



Focus Report :

Distance Education in Turkey

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ABSTRACT :

Turkey is in both Europe and Asia, and has Anadolu University with 760,859 students (in 1998, according to the World Bank) which is the largest mega-university in the world, founded in 1982. Anadolu University currently has three distance-education faculties ; - the Open Education Faculty (OEF), the Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Business Administration. Other forms of distance education through the Ministry of National Education include the Open High School (OHS), the Open Primary School, and the Open Vocational and Technical Education School. Today, Anadolu University has, including the distance education system, 12 faculties, 9 vocational schools, a state conservatory and 12 research institutes. Although Turkey has the technological capability for more interactive two-way communications, all distance education including learner support services are through the older one-way technologies. Various social and political constraints remain to be negotiated.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Although the implementation of distance education in Turkey started in 1982, there were discussions for distance education in general as early as 1927. This concept was thought to be beneficial in increasing the literacy rate among the citizens in Turkey. In those years, other countries had already initiated education through correspondence by mail. Due to the common belief that people cannot learn reading and writing without a teacher, the idea of distance education was not considered more seriously in Turkey until 1956. Between the years 1927 and 1955, distance education merely

remained as an idea. The first distance education project was initiated at the Research Institute of Bank and Trade Law, in the Faculty of Law, at Ankara University, in 1956. In this implementation, bank employees were educated through correspondence by mail. In 1961, the Centre for Education through Letters was established as a sub-division of the national Ministry of Education. This scheme targeted people who wished to complete secondary education without attending face-to-face courses.

These courses were expanded in 1966, with the establishment of the Advanced Teacher Education School. Then in 1975

and again in 1978, attempts to establish an Open University were unsuccessful. In other words, in Turkey, 'Education through Letters' (in Turkish, called YAY-KUR) was implemented as correspondence education. However, the required efficiency and success were not attained.

Again in 1970's, Eskisehir Economics and Commercial Academy, the Institute for Education through Television became a pioneer in the distance education area. In 1981, a governmental campaign was started to reduce the illiteracy rate in Turkey. In this attempt, television was an important educational tool. The programme achieved a considerable success with a considerable increase in the literacy rate. In the same year, The Turkish Higher Education Council provided an opportunity to implement distance education at Turkish universities. After these pioneering years, we witnessed a well-planned, scientific and efficient approach to distance education in Turkey. The institutions of distance education in Turkey are Anadolu University in Eskisehir and the Ministry of National Education.

The current forms of distance education at Anadolu University are the Open Education Faculty (OEF), Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Business Administration. The other forms of distance education are through the Ministry of National Education and include the Open High School (OHS), the Open Primary School, and the Open Vocational and Technical Education School.

2. DISTANCE EDUCATION AT ANADOLU UNIVERSITY :

The foundation of Anadolu University goes back to 1958. In dual mode, the university has undertaken distance teaching since 1982. Within this time period, Anadolu University has made considerable contribution to the Turkish Education System. Today, due to the distance learning system, Anadolu University is considered one of the ten mega-universities of the world. The origin of Anadolu University was the Eskisehir Academy of Economical and Commercial Sciences (EITIA) founded

in 1958. During the reorganization of the Turkish Higher Education System in 1982, EITIA joined with the State Academy of Engineering and Architecture (DMMA) to form the framework of Anadolu University.

Today Anadolu University has, including the distance education system, 12 faculties, 9 vocational schools, a state conservatory and 12 research institutes. The three faculties, which constitute the distance education system of the university, are the Open Education Faculty (OEF), the Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Business Administration. These faculties also employ the distance mode of education (see for details <http://www.anadolu.edu.tr>).

The faculties that constitute the distance education system of Anadolu University are organized in a conventional university structure. Each faculty has a dean, a faculty board, an executive committee, and administrative bodies. A vice-rector is responsible from the coordination of the activities of the faculties in the distance education system.

2.1 The Open Education Faculty :

The Open Education Faculty (OEF) conducts two-year associate degree, degree completion, and certificate programmes. This faculty has a special status among the three schools because the tasks of student administration, course books printing, production of radio and TV programmes, data processing services, academic counseling activities and the student examinations are all assigned to this faculty. In another words, the Open Education Faculty has the responsibility of providing services to the system where as the other faculties have only academic functions (see for details <http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr/>).

