# A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY OF OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF DISTANCE EDUCATION APPLICATION

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## ABSTRACT

Distance education is regarded as one of the means for educating people who have not had formal education chance or who have not preferred the formal education. Distance education, on the other hand, is quite difficult and requires the fulfillment of various conditions. When the applications of distance education are examined, it is seen that it provides one way communication and the students have various problems.

The aim of this study, within this framework, is to examine the perceptions of Open University students in relation to the problems of distance education applications. The subjects of this study are the Open Faculty students (n=45) who attend to Open Faculty courses provided by Abant Izzet Baysal University. The data were collected through interviews. The results indicated that i) they preferred mostly the open learning as they worked at different offices, ii) they pointed out that most of the university and faculty students had positive attitudes towards them. However, they reported that i) they had difficulty in studying by themselves, ii) had some problems as open learning faculty students and iii) they believed they would have problems in finding a job in the future.

**Keywords:** Distance Education; Educational Demands; Perception; Off- Campus Student

## BACKGROUND

Regardless of the development level of societies there exists always, high or low, demand for education. The total of individual education demands refers to societal demand for education though demand for education differs in line with the individual demands (Unal, 1996). Harnqvist (1978, cited in: Unal, 1996) divides the variables affecting individual demand into two as individual and institutional factors. While individual factors refer to gender, cognitive abilities, interests, student success, expectations, family origin and etc., institutional factors refer to conditions before selection, conditions relating to selection, demographic factors, professions and economy, social and cultural circumstances, and other factors. It can be said that these factors include variables reflecting the characteristics of the education system not only the student is involved as an individual but also existing within the society the student is living in despite he's not related to.

Many variables related to the education system, especially the differentiations within the system, influence individual decisions. One of the differentiations in the system is the diversity of educational programs.

This diversity not only affects the student's choice among higher education programs but also act as a determining factor in deciding to continue education (Unal, 1996). Selection process implemented to students in entry to higher education and the prerequisites to be fulfilled hereinafter result in limitations in individual demand (e.g. ability tests, compulsory attendance, day or night education etc.). For this reason, arrangements concerning the education system are used to change the decisions about individual demands. On the other hand, structural changes related to institutions such as market order, law and the related arrangements affect the individual demand for education because they will change employment expectations, the rights and opportunities of an individual (Unal, 1996; Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 2006).

One of the reasons, perhaps the most important, of high individual demand for education is that starting wages are high thanks to education or the level of lifelong earnings thanks to education is satisfactory in meeting the individual expectations. High expectations towards education may continue even in high-level unemployment cases. For example, in 2006 22,1 % in general when the unemployment rate of higher education graduates in Turkey (http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=403 21.12.2006), individual demand for higher education continues increasingly. This reveals that many things are expected from higher education despite all (Unal, 1996).

The expectations of societies from education are high just like those of individuals. Economic concerns constitutive the basis of high expectations from education and have encouraged advancement to become a learning society. A knowledge-based economy relies on using ideas instead of physical abilities, creating new information and using technology. Becoming a knowledge economy and a knowledge society requires individuals to be more skillful and well-informed also in daily life. That's why; a new education-learning model must be developed: that's lifelong learning. In this context, compulsory educations constitute the basis of lifelong learning (Koc, 2005). People need to be educated before and after compulsory education, anyway. Now that it's not always possible to meet this need in schools, lifelong learning must be provided in different ways.

These ways may be cooperative programs as in Britain, Switzerland, Belgium and Finland, courses provided by the industries and universities, day and night programs in universities, distance education and wide spreading Open University models (Koc, 2005). In this framework, Open University is considered as one of the such phenomenon that has emerged in response to the educational and developmental needs of the countries (Gopal, 1995). In distance education system, education is conducted independently from time and place and using different distribution channels (Dundar and Hendel, 1996; Seferoglu, 2006). Moreover, the functions of distance education system include not only supporting programs but also the education system as a whole because there are two constraints laying the basis of rapid increase in demand for especially higher education.

The first is the increase in the number of secondary school students educated in certain fields and the latter is the need for employees having qualified abilities required by knowledge-based economy. Employees in valid business markets are always in a competitive environment and they must always follow the changes and developments in their fields through learning and they must meet the need to make ability changes to meet the market expectations in order to be the winner in the market (Dundar and Hendel, 1996).

