

## **Effective Learning Outcome in Classic classroom Versus E-learning Classroom: A Case Study of North Cyprus Education**

**By**

### **Abstract**

*This study provides an overview of e-learning activities in TRNC -so called North Cyprus- and compares the effectiveness of e-learning programmes with classic classroom education. The aim of this study is questioning the learning outcomes by comparing the classical classroom education with e-learning education model. Qualitative research model was used to collect data for estimation of learning outcomes in North Cyprus higher education providers. As the result indicates, the accreditation of e-learning-courses in North Cyprus is not a common practice yet. This study bridges the gap by developing a better learning outcome for achieving aims, such as promoting, standard setting, evaluation and consultation processes, development and maintenance of high educational, ethical and business standards in education and training programs.*

**Keywords:** *Classroom education e-learning, learning outcome, North Cyprus, Higher Education,*

### **Introduction**

In North Cyprus higher education, comparison of learning outcomes not only for e-learning programmes but also for classical classroom education was rather difficult. In many institutions lack of efficient control and evaluation of programmes reduces the estimation of learning outcomes.

Since 1995 I am in the education sector, as a lecturer, an expert and an advisor. To date my own experiences as a lecturer and communication with students, research with experts and professors, namely with all stakeholders who contributed to my survey; helped for better research and estimation of problems and possible solution in education system in North Cyprus. First of all, as in all other sectors, in education also state control is not sufficient. Neither local authorities nor owner of the private universities wants to confront with problems and to consider complains of the students, remarks of experts/ academicians in higher education. Moreover, mentioned stakeholders deliberately give some exaggerated positive information on level of education quality and learning outcomes. This is done for protecting the number of students attending to the university. I really absolve those institutions/ people and authorities who really strive against existing situation in higher education and try to increase the learning outcomes. But current political problems and chaotic situation affects also higher education in North Cyprus and

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reduces the correct estimation of the level of learning outcomes and quality assurance both in classical classroom education and e-learning programmes.

### **Methodology**

In this study qualitative research model is used. This model is rather helpful for collecting data on estimation of learning outcomes in North Cyprus higher education providers. In this survey my own experiences and communication with stakeholders in education as a lecturer and expert is considered. However, scientific research and investigation on literature and on education is also considered.

### **Adoption of EU's Higher Education in North Cyprus**

Since 2004 adoption of the EU's higher education in North Cyprus has been put in process. However lack of official communication with the EU's DG 11 reduces the effective application and adoption of the programmes in North Cyprus. Some regulations and membership from the EU's institutions have been granted to the North Cyprus higher education institutions, such as membership to the North Cyprus universities at European University Association, Associate membership of ENQA for the YÖDAK and some other bilateral special programmes such as youth and EU's scholarship programme for students in North Cyprus offered to the Turkish Cypriots. However, neither Erasmus University Charter nor Bologna Higher Education Area has been extended into the North Cyprus territory. The reason for this was 'the political issue in Cyprus' which defined in EU's Acquis Article 1(1) of Protocol 10 to the Accession Treaty 2003<sup>1</sup>. This protocol implies application of the EU's Acquis in North is suspended and all EU's regulations and programmes will not be extended to the North Cyprus community unless some special regulations have been put in process. Therefore EU's education programmes are also excluded for North Cyprus higher education institutions.

Especially, EU's project E-xcellence, EADTU (European Association of Distance Teaching Universities) (January 2005) has important role on supporting the e-learning project of the European Commission for creating standards of excellence in e-learning, which is divided into three actions given below. These are:

- Assessment tool (program and institutional level)
- Improvement tool (internal quality care system)
- A tool for accreditation for excellence.

In the Bergen Report (2005) cooperation with the European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education EURASHE and ESIBÖ,

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<sup>1</sup> EU's Acquis 2003

stated that in the EHEA development of an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, accreditation and evaluation is required. The European standards for quality assurance in higher education are explained in following section.

### **1. EU's Quality Assurance Standards in North Cyprus**

The standards are in three parts covering internal quality assurance of higher education institutions, external quality assurance of higher education, and quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies. Since the North Cyprus higher education is dependent on EU's education programmes, and there are not any estimated standards for quality assurance by YÖDAK, then it will not be wrong to consider these standards for the higher education in North Cyprus. As I mentioned before YÖDAK still try to set/ estimate the standards and criterion for the quality assurance in higher education and e-learning. The reason of difficulties for the estimation of criterion and standards for quality assurance cannot be dependent on the long process and comprehensive research. It is also dependent on different political approach and changes after elections, which ignore all endeavours of previous cabinet on same process. This is happened, because in North Cyprus neither in education nor in other sectors there is not any sustainable state policy. In such a bureaucratic hurdle it is not easy to determine any standards on quality assurance too. In addition, application of quality assurance standards is also not easy, because estimated criterion and measures will increase the inspection and control on universities which this may not be desired by private universities. First of all, number of less successful students, who comes with diploma guarantee, will not be able to reach this goal easily. Secondly, universities, which are not internationally recognized and trying to survive in such political and economical problems, will not be the first choice of students. Thirdly, fear of losing number of students attending to the North Cyprus universities. And the last problem is assumed to be the relations between universities and governments may affect many cases in such a small island.

