

AN ANALYSIS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION APPLICATIONS IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Increasing means of mobile learning, and the enforcement of certain legal regulations on distance learning have been affected individuals' approaches towards distance learning. Furthermore, due to the factors such as the increase in demand for distance learning, an increase in the interest and efforts of Public and Foundation Universities in Turkey towards distance learning is noticed day by day. This study aims to provide a general analysis of the distance learning services of the public and foundation universities that offer distance learning in Turkey. The data of this research for the development of distance learning services in Turkey were obtained from literature review, legal regulations and as the primary source the web pages of higher education institutions, which offer distance-learning services in Turkey.

Keywords: Distance and Open Learning in Turkey, Tendencies in Open and Distance Learning, Problems in Open and Distance Learning

1. Introduction

There have been rapid developments in communication technologies and the increase in mobile learning means as a result have greatly influenced the expansion and development of open and distance learning in Turkey similar to the world. It is known that mobile devices and internet access will expand further and become less expensive in the forthcoming years. The developments in 3G, 4G, GSM and satellite technologies will also influence and expand the uses of mobile technologies in the daily life (Yamamoto, Ozan and Demiray, 2011, p.379). The developments in mobile instruments such as smart phones and tablets are also an indicator of that.

In Turkey, although certain preliminary efforts were shown at the beginning of open and distance learning applications in higher education, the actual expansion started with the foundation of Anadolu University Open Education Faculty in 1982 under the Statutory Decree 41 (Anadolu University, 2012).

With regard to the provision of distance learning services in Turkey, "Directive of Distance Higher Education Based on Inter-University Communication and Information Technologies" as one of the most comprehensive legal regulations with regard to the presentation of distance learning services identified the purposes of distance undergraduate and graduate education based on inter-university communication and information technologies. The standards related with the identification and crediting of the courses and programs with the directive, identification of client and server universities, student acceptance, record, test and course passing methods, financial provisions and the courses to be taken from the institutions and organizations abroad are outlined herein. This directive currently forms the legal basis for opening distance learning centers by the universities. In recent years, universities have been conducting distance learning programs and activities within the scope of this directive. "Informatics National Committee Directive" (2000) also provided an important development for the presentation of distance learning services. Major changes that concern the field of open and distance learning were provided in Article 171 (p. 49-50) of the law 6111 (2011) -which is also defined as omnibus bill- and in article 44 of the law 2547. With these regulations, opening distance learning programs by universities based on information and communication technologies was provided with a legal status.



To identify the principles required to be complied with in the courses and programs covered by the “Directive of Distance Higher Education based on Inter-University Communication and Information Technologies”, the “General Principles on the Courses/Programs to be Opened within the Scope of Distance Learning” (2012) which was prepared by the Informatics National Committee further to article 5 of the related directive outlined the principles that should be complied with to develop and assess distance learning courses and programs, and the characteristics that are suggested for interactive and non-interactive distance learning courses in order to ensure the uniformity of concepts and terminology in the studies developed within the scope of open and distance learning. According to Can (2012); despite the rapid quantitative development of open and distance learning in Turkey, efforts and legal regulations that would contribute to the qualitative development of the field are also needed.

However, new regulations and standards are essentially required to conduct distance learning activities in Turkey in a more planned, organized and systematic manner.

Table 1. Public Universities Offering Open and Distance Learning in Turkey, and Their Characteristics

