible.

8 In terms of human history, the emergence of institutional and systematic
 9 education can be traced back to the invention of writing. However, the emergence
 10 of modern educational approaches coincides with the process known as the Age of
 11 Enlightenment. Traditional educational approaches based on ancient, scholastic,
 12 religious or rote-learning approaches were followed by modern educational
 13 approaches put forward by thinkers of the enlightenment period such as Rousseau,
 14 Locke, Montessori, and Dewey, in parallel with the modernity process. Although
 15 mainstream modern education approaches are still applied today, the
 16 understanding of education has begun to transform again, especially with the
 17 effects of postmodernism and globalization. The issue of digitalization of
 18 education has become an educational paradigm that has been discussed on a global
 19 scale since the second half of the 20th century and has gradually spread in the 21st
 20 century. When it comes to digitalization of education or digital education,
 21 education processes that are more independent of time and space, especially
 22 technology and the internet, come to mind. Particularly with the widespread use of
 23 the Internet and the spread of personal computers, the transfer of educational
 24 activities to the digital environment and/or the use of cyber environments as an
 25 alternative venue is a situation that we have begun to experience in the last few
 26 decades. It would not be wrong to say that the Covid-19 pandemic, which has
 27 recently affected the entire world, has accelerated digitalization in education.

28 The discipline and profession of social work, like many branches of social
 29 sciences, is a younger field compared to the sciences. The beginning of social
 30 work education, which has been based in the West, especially in England and the
 31 USA since the last quarter of the 1800s, corresponds to 1961 in Türkiye (Alptekin,
 32 2016; Onat, 2005). Social work education, which gained an institutional identity
 33 with the opening of the first social work schools in the West, today provides the
 34 training of many social workers from all over the world (Austin, 1997). The
 35 phenomenon of digitalization inevitably directly affects social work education.
 36 Some methods or techniques that can be considered inherent in digital education,
 37 such as online education, distance education, hybrid education, have started to
 38 become a part of social work education in many countries around the world. It is
 39 possible to say that social work education in Türkiye is just at the beginning of the
 40 digitalization process. In this study, it was tried to reveal the perspectives of
 41 students, social workers, and academicians regarding social work education in
 42 Türkiye. In this respect, it is thought that concrete programs and practices for the
 43 relevant country will guide the education processes in Türkiye.

Methodology

This section contains general information about the methodology of the study.

Research Design

This research, which aims to look at the current situation and future of social work education in Türkiye from the perspective of students, academicians, and social workers, was designed with a qualitative method. Phenomenological research is a research design originating from philosophy and psychology, in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals regarding a phenomenon as defined by the participants. These descriptions result in capturing the essence of the experiences of individuals who have various experiences with the phenomenon in question. This design has solid philosophical foundations and often requires conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; cited in Creswell, 2017). For these reasons, the phenomenological approach was preferred in this research.

Selection of Participants

The participants of the research, designed with a qualitative method, consist of four students, four academicians, and four social workers. All participants reside in Ankara. Students, social workers, and academicians were included in the study to address the issue from different dimensions. Interviews were completed when the responses were deemed to have reached sufficient saturation for the purposes of the research. Some basic information about the participants is included in the table below.

Table 1. Basic Information about the Study Participants

Study Group	Age	Gender	School/Institution	Field
Student 1	18	Female	Başkent University	Social Work
Student 2	19	Male	Hacettepe University	Social Work
Student 3	20	Female	Ankara University	Social Work
Student 4	21	Male	University of Health Sciences	Social Work
Social Worker 1	33	Male	Social Service Centre	Child Welfare
Social Worker 2	73	Male	Social Service Centre	Gerontological Social Work
Social Worker 3	28	Female	Courthouse	Family Court
Social Worker 4	50	Female	Hospital	Medical Social Work
Academician 1	43	Female	Başkent University	Family Welfare
Academician 2	40	Female	Yıldırım Beyazıt University	Social Work with Children
Academician 3	36	Male	Hacettepe University	Disability
Academician 4	54	Male	Ankara University	Psychiatric Social Work

1 Data Collection Process

2
3 The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview form to collect data
4 within the scope of the research. The data of the research was collected in the
5 three-month period between June 2023 and August 2023. The interviews lasted
6 approximately 60-90 minutes and were audio recorded with the consent of the
7 participants.

