

**USES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGIES AT MEGA  
UNIVERSITIES: CASE STUDY OF ANADOLU UNIVERSITY-  
TURKEY**

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**ABSTRACT**

Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty (OEF) has served more than 520.000 students over 8 countries in total for the last 18 years by certificate, graduate and associate degree programmes. Various technologies are being used related to the necessities of the system and the progress of the era. These are: Printed materials, Television programmes (recorded-live), Radio programmes, Academic counseling, Computer aided education and Teleconference.

The use of new technologies will become widespread because of the access opportunities of the students to the technology increase. It is aimed to develop and widespread the technical opportunities of the faculties like lecturing by internet, interactive communication and audio-video conferences.

**Keywords:** Distance Education, Open Education Faculty, Anadolu University, Distance Education Technologies

## **USES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGIES AT MEGA UNIVERSITIES: CASE OF ANADOLU UNIVESITY–Turkey**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Distance education came into practice in 1982 and it was a turning point for Turkey because it was impossible to apply any distance education project for so long and in an appropriate way.

Although it was the first trial, Centre for Letter Education which was founded in 1960, was the starting point in 1974 for systematic distance education. The aim in this school was to educate teachers in different branches and it started education in 1974-1975 academic year. The system could not be run for a long time so the students were transferred to formal schools in 1978-1979 academic year. In the same years, in a project to educate teachers in Teachers College it was planned to use audio-video and interactive education opportunities. However after a year the project was given up. In another project -Yay-Kur- the aim was to educate people at all ages, but it was also not successful.

In Turkey, a new formation took place in higher education in 1982. Anadolu University, which was formerly an academy, became a university in 1982 with this formation.

In the same year a decision was made about the Open education Faculty in Anadolu University and first students were registered to Open Education Faculty.

Anadolu University was volunteer for a system which was unsuccessfully tried before. In order to form its infrastructure to be used in distance educatin Radio-television school was founded. When the distance education started in this school, most of the first graduates were employed in Radio-television Education Centre in a studio which was founded jointly with German and with a team who completed first test broadcast. An agreement was made with professors and instructors in different universities to work on printed material.

In 1993 the distance education system was viewed once more and the valid application for today was started. Since then, the Open Education Faculty runs license programs Economics and Business Administration Faculties and also Complimentary Education and Certificate Programs.

The Open Education Faculty gives education to the largest group of students in quantity in Turkish education system. The first year approximately 30.000 students were registered. Distance education is very important in such a country like Turkey with a young population. The mission of Open Education Faculty is important in this respect. In 1999-

2000 academic year the number of students is 153.000. The Open Education Faculty has a total of 520.000 students.

## **TOOLS USED IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE CHOICE OF TECHNOLOGY**

It is clear that in distance education the communication between teachers and students depends on technology and there are various alternatives in the use of technology. This variety provides students with study opportunities in order to make them successful. Radio and television broadcasting, audio-visual cassettes, tele-conferencing, computer and internet and printed material are educational tools in distance education. World of technology both provides information about different technologies and also defines their strengths, limitations and differences (Global Distance Educationet 2000a).

In distance education the choice of technology is affected by both opportunities and the demands of target community. The economic and social situation and learning ability of the target community is important in the choice of tools. On the other hand, well prepared printed materials are the basic teaching materials in distance education. The Open University in England, for instance, uses 80% printed material, 10% radio-television, 10% interactive seminar and summer schools (transferred by Banar, 1996, p:55). German and France also have similar applications considering printed material as their basic.

It is possible to evaluate tools according to their uses. Developing technology determines the variety of tools. For instance, the use of computers and satellite broadcasting provides innovations in distance education. Tools also shape educational methodology.

### **\*One-way tools**

It is known that with classical distance education tools teachers and students do not see each other, so they are not influenced by each other. The same place or time is not shared in this system. The connection is through books, radio-television programmes and audio-visual cassettes.