Below given ENQA standards are considered for questioning the existing higher education structure in North Cyprus universities, because no other standards and criterion defined by YÖDAK to date. By considering these standards for North Cyprus higher education, difficulties of higher education providers on quality assurance in learning outcomes can be better understood. These standards are also used as a tool for assessing the learning outcomes.

The European standards for quality assurance in higher education are defined below<sup>2</sup>:

### **European Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance within Higher Education Institutions**

“Internal quality assurance refers to the policies and mechanisms implemented in an institution or programme to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purpose and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular.”<sup>3</sup> Internal quality assurance is used for implementing institution’s own programmes’ requirements according to the predetermined standards for regulating education in its own institution.

#### **Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance:**

In North Cyprus YÖDAK became an associated member of the ENQA, which implies a partial membership status. “Associates and Affiliates will be entitled to receive ENQA publications and attend seminars and workshops, and be given access to the password protected parts of the ENQA website. They will not however, be entitled to call themselves ‘members’ of ENQA and will not have voting rights.”<sup>4</sup> Impact of the extension of ENQA standards in universities in North Cyprus, are still in progress and very small changes observed. These changes can be summarized as development of mission, vision, strategic plans, development of curriculum, and adaption of European Credit Transfer System and some other programmes. However adoption of these plans and programs are not sufficient, since the application of these programmes are not effectively in progress and control of these programmes are not properly done and many things in quality assurance still stay intact, then there is no meaning to develop so many policies and programmes. In

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<sup>2</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Printed by Multiprint, Helsinki, Finland 2005, ISBN (pdf): 952-5539-05-9

<sup>3</sup> Michaela Martin, and Antony Stella: External Quality Assurance in Higher Education: making choices, UNESCO: International Institute for Education Planning, Paris, 2007 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001520/152045e.pdf>, p.34

<sup>4</sup> European Network for Quality Assurance, Associate Affiliate, [http://www.enqa.eu/assoc\\_affil.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/assoc_affil.lasso)

universities irregular application of measures and other inefficiencies creates problems for students and lecturers. Some of these problems are related to learning outcomes which is caused by inefficient material and lecturers. Some caused by owner of the universities, who wants to maximize his own profit and not quality of education. Therefore policies and procedures seem to be similar but not applied and or treated similarly.

### **Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards:**

In legislation some regulations are in force for periodic review and monitoring of education programmes. However in application, effects of measures and regulations for higher education institutions are not on desired level. One of the important reasons of this low level control and inspection on universities is dependent on the considerable good relations between universities and government, which prevent proper application of measures and regulations. But also weak student profile, who attends to the North Cyprus Universities, plays the major role on lower control in universities.

### **Assessment of Students and 2.1.4 Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff**

Criterion and regulations on student assessment and quality assurance exist in all higher education institutions. However, inefficient application of assessment criterion for students creates some difficulties in quality assurance process. The reason of inefficient assessment of students is happened because of weak student profile in Cyprus universities. Both my colleges' and I as a lecturer in the universities observed and experienced similar problems with the head of administration, who request for better assessment for some students. Unless considering these requests of the administration some problems, such as artificially created inefficiencies in job places can be created. Similar support can be observed for some lecturers who are not considering the learning outcomes of students and taught several years similar subjects with similar exams and increase his/her popularity as a best lecturer and good teacher. In such a bad situation it is really difficult to increase the learning outcome of students without belonging one of these parties or groups. Because in such a corruption, lecturers who do not consider requests of administration may lose his/her job or may be nominated to the worst lecturer of the department at the end of the semester.

In fact, such mobbing activities can be observed in many institutions all around the world. But, in education, such treatments cannot be accepted, first of all, it is not acceptable because it reduces the learning outcomes, and second, penetration of such bad actions can easily spread in to the community and spoil the future of the young generations.

**Learning Resources and Student Support:**

In all institutions similar and or equivalent programmes are offered to the students. However, in some departments some lecturers are lazy and do not want to spend more time for preparation for their students. The reason of this is mostly the less successful group of people, who has no challenging power and wants everything 'easy going style'. These easy going student and/ or lecturer group reduces the learning capacity and challenging power in research and education on desired level.

**Information Systems:**

In North Cyprus in all institutions, there are written regulations. In these regulations all required measures included for carrying out their faculty programmes, for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities. But in application there are many problems required to be solved because of problems both in academic and administrative structures. In most of the higher education institutions, quantity of students is an important proof of evidence for the good university profile. Neither the level of students and learning outcomes nor the quality of education is in question.

