A Proposal for an Online Graduate Degree Program in Computer Education and Instructional Technologies (CEIT) in Turkey

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Abstract: - This study proposed that there needed to be an online platform for the graduate level studies in Computer Education and Instructional Technologies. The proposed platform was named BOTE-UYUM, or CEIT National MA Initiative Research (CEIT-NMAIR). The platform was suggested to share the expertise of a mega-university, Anadolu University in this case, in the field of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies (CEIT) to offer graduate courses online along with face to face assistance on a regular basis. Generating the platform to empower and diffuse an MA program in CEIT was found significant for the future ICT integration endeavors of the country. Researchers intended to create an on-line learning system, which should be feasible to deliver MA courses. Within the scope of the proposal, a synergy at masters’ degree level at CEIT departments in Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus would be created. Before creating the online learning system, it was planned to refer to the opinions of the shareholders, that is, principal participants of the proposed program including academicians, teachers and prospective teachers to form a national point of view. The project should proceed with the creation and evaluation of the online learning system.

Key-Words: - CEIT, Higher Education, Online Education, Graduate Degree, ICT

1 Introduction
The new era involves a transformation towards the knowledge society which is empowered with several developmental areas such as technology management and information literacy training. This transformation generally goes hand in hand with emerging technologies implicating that many technology-supported endeavors empower the transformation process. Developments in the fields related to information technology have transformed the processes and procedures in many fields
in a more effective direction including the field of education, as the effectiveness of teaching-learning processes and efficiency of information access have been better through emerging technologies. In this regard, equipping individuals with the skills to use ICTs effectively, salubriously and productively have begun to carry utmost importance. ICT-efficient employers with technology and online communication literacy skills are sought for in many areas of the work life. Such a transformation increased the need for the work power who can manipulate the technology for the greater good, and who can assume this role through demonstrating digital wisdom. The first department to equip individuals with such skills was founded in 1986 at Marmara University, Faculty of Technical Education. Within the framework of the faculties of technical education, which graduated teachers to work in vocational schools, several departments were founded including Electronics and Computer Teaching, and Computer Teaching. In addition, the faculties of industrial arts education founded Computer Education departments, which mostly focused on software development skills. However, such endeavors could not meet the need for ICT-efficient work power, which led to the foundation of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies Departments within the framework of education faculties in Turkey. The Higher Education Council of Turkey (YÖK) and the World Bank cooperated to found these departments in 1998 while restructuring the curriculum of education faculties [1].

As a result of this undertaking which is named as the Restructuring of Education Faculties, all CEIT departments in Turkey followed an instructional program proposed by the Higher Education Council. Even though the elective courses varied, the program proposed by YÖK sustained standardization and accreditation among the CEIT departments in Turkey. Moreover, the program was criticized in several conventions and councils, which led to developments in the contents and procedures. The final program was developed by scholars in the field from Ankara, Gazi and Marmara Universities, and put into practice in the 2006-2007 academic year, whose first graduates will be in the work power in 2010.

2 Proposal Summary
CEIT Departments empower the picture of Modern Turkey with contemporary instructional practices, and serve as meeting points for multidisciplinary approaches. As these departments train the teacher candidates through most up-to-date instructional technologies and methods, they are expected to fill in the gap in the teacher training field in terms of revealing teachers who are effective both in technology and instruction. Such a fruitful endeavor needs to be extended to the graduate level in Turkey. There are few graduate schools offering degrees in this field; however, most teachers working for the National Ministry of Education cannot pursue their academic development through this program mostly because of attendance problems. Providing information technology teachers, and teachers from other fields with the contemporary trends and issues in instructional technology should become widespread, an aim which could be realized through creating an online platform to offer graduate degrees in instructional design and technology. In this regard, researchers initiated a research endeavor to create an effective platform for a graduate degree in CEIT. The platform was named BOTE-UYUM, or CEIT National MA Initiative Research (CEIT-NMAIR) which would be empowered through the expertise of a mega-university, Anadolu University in this case, to create a synergy at masters’ degree level at CEIT departments in Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Through resorting to the opinions of the shareholders, administrators, academicians, teachers and prospective teachers; a national point of view might be created as well as developing the current undergraduate programs. Offering the courses online would bring about several advantages such as:

- teachers would be able to attend courses without leaving their workplaces,
- they would have a chance to integrate contemporary instructional technologies to their unique fields of study, which might create positive attitudes towards instructional technology development and professional innovation,
- they would be able to take courses from the experts in the field wherever they are and whenever they wish.

However, such an endeavor at the national level should be realized through effective communication and collaboration among the scholars and professionals in the field. In this regard, all CEIT instructors, students and graduates should have a chance to deliver their opinions regarding the development of the program. Several research questions might be addressed within the development process:

1. What do CEIT instructors, CEIT students, CEIT graduates, and other stakeholders expect from an MA program in CEIT regarding the preliminaries and indispensable characteristics?
2. How can they contribute to the foundation of the program?

After the opinions of all stakeholders are gathered and analyzed, the online learning platform will be determined, the learning management system will be planned and generated, instructors will be assigned,
course materials will be prepared and the implementation will be realized. A comprehensive need analysis will be conducted through determining software and hardware resources, strengths and weaknesses of the current programs, potential elective courses to empower the current program, types and features of instructional materials and strategies to be used to deliver the content in accordance with the objectives determined through the opinions of stakeholders and expectations of the transforming world.

The BÖTÉ-UYUM program will be founded within the framework of Anadolu University, Graduate Institute of Educational Sciences. The endeavor could be considered unique in the Turkish Higher Education system since there is not a complete program offering masters’ degree in the field of computer and instructional technologies education. Such an endeavor will also serve to the purposes of creating a mutual synergy and mobility among European Union students.

3 Conclusion
The Frascati Manual prepared by OECD [2], maintained that development and research practices should be realized within unique, grounded and effective classification units where the data were collected through salubrious triangulation of several data sources. In addition, the manual suggested that it was necessary to identify minor fields of information economy and information society. In this regard, the CEIT departments might serve as a minor field to ameliorate the information society through implementing productive and most up-to-date instructional technologies to equip the work power with the fundamentals and specialties. Moreover, even though the problem seems to be a local one, the process, the product and the implementation of the program may trigger similar endeavors in other fields of study. This presentation provides the details of the research endeavor, steps to be taken and burdens to cope with, and asks for the recommendations of the participants to better initiate the endeavor.

References: