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The Leadership Role for Turkey in Regional Distance Education

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ABSTRACT :

This Paper reports the distance education practices in Turkey, and then examines and discusses the role of leadership which should be undertaken by Turkey in the regions of Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Baltic, Turkic, Caucasian, the Middle East and northern Africa. International distance education organizations in the world are not well organized and functional in this area, nor are the regional distance education institutions in the name of educational institutionalism. To fill this gap, it is argued here that Turkey take a leadership role in the distance education field in this region and thereby organize the practices of the regional countries for their mutual co-prosperity and benefits. The structure of the potential distance education organization and the regulations of the organization is discussed in more detail based on this argument and available freely online at http://www.midasebook.com. The suggested name for this regional group is ICDEEEWA (International Council for Distance Education for Eastern Europe and West Asia). A draft of the constitution of the recommended association is presented and discussed at http://www.midasebook.com.

1. INTRODUCTION :

An "interaction" is not a one-way road. Cultural interaction works both ways. Therefore the use of information communication technologies in distance education (DE), making international collaboration feasible, is among the advantages of globalization. Through collaboration and projects of international organizations like the World Bank and UNESCO, the right to education can be enjoyed. The fundamental human right to education is specified in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that: "...Everyone has a right to education... Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace..." (Visser, 2003). Distance education when well-equipped can serve these aims. It can be used to solve the problems of undeveloped societies. Easily accessible and multicultural approaches shall of course better serve global concerns of under development and help solve the educational problems.

Modern distance education is said to have begun in 1963 (Perraton, 2007). In that year, the National Extension Institute was established in the United Kingdom, as a model for an open university. The methodology of DE, more recently known as distance learning, has given rise to the principle that education should and can be

open to all. Open education, or open learning, is a vision of an educational system accessible to every individual with minimal restrictions. This philosophy stresses the flexibility of the system to eliminate problems caused by barriers of, for example, age, geographical location, time constraints and economic situation (Bates, 1995). Open and distance learning (ODL) is therefore a system which combines the methodology of DE with the concepts of open learning and flexible learning. ODL is, of course, a very idealistic concept which in reality is difficult to implement. DE specialists believe strongly, however, that many ODL principles can be fulfilled better by DE methods than by conventional face-to-face (f2f) educational approaches.

This philosophy represents a paradigm that emphasizes access to education, and the learner's need for independence. The desire to increase educational access was the main drive for many countries to adopt DE (Garrison, 1993). Moore (1993) believed that as long as materials have been prepared, learners have full autonomy to undergo their learning process on their own terms. Based on this access paradigm, DE has been considered as an "industrialized" type of education, and as the product of an industrial society (Peters, 1994). According to Peters, the system of DE has many similarities with an industrial factory, with need for a clear division of labour, mechanization of activities, orientation to mass production, standardization of output and centralization of the system. Owing to these similarities, DE has been accepted by industrial society as a method of mass-producing trained labour. Peters argued that DE methods should also change in response to the changing demands of post-industrial society. This is even more the case in today's information society. Whereas the DE process previously relied on the use of pre-produced learning materials and correspondence, the addition of today's ICT to the process makes it possible to make DE individualized and interactive.

The educational needs of the post-industrial society are different from those of the industrial society. However, this is due to the constant changes in skill demanded by occupational and professional fields. The original correspondence-based mass-education model of DE does not meet today's demands for a one-on-one, interactive style of education capable of adjusting to educational needs and of developing an effective individualistic style of DE (Peters, 1999).

The new ICTs, however, can add these features that were lacking in earlier DE models. Today's production methods, communication technologies, perceptions of problems and problem solving strategies can be overdue and obsolete tomorrow. On this basis, a DE paradigm is developing characterized by a fully effective two-way communication process between teachers and students, students and study materials and between students and the educational institutions. A one-way process (that is, presentation of learning materials in printed, recorded or broadcast form) is complemented by two-way feedback between students and the teacher/institution implementing the programme.

Holmberg (1983) pointed out, that despite the fact that DE is designed for independent study, it should not be suggested that it can be implemented with no study support services. Even though interaction in the form of real conversation may be difficult to achieve in DE, much can be done to ensure that a conversational atmosphere is made available to the students. Holmberg's concept of guided didactic conversation which is related to an effective two-way conversation in, for example, prints over the telephone.

The goals and spirit of this atmosphere are implemented in the sensitive design of the learning materials, assignments and study supports. Via good materials, the students can obtain an "atmosphere" as in a conversation with the lecturer who developed them, and this in turn helps the internalization process whereby the materials assist the students to learn.

According to Sewart (1984), pre-produced learning materials cannot replace the functions and roles of conventional teachers entirely. Students have different needs which the learning materials may not

anticipate, and which cannot be satisfied by mass-produced learning materials. Thus, Sewart emphasizes the importance to students of organised learning support services. One type of support is the tutor-counsellor who acts as a subject matter expert (SME) responsible for guiding students academically and personally. Sewart (1984) believes that a tutor-counsellor who functions as both lecturer and mentor can significantly improve the quality of the DE teaching and learning process. The development of new ICTs such as audiovideo-conferencing has further enhanced this guided didactic process, by reducing the gap between the teaching act and the learning act that previously created psychological and transactional distance in the learning process (Moore, 1993). The benefits of modern ICTs have also generated a broader way of thinking about DE. Solutions to the problems of physical separation between teacher and learner in DE enable the broader use of educational facilities. When the teaching acts and learning acts can be effectively achieved in non-real time (asynchronously), two major problems are reduced:

- the traditional lecturer/students ratio which commonly limits the absorption capacity of education, and
- the classroom walls that commonly limit the transmission capacity of education.

Overcoming these hurdles transforms the educational process from one that is closed in nature to one that is physically more open, and education is no longer associated with the physical classroom.

Sherry (1995) states that distance education technologies are expanding at an extremely rapid rate. She continues on to point out that instructional designers and curriculum developers were so captivated with the latest technologies that they were not dealing with the new roles of teacher, site facilitator and student in the distance learning process. In traditional education, teachers interact directly with their students. In contrast, distance learning teachers are not in direct classroom contact with their students. The distance-learning teacher is the common thread throughout the distance learning process.