University	Status	Program Type	Commencement of Activities
Adnan Menderes	Distance Learning Center	Not Active	2010
Afyon Kocatepe	Distance Learning Vocational School	Associate Degree, Course	2011
Akdeniz	Distance Learning Center	Associate Degree	2010
Amasya	Distance Learning Center	Not Active	2011
Anadolu	Open Education Faculty Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree, Undergraduate Completion, Certificate, Primary Education, High School	1982
Ahmet Yesevi	Distance Learning Faculty	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree	2001
Ankara	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate Completion, Associate Degree and Certificate, Course	2002
Atatürk	Distance Learning Center Open Education Faculty	Graduate, Undergraduate, Undergraduate Completion	2009 2010
Balıkesir	Distance Learning Center	Associate Degree	2009
Bartın	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree, Certificate	2010
Bilecik Şeyh Edebali	Distance Learning System	Course	2011
Bingöl	Distance Learning Center	Not Active	2012
Bitlis Eren	Distance Learning Center	Associate Degree	2011
Boğaziçi	Distance Learning Center Lifelong Learning Center	Undergraduate, Graduate, Open Education and Corporate Training Programs,	2002
Cumhuriyet	Distance Learning Center	Undergraduate Completion	2009
Çanakkale 18 Mart	Distance Learning Center	Course, Certificate	2010
Çukurova	e-Çukurova Vocational School	Associate Degree, Course	2003
Dicle	Distance Learning Center	Undergraduate Completion	2010
Dokuz Eylül	Distance Learning Center	Undergraduate Completion, Graduate	2010
Düzce	Distance Learning Center	Not Active	2010
Ege	Ege Vocational School	Graduate, Associate Undergraduate, Project, Course	2003
Erzincan	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Associate Degree, Certificate	2011
Fırat	Distance Learning Center	Project, Course, Training, Seminar, Certificate, Associate Degree, Graduate	1992-2002
Gazi	Distance Learning Vocational School IT Institute	Doctorate, Graduate, Associate Degree, Course, Training, Certificate	2006
Gaziantep	Informatics Department	Course, Graduate,	1998
Hacettepe	Distance Learning System	Course	NA
Harran	Distance Learning System	Course, Training, Project, Conference	1999
İnönü	Distance Learning Center	Undergraduate Completion, Undergraduate, Associate	2009



		Degree, Graduate	
Istanbul	Distance Learning Center Open and Distance Learning Faculty	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Undergraduate, Undergraduate Completion, Certificate,	2009 2011
Istanbul Technical	Distance Learning Center	Course	1996
Karabük	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree, Certificate	2009
Karadeniz Technical	Distance Learning Center Vocational School	e-University Project, Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree and Certificate.	2002
Kırıkkale	Distance Learning Center	Associate Degree, Certificate	2009
Kocaeli	Distance Learning Center	Course, Graduate, Associate Degree	2005
Marmara	Distance Learning Center	Course	2009
Mehmet Akif Ersoy	Distance Learning Center	Undergraduate, Graduate, Associate Degree, Personal Development Programs, Course, Training	2009
Mersin	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Associate Degree, Certificate	2002
Namık Kemal	Distance Learning Unit Distance Learning Center	Course	2008
Ondokuz Mayıs	Distance Learning Center	Undergraduate Completion, Graduate	2009
Ortadoğu Technical	Distance Learning System	Course, Certificate	1998
Sakarya	Distance Learning Center	Course, Certificate, Graduate, Associate Degree	1994-2002, 2005
Selçuk	Distance Learning Center	Course	2000
Süleyman Demirel	Distance Learning Vocational School	Undergraduate, Associate Degree, Course	2008
Trakya	Distance Learning Center	Course, Associate Degree	2006
Uşak	Distance Learning Center	Associate Degree, Course, Project	2009
Yıldız Technical	Informatics Department Distance Learning Center	Course, Certificate	2002

Source: Created by researches after the web pages of the universities offering open and distance learning services were examined.

Table 1 shows that there are open and distance learning applications at Doctorate, Graduate, Undergraduate, Undergraduate Completion, Certificate and Course levels at 45 Public Universities in Turkey during the academic year 2012-2013. It is noted that open and distance learning applications are conducted at "faculty" level at Anadolu University, Ataturk University and Istanbul University. It is noted that open and distance learning applications are generally configured as "Distance Learning Center", "distance learning vocational school" (VOCATIONAL SCHOOL), or "distance learning unit or system". Furthermore, the expansion of open and distance learning applications at higher education institutions is noted after 2009.

