THE DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY AND OPEN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Failure to meet considerably high demand for higher education in Turkey has always been one of the most significant concerns of Turkish Higher Education System for many years. In this respect, Anadolu University Open Education Faculty has played a significant role in the attempts to overcome this problem in Turkey for the last three decades. In this study, the development of the demand for higher education in Turkey and that of the open education system in parallel with this demand are examined and the specific reasons why this system is preferred by the students enrolled in the system are analyzed and the results obtained are evaluated from a scientific point of view.

INTRODUCTION
Obtaining the right to attend a higher education institution is an important part of the agenda in Turkey just like in other countries. For Turkish young people who are old enough to attend a higher education institution, whether to take part in business life or to continue education life by attending a university is an important decision they have to make. Unfortunately, since the current demand is considerably higher than the available capacity, access to higher education is now a serious problem in Turkish context. When the fundamental functions of higher education are considered -such as contributing to personal development of individuals, equipping learners with creative, scientific and critical thinking skills in addition to training them for a specific occupation-, it should be an important objective for governments to provide opportunities for as many people as possible to access higher education.

Due to the importance given to modern education since the foundation of Turkish Republic in mid 1920s and the steps taken since then by the ruling governments accordingly, the demand for education at every level increased considerably. Similarly, during this period, the number of faculties and universities established also increased, however; this increase was far less than that of newly established secondary level educational institutions; namely secondary schools and high schools. In addition, there was a considerably high interest in receiving college level vocational education for certain jobs, which resulted in higher demand for certain faculties related to such jobs. As a result, the available quotas allocated for higher education failed to meet this increasing demand, and finally, the higher education institutions started to accept their students by administering a kind of placement test organized by each institution seperately. However; unprecedentedly increasing applications made for higher education institutions led to an ultimate solution; which was a centralized student selection and placement exam administered across the country by a center called "Student Selection and Placement Center"
Today, many solutions are offered to meet this increasing and diverse demand for higher education, and related educational policies are discussed thoroughly; however, permanent solutions cannot be put into practice yet. It is clear that simply increasing the capacity of formal (face–to–face) higher education is not sufficient enough to solve the problem completely. Although various suggestions might be offered for permanent solutions, the following ones are listed among the mostly agreed ones in Turkey: restructuring the secondary education, realizing structural, administrative and functional changes in higher education and improving open education system.

The discussions regarding educational systems mostly focus on the following criticisms: formal education's failure to meet individuals' demands for basic education, especially when the popular concept "lifelong learning" is considered; and the fact that those who do not access to formal education are deprived of education. Open education system, which is currently used or in the process of implementation and development in many countries including Turkey, is an outstanding educational model proven to be effective in meeting the demand for higher education and in offering equal opportunities in the field of education. Because of the popularity of distance education all around the world today, first of all, it is necessary to know what distance education is. There are some definitions, which describes distance education (Rüzgar 2004). Michael Moore (1989) defines distance teaching as "the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviors are executed apart from the learning behaviors, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner's presence, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices. On the other hand, Keegan makes one of the meaningful definitions of distance education. For Keegan (http://home.anadolu.edu.tr/~udemiray) there are six elements to be considered for a unifying definition of distance education:

1. The separation of teacher and learner, which distinguishes it from face to face lecturing,
2. The influence of an educational organization, which distinguishes it from private study,
3. The use of technical media, usually print, to unite teacher and learner and carry the educational content,
4. The provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue,
5. The possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes,
6. The participation in an industrialized form of education, which if accepted, contains the genus of radical separation of distance education from other forms.

When the distinctive features of distance education stated in the above mentioned definitions and the unique practices applied (making use of technological advancements and integrating them into the system) are considered, it is crystal clear that distance education is likely to serve as an effective solution to aforementioned concerns. Especially, the implementation and intense use of e-learning practice in both traditional and distance education institutions strengthen this argument to a great extent.

In parallel with the solutions sought to balance increasing demand for higher education, open education techniques were initiated in Turkish Higher Education system as of 1970s. In this context, "correspondence teaching " and "mass higher education institution (YAYKUR)" were among the first applications for mass distance higher education. As to be discussed later in this paper, such applications were not continued although they received considerable demand at the beginning. Open Education Faculty, which was established in 1982 by Anadolu University, has been offering distant higher education for almost 30 years and still provides considerable support in meeting this increasing demand.

In a country like Turkey, where there is no comprehensive and stable long-term planning in the field of education and education policies are continuously revised and manipulated according to current conjuncture, it is worth examining such a system in detail which has been applied for such a quite long time. Today, Anadolu University is considered a "mega university" with its over one million graduates since its foundation and over one and half million currently attending students. This accomplishment and the demand for the system constitute the main focus of this study. It would be unfair and one-sided analysis to accept that only those who do not have the chance to be enrolled in formal education prefer open education system (despite the fact that it is an important reason). All institutional factors such as the programs offered, simple registration procedures, learner support services and well-established organizational structure and, of course, obtaining students' opinions regularly through various data collection tools should be taken into consideration while accounting for the demand for open education system. Therefore; this study aims at determining the factors leading to this considerable demand for open education system in Turkey and contributing to the development of further distance education projects and applications in the country.