**Public Information:**

Almost all institutions in North Cyprus use the media for promoting the desire of students for attending their institution. The desire for increasing the number of students and for increasing the attraction of students is a continuously promoted via media. Administrative bodies of universities, advertise in some partisan media organs. By doing such activities, some realities about the quality of education in universities, increased artificially.

**European Standards for the External Quality Assurance of Higher Education**

European quality assurance in higher education and criterion and standards becomes an important role in a globalized world, where the knowledge based information and communication have increased the challenging power of people in the international market. "Globalisation has profoundly transformed the functioning of the world economy. Producing new knowledge and investing in the production of high level man power has become one of the main objectives of any country wanting to compete in the globalized market. At the same time the explosion of new information and communication technologies has made possible the emergence of knowledge societies, where higher

education institutions play a key role.”<sup>5</sup> Due to this important role of higher education in such a global world, it is expected that the standards and criterion on quality assurance and learning outcome will be also standardized and equalized worldwide. In this standardization process of higher education, similar curriculum and programmes, similar transcripts as it is done in the EU via European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is required. By doing these regulations it is expected that students in different countries will be educated with similar programmes. Similar learning outcomes are expected to be obtained for man power with similar challenging power in a global world where the requirements in the multinational companies become similar.

**Use of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures:** External quality assurance procedures are important for the effective application of internal quality assurance processes. Due to these process standards for external quality assurance is considered for the internal quality assurance criterion. Of which these criterion is considered for the external body, “which may be a quality assurance agency or anybody other than the institution that assesses its operation or that of its programmes in order to determine whether it is meeting the agreed or predetermined standards.”<sup>6</sup> Mention standards and criterion, for the higher education institutions, contributes for better adoption of the standard education programmes in the whole nation. In North Cyprus YÖDAK is responsible for standard quality assurance criterion. However these standards are still in progress and not defined to date. Therefore all institutions determine their own standards for quality assurance. But, sometimes these institutions, neglecting or ignoring determined criterion and standards for above mentioned fear of losing students attending to their programme.

#### **Development of External Quality Assurance Processes:**

In higher education objectives of quality assurance must be determined before higher education institutions introducing their programmes. It is required to determine these objectives for better adoption of the standards in the whole country. However, in North Cyprus higher education, mentioned criterion still not determined for the institutions. But, in Ministry of Education, a higher education council was founded and some measures and regulations have been put in to force for regulating the higher education and its programmes in 1993. Of which these regulations was rather general and not sufficient to fulfil the needs of the higher education and programmes. In 2005 the

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<sup>5</sup> Michaela Martin, and Antony Stella: External Quality Assurance in Higher Education: making choices, UNESCO: International Institute for Education Planning, Paris, 2007 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001520/152045e.pdf>, p.11

<sup>6</sup> Michaela Martin, and Antony Stella: External Quality Assurance in Higher Education: making choices, UNESCO: International Institute for Education Planning, Paris, 2007 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001520/152045e.pdf>, p.34

YÖDAK restructured and higher education law put into effect. Since 2005, some regulations and plans developed and adoption of North Cyprus universities into the EU programmes has been in progress.

#### **Criteria for Decisions:**

In North Cyprus, private institutions determine their own standards and criterion for regulating programmes. But criterion for external quality assurance is not determined. Therefore, neither YÖDAK nor Higher Education Department of Ministry of Education plays an important role on decision making process, exemption of the Higher Education Law, which defines and regulates the higher education.

**Processes Fit for Purpose:** In North Cyprus higher education sector, external quality assurance processes are not designed for ensuring requirements for implementing objectives of higher education.

**Reporting:** There are some annual reports about higher education sector which describe the activities of the YÖDAK. But these reports are not intended to make any recommendation or any decision for the future perspective of the education.

**Follow-up Procedures:** No follow up procedure is implemented for quality assurance processes which may contain recommendations for actions. Only in 2006 Bologna follow up group was created for adopting the higher education to the European Higher Education Area which would be created in 2010. Unfortunately political difficulties on North Cyprus prevented this action.

**Periodic Reviews and 2.2.8 System-Wide Analyses:** Similarly there are no reports and other reviews published by agencies on quality assurance for describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

### **European Standards for External Quality Assurance Agencies**

**Use of External Quality Assurance Procedures for Higher Education:** The effectiveness of external quality assurance processes is required to be taken into account by the external quality assurance agencies. But as described in above section, the criterion and regulations of the quality assurance is still not defined by the YÖDAK for better adoption of the ENQA regulations in North Cyprus. Therefore it is not expected to assess the quality assurance and its effectiveness in higher education.



**Official Status:** In North Cyprus YÖDAK is formally recognized authority for higher education planning, evaluation, accreditation and coordination. The YÖDAK as a higher education council is the highest organ in higher education. However Ministry of Education is also dealt with the higher education. Especially political issues and cases are directly related with the education minister who are in the cabinet and can affect and put into effect some regulations and law. YÖDAK, responsibilities for external quality assurance and coordination are expected to be agreed by all higher education institutions. On the one hand Ministry of Education with some political applications and on the other hand YÖDAK's coordination, evaluation and accreditation activities which are assumed to be the highest organ in higher education caused some problems in controlling the higher education sector.