### **\*Two-way tools**

With the help of satellite broadcasting television, radio, telephone and computer are becoming basic tools in distance education. These tools overcomes the problem of place and time difference between teachers and students. It is possible to reach to every part of the world with these tools. In a way they provide face to face communication.

## **The use of One-way tools in Open Education Faculty**

### **Printed Material Aided Distance Education Tools**

It is known that printed materials are the basic materials in distance education. A well-written book, brochure, magazine and newspaper both

provide students with information thus makes them knowledgeable and also overcomes learners' loneliness problem which is the biggest problem in distance education.

The Open Education Faculty of Anadolu University, which has 520.000 students, would certainly take the economic situation of the country into consideration. Besides, it should provide students equality in opportunities. (The students may not reach to other sources) Thus, the base of educational tools in the Open Education Faculty is books. Moreover, printed materials reach students and offices easily, the students do not need to have extra expenditure. These materials can be kept and when needed they can be used as vocational reference. These opportunities make printed materials a valuable basic tool. Printed materials in the Open Education Faculty are not different from those of the others in the world. These materials are:

- \* Books
- \*Newspaper
- \*Radio-television broadcasting booklet
- \*Student guides
- \*Booklets

### Books

The printed materials which are sent to students are the first source to be used. For this reason, the language in the material should be clear, long and complex structures should be avoided, information should be presented briefly, unnecessary explanations should be avoided. Moreover, photographs, graphs and tables should be meaningful and effective (Willis 1994, p.127). So the preparation of a book is a long process.

When we consider the book preparation process we will be aware of the fact that distance education printed materials are different from other printed materials with respect to education system as well.

Economics and Business Administration programs in the Open Education Faculty regard books as basic educational tools. The books which are written according to the principles of distance education system have chapters and one chapter includes one subject matter. These books are written by professors who are experts in the subject by following the principles and features of distance education system. However in some cases, the design of the book can be different. The main aim is to write a material from which, when it is read, everybody could get the same results. At the beginning of each chapter the aim of the unit, sub-titles, and questions are given. When students read this they clearly understand which subject they are going to deal with and what they will learn. Then , information about the topic, maps, tables, graphs, photographs take place. In these parts; students are also asked questions and asked to combine the new topic to the previously learned material. At the end of each unit there is a summary and evaluation questions. Thus the unit has been revised. Moreover, at the end, there is reference which can direct students to other

sources when needed. Questions, summary, notes take place in these books to make students study by themselves and to stimulate them.

In the first years, books were sent to students as fascicles but lately students have been sent books as a whole. In the early years books were sent to either homes or to the Open Education Faculty offices, but later not to cause chaos books were sent only to the offices. In the packets which are sent to students there are only books, no other materials or documents. However, in the Theology project which started in 1999, students are sent a brochure describing how they would use the books enclosed in their books.

In 1999-2000 academic year more than 200 books were written including the new publication of the books were written in the past. So far, nearly 400 books have been written in the Open Education Faculty including complimentary projects. Approximately 1500 editors and writers have worked in preparation of these books. The two surveys which were conducted about the printed materials in ten years time show that the books are becoming better in time. (Gokdag, 1986, Banar 1996) Moreover, it was founded that printed materials used in Open Education Faculty overcomes the source material problem in Turkey as in the example of Nursing program. ( Gunes 1992 p.8)

### Newspapers

One of the best known ways of preventing students feel alone is newspaper. The aim is to enable connection with the Open Education Faculty although it seems one-way interaction. Barkan notes that the newspaper is preferred because it is cheap and alluring printed-visual material (Barkan, 1981, p.177)

The first newspaper of the Open Education Faculty published with these beliefs in mind is Anadolu Gazetesi, which was first published in 1983. It was published for about five years. The eight-page newspaper which was published in every two months aimed at communicating with students by pasting to students home address. The news were chosen from students and university aiming at attracting students of the Open Education Faculty. Anadolu Gazetesi can be compared to Sesame which was published and delivered student by offices in England and Open Teach which was published by Open University in Netherlands. (Gurcan, Demiray:1998, p.205)

A bulletin called Ac kogretim has been published in every three months since 1995. Ac kogretim also has similar bulletins in the world. The trainee student newspaper of the Communication Sciency Faculty in Anadolu University has a special publication in every three months for students of distance education. In this newspaper such topics as distance education, student problems are given importance. These newspaper and bulletins are free for students.

