

Organizing the Phenomenon of Distance Education in the Field of Architecture

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Abstract: Architecture includes a wide range of courses from only theoretical courses to only practical ones. Applying distance education for transferring the learning from teacher to student requires deliberation and exact programming. In this research, we have compared the level of learning of students in traditional education system with that of the students in distance education system in architecture field. For this purpose, students a course arbitrary choose traditional or distance education system for given course materials. Selection of studied course materials among specialized ones considering the level of action of its presentation will be illustrated in the text. This study is a semi-experimental research. The population which has been studied includes the students of architecture in associate and bachelor level program of the University of Mohaggeg in Ardebil during the academic years of 2007-8 and 2006-7. The collected data is the result of the qualitative –quantitative assessment of these students in their academic courses and comparison of their level of learning with one another. The result of this research focuses on the success of distance education system in theory vs. the relative lack of success in practical courses. These conditions, different plan for practical courses in distance education system takes.

Keywords: Distance Education, Traditional Education, Self Teaching, Independent Learning, Architecture, Educational Programming.

1- Introduction

Considering the young make up of Iran's population, change of the perception of the people compared to the past two decades and some socio-cultural considerations, the need for paying attention to education and developing the skilled and expert manpower in certain academic fields at the universities is more obvious. It is clear that the traditional universities and higher education institutes, especially in fields of study such as architecture education, due to lack of enough experts and instructors cannot supply the demand of the country's need and/or the desire of the many students who want to study in these fields.

As it is known, during the last three decades the traditional system has not been able to meet more than 15% of the country's need; therefore, alongside the traditional system of education, the necessity of using open learning system and benefiting from educational technology in order to increase the capacity and better use of educational resources and expert instructors is totally felt. Study of the history of education shows that lack of enough expert manpower, as a problem, did exist in the today's developed countries, and in dealing with this problem, the open learning system based on technology in comparison with the traditional learning system, presents more practical, trustworthy

and economical solutions. This new method due to its specific characteristics, especially its coverage capability, can be an effective and complimentary factor in supplying the demand of the society for expert manpower.

Studies to some extent have made clear the position of distance education system in comparison with the traditional education system according to the quantity of presented learning in given period of time and the quality of taking advantage from this system but reasons for superiority of system over the others aren't exactly determined. Importance of various exclusivities of distance education system is highlighted by different researchers. For example self-education is one of the advantages of distance education system.[1] independent study as the reason of success of said system also underline the continuous relation between student and educator as the essence of prosperity of distance education system. [2-4]

Mentioned researchers emphasize that distance education system is a successful system and their only disagreement is about the reasons of this success. But some other researchers believe that distance education system is inferior system.[16] some others point to the superiority of this system to traditional one implicitly and state that certain comments on this case needs further researches. [8] Although some researchers have done comparison too. [3]

However, by present research we intend to compare the level of learning of architecture students in some specialized course materials in distance education system with traditional education system. In this

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paper while clearly defining the distance education system, we review the literature of comparison between traditional education and education based on communication technology briefly to recognize benefits and problems of distance education system and improve and apply it in architecture.

In other part of study we compare the level of learning of students in the two mentioned systems by statistical analysis. Unique criterion for comparison is the final scores of students. Confounding factors like quality of teaching is omitted by using the same educator for both systems simultaneously in given course. The result of research will be described exactly.

Capability of distance education in providing a viable and effective form of education in most of the theoretical fields is crystal clear, but its ability to do the same in the practical academic fields such as architecture education which learning practical skills and solving mathematical problems is a must, faces lack of clarity as far as the quality of the education of the students is concerned. Assessment of the level of learning of the students, study of the role of the self-education, and independent study in education along with comparing them with the traditional system is a few of the most important issues which this study aims to find answers to them. Distance education in architecture education, due to its unique nature, possesses the capability of quantitative and qualitative progress in different places and times and in different levels of education. Therefore, higher education in architecture education, developing and expanding the education of the students and the educators on a large scale and turning to distance education can be considered by the planners in different universities.

2- Definition of Distance Education

The concepts of correspondence education, open-education, semi conventional education, independent study and self-education, open learning system, tele-course, and finally distance education are similar terminologies which are often interchangeably used and discussed in educational and cultural circles of different societies and have a vast range of definitions and explanations. The above phrases, all refer to the forms of education in which there is no need for the instructor to be present in a classroom. Even though, these terms are not the same, but they are not totally unrelated to one another. Among these terms, the term, distance education is considered to express the definition of education without presence of the teacher.

