

Chapter 9

Economic Importance of the Distance Education Expert

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ABSTRACT

The communication and information technologies are undergoing a major innovation process in our day. The new education technologies have had positive reflections on the traditional and distance education systems and are being used extensively in these areas. In the global competition environment, knowledge has become an important commodity for the distance education institutions. The intellectual capital stocks to create and protect knowledge and to develop it into a competitive element are equally important as the physical capital stocks for the distance education institutions. In this chapter, the job skills, workplace effectiveness, economic and environment friendly actions, personal capital, intellectual capital, personal well-being of the distance education expert and his/her contribution to economic growth and human development are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In our day, it is very important for the distance education institutions to survive the waves of change within a dynamic structure that is renewing itself constantly. However, the main goal of the distance education institutions is to accommodate the manpower that could detect the future waves and in fact, be innovative and able to define the future. In the economic atmosphere that is in a tide of rapid change, the future is vaguer than it has ever been before. The only valid strategy to

move along this path is to continually generate innovative ideas and to learn fast.

The developments in the communication and information technologies have been the driving force in the creation of the knowledge economy. Knowledge and innovative technologies are the most important instruments of global competition. Knowledge economy has created new opportunities to the knowledge experts and has endowed them with an enormous power. Knowledge experts are individuals who transform knowledge into wealth. Meanwhile, the distance education expert

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(DEE) is an individual who organizes the creation of different advantages through the high level of education possessed by the distance education institution where he/she is employed and transforms the institution's knowledge into wealth by the new economic advantages that he/she creates.

The element that will carry the distance education institution to the future is the intellectual capital constituted by the sum of the values created by the individuals within the organization, the company's strategies, structure, processes and the relationships established with the company's customers and the society.

The job skills, workplace effectiveness, economic and environment friendly actions, personal capitals, intellectual capitals, personal well-beings of the DEE's, their contributions to the competitive power of the country's economy, and their innovative contributions to economic efficiency, growth and human development will become even more important than ever. The economic dimension of the above listed properties of the DEE has been examined in this unit.

BACKGROUND

Distance education is less a philosophy and more a method of education. Students can study in their own time, at their chose (home, work or learning centre), and without face-to-face contact with a teacher (Bates, 2005). During the period from the past to our day, the technologies utilized in the distance education systems have changed (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, Michael, & Zvacek, 2009).

The innovations in the communication and information technologies are influencing the education sector and the distance education systems, as is the case in all other sectors. The first application of the distance education systems has been open learning. Open learning is an education given through letters. The first applications

date back to the 18th century. Open learning has provided education through letters, radio and telephone until the 1970's. With the inclusion of the television into the field of education in the 1970's, education programs have started to be broadcasted on television. In the 1980's, interactive television broadcasts and computer-based education have been included in distance education. Upon the entrance of the internet in the field of education in the 1990's, the e-learning era has started. And, in the 21st century, through the use of the Web 2.0 technologies in the distance education systems, M-learning and V-learning applications have been started in the rich media environment (Bates, 2008; Bramble & Panda, 2008; Caladine, 2008; Connolly & Stansfield, 2006).

E-learning provided over the internet is a revolution as compared to traditional education. E-learning is a significant concept in that; it allows individuals and institutions to structure the educational materials in the electronic media as required and in a flexible manner, to update these rapidly, to include different technologies into the learning process and receive education at any suitable time, on a 7/24 basis, and provides the educational institutions with the ability to offer and transfer the education (Demirci, Yamamoto & Demiray, 2011). E-learning is in interaction with lifelong learning, globalization education and enterprise training. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that many concepts are used for e-learning. We may give the following examples for these concepts: Online leaning, web-based learning, web-based instruction, web-based training, distributed learning, advanced distributed learning, flexible learning, blended learning, m-learning, v-learning, and so on.

The distance education expert (DEE) is an experienced individual with a variety of skills, who has been educated in the field of distance education or has acquired adequate accumulation of knowledge in distance education, and serves at distance education institutions.

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