## Radio-Television Broadcasting Booklet

Until 1999-2000 academic year the date and time of programs were announced by the offices, registration guides, television (TRT teletext) and some daily newspapers. In 1999-2000 academic year, the broadcasting program, which is planned every year by Radio-television Education Centre Planning Department and Radio Department was sent to students without any fee.

### Student Guides

In registrations students are sent Registration Guide. In these guides students are informed about how to complete registrations, which offices they could go for registration, what kind of procedures they could have in offices and in the Centre, how and where they would pay. Students are also informed about their trainee works and examination regulations.

Registration guide is aimed at first year students to inform them of the first year's lessons and examinations. Reregistration guide is prepared for upper classes. The difference is that reregistration guide includes information about lectures of upper classes.

### Booklets

In some projects like Theology, some guide books were written to inform students how to study the books and how to use the educational tools and were sent to students with their books. For computer aided education booklets have also been written. These booklets have three parts; one for students, one for teacher and one for technical application. Student part informs students about how to make use of system by himself, how to use the programs and how to solve the technical problems. Teacher part informs teachers about how to help students by using this system. These booklets have been used in laboratories.

### Audial Distance Education Tools

In distance education the use of audial devices is varying. Programs usually prepared as audial cassettes or radio broadcasting have been sent to students with their books and students are expected to make use of these cassettes. Live or recorded radio programs should be broadcasted by a channel which can be received from all over the country. Radio is an important device in respect to its capacity for direct application. (The best example is Orson Welles' radio program) If the radio is used with the other opportunities and the special programs are produced for radio, an effective use is achieved. It can be used for small groups and it can also be used for motivation in bigger groups (Global Distance Education 2000b) These reflect how radio is used effectively although it provides one-way interaction.

In the Open University audial educational tools have been used as a support to other materials. Audial tools are used most effectively in foreign

language classes (English, French, German) as well as Turkish Language and Modern Turkish Literature. The year of 1999 - 2000 it has been planned to broadcast 103 radio programmes each of them 20 minutes.

Radio programs are formed based on books by the cooperation of experts of the lecture and producers. These programs are produced as the form of dramatization, lecture and discussion. Broadcasting is generally on TRT1 so that a large group of people can receive and the programs are broadcasted three times a week each session lasting 40 minutes.

It is known that audio tools which are not very expensive both to produce and to be obtained by the students help students learn effectively in each condition such as while walking, working, driving, using the computer. However, Open Education Faculty nowadays has been making less use of these audio tools. The only use is broadcasting previously produced programs.

### Visual Distance Education Tools

Vision is an effective means for education when it is combined with sound it becomes stronger. Distance education makes use of this technology-television for different purposes. As in the Open University in England students in the Open Education Faculty in Anadolu University are either sent cassettes or they make use of broadcasting or both.

The use of visual material in the Open Education Faculty at the beginning was in the form of production of television programmes and broadcasting them on the TRT, which has a nation wide network institution. In time this technology used for different purposes in varied forms.

In the first year of the Open Education Faculty 207 programs were produced. So far totally 1281 lecture programs have been broadcasted and every year approximately 300 programs are being produced. In the early years of the Open Education Faculty in order to emphasize the section in the chapter writer, editor and producer of the program worked together and produced a television program. Later, writer and editor had more control, thus most of the sections in the books were presented. Nowadays, when it is meaningful to televise any topic, a program is being produced.