Anadolu University, as a "mega university" with its over one million graduates and currently enrolled students assumes significant responsibilities in the field of distance education and plays important roles in overcoming the current problems of Turkish Higher Education System and meeting the intensive demand. Since its establishment in 1982, there has been considerable increase every year in the number of students enrolled in open education programs due to the demands from different parts of the society for higher education. These diverse needs or demands for education from different levels of the society in parallel with the changes in the prevailing conditions of the period have been met successfully despite certain restrictions due to the diversity of needs and available conditions; and therefore, Anadolu University has, now, been considered as a mega university and presented as a successful model in the field. In this regard, there are many components of this system that are worth examining in its 30 year-history. It is expected that a thorough analysis of Anadolu University distance education system regarding the registration procedures and kinds of enrollment and the introduction of the technical solutions applied to potential and experienced problems will provide insights and models for similar programs and applications worldwide.

Within this framework, this study examines the development of the demand for higher education in general and for open education in specific. To achieve this purpose, the detailed data regarding the reasons of the students enrolled in open education system for preferring this system are obtained through the administration of a questionnaire. The main scope of the study is to interpret the components determining this demand for Turkish Open Education System, which has proven to a be great success in the literature with its more than one million students as of today, through the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires.

The Demand for Higher Education in Turkey and its Development
Revising and restructuring the education system to keep up with the conditions of modern world was one of the primary objectives of newly established Turkish Republic in mid 1920s. It was fortunate that there was an

immediate and considerable support for this restructuring process from the society since, at those times, majority of the population were living in villages, overall education level of the society was quite low and the available educational institutions were quite diverse. This support resulted in a continuously increasing demand for education at every level. For the purposes of this study, the focus, henceforth, will be on the development of higher education and open education and the demand for these two systems in Turkey.

The development of higher education in Turkey
In order to achieve the objectives of the new republic in terms of the modernization of education, different models of university systems from the West were taken as models rather than simply improving already available "madrasah" system. Initiated with the establishment of Dar-ül Fünun in 1900, the historical development of Turkish Universities continued with the foundation of new universities and faculties in Ankara and İstanbul until 1950s and, later, in different cities located in Anatolian part of Turkey. One of the important challenges faced during this period was the number of students in higher education. During this period, Turkey and France shared the third place in the rank (with an annual increase of 7 %) among OECD countries in terms of the annual rate of establishing new schools. However; the annual capacity increase was far from meeting the increasing demand. The number of students enrolled in secondary level educational institutions, which was 17.000 in 1930, increased to 20.000 in 1940, to 34.000 in 1950, to 55.000 in 1960, to 152.000 in 1970, to 321.000 in 1980 and finally to 387.000 in 1990. Similarly, the percentage of higher education institutions except universities increased to 33 % in 1966 and to 40 % in 1969 from 3 % in 1958 (Güvenç, 2009).

Until the regulations initiated following the enactment of Higher Education Law numbered 2547 in 1981, the following situations were prevalent in Turkish higher education system: diversity among universities in terms of administrative and financial autonomy and the presence of other higher education institutions apart from universities (State Academies of Engineering, Academies of Economic and Commercial Sciences, State Academy of Fine Arts, Sports Academies, Vocational Schools established by the Ministries and Educational Institutes etc) due to arising different needs and demands. In 1980 – 1981 academic year, there was a total of 166 higher educational institutions in Turkey including 19 universities (Gürüz 2003).

Higher Education Law enacted on November 6th 1981 was an important step to restructure Turkish Higher Education. The objectives and scope of the law are stated as follows: "to organize the regulations related to education, learning, research, publication, academic staff, students and other personnel in higher education institutions; to determine the objectives and principles for higher education as well as the procedures, duties, responsibilities and authorizations of all higher education institutions and the related organizations they are affiliated to. The institutions administered by Turkish Armed Forces and Turkish Police Department are exempt from such regulations".

Following the enactment of the Law numbered 2547, which might be considered one of the most fundamental regulations in the history of Turkish Higher Education System, eight more universities were founded, which increased the number of available universities in Turkey to 27 in 1982. In the following years, this number continuously increased in order to meet the demand and to make higher education available across the country. Today, there are 159 universities - including 94 state universities, 45 private universities, 7 private vocational schools, 5 military higher educational institutions, 1 educational institution administered by Turkish Police Department, 5 universities in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and 2 state universities with Special Status. All these institutions accept their students according to the results of a "student selection and placement examination" administered every year in Turkey.

