

Distance Education Within A Campus: Case Of Selcuk University

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INTRODUCTION

Distance education phenomenon has risen in recent years especially with the adaptation of new telecommunication technologies. The term 'distance education' refers to many teaching and learning activities in which the learner is separated from the educational institutions or from the instructors (Miller & Smith, 1998). Distance education is basically defined as taking a course where students and instructor are separated from each other by distance (Fender, 1999).

Many definitions stress on separation by both space and time as a main sign of distance learning. Perraton (1988) defines distance education as "an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner" (p.34).

In this context, many forms of media play important roles in distance education. Media have become a bridge between students and lecturers. In addition to traditional materials, written to be printed or recorded, internet and video-conferencing systems have begun to be used in distance education (Miller & Smith, 1998; Schneider & German, 1999; Jung, 2000; Motamedi, 2001).

Distance education has many advantages as well as disadvantages. First of all, students do not need to attend the classes; instead, they get access to information and resources via internet, e-mail and television. Students can study when its suitable for them in their own environment, i.e. home or workplace. Moreover, the courses extend learning beyond the classroom. Students can contact instructors or eachother whenever they need to.

On the other side, the main disadvantage of distance education is lack of personal contact and interaction between students and lecturers. There is also a high cost of studio production and course-design time (Schneider & German, 1999; Hall, 1995; Birks, 1997; Busacco, 2001; Griffin-Shirley, Almon & Kelley, 2002).

Selcuk University is one of the biggest universities of Turkey in terms of student number. Selcuk University has three campuses apart from each other and approximately 45.000 students study within these campuses.

In 2001, Selcuk University started a distance education project which covers three obligatory courses that all freshmen must take. The courses are; Turkish Language, Foreign Language (English) and Principles of Ataturk and History of Revolution. In this project these courses, are given from both internet (web-based) and University Television (UNTV) a locally broadcasting television station run by School of Communication. These courses also thought in the classrooms by lecturers. Students can freely make a decision between the alternatives. They can watch from television, follow from internet or attend the classroom. This project differs from traditional understanding of distance education in the sense that, students and lecturers are not geographically separated. The main aim of the project is to provide the students with alternative learning methods.

In this context, this paper has concentrated on evaluating students' points of view about distance education project of Selcuk University. In the evaluations, students' levels of utilization and satisfaction have been discussed.

METHODS

Data were collected for this paper from freshman students of Selcuk University in April 2001. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 801 students were selected and an administrative questionnaire was applied. In this selection, students proportions of schools was taken into account.

RESULTS

The distribution of respondent students according to their schools is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Students According to Their Schools

	Frequencies	Percent
School of Technical Education	30	3.75
Vocational College of Technical Sciences	103	12.86
School of Agriculture	31	3.87
Vocational College of Social Sciences	64	7.99
School of Education	129	16.10
School of Dentistry	32	4.00
Law School	44	5.49
School of Engineering and Architecture	63	7.87
State Conservatory	20	2.50
Vocational School of Physical Education and Sport	32	4.00
School of Art and Sciences	60	7.49
School of Economic and Administrative Sciences	34	4.24
School of Divinity	27	3.37
School of Communication	43	5.36
School of Vocational Education	55	6.87
School of Veterinary Medicine	34	4.24
TOTAL:	801	100.00

In addition to this, 52.7 % the respondents are male and 47.3 % are female.

Table 2 shows, level of utilization for each alternative .

Table 2. Usage Levels of Internet, Television and Classes

	Internet		Television (UNTV)		Classrooms	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very frequently	9	1.12	4	0.5	31	3.87
Frequently	19	2.37	9	1.12	58	7.24
Sometimes	127	15.86	95	11.86	216	26.97
Very rarely	148	18.48	135	16.85	183	22.85
Never	498	62.17	558	69.67	313	39.07
TOTAL	801	100.00	801	100.00	801	100.00

According to Table 2, 1.12 % of respondents use internet for these courses very frequently, 2.37 % use frequently, 15.86 % use sometimes, 18.48 % use very rarely and 62.17 % never use. This results show that students' utilization of internet for these

courses is very low. Secondly, 0.5 % of students use television very frequently, 1.12 % use frequently, 11.86 % use sometimes, 16.85 % use very rarely and 69.67 % never use. As seen in this results, rate of the students' television usage for these courses is very low and also lower than internet. Finally, when we look at attendance to the classes in the classrooms, we find that, 3.87 % of students attend the classes very frequently, 7.24 % attend frequently, 26.97 % attend sometimes, 22.85 % attend very rarely and 39.07 % never attend classrooms. Therefore, majority of students prefer classrooms to internet and television for these courses.

