

## INVESTIGATING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' OPINIONS IN RELATION TO OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate university students' opinions in relation to Open University students. The subjects (n=69) of this study were students of Abant Izzet Baysal University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, in Bolu-Turkey. The data concerning the university students' opinions in relation to Open University students were collected through interviews held by the researcher during the spring semester of 2005-2006 academic years.

The results of this study indicated that they believed Open University to be a good opportunity for people who work and who have no chance to receive university education, they believed there to be no difference between them and the Open University students and graduates in terms of the subject knowledge as they took mostly the same courses during instruction. On the other hand, they added that it was not possible to acquire the professional knowledge, skills and behaviors given by Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. In addition to this, they believed that although there was no difference between themselves and Open University graduates in the public sector where job opportunities are concerned, they added that they would prefer Open University graduates if they were employers.

**Keywords:** Distance Education, On-Campus Students' Opinions, Open University.

### BACKGROUND

Today various developments, changes and transformations have been observed in all areas of study and as the consequence, it could be said that the world has changed a great deal due to these rapid developments, changes and transformations. The age in which we live is called the 'information age' and in line with this, knowledge and information technologies are considered as the indicators of the information age. Distance Education is considered as one of the means of educating individuals.

In this respect, Wilson (2002) defined distance learning as an educational approach that integrates technology, connectivity, curricular content, and human resources. According to Conceição (2006) distance education refers to instruction that occurs when there is a difference in time, location, or both and added that there are a variety of distance education delivery systems: correspondence, broadcast, teleconferencing, computers and digital technologies, and the Internet and World Wide Web. With the developments and changes that are observed in today's world, distance learning can be reconceptualized as the deliberate organization and coordination of distributed forms of interaction and learning activities to achieve a shared goal (Dabbagh, 2004). According to the literature(Dundar and Hendel, 1996;Sharma, 1987; Taylor 1987), the only major difference between distance education and conventional education is that in distance education there is a tendency to capture a permanent record of instruction in print or by electronic mails, whereas traditional education tends to be ephemeral.

**In distance learning systems, as the number of students and their needs are much greater than in the conventional systems, different types of courses are offered with a mixed use of teaching strategies and media.**

**In this framework, the courses offered in distance learning systems are grouped under different categories such as training courses, awareness courses, updating courses, academic courses, interface courses, upgrading courses and language courses. During these courses the lecturing and tutoring are the most preferred teaching methods, but in the meantime audio visual teaching text, tv broadcasting, computer aided learning and interactive video materials require support staff to the academicians. In this respect King and his colleagues (2002) considered the most important features of distance education to be its flexibility in schedules, making available the education and tools that were needed to reach their personal or professional goals. When the literature is examined it is observed that distance education programmes are different from traditional education programmes in terms of the learners' characteristics (as learners' learning preferences, strategies, approaches, needs and expectations) (Monachehri and Young, 2006; O'Lawrence, 2006; Stewart et. al., 2004; Uhlig, 2002), the nature of the teaching-learning environment (Howard et. al., 2005; Kuo, 2005; Li, 2003; Stewart et. al., 2004), the mode of interaction between and among instructor and students (Lightfoot, 2006; Stella and Gnanam, 2004; Stewart et. al., 2004) and the role of instructor (Beard and Harper, 2002; Conceição 2006; Howard et. al., 2005; Kuo, 2005; Petracchi and Patchner, 2000; Zarghami and Hausafus, 2002; Uhlig, 2002), and the instructional activities (Lim et.al., 2006).**

### **Curriculum In Traditional and Distance Education Programs**

**In the light of the explanations made above, it is could be said that distance education classes are different from the traditional classes in terms of various aspects. According to literature (Dabbagh ,2004; Wilson, 2002) in traditional classes teacher is the source of knowledge and acts as the evaluator of students' learning, the content of the course organized through linear approach and students get the same instruction at the same pace and during instruction direct approach to teaching is followed, teacher guidance during instruction is basic (passive students versus active teacher), no student-student interaction during instruction, frequent tests to measure to what extent the objectives are attained. With the introduction of Internet- and Web-based instruction, it is realized that traditional techniques will not work. The potential for collaborative work and interaction will increase. Interaction mean going beyond the learner- teacher, learner-content, and learner-program modes to learner- learner and learner- group modes. New pedagogical modes or constructs (such as: distributed learning, open/flexible learning, knowledge networks, knowledge building communities, electronic classrooms, etc.) are emerging.**