OEF Academic Departments

There are four academic departments in the OEF;- the Departments of Distance Education, Continuing Education, Economics and Administrative Sciences, and Health Programmes. Among these, only the latter two are active in offering associate degree study with vocational school status. The Department of Distance Education is

established in order to offer graduate study in the field of open and distance learning. The Department of Continuing Education designs and administers continuing education programmes to students coming from various backgrounds.

OEF Academic Programmes

During the 1998-1999 academic year, the OEF had a total of 650,000 students. It offers education in 15 different programmes. These programmes are Sales Management, Office Management, Banking and Insurance, Business Management, Public Relations, Nursing, Health Institution Management, Tourism and Hotel Management, Accounting, Home Economics, International Trade, Social Sciences, Public Administration, Midwifery Training, and Health Technician Training.

There are also the West Europe Programmes, which are an extension of the Department of Economics and Administrative Sciences, started in 1987. These programmes are coordinated by the branch office established at Cologne, in Germany. The Economics (BA degree), Management and Organization (BA degree), and the Foreign Trade (associate degree) programmes are offered to Turkish citizens living in Western European countries - mainly in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and Austria. The examinations are held at 11 centers (Vienna, Brussels, Cologne, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, Stuttgart, the Hague, Paris, and Bern) separately from the examinations held in Turkey.

Various certificate and degree completion programmes are being conducted in the Department of Continuing Education. The Education Associate Degree Programme was established in 1985 to provide associate-degree study for primary school teachers who are already graduates of teacher schools. Approximately 135,000 primary school teachers have now graduated from this programme receiving associate degrees.

The Degree Completion Programme was established in 1990 to provide bachelor degree study for high school teachers who were already graduates of Education

Institutes in the fields of Turkish language and literature, mathematics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and biology. In 1993, English, French, German, artistic drawing and physical education fields were added. Approximately 35,000 high school teachers have now graduated from this programme. In 1997, a degree-completion programme was started for primary school teachers already having associate degrees. During the 1998-1999 academic year, there were around 35,000 students enrolled in this Degree Completion Programme.

Agriculture and Veterinarian Programmes are offered to provide associate degree study to the technicians employed at the Ministry of Agriculture. By the end of 1995, the Agriculture Programme had 4,500 graduates, and the Veterinary Programme had 1,500 graduates (Özkul, 2003).

2.2 The Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Business Administration :

The other two faculties within Anadolu University are the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Business Administration, and these also employ distance education. These faculties started in 1993. Both conduct four-year programmes leading to a BA degree. Additionally there is one course offering an associate degree within two years.

The Faculty of Economics offers distance education programmes in Labour Economics and Industrial Relations, Public Administration, and in Public Finance (see <http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr/bindex.html/>).

The Faculty of Business Administration offers programmes in Accounting and Finance, Marketing, and in Management and Organization (for details see <http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr/cindex.html/>).

3. DISTANCE EDUCATION BY THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION :

The Ministry of National Education (MONE) provides distance education through the Open Primary School, the Open High School (OHS), and the Open Vocational and Technical Education School. Every Turkish citizen is provided with the

service of distance education so as to realize equality of opportunity in education and to support education given in the institutions of secondary education. Within the scope of distance education services, the open primary education school and open education high school are available

3.1 The Open Primary School :

The Open Primary School (OPS) offers the opportunity to complete their 8-year primary education by distance education to those individuals who had entered primary school and who could not continue to secondary school for any reason. There were 137,847 students in the OPS during the 1999-2000 academic year.

3.2 The Open High School :

The Open High School (OHS) is a widespread secondary education programme, which has been operating since 1992. The OHS started with 45,000 students, and reached a student population of 90,000 by 1996. The purpose of the OHS is to allow traditional and non-traditional students, who for one reason or another have not completed secondary schools, with an opportunity to earn a high school diploma. The OHS curriculum is the same as for traditional high school students.

The OHS provides a service for those students who were not able to continue in formal education institutions for various reasons, or who have passed the age for formal education or who want to move to open education high school while still in formal conventional secondary education.

(For a review of the OHS between the years 1992-1997, see Demiray, 1998).

3.3 The Open Vocational and Technical Education School :

The Open Vocational and Technical Education School (OVTEs) provides education opportunities to citizens who have finished their primary education but have not been able to receive vocational education for various reasons, by implementing correspondence education and - where necessary - face-to-face education programmes, and teaches vocational knowledge and skills to those who have not

been able to enter any institution of higher education.