Before the final examinations in 1998–1999 academic year, two preparation for examination programs were produced for ten lessons. In these programs each lasting 30 minutes, questions that were asked in previous examinations were analyzed and solved by the experts of the topic. It is possible to consider these programs as supportive programs for students.

Apart from these lectures introductory programs have been produced to introduce new projects by defining printed materials, television-radio programs and examination regulations. Besides a news broadcasting of which the agenda changes in every 15 days has been produced. In this program the news and announcements for students of the Open Education



Faculty, activities in the university, lives of students and graduates take place.

After the television programmes are produced by combining two or three lectures cassettes are produced following the treaty with TRT (Turkey Radio and Television Broadcasting Company) These cassettes are broadcasted on TRT 4 after they have been supervised for the rules and regulations of TRT. The dates and times of broadcasting are determined at the beginning of each academic year. In 1999-2000 academic year programs are broadcasted everyday from 10 to 13 in weekdays. These programs are rebroadcasted from 21 to 24 in the same day. Besides at the weekend from 18 to 21 lectures are broadcasted. The dates and times are planned by considering the students who have to go to work. Moreover, for Western Europe Project these programs are recorded and the cassettes are sent to students as sets.

### **Two-way Tools**

It is possible to use audio-visual and computer aided tools interactively.

#### **Television**

Last summer, there was a change in the use of television as a one-way tool in Open Education Faculty after a try for examination preparation. During the broadcasting of preparation for examination program a new program was planned to communicate with students. This was the live program which was thought from the beginning but could not be applied because of monopoly in broadcasting. (Later universities got the right to broadcast but they still have limitations. Live program was broadcasted on TRT) It is planned to have live programs in examination periods this year.

#### **Teleconference**

Teleconference is defined as a system which provides communication between (at Least) two people in different places (Inglis, 1988, p.265) This simple definition may not be enough for such an important contemporary tool. However, the experts in distance education are interested more with the opportunities for communication it brings.

Each kind of communication that people have in face to face communication can be achieved in tele-conferencing. Moreover it is cheaper than the other tools, motivative and reaches people who live in different places at the same time. (Global Distance Educationet 2000c).It can be used in:

- \*traditional lecturing
- \*seminar/workshop
- \*panel discussion
- \*interaction (Global Distance Educationet 2000c)

Tele-conferencing is also used for business meetings and transferring information in and between universities. This technology which provides interaction and sharing of materials is suitable when information transfer is needed. When it is used in science like medical sciences and engineering it enables observation of experiments and operations by many people so, the use of tele-conferencing is considered a tool which increases the quality of education. Oclahoma University, which has a distance education programs, is one of the universities which makes use of this technology.

The best known and mostly used technology today is tele-conferencing and it is used for different purposes in the Open Education Faculty. After the system was founded in 1997, firstly between the two universities in Eskisehir (Osmangazi and Anadolu) and then with the combination of Middle East Technical University to Kazakhstan Ahmet Yesevi University the lectures were shared. In 1998, it was used for opening speech and presentations in Second International Distance Education Symposium held in Ankara where is the capital city of Turkey, it is nearly 300 km away from Eskisehir. And it has been used for academic counseling in the year 2000. In North Cyprus Federal Republic, teleconferencing is used for traditional lectures two days, eight hours a week between the office of the Open Education Faculty in Lefkosa and the Centre.

The Open Education Faculty now has a tele-conference system which enables the communication of three centres. It can be possible with the help of other institutions to combine to and communicate with several centres. It is certain that borders of education can go further depending on the opportunities of using technology. However what we say never loses its importance.

### Computer Aided Distance Education Tools

Computer adds opportunities to the developments in educational technology. Firstly it enables students freedom. After the use of computer at home, students have been able to make use of education opportunities whenever they want. Internet also enables students to receive desired information in desired rate and time. Cyber libraries and universities are in fashion. Naturally, the Open Education Faculty should make use of these opportunities.