**In the meantime, when all education programs are examined generally, it is seen that the following dimensions are common: the course objectives, the course content, the learning experiences and the measurement and evaluation. During the designing of a curriculum, the curriculum designer gives the answers of the following four questions: "what is to be done?", "what subject matter is to be included?", "what instructional strategies, resources, and activities will be employed?" and "what methods and instruments will be used to appraise the results of the curriculum?" as Ornstein and Hunkins (1988) state. Having examined different instruction design models, Zheng and Smaldino (2003) consider learner considerations, content organization, instructional strategies, and evaluation as the common similarities and key dimensions of the models that play an important role in the instructional design process in distance education. In addition to these, they believe that the instructors of distance education play an important role in the design of instruction to distant learners.**

Having examined the literature and taken the ideas of subject-specialists into consideration, Zheng and Smaldino (2003) imply the importance of learners' attitudes or interests, skills, knowledge, experience, and learning styles and interactions when learner considerations are focus of attention during the design of distant education programs.

According to them, as long as the content is planned around the needs of the learners, their active participation and their interactions with the content, the instructor and with the learner, their loneliness and isolation in the distant learning environment/setting are diminished. They believe that the course content in distance education should be designed around the learners' needs and the instructors need to consider a variety of instructional strategies that provide learners' active participation and take the learners at the focus of attention and they suggested the importance of continuous evaluation, as well.

In this respect the possible answer to the question "During the instructional design process of distance education programs, what aspects should be taken into consideration?" should be given. The answer to this question is whether for a traditionally taught or distance education course the instructional design process must address the following key issues: needs assessment, goals and objectives, learners/audience, content, technology, teaching methods and media, assessment and evaluation as pointed out in Roadmap to Effective Distance Education Instructional Design: Instructional Design in Distance Education Project held between 2002–2004.

On the basis of the subject specialists' opinions and of the literature mentioned above, the following points should be taken into account during the instructional design process of distance education programs: the learners' diverse needs and characteristics need to be identified, during the formation of course objectives, the affective domain (attitudes, values, worries, anxiety levels, interests, frustrations) need to be emphasized especially as it is neglected in most of the courses, during the selection and the organization of the course contents, learner-centered design needs to be preferred, the learners' background (previous) knowledge, information and their personal experiences about the subject to be studied and learning experiences they have undergone need to be considered during the organization of the content, learners' active participation in flexible learning environments in which they interact among themselves as collaborative partners in order to reach information or to solve a problem through instructional activities, during these instructional activities, the essence and importance of feedback, reinforcement, active participation and correction need to be kept in mind, the learning materials studied and/or the instructional activities need to be relevant, meaningful, and closely related to their motivations and career goals and the learning process as a whole need to be examined and considered during the evaluation of learners in addition to formative and summative evaluation .

## **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

Due to various developments and changes that have taken place in the world, various means are used to train and to educate people. This could be either formal education at school at different levels, or distance education using television, radio, or computers for example. In Turkey, education is divided into two: formal education and informal education. At the university level students attend either formal educational institutions or attend universities that offer Open University programs in order to earn their diploma. However, it is not clear whether the graduates of universities and the graduates of Open University are considered to be equal or not. Within this framework, the aim of this study is to investigate the opinions of university students in relation to Open University students.

## METHOD

### Research Approach

Today, qualitative research is preferred and considered to be more satisfactory. The reason is that it requires spending more time, and qualitative evaluation techniques provide a possibility for a more comprehensive analysis. In addition, the main advantage of qualitative research is the provision of detailed and comprehensive data about the problem on hand (Yildirim and Simsek, 2003). These advantages mean that details and comprehensiveness a researcher cannot predetermine are apprehended. For this reason, a qualitative research method was used in this study to collect more comprehensive data.