Some researchers commonly say that the term 'free' is opposite of the term 'limited' and includes the omitting of the limitations, developing and enriching the domains of activities and learning experiences as educational experiences and is

considered to be the symbol of the change in the relationship between the student and the teacher [3].

The researcher defines tele-course as follows: "a learning system for learners who use video programs, text books, study guides, practice exercises, and other educational tools which may include phone communication, mail and possibly virtual face to face meetings of the teacher and the student for learning and educating themselves" [5].

Another researcher defines distance education as follow: "Distance education is learning in a location away from the instructor", and in continuation he has further defined distance education simply as the education which takes place outside of the educational institution [1 and 6]. And "distance education in contrast with the traditional education, is not placing one person in front of many, it is using the media. As the result of this, the education triangle, instructor, student, and the blackboard) gets dismantled" [6].

It is observed that in the definitions given above separation of the teacher from the student and flexibility of the student in adjusting with the curriculum and the location of the class is being pointed at.

Distance education as being a method of education in which the student is responsible for learning the course material, and the student and the teacher in their educational relationship have no need for a face to face encounter. [7,8]

The researcher calls distance education a formal way of learning in which most of the education takes place when the teacher and the student are distant from one another [7].

The other defines distance education as a term which is used to describe different methods of teaching and learning in which the education does not directly takes place under the guidance of a teacher at a certain location and time, but it benefits from an organized plan and an organization which does the planning [9].

In other's opinion, distance education is an indirect method of education which is based on geographical and emotional separation of the student and the instructor from one another, and the relationship between the teacher and the pupil(s) is based on the laws of technology in which learning is placed somewhere between total support by the instructor and total lack of support by the instructor [4].

And basically any description of distance education starts with understanding and familiarity with the separation of the teacher and the student as a vital characteristic of the distance education [10].

Some researchers consider distance education as a type of communication method that uses media for the purpose of organized and systematic learning in which the instructor and the student are away from one another [7].

In open learning system the term learning is mentioned as self-making and self-teaching [30]. This term or word foretells of the change in the traditional relationship between the student and the instructor. With a little bit of deep thinking, one may define the term open as follow: creating flexible learning opportunities for the individuals who lack access to the universities (traditional system), ample opportunities, and have time and location limitations [11].

Looking at the meanings of the terms 'open' and 'learning' and the definitions provided by Hølemberg, Keegan, and... for distance education, whenever teaching and learning take place in a certain location and time, it is called face-to-face education or learning, but whenever one or both of these conditions are not there, we are dealing with distance education. Even though traditional education system is considered to be an ideal form for the architecture education, if we are unable to place the teacher and the student in one location at the same time, we must look for another solution. In such a case, the best solution is employing distance education. In the distance education system, one or many aspects of the known traditional education is not deleted; whereas, in this system the teaching responsibilities, educational guidance, counseling, orientation and guidance of the student, and assessment can be done totally and completely, and even sometimes in comparison with the traditional system of education, due to concentrated assessment, overseeing, and maintaining the minimum quality, can be much more useful and efficient.

3- History of distance education in the world

Distance education formally appeared in the former Soviet Union, Sweden, and the Great Britain in mid 19th century. Even though, back then small and big institutions were designated for this type of education, it lacked the kind of concentration which we are witnessing in this type of education these days. About 100 years ago, the first institutions of the type which we now have started their operations, but the turning point in the history of the distance education until 1969 in which the open university of England started using powerful media such as radio and television and gained the capability of large scale distance education [3].

Large scale expansion of distance education using the technology in the field of communication started about 30 years ago. Since that date, the transportation networks, telephone lines, radio and television stations, communication networks and in parallel with them the skills of distance education has developed all over the world. The evolutionary

stages of distance education can be categorized as follow: in the first stage of this type of educations were offered in the form of correspondence education which is still common.

The characteristics of the second stage of development in distance education in 1960s and 70s was its dependence on radio and television which were supported by correspondence education and printed texts. The third stage of the evolutionary trend in distance education is distinguished by teleconference which was made possible by the advanced achieved in video-computer technology. Presently, this technology economically is accessible by the majority of the people in the world.

Currently, we are between the second and the fourth stage of the development of distance education. Distance education, now, is relying on the new advances in telecommunication and computers. Its distinguished characteristic is employing the least amount of distance educational material with the support of computerized multimedia teleconference, computer networks which make it possible to teach many at the same time in all corners of the world.