4. SOCIO-CULTURAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS :

4.1 In Higher Education :

Understanding the socio-cultural context is the key to developing appropriate support systems for distance learners. In her study of the socio-cultural context of Turkish distance learning, Murphy (1991, p.225) observes that "two elements of Turkish culture - patronage and an oral tradition - seem to play a significant role in distance learning even in modern Turkey." Patronage systems that foster values of obedience, honor, and respect for authority are evident in the educational system through students' respect and loyalty toward their professor and bonds of friendship and mutual assistance among classmates. She further observes that Turkey's roots in an oral tradition imply that people are likely to express themselves in terms of practical situations rather than in abstract terms. Numerous researchers support the importance of understanding a culture and ways of learning before implementing a solution. Turkey's roots in an oral tradition, along with its emphasis on rote memorization and the sacredness of text, make independent textbook learning less suitable.

In 1998, the World Bank recognized Anadolu as the world's largest university, and today has a total of 760,859 open education students (for student population by year, see Table 1). In Turkey, the schooling rate is 22.4% for higher education including open education. About 35% of the higher education population are in the distance education system of Anadolu University (Özkul, 2003).

The average age of the students is 24 years, with the age distribution given in Table 2. Male students comprise 60% of the total. About 70% of the students have full-time employment, and 8% part-time employment. Handicapped students comprise about 15% of the total. Residential data show that about 53% of the students

Table 1 : Anadolu University Student Population by Year

Academic Year	Number of Students		
	Open Education Faculty (OEF)	Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Business Administration	Total
1982-83	-	29,445	29,445
1983-84	-	45,378	45,378
1984-85	-	64,141	64,141
1985-86	-	97,313	97,313
1986-87	-	106,000	106,000
1987-88	-	133,160	133,160
1988-89	-	174,738	174,738
1989-90	-	256,169	256,169
1990-91	-	292,220	292,220
1991-92	-	326,701	326,701
1992-93	43,597	354,587	398,184
1993-94	114,811	421,712	536,523
1994-95	155,337	414,398	569,735
1995-96	167,903	360,638	528,541
1996-97	185,708	346,547	532,255
1997-98	221,821	371,371	593,192
1998-99	243,092	393,347	636,439
2003-04	289,659	471,200	760,859

source: Özkul, 2003, <http://www.anadolu.edu.tr/>

Table 2 : Age Distribution of Students

Age /years	Percent of Total
Less than 20	5.2
20-24	32.6
25-29	26.8
30-34	16.9
35-39	12.3
40-44	4.6
More than 45	1.6

Özkul, 2003, <http://www.anadolu.edu.tr/>

Table 3 : Open Primary and Secondary School Student Population

Type of School	Number of Students		
	Male	Female	Total
Open Primary School	83,074	54,773	137,847
Open High School	249,096	119,012	368,108
General Secondary Education	221,507	109,335	330,842
Open Vocational and Technical School	27,589	9,677	37,266
Industry Vocational High School	20,821	1,312	22,133
Vocational High School for Girls	37	3,119	3,156
Trade Vocational High School	4,839	3,870	8,709
mam-Hatip High School	1,892	1,376	3,268
Total	332,170	173,785	505,955

source: MONE, 2001, http://www.meb.gov.tr/stats/apk2001ing/section_5/3.%20Current

live in cities with a population above 500,000, 16% in cities with a population between 100,000 and 500,000, 18% in provincial towns with a population between 20,000 and 100,000, and the other 13% in rural towns with population less than 20,000.

The composition of students in the OEF varies from programme to programme. In some programmes, such as the Teacher Training Programme and the Nursing Education Programme, students are already working in their areas of specialization and they tend to be older students. In the Tourism Certificate Programme, on the other hand, students are typically younger and are not yet working in their subject area. In the Business Administration and Economics Programme, the percentage of working students has increased from 30% in 1983 to 70% in 1990. Overall, the percentage of females enrolled is increasing. The general age range of students across all subjects in the OEF is older than that found in traditional institutions. The students range from 17 years to 80 years old. The majority of students are married, and the average family has three children (Demiray, 1995).

A follow-up study on 768 students who had graduated from the OEF found they mostly live in rural areas of Turkey; the graduates of OEF were mostly men; the

average age of graduates was higher than that of those attending traditional departments; the rate of graduation was higher for students who had parents with a high level of education; and there was a strong correlation between daily course study hours and the graduation rate (Tekin & Demiray, 1989).

