

SYMPOSIUM REPORT

The First International Symposium on “New Horizons in Educational Communication and Technology.” Open Education Faculty, Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey, May 23-25, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

In its 20th anniversary celebrations week, Open Education Faculty (OEF) held its First International Symposium on “New Horizons in Educational Communication and Technology,” at Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey, between May 23 and 25, 2002. The many national presenters were joined by presenters (six of whom were keynote speakers) from other countries, including Greece, Israel, Kazakhstan, Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic and the United States. It was enlightening to hear their diverse views and successes, as well as the problems they are still facing. Attendees included distance education and open learning practitioners; lifelong/adult education and learning professionals; distance education and open learning academic faculty; technical

experts; policy experts; government, university, and college officials of all ranks; trainers in private and public institutions and companies; and administrators, managers, and purchasers of equipment and software related to this field.

Apart from opening and closing sessions and receptions; 8 pre-symposium workshops, 4 panels and 23 parallel sessions were held during this celebration week, which started with workshops May 20-22, followed by the three-day symposium May 23-25. Afternoons of May 25 and 26 of May were spared for sightseeing tours around Eskisehir, where the Phrygian civilization was based.

The following summary is based on my notes, the symposium program, the abstract booklet distributed at the symposium, and the symposium CD (including the full text of the

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symposium papers). A proceedings book (including discussions' and panels' texts) will be published by Anadolu University.

AIMS OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Among the aims of the symposium were:

- To evaluate developments in the world with the help of plenary sessions in which the international participants present their academic studies and experiences.
- To evaluate distance education, and its applications in Turkey; to offer new designs, new suggestions, and to discuss the problems in this field with academicians and practitioners; to share and exchange ideas and experiences.
- To evaluate distance education applications in Turkey with the help of paper presentations, panel discussions, and workshops (See: <http://www.anadolu.edu.tr>, Duyurular [Announcements] button).

FOCUS AREAS OF SYMPOSIUM

The theme of the symposium was "new horizons in educational communication and technology". In addition, the following six major sub-topics and related issues were discussed:

Distance/Open Education

- Management approaches
- Economic problems
- Theoretical perspective
- Providing quality
- Legal arrangements

Online Education

- Interaction strategies
- Virtual communities/cultures
- Evaluation approaches

Learning and Teaching

- Constructivist approaches
- Learning styles
- Collaboration based teams

Instructional Designs and Improvements of Teaching Systems

- Learning needs
- Feedbacks systems
- Innovative learning/teaching strategies
- Assessment-evaluation

Teaching Environments

- Authoring systems
- Visual literacy
- Multimedia environment application
- Interface-learner interaction
- Integrated learning perspective

Tendencies in the Field of Education Communication and its Technology

- Job possibilities
- Technological equipment
- Changing qualification
- New roles for learners and teachers

SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS ON MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY

The first workshop, Monday morning, was "Creating Virtual Communities," by Marina S. McIsaac, of Arizona State University, USA. In the afternoon session, Antonis Linarakis, of Hellenic Open University, Greece, presented "Comparative Study of Open, Distance and Conventional Education."

Tuesday workshops started with "Evaluating Online Learning: Models and Methods," by Charlotte L. Gunawardena, of the University of New Mexico. Mediha Saglik and her team (Nedim Gurses, Emine Demiray, Sensu Curabay, and Serap Ozturk) from Anadolu

University, discussed “Visual Telling for Television Course Productions” by making a live TV broadcast in OEF’s Studio 3. This workshop was in Turkish. The team showed us the ideal condition and process of TV course materials production and its problems, which have been met in the running of the OEF system. William Winn from the University of Washington gave a workshop on “How to Use Virtual Reality to Support Learning.”