Table 2: Quotas Allocated for Open and Distance Learning Programs with the Central System Test According to OSYS (Student Election and Placement System) Guide for the Academic Year 2012-2013

University	Associate Degree Student Number	Associate Degree Formation	Undergraduate Student Number	Undergraduate Formation
Çukurova	400	Vocational School		
Afyon Kocatepe	200	Distance Education Center Vocational School		
Amasya	100	Vocational School		
Ankara	650	Vocational School		
Gazi	810	Distance Education Center Vocational School		
Akdeniz	300	Vocational School		
Bartın	100	Vocational School	95	Faculty of Literature
Beykent	-----	-----	120	Fac. Of Economic & Adm. Science and Literature



Bingöl	150	Vocational School		
Bitlis Eren	100	Vocational School		
Mehmet Akif	50	Vocational School		
Trakya	300	Vocational School		
Fırat	50	Vocational School		
Erzincan	150	Vocational School		
Atatürk	25000	Open Education Fac. (Justice)		
	10 departments will provide quotas	Open Education Faculty	26000	Open Education Faculty
	50	Vocational School		
Anadolu	25000	Open Education Faculty (Justice)	31000	OEF (Philosophy, Turkish language, socio.)
	30 departments will provide quotas	Open Education Faculty	29000	Open Education (Economy)
	-----	-----	15000	Open Education (Administration)
Süleyman Demirel	500	Distance Education Center Vocational School	50	Engineering
İstanbul	380	Vocational School		
	-----	-----	100	Faculty of Literature
	-----	-----	550	Faculty of Economics
	-----	-----	60	Faculty of Communication
	-	-----	37000	Open and Distance Learning Fac.
Marmara	150	Vocational School		
Karabük	250	Vocational School	720	Literature, Science, Eco. Adm. Engineering
Kırıkkale	200	Vocational School		
Kocaeli	250	Vocational School		
İnönü	100	Vocational School	300	Eco. Adm. Scie. Faculty
Celal Bayar	75	Vocational School		
Mersin	1000	Vocational School		
Sakarya	600	Vocational School	680	IT Fac. Eco. Adm. Eng.
Cumhuriyet	100	Vocational School		
Karadeniz Technical	150	Vocational School		
Uşak	100	Distance Education Center Vocational School		
TOTAL	57.265		140.675	
Foundation Universities				
Plato Vocational School	670	Vocational School		
Atılım	80	Vocational School		
Beykent	80	Vocational School		
Beykoz Logistics Vocational School	80	Vocational School		
Fatih	216	Vocational School	39	Fac. Of Letters & Science
İstanbul Aydın	120	Vocational School		
Maltepe	-----	-----	90	Eco. Adm. Sciences
Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Türk Kazak	100	Vocational School	400	Inf. Tech. And Eng.
Zirve	-----	-----	150	Ec., Adm. ,IT, Eng
TOTAL	1346		679	

Source: 2012 Student Election and Placement System (ÖSYS), Higher Education Programs and Quotas Guide, Head of Measuring, Election and Placement Department (ÖSYM, 2012).



Table.2 shows that within the scope of central placement for the academic year 2012-2013, Public Universities allocated quotas for 52.265 students of Associate Degree programs and 140,675 students of Undergraduate programs for open and distance learning. Meanwhile, Foundation Universities allocated 1,346 quotas for Associate Degree programs and 679 for Undergraduate programs. The total quota allocated for open and distance learning programs within central placement in the academic year 2012-2013 is 199,965. Also considering the students learning in the Graduate, Certificate and Undergraduate Completion programs of open and distance learning, it is possible to say that open and distance learning applications have developed and are continuously developing in Turkey in terms of quantity.

One of the most important points that draw attention in Table is that a limitation of quota was brought to Economy, Administration and Open Learning programs of Anadolu University Open Education system. Introduction of a quota limitation to these programs in which any student who prefers them could study without a quota limitation can be explained with the expansion of open and distance learning applications in Turkey, and that quality has also started being taken as the basis in addition to quantitative developments in open and distance learning. Table 2 indicates that distance learning programs have also been opened in the field of engineering. Meanwhile, the programs mostly concentrate in the fields of Philosophy, Turkish Language, Sociology, Geography, History and Economic & Administrative Sciences. More concentrated programs have been opened in the fields of economy, business administration etc. These fields are preferred by institutions as they are the fields that require less cost.