2. METHODS :

2.1 Technologies

Electronic technologies have increasingly changed the interaction between instructor and student. For most of the 20th century, distance education involved pen and paper, the typewriter, and the postal service, which provided the sole link between the individual instructor and the individual student. With the development of the radio and then television, it became possible to transmit educational courses, programs and content widely using these mass media distribution channels (Moore & Anderson, 2003).

Advanced countries have more opportunities for improvement than developing countries. Underdeveloped countries have some problems in utilizing a distance education system because they are handicapped population growth that overwhelms the region's carrying capacity, remote and separated rural areas, lack of enough unskilled teachers, excessive school dropouts, high illiteracy rates, and not enough resources (Towhidi, 2010). At a time of rapid technological change, and contested, complex concepts associated with globalisation, knowledge is becoming a primary factor of production in a global economy. As knowledge is becoming a primary factor of production and competitive advantage in a global economy, universities face macro challenges in responding to the exponential growth in demand for higher education, and to the changing concepts of globalisation, commercialisation and competition.

While Internet advances can theoretically support constructivist, learner-centred and interactive learning, challenges of Internet-enabled learning such as e-learning considered within the changing nature of knowledge, changing needs of society, changing teacher roles, and learner expectations need further investigation. These challenges go beyond innovative ICT implementations to the design and development of a holistic university system, that responds national and global needs, and to the community of demand. Answering to

the challenge entails a paradigm shift from the modern national university to a sustainable global higher learning system that provides rigorous quality in teaching and learning, and processing and application of knowledge to real-life problems in diverse cultural contexts. How we assess learning effectiveness, and whether we assess according to global and/or local standards will become increasingly important and contestable as universities seek to respond to the global issues of our time (Rajasingham, 2011).

2.2 Institutionalism of the Organizations

The international activities of universities dramatically expanded in volume, scope, and complexity during the past two decades. These activities range from traditional study-abroad programs, allowing students to learn about other cultures, to providing access to higher education in countries where local institutions cannot meet the demand. Other activities stress upgrading the international perspectives and skills of students, enhancing foreign language programs, and providing cross-cultural understanding.

Internationalisation, on the other hand, is viewed as a process that blends intercultural international dimensions into different academic activities, such as teaching, learning, and research, into the purpose and functions of higher education. The common feature in the narratives that define open distance learning and internationalisation is the blending of university services to achieve specific outcomes (Msweli, 2012).

2.3 International vs Global

Internationalization is often confused with globalization (Altbach, 2004). It defines that globalization as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement. Global capital has, for the first time, heavily invested in knowledge industries worldwide, including higher education and advanced training.

This investment reflects the emergence of the "knowledge society," the rise of the service sector, and the dependence of many societies on knowledge products and highly educated personnel for economic growth (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Institutional approaches to organization studies focus attention on the relationships among organizations and the fields in which they operate, highlighting in particular the role of rational formal structures in enabling and constraining organizational behaviour. A key contribution of institutional studies has been the development of strong accounts of the processes through which institutions govern action. This has been accomplished in part through theoretical statements which have delineated key sets of concepts and relationships that tie institutional structures and logics to organizational forms conducted (Meyer & Rowan 1977; DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Although the traditional emphasis of institutional approaches to organization studies (Thomas & Roy, 2006) has been on the explanation of organizational similarity based on institutional conditions, there has over the past 10-15 years emerged a new emphasis in institutional studies on understanding the role of actors in effecting, transforming and maintaining institutions and fields.

Also key in the development of institutional understandings of organizational action has been the large set of empirical studies that have documented the connections among institutions, fields and organizations. These studies have catalogued the impact of institutional forces in a wide variety of sectors and geographic contexts, and at varying levels of analysis including intra-organizational (Zilber, 2002), interorganizational (Leblebici et al., 1991) and international (Keohane 1989; Meyer et al. 1997). Finally, there has emerged an influential set of reviews of institutionalism in organization studies that have summarized and synthesized the major work in the area into coherent frameworks (DiMaggio & Powell 1991; Tolbert & Zucker 1996; Scott 2001; Schneiberg & Clemens 2006).

The roles of the various actors in creating

new institutions has been examined primarily under the rubric of institutional entrepreneurship. DiMaggio (1988) argues that institutional entrepreneurs are central to institutional processes, since 'new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly'. The concept of institutional entrepreneurship is important because it focuses attention on the manner in which interested actors work to influence their institutional contexts through such strategies as technical and market leadership, lobbying for regulatory change and discursive action (Suchman 1995; Fligstein 1997; Hoffman 1999; Garud et al., 2002; Maguire et al. 2004). The role of actors in the transformation of existing institutions and fields has also risen in prominence within institutional research. Institutional studies have documented the ability of actors, particularly those with some key strategic resources or other forms of power, to have significant impacts on the evolution of institutions and fields (Clemens 1993; Holm 1995; Oakes et al., 1998; Greenwood et al., 2002), including both institutional transformation and deinstitutionalization (Oliver 1992; Ahmadjian & Robinson 2001).

Institutions, in this view, are the product of specific actions taken to reproduce, alter and destroy them. Jepperson's approach points to an emerging focus within institutional studies. Along with understanding the processes through which institutions affect organizational action, research has become increasingly concerned with the effects of individual and organizational action on institutions. The second category of institutional work pointed to by Oliver's discussion of deinstitutionalization is the work done by individuals and organizations in order to maintain existing institutions.

Oliver (1992) highlights this form of institutional work indirectly when mentioned the failure of organizations to reproduce previously legitimated or taken-for-granted organizational actions.

Thus, the reproduction and continuation of institutions cannot be taken for granted, even the most highly institutionalized technologies, structures, practices and rules require the active involvement of individuals and organizations in order to maintain them over time (Lawrence et al., 2001). Zucker (1988) argues that even among institutions, entropy is a natural tendency that needs to be overcome by organized action. Despite the potential importance of this category of institutional work, it has gained relatively little attention. As Scott (2001) notes, Handbook of Organization Studies 'most institutional scholars accord little attention to the issue of institutional persistence, and those who do disagree over what mechanisms underlie stability'. Of course, the articles by DiMaggio (1988) and Oliver (1991; 1992) are by no means the only ones that deal with institutional work. Beckert argues that institutions can provide actors with the ability to act when the 'complexity of the situation and the informational constraints do not allow them to assign probabilities to the possible consequences of choices'; at the same time, however, institutions “come under pressure from agents who recognize their constraining qualities for more efficient outcomes” (Beckert 1999, 779).

