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High School Students' Attitudes towards Distance Education: Comparative Study

Birol Celik[a] *, Huseyin Uzunboylu[a]

[a]*Department of Educational Curriculum and Instruction, Near East University, Nicosia, Cyprus*

Abstract

By the rapidly evolving technologies, alternative training methods used on training needs of individuals instead of classical training methods. With the growing popularity of distance education opportunities, students' attitudes towards distance education is rapidly changing. The purpose of this study was determine to changes of attitudes of high school students in 2010 and 2014 towards distance education. To achieve this study "Distance Learning Attitude Scale" (DLAS) and "Personal Information Form" (PIF) developed by Celik (2011) utilized. Mentioned measuring tools applied to 92 in 2010 and 99 in 2014 high school students. DLAS has two sub-dimensions on distance education which are positive and negative attitudes. The reliability of these subscales were examined by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Positive sub-dimension attitude toward distance learning Cronbach's Alpha coefficient calculated as α=0.91 for 2010 and α=0.92 for 2014 and negative sub-dimension attitude toward distance learning Cronbach's Alpha coefficient calculated as α=0.75 for 2010 and α=0.79 for 2014. Participant student's gender, socio-economic levels and internet usage time determined by PIF. İnternet usage time of students grouped by less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours and more than 3 hours. ANOVA used on SPSS 20 software to analyze if student's gender, socio-economic level and internet usage time have significant impact on positive and negative attitudes. Homogeneity of variances analyzed by Levene F test. Each test examined separately for the 2010 and 2014 data. As a result of the analysis, no significant difference ($p<0.05$) of student's gender on distance education attitudes detected. The time spent on the Internet in 2010 has a significant difference ($p=0.04$) on positive attitude but no significant difference on negative attitude. No significant difference for the time spent on Internet for both attitude scales. Socio-economic status of students has a significant difference ($p=0.02$) on positive attitude for the year 2010 but no significant difference for the year 2014. Additionally no change detected on distance learning attitudes of students in comparison between the year 2010 and 2014.

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Keywords: distance learning, internet, computer, high school students

* Birol Celik Tel.: +90 532 405 67 75; fax: +90-212-222-6548
E-mail address: celik.birol@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The field on which the countries focuses upon and allocate more and more resources for in the science age is education. In parallel with the developments in science and technology; different education and training methods have been started to be tried in order to increase the quality in education and to get people gain the information, skills and behaviors required by employment potential and industrial society. Distance learning was developed in order to meet the needs of persons who cannot participate in face-to-face classes (Beldarrain, 2006). Distance learning was firstly described by Keegan (1996) as the continuation of the learning processes among the trainer and students who are located in different places with various means. According to Eisinger (2000), distance learning is a planned learning experience which was formed for certifying the learning and which encourages the student communication; and which may access the student all around the world by addressing the students in distant places.

When the history of distance learning in Turkey is investigated it is seen that distance learning was firstly performed via letter and "open university" has been developed. Together with the rapid developments and changes in technology, Distance learning has become different and e-learning and distance learning programs based upon internet have become widespread. One of the most important reasons of using computer and internet on education is increasing demand of education every passing day (Ozdamli ve Uzunboylu, 2008). Computer- computerized systems (laptop, tablets, smart phones, etc.) enable the formation of programs from which the individuals can get education in the time they want and on the place they are by benefitting from the internet. While the first generation web tools have been e-mail, chat rooms; the web blocks, wiki, podcast has followed these (Beldarrain, 2006). When the educationalists became aware of the power of these tools, the applications of these tools aiming at education have been developed (Beldarrain, 2006). Thus, lots of distance learning tools have been developed.

Since income is a significant factor in the formation of life styles of the people from every segment of society, it is thought that the perception of today's high school students who have grown in technology era will be related to the socio- economical level of their families (Saybasili, 1992). Adequate socio-economic opportunities are required for keeping up with the contemporary technology. Celik (2011) researched upon high school students in Turkey in determined that approaches towards distance learning show social-economical differences. Moreover "Net Generation" has an easier access to technology and they spend more time with technology (Newland & Bylest, 2014). It is thought that the fact Turkey is among the developing countries will affect the attitude of high school students in Turkey towards distance learning. In this context investigation of the changes towards the distance learning in relation to rapidly changing technology due to the gender, socio-economic levels and access to technology of the high school students has been aimed.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This research includes two study groups. First study group includes 92 students (72 men, 20 women) who were studied in high school in Istanbul in the year 2010. The second study group includes 99 students (75 men, 24 women) who study in high school in the year 2014. All of the participants were volunteers.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Personal Information Form (PIF)

Personal Information Form (PIF) was used for obtaining the demographical information of the students. While issuing this PIF, Socio-Economical Level Scale (SELS) which was developed by (Bacanli, 1992) was benefitted. PIF aims to determine the gender, internet access tools, income levels of the families and the time spend on internet of the students who have participated in the research.

2.2.2. Distance Learning Attitude Scale (DLAS)