Computer aided works in the Open education Faculty are completed by CAE (Computer Aided Education) Centre which started works in 1990. In 1992 the Centre completed some of its distance education tools and connected to internet.

In the 1993-1994 academic year, Anadolu University started to computer aided education laboratories for Business Administration, Economics Departments of the Open Education Faculty. Each laboratory has 18 to 30 computers. More than 50 classes are included in the programs and these include summary of the subjects, exercises, explanations and examples and pre-tests which prepare students for examinations. These programs aim at

learning in laboratories. Students make use of laboratories free and they are able to reinforce their knowledge by the help of computer.

There are many opportunities in the preparation of materials in the computer. Firstly, computer increases the visual quality. For instance, it can make use of animation, has many opportunities for color and able to form graphs. Moreover, individual students use it and program is interactive, so students get feedback immediately.

### Internet and Pre-tests

Internet is regarded as a democratic and interactive communication system. Internet enables these opportunities: It is easy to receive any information, provides opportunity to use many tools at the same time,(for example; camera, video, writing, graph) it is easy to use, gives chance to transmit information to many people at the same time (like transmission of books, articles etc.) Distance education can make an effective use of the internet. Although the learning depends on students' background, needs and speed, it improves through internet.

One-way or interactive communication is possible through internet. Reaching at the faculty by using web pages in the internet is one-way but interactive communication. In the same manner the use of the programs which has special forms is one-way and interactive communication. There are also programs which enable communication of teachers and students and these are interactive styles. For instance, they meet through e-mail or chat programs.

The Open Education Faculty tries to follow the innovations by considering its capacity. The Open Education Faculty shares the innovations with the students considering their demands. This year pre-tests have been given through internet as a new application , students can take examinations throughout twenty-four hours whichever class or how many examinations they like to. Pre-test examinations were given on December 27, 1999 from 60 lectures. Broadcasting was started January 3, 2000. (Mutlu, Y Imaz 1999, p.3 )

This application has been planned to be carried out this application. So, how many students have made use of computer aided education has been observed and presented as reports.

### Web Site and e-mail

E-mail is a communication system which enables students to reach information that could be reached with formal letters without internet. It makes the communication of the faculty easier both with students, in the institution and among institutions. It enables the communication between learners and teachers. The web site of the Open Education Faculty includes information about the faculty, administrators, opportunities to communicate

with administrators. There is also information about examinations and pre-tests.

### The Use of Telephone

Telephone is the oldest tool that enables the communication. Rowntree notes that telephone can be used in education by combining students to the lectures. Telephone is also used in tele-conference. (Rowntree, 1994,p. 239)

At the beginning telephone was used only to solve problems in the Open Education Faculty but now it has been used for education. It especially makes it easier for students to find answers to their questions on live programs on television. It is used both as a communication and as an educational tool.

### Interactive Communication

#### Academic Counseling

Interactive communication is the most well known and frequently used method of teaching in classical education . Naturally this method has been used in distance education, but one of the problems in a distance education system is that the instructors and the learners cannot come together. This situation willingly or unwillingly takes away the learner and the instructor from their existing educational atmosphere and incites the feeling of being alone. Interactive education is of course practiced with the help of technology. But providing this necessitates a certain investment. However the contribution of conditions of interactive education formed with the frame of possibilities to the quality of education cannot be discussed.

Academic counseling is an important teaching atmosphere of distance education. The basic aim here is to enable students to ask question to the instructor and he learns any subject they failed to understand in books or on television programmes. There is always an academic counseling in the programs of economics and business administration at the Open Education Faculty. At the beginning of each academic year, it is announced where the academic counseling centre will be opened. Academic counseling for any lesson and its counseling day, place and hour can be learnt form the Open Education Faculty offices. No other document except an identity card is asked for when they attend the lessons. The Open Education Faculty, in order to fulfil academic counseling, has cooperated with other universities on the condition that lecturers are suitable. The Open Education Faculty has been using other lecturers in giving academic counseling in places where other university support is limited. This way of academic counseling is being carried out in 26 cities.