### Study Group and Data

#### Study Group

Abant İzzet Baysal University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences students (n=69) who accepted to be interviewed for this study formed the population of the study. The subjects of this study were the sophomores of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and with regard to their departments, they were the students of Public Administration Department (n=25), Economics Department (n=15) and Management Department (n=29) and their ages were between 20 and 22. During the study, as it was not possible to reach all Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences students in Bolu, the study group to which the semi-structured interview technique could be used was formed through determining the students. The semi-structured interview technique was used to collect data in this study. In semi-structured interviews, the aim is to find out whether the statements of the persons interviewed are coherent, what differences there are and to obtain true information about the subject by making a comparison. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are prepared before but the answer options are not defined.

Content analysis should be done to make an interview analysis. Content analysis is basically the process of coding what an individual says or writes, i.e. an analysis with a written or oral system (Balci, 2001). For the research questions or hypothesis of qualitative researches, the literature is surveyed (Crosswell, 1994: 22) and generally supported by interview or observations. Due to these during the present study the content analysis was conducted. Reliability of content analysis is closely related to category arrangement. Coding is very important in content analysis. What a category refers and defines must clearly be determined in order to avoid each coder evaluating categories differently.

In this technique, reliability depends on whether coding persons understand the text they're examining differently or not. More than one coder increases reliability. Moreover, each research requires new approaches while analyzing data. The selection of these approaches is totally up to the researcher. In this study, interview data were coded based on the related literature. The analysis was made with the help of these codes. In this study, coding was made by the researcher and a subject-specialist separately and then compared. As the present study requires collection of data, peer examination, member checks and search biases (clarifying the researchers' assumptions theoretical orientation at the outset of the study), the triangulation method was used (see Merriam, 1988). Data obtained through survey of literature related to the subject were converted into an interview form, submitted to expert professors in the field of Educational Sciences (6 people from the field of educational sciences) for examination and rearranged in line with their opinions. The interview form developed by the researcher was applied to a small group (4 people) of Abant İzzet Baysal University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences students. The obtained data from this application were compared with the literature, their accuracy was controlled and the data obtained from interviews were again subject to comparison with the literature.

### **Data Collection**

During the study the data were collected through the interviews held with the Administrative and Management Faculty students (n=69) of Abant Izzet Baysal University, in Bolu-Turkey, in the spring semester of 2005-2006 academic year. For this study in order to collect the qualitative data an interview form was developed by the researcher and the interview form consisted of five questions which aimed to investigate the opinions of the students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences of Abant Izzet Baysal University in relation to Open University students. During the study, the following five questions given below were answered by the university students.

- What is your opinion on open learning faculties?
- Do you think there is a difference between you and open learning graduates in terms of the professional knowledge, skills, and behaviors?
- Do you think that the professional knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes aimed to be imparted by the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences can be acquired through an open learning system?
- When you consider job opportunities, do you think there is a difference between graduates of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and open learning faculty graduates? If so, what kind?
- Assuming that you are an administrator in an organization/institution/enterprise, how important would the university diploma is taken from in evaluating job applications be?

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

During the interviews, notes were taken and then converted into interview texts by the researcher. As stated by Yildirim and Simsek (2003), the texts were turned into matrices as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) in order to ensure detailed, clear and comprehensible data processing and analysis process. During the formation of these matrices, only the opinions and ideas related to the scope of the present study were taken into account, and the unnecessary opinions and ideas were disregarded.

The number of opinions and ideas repeated in the matrices was discovered, and those repeated 4 times or more were considered as a general tendency. On the other hand, the unrepeated opinions and ideas were regarded as findings peculiar to each of the group members who participated in the interview. Since the interviewees were guaranteed that their names would not be revealed during the research at the beginning of the interviews, the participants were given letter codes (such as A, B, C) by the researcher instead of using their names.

