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AN OVERVIEW OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS: TÜRKİYE EXAMPLE

***Annotation.** The idea of «using digital opportunities effectively» began to be considered as a need in the field of education and training long ago, and has turned into a mandatory practice in the COVID-19 Pandemic. In this process, the advantages of distance education methods that can be integrated into formal or face-to-face education have been seen once again. Distance education is a multidimensional process involving education conducted over long distances and mediated by instructional technology. Distance learning, one of the virtual environments, has eliminated the time and place dependence for the individuals and appealed learning style of each individual. Web-based distance education has been made possible in recent times because of the convergence of the growing interest in life long learning and unprecedented rapid developments in information and communication technology. These developments have had great impact on teaching and learning in general and distance education in particular. When the distance education is planning, it should be taken decisions that affect all aspects of the education system. In this study is to explain distance education programs.*

***Key words:** Internet, education, distance education, distance learning, instructor.*

***Анотація.** Ідея «ефективного використання цифрових можливостей» давно почала розглядатися як потреба у сфері освіти та навчання, а під час пандемії COVID-19 стала обов'язковою практикою. У цьому процесі ще раз*

виявились переваги методів дистанційної освіти, які можна інтегрувати у формальну або очну освіту. Дистанційна освіта – це багатовимірний процес, який включає навчання, яке здійснюється на великих відстанях і опосередковується навчальними технологіями. Дистанційне навчання, одне з віртуальних середовищ, усунуло залежність від часу та місця для окремих осіб і зацікавило стиль навчання кожної людини. Дистанційна веб-освіта стала можливою останнім часом завдяки конвергенції зростаючого інтересу до навчання впродовж життя та безпрецедентно швидкого розвитку інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій. Ці розробки мали великий вплив на викладання та навчання загалом і дистанційну освіту зокрема. При плануванні дистанційної освіти необхідно приймати рішення, які стосуються всіх аспектів системи освіти. У цьому дослідженні пояснюються програми дистанційної освіти.

Ключові слова: Інтернет, освіта, дистанційна освіта, дистанційне навчання, викладач.

Research Type: Review.

Introduction. Technological innovations and developments, which continuously affect the educational environments, have improved the previous ones in each time and also brought about occurrence of new concept and techniques. In the last decade, the rapid growth of technology, especially Internet technologies, have led to the opportunity of doing most of the face to face educational activities in the virtual environment. In Distance Education, delivery types are classified as asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous distance education is an alternative model of learning where students and teacher aren't able to be in the face to face interaction and be located in the same environment at the same time (Carswell, 2002) [10].

Synchronous distance education connects students and instructors via real-time communication. As a director, guide and organizer, teacher is one of the crucial parameters in a face to face educational environment, so it is in the distance education

environment. Distance education is a structured procedure including the need of preparing contents, assignments, lecture notes etc. In such a structured environment, teacher is of vital importance (Gursul, 2010: 170-171) [15]. The Internet is expanding the global village, thereby, enhancing communication, collaboration and the cooperation of peoples with each other across the world. As a result, cross-border education is growing worldwide and creating greater access to education in developing countries (Farkindele, 2012: 309) [14].

Distance education is affected by factors such as the opportunity, equipment, the ability of the students to use technology, attitudes towards distance education, family and teachers who provide education. It is seen that students can develop an attitude towards the functioning of the education system as well as towards the lessons (Kurnaz, Kaynar, Şentürk Barışık & Doğrukök, 2021: 470) [17].

Aim. The purpose of this article is to explain how to make distance education.

Method. In this study was conducted a literature review.

Literature Review.

What is Distance Education?

According to Barker & Hall (1994) The concept of «*Distance Education*» or – «*Distance Learning*»; includes the use of the Internet and web-based materials, interactive television, computer conferencing, and multimedia modules [3]. Distance education is the most effective educational concept for today's educational world that has similar characteristics to traditional education systems. In fact, Distance education can be defined as all the processes after the walls in a traditional school have been removed from the center. It is platform where student-teacher and student interaction are realized in different time zones in different time periods (Sevindik, Çınar, Yolcu & Yiğit, 2017: 156) [25].

