Governmental Organization's Goals of Distance Education for in-Service Training

Kamu Kurumlarının Hizmet İçi Eğitimde Uzaktan Eğitim Hedefleri

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine the targets of distance education applications for in-service training in governmental organizations. Due to large number of staff and cost spent all over the country, it is estimated that ministry level governmental organizations should gain benefit from distance education for in-service professional training. In the scope of the study, it is explained the topic's importance by giving information about the distance education and in-service training. This study, which is conducted as a document analysis of the strategic plans of government organizations downloaded from their web sites in December 2014, aims to examine goals of distance education for professional development training. Findings of the research indicate that more than half of the governmental organizations do not have any relevant goal, some of them have limited goals and only six organizations have goals about distance education for professional development training.

Keywords: Distance Education, E-Learning, In-Service Training, Professional Development

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı kamu kurumlarının hizmet içi eğitim uygulamalarında uzaktan eğitim ortamları ile ilgili hedeflerini tespit etmektir. Personel çokluğu ve geniş coğrafyada teşkilatlanması nedeniyle kamu kurumlarının hizmet içi eğitim uygulamalarında uzaktan eğitim ortamlarından faydalanmaları beklenmektedir. Çalışma kapsamında hizmet içi eğitim ve uzaktan eğitim ile ilgili literatüre dayalı bilgiler verilerek konunun önemi ortaya konulmuştur. Çalışmanın amacı kurumların hizmet içi eğitimde uzaktan eğitim hedeflerini ortaya koymaktır ve çalışmada 2014 yılı Aralık ayında bakanlıkların web sayfalarında bulunan stratejik planları doküman analiz yöntemi ile incelenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları, kurumların (bakanlıklar) yarısının hizmet içi eğitimde uzaktan eğitim ile ilgili herhangi bir hedef belirlemediğini, bir kısmının sınırlı hedefler ortaya koyduğunu, 6 bakanlığın uzaktan eğitim ile ilgili çeşitli hedefler belirlediğini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uzaktan Eğitim, E-Öğrenme, Hizmet İçi Eğitim, Mesleki Gelişim

1. Introduction

Government organizations need to train their employees in order to correct the faults in the existing practices, improve satisfaction of citizens and increase quality of services provided, minimize the problems being experienced. The main-services provided by state in Turkey are performed by the ministries as the executive authorities. Similar to many organizations, the ministries also allocate significant amounts of resources for training of their staff. In spite of the sources allocated by many organizations, it is stated that in-service trainings provided to employees are still not in desired level due to many problems and difficulties such as geographical disorganization and large number of staff. Distance education environments which provide significant convenience for training large groups in wide geographies may contribute into solution of this problem with. This study examines the distance education targets in in-service training according to strategic plans of the ministries.

2. In-Service Training

In-service training may be defined as the process of gaining individuals the abilities they would need throughout their working life (Orhan and Akkoyunlu, 1999). Can et al. (Can, Akgün, and Kavuncubaşı, 1998) specified the in-service training as the process of teaching employees systematically necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors to ensure them display the expected performance during the period beginning from their starting date until leaving their job. The aim benefits and difficulties of the in-service training are described in this chapter in order to better understand the subject.

According to Yılmaz and Düğenci (2010), in-service training has economic, social and individual aims. These aims include in general,

- Improve productivity, increase product/service quality,
- Prepare the necessary human resource to be needed by an organization in direction of its strategic objectives,
- Increase motivation of employees by contributing in their progress,
- Improve loyalty of staff to the organization,
- Comply with developing and changing legal legislation, procedure and implementations (Peker, 2010; Yılmaz and Düğenci, 2010)

In conjunction with these aims, in-service trainings are provided for reasons such as promotion, change of position, change of duty or making the staff ready for duties to be undertaken in the future.

To list the main benefits of in-service training, it brings necessary knowledge, skills and experience in individuals they would need to display desired performance in order to fulfill duties of the organization and consequently productivity of staff increases and the possibility of making mistakes decreases. Organizations have to resolve

performance problems of their employees in accordance with their mission, vision and strategic plans (Çakır, 2013). If the performance problems are related to lack of skills and knowledge; they can be resolved by means of training programs to be organized education needs and training design principles which are propounded as a result of right analyses. Organizations decrease failure rates resulting from lack of knowledge and skills in staff and rapidly adapt to the changes in existing practices by means of in-service trainings. They have also make human resource educated which will realize and support their visions and missions in addition to correcting the existing practices (Çakır, 2013).

