



#### **1.4. DISTANCE LEARNING GOALS OF FIRAT UNIVERSITY**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Traditional methods have been gradually replaced by modern methods. Modern technological tools are used for teaching to increase the quality of the education especially in developed countries. For example, some universities use live teleconference techniques to teach the students on different campuses simultaneously. In this way the students can ask questions, if they want to, to the lecturer as if they were in the same lecture hall. In this way telecommunication can be used for teaching purposes.

For the purpose of distance learning some countries use satellite to teach students in different places. In UK, USA, Turkey etc., TV facilities are being used for education, such as in the Open University. In Turkey, the Distance Learning is provided by Anadolu University. The students' performance has not reached the required standard, however, because TV programs cannot be watched regularly by students.

The number of countries which use the Internet facilities for MSc is increasing. USA, England, and the Netherlands are the pioneers of this system and they have reached the required quality level. Since 1992 The University of Firat has also been providing Distance Learning via Firat TV. It is now possible to make programs for "Certificate in Computing". Therefore the demands of the people living nearby are served.

## **A. DISTANCE LEARNING APPLICATIONS AT FIRAT UNIVERSITY**

Since 1990 Distance Learning has been used for certification some fields by using Electronic Mail, video conference systems and Firat TV.

### **a) Distance Learning by E-Mail**

The University of Firat was one of the first eight universities to set up the E-Mail facility in 1988. In 1990, some of the university academic personnel used the E-Mail as a first Distance Learning application. They used this facility to communicate with their supervisor in America. In this way they managed to complete their MSc studies.

### **b) Distance Learning by Firat TV**

With the foundation of the first private TV in 1991 in Turkey, The University of Firat also established a TV broadcasting system and by this way it became possible for the people living nearby to watch CNN broadcasts. These broadcasts have found popularity, especially, among university academic personnel, because CNN is one of the most popular TV news channels in the world. Later on, the number of broadcast provided by Firat TV was increased. The broadcasts were received from satellites and the number of people watching the programs increased even though they had no foreign languages.

In addition to these advances, in order to convey the news in the university and also to make cultural and educational programs, the first Firat TV's own broadcasts began on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1992. The programs were increased day by day. By defining the policy of the Firat TV, it was planned to be an association.

Computer course sessions for TV broadcasting were prepared. Computers were rented to applicants who wanted to follow the programs. After the completion of the courses, examinations were set and the students who passed the exam were given a certificate. In June 1995, the Higher

Education Council/World Bank's Industrial Education Project's "Computer Systems Technologies" courses were performed. In these courses the lectures were recorded and broadcast at the same night. Hence the students had the chance to follow the same lecture twice. These courses were followed by 32 lecturer as students from different universities in Turkey. The same courses were repeated for the teachers employed by National Education Ministry. This time 132 teachers attended these courses. Therefore in Firat University, Distance Learning programs towards certificate started in 1995.

#### **c) Distance Learning Using the Internet**

In order to be connected to Internet and to construct home page for the university, the Internet studies were started, in 1995. This project was supported by the Research Fund of the Firat University. In order to be connected to Dial-up and TURPAK X25 line, the necessary applications to related associations were made and in December 1995, connection to Dial-up was implemented. The one of the important parts of this project was to prepare a home page for the university. In this way all the departments in the university have been introduced and the necessary information put into HTML files. This page has been prepared in English and will be available in the near future.

### **B. PRESENT POSSIBILITIES FOR THE DISTANCE LEARNING AT FIRAT UNIVERSITY**

As stated above, Firat University has prepared all the necessary hardware background for the distance learning. It is the only university which has all E-mail, INTERNET and TV station among the Turkish Universities except Anadolu University. Anadolu University carries on TV broadcasting based on the protocol made with TRT. However, The University of Firat has its own TV station and it is the only university TV which has been broadcasting since 1992 without interruption. Firat TV has

got big progress for being an association. The equipment, supplied by YOK-World Bank II. Industrial Educational Project, does not exist in any local private TV station.

A new transmitting tower has been constructed on a hill on the university campus recently. And also, there is a new modern studio, established by the university's own sources, which has been in service since the beginning of 1996.

### **C. THE DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF DISTANCE LEARNING AT FIRAT UNIVERSITY**

The introduction of distance learning via Firat TV is faced with a number of legal problems. Works still continues in order to make Firat TV a local broadcasting TV station. But, radio and TV Committee and law numbered 3984, which is about broadcasting, prevents the universities to broadcast. When this law was prepared, it had not been taken into account that the universities might broadcast to do distance learning ( The 29<sup>th</sup> item of the law hinders the broadcasting of universities).

In developed countries, university broadcasting and use of distance learning systems in which small number of lecturers can teach to a crowd of people are always encouraged. This sort of effort should be supported in Turkey as well. For example, METU's radio broadcasting over the INTERNET is actually against current laws. But METU's radio broadcasting is an important activity. This type of effort should be encouraged to serve people's different needs.

### **D). SUGGESTIONS AND TARGETS**

When the distance learning system is accepted and set up by our university without delay, the number of students in the required fields (e.g. Computer Science) can be increased. As a result of this, the demands in

these fields will be satisfied, and also education will be reached to more students by less number of lecturers. With respect to the present technology, the ideal way in the distance learning systems is to use TV, Teleconference, Video Conference and INTERNET together at the same time. When this type of system is established, questions can be asked during the live broadcasting by use of teleconference system. Essays and homework can be sent to the lecturer by INTERNET.

By using the video cassette, lectures can be watched whenever required. Firat university has implemented the most important part of the necessary background by having Firat TV, INTERNET and E-MAIL connections and managed to organise some educational programs which gives certificates to students in the local area. One of the most important things lacking in this system is the teleconference system. If this is done, the certificate educational programs can be carried on perfectly.

The next target should be to start the educational programs which provide diploma (Undergraduate and graduate) at Firat University. The present laws, especially 3984 which is about Radio and TV Committee and Broadcasting, should be reviewed and the item 29 of this law, which hinders the educational councils (universities, etc.) to establish their own radio and TV station, should be changed and chance should be given to the universities to realise distance learning directed towards to diploma.

Turkey is among the rare number of countries which has two satellites in space. With the help of these satellites, Turkey can carry on educational broadcasting covering East Europe and some Turkish republics. Firat University, by using the experiences about distance learning in last several years, desires to take an active role in Science and Technology Distance Learning Project.