As Scott (2001) notes in the *Handbook of Organization Studies*, “most institutional scholars accord little attention to the issue of institutional persistence, and those who do disagree over what mechanisms underlie stability”

The concept of institutional strategy describes the manipulation of symbolic resources, particularly membership Access and the definition of standards, which are key aspects of the type of work necessary in the early stages of an institutionalization project. Fligstein (2001), in a related fashion, uses the construct of 'social skill' to describe the various tactics that social actors use to gain the co-operation of others. He further observes that the social skills used to reproduce fields are different from those used in conditions of crisis or change. These latter skills are used by entrepreneurs who 'find ways to get disparate groups to co-operate precisely by putting themselves into the positions of others and creating meanings which appeal to a large number of

actors'. The paper entitled as "How Organizations Change: The Role of Institutional Support Mechanisms in the Incorporation of Higher Education Visibility Strategies, 1874-1995" develops the argument that institutional mechanisms support changes in organizational strategies in ways that contrast with the standard interpretation of institutional "iron cages" that pressure organizations to conform. Differences in the pattern of incorporation across the three strategies provide robust evidence for alternatives to a prevailing "iron cage" view of institutional pressures and constraints.

These findings also reinforce the importance of specifying field-level mechanisms to supplement a focus on the important organization-level mechanisms (Washington & Ventresca, 2004).

2.4 Fostering Leadership and Education

The question is how institutions of the academic community can collectively work together to transform themselves and their institutions with the aim of giving leadership development the priority it deserves. To address this challenge, this set of core leadership principles and values is suggested that faculty, students, administrators, and staff may wish to utilize as they consider how to go about the very critical and difficult work of institutional transformation.

In short, our conception of leadership comprises the following basic assumptions: Leadership is concerned with fostering change; Leadership is inherently value-based; All people are potential leaders, and Leadership is a group process. It requires a vision of what higher education will look like in the future, and a clear plan and methodology for transforming the institution to achieve this vision.

All of the inter-related organizational aspects need to be addressed in the transformation process: management and leadership (e.g., transformational leadership issues, sound business practices), organization structure (e.g. flexible organizational structures and effective team-work), strategy (e.g. market and needs analysis, strength, weaknesses, opportunity, and threat analysis) technology (e.g. upgrading IT infrastructure, hardware and software management), human resources (e.g. recruitment, staff development), and organization culture (e.g. changing and managing culture as a competitive advantage).

Moreover, the transition depends not only on the efficiency of the transformation process itself but also on the commitment and entrepreneurial capacities of the senior and middle managers and staff. This may be particularly difficult for the traditional single-mode university; more accustomed with face-to-face contexts and client groups within readily identifiable local catchments (Ulukan, 2005). In other words, a new organization could help bring together universities and professors in the region.

2.5 The Role of NGO's in Education

NGOs are difficult to define and classify due to the term's inconsistent use. To attempt a classification of NGO's requires a framework that includes the orientation and the organization's level of operation. An NGO's orientation refers to the type of activities an organization takes on. These activities might include environmental, development, or advocacy work. An NGO's level of operation indicates the scale at which an organization works on, like the difference in work between an international NGO and community or national NGO. One of the earliest mentions of the term "NGO" was in 1945, when the UN was created.

The UN introduced the term "NGO" to distinguish between the participation of international private organizations and intergovernmental specialized agencies. According to the UN, all kinds of private organizations that are independent from government control can be recognized as NGO's. NGO's cannot seek to diminish a nation's government in the shape of an opposing political party; and moreover NGO's also need to be non-criminal and also non-profit.

Rapid development of the non-governmental sector occurred in western countries as a result of the processes of restructuring of the welfare state. Further globalization of that process occurred after the fall of the communist system and was an important part of the Washington consensus.

Globalization during the 20th century gave rise to the importance of NGO's. Many problems could not be solved within a nation. International treaties and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization were centred mainly on the interests of capitalist enterprises. In an attempt to counterbalance this trend, NGO's have developed to emphasize humanitarian issues, developmental aid and sustainable development.

Before the restoration of democracy, NGO's were not allowed to be registered and operate. After reestablishment of democracy NGO's, could play an effective role in many people oriented programs such as health, family planning, and environment, formal and non-formal education.

At present NGOs are playing a very important role to provide helpful services to the population in rural areas. Similarly it has done remarkable work in the field of literacy, family planning, population, environmental conservation and development of formal and non-formal education. Since 1950s, many educational institutions such as schools and colleges are opening. But still more than 50% of the adult population is illiterate in the world. It is a fact that Education for All (EFA) could not be provided through schools alone.

After 1970s, formal, non-formal education and distance education should be developed to provide literacy education combined skill training to all from primary to PhD level around the world beside training teaching and vocational education. As a matter of fact the NGOs have shown that they are more effective and efficient role and function to provide education for all especially through traditional, formal, non-formal and distance education applications.

Over the past decade the development education sector has undergone a process of change that has strengthened its policy framework and consolidated its shift from the periphery to the centre of mainstream education provision.

In the mid-1990s, practitioners debated development education's position in mainstream delivery and its capacity to address key learning needs within formal and non-formal education. That debate seems far removed from today's more dynamic framework for delivery.

The language of education used by nation-states as well as international intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations NGO (both transnational and national), and agents of civil society (many of which belong to the aforementioned categories) contributes heavily to the self-identification of individuals. By understanding the language of each, we can reach a greater understanding of the multiple, conflicting, and overlapping educational ideologies employed across the globe.

Education has played a major role in the creation of the current world in which we live, mainly because it allows us to conceptualize our surroundings as well as our interactions with those surroundings. Today's multicultural learning environment (online or on campus) accelerates the number of web-based programs and this shows the magnitude of the growing demand.

3. RESULTS :

Despite the numerous and volatile changes we have undergone as a society and civilization, education still remains the most powerful force for individual and collective transformation. Change dominates our world and education is a major vehicle for initiating, managing, and sustaining or stabilizing our environments affected by change. It is through educational value that we develop the understanding and then knowledge to effectively craft strategies for leading change (Kotter, 1996).