8 9 Analysis of Data

10
11 During the data analysis process, firstly the data obtained from the
12 participants were deciphered. The resulting transcripts were combined into a single
13 file. Considering the combined transcript, it was seen that the transcription
14 contained a total of 135 pages and 45021 words in Arial 10-point font. After this
15 process, Nvivo program was used to analyse the data. Thematic coding was done
16 within the scope of qualitative analysis, and in this context, first the relevant codes
17 were determined, and then sub-themes and themes were created through
18 interrelated codes. The findings were discussed in the light of current literature.

19 20 21 Results

22
23 Thematic analysis of the data obtained from the participants in line with the
24 design of the research is included in this part of the study. In parallel with the
25 questionnaires used in the interviews, the opinions of the participants were
26 revealed within five main themes.

27 28 Theme 1: Current Status of Social Work Education

29
30 In the introduction part of the study, it was mentioned that social work
31 education in Türkiye has been around for more than sixty years. In the past period,
32 the political, economic, and cyclical processes in the country have inevitably
33 affected social work education. Considering this process, participants were asked
34 to evaluate the status of social work education.

35 Looking at the responses received from the participants, it can be seen that the
36 current situation of social work education has both positive and negative aspects.
37 The opinions of the participants who think that the education has “positive
38 aspects” are as follows:

39
40 *“This had a positive aspect: since we were few in number, we could easily find jobs
41 as graduates.” (Academician 1)*

42 *“Regardless of qualifications, the number of people receiving master’s and doctoral
43 education in the field of social work has increased significantly. Besides, the
44 publications produced by young academics have increased in number, quality and
45 quantity and have become more visible.” (Academician 4)*

46 *“It has been seen that there is a great need for social workers in terms of the social
47 work profession, both in the public sector and in projects supported by civil society.*

The training and experience that social workers have in subjects such as community organizing skills, risk assessment, identifying urgent needs and creating interventions accordingly, and crisis intervention have become more visible.” (Social Worker 4)
“In the beginning, there was an interview system in social work education and there were few students and qualified education.” (Social Worker 1)
“Social work education is carried out from a multidisciplinary perspective on the basis of knowledge-skills-value.” (Student 4)

Three of the students participating in the study talk about the benefits of the application and research courses given in the current education:

“I believe that making theoretical knowledge concrete through applications and research is an important opportunity to gain professional skills.” (Student 1)
“I think it is a great advantage that students can gain experience in many areas of social work before starting their professional lives, thanks to practice courses.” (Student 2)
“In addition, I would like to point out that the compulsory internship practices carried out in many different fields and institutions throughout the education process have a great contribution to the field.” (Student 3)

The opinions of the participants who think that the education has “negative aspects” are as follows:

“When we evaluate the current situation, unfortunately we witnessed an uncontrolled growth, and we could not stop it.” (Academician 1)
“In the current period, as a result of the uncontrolled growth, the qualitative increase is not compatible with the quantitative increase.” (Academician 4)
“Even in formal education, there is no standard undergraduate education. This was the part that we constantly noticed and were disturbed by. So, think about it, even in the exams of the most basic courses, you cannot even use an equal level measurement tool to measure the situation of the students.” (Social Worker 2)

Majority of participants emphasize that the current open education social work education is a fundamental problem. Two of them are as follows:

“I can state that the weakness of social work education in Turkey is that social work education can be received through open education. I think that people who receive open education social work education are quite inadequate in matters such as interview techniques, writing social investigation reports, and in-depth case analysis.” (Student 2)
“I can say that the opening of open education and the decreasing quality of the existing education.” (Social Worker 3)

As can be understood from the participants’ opinions, the current situation of social work education has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, application and research courses come to the fore, while on the negative side, there is the issue of open education.