Academic counseling service were put into practice for the duration of 2-3 months in 16 cities. This number has increased gradually and for this academic year 55 centres were informed about academic counseling.

The Open Education Faculty will start a new program in the academic year 2000-2001. This program, which will bring about a new practice in interactive education from the point of the Open Education Faculty, covers the departments of English language teaching and training primary education teachers. In the English language teaching program there will be an interactive education during the first two years. Teachers who will give this interactive teaching will attend a course about distance education technologies at Open Education Faculty in summer.

### Student Bureaus

When looked at from the student profile of the distance education program, it is seen that students are all from different corners of the country. This situation causes the student to be alone with his problem and to feel alone. One of the ways of solving these problems is to open bureaus in or nearby places where the students live and this will at least give him a chance to get information about his personnel matters. At the beginning of the Open Education Faculty, there was eight bureaus, one of which was in Eskisehir. Today there are offices in 77 cities including the one in Lefkosa. The functions of the head office and of the other bureaus are different. The other bureaus are in charge of these functions: registration, renewing registration, registration cancelling, student certificate, preparing student identification card, military service postponing, giving licence and pre-licence diploma and keeping documents about students. The Head bureau is in charge of giving diploma and certifying equality documents in schools abroad.

In the academic year 2000-2001, the Open Education Faculty plans to do registration and renewing of registration with the on line system. This system undoubtedly aims at increasing the quality of the service given to the student. With the quality, it is meant that the service given to the student must be of the same standard and given in a timely. From the point of view of the institution, it is thought that the cost must be low after forming the infrastructure. In order to maintain the system that is going on, it is possible to direct all studies about students to the computer. Besides the registration and renewing the registration, gathering the information about students can be used for the connection between student and the Open Education Faculty. Learner can reach the manager and the instructor and can solve his/her problems. Using a computer in and outside of the institution can speed up the communication. Besides, it provides a better use of time rather than wasting time at meetings or on the telephone.

### Communication Centre

At the beginning, the students' relations with their faculty was carried out coincidentally by someone from the faculty that the student got on the phone. At first Public Relations Office was founded but it was thought to be insufficient. Later, Anadolu University established "the Communication Centre" in order to learn and solve the problems of the students from different locations. Each question sent to this centre by fax, telephone, letter

or e-mail is considered and solved thoroughly. Frequently asked questions are being responded to and discussed on the television programmes called "News From Your University".

## CONCLUSION

The Open Education Faculty admitted 30.000 students in the academic year 1982-1983. Almost two decades later, the number of students studying at this faculty has reached 152.000. In spite of the increasing population and the demand for a higher education of this increase in population, the demand for the Open Education Faculty seems not as high as before. Together with the appearance of this situation, Anadolu University has started to research the problem. This research involves designating the problem and finding a solution. Anadolu University considers this research as the process of the reformation and studies have been put into practice by Distance Education Planning Unit. In these studies carried out by the dean of the Open Education Faculty and presidency of Anadolu University, it has been planned to include teaching planning, graphic planning, author of a main text, experts and program editors to which the media production directors are connected. These studies are serving for the purpose of strengthening the position of Anadolu University among the other universities in the years 2000.

This study claiming that productivity plus quality will bring success. All the things done so far at Anadolu University have been gone over and examined. Future planning has been done considering what to do and how to do.

The Open Education Faculty, using both traditional and new educational technologies, meets the demands of students. While the planning of written materials is continuing, however, using new technologies has been planned in order to make an effective distance education system. The Computer, which could not be imagined to be used in distance education in 1960s and which is now used for almost every purpose, is in a position to be education tool of future as Rowntree stated. However, how much better and effectively the tool will be used depends on entirely on the socio-economic conditions of this country.

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