Globalization and the revolution in technological communications are major forces of change in higher education. This environment, when coupled with the needs of adult learners and the rising costs of tuition at traditional and distance colleges and universities, has stimulated the emergence of for- profit, degree-granting higher education in the United States. Paper which is entitled Globalization and the Emergence of For-Profit Higher Education examines the growth of for-profit higher education, provides a cost/profit analysis, and gives examples of for-profit universities that are increasing international in scope and concludes with a discussion of the implications of these developments for colleges and universities (Morey, 2004, p. 131).

Globalization and effects of ICT specifically the Internet are criticized for cultural monopolization due to hegemony of certain states mainly the US and the UK. The critics have certain arguments that have to be taken seriously in the name of democracy and equal rights of peoples. Because ICT are an important political mean and education can be a powerful political tool; that can be used for both assimilations and/or for developing societies that are in need of such opportunities.

Though there are two sides of the coin, it should be stated frankly that ICT narrow gaps and brings understandings closer. People are closer to different societies' values and realize that they have more to share. Collaboration in distance education is possible as a result of development of this common understanding. But this process works both ways, in this study it is underlined that international applications of distance education can serve to further connect peoples and help promote new common values. One of the repercussions of globalization; increasing number of non-state entities in IR is effective for education too. These organizations deal with distance education institutions with/without government support. Of course universities have welcomed distance education ahead many institutions and offer domestic and international online courses. The increasing number of open universities is academically an advantage. This is because distance education is not just a product for the global market some times; and it's pedagogic and quality related issues are very important. The learning communities that the ICT create and international channels sustaining collaboration can lead to high quality distance education programs.

Globalization has affected many areas of society and will continue to shape the future of education and content delivery indefinitely. The impact of globalization has led to exceedingly higher enrolments for many universities and colleges. It has become increasingly apparent that individuals need to consistently learn new skills in order to remain employed and competitive in a knowledge and digital economy. Those individuals who cannot or will not learn new skills will have more difficulty finding employment and remaining competitive (Portugal, 2006).

Distance education institutions have always managed to teach students beyond the frontiers of the jurisdiction within which they exist as physical entities. The development of Information and Communication Technologies has greatly expanded the number of institutions offering programmes on a regional or global basis. The developments of modern Information and Communication Technologies have greatly helped the emergence of global distance education systems.

Global web-based learning models are spreading mainly developing countries such as the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Europe; they influence the trends, causing international relations (IR) to be influential in managerial decisions and institutional structures of cooperation. International education necessitates multidisciplinary approaches to construct better contexts for learning.

Education is now more essential for people to realize their dreams and survive, especially in a global society where education is no longer an option, but a must to enter the highly competitive labour market (Demiray & Sever, 2009, Demiray & Sever, 2011).

Distance learning has become a major force by which individuals all over the world are acquiring the necessary training, skills, and education required to enter the job market. This has led to an unprecedented growth in all aspects of the distance learning industry, from the number and types of schools to the variety of technology and programs being offered. This teaching and learning modality makes time and space the regulating variables between teachers and students located anywhere, yet interacting through powerful and speedy information and communication technology systems and processors.

Recent studies have indicated that, while there is a great deal of interest among both governments and institutions in inter and international institutional cooperation, the terminology of cooperation is confused and imprecise.

Mergers are sometimes characterized as being an extension of inter and international institutional cooperation such as associations, sometimes they are regarded as separate, unique, and situated on a plane or continuum different from that of such structures as federations and consortia. Yet, in generic terms, mergers share a number of characteristics with other forms of cooperation, and are often pursued for the same reasons.

This study investigates the origins and motivations of inter-international institutional cooperation in order to show that the various forms of cooperation, including mergers, are part of a single evolutionary continuum.

This inclination toward a broader worldview, and the need for greater and more knowledge to facilitate survival amidst competition and change, has led to increased demand for education by people and nations in all corners across the globe. In turn, this need and the availability and use of information and communication systems made available through constantly increasing technologies have facilitated the increased use of Computer Mediated Learning CML, to support teaching and learning, especially via distance educational opportunities. Although the economic benefits of collaborative schemes and of the transfer of courses in distance education are clear, examples of collaboration between distance education institutions are rare. A reason is sought in the "organizational climate" or "ethos" of each institution engaged in distance education, which inhibits joint design and use of courses or the transfer of a course from one institution to another. This theme is examined in relation to distance education in the integrated mode system of Australian and New Zealand universities, six in all. The universities are compared in terms of six features of organizational climate of particular relevance to distance education: physical characteristics, academic organization, involvement in distance teaching, organization of distance teaching, components of distance teaching and staff attitudes to distance education. It is concluded that the considerable variation between institutions, with respect to these features, creates difficulties for collaboration. The best prospect for collaborative schemes in distance education therefore may have to lie in the use of national or international agencies to validate courses as part of a national or international higher education programme along the lines of Britain's CNAA (Bynner, 1985).

Transformation as a general concept refers to some degree of change, usually significant, observed in the quality of a situation, or in the nature and trend of a phenomenon. Lippit (1973) has observed that nothing could be measured that would not display “some notable difference at least between two successive points in time where the time interval is long enough.”

In distance education, transformation would refer to dimensions or levels of change over a period that has become significant in practices in the field. For example, the use of more sophisticated media, or the noticeable change in the range of programmes represents issues that would fit within a period. Rapid technological growth and advances in computer technologies have contributed to increasing use of the Internet in higher education. To remain competitive, educational institutions are pressured to embrace DE. Distance learning has changed dramatically since the

1990s to become a dominant part of the landscape of the higher education global industry of the 21st century. Today we have mega-distance learning corporations, colleges, and universities operating on all continents and offering training, continuing education, and academic degree programs in various fields.

As such, many distance learning institutions have emerged to become major players in education, some becoming complements, alternatives, and even replacements to the traditional or on-campus programs and schools or educational formats. Teaching and learning modes where teachers and students or educators and learners are separated by time, distance, and location have become the most convenient and fastest, "easiest" ways to meet the growing demands for degrees, education, certification, and training.

Distance learning opportunities respond effectively to the demands of individuals in the fast-paced globally competitive world of the 21st century. In this environment, administrators, teachers, and learners must attend to multiple tasks and responsibilities in personal and professional lives while providing and pursuing education. Despite the great convenience and benefits of distance learning opportunities, there are problems and challenges that DLAs must face in leading units, departments, and institutions offering distance education (McFarlane, 2011).