4- Specific characteristics of distance education

Based on what is already discussed, in the traditional teacher-centered education, the educational activities are the responsibility of the teacher, and the students play the role of the receivers of the knowledge; whereas, in distance education, the responsibility of learning is that of the student and presence of a middleman in transferring the educational message from the instructor to the mass of students, gives certain specific characteristics to this system of education. Researchers consider paying more attention to individual education, self-education, and independent study to be important specific characteristics of this system of education [2, 3, 12, 13]. Others believe that the main characteristic of distance education system is guided and purposeful educational communication which shows the existence of a two way and continuous relationship between the instructor and the student mass [3,4,2 and 7]. Other find the specific characteristic of the distance education in its curriculum planning. They believe that many studies have showed its curriculum planning to be its unique and trademark characteristic [4]. Some other describe the specific characteristics of the distance education system which based on the mentioned opinions and beliefs, this description seems to be more thorough [9]. Keegan believes that distance education contains six characteristics which are as follow:

- 1- Separation of the teacher and the student (teacher and the one who is being thought)

- 2- Major role of the educational organization in the phenomenon of teaching and learning instead of the individual
- 3- Using new technologies as educational tools
- 4- Providing two way communication line between the teacher and the learner by using the existing technology
- 5- Lack of existence of group learning classes and emphasis on individual learning and education
- 6- Individualized learning (major part of learning takes place in an environment other than the formal learning environment at a location and a time which is decided by the learner)

The advantages of distance education: distance education can be an answer to many shortcomings of the traditional education system and provides the opportunity of getting a higher education for people in all of the countries of the world. [13][14][12][13] One of the reasons which the third world countries are moving more and more toward the distance education system is that it is more economical [5]. He mentions the other advantages as follow:

- 1- Providing an opportunity to continue one's education in any place in the country
- 2- Providing an opportunity to continue their education for the government employees, housewives, and other people whom it is not possible for them to continue their education within the traditional education system
- 3- Eliminating the problem of distance, transportation and educational space
- 4- Higher flexibility of the distance education institutes compared to the traditional educational institutes
- 5- Maintaining the customary social, cultural, and economical system of the citizens

The advantages of establishing the distance education universities are as follow [12]:

- 1- Elevating the cultural and scientific level of the country
- 2- Admission of more students
- 3- Decrease of the expenses per capita
- 4- Reduction of moving and relocation among the students
- 5- Time and location flexibility
- 6- Less need for full time professors
- 7- Possibility of having a business venture alongside the educational activity

According to other considering the advantages of distance education are as follow [15]:

- 1- Wide range of coverage (Great coverage)
- 2- Flexibility
- 3- Less need for full time instructors
- 4- Possibility of education for the government employees while they are still employed
- 5- Less expense per capita for the student compared to the traditional education system

According to other notion, the advantages of distance education using computers are as follow [7]:

- 1- It provides the chance for team work for the students
- 2- It makes interaction between the instructor and the student possible
- 3- It reduces the wasted time which is spent by the student for getting a response from the instructor
- 4- It provides immediate access to the references and the data banks
- 5- It speeds up and facilitates sending the required homework to the instructors by the students
- 6- The possibility of loading and saving the information from the network on a diskette exists

- 7- Testing in this system is done via a computer [5]
- 8- The time of the connection is flexible.

And according to him the disadvantages of using computers in distance education includes the following:

- 1- Lack of a face to face relationship between the student and the instructor in a way that the student in some courses which are offered by a computer does not see the instructor until the end of the course. As the result of this, the emotional bond between the student and the instructor is noticeably reduced.
- 2- Lack of the possibility of benefiting from the messages which are conveyed by body language and plays an important role in education such as, facial expressions, laughter, change of the intonation of the voice, hand gestures and ...
- 3- Lack of feedback.

Another researcher writes on the advantages of communication via computer as follow:[3]

- 1- Possibility of synchronous connection which liberates the users from the time and the place limitations.
- 2- It provides communication line between the instructors, students, curriculum planners, and other members of the society.
- 3- It reduces the separation feeling between the students and provides the opportunity for shared learning and education.

Considering the statements and the opinions which have been offered, it may be possible to list the characteristics such as separation of the instructor and the student, providing a two way connection between the learner and the teacher by using technology in order to improve the quality of education, individualizing learning, massification of education, flexibility of education as far as time and the place are concerned, and reduction of interaction time between the learner with the teacher and the other learner.

5- Research Goal

This research is conducted for the purpose of comparing the quality of learning of architecture education students within the distance education system and the traditional education system, and study of the role of self-education and independent study in learning different academic subjects in the architecture education curriculum. In this research the two systems have been compared with one another in the following two stages.