Theme 2: Strengths and Weaknesses of Social Work Education

When evaluating social work education in Türkiye, it is necessary to consider the strengths and weaknesses together. In this context, the second main theme focuses on strengths and weaknesses. Participant views on the “strengths” of the education can be exemplified as follows:

“A strong point of social workers in Turkey is that, although there is no systematic supervision, they have somehow developed the supervision system among their colleagues.” (Academician 1)

“I see young academics. After more productive hands and the number of young people began to increase, the number of translated books, book chapters, books and research began to increase in the academy.” (Academician 4)

“I thought I could give examples of the increasing number of departments as well as the increasing number of academicians.” (Academician 3)

“Universities have accreditation processes. For this reason, there are some standards they must comply with. This also improves education.” (Social Worker 2)

“Another prominent issue that I see emphasized in my social work education is the emphasis on unconditional acceptance and the uniqueness of the human being. In each course, from first year to senior year, it is emphasized that each person’s needs will be different, and students’ professional perspectives are drawn within this framework.” (Student 3)

“There is also a significant increase in the number of students who deliberately choose social work. I think this is an important thing. Maybe that can be mentioned as a strength.” (Academician 2)

Participant views on the “weaknesses” of the education can be exemplified as follows:

“Currently, no matter which public institution you go to, unfortunately we do not have a system or a supervision process. This is a huge deficiency.” (Academician 1)

“For its weakest aspects, this is the proliferation of education, the proliferation of training programs... Is the aim really to provide social work education or to open a department at a university? This raises the question.” (Academician 3)

“Not all social service institutions are suitable for students to practice social work. We tell students to work in a group, but that is not the nature of the institution. So maybe a student does not do any groups, does not collaborate with any individuals, maybe doesn’t do any community work at all.” (Academician 2)

“I can point out that social work education is not offered in English as a weakness. Including academic English could have contributed to students continuing their professional development with a broader perspective.” (Student 2)

“We see that our professional boundaries cannot be drawn because we do not have a professional law. For example, although a field such as school social work should exist in Turkey, we are still trying to explain the duties and responsibilities of the social worker.” (Student 3)

It is widely reflected in the opinions of students, academicians, and social workers that the fact that social work education is given at the open education faculty is a weakness.

1
2 *"There is a social work department in open education faculties, but I see it as*
3 *a disadvantage that it is limited to theoretical knowledge and does not allow*
4 *the acquisition of practical skills, and I think that it will directly affect the*
5 *practice negatively." (Student 1)*

6 *"I see that there are two particularly critical turning points here. The first is*
7 *open education and the second is undergraduate completion." (Academician*
8 *1)*

9 *"The opening of open education and the decreasing quality of education that*
10 *currently exists." (Social Worker 3)*

11 12 **Theme 3: Proficiency Level of Social Work Education**

13
14 Another question asked to the participants within the study was about the
15 adequacy of social work education in Türkiye. As can be understood from the
16 answers, the inadequate aspects outweigh the sufficient aspects.

17
18 *"When I evaluate the social work education in Turkey from the perspective of my*
19 *own university, I find it sufficient in many subjects. These are accompanied by*
20 *reasons such as the high number of internships and the fact that each academician's*
21 *major is social work." (Student 3)*

22 *"If we go specifically to the research course, while there is a finding such as big data*
23 *in the world, and there is such an opportunity and new methods have emerged that*
24 *can analyse big data, we see that traditional research methods and traditional*
25 *analysis tools are still used in social work education." (Academician 3)*

26 *"We say that social work is an applied discipline and profession, so this practice*
27 *needs to be seen much more in the curriculum. But as you said, in most schools and*
28 *departments, students start practicing late. This may cause anxiety in the student or*
29 *delay the preparation for the application." (Academician 4)*