The existing body of literature is limited in coverage of faculty DE issues and presents no comprehensive theoretical base. Instead it adapts several existing theoretical frameworks. The constant evolution of globalization creates the need for entrepreneurial leaders and learners who have a strong ability to look to the future, which requires a holistic approach to innovation and change. Entrepreneurial leaders are needed to help foster a global mindset throughout institutions characterized by innovation, change and risk taking propensity while valuing social responsibility.

Innovation is more than being creative or coming up with ideas. It is the ability to do things differently, which generates change and pioneers new paradigms (Engle, Mah & Sadri, 1997; Kirton, 1976, 1978). Innovation is about coming up with new ideas, products, collaborations, services and solutions that can be implemented and used. According to a study conducted by IBM's Global Business Services (2006), innovation is vital to growth and sustainability in the current era of rapid change and globalization. Innovation has become essential to the success of individuals as well as new and existing organizations. Innovation is not a new or mystical concept. An organization should have a unique vision as well as a unique innovation strategy. Innovation strategy should match the culture of an organization (Davila, Epstein & Shelton, 2006). Further, leaders must work to integrate innovation into the very core of an organization (Skarzynski & Gibson, 2008).

Educational leaders (administrators, staff members, and instructors) must integrate innovation into their organizations, programs and courses to grow and maintain enrollments, and programs. Further, students must be taught the importance of innovation and have the opportunity to innovate in educational settings.

There are many aspects of innovation, which include fun, creativity, diversity, collaboration and the ability to trust intuition. Time must be dedicated to the innovation process. However, one of the most essential elements of innovation is risk taking. The ability of distance learning administrators to effectively address these problems and challenges will significantly shape the future of online or virtual distance education.

The new leader must accordingly be willing and able to;

- manage change and innovation ;
- listen to and assist stakeholders, maintaining and enhancing relationships between the institution and relevant partners;
- embrace the realities of network environments ; and
- ensure transformation to a new model of teaching and learning (Cleveland-Innes, 2012, p. 233).

4. DISCUSSION :

Similar to traditional educational administrators, distance education/learning associations DLAs or leaders must meet a variety of problems and challenges in ensuring the effective and efficient operation of distance learning schools. Valentine (2002) has identified five major problems and challenges to distance learning that administrators must deal with: quality of instruction, cost effectiveness, misuse of technology, role of technicians, and problems with equipment. One of the greatest and most complex of the problems and challenges faced by distance learning administrators is that of quality assurance in terms of the value and quality of distance learning programs. This mainly stems from the long-standing debate regarding traditional versus distance education programs and schools. The key problems-challenges among these five factors seem to be the quality of instruction, misuse of technology, and costs effectiveness, and distance learning administrators can follow several recommendations in order to deal effectively with these issues.

Dede (1993) also supports the idea of leadership in distance education being different from traditional education leadership, "Creating and conveying technological visions powerful enough to displace traditional educational models is one of the most challenging aspects of leadership." Care and Scanlan (2001) add, "There is a general lack of understanding regarding the experiences of administrators, faculty, and staff from other departments in the development of distance education courses."

The roles and goals of DE associations need to be clear in order to get some sense of their views about the associational umbrella in general. International cooperation in DE is a very popular phenomenon today. International collaboration and integration initiatives have increased in the framework of organizational cooperation at different levels and in different issue areas. The European Union (EU) and the cooperation in different policy areas : projects for both member and non-member states are examples of how ICT can ease and facilitate interactions (Wendt, 1994, p. 384).

Thus, an effective distance learning association should make curriculum planning and quality assurance important factors. This is where a responsibility over institutional planning and effectiveness comes into play. Despite the virtual side of distance learning, administrators still need to carry out the managerial role of controlling and monitoring for standards, whether that standard is in reference to programs, curriculum, or instructors. They need to work hard, not only in obtaining, but also maintaining relevant state and agency approval for programs. This requires DLAs to keep abreast of new developments in the fields. This can be accomplished by being members of distance learning organizations and agencies.

Additionally, effective DLAs will view themselves as part of a global trend in education and seek to be actively visible and participating subscribers and members in conferences in the industry, and read and subscribe to academic and professional journals and magazines. Training and education are also important in dealing with these problems and challenges as DLAs further their knowledge of distance learning technologies and their leadership skills.

In proving themselves to be exemplary leaders who are able to meet the challenge of 21st century leadership, DLAs must now model the way for educational value and quality that enables faculty and students to meet their goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). This requires effective delivery of skills and training using appropriate technology and pedagogical approaches (Entz, 2006). As effective leaders, DLAs are expected to design, implement, and maintain both value and quality in distance teaching and learning programs. The call for higher standards and quality from various stakeholders and demands for increased accountability from educational leaders and institutions stemming from the need for and attempt at educational reform (McFarlane, 2010; Hale, 1999) have also added pressure to DLAs to create value and quality at both the beginning and end-stage of instructional

programs. Moreover, the competitive market for educational credentials, students' satisfaction, continuous governmental regulation and monitoring, criticisms from education watchdogs, increased number of institutions offering distance learning programs, accreditation diversity, competition and employment prospects relative to perceived degree value and quality - are demanding more and more from distance learning institutions and programs in terms of value and quality. Distance learning programs must be managed and led effectively by administrators with broad knowledge and understanding of the education industry and these regulating variables.

Leaders in distance learning must constantly be aware of how to adjust, evaluate, and assess the validity of programs, content, and emerging technologies to remain competitive and viable in this new society. Educational leaders will benefit from collaboration with business and industry leaders and vice versa. Beaudoin (2002) states that education has benefited from insight and inquiry but might adopt practices from business and industry. In addition, faculty and administrators should work collaboratively in the practice and theory of online delivery methods. With the increasing changes happening throughout the world, higher education leaders need to be aware of these mutable circumstances and influence their colleges and universities to be able to adapt and transform accordingly. Higher education will need to service more individuals and educate them based on the skills necessary for employment and success (Portugal, 2006).