**Activities:** Programmes at institutional level is assumed to be coordinated by YÖDAK and all activities for external quality assurance is expected to realize internationally accepted criterion, such as in ENQA defined. But whether it is done or not is not clear, because neither transparency on all activities nor open archive via web page is regularly and properly published. Neither president of the YÖDAK nor members are open for any dialogue or interview, even if it is requested for scientific research. They are playing the three monkeys as some other leading person in the public authorities.

**Resources:** Financial resources are assumed to be sufficiently offered by the ministry of finance every year for those people who are in the YÖDAK. According to the former president and members adequate and proportional resources are given to the agency for carrying out their activities. But, YÖDAK's unofficial relations (because of the unrecognised state status of TRNC) with foreign institutions and agencies cause some difficulties for participating all meetings and congress. Results of such unofficial representation of agency in international organisations, activities and communications are realized with former presidents and people who are not in charge and not effective for improving the existing structure of YÖDAK in international organisations.

**Mission Statement:** In 2005, I as an expert advisor of the YÖDAK and Ministry of Education did many regulations such as mission statement, vision plan, strategic plan and some others. And requested from all universities for preparing their own mission statements and other required documents. Agency goals and objectives defined for better quality assurance and learning outcome in higher education. Later, higher education law was amended, which contributed for preparation of the higher institutions into the EU's education programmes. Application for the ENQA to become a member was also realized. But only associated membership was offered.

**Independence:** YÖDAK is an independent body of the government and it has autonomous responsibility for operations. Its conclusions and recommendations which are made, are not influenced by third parties. But some affection from higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders is still considerable. Especially interests of higher education institutions are highly respected. But problems related to the departments, lecturers and students for better learning outcomes are mostly covered and/or stay intact.

**External Quality Assurance Criteria and Processes Used by the Agencies:** The processes, criteria and procedures used by agency are still in progress and neither the criterion nor the regulations on quality assurance is published. Only institutions regulations and some measures are considered for application of the programmes. Although, it is expected that these processes are realised according to the below given criterion. These are defined in the ENQA regulations as:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

**Accountability Procedures:** Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.' Achievement of planed goals has also meant an enlarged computer network system (via World Wide Web pages) for better communication and information between universities, academic staff and students to harmonise the higher education for adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees throughout Europe and as well as North Cyprus. Due to this harmonisation and equivalence of education, demand for an e-learning becomes an important role as a tool for accreditation for excellence.

In TRNC -so called North Cyprus, adoption of the EU's higher education program, projects and regulations in universities is also started. Due to this reason several projects and measures have been put into effect for implementing the EU's education and harmonisation of the university education in North Cyprus. However, beside of Cyprus problem, mentioned problems above with the private universities, which reduces the quality of education and artificially increases the learning outcomes causes some problem in the adoption process of EU education and standards in quality assurance. In North Cyprus the existing system which means unrecognised state and very few relations of government and citizens with foreign countries and institutions, unofficial participation of

the state authorities to the international institutions and activities reduces the effectiveness of institutions and their planned programmes and projects in North Cyprus. Moreover staff and personal who work for these institutions are also negatively affected from illegal and unofficial status of state. Because such isolation and retarded status of citizens reduces the desire of people to become a challenging power in their professional workplace. In such an isolated life, neither lecturers nor students are being forced by any office or authority to teach/ learn properly for their future.

In fact political dilemma which prevents government authorities to communicate and to co-operate EU colleagues for better adoption of EU's education programs, reduces the expected contribution of the programs in universities in TRNC.

### **New Communication and Information Technologies on Education: Classroom education versus E-learning**

Globalisation has inevitable economic, social, cultural, results on the world nations. The important effect of the globalisation can be seen on society's interconnection. In a globalized world it is also expected that enlarged and harmonized higher education throughout the world nations is realised. But it is also hoped that different languages, cultures, education systems and learning methods maintain in a harmonized education system. Due to this harmonisation rapid growing multicultural communities, multinational companies, etc. become closer to cooperate and to understand each other. By doing this harmonisation and equivalence in education, people from different nations who became closer than ever for several reasons such as work and study for same projects/ companies, communicate to reduce tensions between nations and develop similar goals for increasing the global welfare.