30 *"There is a group of academics who do not follow current events, do not speak*
31 *English, do not follow publications in English, and do not know new research*
32 *methods. On the other hand, there are many academics who know all of these and*
33 *are really trying to produce something new, and because they are trying to produce*
34 *something new, they are blocked, unwanted, or not financially supported, even*
35 *though they know these things and want to do them." (Academician 2)*

36 *"I find it inadequate because there is no well-equipped training staff, and the quality*
37 *of education has decreased." (Social Worker 3)*

38 *"I think it would be more satisfying for me to be provided with the opportunity to do*
39 *more case analysis and participate more in individual interviews and group studies."*
40 *(Student 1)*

41 *"I think social work education is inadequate. Basically, I think that the fact that there*
42 *are many universities providing social work education has a negative impact in*
43 *terms of the quality of education and selectivity among students." (Student 2)*

44 *"I can consider the fact that there are people who have not received social work*
45 *education before among the faculty members who provide social work education, as*
46 *another factor that makes social work education insufficient in Turkey." (Student 4)*

47 *"For a professional group that basically conducts studies directly related to humans,*
48 *I think that the quality and number of courses focusing on psychology, interviewing*
49 *techniques, and traumas are insufficient." (Student 3)*

As can be seen, although social work education in Türkiye has lasted more than half a century, deficiencies in education and therefore in the field continue.

Theme 4: Aspects of Social Work Education that Need to be Improved

It is not possible to expect both basic education and higher education to be perfect in a country. Especially a relatively new and developing discipline has many aspects that need improvement. In this context, opinions were received from the participants regarding the aspects in which social work education might need to be improved.

“For example, if the core education program were to spread throughout Turkey. You know, they were studied meticulously, one by one, filtered through examples from different countries. Here is a program prepared with significant effort by social work academics, and as such, students in the east and the west will go through a similar process.” (Academician 2)

“You know, clear job descriptions and clear hour plans can be made. So, you still do it all, but what is the only clear thing right now? The minimum number of hours we are obliged to teach. But besides this, devoting so many hours to research, devoting so many hours to practice, supervision, administration, duties, etc. It would be better if there were clearer job descriptions.” (Academician 4)

“There should be standard education. Internship, practice hours, supervision hours... There should be equal levels of practice and supervision. All sections should be standard. All departments must have standards.” (Social Worker 2)

“I wish all students could see different internship areas, experience different teachers, and get to know themselves and give direction regarding this...” (Social Worker 4)

“Social work education methods should be changed with an approach evolving towards universality.” (Social Worker 1)

“More efforts should be made to draw our professional boundaries and ensure that theoretical lessons match the experiences gained in practice. The perspective on social work in Turkey should be examined and lessons should be shaped more according to practice.” (Student 3)

“A more equipped educational staff should be trained, and the professional definition should be clearly defined. Additionally, I find this aspect lacking as what needs to happen is explained but what needs to be done under the current conditions is not explained.” (Social Worker 3)

Updating social work education in terms of both curriculum and course content is reflected in the opinions of both academicians, students, and social workers:

“The point that is missing or needs improvement is curriculum design and education. I say education. So, first, I think that educators who will design the curriculum should have a new vision, knowledge, and skills.” (Academician 3)

“There are some overly critical lessons, one of which I think is gender and one of which is poverty. Courses such as human rights must be compulsory courses, not left to the student’s choice. Since these are issues that will fundamentally affect a social worker’s perspective, I think that all of these should be compulsory courses and should be taught in all universities.” (Social Worker 4)

"I believe that there are deficiencies in course content within the scope of social work education in Turkey. I think the content of many courses is like each other. However, I believe that the courses have deficiencies in terms of the field of psychology. Adding course content such as personality theories and social psychology may be beneficial in order to be able to evaluate a case in depth, gain different perspectives, produce different solutions, and learn the source of problems." (Student 2)

The opinions exemplified above show that social work education has many aspects that are lacking and need to be improved. Among these, issues such as curriculum, course contents, educational standards, and professional boundaries stand out.