As a result of this, because it's not always possible to meet the needs of employees through traditional education, distance education is considered an alternative to traditional education because it's flexible in time in reaching a wider mass and more economic. In this context, distance education applications create conceptual resources based on creating new opportunities, ensuring job-education unity,

democratization, lifelong education, directing to individual facts, exploiting institutions effectively, integrating technology with education, focusing on individual and social needs, and three-dimension integration (press-media, letter, face to face instruction, reaching huge mass of people, integration in individual and mass education, desire for education and financial possibility balance) (Alkan, 1998).

Distance education is defined by a variety of labels, such as "correspondence education", "home study", "independent study", "distance teaching" and "open learning". These definitions, especially "correspondence education", tell us where distance education comes from (Isman, 1998). While distance education was the most common way of participation to lifelong education in China, open universities were very popular in Britain. Distance education, which was first spread with the Open University Project launched in 1969 in Britain, is regarded as a process where parts the teacher and students don't encounter are intensive (Aybay and Aybay, 1996).

Considering the distance education studies in our country, it's known that a lot of people continue their education through Open Learning Faculty Programs in Anadolu University in Turkey (Koc, 2005; Alkan, 1996).

Although Open Learning Faculty was opened in 1982, the idea and organization dates back to 1970s. In this scope, primarily business administration and economics distance education programs were opened and the first students were accepted to these programs (Demiray and Mc Isaac, 1995; Candemir et.al., 1996).

As a result of reconstruction activities in 1993, management and economics faculties were assigned to carry out four-year undergraduate programs; and open learning faculty was assigned to carry out two-year degree, bachelor's degree completion, any certificate programs and other extensive education services (Candemir et.al., 1996).

Open Learning System launched with two distance education programs in the fields of Economics and Business Administration in the 1982-1983 academic year continuously enhanced its service fields after this academic year. In 1993, Economics and Management programs were converted into four-year faculties as a result of the reconstructing activities in accordance with the decree numbered 496. Open Learning Faculty was assigned to carry out activities related to open learning application, two-year degree, bachelor's degree completion, and any certificate programs (http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr, 02.11.2006).

Faculty of Economics established in 1993 conducts education activities through distance education system. Faculty of Economics carries out academic consultancy and practice services and face to face instruction as well as distance education and consists of Departments of Economics, Finance, Public Administration, Labor Economy and Industrial Relations, and International Relations. However, Department of International Relations does not accept students yet (http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr 02.11.2006). Faculty of Management was established in 1993 with rearrangement of open learning system which continues distance education since the 1982-1983 academic year.

In the 2000-2001 academic year, the Accounting-Finance, Marketing, Management and Organization departments in the faculty were unified to become one department to ensure equivalence to similar faculties in other universities and was reconstructed as Department of Management on condition that the status of existing students in above-mentioned departments be preserved. Faculty of Management provides opportunities for not only young people at the age of university education but also to the ones who have had no chance to follow a higher education, preferred to work and cannot attend a formal education institution, have a two-year degree and want to raise it to bachelor's degree through contributing considerably in widening higher

education to masses as a distance learning faculty (http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr/, 02.11.2006). During conducting courses in Open University Faculties of Economics and Management, advanced technological possibilities such as internet, computer-supported education and videoconference as well as printed course materials and TV broadcasting are used to ensure adaptation of students to these technologies and create a technological interaction. Also, academic consultancy and practice services (face to face instruction) are provided (http://www.aof.anadolu.edu.tr 02.11.2006).  in suitable regions

Academic consultancy courses, which take into place at nights at weekdays or weekends according to cities without compulsory attendance, are provided free of charge and students are able to attend the courses by just showing their students IDs. In this understanding, the students attending the academic consultancy courses get the chance to learn from the instructors the subjects they cannot understand (http://www.aof.edu.tr/danismanlik/a0100.html 09.11.2006) from course programs on TV and course books.

In this framework, the aim of this study is to learn opinions about the problems Open Learning Faculty students (Faculty of Economics and Management) face in distance education applications. To this end, the following questions will be answered:

1. In your opinion what are the reasons for preferring Open Learning Faculty?
2. What do you think about the attitude of other university students towards OLF students?
3. What do you think about the attitude of other university instructors towards OLF students?
4. Can you study individually except in the period when you attend the program in Abant İzzet Baysal University? How much efficient do you think it is?
5. What kind of problems do you have as an Open Learning Faculty student?
6. What kind of problems do you think you'll have when you graduate?