General Demand for Higher Education in Turkey
Following the foundation of the republic, Turkish Higher Education system has shown considerable improvement in terms of the opportunities offered and the number of students. The main reason this increasing demand for education is the need for qualified individuals due to rapid social, economic and social development after the declaration of the republic and the increasing enthusiasm and willingness to keep up with world agenda and latest developments. During this process, Turkish Education System inevitably developed into a system taking the demands by the society into consideration rather than simply guiding social change (Tekeli, 1980).

Since this newly established education system are, to a great extent, based on the demands from the society, more and more higher education institutions were founded in many cities, and a considerable number of faculties and academies were established accordingly. During this period, the quality of the higher education provided was also discussed thoroughly among scholars in parallel with the quantitative increase. However; the continuing demand for higher education urged the establishment of more and more new institutions in the country. Until 1960s, the capacity of higher education institutions was sufficient to accept all the applications made by high

school graduates, however; after 1960s the capacity of higher education institutions was not enough to meet the demand from high school graduates. In 1960, 19.197 of 23.535 students who graduated from high schools were able to register in a higher education institution. As the years passed the situation became worse. In 1973, only 41.789 of 89.359 high school graduates were able to obtain the right to enroll in higher education institutions (Dökmen, 1992). In other words, only 47 % of high school graduates obtained the right to register in a higher educational institution in 1973, which was 82 % in 1960.

As of the late 1960s, the gap between the capacity of higher education institutions and the demand for it became larger and larger (Mıhçıoğlu 1974). The solution offered at this point was to admit students by administering a type of examination. First application, which was a "central examination", covered only some of the universities, and later the practice was extended to all the universities except METU (Middle East Technical University) and ITU (İstanbul Technical University) under the organization by Ankara University in 1964 – 1965 academic year. The reasons lying behind the administration of such a country-wide centralized examination were as follows: the rapid increase in the number of students applying higher education institutions; artificial increase in the number of candidates, local examinations and the complexity of procedures; failure to fill up the quotas predetermined for the departments at universities; and the problems occurred due to not administering the exams in certain centers under the supervision of experts (Dökmen 1992). Above mentioned concerns required the administration of a country-wide selection and placement examination.

Until 1974, this central examination was organized by different universities each year. In 1974, however, "Inter-universities Student Selection and Placement Center" was established and therefore given the authority to administer this examination. This institution was later was renamed as "Student Selection and Placement Center" in 1982 and affiliated to Higher Education Council. The distribution of the numbers of students who applied to and were placed in higher education institutions since 1974 according to years is as follows:

Table 1. The Number of students who applied to and placed in universities (Formal Education) between 1974 and 2009

YEARS	APPLIED	PLACED	YEARS	APPLIED	PLACED	YEARS	APPLIED	PLACED
1974	--	37254	1986	503566	96674	1998	1359579	254542
1975	--	68511	1987	628113	100912	1999	1479562	266689
1976	--	40767	1988	--	107333	2000	1414823	277827
1977	357511	36613	1989	691676	108822	2001	1473908	296101
1978	373865	37438	1990	773837	112865	2002	1823088	368010
1979	--	40622	1991	738955	116968	2003	1596879	347564
1980	--	41572	1992	837766	146375	2004	1902132	393220
1981	--	56010	1993	1088393	173013	2005	1851618	423106
1982	408621	72983	1994	1193159	204816	2006	1678383	417918
1983	210940	89881	1995	1212580	216123	2007	1776441	437638
1984	--	100580	1996	1386611	225223	2008	1646376	562981
1985	480747	96086	1997	1398596	253602	2009	1451350	585998

Resource: The data was obtained from OSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center) http://osym.gov.tr
When the above mentioned statistics are examined, it can be clearly seen that admitting students according to the results of a central examination did not produce an effective solution to the concerns related to accessing higher education. The simplified procedures to apply for a central examination and low cost led to an incredible increase in the number of students who want to attend a university. Similarly, these advantages also affected those who would like to change his or her current higher education institution; therefore increasing the number of students who want to attend a different department or university for some reasons (Serter 1986). Application / placement ratio, which was around 20 % for a long time, increased only a little bit in early 2000s due to the emergence of evening education in universities and the new policy of Vocational High Schools which does not require students to take any examinations. Today, the ratio increased to around 40 % due to rapid increase in the number of newly established universities and quota increase for certain faculties and departments.

It is really necessary to search for a solution for the problem by increasing the available capacity. However, such practices bring about quality concerns by initiating various discussions ranging from campus capacity and shortage of equipment and academic staff. Such discussions and solutions offered are multi-dimensional and mostly focus on the structure of higher education system, the programs offered, the teaching methods and procedures used, the legislations applied, the principles determined for obtaining registration rights, and financial issues. These issues will not be dealt with here since they are not within the scope of this study. However; it is obvious that the solution would be possible only when the function of higher education in social and cultural life is redefined; primary, secondary and higher education systems are restructured in such a way that they complete each other; and finally when the changing and developing needs of the society are satisfied. Indeed, numerous solutions suggested in the related literature focus on above mentioned conditions, and open education is highly likely to be an indispensible alternative among the models suggested.