Changes in citizens and the private sector profile and relations with other countries and organizations are forcing organizations to change. Organizations have to propound their targets for in-service training in their strategic plan for improving knowledge and experience of organization staff in order to turn this change into an advantage. It is known that a number of problems are encountered in in-service training practices even though its importance has been noticed by governmental organizations in our country. It is stated in the Prime Ministry strategic plan ("T.C. Başbakanlık (2011-2015) Stratejik Planı," 2010) that "Failure in exposing public staff to sufficient extent of in-service training prevent them from having knowledge and skills to carry out their works in an effective and productive way".

The difficulties experienced in implementation of in-service training prevent the benefits expected from education from reaching up to desired level. In addition to education provided on-the-job, in-service training is in general implemented in a way bringing staff together in a center and providing the education in class-hall atmosphere. However, it is not possible to educate large groups in this way. The Ministry of Education (2009) states in its strategic plan that all employees cannot sufficiently benefit from in-service training by reason of large number of staff members. By reason that the ministries provide services in a wide geography throughout the country; access of staff members to the place of education from the place where they work is another difficulty. Some difficulties are experienced in educating large groups in a wide geography by reason of both education cost and the fact that staff members would become distanced from their office.

According to a study held by Ministry of Education (MEB), daily direct in-service training cost of a public staff member is 385 TRY in average. According to the Education Activities report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department of Education, 3445 staff members received in-service training throughout a year. The figure comprises of over 1649 executive directors status and 1794 other status staff members according to the report. For a staff member working in executive director status, not only the education cost but also the indirect cost arising from becoming distanced from his/her office reaches to a significant dimension for the ministries which have a great number of staff members throughout the country such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Internal Affairs.

3. In-Service Training and Education Technology

One of the indicators of quality is the use of technology. The most important benefit provided by technology for human beings is to generate solutions which would minimize the defective aspects of the existing practices. In conjunction with this, solutions are being provided for a number of education related problems by means of technology. According to Alkan (1996), all possibilities of the education technology should be exploited in order to provide high quality education for wide masses.

Improvement of learning quality and increase in the number of learners, controlling or declining the teaching costs create a pressure on organizations and the organizations must rapidly complete the integration that aims effective use of technology in education in order to get rid of this pressure (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). However, the process of integration is progressing so slowly and the organizations cannot yet use technology effectively (Hammond, 2014; Öncü, 2013). Today technology is still perceived as the use of *office applications such as word processor (MS Word), presentation tool (MS Powerpoint), electronic mail service (e-mail)*. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has determined the level of computer usage ability according to criteria of "word, excel, powerpoint, internet usage, e-mail usage" (İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2009). However, information and communication technologies provide much more convenience for daily life and working life compare to the office applications.

Technology would provide a great extent of contributions into education when it is used correctly in terms of pedagogy as content based in compliance with education needs (Hammond, 2014). In this scope, today effective use of technology became a necessity for overwhelming the difficulties experienced in education. As a result of this necessity, organizations should benefit from distance education environments as an effective method in educating large groups.

4. Distance Education

Distance education environments are considered a low cost, high quality and effective solution which could meet education requirements of working people without becoming distant from their workplace (Alkan, 1996). The USA Army aims to achieve some saving up to 805 million US dollars until 2015 with the Distance Education Program (Winkler, Leonard, and Shanley, 2001). Interest of governmental organizations in distance education has not yet reached to the desired level in our country in spite of developments occurred throughout the world. In-service training practices do not include any information about distance education environments in strategic plans of several ministries.

Then, why is distance education such much important? It would be useful to provide information about distance education in short to better understand the subject.

Distance education environments which in general express presence of instructor and learner in different physical environments have rises in the form of publishing teaching material (newspaper, journal, books etc.) and making them available to learners by mail (Gunawardena and McIsaac, 1996; Karataş, Karataş, and Kaya, 2012). Educational television programs and then computer aided education applications made distance education more interesting after wide groups are educated through the radio technology.

Today, technology is used for education purpose in different forms. Integration of technology that started by use of computers at class is still ongoing in different fields such as internet technology, online education practices, use of presentation and application tools (interactive whiteboards, projectors etc.) (Ertmer at al., 2012).