Students' satisfaction levels about courses with different alternatives are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Level of Satisfaction With Internet, Television and Classrooms

	Internet		Television (UNTV)		Classrooms	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very satisfied	77	9.61	32	4.00	122	15.23
Satisfied	155	19.95	126	15.73	249	31.09
No idea	393	49.06	462	57.68	228	28.46
Not satisfied	80	9.99	72	8.99	103	12.86
Never satisfied	96	11.99	109	13.60	99	12.36
TOTAL	801	100.00	801	100.00	801	100.00

As seen in Table 3, with courses on internet, 28.96 % of the students is satisfied, 21.98 % is not satisfied and 49.06 % has no idea. In terms of satisfaction with television, 19.73 % of students is satisfied, 22.59 % is not satisfied and 57.68 % has no idea. Lastly, with classrooms, 46.32 % is satisfied and 25.22 % is not satisfied. Only 28.46 % doesn't express an idea. These results show that, students' satisfaction with classrooms is higher than with internet and television

For students' views on using these alternatives as a source of pre-exam study, Table 4 shows results below.

Table 4. Usage of Internet, Television and Classrooms As a Source for Pre-Exam Study

	Internet		Television (UNTV)		Classrooms	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Frequently	59	7.36	15	1.87	97	12.11
Rarely	140	17.48	111	13.86	289	36.08
Never	602	75.16	675	84.27	415	51.81
TOTAL	80	100.00	801	100.00	801	100.00

According to the table, most of the students study for the exams depending on the classroom attendance and using the books. Parallel with the previous results, when studying for the exams, internet and television are not as popular as classrooms are.

Students' views on the future of distance education project in these courses are shown below.

Table 5. Students' Views on The Future of Distance Education Project

	Frequencies	Percent
Should continue	318	39.70
Should not continue	332	41.45
No idea	151	18.85

TOTAL	801	100
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As seen in Table 5, number of the students who want the project to be continued and who do not want are almost same. 39.7 % of students want it to be continued and 41.45 % does not.

Table 6 shows, the advantages of distance education according to students,

Table 6. Advantages of Distance Education According to Students

	Frequencies	Percent	Valid Percent
Large number of students reached	19	2.37	5.90
Lack of obligatory attendance	263	32.83	81.68
Utilization of alternative learning methods	15	1.87	4.66
Ability to follow in domestic environments	25	3.13	7.76
Total	322	40.20	100.00
Missing	479	59.80	
TOTAL	801	100.00	

According to the table, the biggest advantages of distance education are lack of obligatory attendance (81.68 %) and ability of the courses to be followed the courses in domestic environment (7.76 %). These results are similar to advantages of distance education cited in literature.

On the other side, disadvantages of distance education according to students are as follow,

Table 7. Disadvantages of Distance Education According to Students

	Frequencies	Percent	Valid Percent
Lack of personal contact	62	7.74	45.26
Lack of interaction with lecturers	75	9.36	54.74
Total	137	17.10	100.00
Missing	664	82.90	
TOTAL	801	100.00	

According to 45.26 % of students lack of personal contact is the biggest disadvantage of distance education when 54.74 % think the same for lack of interaction with lecturers .

Lastly, statistically significant differences were shown between genders' views on the future of the project. Table 8. crosstabulates gender and the views on the future of distance education project.

Table 8. Crosstabulation of Gender and View on The Future of Distance Education

		View on The Future of Distance Education			
		ShouldContinue	Should Not continue	No idea	Total
Gender	Male Count	187	155	80	422
	% within gender	44.31%	36.73%	18.96%	100.00%
	Female Count	131	177	71	379
	% within gender	34.56%	46.70%	18.74%	100.00%
TOTAL	Count	318	332	151	801
	% within gender	39.70%	41.45%	18.85%	100.00%

There is a statistically significant relationship between gender and view on the future of distance education ($\chi^2= 9.57$, d.f.=2, $p= 0.008$). As seen in results, male students want the distance education to be continued more than female students do. 44.31 % of male students want it to be continued when only 34.56 % of female students wants the same

CONCLUSION

Selcuk University started a different kind of distance education with this project. Three obligatory courses that all freshmen must take, reached to students via internet and television So that, students can adapt to new learning methods. In survey, students' utilization of internet and television for these courses seems low. Students still use classrooms primarily followed by the internet and television. The main reason of low utilization of internet and television is the difficulty in accessing to these mediums. Since, many students live in dormitories opportunity to watch television or connect to internet is very limited. Almost half of the students is satisfied with the courses in the distance education project. At the same time, half of the students wants the distance education project to be continued in the future

As a result, in its first year this project seems successful according to students. Especially, male students are more satisfied with this project than female students are and want it to be continued in future.

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