DLAs must embrace their managerial-leadership roles that are informational, interpersonal, and decisional (Mintzberg, 1973). They manage people, systems, and processes and should take a true systems thinking approach in the distance learning. Mintzberg's model is further broken down into ten leadership responsibilities or functions with activities that DLAs can effectively apply to their duties and responsibilities. DLAs must deal effectively with a lot of information by being monitors, disseminators and spokespersons by effectively managing the flow and transfer of information to produce knowledge and ideas that effectively communicate rules, policies, and expectations. They must be able to motivate their staff and faculty members and lead organizational activities and programs as figureheads, leaders, and liaisons. Effective DLAs plan effectively in order to improve teaching and learning by preparing schedule, budget, setting priorities, and acquiring and distributing resources as needed by faculty and staff to respond to students' needs.

DLAs can best ensure quality of instruction by having the right people, administrator, instructional and technology experts, right technology, quality and well-designed and organized curriculum, appropriate materials, textbooks and other media sources. Effective DLAs are happy to represent their schools and programs at conferences, through media and community contact, and they identify new opportunities and projects for growth and success that will positively impact all members of the organization in their capacities as entrepreneurs, disturbance handlers, resource allocators, and negotiators.

Effective DLAs will understand and apply the guidelines of exemplary leadership as they seek to inspire a shared vision within the organization, unit or department. They must model the way by being examples of effective leaders and managers, and challenge others to think and work hard. They must enable others to act through empowerment and participatory leadership, and encourage faculty and staff to take a servant leadership approach to teaching and caring for students who are the ultimate customers and reason for being (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Emerging leaders in distance education will need to be well versed in the business functions of their universities and colleges so that online systems and structures operate smoothly and effectively for students, faculty, and support staff. "The move to distance education requires that institutions effectively utilize business plans to a greater extent than many administrators are used to doing" (Folkers, 2005). Thus the

implementation of online distance programs can be daunting when considering the areas necessary for support that will incur additional costs such as on-going faculty support/training, course delivery, course design, student support services such as billing/accounting, library services, advising, IT support systems, online processing, online registrations, and course management software (CMS).

"The 2002 National Survey of Information Technology in Higher Education, conducted by the Campus Computing Project, found that only 40.5% of the colleges and universities surveyed were capable of processing credit card payments from campus Web sites" (Folkers, 2005).

Course management software (CMS) should be carefully considered since this expense can increase substantially over time. Developing one's own proprietary program or using systems such as ANGEL, WebCT or Blackboard can become more costly than an institution originally presumed, especially when support systems need to be developed campus wide. Another consideration for distance education leaders is that these support systems are able to interface with existing IT systems throughout the institution whereby adding to the value relating to these expenses. Emerging leaders in distance education not only must be transformational leaders but must also become situational leaders who are innovative visionaries that can motivate, energize, inspire, and induce others to move forward while fully articulating a shared and competitive distance learning agenda.

Beaudoin (2002) states that emerging leaders in distance education need a variety of skills that are constantly refined and those include resource mobilization, needs assessment, fitting technology to needs, program evaluation and accreditation, policy formulation, strategic planning, operationalizing ideas, market analysis, implementing online infrastructure, collaborating with partners, training and support for faculty, and mentoring the next generation of leaders. The move towards e-learning along with emerging leaders whom assess the effectiveness of distance education modalities will continue to offer education to a broader market share (Portugal, 2006).

Leaders create and convey compelling images of how our reach is much less than our potential grasp; they redefine people's paradigms about what is possible. In contrast, competent managers are adept at organizing operations so that an institution's efficiency in accomplishing plans is optimized. This is a vital task often neglected by leaders who do not understand management, to their later regret, for good administration involves both envisioning and operationalizing.

Leadership requires developing both instruction-oriented technologies and technology-intensive learning-by-doing approaches; applying this combination of pedagogical strategies necessitates numerous assumption-breaking changes in the organizational context of the classroom and the roles of teachers, parents, and students. Creating and conveying technological visions powerful enough to displace traditional educational models is one of the most challenging aspects of leadership. In conclusion, leadership is a role fraught with difficulties, requiring both wisdom and maturity. In articulating the requirements of leadership is to encourage everyone to lead, always. If each of us were to act in the ways described above-every day, however imperfectly-educational technology and distance education application could be the driveshaft for restructuring education and shaping a bright future for our society (Dede, 1993).

The most radical implication of the model concerns the relative role of those whose work has not traditionally been seen as essential to continuing education practice: this includes administrative, marketing, finance, and IT staff, among others.

The model reveals opportunities for leaders and managers in these areas to assert themselves in new ways throughout the organization. Significant professional growth and development on their part will be required to understand how their practices merge and blend with other domains and to establish their credibility in those domains (Moroney, 2007).

5. IMPLICATIONS :

Recognition has been expanding rapidly of the major role that DE and ODL can play in the development of human resources. The establishment of single- and dual-mode DE institutions and consortia demonstrates that DE and ODL are now perceived as acceptable and reputable means for providing education to all. The increasing number of institutions offering DE programmes has increased the need for institutions to share their experiences and to collaborate. Regional, national and international organisations are continually under development in the field, and are playing significant roles in developing DE concepts and implementation methods. Analysis of the data revealed that the participants believed that DE associations contribute to the professional lives in a number of ways**.**

Close examination of this data indicated that while the participants identified a number of institutional and individual benefits, each of these benefits could be assigned to one of three subcategories: benefits to members, benefits to the field of DE, and benefits to education as a whole.

The main implication is for establishing a new regional group in DE. The suggested name for this regional group is ICDEEEWA (International Council for Distance Education for Eastern Europe and West Asia). A draft of the constitution of the recommended association is presented and discussed at http://www.midasebook.com. ICDEEEWA is suggested as the association for the region Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Baltic, Turkic, Caucasian, Middle East, Arab Peninsula and North Africa. These regions include the following countries such as Algeria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Georgia, Jordan, Hungary, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Morocco, Norway, Oman, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and some others.

This study has explored the distance education practices in Turkey, and presents the role of leadership which should be undertaken by Turkey in the region of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa regions countries, shown in Figure 1 as a regional map for ICDEEWA.

Figure 1 : A regional map for ICDEEWA

It is now a well-known fact that the international distance education organizations in the world are not well organized and functional in this area or for the regional distance education institutions.