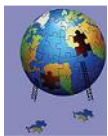
Table 3. Foundation Universities Offering Open and Distance Learning in Turkey, and Their Characteristics

University	Status	Program Type	Commencement of Activities
Atilm	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Associate Degree	2008
Bahçeşehir	Distance Learning Center	Graduate , Course	2008
Başkent	Distance Learning Center	Not Active	2011
Beykent	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree	2008
Beykoz Logistics Vocational School	Distance Learning Center	Associate Degree	2011
Bilgi	Distance Learning System	Graduate	2001
Bilkent	Distance Learning System	Course	1993
Fatih	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree, Course	2011
Işık	Distance Learning Center	Graduate	2009
İstanbul Arel	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate Degree, Course	2011
İstanbul Aydın	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Associate Degree and Certificate	2009
Maltepe	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Associate Degree, Certificate	2006
Okan	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Certificate, Course	2009
Plato Vocational School	Distance Learning Unit	Associate Degree	2011
Sabancı	Distance Learning System	Graduate	2001
Zirve	Distance Learning Center	Graduate, Undergraduate Certificate, Training,	2011

Source: It has been created by researchers after the web pages of the universities that offer open and distance learning services are inspected.

Table 3 shows that open and distance learning applications are offered at Graduate, Undergraduate, Associate, Certificate and Course levels at 16 Foundation Universities in Turkey during the academic year 2012-2013. Open and distance learning applications of Foundation Universities are generally organized as "Distance Learning Centers".

According to ÖSYS central placement results in 2010, the number of students included in open education system was 255.927 (ÖSYM, 2010), and that in 2011 was 253.738 (ÖSYM, 2011). In



the academic year 2010-2011, together with the new student enrollments, totally 1.713.923 students are identified in the open education system (ÖSYM, 2012). This also indicates a serious request. According to ÖSYM (2012) data, excluding distance learning programs with 2012 central placement, 223,785 students were placed to open education faculties only (İstanbul University, Ataturk University and Anadolu University). 90,178 of these students were not placed in any higher education programs before, and 37,707 of them are senior students.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to the result of the research, it is noted that higher education institutions are involved in different structuring efforts such as open education faculties, open and distance learning faculties, distance learning centers, distance learning units, distance learning vocational schools, and IT Institutes. With regard to program types, learning is provided at Graduate, Undergraduate, Undergraduate Completion, Associate Degree, Certificate, training and in-service training levels. The expansion of distance learning applications after 2009 may be explained with the Higher Education Council's (YOK) orientation towards realizing legal regulations on this field.

In open and distance learning, the legal regulation that foresees not charging any other fees than open education and distance learning teaching materials, and the transfer of up to twenty percent of the total of student contribution fees to the education organizations that offer academic consulting service (2012, Official Gazette 28396) brings into question how financial problems/needs would be covered during the presentation of open and distance learning services by public universities especially.

The problems in the field of distance learning have been considered by various authors (İşman, 2008; Özkul and Aydın, 2011; Can, 2012) and many problems such as lack of a teaching design, not using learning methods suitable for distance learning, defects of measuring and assessment system in learning, lack of general assessment of the system at the universities that offer distance learning, unclarity of the management form of distance learning, lack of a certain quality and standards chain, insufficiency of teaching quality, problems of access to university education, insufficiency of research and development, lack of covering student preferences, and failing to provide sufficient support to the providers of distance learning service have been mentioned.

Mainly the quantitative development in distance higher education in Turkey which has been continuing with a gradual increase year by year (Open Education Faculty Management) should be directed towards a qualitative development with the support of national public and private organizations mainly (Can 2005, p.261). Efforts should be spent to develop certain systems, quality standards and suitable methods.

To overcome the foregoing challenges and support the quantitative development also qualitatively, there is an obvious need for structuring, presentation, course content creation, program type identification of distance education services and for creating certain standards on the competencies of learning elements in distance learning. In this context, there are certain requirements such as identifying legal and academic regulations and standards in opening distance learning centers, taking supply & demand analysis as the basis in opening distance learning programs, and organizations special training programs to cover the need for teaching staff and employees qualified in distance learning. Creating certain academic and financial standards, obtaining public support and interest in open and distance learning practices in Turkey may also provide significant contribution for the qualitative development of the field.

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