Distance education is a planned systematic application of education technology in which the source and the recipient are in separate (distant) environments in most of the learning-teaching processes, and that allows its recipients for «individuality, flexibility and independence» in terms of teaching age, purpose, time, place and method; and materials, tools technologies and methods such as written and printed

materials, audio tools, technologies, face-to-face education are used in learning-teaching processes, and communication and interaction between the source and the recipients are provided by interactive integrated technologies (Uşun, 2006: 20) [23].

Distance education, being in a certain age range, being in a certain time period or being in a certain environment and developing technology encourage people to connect remotely (Arat & Bakan, 2011) [1]. Thousands of adults want to continue their education up to the university level, but they cannot continue their education due to restrictions like geography, vocation, and age so the distance education is a good option.

The four main elements are the innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system. Learning environment is a system that consisting of instructors, students, course materials and technology etc. (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2009) [26]. In this context, when developing distance courses, there are issues that need to be considered (Moore & Kearsley, 2005) [21]. Some of these are:

- Determination of content
- Configuring and sequencing of the materials
- Selection medium
- Determination of teaching strategies
- Ensuring interaction
- Evaluation of learning
- Giving feedback to students
- The choice of production methods to create course materials (Boz-

Yüksekdağ, 2012: 9) [6].

Technology and Distance Education.

Synchronous media tools that provide real-time, audio-video communications are necessary social, teaching and learning platforms for effective interaction and interconnectivity for distance education delivery.

Asynchronous media tools, such as:

- Electronic Mail - Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail, etc.;

- Web Resources-virtual libraries, web sites and web pages;
- Learning Management Systems (LMS)-Moodle;
- Interactive environment-Moodle discussion forum; and
- Social Interconnectivity-Twitter, MySpace and Facebook, all these provide suitable platforms for effective online distance education (cited in, Fakindele, 2013: 316) [14].

Technology represents an educational tool for both teachers and students. Teachers can organize technology-related projects or assignments for the students. These technology based assignments may represent independent or cooperative work. In the discipline of instructional design, technology plays various instructional roles. A tools approach assumes that student learners can flexibly apply general purpose software, such as word processing or spreadsheets, to various educational topics. This approach can be contrasted with the use of software developed specifically to teach a particular topic. Educators worldwide are launching a revolution using technology in their classrooms and schools. It includes programmed texts, TV programs, computer software, and entire courses of web-based instruction. The growth of Cross-Border Higher Education (CBHE) globally in recent times has serious implications on students, academic staff, educational programs and higher educational institutions according to UNESCO (2010) [27].

Internet is a search engine or virtual library for scientist at universities to share ideas and data on scientific projects. With the developments in the Internet and the global network system, the universities immediately took the advantage of using World Wide Web to deliver instruction, regardless of the physical distance and time. The effectiveness of an online instruction is mainly measured by how much interactive the process is, how much it satisfies the students' needs, and how it eliminates the communication barriers between the involved participants (Isman, 1997: 60) [13].

Student-Faculty Interaction.

Brownrigg (2005) said there is a strong relationship between student-faculty interaction and Web-based classes [9]. Moore & Kearsley (2005) stated after

presentation of content, lecturer supports students to interaction with content. Besides, lecturer is responsible for the designed testing and evaluation to ensure students' progress [21]. Wegmann & McCauley (2007), suggest some strategies that will help the development of online interaction [28]. These are:

- It should be measured in technological knowledge of students.
- Each lesson should begin with activities that require students to become acquainted.
- Office hours should be kept regular.
- Connection should be established once a week for each student through e-mail, discussion board reply and assignment response.
- It should be respond e-mail of students within 24 hours
- It should be added rubrics to gauge participation of students (cited in Boz - Yüksekdağ, 2012: 246-247) [7].

Student-Student Interaction.