There were four workshops on Wednesday of the celebration week. In the morning, Francis Dwyer, of Penn State University, discussed “Rapid Instructional Design: A Process.” The last presenter was Toshio Kobayashi, from Japan’s National Institute of Multimedia Education. His study was on “Educational Reform by Multimedia Technologies in Japan.” Atılım University and four commercial institutions (Turk Telekom, Comsat-Turkey, Erel-Ersoft, and Norbo) also conducted educational activities during workshops days.

THURSDAY’S GENERAL SESSIONS (MAY 23)

The first General Session began on Thursday May 23, 2002 with the opening ceremony and speeches by Ali Ekrem Ozkul, Dean of OEF; Engin Atac, Rector of Anadolu University; and Kemal Guruz, Director of the Turkish Higher Education Council. Yilmaz Buyukersen, former rector of Anadolu University and founder of the Open Education Faculty (and now mayor of Eskisehir City) discussed “To Open Education from the 20th Century to the 21st Century.” Marina S. McIsaac, of Arizona State University, presented “Global Distance Education: Anadolu University’s Rise to Prominence,” which reflected on the growth of Anadolu’s Open Education System from its early days as the Open Education Faculty. She mentioned that the developments are viewed in light of the upcoming challenges posed by globalization and digital technologies. Emphasis is placed on connectedness as the defining measure of globalization, and emphasizes

teacher training, shifts in pedagogy and instructional design in future distance education projects.

A panel presentation, on “Open and Distance Education in Turkey: Problems and Its Solving Ways,” included Ali Ekrem Ozkul, OEF; Ruhi Esirgen, Director of National Ministry of Education, EğiTEK; Nese Yalabik, Middle East Technical University; Asaf Varol, Firat University; Ibrahim Hakki Alpturk, General Director of Turk Telekom; and Abbas Guclu, *Milliyet Daily*’s education columnist. Dr. Atac began the panel with a series of statements, developments, functions, and importance of distance education for Turkey and presented the panelists’ short biographies, their positions and responsibilities for the Open and Distance Education system in Turkey. As moderator, Atac limited each speaker to five minutes. This limit had advantages and disadvantages: as Ibrahim Hakki Alpturk noted, it “successfully avoided any one person dominating the agenda; but it also limited speakers who wished to structure an argument.”

Twelve other papers, on a variety of subjects related to distance education, were presented on Thursday at Anadolu University’s Atatürk Cultural Center.

FRIDAY’S GENERAL SESSIONS (MAY 24)

On Friday, there were two keynote speakers and 15 presentations in morning sessions. Charlotte Gunawardena, of the University of New Mexico, discussed “Social Presence and the Sociocultural Context of Online Education.” The other keynote speaker was William Winn from University of Washington. His subject was on “What Can Students Learn in Artificial Environments that They Cannot Learn in Class?” Fifty papers were presented in Friday afternoon sessions.

In addition to these, there were two more panels. Anadolu University faculty members Levend Kilic, Hakan Aydin, Fikret Ucar,

Hulya Pilanci, and Aysegul Tokbudak discussed "Printed Materials Design: Anadolu University OEF Case." The second panel of the afternoon, on "Distance Education Applications of National Ministry of Education," was presented by Erol Duzgun, Aynur Uzer, Zehra Adiyaman and Mine Hicyilmaz Arslan, from National Ministry of Education.

SATURDAY'S GENERAL SESSIONS (MAY 25)

Saturday was the last day of the symposium. The morning session featured one panel and 26 presentations. The panel, on "Electronic

Scholar Journalism in Distance Education," was presented by Ugur Demiray, of Anadolu University and Editor-in-Chief of TOJDE; Kursad Ozmen, Editor of hurriyetim.com; Arif Altun, of Izzet Baysal University and editor of Ilkogretim Online; and Mehmet Kucuk, from Hacettepe University.

In all, 99 papers by 155 researchers were presented at 22 sessions. More than 500 persons participated in the OEF's celebration week activities. Symposium registration fee was \$30 US. This fee included the symposium abstracts booklet, papers CDs, TOJDE's back issues CD (*Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*), symposium bags, and symposium cups.