Theme 5: The Future of Social Work Education

As mentioned in the introduction, the century we live in brings about some very rapid changes. It is obvious that many professions, whether old or new, will transform significantly in the near future. Within this main theme, participants' expectations for the future of social work education were revealed.

It is stated by two academics that artificial intelligence, one of the most important and exciting developments of the 21st century, will affect social work education:

"Maybe it will be artificial intelligence and social work, or education and social work. It may be possible to provide education remotely and with the help of artificial intelligence, for example. Something like this may be needed." (Academician 1)

"I am afraid whether other disciplines can play a role in social work or even take the leading role in designing the future. I think it is inappropriate to speak with a populist discourse such as some professions will die. Because we can now easily say that artificial intelligence can be used in machine learning, that is, in collaborating with the client." (Academician 3)

Although it is difficult to predict the future of the social work profession today, some participants think that the profession will gain even more importance and value:

"I am sure that when the profession is valued more, this will of course be reflected in the academy. Because we will be expected to do more in the field, our clinical skills and macro skills will also need to be better. This is therefore something that will feed the academy." (Social Worker 2)

"In fact, the most principal factors that will shape the answer to this question will be the policies to be implemented in the future and the atmosphere of the social structure. However, if I were to make a comment based on the course and transformation of Turkey's social and political structure from past to present, the need for social work professionals and therefore social work education will continue." (Student 1)

"I believe that the presentation of social work education will be updated depending on the innovations and changes taking place in the world. At the same time, I believe

1 *that the value given to social service will increase as the need for social service*
 2 *increases day by day.” (Student 2)*
 3

4 In addition to these positive change expectations, there are also opinions that,
 5 considering the general conjuncture, the quality of education will decrease further
 6 and even the risk of closure of social work departments will increase:
 7

8 *“I think that the quality of education will gradually decrease and for this reason,*
 9 *students will turn to places where the profession is developed, that is, abroad, if they*
 10 *meet the language conditions.” (Social Worker 3)*

11 *“I do not think that the future of social work and social work education will be good*
 12 *for Türkiye. Because if there is work, students come, if there is no work, students do*
 13 *not come.” (Academician 2)*
 14

15 In addition to the aforementioned views, two academics suggest that the skill
 16 dimension will be more prominent than knowledge in the future of social work
 17 education:
 18

19 *“Information is okay, but how can we do it? This is what education will turn into.*
 20 *For example, I will not go and give lectures anymore. But I will try to provide that*
 21 *skill part to the student. Perhaps such software will come out that will interview the*
 22 *student as a client and develop that skill.” (Academician 1)*

23 *“But the important thing is to invest in the skill and value base, maybe a little more*
 24 *here, I guess. How the acquired knowledge can be blended with skill, what values it*
 25 *is related to, that is, requires a little more emphasis on the integration of knowledge*
 26 *with skills and values.” (Academician 3)*
 27

28 Based on all these views, it is possible to say that digitalization will become
 29 even more important for the future of social work education. We can predict that
 30 the political, economic, and other aspects of the country will affect the future of
 31 social work education positively or negatively.
 32
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34 Discussion

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 36 As a result of the questions asked to the participants in line with the purposes
 37 of the study, social work education in Türkiye was tried to be discussed from
 38 different dimensions. These views, gathered around five main themes, are
 39 discussed in the light of current literature in this section.

40 Although it is difficult to predict the future of not only social work but also
 41 other professions, it is possible to come across some theory and practice-based
 42 content on this subject in the literature. To illustrate, Council on Social Work
 43 Education (CSWE) focuses on different scenarios for the future of social work,
 44 and four different scenarios stand out. These include (1) Adopting technology to
 45 improve practice; (2) Building on our successes; (3) Social workers are leaders
 46 everywhere and (4) Social work leadership for a high-tech world (CSWE, 2018).
 47 Within the scenarios in question, if we think specifically about education, it can be
 48 said that the leadership of social work issues can come to the fore with the

adaptation of technology to social work theories and practices. As included among the participants' answers, the following question is important for social work education in a technology-intensive future: "How might social work education prepare students for the use of technology in teaching, learning, and practise?" In terms of social work leadership, it is useful to consider the following question: "How might social work education integrate professional and interdisciplinary leadership into the curriculum to better prepare graduates for leadership roles in addressing the critical issues facing our communities and society?" The answers to these questions will be decisive for the future of social work education both locally and globally.