Cooperation among students is an important component of activities. The students need to combine their forces to learn more. They need to understand and reflect social skills such as recognize, support, communication and trust, to work together on Web. Asynchronous online communication provides to students the possibility to interact anywhere, at any time to ask questions, share ideas, and freedom of inquiry (Lobry de Bruyn, 2004) [18]. In a study examining the social existence toward asynchronous online learning environments, the students stated that interaction is important for the development of social existence (Joyner 2009). Russo & Campbell (2004) stated that frequency of interaction is important in online environments for the students do not feel alone themselves (cited in Yüksekdağ, 2012: 246-247) [7].

Fisher (2004) noted that interaction was perceived more flexible and learner-centered by students in online environments, because it provides facilities such as learning, thinking, resource gathering and participating in discussions. Time management strategies like self-regulation, self-motivation and self-direction are affected by student character traits, disposition, and the personality of the distance

learner (Moore & Kearsley, 2008), therefore, are critical to student's success, persistence and satisfaction in a Distance Education program [21].

Distance Education in Türkiye.

It is imperative for countries to provide quality education that would empower their people to compete and benefit from the growing socio-cultural global exchanges of the 21st century. Today, the Internet is available in schools, as well as in many students' homes in Türkiye. Through the Internet, students and professors converse through a variety of forums, including e-mail, online discussion forums, bulletin boards, and web pages. The development of distance education in Turkey has taken place in proportion to the socio-economic conditions of the country. Although the first known beginning instance of distance education was in the 18th century in Turkey, the first activities of distance education were started in the middle of the 20th century. The first institution that carried out distance education activities at the university level was established as the Open Education Faculty in 1982, and it carried out this activity over radio and television in the first years (İşman, 2011) [12].

Today the people all around the world have been experiencing hard times since the early 2020's on account of the Corona virus pandemic. In our country the pandemic has brought a great deal of alterations in people lives and the authorities have been proceeding to make compulsory regulations in several areas such as flexible working hours, quarantines and curfews. In order to minimize the spread potential of the pandemic, the authorities have made some decisions. "Social distance" and "wearing mask" have become indispensable for our "new normal" lives. One of the measures taken to struggle with the pandemic has been distance education. Students have to take distance and online education during this exceptional period (Daş, 2022: 3) [11].

Today, Eskişehir Anadolu University, Istanbul University and Erzurum Atatürk University Open Education Faculties come to the fore as the drivers of distance education. Also, 2018 PISA data indicate that Turkey has an effective online portal and that many of the teachers and school principals have the necessary technical and pedagogical skills to integrate digital devices into education.

According to the results of the research conducted by Kurnaz, Kaynar, Şentürk Barışık, & Doğrukök (2021: 468) there is a significant difference in the university students' positive views about distance education in terms of their social lives, socio-economic factors, ability to learn independently, making themselves willing to learn, their willingness to go to school, adaptation to the lesson plan, school performance of the students, before and after course studies, devices they use for the education, the internet connection quality they have, their capability level to use the technology, access to course resources and the system of the university they are studying at [17].

In their study called, -Teacher-Student Interactions in Distance Learning, Terzi and Celik (2005) studied the importance of teacher-student interaction on knowledge and aptitude improvement by distance learning in isolated environments, especially for university students. Results of the study, comparison of student related data between teacher-related data represents integrative approach that helps clarifying the complex interrelationships between person, process, and product variables in a distance learning environment (cited in, Gursul, 2010: 171) [15].

According to the results of the research conducted by Daş (2022), it was concluded that the students who had high level of motivation were more successful than those having low motivation level. The participants who had positive attitudes to online teaching invested low mental effort in online courses. In another words, the students who invested very high mental effort in online classes also had negative attitudes to online learning [11].