Once computer technology and internet infrastructure became widespread, that has been a turning point in education and distance education has gained a different dimension (Saba, 2005). Being criticized based on limitation of learner-instructor interaction, distance education has eliminated this restriction by means of possibilities and facilities brought by the internet technology. Students may now direct their questions to instructors in parallel with developments in information technologies, and practices with a wide participation can be performed within communication and interaction with other individuals who receive education (Holmberg, 2005; Morrison, Ross, and Kemp, 2007). However, distance education has some rules and practices which include much more than recording a course in video media and broadcasting this.

Distance education must pass through an effective design process and be planned in detail in order to achieve expected objectives (Gunawardena and McIsaac, 1996). This is because incorrect planning and implementation of distance education would lead to withdrawal or failure in education. In addition to transmission of a course in a class atmosphere to people in distance the subjects such as preparation of education materials, course content and evaluation methods, interaction, course period and timing, feedback should be planned, designed and implemented in detail (Reiser, 2001). Teaching materials and medias should be prepared in a way that arouses the feeling of being face-to-face with teacher in a guiding structure that makes learning easier (Holmberg, 2003; Holmberg, 2005).

Convenience of distance education sometimes outweighs in-class (face-to-face) training (Simonson et al., 2009). A number of institutions and organizations regardless of being small-large size prefer distance education instead of training practices provided in class atmosphere with a high cost (Morrison, Ross, and Kemp, 2007). This is because today's organizations have to continuously adapt their employees to legal and work conditions rapidly in parallel with changing technological developments and innovate themselves in such a competitive environment. This necessity has oriented organizations to shift towards distance education due to the difficulties in the existing education practices.

As the most widespread implementation of distance education, e-learning environments have reached a market size equal to 35 billion dollars in 2011 throughout the world. It is suggested that this figure would exceed 50 billion dollars in 2016 (Docebo, 2014). The figures as well as high amount of money spent for distance education are also the indicators of increasing interest all over the world. According to the Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 1.898.980 college students, 5.444.701 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in at least one distance education course during 2012 fall semester in the USA (Lokken, Womer, and Mullins, 2014).

In today's world where the knowledge is undergoing a highly rapid change, governmental organizations should benefit from distance education programs in order to ensure public staff to rapidly accommodate themselves to changing and developing circumstances. A number of previous studies revealed substantially various benefits of the distance education but the following benefits come to the forefront when the subject is evaluated in terms of in-service education;

- Training of considerably large groups with low costs,
- Avoidance of the fact that employed staff would become distanced from his/her office,
- Ability of updating education content rapidly according to changing and developing new circumstances,
- Ability of reusing prepared materials (education modules) for different trainings (Yılmaz and Düğenci, 2010),
- The fact that participants of a training can access to training materials in anywhere and anytime they desire,
- Ability of providing education for a number of participants in different spaces highly distant from each other (Morrison, Ross, and Kemp, 2007).

5. Method

This study was held with the method of document analysis. Document study implies review and analysis of literature sources related with the research subject oriented for a certain purpose (Karadağ, 2014; Karasar, 2012) The study aims to reveal targets of the ministries related with utilization of distance education method in in-service training.

In this study, targets of the ministries towards distance education practices in in-service training are examined in direction of the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry (2011-2015) Strategic Plan and Strategic Plans of the ministries which constitute the government as of December of 2014. Internet (public network) WEB sites (web pages) of the prime ministry and relevant ministries were examined and their strategic plans were accessed, then data has been acquired from these plans in the form of document review. Since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Defense Ministry's Strategic Plans could not be accessed they and the Vice Prime Ministers were excluded from the study by

reason of organization structure of the ministers. For that reason, strategic plans of 19 out of 21 ministries and that of the Prime Ministry constitute the scope of the study.

The words "distance education", "online education", "e-education" and "in-service training" have been searched in the strategic plans and viewpoints of organizations about distance education environments in the context of in-service training have been analyzed in scope of the research. By considering the possibility of misspelling, the statements of "in-service training" and "in service training" have been separately searched in text but they have been evaluated together. Any information has not been found about online education and e-education in the strategic plans other than the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning.

6. Findings and Interpretation

It was determined that some ministries utilize distance education practices even though their strategic plans do not include these practices. However, most of these practices are those oriented towards external stakeholders associated with field of duty of the ministries instead of in-service training. For example, the Ministry of Education has prepared and still utilizes a number of distance education environments oriented towards primary and secondary school students. However, data related with status of distance education has been gathered in scope of in-service training in accordance with the objective of this study. For this reason, distance education practices which do not include in-service training have been excluded from the study.