## METHOD

### Research Approach
Today, qualitative researches are preferred and considered to be more satisfactory compared to quantitative researchers. Since they require spending more time and the qualitative evaluation techniques provide a more comprehensive analysis possibility. In addition, the main advantage of qualitative researches is provision of detailed and comprehensive data about the problem on hand (Yildirim and Simsek, 2003). These advantages of qualitative researches mean that details and comprehensiveness a researcher cannot predetermine are apprehended. For this reason, qualitative research method was adopted in this study to collect more comprehensive data.

### Study Group and Data
### Study Group
The subjects of this study were students attending open learning faculty and living in Bolu province. But, since it was not possible to reach all open learning faculty students in Bolu, the study group to which semi-structured interview technique could be used was formed through determining the students attending consultancy courses, working in institutions and accepting to be interviewed. In this study the term "University students" referred to "the Open Learning Faculty students" who study management and economics at management and economics faculty providing education-learning through open learning system.

### Semi-Structured Interview Technique
"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 choices 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 (Balcı, 2001). For the research questions or hypothesis of qualitative researches, the literature is surveyed (Crosswell, 1994) and generally supported by interview or observations.

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 to evaluate categories differently. In this technique, reliability depends on whether coding persons understand the text they're examining differently or not. That a coder is more than one person increases reliability. Moreover, each research requires new approaches while analyzing data. 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-matter expert separately and then compared. In addition, Triangulation method was used for validity and reliability (Yildirim and Simsek, 2003).

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 developed interview form was applied to a small group (4 people) consisting of students attending open learning.

The obtained data were compared with the literature and their accuracy was controlled. Data obtained from interviews were again subject to comparison with the literature (For example: Cekerol, 2006, Demiray and McIsaac, 1995).

### Data Collection
Data used in this study were obtained from the interviews made with open learning faculty students in 2005- 2006 academic spring semester. The interview form was developed by the researcher. The Interview Form consisted of six questions aiming to get the opinions of open learning faculty students. The interview was made by the researcher with 45 students who accepted to be interviewed and studied in department of economics, management and public administration in open learning faculty.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation
During the interviews made by the participants, the notes were taken by the researcher. During the interview process, these notes were converted into interview texts by the researcher. As stated by Yildirim and Simsek (2003), the texts were turned into matrixes proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994:148) to ensure detailed, clear and comprehensible data processing and analysis process. During formation of data matrices, the information which were not necessary was disregarded and only the necessary information was remained.

Meanwhile, the number data repeated in matrix was found out and the ones which were repeated for 4 times or more were considered as common opinion while the unrepeated data were regarded as the finding of the study because they were peculiar to the group members who participated the interview. During this process, it was considered to be appropriate to name the participants with codes of letters (such as A, B, C) instead of using their names because they were guaranteed that their names would not revealed during the research. For this reason, the statements were

presented with these codes in findings section of the study. Also, the obtained findings were interpreted in line with the theoretical information and the results were tried to be deduced.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Nearly eleven years of human life pass in education process. However, education process does not end there. Since the possibility of being employed after secondary education in our country is very little, the demand to remain in the education process increases. Nonetheless, the number of formal and extensive higher education institutions in our country is not enough to meet the existing demand.

Additionally, despite the fact that education in our country is "free of charge and provided by the state", university education requires a certain amount of income or money. That's why; it's not possible for everyone to follow formal higher education. Therefore, there is an institution the ones who both want to study and work resort to: Open Learning Faculties.

### Reasons For Preferring Open Learning Faculty

Every service provided to human has a cost. Since education is a service provided to people, there is a cost for benefiting from this service, i.e. price, and the price for education service changes according to the type and level of education.

Moreover, the price required to be paid by individuals for the same type and level of education may be different from each other. In the education levels after compulsory education, renouncing the money to be earned due to working in a job, abandoning education service and gaining income will generally increase the education cost to the individual (Unal, 1996). Yet, educational cost decreases for the ones who have the opportunity to both study and work. So, some of the students in open learning faculty stated that they preferred both to study and work (C,C1, D, E, I,J, K, M,N, P, T, X, 1H, 1J, 1N) and they would get a grade or level advancement or have the opportunity to be promoted when they graduated from a higher education institution. In this context, it can be said that the opinions of the participants are parallel to the result of Woodley's study (1988). The results of Emir and Ozen's (2006) study revealed that most of the Open University students enrolled the Open University program for being promoted in their professions. On the other hand, Wilde and Epperson (2006) reported that only 46% of the respondents in their study had actually advanced in their careers. This may mean that not all of Open University graduates are promoted in their professions.