The participants' statements were presented with these codes in the findings part of the present study. The obtained findings were interpreted and the results were deduced on the basis of the theoretical background information.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY**

### **What Is Your Opinion On Open Learning Faculties?**

Open learning is a very good opportunity for those who do not achieve a high enough score for formal education and for those who have to work or have no other possibilities (A, B, F, O, P, R, U, W, Ee, Mm, Ss, Ss, Vv, Zz). Vivoda (2005) states that distance learning provides various advantages such as searching for ways for career advancement, changing careers, or increasing their knowledge. According to Vivoda (2005), distance education is regarded as an alternative to the traditional campus for those with family commitments and the many living far from any university campus.

One can be successful by improving oneself (A, H, Ii). Open learning faculties are considered to be a good solution for those who want to both study and work or can not afford a formal education (C, C, H, Ii, Ii, Uu, H, L, Tt). According to Mariani (2001), some of the students of Open University already work and they attend distance learning to upgrade skills, finish a degree, or pursue another degree.

According to the results of Ukpo's study (2006), 88% of students enrolled on a course to enable them get better employment after completion, 65% were motivated to do the course to improve their ability to participate in community work, 39% were motivated to improve their intellectual knowledge, and 32% their classroom performance. Uhlig (2002) believes that in the future there will be various types of learners who will be motivated to take advantage of distance learning opportunities and added that in the future people working in different services will enroll these courses to upgrade his/her skills or to increase his/her employment opportunities. The only thing that differs between open learning faculty students and formal education students is that the former do not learn in a classroom environment. This is seen as a disadvantage (G, S, Hh, Kk, Ab).

According to Forrester and her colleagues (2005) the information given to distance education students should be accurate, punctual and that as the majority of students are working while studying they need to have accessible course-related information. However, since they use electronic means of communication, the communication may break down between and among themselves leaving them unable to use these means. In the meantime tutors should provide various means for them to improve their integration and facilitate their sense of belonging to the programme and the wider university. It is easy to enroll on programs in open learning faculties, but studying in and graduating from an open learning faculty is difficult (G, K, Gg). According to G and U, "Studying a lesson with an instructor is an advantage" (Ag).

Since open learning is based on storing theoretical knowledge and information, it is insufficient in ensuring a career (Ll). According to Ab, "Open learning system that supports memorization holds examinations on the same course books and almost the same questions every year. I do not believe that these courses teach much and this is an unnecessary application" (U) and "an unnecessary application" (Cc).

According to I, "I am not very sure but I have heard that open learning faculty is not mentioned in diplomas. If this is true, it is too bad that we tried so hard to get in the university because we are all going to be perceived as equal in the future" (Nn). According to Ss, "Despite the low score open learning faculty students get in national examination, they get the same diploma we get. Yet, it is very important in terms of national interests that people become well-informed instead of remaining as a high school graduate" (E, D, Z, Cc, Gg, Ab, Ah). "I find this application unnecessary because we have many universities" (S, Jj) and also "this is a bad application for the fields of economics and administrative sciences" (Ag). "Most of the students in this program aim to be made exempt from compulsory military service and this only results in an increase in the number of unemployed graduates" (F, T, Ff, Oo, Rr, Ad). "But this is an important application for a career" (Y).

Mariani (2001) states that some of the students of Open University already work and they attend distance learning to upgrade skills, finish a degree, or pursue another degree. At this point, the results of Ukpo's study (2006) appear to support these ideas. According to the results of Ukpo's study (2006), 88% of students enrolled on the course to enable them get better employment after completion, 65% were motivated to take the course to improve their ability to participate in community work, 39% of students were motivated to improve their intellectual knowledge, and 32% their classroom performance.

In the meantime Vivoda (2005) considers distance education as an alternative to the traditional campus due to family commitments and living far from any university campus, and adds that distance learning provides various advantages, such as searching for ways to advance in their careers, change their careers, or increase their knowledge.