The role of information and communication technology in current days plays an important role for the harmonisation of the higher education in different countries. As Cann (1999) investigate the implementation of internet based teaching tools which is the evaluation of online teaching materials and has an important role on application of e-learning, must be considered before adoption of e-learning in counties. In fact inequality between countries and regions in the use of communication technology create digital divide concept. Furthermore, mentioned digital division turns into digital abyss in the last decade. In the world, the lack of communication technology is about %80 and in Africa only %2 of the population uses the telephone lines. In addition to this the use of Internet in African Countries are still in marginal position. Total African internet user base of around three million, two-thirds of them in South Africa. "That works out to a ratio of one Internet user for every 750 people outside South Africa, compared to a world average of

about one for every 35 people. (The ratio in North America and Europe is about one in three.)<sup>7</sup>

Developed countries with higher human resources have opportunity to become a part of computer/ web based communication and information systems and less developed countries with lower human resources are in danger of the sacrifice of digital divide. Due to this digital abbeey between rich and poor it is important to note that the traditional education system has always advantage, where the teacher becomes the centre of knowledge in the class. And e-earning opportunity can only be considered for those countries where the communication and information technologies are enlarged throughout the country. Therefore adoption of the e- learning requires high technology equipments, where in most of the EU countries as well as in North Cyprus universities exist. Due to this high technological equipment creation of e-learning network will be easily adopted for application of the e-learning in higher education. However, in North Cyprus isolation is rather high and prevents government authorities to join the EU institutions and other international organisations officially. But mentioned technologies reduce North Cyprus citizens' isolation and increases citizens awareness on education and other matters in the world. This is sometimes realized via people's private endeavours or sometimes, government authorities and other NGO's communication. Due to these activities and communications realised between people in North Cyprus and in other countries, development in the world can be caught up. In addition to these communications, people educated from abroad become a multiplayer in higher education sector and give impetus not only classroom education but also e-learning activities. However, there is another important point to be considered, namely the efficiency of e-learning instructors which might be replaced with teachers training. This is questioned in the following sections.

### **Effects on Classical Classroom Education**

Impact of the technological developments observed in the classical classroom education. The use of technology (projector/ presentation devices, computer based presentation etc.) in classroom becomes more and more abundant. However the effective role of the teacher/lecturer in classroom education is more important than techno use. It is obvious that computer based knowledge and information systems play an important role

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<sup>7</sup> Stock E: Computers for youth: Focusing digital divide efforts on the home, In Digital divide network. Retrived October 19, 2002, from <http://digitaldividenetwork.org/content/stories/index.cfm?key=107>

both in classical education and in e-learning. In my opinion, the classical classroom education will become more challenging than e-learning, because in classroom education, students become more interactive learning methods than e-learning. Since the e-learners communicate with computer based education, the questions and unclear parts of education must be repeated by the e-learner and in that phase it is suspicious that learner will come to the correct answers for his/her questions. In classroom education most of the questions can be answered in the classroom and most of the answers will be obtained via teacher, who he/she will be the professor in his/her subject. Therefore it is expected that in the classroom education most of the students will be informed with the correct information, except those who are not concentrated to the teacher. But in e-learning most of the questions and answers will be researched via computer by students and it is expected that some misunderstanding and miss leading research can be occurred in such survey. In addition, many researchers agree that technology will never replace trainer or instructional designers, but technology brings with it more demands for teamwork and collaboration among a diverse group of workers (Wagner, & Reddy, 1999).

Some lecturers in TRNC universities also believes that lecturer roles in the classroom as compare to the e-learning instructors have the advantage to communicate with his/ her students face to face. As a lecturer he/ she performs the lecture in the class as the centre of knowledge and learning. Lecturer advises on course exercises and revision. Lecturer writes course materials, exercises, and auxiliary materials and develops overheads to perform lecture as much as possible intelligible. As a lecturer prepare handouts, produces the training materials, manuals, overheads, graphics. And lecturer has the advantage to teach and ask questions, discusses and get feedback in the class to increase the knowledge and/ or change the wrong belief of the students which is not possible via e-learning. As Bakers suggests in his book *Tips for Being a Successful distance Student* (1995) that “distance learners should be more assertive in interrupting or correcting their instructors when he or she misuses the technology, even though this may be uncomfortable at first. Instructors must establish trust with distance learners by being open and honest regarding their level of skill with the technology, using humour to diffuse student anxiety, instructor need to set ground rules during the first class meeting. Encouraging assertive behaviours by recognizing student interruptions and correcting audio and video problems as they are brought to the instructor’s attention will serve the distance instructor and student both.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Baker M.H.: *Tips for being a successful distance Student*, Handout distributed at post conference workshop 11<sup>th</sup> Annual conference on distance teaching and learning, Madison WI, August 1995

In addition to these facilities of classroom education, e-learning is also required to become familiar with the computer/ web based communication and information system during the education. Therefore the administrative bodies and computer/ web based learning operators in universities in North Cyprus may ensure that distant sites are set up and operable. E-learning instructors may also assist other trainers with exercises, distribute work, collect materials, and administer tests, exercises, to become familiar with e-learning. In classical education use of technology and other information systems are also important but without of such facilities education can also be done if an effective lecturer is in the classroom for teaching students.