- A) Overall quality and level of learning by the students within the two systems
- B) Quality and level of learning in the theoretical major courses and practical courses which are of art and science nature.

Considering the weakness and disabilities of the distance education system in teaching the practical courses, which are mainly thought via printed media, the other goal of this research focuses on the ways that educational media can be employed in offering

the information and increasing the quality of learning in architecture education.

6- Learning level of the students in distance education System

Even though many of the students, instructors and others, especially in architecture education, believe that the distance education compared with the traditional education is second in importance, the results of some studies has shown that distance education not only has the capability of massification of education, but also it provides the opportunity for the vast majority of people to receive higher education. [16] If the planning of this system is designed and implemented with adherence to the principles of distance learning, it has an equal place, if not higher, as the traditional education system. [17]

Moreover, in the based on the results of some other studies, superiority of the quality of education in distance education system in some theoretical academic fields compared with other methods of education at university level can be pointed out, and even if such superiority does not exist, at least equality of this system is defendable. [10] The grades of the midterm exams of physical education major students in the traditional system with those of physical education major students in the distance education system, and has shown that the GPAs of the distance education system students have been higher than the GPAs of the students in the traditional education system. [18] In a similar research, researcher has taken the final midterm grade of the students of physical education major in a course in the traditional education system and has compared them with the final midterm grades of the physical education major students of the distance education system, and has reached similar results to McFarland's [3]. Therefore, paying attention to the experimental results in practical fields can provide the motivation for trying to do the same in architecture education.

The results of other researchers conducted on the capabilities of distance education shows that even in academic fields of study which have practical courses and the courses which require gaining special skills, distance education can be functional and be implemented. [19] If they are designed and managed properly, good and acceptable results can be achieved. In another research, which was conducted on the relationship between learning and distance education and traditional education, it is concluded that in adult education, if the sources and the references are put together properly, distance education may be equal in quality with traditional education, and even sometimes since independent study and learn direct education forces the learner to think, it may be superior to traditional education

[20]. Based on the conducted researches, it can be reasoned that the level of learning of the mass of the students in the distance education system which is designed according to the principles of learning, educational design, and planned based on placing the student at its center, and has enough resources and references along with proper media use, is not at lower rank in comparison with the traditional system of education. Therefore, with such a background, it can be concluded that looking at it negatively before testing it in null and void.

There are two different points of view regarding distance education: The first point of view uses distance education as a complementary tool in education, but the second one uses it for distributed learning. Since usage of educational aid tools is more related to the traditional system of education, in this research the emphasis and concentration has been on the second point of view and function which meets the need of today's society, using it in distributed learning and by using the interactive education method, it was tried to provide the appropriate setting for education.

First, we provide a definition for distributed learning. The department of the scientific technology of the University of North Carolina has defined distributed learning as follow: "distributed learning environment is an environment which is centered on the mass of students, and in this environment, by using different technologies, the opportunity for interaction within a suitable frame of time and place is provided". This model is created based on specific technologies which must possess the economical aspects of the university education, open education system, and distance education system [3].

This aspect gives the instructor so much flexibility which he/she can take care of his/her students' different needs and maintain high quality and low cost while providing them with an effective education. one of the intellectuals and theoreticians of the new systems of education at the University Of Day Cane Of Australia states that many of the higher education institutes are actively perusing rebuilding the infrastructures, redesigning policies, and organizing their communication systems so that they can maintain their competitive advantages in the information highways environment [2]. He also reasons that the new paradigm which is taking form in higher education has the following characteristics:

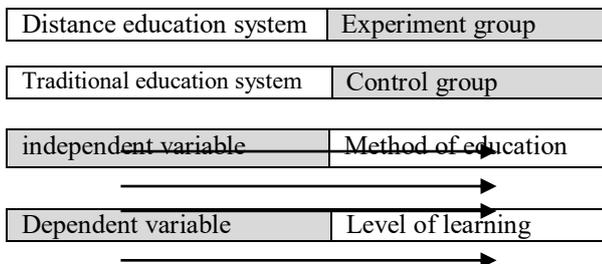
Old paradigm	New paradigm
Industrialized society	Information society
Less important technology	Multi-media center
One time education	Life-long education
Fixed academic curriculum	Open and flexible academic curriculum
Organization centered	Education centered
Concentrated	Shared
Localization	Global network

The new technological environment “Makes access to education possible without paying any regard to geographical, ethnic, and cultural limitations”, and this issue will weaken the theories on traditional classrooms very soon. [3] [13][6][4]

7- Research Methodology

To compare the level of learning in the subjects which can be assessed between the students within the two systems of education, the method of using a control group after the assessment in a semi-experimental method has been used. Two groups included two groups, the experiment group: the students within the distance education system, and the control group: the students within the traditional education system. The independent variable in this experiment was the distance education method which the subjects in the experiment group have been educated in this system of education. Dependent variable is chosen to be the level and the quality of learning of the students in both groups.

