

**VIDEO EDUCATION CENTRES TO MEET
STUDENTS NEEDS IN TURKISH DISTANCE
EDUCATION PROGRAM***

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INTRODUCTION

Anadolu University, in Turkey, has over 100.000 students enrolled in a nationwide distance education program. The university is located in Eskişehir, a city of approximately 500.000 located in middlewest Anatolia between Ankara and Istanbul. The university is not presently a distance teaching university but it is a university with a distance teaching department referred to as the Open Education Faculty (OEF). Although the program has been remarkably successful, the administration at the university continues to seek new ways to solve present and futural problems inherent in such a massive undertaking.

One of the geatest problems conforting educators in Turkey is how to provide thousands of students with education at a distan-

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ce by utilizing limited personel and financial resources. A solution is to use existing communicational technologies such as television, radio, printed materials to supplement the primary medium of intruction. There are more than 200 regular supplementary television and radio broadcasts per year. These television programs are aired over one of the two government operated television channels. First channel broadcasts throughout Turkey but the second channel presently serves only the principal cities and is not available for educational programming.

Open education students generally watch television courses at home. In addition to printed materials, radio and television programs, an important component of instruction is provided by Academic Advising Centres and OEF Bureaus. These bureaus, at 22 locations in Turkey and Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic, provide face-to-face lectures at the end of the day, usually from 18:00 to 21:00 to supplement the printed materials and radio-television programs for students enrolled in open education courses. Students who would like to ask questions or hear supplementary lectures are encouraged to attend Academic Advising Centres where a university lecturer is available to help them. Approximately 80% of the students enrolled in open education programs make use of these centres (Serter, 1986, p. 47-49). It is planned to have such service centres in as many of the 67 provinces in Turkey as possible.

NEED FOR VIDEO EDUCATION CENTRES (VEC)

A major and current problem is the difficulty students have in watching or listening Open Education Faculty's educational television and radio programs which are broadcast only once. In an effort to determine whether students would benefit from watching video cassettes of the educational programs if they were made available at Video Education Centres (VEC), two applications have been undertaken for the «pilot project procedure» which was suggested as a project by a research group in the past year. (Tekin, Demiray, Barkan, Project Report, 1987). These applications asses the need for supplemental video education service at the existing bureaus. The current level of TV broadcasting of Open Education Faculty's instuctional programs may be accepted as insufficient for Turkish distance education. Television reception is widely available today in Turkey, throughout over 98% of the country.

92% of the OEF students indicate that they follow the television programs at least some of the time (AÖF Öğrenci ilgi Formu, 1983-84). In previous years the programs were broadcast at 5:00 pm. in the evenings during week days at a time that the majority of students were still at work and therefore were unable to watch the programs. The 20 minute TV programs this year are broadcast on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., and on weekends from 8:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. These broadcast hours may be accepted as too early for convenient viewing because the majority of open education students are generally at work during these hours so they are unable to watch or listen to the programs. Furthermore, each lesson is broadcast only once per year. Therefore students are unable to watch or listen to programs if they missed the normal broadcast time. Thus neither the university and faculty administration nor the open education students have had no control over the timing or pacing of this element of their instruction. Although the Video Education Centre (VEC) projects do not currently address the issue of an independent study, or the effectiveness of video programs used individually by students to complete a course at their own pace, that appears to be an area for further study.

PILOT VIDEO EDUCATION CENTRES PROJECT

The large scale Video Education Centre (VEC) project which is underway is anticipated to affect in a number of Open Education Faculty (OEF) Bureaus throughout Turkey. The main purpose of VEC is to provide increased support services to open education students. It is generally expected that OEF students will continue to drive the bulk of their learning (approximately 65%) from printed materials, 15% from the evening face-to-face lessons, 10% from television and radio instruction and 10% from other activities.

Since the beginning of open education six years ago, improvements have been made in a number of instructional and administrative areas. VEC propose yet another alternative to provide supplementary educational services to students in various parts of the country. Pilot projects have already been completed in two of the 22 OEF Bureaus in Turkey and Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic, specifically, in Konya and Denizli. The content of the pilot project has been limited to Foreign Language (English) Programs.

PILOT PROGRAM I

A pilot project in Konya was completed during spring, 1987 (May 18 to June 1, 1987) to discover whether or not video education centres could be absorbed into the normal activities of OEF Bureaus (AÖF Dekanlık, Konya VEM Raporu, 1987). In this project a staff person showed Video English Lessons which had already been prepared by the faculty for broadcast television.

Students learned about the video education pilot program in Konya through the regional press and through notices posted at the bureau. Four groups of approximately 20 students each were formed and met for 1 hour per day for 12 days at the Konya Bureau. These groups were composed of first, second, third and fourth year OEF students. A midday class was even arranged for the convenience of the students who work fulltime. During the first 10 days video programs were shown for units 1-30 (which is equivalent to the first year English Course) and then all the those were repeated during the final two days. Because of time planning however, it was not possible for the students to have repeated showings of the video programs during their individual session. The purpose of this project was not to teach the foreign language directly but to help students consolidate their previous knowledge through repetition of the material.