To fill this gap, it is argued that Turkey should have a leadership role in the distance education field in the region and can organize the practices of the regional countries in academy and practice. Based on this argument, the structure of the potential organization and the regulation of the organization will be discussed. And also, the draft of the constitution of the recommended association will be presented, which will be regulated and redesigned in accordance with the others.

Thanks to this council, nearly 50 countries will have the chance to introduce their distance education practices to the world. These countries can use ICDEEWA to discuss practical and scientific issues via conferences or journals, and they can even establish various other sub-distance education associations in their own region or in their countries.

Some of the countries to be covered by ICDEEWA are Algeria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Georgia, Jordan, Hungary, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Norway, Oman, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and so on.

Turkey is a developing country located between Europe, Middle East and Asia. Turkey's highly strategic geopolitical position gives the country the role of a mediating bridge of culture and facilitator of regional trade and politics. The roots of distance education in Turkey can be traced back to early 1920s. Correspondence study was considered one of the main solutions for never-ending demand for formal higher education in Turkey. After several unsuccessful attempts, Anadolu University was established a solid distance education system in 1982 that has been helping governments meet quite a big portion the demand for higher education in Turkey.

Anadolu University was established in 1981 from an older institution, the Academy of Eskisehir, Economics and Commercial Sciences (EAECS). In accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1981, it was also authorized to provide distance education in Turkey on a national scale. As a result in 1982 the former Faculty of Communication Sciences of the EAECS was transformed to become the Faculty of Open Education, or, as it is called commonly, the Open Education Faculty (OEF) (McIsaac, Murphy & Demiray, 1988).

Anadolu University is one of the pre-eminent innovative universities in Turkey. Anadolu University houses 12 faculties, 3 of which are distance education, 7 schools, 4 vocational schools, 9 institutes (4 graduate schools, 5 institutes) and 28 research centers and units. The University is proud to have implemented one of the most successful distance education programs in the world, which is taken as a model by many institutions.

Today, the number of students at Anadolu University in the 3 distance education faculties reach 930,000 for BA degree courses, and including all other non-degree students the number reaches totally 1.6 million. One of the major strengths of the University is the academic staff who are committed to excellence in teaching and research in an academically and technologically enhanced environment. These faculty academic staff strive to pass on their knowledge and skills to their faculty students in a dynamic and creative teaching environment.

Figure 2: Anadolu University Rectorate

Figure 3: The Open Education Faculty

Anadolu University, a state university, houses 12 faculties (first cycle), 3 of which are distance education, 1 State Conservatory and 6 schools (first cycle), 3 vocational schools (short cycle), 5 graduate schools (second & third cycle) and 38 research centres and units. Besides providing new capacities for the demands in Turkish Higher Education, Anadolu University Distance Education System administers the

associate degree, bachelor's degree and degree completion programs for the personal in the national education, health, theology, horticulture, police, the Turkish Air Force, Army, Navy and Gendarme via its distance education model. Moreover, Anadolu University provides many people with large contributions by training human resource for prestige and international organizations thus helping raise the educational levels of Turkish citizens.

The Open Education Faculty (Figure 3) in the Anadolu University Distance Education System has 35 bachelors and associate degree programs with the enrolled Turkish students, who live in Turkey and also Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and 6 Western Europe Countries and provides these students with educational services via a coeval distance education system. Today, 40% of the students, who attend their education, in Turkey are the students of Anadolu University and Open Education Faculty. The majority of them are the students who cannot find a change to attend traditional higher education. In this aspect, Open Education Faculty is proud of itself to provide educational opportunities to students with physical, hearing and visually impaired disabilities and people in prisons without making discrimination.

Anadolu University is the dominant distance higher education provider; other higher education institutions have been showing a great interest in offering distance education especially since late 1990s as a result of advancement in computers and computer networks. Sakarya University, Ankara University, Ahmet Yesevi University, and some others are offering e-learning solutions to overcome huge demand for higher education for some years.

In terms of higher or even primary and secondary education, distance education seems as a convenience in many countries where there is enough number of seats for every individual who would like to get in a formal educational institution. However, for countries like Turkey, distance education or e-learning can be considered as a necessity to meet the education demand of large amounts. Accordingly, e-learning in Turkey should be evaluated this nature is in mind. By the same token, education proves to be an important mean of achieving this type of interaction. Here, distance education via ICT, is the appropriate mean of reaching communities far away and creating relations with them despite long distances and limitations of traditional methods of education. It is then possible to be in contact with masses and share information, values and world view.

Countries should be ready to use ICT for the transition to the information society. E-readiness is one of the important aspects of the E-learning. E-readiness is the ability to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to develop one's economy and to foster one's welfare.

In Turkey, all classes in formal education are offered as face to face, and distance learning is almost inexistent in the practice. Face to face learning, despite many positive aspects, is among the main reasons of the limited capacity. This may be overcome through conducted certain classes in formal education through e-learning (Demirci, Yamamoto & Demiray, 2011).

Depending on the quality of programs and characteristics of the classes, if 10-30% of the program was made through e-learning, a noteworthy capacity increase may be obtained at the universities.

The Higher Education Strategy of Turkey, as the preference was made for distance learning and increasing the capacity of higher education, Turkey must take new steps to develop e-learning applications. (Demiray, 2010)

Although an Informatics National Committee was established in Turkey in 1999 under the body of Board of Higher Education (YOK) and certain applications were attempted in the area of e-learning, a development as quick as expected could not be obtained.

The required initiatives should be taken to revive this learning channel by evaluating this experience and by providing the necessary resources for making the payments that might encourage those who would prepare classes with this program. Special pedagogic approaches and design are required to obtain a successful result in

open learning. E-learning is not a cheap substitute of formal programs. These programs should be designed as specifically based on pedagogical knowledge and have the required support systems.

In the transition process the information about programs undergo constant reevaluation and change. With the conditions that the changes are updated on Anadolu Information Package to ensure students' reception of correct and current information Open and Distant Education Programs have been excluded from ECTS Label Application. The present rules and regulations exclude students enrolled in Open and Distance Education from participating in European Student Mobility Programs. Given the above mentioned factors, the exclusion of Open and Distance Education Programs from the ECTS Label Application need not present a problem.

DLAs must lead faculty to achieve established program goals and objectives by providing access to training in the use of technology, development of pedagogy, increased interaction with students, coordination with faculty development staff and administrator, and continued education and training to sharpen skills in teaching. DLAs must provide faculty members with definitions concerning standards, value, and quality.