### **Effects of New Communication Information Systems on E-learning**

New technologies, communication and information systems force higher education institutions to adopt their system into the new technology and trends in education. Of which e-learning is one of the most important component of these developments in education. But the e-learning was not such a new application in education. The previous version of e-learning was created as in form of open universities, which also required for adoption of high technology in higher education such as; audio rooms, satellite TV connection, video recorder, and cassettes, etc.

In North Cyprus education via open universities also put into effect in 1981 Higher Education Law in Turkey. The Anatolia University or -so called Open University- started its academic life in 1982. And extension of the Open University was also realised in 1982-1983 academic year.

Since last decade extension of new technologies and social networks affected and changed the way of our life and become also an integral part of students in universities. The removal of physical distances via internet and computer based technologies many cooperation and collaborations between universities realised and joint research projects developed.

Consequence of new technologies and developed communication and information systems caused many changes in everyday life. Enlarged European Union's Education Area via Bologna Process, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), free movement of students and teachers increased and standardised degrees are some of these changes. Development of similar curriculum in similar disciplines increased the equity and challenging power of young generation in international labour market.

The effective role of new technologies and increasing role of computer/ web based knowledge; communication and information such as e-state, e-trade, e-media etc compel

university education to combine university studies with the e-learning. As stated by Barron (2000), E-learning interventions are rapidly becoming organisations response to continuous learning and change in the new economy. Today organisations are in synch with and using content providers, authoring tools, training management systems, portals, delivery systems and integrated solutions to foster their e-learning endeavours. This is important because as companies digitally transform their businesses, knowledge and training become rapidly obsolete, just in time.

In addition, technology-enabled learning fundamentally changes the locus of control from the trainer to the learner. As Drisscoll investigates (1998) also the e-learners, who are mostly adult people, who work and study. According to Drisscoll's research, e-learners concentrate on a specific topics/ problems for achieving difficulties at work or to become expert in their field. The specific characteristic of e-learners includes:

“Have real life experience,  
prefer problem centred learning,  
are continuous learners,  
have varied learning styles  
have responsibilities beyond the training situation  
prefer to manage their learning.”<sup>9</sup>

These characteristics of e-learners indicates that e-learning is especially suitable for specific group of people who have job experience with less knowledge but wants to increase their knowledge within a limited time. It must not be preferred as a new education model for the whole learner. Because e- learning type of education is especially suitable for specific group of people who cannot regularly attends into the classroom and have less time to manage education. E-learning is best learning method for those who work and study, who makes research and who are capable for learn in a limited time.

### **The Important Role of Control and Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance in Higher Education in North Cyprus**

This section concentrates on strategic importance of quality assurance and e-learning in higher education. The role of higher education evaluation accreditation organs

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<sup>9</sup> Drisscoll M: Web based training: Using technology to design adult learning experiences, San Francisco, jossey –Bassy/ Pfeiffer 1998 (chapter 2- 1.section)

that control and evaluate the higher education institutions are important. And advantages and disadvantages of e-learning in quality assurance and effects on work life play an important role in socio economic life.

The pressures on control and evaluation of higher education will intensify over the next 10 years, while new challenges are becoming evident in higher education in North Cyprus. These include an increased focus on accountability to students for the quality of the education and services they receive; the growing importance of e-learning; an increased emphasis on issues of wider participation, retention and graduate employability; the introduction of new forms of reporting student achievement; the quality of research training environments; increased competition from overseas providers; growing international perspectives on curricula and standards issues. The purpose of the e-learning is to support university education, and enhancing the learning experience of students.

In North Cyprus in higher education, universities provide a comprehensive, integrated and coherent focus on improving the student learning experience via increasing the standards of the university education. Higher Education institutions focus on improving the student learning experience, undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate. YÖDAK as a higher education evaluation and accreditation body in North Cyprus, recognise the significance of variety of institutional missions and believe that this diversity is one of the key strengths of the higher education sector. Being both receptive and innovative will be the central challenge YÖDAK must meet to be successful.

In the North Cyprus there is no other organisation of similar position as YÖDAK and scope in the higher education. All higher educational institutions recognise the importance of YÖDAK work and they have all indicated initial support to its function. There is a substantial body of work in higher education in North Cyprus to build on and have professional staff for implementing this duty. To exploit this strategic position successfully YÖDAK needs to be clear about its focus and priorities, demonstrate that YÖDAK's advices and support is well-grounded and effective, be open, participative, and consultative in its processes. YÖDAK will do this through the aims and objectives of the strategic plan and their detailed implementation.

YÖDAK as a highest organ in higher education must control, evaluate and implement the expectations of higher educational institutions in accordance to the internationally recognised regulations such as EU's education programme and ENQA regulations. However neither YÖDAK as control organ nor ENQA implements their duty in expected level. This is happen because on the one hand, YÖDAK cannot play an important role because of relations of universities with the government and Ministry of Education which is time to time become more effective than YÖDAK and affects and change some regulations in accordance to the universities expectations. By doing such regulations and



putting into effect, causes serious problems for YÖDAK and reduces its importance and trust of universities to YÖDAK as a control and evaluation organ. And on the other hand EU's ENQA which granted to the YÖDAK associated membership which is "entitled to receive ENQA publications and attend seminars and workshops, but will not have voting right".<sup>10</sup> This implies ENQA is not consider YÖDAK as a full member and is assumed to be a associate member for joining to the seminars and workshops and other activities, without voting and without controlling and evaluating activities in those countries, where associate membership offered.