Moreover, Uhlig (2002) believes that in the future there will be various types of learners who will be motivated to take the advantage of distance learning opportunities and adds that in the future people working in different services will enroll on these courses to upgrade his/her skills or to increase his/her employment opportunities. This may imply that, while designing distance education programs, their reasons and their demographic characteristics should be considered by the program designers, which is implied by Erdogan and his colleagues (2006).

In the meantime, Forrester and her colleagues (2005) point out that as distance learners use electronic means of communication, the communication between and among the tutors and the students may break down as they may be unable to use these means. In order to overcome this gap and/or barrier, they suggested that tutors should provide various means to improve their integration and facilitate their sense of belonging to the program and the wider university as most of the students do not see and/or are away from each other.

### **Do You Think There Is a Difference Between You And Open Learning Graduates In Terms Of The Professional Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors?**

There is no difference in terms of knowledge because the same courses are taught (B, D, E, G, I, O, S, Gg, L, Aa, Hh, Ss, Ah). The only difference is that open learning faculty students study alone while formal education students study a lesson with instructors (G, I, I, Ff, Pp, Ss). The important thing is that an individual educates himself (Bb). As an example when the courses offered by Abant Izzet Baysal University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Anadolu University Distance Education Faculty are compared, it is seen that they are mostly the same courses. In other words the course titles may not match with each other their content may show similarities (Abant Izzet Baysal University, 2007; Anadolu University, 2007).

Open learning faculty students may have insufficient and unnecessary information and knowledge because they are trying to learn with their own efforts. There is a difference between formal education students and open learning faculty students in terms of learning in-site (S, T, U, W, Y, Cc, Cc, Ii, Ii, Jj, Kk, Nn, Oo, Uu, Vv, Zz, Ae). Supportive and informative resources are more limited and they learn more superficial and unnecessary information and knowledge during their courses (A, C, G, J, K, O, R, V, Ee, Jj, Ll, Oo, Ww, Ab, Ac, Af). The support systems in distance education programs have crucial functions for the success of these programs. In this respect, Moore (2003) points out the importance and essence of a learner support system in distance education programs as it has critical importance for determining the success of the whole distance education program and views the learner support system as a back-up safety net for the individual student who encounters difficulties that are unexpected and idiosyncratic which are not anticipated by the course designers, instructors, and administrators, of difficulties that they know will occur and handle them on a case-by-case basis. In his study, Wheeler (2002) found that although remote students expected a great deal social and academic support and they received less academic support, local students expected more practical and social support and received less social support as the results of his study. However, they be more well-informed because they both work and study (C, C, Ii Mm, Ad). At this point, the following example supports what is stated by the participants. As a university lecturer Clark said after the nurses had received their graduation on certificates they now had the skills and knowledge to access information from the web, which had a direct impact on their practice (Overcoming the challenges of learning by distance-Distance Education, 2002).

In theory, formal education students study harder (X, Gg, Tt). Moreover, chance is an important factor in multiple choice exams, so Open learning faculty students pass exams not only with their knowledge (U, Ss, Uu).

In their study Yasar and Gultekin (2006) report that teacher candidates perceived teacher training via distance education as a more difficult and an abstract training in comparison with formal training and a great opportunity for students not having a formal training opportunity. In addition, their study revealed that teacher candidates believed that the program they followed equipped them with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes related to teaching profession satisfactorily.

According to P, "Open learning education requires good memorization. There are no practical applications and you learn from a course book. If an individual wants a better education, he attends private open learning courses". Kaya and his colleagues (2006) report that, although open education faculty students believed that academic counseling, e-support, technical support services, visual and auditory technology and the examples given in the web based lessons are beneficial; they believed they were not sufficient. In order to overcome the insufficiencies distance education faculty students attend courses organized by the private sector as Gokdag (2006) states.

Yasar and Gultekin (2006) reported that teacher candidates perceived teacher training via distance education as a more difficult and an abstract training in comparison with formal training but a great opportunity for students not having formal training opportunity. In addition to this their study revealed that teacher candidates believed that the program they followed equipped them with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes related to teaching profession satisfactorily.