On the other side, they also preferred open learning faculty because of the reasons (e.g. insufficient score for entering the department) they want in Student Selection Examination (G, H, I1, O, O1, R, S, U, U1, 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D,1E, 1G, 1I,1I1, 1L, 1M, 1O, 1O); and they are not accepted to a four-year program due to various reasons (graduating from vocational high schools, vocational religious high schools etc.) (U, U). Open learning faculty is also preferred because it gives the right to get a bachelor's degree to the ones graduating from a two-year program (S1, Y, Z). In their study, Emir and Ozen (2006) found that the Open University students considered Open University as a good opportunity for everyone who wanted to be a university student or who wanted to be accepted as a university graduate. They also stated that another reason for preferring open learning faculty is that families do not want to send their children to move to another city to study (A, F) and children do not want to be a burden to their families (V). The reason is, according to Unal (1996), the price of education changes considering the factors such as staying with the family during education process and staying in a dormitory or in an apartment or the distance between the university and house. As a matter of fact Wilde and Epperson (2006) findings were parallel to Unal (1996).

In addition, such reasons as being curious about university education because they did not have the opportunity in the past (W), equal diploma issued by open learning faculty as similar to formal higher education institutions (T), and the possibility to transfer vertically to another faculty (1F) were also stated by the participants. The KPSS (The Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) point obtained from the KPSS exams is considered to be a criteria for being assigned to public sector as government officer however where the diploma issues from is not (http://www.osym.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF7A2395174CFB32E13268F856B8965D8A, 21.12.2006), taken into account.

## How is the attitude of other university students towards Open Learning Faculty students?

Despite formal education students do not consider themselves much different from Open Learning Faculty students (A, C1, N, 1H, 1J, 1K, F, V, B, I1, U, 1B, 1D, 1I1, 1M, W), they consider themselves superior (C, E, I, M, P, X, J, G, 1C, 1E, 1L, 1O, Z, L).

On the other hand, there are some formal university students who don't regard open learning faculty as a faculty and open learning faculty students as university students (1G, 1O, Y, R). That's why; they stated that "I cannot tell that I'm an open learning faculty student because I'm staying in a dormitory (S)". There also some formal university students who treat open learning faculty students as second-class people (T, 1A, 1E, 1N). On the other hand, there are some students who have friendship with formal university students (U) while there are also some who have no idea or communication (O).

In his research on open learning faculty students, Akyildiz (1998) stated that they believed communication resources were not sufficient and open and the existing communication did not support them emotionally. At this point, it could be said that what Wilde and Epperson (2006) found in their study might support the results of Akyildiz's (1998) study. In this respect, Wilde and Epperson (2006), on the basis of the students' written comments, stated that they felt disconnected from their classmates and faculty.

Some conventional education students state that studying in open learning faculty is harder and it's really difficult to try to be successful with personal efforts in an unfamiliar field (K, H).

## How Is The Attitude Of Other University Instructors Towards Open Learning Faculty Students?

Considering the general situation, conventional education students and open learning faculty students will get a diploma with the same characteristics when they graduate. In line with this information, instructors in universities do not discriminate between open learning faculty students and other conventional education faculty students and act sincerely (A, B, C, Ç, E, F, G, H, I,I1, J, L,  N, O, S, T, U, U1, V, W, X, Y, Z, 1A, 1D, 1E, 1F, 1G, H, 1I, 1I1, 1J, 1K, 1N). According to K, "instructors state that they are going to be as successful as formal faculty students but they would prefer formal university students if needed". On the other hand, the problem arises partly from open learning faculty students because they cannot adapt accordingly (1O1).

Yet, the situation seems to be different in practice. It is stated that some instructors are less interested in open learning faculty students because they're not formal university (their) students (1L), they give courses less carefully (1O) and their assistants give the courses (O, R, S). However, De Simone (2006) stated that distance education teachers must be willing and able to develop new methodologies of teaching that redistribute power, role, and responsibility within the learning community.

