Measuring Lecturers’ Perception of Transition to E-Learning Systems and Digital Divide: A Case Study in School of Business Administration of Istanbul University

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ABSTRACT
The development of internet technology has affected spread of e-learning programs. Students have been attending e-learning programs worldwide. For example, students in Turkey have increasingly been using this technology to attend e-MBA programs. Due to constraints like lecturers, ability to use technology and the infrastructure of information technologies in current education systems it is not possible to reach high levels of higher education. In this paper, the authors measure lecturers’ behaviors toward e-learning activities. The study gauges their ability to use information technology, perceptions about the advantages of e-learning program, and readiness for the transition. Data are provided from a survey conducted in the School of Business Administration at Istanbul University. Descriptive statistics and nonparametric tests are used to analyze the data. These tests measure the digital divide between academicians taking into account their academic qualifications, gender and departments.

Keywords: E-Learning, Distance Education, Higher Education, Learning Technologies, Technology Acceptance

INTRODUCTION
The use of information and internet technologies as teaching and learning tools is now rapidly expanding into education. By the development of internet technologies, electronic learning (e-learning) programs have spread. E-learning is one of the most popular learning environments in the information age. It is the new wave in learning strategy. E-learning, unlike traditional learning, is another way of teaching and learning, also it can be used as a supporting tool for the traditional learning. Countries with large number of young population such as Turkey have great educational needs. To meet these,
it is important to prepare e-learning programs in universities. Due to the constraints such as number of lecturers, their abilities in using technology and infrastructure of information technologies in current education systems, in Turkey it is not possible to reach high levels of higher education. As we mentioned in earlier study (Balaban, Cilan & Adiguzel, 2007), both lecturers’ and learners’ attitudes toward using e-learning is important for the success of the programs near the infrastructure factors. E-learning extends traditional learning paradigms into new dynamic learning models through computer and web technologies. Also, through innovative use of modern technology, e-learning not only revolutionizes education and makes it more accessible, it also brings formidable challenges for lecturers and learners.

Personal attitudes are a major factor to affect individual usage of information technologies. Transition to e-learning programs required both lecturers’ and learners’ prior preparation. Apart from that adequate technological infrastructure is needed. Lecturer’s faith in success of e-learning programs speeds up the transition. In an earlier study we indicated learners’ perception of the e-learning programs and digital divide in higher education. In this study we have focused on measuring the lecturers’ behaviors towards the e-learning activities. We also tried to measure their abilities in using information technology, their perceptions about the advantages of e-learning programs and their readiness for the transition.

**Literature Review**

There are several studies based on lecturers’ and learners’ attitudes toward e-learning environments (Liaw, Huang & Chen, 2007; Mazzolini & Maddison, 2007; An, Shin & Lim, 2009; Hogan & Mc Knight, 2007; Mullen & Tallent-Runnels, 2006; Liaw, Huang & Chen 2007; Lima, Leeb & Nam, 2007; Sun, Cheng & Finger, 2009). A study on online lecturers’ perceptions on teaching experiences occurring in Australia, Canada, China, United Kingdom, United States and Taiwan (Hsieh, 2010), and another study developed an integrated model with six dimensions: learners, lecturers, courses, technology, design, and environment and investigate the critical factors affecting learners’ satisfaction in e-learning (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen & Yeh, 2008). Another study suggests a multi-dimensional approach for e-learning evaluation via six dimensions: (1) system quality, (2) service quality, (3) content quality, (4) learner perspective, (5) lecturer attitudes, and (6) supportive issues. As mentioned in the study, the six dimensions had a significant effect on the learners’ perceived satisfaction (Ozkan & Koseler, 2009). Also there is a study on comparing traditional courses and online learning (Baker, 2004).

Some potential learners and lecturers who have access to these technologies cannot fully participate because of the inaccessible design of courses. There are some studies on improving the accessibility of the University’s distance learning courses (Burgstahler, Corrigan & McCarter, 2004; Raua, Chen & Chin, 2004; Wang & Wang, 2009).

Also there are studies on online courses for people with some disabilities (Schmetzke, 2001; Kinash, Crichton & Kim-Rupnow, 2004). They also provide an overview of access challenges and solutions for people with disabilities, legislation, accommodation and universal design approaches to accessibility, and standards and guidelines. The availability of a wide range of assistive technology makes it possible for individuals with almost any type of disability to gain access to computers and telecommunications technologies (Carlson, Ehrlich, Berland, & Bailey, 2001).

**Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to explore lecturers’ attitudes toward e-learning usage. The data for this study was gathered by means of a questionnaire that is designed in several steps in light of the previous literature. The survey is conducted in School of Business Administration. Professors and research assistants are asked to answer the questionnaire for investigating
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