In the meantime the support systems in distance education programs have crucial functions for the success of these programs, and the literature confirms and supports these opinions through various studies. In this respect, the findings of Yasar and Gultekin (2006) support the students' views. Moore (2003), in the meantime, points out the importance and essence of a learner support system in distance education programs as it has critical importance for determining the success of the whole distance education program and views the learner support system as a back-up safety net for the individual student who encounters difficulties that are unexpected and idiosyncratic which are not anticipated by the course designers, instructors, and administrators, of difficulties that they know they will occur and handle them on a case-by-case bases. In his study, Wheeler (2002) found that although remote students expected a great deal social and academic support and they received less academic support, local students expected more practical and social support and received less social support as the results of his study.

On the other hand when distance education faculty services are not sufficient to meet the needs and expectations of distance education faculty students, the students try to use various means to overcome these insufficiencies. Meanwhile Kaya and his colleagues (2006) report that although open education faculty students believed that academic counseling, e-support, technical support services, visual and auditory technology and the examples given in the web based lessons are beneficial; the students believed they were not sufficient. In order to overcome the insufficiencies of the web based lessons, Gokdag (2006) stated that distance education faculty students attend the courses organized by private sector.

Concerning this, what participant P said during the interview may also support this idea. According to P "Open learning education requires good memorization. There are no practical applications and you learn from a course book. If an individual wants a better education, he attends to private open learning courses". The university



students believed that open faculty graduates have both the knowledge of theory and practice.

At this point what Clark said after the nurses had received their graduation on certificates could support their ideas. According to her they now had the skills and knowledge to access information from the web, which had a direct impact on their practice (Overcoming the challenges of learning by distance-Distance Education, 2002).

### **Do You Think That the Professional Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors and Attitudes Aimed By Faculty of Economics And Administrative Sciences Can Be Acquired Through An Open Learning System?**

It is directly related to self-improvement (A, D, J, O, U, Z, Dd, Gg, Ss, O, L, Hh, Kk, Rr, Uu, Zz, Ad). They can be more successful if they improve themselves. They may acquire these attitudes through internship and courses with their own opportunities (A,B, C, I, Aa, Cc Tt). The aim is to pass the Public Personnel Selection Examination (W).

I do not think that knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes aimed by Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences can be acquired through an open learning system (B, E, G, O, R, S Y, X, Ee, Ff, Ii, Jj, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo, Vv, Ww, Uu, Ab, Ac, Ae, Af, Ah, Ag). It is very difficult to learn a lesson by yourself just from a course book (E, S, X, V, Cc, Ac). In formal education, knowing people and developing relationships is more effective (C, V, Gg, Oo, Ab, Ac). It is a deficiency that they can not get support and guidance from the instructors (G, P, T, U, Ii, Jj, Uu, Ac). Ukpo (2006), as the result of his study, reports that the students valued tutorial / face-to-face contact sessions with instructors more than four categories of support services (as face-to-

face contact sessions at study centers, learning material and library services, administrative services) provided to the students Course books and TV programs provide information but not in detail (I, Pp). I. According to F, "knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes aimed by Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences can not be acquired through an open learning system because university is a culture; people do not go to universities just to be informed. This can be learned only by experiencing" (H). The ideas of the university students on being a university student implied that if someone considers himself/herself to be a university student, he/she should go to the university campus and attend the courses regularly. If he/she does not do these, he/she is not considered to be a university student.

According to Gorito (1996) it is useful for the student to plan to meet a professor or subject tutor at least once in order to prevent reducing the aim of checking learning to a more mechanical reinforcement. As the student has the possibility of knowing why a response is correct or incorrect or to have a specific comment on his/her work, face to face tutorial with the professor or tutor is conducive to more complete and meaningful learning. At this point it could be said that the results of Ukpo's (2006) study support what Gorito (1996) states. Ukpo (2006), as the result of his study, report that the students valued tutorial/face-to-face contact sessions with instructors most of all the four categories of support services provided to the students. Burgon and Williams (2003) report the benefits of the blended course upon on-campus learners who participated in the same course with the distant learners when their opinions on course components, study groups, discussion board, and instructor/TA are concerned.