Reisch (2013) highlights the following characteristic situations in terms of the present and future of social work: A structural analysis of society; recognition of the significance of history, culture, and context; a synthetic and adaptive rather than rigid ideological perspective; an understanding of the interconnectedness between domestic and international issues; awareness of the role of race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation in the marginalisation of certain population. In this context, the analysis of social structure is of immense importance in terms of social work education, and it is deemed necessary to establish connections about national and international issues.

Ferguson (2017) focuses on three possible scenarios for the future of social work and social work education. The first and worst of these is the extinction of social work as a profession. The reason for this can be given as the danger of social work, which has grown especially within the welfare state, disappearing within the neoliberal system. A second and positive scenario is that the role of social work will increase, especially in providing care and shaping social policies. At this point, the increasing aging of the global population and the increasing need for more equality and social justice among the dilemmas of neoliberalism can be given as examples. The third and final scenario is that it is accepted that social work has moved away from its essence, but its role in society will be reconsidered and new practice models will be put forward. Lorenz (2017) on the other hand, argues that social work education, especially in Europe, will face a test in the next decade on the concepts of equality and extreme individualism in the face of totalitarianism, which has increased its influence after postmodernism. Considering the opinions of the participants in this study, there are opinions that social work will gradually lose its importance and that its value will increase further. Therefore, it is possible to say that the future of social work education depends on changes in social needs and the construction of new models for practice.

One of the most fundamental issues for today and the future of social work education is undoubtedly the digitalization process. At this point, participants emphasized focusing on skill training rather than knowledge, especially with artificial intelligence. Gencer & Aktan (2021) argue that the need for change in the digital age and society will also affect social work, and they discuss this process through the concept of Social Work 2.0. In this context, the question of where social work is in digitalization becomes important, and the ability of social work education to adapt to digital environments is decisive in terms of the answer.

1 Tuncay (2020) focuses on opportunities and obstacles in online social work
 2 education. According to him, in terms of opportunities, especially the topics of
 3 contribution to equality of opportunity and accessibility come to the fore, while in
 4 terms of obstacles, the economic context, globalization of education and technical
 5 obstacles come to mind.

6 Alptekin, Topuz & Zengin (2017) in their study on the current situation of
 7 social work education in Türkiye, revealed the weaknesses and strengths of
 8 education. In the study, while the abundance of weaknesses comes to the fore,
 9 attention is drawn to problems such as the opening of too many departments in a
 10 short time, the existence of open education social work programs, and the excess
 11 of teachers and students outside the field. In this study, while the issue of open
 12 education was emphasized especially by the academic participants, the issues of
 13 uncontrolled growth and extraterritoriality were also brought to the agenda. In the
 14 study of Alptekin et al., the strengths of the study are given as the potential of the
 15 increasing number of departments to provide different perspectives and the
 16 increase in the number of graduates and academic publications (2017). Sehman &
 17 Yolcuoğlu (2020) evaluated social work education in Türkiye from the perspective
 18 of open education graduates. According to the results, it was revealed that the
 19 participants felt professionally inadequate and found the supervision support
 20 inadequate. Considering that one of the prominent issues in this study is the lack of
 21 supervision in undergraduate education, this issue is seen as a common problem
 22 area in terms of both formal and distance education. Yılmaz, Koçak &
 23 İçağasıoğlu-Çoban (2022) conducted a study that included the analysis of practice
 24 courses in social work departments. One of the most important results revealed is
 25 the lack of standard among departments in terms of practice courses. In addition,
 26 the fact that there are few or no social workers in some practice institutions is
 27 among the results revealed. In this study, social work practice is one of the topics
 28 discussed, and the participants focused mostly on the content of the practices.
 29 However, as can be seen, quality and standardization are issues that need to be
 30 emphasized as much as content.