Therefore, according to her, to ensure the success of learning activities carried out at a distance education faculty must not only develop the necessary competencies to the their work but must also develop a clear understanding of their redefined roles and responsibilities. In addition to these, the instructors in Zheng and Smaldino's (2006) study stated a need for additional assistance or support to improve the way they address student considerations, to improve assessment of students of their course, and to make their instruction more effective in their distance education.

### Can You Study Individually (Suitable Study Environment, Library) ExceptIİn The Period When You Attend The Program In Abant Izzet Baysal University? How Much Efficient Do You Think It Is?

A student needs to primarily know the individual study techniques well and choose the best technique for himself to be successful. But this always requires a good guidance. Because some students are luckier in choosing the suitable method while some cannot choose the most suitable method for themselves and this decreases the level of their success. In this context, things get harder for open learning faculty students.

Because most of them stated that they cannot study at home by themselves or it is not effective even if they do (Ç, X, 1H, J, V, I1, 1I, 1I1, Z, H, Y, 1A, 1E, 1N, U, 1O, R, O, 1C, 1M, D, P). Nevertheless, they stated that they cannot use the library because they are open learning faculty students and also they do not need to because they are not assigned to do homework (1J, 1K, K, A, S). Particularly, K states that "We can benefit from library but we don't feel the necessity to make a research because we do not have any obligation to do homework. We aim to get a satisfactory grade by memorizing the course books sent just like programmed robots....." Yilmaz (1996) suggests that libraries may be established as academic consultancy centers where distance education students benefit from and also states that although these libraries may not function as a systematic library, they could be used in meeting the needs of students. But, the participants stated that these services were not provided in many academic consultancy centers as of 2006.

On the other hand, many participants stated that they benefited from resources published by open learning faculty on internet (C, E,1O, 1B) and auxiliary books commercially sold (E,U). When various subject-related studies were examined, it was stated that computer-based academic consultancy services were included in 1994 in addition to specially prepared course books, TV broadcasting, web-based open learning publications and academic consultancy services, the ability and learning speed of open learning faculty students were different in terms of the prepared programs and this caused a problem in education; and thus these problems were tried to be solved by providing different methods and education technologies but the efforts were insufficient (Dogan, Ozturk and Ozogut,1996; Pakdiratn, 1988; Kaya, Agaoglu and Ozgur, 2006).

The participants evaluated this situation with the following statements: Some could study at home (I, G, O1, S, 1D, W, T, 1F), they could study efficiently with their friends if they could come early and find an empty classroom (1J, 1K, L). But they stated that the most effective study was possible in academic consultancy course and they were more successful by listening, asking questions and discussing (N, M, F, 1G, 1L). This fact could imply that instructors of open learning faculty need additional training on the classroom applications of new educational technology facilities and new approaches in teaching and learning. In relation to this fact, Sax (2006) pointed out that faculty members who taught on line must be trained not only in new technology but in new pedagogy. In line with this, Zhang and Smaldino (2006) revealed that most instructors frequently used discussions, student presentation, student-student interaction, and student feedback while few instructors used role playing.

In this context, when the applications around the world are examined, Sakamoto(1986) stated that there are six study centers for students, called Kanto of University of Air, where the students in Tokyo and around attend courses and seminars, receive consultancy services, benefit from library, take their exams, watch course programs on video tapes and auxiliary educational video tapes.

### What kind of problems do you have as an Open Learning Faculty student?

The obstacles in learning with distance education method are generally differences in student profile, obstacles arising from the provider institution, organizational obstacles, program related obstacles, and obstacles arising from student (Cekerol, 2006). Similarly, a group of students stated that they faced no problems ( R, F, G, H, W, T, 1A, 1I1, 1F) whereas some of them stated that there were some problems such as not attending the courses, not being quite in classroom, not paying attention to courses, talking in class, attending courses other than educational reasons (D), providing consultancy only for three classes (N, O, V, 1G, 1J, 1K), and lack of compulsory attendance (1M).

It's observed that the biggest problem of open learning faculty students is "not studying" (Ç, 1H, J). On the other side, other problems such as lack of classroom for consultancy courses and looking for a classroom before each class starts (A, 1B, 1C, 1H, 1O,1O) are also observed. Also, sending assistants to classes is another problem (O). Gunawardena (1996) stated that instructors have a significant function in student support services in distance education and instructors are the most important obstacle underlying learning experiences which is the most important factor in facilitating students' learning as a result of related the studies carried out. In this respect, teachers' skills play an important role in success of schools as Valdenberghe (1999) implied. According to Valdenberghe, teachers' skills determine not only the success of schools but also the quality of instruction at schools.