OPEN EDUCATION

The fact that the durations of primary and secondary education were extended according to the prevailing conditions and multi-program secondary education models and "preparation school" practices for universities were available more and more in Turkey caused individuals to spend more years in educational institutions, which also encouraged the willingness among young people to continue for university education. Similarly, the increasing importance of "having a diploma" due to new developments and changes in working life also affected this process. Therefore; in today's world, those who are employed in higher education system have to deal with heterogeneous groups of young people and adults who have different backgrounds, interests, personal skills and preferences compared to those in the past. This development and new situation requires the restructuring of higher education with two important concepts in mind: lifelong learning and continuous education.

When the problem is analyzed from an educational dimension, it is observed that "pre-adult education process", which was once carried out traditionally by higher education, started to develop into a new concept called "lifelong learning" and is still changing accordingly in today's world. Moreover, the meaning of "learning" for students now is not "being an absolute goal" itself but just a "tool" to reach a predetermined goal. Moreover, it is now observed that "elite higher education" mentality and practices are being replaced by "mass higher education" (Alkan, 1981). In this regard, the determining factor of this development is the advancements in information and communication technologies, which showed considerable acceleration as of 1960s. Education, of course, is one of the sectors which are positively affected by such advancements. At this point, distance education was designed as a concrete model which might satisfy individual and social needs, and meet the demand for lifelong learning and basic education by using technological advancements as effectively as possible. During its initial phases of development, open education was thought to be just an alternative low quality education and criticized accordingly due to certain learning channels employed at the beginning. Although the point achieved today has not been able to completely overrule these critiques, the concerns were solved to a great extent. Moore and Kearsley proposes five phases regarding the development of open education (Moore and Kearsley, 2005, p.24-46).
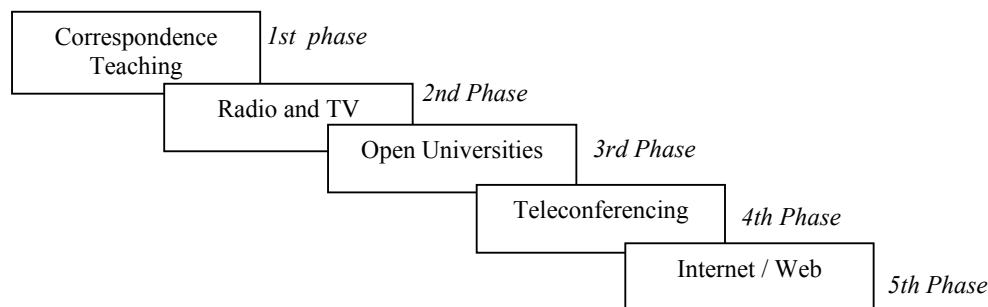

Figure 1. The Phases of the Development of Distance Education

The first phase is "correspondence teaching", which were initiated in the late 19th century. The educational activities in this method are based on printed materials and the feedback provided by the learner for the instructor or the institution through letters sent via snail mail.

The second phase is "teaching through radio and television" – in which radio was used in 1920s and television in 1930s as the primary medium of presentation.

The third phase is "Open Universities", which might be defined as a new organization type rather than an innovative communication technology. Open Universities have been an effective tool in organizing the available technology and human resources, and in developing new educational techniques and theories as well as finding solutions to emerging problems thanks to their expert staff who commit themselves to distance education and educational designs. They also benefit from economies of scale since they have quite high number of students enrolled in their programs.

Teleconferencing, which is acknowledged as the fourth phase, has been an important component in the development of distance education since it allows learners and teachers living in different places to communicate and interact. In contrast to one-way communication like in "correspondence teaching" and "teaching through radio and television", teleconferencing was able to initiate an important change in the presentation of distance education thanks to developmental phases it passes throughout its history: from "audio-teleconferencing" used at the beginning to "interactive video-conferencing" and "interactive video" and "two-way video conferencing" techniques employed depending on the available technological advancements of the period.

The fifth phase, which is called internet and web-based education, brought a new dimension to distance education. Bayrak (2001, p 61) claims that the redefined structure, management and learning environments of education due to the effects of globalization is a paradigmatic transition period for educators, students, administrators and policymakers, so he suggests that web-based education should be examined in terms of the processes followed during this transition. Due to increasing popularity and accessibility of internet, web-based education brought a dynamism, growing interest and an innovation to distance education with its new presentation channels where writing, sound and video are combined in one single communication tool and finally with its constructive, "learner-centered" and process-oriented teaching methods.

Each phase mentioned above such as "correspondence teaching", "teaching through radio and television" and "teleconferencing" changed the organizational structure of distance education to a certain extent. In parallel with the changes and transitions in open universities, today some institutions which only provide face-to-face education are planning and even implementing a dual education system by integrating open education into their programs. New technologies opened the way to the emergence of electronic (online) universities and allowed the accessibility of distance education to masses through collaborations and mergers among institutions.