Some practical methods that DLAs can use in developing faculty skills and effectiveness include:

- assisting faculties in the use and application of technologies in the teaching process,
- developing a faculty newsletter which provides tips and guidelines as well as up-to-date knowledge and information on distance learning,
- creating a faculty research and writing department or center that oversees faculty publications in professional and peer-reviewed journals,
- attendance and participation in conferences, and
- developing high collaborative efforts between and among faculty, staff, and administrator to create common value and agreement.

Effective DLAs understand that the environment in which they lead is a rapidly changing one demanding continuous learning and adaptation. They see the need for managing and dealing with change, and through flexibility, share their leadership responsibilities and rewards.

DLAs must ensure that their staff and faculty are qualified both academically and professionally, and that these professionals are keen on delivering only quality instructions and high customer value.

Accordingly every organization should have required resources, skills and attitudes to be able to implement e-learning. A similar approach with several changes can be used in educational settings.

One of the important differences is that the educational institutions should focus on learners and instructors. For instance, in terms of technology, administrators of educational institutions should ask themselves whether learners they targeted have access to computers and Internet to be able to attend the online courses. Also they have to be sure that their instructors are able to access the technology to be able to implement and produce instructional materials.

In summary, an educational institution may assess its readiness for e-learning by analyzing the resources it possesses, and the skills and attitudes of its learners, instructors, staff, as well as administrators. In addition available vendors and/or strategic partners might be very beneficial for the success of an e-learning initiative. These resources, skills, and attitudes are related to technology, innovation, and people factors. In the light of these factors and constructs to assess e-learning initiatives in Turkey we can easily identify several trends and issues. For instance, in terms of resources, a big majority of the educational institutions as well as corporations heavily rely on vendors' management, design and development capabilities. Although they wish to have their own resources, for example learning management systems (LMSs), due to shortage of qualified technical staff they are having difficulty to build new systems or adapt available ones.

The shortage of staff and technology as well as knowhow force them work with limited number of vendors who usually prefers to sell one product to many and to keep close ties with the institutions to be able to make as much profit as they can. Therefore we see same course materials offered by different universities under different or same courses. Limited number of educational institutions and corporations are able to establish better relationship with the vendors. Another issue is about the instructional strategies employed in e-learning courses. The majority of the learning environments are still designed to promote one-way communication flow as a result of computer-based instruction tradition. And a big number of those who were able to shift their design do nothing but imitating face-two-face strategies into online environments. A good evidence of this trend can be observed in the activities done by using synchronous communication tools. In quite a number of institutions these tools are being used to lecture or to conduct question and answer session.

On the other hand, learning in the current networked era is not same as in industrial and information eras. It requires a different perspective to design learning environments. Authentic tasks, ongoing assessment, respect to preconceptions, differentiated learning are some of the components educators should consider designing e-learning environments that really work. The vendors' limited background in learning theories also does not help institutions and corporations offer effective learning experiences.

Additionally seeing e-learning as an opportunity to make (or cut) more money rather than a way to help learners learning is one of the major issues. This belief leads institutions and corporations kick off e-learning initiatives without starting a cultural change in institution, careful planning and budgeting, quality in the LMSs and ICT, adequate training, support and time-release for faculty, and good instructional design and ICT support personnel. As a conclusion, dissatisfaction and frustration usually appears among learners and society in general.

Education is a field of social responsibility from the point of the government and very important for the countries. The government should intend to improve citizens with these educational efforts. Besides the business approach to education is individual or institutional. This also enhances value creation policies with its educational system. E-learning brings a lot of educational opportunities to the people who are living in rural areas, workers who cannot able to attend face-to-face courses, people who have some limitations and women who encourage improving themselves.

In the last 20 years, with the introduction of the existing information on electronic environment to the economy and the business world, and as a result of their

direction in this way, individuals also perceived the importance of E-learning in a short time (Yamamoto, 2009).

Turkey is a country between three continents and several cultures. Some descriptive information about Turkey in general and the education system has provided and background of today's e-learning approaches of Turkey has also explained in this chapter. Since e-learning is still in infancy stage in Turkey, there are a lot of issues to be solved. Dependence to the vendors, shortage of qualified staff as well as instructors, exaggerated expectations, unappealing and ineffective learning materials, preconceptions about learning at a distance, and lack of legislations are some of the significant issues that should be taken into account. It has been mentioned here that, e-learning is one the fastest growing innovation in Turkey same as all around the world. Since early 2000 quite a number of Turkish companies and especially higher education institutions have been literally jumping into e-learning wagon without any frontend analyses. The results are not promising: only limited number of companies have reached or approached their expectations from their e-learning initiatives (mainly providing cost-effective training) and still Anadolu University, a long time distance education provider, is the dominant e-learning provider along with only couple of

others such as Sakarya University and Ankara University. Not to mention primary and secondary education: there is almost no successful initiative about integration of e-learning into classrooms. On the other hand e-learning is increasingly diffusing in corporate settings as well in Turkey. The most significant reasons for e-learning are related to the cost cutting for the companies. However some banks and retail companies has started to give more importance to e-learning to educate their staff and customers.

On the other hand, social networking, mobile learning, Web 2.0, open courseware, communities of practice, informal and non-formal learning, standard-based learning, user-generated content, ongoing assessment are among the major trends in e-learning implementations all over the world. In Turkey, unfortunately we do not observe these trends. Instead extensive use of self-study materials and synchronous communication tools as well as large number of classes, degree or certificate programs on very specific fields, blending with face-to-face lectures can be seen as major trends. Governments have a very crucial role for encourage these kinds of programmes. E-learning should be used primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education. There should be an e-learning readiness scale for the needs and future plans for e-learning. On the other hand there is also a social resistance for this new kind of systems. Since 1980's Anadolu University's Open Faculty's efforts are significant. Also with the new technologies there is a great tendency towards Internet and mobile Internet which is also very important for eliminate the resistance for distance education.

It is clear that a regional organization, here tentatively called ICDEEEWA, can serve the needs of the region's 50-plus countries. The centrally located country Turkey with a history of involvement with distance education is a logical place to situate such a regional organization to foster better distance education. If we are to reduce illiteracy substantially, we must look to regional cooperation in addition to national and local initiatives.

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