Higher education Control and evaluation organs is assumed to be intended to work with university and individual staff and other qualified experts to help them deliver the best possible learning experience for all students. It must also cooperate with the related authorities and their finance department to create the best policy environment to enable this to happen. *Institutions* can expect from higher education control and evaluation organs to influence national policy on their behalf; to provide them with practical solutions and research evidence; to provide national recognition of the programmes which they offer to their students and staff; and to supply continuing curriculum, pedagogic and developmental support for their staff. *Disciplines and subjects* can expect higher education control and evaluation organs to supply subject-focused support services via subject centres; to organise discipline networks; and to provide advice, information and resources. *Individual staff* can expect higher education control and evaluation organs to provide support and networking for teaching, learning and supervision through the subject centres; to facilitate their professional standing and professional development; and to provide access to the best possible evidence about how to improve the student learning experience. *Other Organisations and/ or institutions* can expect higher education control and evaluation organs to support collaborative activities; to provide strategic advice in a competitive international climate; to influence national policy; and to help build the sector's capacity for evidence-informed activities designed to improve the student learning experience. *Government and finance department* can expect higher education control and evaluation organs to contribute constructively to the development and implementation of policy which influences the student learning experience and to use effectively the funds provided to us for this purpose. *Students* can expect higher education control and evaluation organs to involve their national representatives in policy development and to put the student learning experience at the centre of its work. higher education control and evaluation organs must focus on increasing the student learning experience of institutions,

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<sup>10</sup> ENQA European Network for Quality Assurance Associates and Affiliates  
[http://www.enqa.eu/assoc\\_affil.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/assoc_affil.lasso)

which will lead institutions to work on all aspects of the student learning lifecycle, the effective uses of learning outcomes, e-learning at universities, the development of enterprise capabilities, and support for excellent research training environments.

Underpinning higher education control and evaluation organs work is a commitment to:

- Equality and diversity
- An international perspective
- Evaluation and Recognition of programmes
- Transparency
- Partnership
- Sharing good practice
- Maintaining high standards of service

**Strategic Aims and Objectives of YÖDAK in Higher Education are Expected to Fulfil the following goals:**

1. To be an authoritative and independent body on evaluating and accreditation process,
  - a. To become a reliable organ of North Cyprus for implementing the accreditation and evaluation of programmes,
  - b. To facilitate the development and implementation of a standards framework for professional recognition,
  - c. To accredit institutional programmes,
  - d. To become a credible provider of opened programmes at universities,
  - e. To become a reliable highest organisation in higher education sector.
2. To lead, support and inform the professional development and recognition of staff in higher education
  - a. To develop accreditation routes for university staff,
  - b. To support and inform professional development and recognition of university staff.
3. To be an authoritative and independent voice on policies that influence universities for providing student learning experiences
  - a. To become a credible provider of strategic policy advice,
  - b. To establish relationships with universities to advice and influence public policy related to the student learning experience.
4. To support institutions in their strategies for improving the student learning experience
  - a. To develop programmes of support based on HEI needs,
  - b. To work with institutions in developing their capacity for institutional research (IR),
  - c. To inform and advise institutions on issues concerning the learning experiences of diverse student groups including overseas students.
5. To promote good practice in all aspects of support for the student learning experience
  - a. To work with the sector to provide high quality information, advice and support on curriculum, learning, teaching and student assessment,

- b. To be a key source of and ensure effective use of information and resources on academic practice and aspects of supporting the student learning experience,
- c. To promote best practice in the internationalisation of the student learning experience,
- 6. To lead the development of research and evaluation to improve the quality of the student learning experience
  - a. To play a leading role in identifying research and evaluation issues relating to the student learning experience,
  - b. To synthesise and disseminate information from research, evaluation and other sources about all aspects of the student learning experience,
  - c. To provide high quality evaluation advice and services associated with improving the student learning experience.
- 7. To be a responsive, efficient and accountable organisation
  - a. To ensure responsible use of resources,
  - c. To deploy professional systems,
  - e. To develop and implement a information and communications strategy.

### **Conclusion**

In this study both, classroom education and adoption of e-learning programs researched. Preliminary results have indicated that a higher education control and evaluation organ plays the major role on higher education accreditation and evaluation. Unfortunately, neither in classic classroom education nor in e-learning programmes YÖDAK has considerable effects.

It is observed that many problems and difficulties are created because of lack of inspection, control and evaluation of institutions. This is happened because of political problems and corruption, which prevents peoples' proper adoption into the system and better extension of international programmes and regulations in North Cyprus. In North Cyprus, universities are not recognized and accredited, neither in EU programmes, nor in other international institutions. However, some bilateral agreements and recognitions are done for attracting the universities popularity and interest of students.