The use of mass communication devices for educational purposes is not a new practice in Turkey. However; there were some considerable differences regarding the following issues: why they are used; the level of technology employed, how are they adopted and perceived; and finally the effects they created (Açıkalın, 1985). İşman (2011), in his article, lists the problems in Turkish Education System under 13 categories: physical conditions, equipment – materials, qualified teachers, quality education, standard education, number of students, attendance, rapid population growth, lack of interest in education by families', interests and skills, level of learning, modern methods and the retention of what has been learned. He suggests that information technologies should be employed as an alternative solution to overcome such problems. He further highlights "distance education" as a new education model that uses information technologies effectively and offers this model as a solution to all 13 problems listed above (İşman, 2011).

The first system using distance education principles in Turkey in order to satisfy the high demand for higher education is "correspondence teaching", which was initiated in 1974 – 1975 academic year. A total of 53.000 students were initially enrolled in the system, which was organized by a unit affiliated to National Ministry of Education. 15 months later, this practice was abandoned due to certain problems and continued by the Mass Higher Education Institution (YAYKUR) in 1975 -1976 academic year with a total of 85.000 students enrolled in 20 different programs (Serter 1986). According to this model, two-year associate degree education was planned, in which the first year would be carried out according to distance education principles and the second one face–to face in the schools affiliated to "formal higher education office". However; this practice was also abandoned in 1978-1979 academic year due to limited number of students, low success level and the fact that graduates were not able to find jobs (Serter 1986; p 7).

Following the enactment of Higher Education Law numbered 2547, Eskişehir Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences, which was established in 1958, was entitled to be university called Anadolu University. The paragraph "h" of the article "5" of the law is about "open education and teaching" in terms of the planning and realization of higher education, and similarly the paragraph "d"of 12th article – which defines the responsibilities of higher education institutions – writes "… providing education for the society especially regarding the modernization of industry and agriculture through formal, mass, continuous and open education". Based on this law, Anadolu University was authorized to implement and organize open education programs as of

July 20th 1982. On November 1982, "Regulations on Open Education" was published on "Official Gazette" numbered 17860, which gives Anadolu University Open Education Faculty the responsibility to provide "central open education" in Turkey.

In order to fulfill this important mission effectively, Anadolu University mobilized all its human resources ranging from the technical and expert staff employed in "The Institute for Teaching through Television" to the academic staff employed in its faculties and departments. In addition, the collaborative projects were carried with the academicians and expert from other universities for the following issues such as course book writing, television program design, script writing and filming and academic counselling services. Anadolu University had already been experienced in open education practice and the use of mass communication tools in education even before it was given this responsibility (Curabay and Demiray, 2002). Both close circuit education TV, which was founded thanks to the self-sacrificing contributions by the staff of Eskişehir Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences in 1970s, and "Institute for Teaching through Television", which was established later on, formed the basis for distance education at Anadolu University.

After the basic requirements were fulfilled, Anadolu University launched distance education system through printed materials, TV programs, and face-to-face education opportunities in the fields of Economy and Business Administration in 1982-83 academic year, when a total of 29.445 students were enrolled in the system. Since then, the number of students enrolled increased due to the increasing demand for higher education in Turkey. Today, 43 % of all the students enrolled in higher education in Turkey are registered in open education system.

The Demand for Open Education
Anadolu University Open Education Faculty has been offering various programs at university level for a wide range of individuals with different backgrounds for almost three decades. The programs offered are quality enough to meet the demands from all parts of the society. The university offers more than 60 various higher education programs ranging from special educational programs for the Police Department and Armed Forces to English Language Teaching and pre-school Teaching programs at undergraduate level, from special training programs offered for Call Centers to Theology and Veterinary and Health Laboratory Services and finally from associate degree and lisence completion programs for teachers employed by National Ministry of Education to those who are already placed by Student Placement and Selection Center and prefers undergraduate and graduate transfer. The demand for such a system in today's world cannot be simply accounted through the argument that people who are not able to obtain the right to attend a formal face-to-face education program prefer open education programs. In this study, students enrolled in the system were given questionnaires to obtain data about their reasons for preferring open education system.

METHODOLOGY
The population of the study consists of students enrolled in Faculty of Open Education, Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Business Administration which offer open education programs at Anadolu University. Of these students, 66.953 students were contacted through random sampling method during 2008-2009 academic year. The questionnaires that were sent as optical forms and completed by the students were processed through optical readers by Anadolu University Computer Research and Application Center and later prepared for analyses. The variables which are not included in the questionnaire but included in the analyses such as age, gender, the place of residence, faculty, department and year were obtained from the database of the Computer Research and Application Center.
The data collected were presented as frequencies and percentages. Certain analyses were made through cross relationships formed among some variables.