As a result of this project, it was determined that indeed Video Education Centres (VEC) can be absorbed into the normal functions of the OEF Bureaus. At the end of the project, the director of the Konya Bureau asked the students to write their suggestions on how to improve and get more benefit from the service. Approximately 90% of the students in the Konya project recommended that an instructor be included in future video projects (AÖF Dekanlık Konya VEM Raporu, 1987). These recommendations may suggest that students are asking for a directed program including an instructor rather than a self-paced individualized course of instruction.

PILOT PROGRAM 2

The second study was done at the OEF bureau in Denizli from November 16 to December 23, 1987 (AÖF Dekanlık Denizli VEM Raporu, 1987). The purpose of this project was to determine how

video, with the help of an instructor, can increase the knowledge and whether viewing video lessons of televised instruction might improve the performance of OEF students. Based upon the recommendations of the students in the Konya project, a teacher was chosen to participate in this second project. The teacher who was selected is considered one of the best teachers from the Denizli Anadolu High School (The Anadolu High School provide most of their instruction in English). The project was designed in the following manner: the english video lessons provided the primary information and examples, and the teacher was instrumental in amplifying selected information only.

Announcement of the new VEC in Denizli was made through the regional newspaper, through posters at the bureau, and this time additionally through individual letters sent to each student living in central Denizli who had failed the first year OEF English course during the 1986-87 academic year.

The first 20 students to apply and who met these qualifications were accepted for the Video Education Centre Program. Five females and fifteen males participated in this five week program. Like 60% of all OEF students, half of the students in this group had regular jobs while attending video class.

These students attended the video class in the Denizli OEF bureau five days a week for two and one half hours each day, from 4:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. for five weeks. At the beginning of the project, the students were given a «pre-level-test» consisting of 100 questions to determine their level of english. In addition, they were asked to write a short biography which included their birthday and place, where they worked and other professional information during registrations. The students covered thirty units (1-30 units) in five weeks. At the end of this period they were given another test called «post-level-test», consisting of the same hundred questions as pre-level-test, to determine the progress of the english level.

The teachers role was to use the prepared VEC Video lessons as the primary from of instruction. When important subjects were presented in the video lesson, or students did not understand a certain corcept, the teacher even used video freeze frame, or repeated portions of the video program to provide information of elicit responses from the class. As the video education centres are a form

of face-to-face instruction, the teacher was able to assess the level of the students' understanding as in other face-to-face situations, i.e., from verbal questions and from nonverbal behaviour. During each session the students completed either one or two units, depending on the situation and the length of the program. The instructor was also able to evaluate the students' progress on a daily basis from the ten questions «pre-and post-unit-tests» given on each unit. As in the level test, the pre-and post-unit-test were consisting of the same questions related to the unit's concept. The results of the level and unit tests were being analyzed currently to determine how effective the video education was. A cursory look at the results of Denizli level tests reveals a remarkable average progress of 60 or 70 points among the students. These results are supported by a similar progress in the unit test results. A questionnaire will also be given to the students. This questionnaire will obtain a student profile, will ask students' opinions on the process of video instruction, and will ask for their suggestions on how to improve this form of instruction. Since these students in Denizli had all failed their first year of English, they intend to take the English midterm and final examinations along with the current first-year students (These exams are given in March and June, respectively).

FUTURE PLANS

It is planned that several more Video Education Centres (VEC) will be established during 1988, in addition to offering video classes again at the Konya and Denizli OEF Bureaus. Video Education Classes are either currently being held or, are in the planning stages in five other cities, each of which has its own particular characteristics.

Denizli is unique in that it is the only city with an OEF bureau but giving academic advising service is not available, so face-to-face instruction is not normally possible there.

Trabzon and Samsun, on the other hand, are located quite far from the administrative centre in Eskişehir, and therefore will have to exercise far more local control than Konya and Denizli which are nearer to Eskişehir. For this, at first a qualified and

effective communication channel must be prepared between these two cities and the administrative center for video education.

İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir which are the largest cities and where a large registered OEF student population is found, both have their unique approaches to this form of instruction.

Finally Erzurum and Van which are responsible for establishing their own video education classes.

The fees that students pay for this service is quite moderate, particularly in comparison with other places which provide lessons. People attending other language courses must pay from four to six times the amount that OEF students pay for their VEC English courses.

Each new Video Education Center will incorporate suggestions made by students and staff involved in earlier projects. For example, changes may be made in the pacing of instruction, the length of time given for each group to complete their instruction, the number of groups which will be formed in the various bureaus, and the kinds of students who will participate in the session. Such changes will depend upon various factors such as geographic conditions, teacher availability and the situation at the bureaus. In addition, Open Education Faculty's lessons, other than foreign language, is offered in project report.

Through the use of available educational technologies such as video lessons to assist local instructors at individual bureaus, effective instruction can be delivered to smaller groups of students in outlying areas. Video stores or libraries can be seen even in small sized towns and videocassettes are easily available. More and more people own television sets and videoplayers. By this way perhaps video lessons can also be used as instructional materials for individual use. Such use of communicational technology contribute significantly to students' control over the timing and pacing of their own instruction.

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