Chapter 5

Administrative Factors in Design and Delivery of Open and Distance Learning Course Materials:
Within the Scope of Universal Design for Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Principles of the Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) can be applied to open and distance education systems as an approach derived from universal design principles. UDI can be used not only for the disabled learners in open and distance education institutions but also for the creation of accessible learning environments for all learners. Within the scope of this study, the history and features of universal design principles in the field of architecture are explained first; then, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Universal Instructional Design (UID) and UDI concepts, which are educational adaptations of universal design principles, are examined in detail. In the last section, management processes of open and distance education systems, examples of universal design in open and distance education and managerial processes in course design and delivery, are examined. In this way; modern approaches such as UDI principles are studied in terms of their applicability within the framework of design and delivery management in open and distance education environments.

INTRODUCTION

Field of education has also been affected by the great advancements in information and communication technologies and gone into the process of reshaping itself. Old fashioned, worn out, slow and cumbersome systems have given way to modern, stronger and richer environments. Field of open and distance learning is also a prime field that gets affected by technological revolutions. In this system, in which learners are at different locations from each other and learning resources, telecommunication technologies are of great importance. As a result of these developments in the information and communications technologies the course materials in open and distance learning systems reached a great variety. Particularly with the developments in internet technologies e-learning mediums were enriched and learners were allowed to create their own unique learning mediums benefitting from very different sources. In open and distance learning mediums it is possible to use many different course materials from printed books to learning management systems and from social networks to three dimensional applications. Analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation stages of these materials are also comprised of processes different from one another. In the design and delivery of these course materials there exist some administrative factors, too.

The approach, which is expected to serve as a guide within the scope of determining administrative factors in design and delivery of open and distance learning course materials is the universal design for instruction principles. Being different from universal design principles, this approach, which was adopted for education and teaching systems has nine principles. Two more principles have been added to seven universal design principles, which are peculiar to field of architecture, and nine principles have been formed. In an order, these principles are: Equitable use, Flexibility in use, Simple and intuitive, Perceptible information, Tolerance for error, Low physical effort, Size and space for approach and use, A community of learners, and Instructional climate (Burgstahler, 2001; McGuire, Scott, & Shaw 2003).

With the universal design for instruction (UDI), the basic objective is to provide courses accessible by everybody, regardless of their ethnicity, age, gender, race, status, disability and different learning styles (Burgstahler, 2007).

The applicable and meaningful design of learning processes is important not only for the disabled but for all individuals. "Creating awareness to maximize functional capacity of each individual", which is in universal design principles, is valid for UDI, as well.

As new technologies are shaping open and distance education methods, there is an increasing need for new approaches such as UDI. Within the scope of this paper and under the guidance of UDI principles, the studies on design and delivery processes

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