FINDINGS
The numerical data distributions for the participants who filled out the questionnaire in 2008–2009 academic year were examined and following results were obtained:

Table 2. Demographic Data about the Participants (2008 – 2009)

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Open Education	19.012	% 28,4	Male	30714	45,9
Economy	20.065	% 30	Female	36239	54,1
Business Administration	27.876	% 41,6	Military Service	Frequency	Percentage
Age Ranges	Frequency	Percentage	Exempt	1.519	5,2

24 and below	31.589	47,2	Completed	7.343	24,9	
25 – 29	16.809	25,1	Suspended	16.771	57	
30 – 34	8.097	12,1	In progress	227	0,8	
35 – 39	5.410	8,1	Cyprus Quota	5	0	
40 – 44	3.014	4,5	2nd Higher Education	1.292	4,4	
45 and above	2.034	3,0	Age limit exeeded	2.285	7,8	
Employment	Frequency	Percentage	Unknown	1	0	
Unemployed	26.599	41,1	Total	29.443	100	
Employed	38.162	58,9				
Total	64.761	100				
Not answered	2.192					
			General Total	66953		

The students who participated in the study were asked to mention three most important reasons for preferring open education system. The total number of replies given to this item was 181.050. The distribution of these replies according to faculties is as follows: 42 % Business Administration, 30 % Economy and 26 % Open Education Faculty. Of these students, 23.6 % stated "to obtain a university diploma" as the reason to prefer open education system and 19.9 % "to find a job". Only 1.4 % of male participants replied that they preferred open education system just to "suspend military service". The distribution of other reasons stated by the participants is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Distribution of "The Reasons for Preferring Open Education" according to "Faculties" (2007-2008)

The Reasons for Choosing Open Education	Frequency	Percentage among those who preferred	%	Open Education Faculty (%)	Economy (%)	Business Administration (%)
To find a job	36.084	19,9	59.7	0.24	0.34	0.43
To obtain a university diploma	42.795	23,6	70.8	0.26	0.31	0.43
To suspend military service	2.55	1,4	4.2	0.1	0.33	0.57
To receive promotion at work	21.188	11,7	35.1	0.32	0.23	0.45
To access knowledge about a subject I am interested in	22.028	12,2	36.6	0.32	0.27	0.42
To regain the education opportunity I missed in the past	18.899	10,4	31.2	0.34	0.29	0.38
My family's reluctance to allow me to receive education in other programs	2.14	1,2	3.6	0.3	0.38	0.33
Not having enough financial power to afford formal education.	7.742	4,3	12.9	0.27	0.35	0.39
Getting sufficient point only to be enrolled in distance education programs	13.358	7,4	22.2	0.28	0.38	0.34
Lack of obligation to attend lessons	14.266	7,9	23.7	0.28	0.27	0.46
Total of Preferences stated	181.05	100		0.28	0.30	0.42

It is observed that the students enrolled in Faculty of Business Administration (43 %) has the highest percentage for the the reason "to find a job". Similarly, the highest percentage for the reason "to obtain a university diploma" belongs to Faculty of Business Administration (43 %). The highest percentage (57 %) for the reason "to suspend military service" is for the students enrolled in Faculty of Business Administration.

When Table 3 is examined, it is found that only 4.2 % of 30.714 male students enrolled stated that they preferred open education "to suspend military service", which was once believed to give the system a negative reputation. The results obtained in this study clearly disprove this belief.

The distributions of the reasons for preferring open education system according to age groups are given in Table 4. The percentage of the students who are 24 years and younger is 48 % while the percentage for those who are 45 or above is 3 %. 64 % of those who prefer open education "to find a job" (19.9 %) are 24 years old or younger. Similarly, the percentage of 24 year old or younger people who prefer open education "to obtain a university diploma" (23.6 %) is 50 %. Those who prefer open education "to regain the opportunity I missed in the past" are mostly from the age group between 24 and 34 years old.

Table 4. The Distribution of "The Reasons for Preferring Open Education" according to "Age" (%)

The Reasons for Choosing Open Education	<= 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45 +
To find a job	64	26	7	2	1	0
To obtain a university Diploma	50	24	12	8	4	2
To suspend military service	62	35	3	0	0	0
To receive promotion at work	29	25	19	14	9	5
To access knowledge about a subject I am interested in	50	26	10	7	4	3
To regain the education opportunity I missed in the past	22	29	21	15	8	6
My family's reluctance to allow me to receive education in other programs	65	22	7	4	2	1
Not having enough financial power to afford formal education.	55	27	9	5	3	1
Getting sufficient point only to be enrolled in distance education programs	68	21	6	3	1	1
Lack of obligation to attend lessons	30	26	17	13	8	6
Average	**48**	**25**	**12**	**8**	**4**	**3**

As Table 5 shows, 42% of those who replied the questionnaire are not employed, and 31 % of those who are employed work in private sector companies. 59 % of those who state that they preferred open education "to find a job" are not employed and 28 % work in private sector. 45 % of those who replied that they preferred open education "to receive promotion at work" are employed in state-run institutions and 39 % in private sector. 72% of those who state that they preferred open education because of "lack of obligation to attend lessons" are employed. Finally, 63% of those who say that they preferred open education because of "the family's reluctance to allow them to receive education in other programs" are not employed.