4.2 In Primary and Secondary Education

The numbers of students in each of the open schools for primary and for secondary education are given in Table 3.

In the OHS, there 223,184 students in the 1998-1999 academic year. (for details see <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupc/cg/02.htm>, and http://www.mezunusa.com/turkey/1_5_2.cf m - 52k).

5. TECHNOLOGIES USED :

The technologies used to deliver distance education programmes are typically one-way and designed to reach the masses. The two major providers of distance education are the Open Education Faculty (OEF) at Anadolu University in Eskisehir and the Open High School (OHS) through the Ministry of National Education (MONE).

The OEF teaches mainly at the university

level, using print materials, broadcasts and some face-to-face teaching called academic counselling. The OEF prepares all its own teaching materials. Print materials (ie the coursebooks) are sent to students on a term basis. About 200 programmes are broadcasted on state television every year. Also there are radio programmes for language courses. Initially, academic counselling was given in 22 provinces.

The technologies used by the Open High School (OHS) and by the Open Primary School through the MONE for all programmes include specially designed textbooks and other printed materials including newsletters and bulletins, television and radio broadcasts.

Examinations by the OEF and the MONE are offered in a variety of locations, usually in cities and larger towns. Computer-aided instruction, while not typically used in distance education, is being introduced into schools nationwide.

TV programmes that are crucial in reaching the OEF students are produced in the Radio-Television Production Center (ETV), which is the main department of the faculty. The abbreviation ETV derives from the center's original name as the Institution of Education via TV. In 1977, the School of Cinema and Television was established in order to train the workforce of the Institute.

The language of the TV programmes is Turkish, and 2399 TV programmes have been produced for these projects so far. Besides TV, radio in parallel with printed material is also used by the OEF. The number of radio programmes produced is 441. Since the OEF has no independent broadcasting facilities itself, programmes are broadcasted through the government-run facilities. TV programmes are broadcasted every weekday for 25 weeks, amounting to 45 hours on one TV channel, and 8.5 hours on another, for all programmes of the OEF. Radio programmes are broadcast for only 2 hours per week. (For details of the television programmes of Anadolu University see: <http://tv.aof.edu.tr>.)

The university has 81 administrative centers throughout the country's 83 provinces. In 58 of the centers, academic counselling is provided, and students can

attend non-compulsory evening classes several times per week. Only 8 percent of the student body has access to computers, so 14 centers also provide internet connections. The university's website recycles past examinations to help students prepare for future tests.

The broadcasting system extends to Nicosia in northern Cyprus, as well as to Cologne in Germany, which enables the university to reach Turks living in Western Europe. A pilot marketing course was recently taught through videoconferencing at a Turkish language preparatory school in Kazakhstan.

The university recently received a boost when the MONE designated it to prepare the country's preschool and English teachers, beginning this fall. The ministry's decision was based in large part on Anadolu's infrastructure, which will enable it to offer instruction even in Turkey's eastern regions.

To improve access to programmes which are broadcast only once, Video Education Centers are set up in some cities.

In 1992, a computer-mediated course was started between the OEF and the University of New Mexico, the University of Oklahoma, Florida State University, Arizona State University, and the University of Wyoming. There is now a greater tendency toward web-based instruction programmes in most universities and other educational institutions. Some now offer online degree or certificate programmes. For example, Anadolu University also offers online self-test opportunities, since 1998. Anadolu is also trying to offer dual mode courses, to understand how feasible, effective, efficient, and appealing it is to offer online programmes, and has founded a virtual university in 1998. Starting in 2001, Anadolu now offers online two-year degree and certificate programmes.

Since 1999, computer-assisted learning material is made available for 17 main courses at computer laboratories in 14 provinces. The courseware is basically drill-and-practice type that combines text, image and sound, developed by the Computer Assisted Teaching Center. Computer-based tutoring systems have also been produced by this center.

Since the mid-1990s, use of the Internet in Turkey has shown rapid development. The increase was especially great during the period of 1996-1997. In July 1996 only 7000 Turkish hosts were connected to the Internet. This number has reached 15,000 by January 1997. Private companies and business firms lead the country in Internet use and everyday approximately 20-30 new companies with com.tr addresses join the Internet society.

According to a recent study (Pak & Askar, 2000), there were 22,282 registered com.tr users in Turkey. This study revealed that only 3% of the whole population were internet users and the average number of users per computer connected to the internet was 752, which was very high compared to other European countries. Only 7% of the population had internet access, and only 12% had computers at home. Of those with computers at home, users spent their time mostly for e-mailing (23%), conducting research (22%), or chatting (16.5%).