According to the results of the research conducted by Kara (2022) it has been seen that the online applications, which are widely used in distance education, strengthen the communication between the instructor and the students due to their nature. It is thought that experts, who are unlikely to attend the course due to various reasons, can contribute to the courses in a practical way through webinars or similar activities. It has been determined that various digital or mobile applications used within the scope of measurement and evaluation methods can provide effective control and therefore bring development [16]. Education should be re-planned in the

light of emerging opportunities and difficulties in the new normal and the post-Covid period (Yelgen, 2022) [29].

According to the results of the research conducted by Berber (2022) the most of the participants suggested that presented authentic examples of language and culture, and they had to make accommodations because of various students' access tools and technology. This demonstrates that instructors put on afford to enhance their teaching and solve the problems. However, the majority of them stated that there aren't enough opportunities to collaborate with native speakers, and their students don't do classwork well or better prior to COVID-19. This indicates that the academic success of learners is low. Another significant result is that the majority of the participants claimed that they didn't learn new things about their students, and they were not interested in teaching online again in the future. This shows that instructors have negative perceptions about online language teaching in general [2].

Conclusion and Suggestions.

Distance education can enrich traditional face-to-face instruction and make it more individualized, valid, accessible, and economical (Isman & Dabaj, 2005: 59). [13]. In recent years, several studies focused on the instructors in distance education, have been conducted. One of them, Mills & his colleagues' (2009), a qualitative study applied at a college of education at a public regional university in south Texas, to determine faculty's perceptions of value and viability of distance education. The results of the study indicate that faculty members studied do not uniformly recognize or embrace the use of distance education [20].

In Murphy and Rodriguez (2009)'s study on the other hand, teachers' perspectives on learner centredness in a distance learning context are examined. In their study, 42 Canadian high school teachers' perspectives are analysed. Results of the study highlighted that asynchronous nature of distance learning provide the teacher with a flexible pace, respect to individual needs, catering to different learning styles, allowing diversity in assessment, one-on-one attention, support and personalised attention [22].

Menchaca & Bekele (2008) tried to find out how the tools used by the instructors affect the learning environment and how the programmatic success is provided. Their study shows the availability of multiple tools, added flexibility to the learning environment; technological tools should appeal to multiple learning styles; collaboration, reflection, and building a learning community are important strategies supported by multiple tools; while, participant satisfaction, appropriate prerequisite skills, and faculty and administrative involvement ensured programmatic success [19]. Beldarrain (2006) stated that interaction and collaboration can be provided asynchronous and synchronous learning networks through technology. Christianson, Tiene and Luft (2002) stated that interaction was not constrained in online environment, unlike it improved more in these environments. Russo and Campbell (2004) stated that student-faculty interaction is generally special, reinforced by individual e-mails with feedback and evaluation in online environments. They added that it should be developed special activities like photos, audio components including greeted to eliminate sense of isolation (Russo and Campbell 2004). Bates (1995) stressed the use of technology in the distance education. The number of students is important. Because choice of medium depends on the number of students choosing courses. On the other hand, students need education to use effectively technology. The researcher added that technology is a no problem, it is a tool. The problem is what will be taught, how to teach [4]. Bonnel (2008) stated that the distance learners found valuable critiques and suggestions that they received from their tutorials and peers [5]. In addition to Johnson (2008) and Su (2006) stressed that the absence of interaction will lead to feelings of loneliness. Also, all of the participants (100%) asked the counseling of experts in the field, and feedback. 75% of participants asked immediate feedback (Boz, 2008) [8].

Communication technology promotes students' interactivity, collaboration and social networking. Effective cognitive and social presence are created in technology-mediated learning environments; consequently, opportunities for effective dialogue and bridging of the transaction distance within the community of inquiry (Johnson, 2008) are promoted and better prospects for enhancement of understanding between

learner-instructor, learner-learner and learner-instructional materials in the field of distance education are possible. In other words, interaction, interconnectivity and interactivity between the autonomous learner, the instructor and a collaborative community of learners is possible only through some form of suitable communication technology. Learner-learner support and encouragement are also needed and should be promoted for successful, effective and efficient learning to take place in distance education (Saba, 2000) [24].

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