Any objectives or targets related with "Distance Education" have not been found in the strategic plans of the Prime Ministry and 10 ministries. Some information related with various objectives and aims are included in the strategic plans of 9 ministries with respect to establishment and utilization of distance education environments.

The Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications aims to establish "Distance In-Service Education Centers". The Ministry of Justice aims to develop and utilize distance education software modules in the in-service trainings on the subjects of cyber crimes and UYAP (National Judiciary Informatics System). The Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology has specified the objective of "putting web based distance education portal into practice and providing trainings" in its strategic plan. The Ministry of Economy stated its objectives related with "Establishment of Online Education Portal" and the Ministry of Development specified the target of "preparation of distance education programs" in their strategic plans.

Three other ministries specified narrower-scoped distance education objectives. The Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning aimed to prepare online education platform in activities related with Geographical Information Systems, while the Ministry of Health targeted to utilize the practices of "Education with Video Conference System" in Organization Based Projects, and the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs is still utilizing the Informatics Training Portal.

The Ministry of Education aims to increase the number of staff members who attend/are certificated in foreign language teaching in international standards, vocational education and distance in-service education activities in international standards by means of distance education. The Ministry is planning to ensure that "each teacher attend at least one in-service training every five years", "teachers are encouraged to attend conferences, conventions and symposiums organized related with their fields" and "the number of staff members who attend in-service training activities performed is increased 2% every year".

In-service training program for 2014 of the Ministry of Education was analyzed by reason of its field of duty and staff status. This is because the Ministry of Education should effectively utilize modern and technological innovations related with education and serve as a model for other organizations.

The Ministry has planned that 82 different in-service trainings and seminars should be provided in 181 periods for 23842 individuals according to its 2014 In-Service Education plan. The shortest of these trainings takes one (1) day, and the longest one takes 118 days. When the number of attendees is analyzed, 114 trainings in total have been determined which target more than 100 staff members. Among them, participation of 444 individuals in total is targeted in one period for Motor Vehicles Driving Courses Applied Seminars. Motor Vehicles Driving Courses Applied Seminars target 4229 people in 14 separate periods, Training Management seminar targets 2348 people in total for 20 separate periods, while Vocational Open Education High School Practices Seminar targets 1800 people in 12 separate periods. However, any training has not been designed as distance education and all these trainings have been planned in a way to be provided face-to-face even though they are included in their strategic plan.

Table 1. MEB In-Service Training in Numbers

In-Service Training cost per person	385 Turkish Liras (145 €) per day
Staff trained	23842 people in a year
More than 100 attendees	114 different trainings
Largest group	444 people
Largest and most repeated	20 times for 2348 people
Longest period	118 days

Undoubtedly, face-to-face in-service training has some superior benefits such as rewarding and socialization of staff. For this reason, organizations take into account such benefits while planning in-service trainings. Moreover, expected efficiency may not be obtained from distance education for learners lack of motivation. However, the limitations of distance education may be minimized with some measures such as establishment of appropriate evaluation and rewarding system, granting valid certificates at the end of distance education, and ensuring that trainees who have completed one stage of distance education with excellence should receive more advanced trainings in the form of face-to-face education.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Expected benefits are not able to be obtained from in-service trainings in governmental organizations for some reasons such as geographical restrictions and large number of staff members. Possibilities provided by the education technology should be utilized to resolve this problem. Once information and communication infrastructure became widespread; that has ensured experience of a turning point in online distance education. While a rapid transformation is being experienced on the subject of distance education throughout the world, particularly governmental organizations are not sufficiently interested in this issue in our country. According to Alkan (1996), scientific approach, coordination, policies follow-up in practice are the reasons which restrict development in distance education and such reasons are still prevailing today.

In spite of many benefits of distance education, it is understood that the targets of utilizing this in in-service education practices of governmental organizations are not sufficient. In-service training practices of organizations will gain a different dimension by means of true policies to be followed-up, proper coordination of distance education processes, introduction of best practices by adapting them to organization staff. Governmental organizations may train large groups with low costs by utilizing distance education environments in in-service training processes correctly. In addition to this, they can reuse prepared materials in separate educations provided for different groups in different times. It is impossible to think that distance education practices would totally substitute face-to-face education one day. However, distance education should be taken into consideration as an alternative that is qualified, cost effective, has the ability of responding to education needs, is appropriate with target groups, and improves performance and productivity in circumstances when provision of face-to-face education is difficult (Alkan, 1996; Morrison, Ross, and Kemp, 2007; Simonson et al., 2009).

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