According to on-campus learners in this study, the course was useful as they paid more attention to lectures during the class, they formed study groups easily in which face-to-face interaction was provided and they provided social interaction through discussion boards by means of which their learning was enhanced, the affective

barriers were removed when asking questions and they appreciated the instructors' teaching competencies and their approach to them.

However, it is believed that distance education faculty students could be as successful as university students. What is inferred from the interview results is that when distance education faculty students look for opportunities to develop themselves and they study harder they may be as successful as university students are. In line with this fact, the participants (A, D, J, O, U, Z, Dd, Gg, Ss, O, L, Hh, Kk, Rr, Uu, Zz, Ad, A,B, C, I, Aa, Cc, Tt) believed that these could be acquired and learned through creating, providing various opportunities and means (e.g. internship, attending courses) for themselves and through personal efforts and they could be more successful than the university students are, even though most of the participants believed that the professional knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes aimed to be given by the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences can not be acquired through an open learning system, Yasar and Gultekin (2006) report that while 132 teacher candidates believed they have gained the knowledge skills and attitudes regarding teaching profession sufficiently, 31 candidates believed they were sufficient in theory but insufficient in practice, and 19 candidates believed they had gained knowledge skills and attitudes regarding teaching profession in the best way while 22 candidates believed they have not gained the knowledge skills and attitudes regarding teaching profession sufficiently.

**When You Consider Job Opportunities, Do You Think There Is A Difference Between Graduates of Faculty Of Economics And Administrative Sciences And Open Learning Faculty Graduates? If Any, What Kind Of?**

There may be in the private sector, but there is no difference in the public sector (A, B, C, G, İ, K, P, S, U, W, Z, Cc, Nn, Ab). Since generally scores are taken into account in applications for a job nowadays, open learning faculty students also have a chance (A). Additionally, there is no difference because open learning is not mentioned in diplomas (F, I, J, K, M, N, R, Ss, Tt, Iı, Ah). In Turkey, in order to become a government officer, it is necessary and important to take the KPSS (The Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) examination and to achieve a certain score. The score obtained from the KPSS exams is considered to be a prerequisite for being assigned to the public sector however where the diploma issued from is not taken into account (Higher Education Council Student Selection and Placement Center – OSYM, 2006).

The important thing is self-improvement and working hard, not the diploma. An individual who studies in a formal education faculty but does not improve himself is more deficient in some aspects (C, E, H, I, T, Gg, Iı, Ab). Yet, there is no difference in terms of knowledge (J, L, O, U, Ee, Iı, Jj, Oo, Oo, Ww). On the other hand, some participants think that formal education students are more successful in terms of knowledge (E, V, Aa, Hh, Ss, Kk). Students in formal education faculties are luckier in finding a job (S, X, Y, Gg, Pp, Ll, Mm, Oo, Oo, Ss, Uu, Zz), because employers take into consideration where the university diplomas are taken from (Dd, Ff, Ll, Ss, Oo, Oo, Rr, Ad, Ae). General belief in the society is that open learning students study just to be known to do so (Dd, Ab). On the other hand, they must be luckier because they already work (Af). When the job opportunities are the focus of attention, the university students believed that there may be no difference between the graduates of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and open learning faculty graduates in public sector concerned, while there may be differences in private sector. In Turkey, in order to become a government officer, it is necessary and important to take the KPSS (The Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) Examination and to achieve a certain score from this examination. At this point, the score obtained from the KPSS exams is considered to be a prerequisite for being assigned to public sector however where the diploma issued from is not taken into account (Higher Education Council Student Selection and Placement Center – OSYM, 2006).