Open learning faculty students have limited number of social activities and friend environment compared to formal education students (U).

Another problem about exams is their difficulty difficult exams (L, 1D,1E), taking exams in two days (Z), conversation among advisors during exams (P), complexity of the language used in the course books (I, E), disharmony of some auxiliary books and course books (U), too much detail in exams (C), and not considering open learning faculty as university in the society (İ,1L). In a study by Gokdag (1996), listed the problems for distance education as; having no research and development units, the nature of the exams, the number of students, the centralized system of Open University

### What Kind of Problems Do You Think You'll Have When You Graduate?

Many open learning faculty students are composed of groups who want to continue their education while working. For this reason, the participants believed that they will not have any problems in being employed when they graduate (Ç, I, I1, P, Z, 1N, 1A).

However, it is stated that the main problem the ones who consider open education as just university and the problem that they will have in the future is to not to be able to find a job (C, F, H, N, O, O, R, S, T, U, Y, 1C, 1I1, 1M,1O, 1O1, 1E). Yet, another fact in Turkey is that an individual must get at least 70 points in Public Personnel Selection Examination to be employed in a public institution. In this case, it is stated that all university graduates have reached an equal level (B, S1, G, 1F). Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that the differences between formal education graduates and open learning faculty graduates arise from the facts such as the difference in efficiency (U), lack of knowledge (A), lack of practice because of no internship process (1K, 1J).

As also stated by Corney (1983, cited in Unal, 1996), in their study carried out in 1970s, Thurow and Lucas  stated that education and placement were not a factor in influencing efficiency of employees because the work structure was defined technologically and efficiency was not a feature of people but work.

According to this study, there is an indirect relationship between education and work efficiency. If there is a desire to work in private sector, the situation changes and diplomas become important (E, 1L, K, 1M, 1G, 1H). Because education represents some characteristics facilitating cultivation and employers want to estimate future performance of employees when hiring and uses education to facilitate cultivation (Unal, 1996). Moreover, the number of economics and administrative sciences graduates is so high that finding a job becomes much harder (1E).

Considering the fact that individuals continue their university education and graduate from a university to acquire a profession, there will be students who want to have graduate and postgraduate education in their fields despite finding a job becomes a very difficult issue. The fact that some of the participants believed that they will be hindered when they want to have a graduate and postgraduate education (J, V) reveals that even they do not consider open learning faculty as university.

However, as a result of the study carried out by Bartels and Arroyo (1992), the open learning faculty graduates participating in the research stated that self-development is unimportant and job and careers concerns come after academic purposes.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS ABOUT OPEN LEARNING FACULTY STUDENTS

Individuals must add new qualifications to adapt the changing aspect of the developing world. Individuals are required to have more diplomas to improve their existing qualifications and to move forward in the queue in the business market. The individuals with the highest education degree in the queue for a certain job are considered to be able to be cultivated compared to others and placed in better jobs with the highest wage (Unal, 1996). The primary priority of having more diplomas is to graduate from an educational institution and certify the graduation. The documents received from educational institutions become important parallel to acceptability of institutions in business markets. The basis of having a job in Turkey is mostly dependent on being a university graduate, in other words having a bachelor's degree. The reason is that the bachelor's degree diploma is a document which contributes to the individual in the long term mostly. That's why, nearly all individuals graduating from secondary education institutions enter Student Selection Examination to be enrolled in a university. The ones passing this examination and being placed in a formal education institution get their places in the queue when they graduate. But what about the unsuccessful ones or the ones who have to work instead of going to a university? They enter open learning faculties which are considered to be a great opportunity. An institution requiring no compulsory attendance, having no classrooms, not accepted as a university in the society, not providing a university environment for university students, having students and most importantly issuing a diploma for individuals so that they get their place in the queue: "Open Learning Faculties".