It is obvious that neither quality assurance nor learning outcomes is an important criterion for evaluating the universities. Some activities are done for increasing the learning outcomes, but this is not done on desired level, because North Cyprus is a closed economy and labour market is limited. Some international relations are maintained via private endeavours. The TRNC is not recognized exemption of Turkey; no other country recognized TRNC as a state. Therefore international relations are very limited. Consequences of this isolation with the world, challenging know-how and man power are not the first criterion for the employers. Results of this isolation and unrecognized status of state, relations and partisan attitudes, becomes more important than other challenging

qualifications for workplaces. In such a strange and unprofessional labour market, proficiency and talent become less important both for employees and employers in many work places, sufficient knowledge for carrying his/her job becomes more important than proficiency and know how. In addition since no one evaluate and consider the learning outcomes of students in universities and later graduate peoples' performance at workplace, then it will not be wrong to expect from the universities to implement all the required quality assurance and learning outcomes criterion for their institutions.

In some private higher education institutions, students' success becomes less important than their regular payments to the accountancy office. The number of students who attends to the university is well known success criterion for institutions. The qualification of academic staff is less important than their popularity between students. Best lecturer is the one who give lots of higher grades to students. Academic publication and research is not important and it is not in considerable amount. For years many lecturers give same material and quizzes with small changes to the students. No term project, presentation, research and seminar works is requested. In case, if it is requested copy paste works are welcome or ghost writers job are also accepted. Problems and complaints confronting in universities both for students and for lecturer are not examine carefully, people who have good relations with the owner of the universities has the advantage to protect and support those who are good friends. In such a tolerated education system it is not easy to expect for increasing the quality assurance in higher education or to implement the e-learning program successfully.

Inefficient role of YÖDAK on universities increases the problems mentioned above. Due to inefficient structure of YÖDAK which is assumed to be deliberately appropriated by the government to YÖDAK is done for reducing the control and inspection on Universities. By doing this, role of ministry of education on higher education is increased, which has more power and relations than YÖDAK on cabinet for protecting the interest of universities time to time. Therefore, problems experienced in universities are not directed to this institution, because neither lecturer's nor students' complains are seriously taken into consideration by YÖDAK. Moreover, cost pressure on higher education prevents authorities to apply any measures on universities, because fear of losing students, who prefer to study in North Cyprus universities, reduces the desire to apply any measure in any problem created by students or administrative or academic bodies in universities. Due to this fear many facilities and easy going education sector was created. On the one hand increasing cost and problems in higher education and on the other hand isolation on the Turkish Cypriots and students caused this situation. Nearly, 10 percent of the North Cyprus budget is gone to the Universities (salaries, projects support) and 10 percent is distributed as a direct student aid. The state's support which is given to the higher education sector is relative low compare to the outcome, which covers about 60

percent of the GNI. Under such financial and political difficulties YÖDAK concentrate its efforts for harmonizing university education in North Cyprus with the EU's education program –to adopt Erasmus / Life Long Learning, to become a member of the Erasmus University Charter (EUC), to join into the Bologna process and to become a member of the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA). However, neither the EUC nor the Bologna process has been enlarged to the North Cyprus universities, because of the political issue which prevents Director General for Education Culture and Training (DG 11) in EU to enlarge the programs into the universities in North Cyprus. The rejection of all efforts was dependent to the Acquire- article 10, which implies 'until political solution relations with North Cyprus Authorities will be suspended'. Nevertheless, after all our efforts with YÖDAK commissions one of the applications to become a partner for better cooperation and adoption of EU's programs was accepted by the ENQA. And in 2007 Associate Status was granted to the YÖDAK. After all these efforts for joining to the EU's education programme and Bologna process, the importance of the e-learning was neglected. Moreover neither local authorities nor EU's bodies such as ENQA take responsibility for improving the quality in higher education. This is perhaps done consequence of Acquire article 10, which prevents people to communicate officially. However plans and programmes are still in progress for adoption and extension of EU's education. Similarly, some universities in North Cyprus prepare e-learning programs for near future too. As main reasons for their reluctance, the interviewers whose e-learning systems are not yet accredited name the following:

Not necessary up to now

No such tradition

There is no real e-learning course yet in our university

No existing accreditation agency for e-learning in North Cyprus

The Bologna process will create the need for such accreditation in the near future.

The e-learning has the advantage of being anytime, anyplace for individual learners who are mostly work and study and has limited time after work. The e-learners understand that it is up to them to teach, not the teacher to teach. The e-learner group connected via Internet is the centre of knowledge and learning. Against to this lecturers in the class are the centre of knowledge and learning. In the class there is an interactive lecture different approaches can be spoken, discussed and better understanding with different approaches offered to the students. But on computer/ web based learning this is not possible.

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