However, another study (Aydin, 2001) has indicated that most Turkish internet users (54%) connected to the internet at home, and most of the other users (27%) accessed the internet at an Internet Cafe, of which there were approximately 1200 at that time. This study also revealed that most internet users in Turkey were male and their average age was 18-24 years. This study also indicated that the internet in Turkey was used mostly for chat and playing games. Other purposes included downloading music or other software, e-marketing business.

In a study (Bayram, 1999) on the effectiveness and problems of virtual classrooms in Turkey, a survey of 356 Turkish internet users was conducted, and the results showed that the main problems were related to current hardware and software, and cost constraints. The other problems were more basic - relating to computer skills.

Some large companies and institutes in both the public and private sectors recognise the power of online education and have started to look for opportunities to offer web-based training to their employees, but progress is still limited.

There have been many attempts to integrate the internet into Turkish primary, secondary and higher education since 1990. The World Bank supported two projects; - the Computer Experimental School and Project for Globalization in Education 2000, to support the formal primary and secondary education. However, the educational uses of the internet are still in the early stages.

A few private schools and institutions are allowing their students to use the internet to communicate with foreign peers or conduct searches for information related to their homework.

Through the Project for Globalization in Education 2000, new computer rooms were established in 2,451 primary and secondary schools in 80 cities and 921 towns in Turkey (Akkoyunlu & Orhan, 2001). The second phase of this project will continue with 3000 schools.

Apart from Anadolu University, some other universities offer online certificate and degree programmes. The Middle East Technical University (METU), for example, offers several online certificate programmes in information technology, English language, and in computer skills. Both METU and Bilgi University now offer online eMBA programmes. Bilkent University and Istanbul University now offer videoconferencing.

The government Higher Education Council (YÖK) has established a committee called the National Informatics Committee (EMK) to facilitate academic cooperation through sharing educational resources among universities, and perhaps in the future to establish a virtual university in Turkey.

6. SUMMARY :

Because of the speed with which distance education was conceived and implemented there have been problems not unlike those faced by other developing countries. Although Turkey considers itself part of the European community, its educational problems place it rather with its Asian neighbours.

The major problems include;

- 1) The limited range of courses being

offered, the use of computer technology, the delays of registration and examination forms, the appropriate use of transmission tools, and user identification by a computer system.

2) Lack of studies concerned with developing distance education technologies in distance education.

3) Lack of in-service training in the new technology.

4) The legal and budgetary restrictions which confront all developing countries.

5) Lack in infrastructure such as electricity, postal and telephone systems.

6) Designing an effective and suitable learner support system.

7) Technologies used to deliver distance education programs in Turkey are typically one-way and non-interactive

8) Although Anadolu University is ready to broadcast its own courses and now has the technology and facilities for local and nationwide broadcasting, current regulations prohibit it from live broadcasting.

9) Low-participation in face-to-face lessons (and face-to-face lecturing at local centers is limited to certain courses)

10) Two elements of the Turkish culture-patronage and the oral tradition - seem to play a significant role in distance learning even in modern Turkey (Murphy, 1991) and Turkey's patronage system influences traditional face-to-face education .

11) Learner-technology interface design is poorly developed

12) Lack of up-to-date technology.

13) The technology generally is inefficient, inequitable and of low quality.

14) When compared to students of conventional universities, the distance education students at Anadolu University are not accepted socially as formal students (this negative attitude is attributed to the relative easiness of entrance to the open education).

Compared to developed countries, the educational uses of the internet in Turkey are still in their infancy. Compulsory primary education in Turkey has recently been extended from five years to eight years, and some problems have been encountered in the expansion, including rooms, hardware and human resources. Distance education

with the internet as a supporting tool are important to help solve these problems.

To improve the learner-technology interface, the OEF is testing out computer-assisted education, web-based instruction, and CD-Rom software. But the main problem for the OEF is how to use these technologies to enhance learner support and interaction. The OEF wants to use live radio to improve learner-instructor interaction. The OEF uses TV broadcasts, but the days and hours are not optimised to support working students.

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<http://bde.anadolu.edu.tr>
<http://www.meb.gov.tr/index.htm>
http://www.meb.gov.tr/stats/apk2001ing/Section_5/3.%20Current
<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupc/cg/02.htm>

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