



**This closing remarks
prepared and presented by
Prof. Dr. Murat BARKAN
Anadolu University,
Eskisehir, TURKEY**

DEAR GUESTS,

As the 2nd International Open and Distance Learning (IODL) Symposium is now drawing to end, I would like to thank you all for your outstanding speeches, distinguished presentations, constructive roundtable and session discussions, and active participation during the last five days. I hope you all share my view that the whole symposium has been a very stimulating and successful experience. Also, on behalf of all the participants, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the symposium organization committee for their excellent job in organizing and hosting our 2nd meeting.

Throughout the symposium, five workshops, six keynote speeches and 66 papers, which were prepared by more than 150 academicians and practitioners from 23 different countries, reflected remarkable and various views and approaches about open and flexible learning. Besides, all these academic endeavors, 13 educational films were displayed during the symposium. The technology exhibition, hosted by seven companies, was very effective to showcase the current level of the technology and the success of applications of theory into practice.

Now I would like to go over what our scholar workshop and keynote presenters shared with us:

Prof. Marina McIsaac from Arizona State University dwelled on how to determine research topics worthwhile to be examined and how to choose appropriate research design and methods. She gave us clues on how to get articles published in professional journals.

Prof. Colin Latchem from Australia and Prof. Dr. Ali Ekrem Ozkul from Anadolu University pointed to the importance of strategic planning for distance and flexible learning. They highlighted the advantages of strategic planning for policy-makers, planners, managers and staff.

Dr. Wolfram Laaser from Fern University of Hagen, presented different multimedia clips and directed interactive exercises using flashmx in his workshop.

Jack Koumi from UK, presented a workshop about what to teach on video and when to choose other media. He exemplified 27 added value techniques and teaching functions for TV and video. He later specified different capabilities and limitations of eight different media used in teaching, emphasizing the importance of optimizing media deployment.

Dr. Janet Bohren from University of Cincinnati and Jennifer McVay-Dyche from United Theological Seminary, explained their experience with a course management system used to develop dialogue between K-12 teachers in Turkey and the US, on the topics of religion, culture and schools. Their workshop provided an overview of a pilot study. They showed us a good case-study of utilizing "Blackboard" as a mean for getting rid of biases and improving the understanding of the American and Turkish teachers against each other.

We had very remarkable key notes as well. Dr Nikitas Kastis representing European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN) made his speech on distance and e-Learning evolutions and trends in Europe. He informed the audience about the application and assessment criteria at European scale, concerning e-Learning in the education and training systems.

Meanwhile, our key note speakers took our attention to different applications of virtual learning. Dr. Piet Kommers from University of Twente exemplified a virtual training environment for acquiring surgical skills. Dr. Timothy Shih from Tamkang University presented their project called Hard SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) as an asynchronous distance learning specification. In his speech titled "Engaging and Supporting Problem Solving Online" Prof. David Jonassen from University of Missouri, reflected his vision of the future of education and explained why it should embrace problem solving. Then he showed us examples of incorporating this vision with learning environments for making online problem solving possible.

Dr. Wolfram Laaser from Fern University talked on applications of ICT at European universities and different quality assurance systems especially referencing those in Germany and Britain, with an eye on the implications of the Bologna process for virtual universities.

Prof. Colin Latchem in his speech proposed an agenda for researching lifelong learning; specifying the needs and opportunities for research at national, organizational and practitioner levels for improving practices and decision making at managerial and governmental levels.

In specific, I would like to remind several key issues and conclusions that have emerged from this symposium.

As you know, the main theme of the Symposium was "lifelong open & flexible learning in the globalized world".

The scope of the Symposium included, but was not limited to four mainstream topics as they relate to open and distance learning, globalization, and lifelong learning:

The Design of Open & Distance Learning,

- The Management of Open & Distance Learning Programs and Policies,**
- The Impact of Contemporary and Emerging Media on Open & Distance Learning,**
- The Evaluation and Research in Open & Distance Learning.**

When we started to receive applications, we witnessed that most of the 200 paper proposals and 66 selected symposium papers were focused on the design and evaluation issues in open and distance learning.

Furthermore, another interesting observation was that whereas the authors of papers from Turkey sent studies mainly centered on the evaluation and research theme, our international participants generally focused on the theme of designing open and

distance education. This might be informative to further investigate the current research trends in the field in different countries.

A central issue, among others, regarding the design of open and distance education was the possible lack of motivation and interaction. The next course of action would be to apply the principles of designing effective open and distance education systems to a variety of motivational issues. We believe the community of researchers in the field is capable and in a position to contribute to these and other subjects in a global and educated manner.

Management of open and distance education appeared to receive less attention from the participants than other three main themes. This proves that we need to encourage more empirical studies in order to support decision making at managerial and governmental levels. We believe that managing an educational system is as vital as design issues in its success.

The paper presentations focusing on the Impact of Contemporary and Emerging Media on Open & Distance Learning shared information about virtual learning. In this context, integration of innovative technologies into classrooms, different levels of interaction in interactive environments, characteristics of online higher education institutions regarding educational technology, and ethical issues in online education were discussed.

The sessions that addressed the most popular theme: The Evaluation and Research in Open and Distance Learning effectively covered the key issues relating to modern e-learning environments, a variety of agents affecting distance education, measurement and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of e-learning systems from a range of perspectives.

Majority of our presenters highlighted the importance of the preparation of teachers for technology enriched environments and how vital it is to accomplish an efficient and productive open and distance education. One speaker pointed out that the use of new learning technologies is a complex and evolving agenda and so teachers need to be encouraged and supported in continuing professional development.

It would be concluded that assessment and increasing teachers' skills on technology literacy would be important for the successful integration of technology in novel areas.

Distinguished Colleagues

As the discussion has proven throughout the Symposium, open and distance education system remains its importance in the society, by utilizing new and more capable technologies.

As regards multi media education; first the television and radio, then the computer, and now we observe the dominance of the latest information and communication technology. In response to the developing needs of the new century, new approaches of lifelong and flexible learning have emerged. We strongly believe that our symposium contributed to the globalization and dissemination of new trends in the field. We would like to meet at new venues, with new theories and practices.

To meet the demands generated by the globalization of education, distance and open education systems have a tremendous potential. Further improvements are strongly needed for the global community encountering more complex educational needs of a greater variety where the social change is getting even faster generating new problems on a daily basis. Large-scale information exchange seems to be one of the

forthcoming challenges in which cultural diversity should carefully be taken into account.

Last but not the least; it is possible to observe the contemporary educational means and e-learning solutions be merged in the near future.

Again I would like to thank all participants for your intellectual discussions over the symposium and all institutions and companies for their invaluable supports...Thank you very much for your attention...

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<http://www.aof.edu.tr/iodl2006/Program.pdf>