31 Zengin, Alptekin & Topuz (2023), in their study on the current situation,
 32 bottlenecks and expectations of social work education in Türkiye, focussed on the
 33 following: Overview of departments; student and alumni status; academic
 34 personnel status; curriculum and the need for indigenous knowledge; international
 35 connections and accreditation of the departments; social work education with the
 36 open education model and field practice challenges. According to the results of the
 37 research, while the negative aspects of education predominate in the current
 38 situation, the need for local knowledge and the situation of open education come
 39 to the fore. In addition, the lack of educators with a social work background, the
 40 scarcity of accredited departments, and the difficulties encountered in field
 41 applications were emphasized. Considering the results of the relevant study and
 42 the responses of the participants in this study, one of the most significant problems
 43 in terms of the current situation and near future of social work education in
 44 Türkiye seems to be the existence of open education programs. At the same time,
 45 the existence of departments that have opened uncontrollably recently and the

insufficient number of educators is also remarkable in terms of the current situation.

Conclusion

The process called education consists of different stages, and the last stage of this is the higher education level. In Türkiye, as in the rest of the world, social work education is given at the undergraduate level in universities. Social work education, which has a history of approximately sixty years, has gone through different milestones and is now offered in many universities. The results of this research, which aims to capture a general picture of the current situation of social work education in Türkiye, are briefly included in this section.

Although it is considered controversial by some, today's university students are considered Generation Z. As introduced to the literature by Marc Prensky (2012), this generation is also called "digital native". Generation Z – in other words, digital natives – was born into a technology-intensive world and has been introduced to digitalization since early childhood. This being the case, they need content that uses technology intensively in their education and training processes, from pre-school education to university. A similar situation applies when it comes to social work education. Therefore, the use of digital opportunities and content for an education curriculum that keeps up to date both globally and in Türkiye is more than a necessity. In fact, it is possible to say that digitalization in education has increased after the period that started with Covid-19 pandemic. As can be understood from the relevant literature (Davis et. All., 2019; Littlefield, 2019; NASW et. All., 2017; Kurzman, 2013; Reamer, 2013) and the results of this study, it is necessary to benefit from the driving force of artificial intelligence in social work education. It seems that not only artificial intelligence but also skill training will become more important than knowledge transfer in this century.

To summarize the points reached through the main themes within the aims of the research and research questions:

- Negative aspects and deficiencies stand out in the current situation of social work education in Türkiye. In particular, the existence of open education programs, the uncontrolled growth of departments and the shortage of qualified instructors come to the fore.
- When we look at the strengths and weaknesses of social work education, the increase in young academics and Turkish publications stand out in terms of strengths, while the lack of a supervision system and the lack of standardization of social work practices stand out in terms of weaknesses.
- Inadequacies predominate in terms of the adequacy level of social work education. While some of the student participants emphasize competence in their own universities, most participants point out the inadequacy of education in terms of both the curriculum, keeping up to date, and the teaching staff and quality.

- When we look at the aspects of social work education that need to be improved, the need for standardization in education prevails in many aspects. There is also an emphasis on making the curriculum and content more universal.
- When looking at the results for the future of social work education in Türkiye, it can be seen that there are both positive and negative expectations. On the positive side, there is the idea that the need for the profession will increase, while on the negative side, there is concern that the quality of education will decrease and even the risk of closure of departments is expressed.

This study shows that education is a phenomenon that should be evaluated multidimensionally and holistically. It should be noted that this study, in which the current situation and the future of social work education in Türkiye is evaluated from the perspectives of academicians, students, and social workers, is limited to the opinions of the participants. In future studies on the subject, the opinions of participants who teach in social work departments but do not have a social work background can be obtained. It is thought that a study based on the experiences of educators and students teaching in open education programs will make a significant contribution to the literature.

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