Table 5. The Distribution of "The Reasons for Preferring Open Education" according to "Employment"

The Reasons for Choosing Open Education	Unemployed	Employed	State	Private Sector	Own Business
To find a job	59	1	5	28	7
To obtain a university Diploma	44	1	19	30	7
To suspend military service	29	1	19	36	14
To receive promotion at work	12	1	45	39	3
To access knowledge about a subject I am interested in	45	1	18	28	8
To regain the education opportunity I missed in the past	31	1	29	31	7
My family's reluctance to allow me to receive education in other programs	63	2	7	23	6
Not having enough financial power to afford formal education.	45	1	10	36	8

Getting sufficient point only to be enrolled in distance education programs	60	1	8	24	7
Lack of obligation to attend lessons	28	1	33	32	7
Mean	**42**	**1**	**20**	**31**	**7**

The data regarding the reasons for preferring open education system and the expectations from open education system are given in Table 6. When the first main reason regarding the preference for open education – "to obtain a university diploma" (Table 3) - is examined, the highest percentage was found for "I have no expectations" as 20.2%. The highest percentage for the second highest reason - "to find a job" - was "high expectation" as 17.8%. Finally, the third highest reason - "to access knowledge about a subject I am interested in"- has the highest percentage for "high" expectation from the program as 14.3%.

Table 6. The relationship between "The Reasons for Preferring Open Education" and "The Level of Expectations from the Education"

The Reasons for Choosing Open Education	How would you grade your expectations from the education you will receive in the department / program you enrolled in? (%)			
	High	**Middle**	**Low**	**I have no expectations**
To find a job	17,8	14,5	10,2	7,9
To obtain a university Diploma	15,9	18,2	19,3	20,2
to suspend military service	3,7	4,2	6,3	6,4
To receive promotion at work	9,9	11,2	11,5	12,8
To access knowledge about a subject I am interested in	14,3	11,0	8,3	8,7
To regain the education opportunity I missed in the past	12,2	12,9	12,4	13,2
My family's reluctance to allow me to receive education in other programs	3,6	3,4	3,8	3,2
Not having enough financial power to afford formal education.	6,1	5,5	5,8	4,7
Getting sufficient point only to be enrolled in distance education programs	8,7	9,3	10,4	7,9
Lack of obligation to attend lessons	7,8	9,8	12,0	14,9

The data regarding the relationship between the reasons for preferring open education system and how much they know about this system are displayed in Table 7. When the table is examined, for the first reason stated for this preference – that is "to obtain a university diploma"- it is found that the total percentage for the options "I have somewhat information" and "I have detailed information" is 33.4. The same total percentage for the second highest reason, which is "to find a job" is 30.6. Finally, as for the third reason, which is "to access knowledge about a subject I am interested in", a total of 26.1 % of those who replied say that "they know the system partly or in detail".

Table 7. The relationship between "The Reasons for Preferring Open Education" and the replies given for the question "How much do you know about Open Education System?"

The Reasons for Choosing Open Education	How much do you know about Open Education System?"		
	I have no information	**I have somewhat information**	**I have detailed information**
To find a job	16,0	15,9	14,7
To obtain a university Diploma	17,8	17,2	16,2
to suspend military service	4,3	4,1	3,8
To receive promotion at work	10,4	10,5	11,5
To access knowledge about a subject I am interested in	11,6	12,3	13,8
To regain the education opportunity I missed in the past	12,5	12,5	12,8

My family's reluctance to allow me to receive education in other programs	3,5	3,6	3,4
Not having enough financial power to afford formal education.	6,2	5,8	5,2
Getting sufficient point only to be enrolled in distance education programs	9,4	9,1	8,1
Lack of obligation to attend lessons	8,4	9,0	10,4

The data regarding the relationship between the reasons for preferring open education system and the frequency of entering university entrance exam are presented in Table 8. When Table 8 is examined, it is observed that the students took university entrance exam more than once. On the other hand, those who state conscious reasons such as "to find a job", "to obtain a university diploma, "to receive promotion at work", "to access knowledge about a subject they are interested in" and "to regain the education opportunity I missed in the past" were found to take this exam only once.