The diplomas which were not generally respected in the first years of establishment were equaled thanks to Public Personnel Selection Examination and the open learning faculty graduates have become equivalent with all university graduates. This may point out that there is a progress in open learning faculty application. But is an undergraduate education where not much human relation exists, which supports memorization-based learning and provides education without instructors, buildings or practice is sufficient? The participants stated that this is a problem and this problem causes them to feel deficient compared to other undergraduates. According to Aybay and Aybay (1996), they emphasize that, for the success of distance

education, instructor and student must come face-to-face even for a limited period of time, i.e. "direct interaction". The same emphasis is observed in a study carried out by Cekerol in 2006. In order to remove these deficiencies of open learning faculties, Gokdag (1996) stated that consultancy service was provided to students in 55 centers during 1995- 1996 academic year; this service was provided in buildings hired by Anadolu University in 5 cities while it was provided in university buildings or Ministry of National Education buildings; 900 instructors worked for this service; these instructors provided consultancy services in 15 classes; and 72 instructors were employed to provide consultancy service in centers not supported by other universities.

Face to face instruction consultancy services for five months in an academic year for certain courses for economics and management faculty students in open education system have been provided to the students in 66 cities[1] in Turkey our country within the framework of Academic Consultancy Service since the 2006-2007 academic year (http://www.aof.edu.tr/danismanlik/a0100.html, 09.11.2006). Since a great number of students have been following Open University courses, it can be said that these students may have different support needs during their education at Open University and various support systems are required to solve the students' problems. Moore (2003) examined the learner support problems under three headings as; student-generated problems that prevent the student from behaving according to the expectations or requirements of the course as it was designed, problems arising from multifunction in the administrative system and emotional problems.

Yet, open learning faculty students continue to search for alternative education ways to go on their education and become more successful because these studies are not sufficient. Among these alternative ways, private courses organized for open learning faculty students by private sector are most striking and it is observed that these courses have an important place in meeting the needs of students for face to face instruction. It is seen that this consideration is parallel to the result of the research called "The reasons of distance education faculty students attending the courses organized by private sector and their self esteem levels" carried out by Gokdag (2006). The results of this study indicated that the students attended the courses organized by private sector due to various reasons, as: 33,5 % for being successful, 24,2 % for having a better education, 10,7 % for being self confident and 10,1 percent for having a social environment in the city. In addition to these, Dursun Gokdag (2006) listed the weakest points of open learning faculty under the following headings as; academic consultation, prevalence of courses, course organization services, face to face instruction, course books, test books and VCD sets, test experiments and information services. As the consequence of these, he (2006) pointed out the reasons of open university students for attending to private courses saying that private courses were more regular and planned, and more adequate to the science of education.

As can be seen in the results of these studies and the study carried out by Erdogan and his colleagues (2006), distance education systems that give priority to educational dimension, respond to interests and attitudes of students, meet the

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[1] Adana, Adıyaman, Afyon, Aksaray, Amasya, Ankara (Cebeci, Besevler), Antalya, Artvin, Aydın, Balıkesir, Bandırma, Bilecik, Bolu, Burdur, Bursa, Çanakkale, Çankırı, Çorum, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Edirne, Elazıg, Erzincan, Erzurum, Eskisehir, Gaziantep, Giresun, Hatay, Isparta, Igdır, Mersin, İstanbul (Bahçelievler, Beyazıt, Haydarpasa), İzmir, Kahramanmaras, Karaman, Kars, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Kırklareli, Kırsehir, Kocaeli, Konya, Kutahya, Malatya, Manisa, Mugla, Nazilli, Nevsehir, Nigde, Ordu, Sakarya, Samsun, Sinop, Sivas, Sanlıurfa, Tekirdag, Tokat, Trabzon, Usak, Van, Zonguldak (http://www.aof.edu.tr/danismanlik/a0100.html, 09.11.2006).

needs at an appropriate level must be developed instead of distance education systems which ignore educational dimension and turn out to be systems with commercial purposes.

Additionally, taking into consideration that open learning faculty students work at the same time, "diplomas" are still the most important documents in professional promotion, getting a degree and changing job or institution.

## Recommendations

The followings can be recommended in light of the findings obtained as a result of this study:

1. Open learning faculty programs and course books should be improved to meet the expectations and needs of students and the markets, accordingly.
2. The numbers and hours of consultancy courses provided to open learning faculty students should be increased.
3. Instructors should be preferred for consultancy courses.
4. Open learning faculties should introduce themselves to the society more "clearly" and public relations efforts should be enhanced to remove prejudice in the society.
5. Open learning faculty students should be provided the opportunity for field practice and to study practice of theoretical knowledge like formal university students.

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