On this basis, for the public sector the scores they achieve from the KPSS exams become more important than their diplomas. However, when the private sector is concerned, additional qualifications (e.g. computer knowledge, knowing a foreign language and others), peoples' beliefs about and attitudes towards open learning faculty students apart from the diploma issued are taken into consideration. As a consequence of this it can be said that the university issuing the diploma is both important and unimportant where the job opportunities are concerned.

**Assuming That You Are an Administrator In An Organization/Institution/Enterprise, How Important Would The University Diploma Is Taken From In Evaluating Job Applications Be?**

I would test their interests, abilities, knowledge, etc. I would evaluate the points taken from the tests. That is to say, the university is not important (A, B, C, G, G, I, İ, N, R, U, U, Z, Aa, Gg, Ss, Tt, İi, Jj, Kk, Ll, Mm, Ab, Ah). The important thing is self-improvement, (B, D, G, İ, M, S, U, X, Cc, Ee, Gg, Pp, Nn), ability, skills and performance (K, S, T, Pp, Ii, Pp).

"If I were an employer, I would hire an open learning faculty graduate because they both work and study. They know more than us about the job" (C).

In a study carried out by Woodley (1988) with open learning faculty graduates, it was stated that 57% of the participants showed better performance in their jobs and 68% of all graduates benefited much from their studies in an open learning faculty. In addition to this, they also stated that a 75% majority of the graduates underwent a change and they achieved this as an Open University graduate. Woodley (1988) states that being an Open University graduate is also effective in "setting up his own business, being the boss". Generally, the university issuing the diploma is taken heed because information flow to students ranges from university to university (E, F, J, O, O, P, S, V, Y, Cc, Gg, , Hh, Ii, Kk, Ss, Oo, Oo, Rr, Uu, Uu, Vv, Zz, Ab, Ac, Ad, Ae, Af, Ag). A diploma is like clothes. People first look at the clothes when getting to know each other. However, clothes are never a valid criterion in knowing an individual (Ff, Ss). In addition to a diploma, speaking a foreign language, computer knowledge (H, O, Pp) and experience (Oo) have important roles in selection. Job level changes according to the subject of the task, education does not matter. (Ss, Ad).

The results of Woodley's study may also support their thoughts in this respect. In a study carried out by Woodley (1988) with open learning faculty graduates, it was stated that 57% the participants showed better performance in their jobs and 68% of all graduates benefited much from the studies they made in open learning faculty. In addition to this, they also stated that three-fourth majority of the graduates undergone a change and they achieved this as an Open University graduate. Woodley (1988) states that being an Open University graduate is also effective in "setting up his own business, being the boss". In addition to a diploma, some of the participants (H, O, Pp, Oo) pointed out the essence and the importance of additional qualifications that may have effects on selecting people for a job / post. According to them, these additional qualifications may be speaking a foreign language, computer knowledge and experience.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The analysis of the data collected indicated that the university students had positive attitudes toward the Open University, and they considered it as a good opportunity and application for people who fail in the Student Selection Examination, who have to work and who can not afford formal education. However, some of them believed this is unfair because the diploma they received after a hard working period during their education period is considered to be equal with the diploma of Open University students.

They also believed there are great differences between self-learning and learning with instructor guidance through experiencing. Meanwhile most of the participants believed that knowledge; skills, behaviors and attitudes aimed by Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences can not be acquired through an open learning system. In addition to these, they believed that the instructors' support and experience are important for their development. When the career opportunities are concerned, they believed there is no difference between them in public sector and they stated that they would prefer Open University graduates if they were employers. In line with this, the following can be recommended in light of the findings obtained from the analysis of the data collected in this study:

1. The open universities' facilities need to be accessible and open learning systems in the universities need to be applicable in different subject-areas.
2. Universities providing education through open learning system need to provide more practice in order to reach a standard with the universities issuing an equal diploma.
3. Academic consultancy services need to be provided for more courses to students in universities implementing the open learning system.
4. Public relations studies need to be started and generalized in order to improve the prestige of universities implementing the open learning system.

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