Chapter 1
Examining E-Learning Programs in Turkish Higher Education System

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a holistic examination of e-learning and its management. While the study primarily aims to evaluate e-learning efforts in Turkey, it also presents the strengths and weaknesses of e-learning in general and proposes a model for classifying e-learning studies. Furthermore, we examine e-learning programs in Turkey and assess the current status of existing programs. Considering the data generated, we examine the similarities and differences between existing programs and to show the current situation of e-learning in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

As predicted by Toffler's vision of the Information Age, the transition to an information society has also taken place in Turkey. In 2003, the Information Society Department was established within the State Planning Organization of Turkey, and the e-Transformation Turkey Project was initiated (SPO, 2004). Furthermore, the EU Lisbon Strategy, which focused on establishing the substructure for an information society (Çukurçayır and Çelebi, 2009: 59), was launched. These developments seem

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to fulfill Garfield's (1979: 15) prediction that bythe 2000s, the information society would become a system in which information affects the government, the private sector, and daily life.

Education, an important factor in establishing an information society, adopts a new perspective as it takes the form of electronic applications, traditional physical educational materials begin to disappear, and new approaches begin to be developed. This is especially true in higher education (Khan, 2005:1). The fundamental logic of distance education, whose origins can be traced back to last century, is the elimination of the geographic and time constraints between teachers and students (Georgiev, et al.,2004:1). E-learning enables educators to apply the same approach to a greater degree through computer and Internet technologies. The process of implementing distance education in Turkey, which started with the faculty of Open University, represents a step into a new age that incorporates electronic development into the distance education system.

Information and communications technology(ICT) for e-learning has been predicted to provide easy accessibility to information and wider dissemination of information, thus providing the prerequisites for an information society (Kumar and Sharma, 2012). The relative decrease in the need for schools in the information society may trigger the expansion of this process (Balay, 2004: 69; Raban, v d., 2001: 381). In particular, the spread of open code applications, free software, online education programs, and the use of IP cameras in recent years stand out as prominent tools of this trend. Georgiev et al. (2004) argued that education started to gradually change and has developed as follows.

Information technologies have gradually become integrated into the education system in recent years. As in the article titled "Education in and for the information society", it has been clearly put it forward, "we cannot have Information for all without education for all" (Guttman 2003: 9). And the term "all" does not refer to global information society but rather the concept of knowledge societies since enhancing information flows alone is not sufficient to grasp the opportunities for development. In the following sections, we examine e-learning programs in Turkey and the efforts made to respond to this trend.

Table 1. Timeline of education methods

Education Method	Traditional Methods	→	Distance Education	→	e-Learning	→	m-Learning
Time	For centuries	→	Last 100 Years	→	Last 20 Years	→	Last 10 Years

Adopted from Georgiev, Georgieva, and Smrikarov (2004, pp. 2–3)