Table 8. The relationship between "The Reasons for Preferring Open Education" and "the Frequency of Entering University Entrance Exam"

The Reasons for Choosing Open Education	The Frequency of Entering University Entrance Exam		
	Once	Twice	Three or more times
To find a job	16,8	16,6	14,6
To obtain a university Diploma	17,6	17,3	16,9
to suspend military service	3,0	4,1	4,6
To receive promotion at work	10,2	10,0	11,2
To access knowledge about a subject I am interested in	14,0	12,6	11,3
To regain the education opportunity I missed in the past	12,0	11,2	13,7
My family's reluctance to allow me to receive education in other programs	3,4	3,6	3,6
Not having enough financial power to afford formal education.	5,8	5,8	5,8
Getting sufficient point only to be enrolled in distance education programs	8,9	10,1	8,6
Lack of obligation to attend lessons	8,4	8,6	9,7

CONCLUSION
Among the solutions to meet the increasing demand for higher education in Turkey, establishing more universities is considered the primary solution to the problem. This solution seems to be a tangible one since it is necessary to find a permanent solution somehow; however, the challenges for this solution are likely to be the insufficient physical conditions and educational materials and the quality concerns. However, due to rapid population growth and the high percentage of young population in Turkey, these inadequacies are considered only a secondary problem, and therefore no serious attempts are made to find effective and permanent solutions to this problem. Today, it is clear that Open Education system in Turkey experiences similar problems to those of Turkish Higher Education System. However, it is also true that the considerable improvements and achievements in Turkish Open Education System in the last three decades has played an important role in being an alternative to reduce the demand that once used to be impossible to meet, and to offer opportunities to ensure equality in the provision of education to masses. After the inititation of the restructuring process as of 2010 in open education system provided by Anadolu University, all the programs and learning channels have been revised. The transition process to the credit system and semester-based system started, and the testing system has been improved by adding different testing methods in most programs such as oral exams, written exams, e-portfolios and even online exams in order to remove the dependence on mere multiple choice testing system. This reorganization process is expected to be completed by 2012 – 2013 academic year.

In order to achieve a considerable success in this process, it is essential to determine the factors leading to the high demand for the system. One of the important criticisms made for the system - though it does not deserve this due to the achievements made for more than 30 years – is the negative attitude towards the system by the society in general, which reflects an existing prejudice that this system is inferior to the others. With this new reorganization process, it is expected to remove this prejudice to a great extent. In this respect, obtaining data about the reasons for preferring open education system will be invaluable in planning the attempts to achieve more effective restructuring process and to analyze the system by moving beyond mere numerical data.

The current study, which aims to achieve this purpose, provides information about the development of the demand for Turkish Higher Education system and the precautions taken to meet such demand as well as the developments in open education systems in Turkey and the world. It further presents data obtained from the questionnaire administered to the students enrolled in 2008 – 2009 academic year.

The analysis of the data obtained reveals that the main reasons for preferring open education system are "to obtain a university diploma" and "to find a job after completing their education". These reasons are similar to those stated for preferring formal face-to-face education as well. The third reason stated is "to access knowledge about the topic they are interested in". Among the reasons which are specific only to open education system are "to receive promotion at work", "to regain the education opportunity I missed in the past" and "lack of obligation to attend lessons".

It is also necessary to examine how potential outsiders, in addition to students, are likely to affect the demand for open education sytem. At this point, it won't be wrong to predict that this demand has the potential to soar since there is a growing interest in open education system since its establishment and there are still free quotas in traditional universities for some reasons. The reasons for this potential can be summarized as follows:

- Considerable cost-effective advantages of the system compared to traditional universities due to economies of scale created,
- The that fact that learning becomes easier and more accessible thanks to the advancements in information and communication technologies,
- The opportunity given to the learners to determine their learning processes due to flexible learning environments,
- The integration of open education system into higher education at both national and international level (such as the accreditation with Bologna process). In other words, the integration of valid academic standards established for higher education into open education system,
- The availability of coursebooks, synchronized and asynchronized academic counselling services, TV programs, e-learning environments and the provision of academic and administrative support services through open education buroeus located in all the cities across Turkey,
- The availability of environments which make learner-learner and learner-institution interactions possible,
- Increasing importance and awareness of lifelong learning and the fact that open education system is the most signficant alternative for lifelong learning practices,
- Simplified procedures for the transfers between open education and traditional (formal) education,
- The variety and number of vocational training programs offered through open education system.

The increasing demand for open education worldwide (or the most recent and popular term used: "online learning") also clearly supports these arguments. According to the plan published by Sloan Consortium in 2006: Nearly 3.2 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2005 term, a substantial increase over the 2.3 million reported the previous year. This more than 800,000 additional online students is more than twice the number added in any previous year (Elaine and Seaman 2006, pp.1,2). A study published in 2011 by the U.S. Department of Education found that "From 2000 to 2008, the percentage of undergraduates enrolled in at least one distance education class expanded from 8 percent to 20 percent, and the percentage enrolled in a distance education degree program increased from 2 percent to 4 percent (Alexandria 2011, pp.3).
Finally, it might be concluded from the results that students consciously prefer the open education system, which has almost equal distribution of male – female population and mostly employed students. When this reorganization process is completed successfully, open education system integrated into both Turkish and international higher education systems will play more significant roles in solving the problems of Turkish Higher Education System.

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