After selecting the statistical sample population, first, the proper arrangements have been made for the chosen course to be taught exactly in the same way in both systems (the text books of architecture education which their contents are according to the policies and regulations assigned by the supreme council of educational planning). The contents of the courses, test questions, length of the academic semester, and the length of the implementation have been exactly the same, and the only difference was the system of education.



From the education point of view, the students in the distance education system have studied on their own without relying on the instructor, and only when it was necessary, have attended classes so that they can clear up their problems with the segments of the course which they were having a difficult time with them. On the other hand, the students in the traditional system of education have attended classes and based on the traditional method of education, face to face, have learned the subjects in the university classes where an instructor was present.

7-1 Statistical population, sample, and the sampling method

Statistical population included all of the architecture education students who are attending the University of Mohaggeg Ardabil’s associate and bachelor degree programs in the academic years of 85-86 and 86-87. The total number of the students was 202. 108 students attended the traditional education institution, and 94 were benefiting from the distance education system. The selected sample included both systems of education in the form of five academic subjects during two semesters.

Considering the size of the selected statistical population and the nature of the research, sampling was done in two stages, grouping and cluster forms.

A) **Group sampling:** in selection of the courses, grouping method was used. First, all the major courses, based on their nature and content, were placed in three groups, then, from each group along with a practical course with general nature and content one course topic was selected which were as follow:

- 1- Architecture theories (theoretical subjects which are of art nature) in bachelor degree program level.
- 2- The role of computers in architecture education (practical subjects with art nature) in bachelor degree program level.
- 3- Geometry 2 and the science of building material (theoretical major courses with science nature) in associate degree program level.
- 4- Architectural design 2 in architecture education (practical major course with science nature) in bachelor degree program level.

B) **Cluster sampling:** In this stage which is for the purpose of selecting different university academic courses, random cluster sampling has been done.

7-2 Analysis method

The analysis provided in this research was done by using the SPSS program software and student t-test was conducted.

8- Results and Discussion

In the report on the founding of the research, first, the result of the assessment on the level of learning in both the traditional and the distance education system, which was the main research goal, was concentrated upon. Then, the level of learning of the students in both systems in: A) The theoretical major courses with art nature, B) The theoretical major courses science nature, C) The practical major courses with art and science nature, and D) The practical courses with general nature was reported. In reporting the result of the research in each one of the groups, the level of the learning in different assessable courses was considered to be important.

8-1 Level of learning by the students in both education systems

The founding of this research shows that the level of learning of the students of architecture education in the traditional system compared to the distance education system is lower, $t=2.72$, with meaningfulness of) 0.165 (Table 1).

As it is observed, the students within the traditional system of education, with GPA of 14.57, compared to the students within the distance education system, with GPA of 15.38, have done poorly (table 1).

Table 1 Comparison of learning within the traditional and the distance education systems

Group	Number of the students	GPA	Standard deviation	Average error of mean	T	Degree of meaningfulness
Traditional system	108	14.57	2.11	0.12	2.74	0.165
Distance ed. System	94	15.38	2.32	0.16	2.74	0.165

8.1.1 The level of learning by the students in the theoretical major courses of art nature (study of the theories in architecture education)

The statistical test shows that the architecture education students in the traditional education system compared to the ones in the distance education system, had a lower level of learning in the Theories of the architecture education course (a theoretical major course with art nature), and this difference from statistical point of view is meaningful (table 2).

Table 2 Comparison of learning in the theoretical architecture courses

Group	Number of the students	GPA	Standard deviation	Error of mean	T	Meaningfulness
Traditional	43	14.27	2.06	0.316	2.61	0.12
Distance	37	15.61	2.18	0.217	2.61	0.12

To test the level of learning of the architecture education students in the theoretical major courses of art nature, the theories of the architecture education course in two semesters was the sample in this research.

8.1.2 Level of learning of the students in the theoretical major courses with the science nature

The level of learning by the students of architecture education of traditional education system in the

theoretical major courses with science nature compared to the level of learning by the students in the distance education system were lower. The statistical tests shows that the traditional education system's students in comparison with the distance education system's students have had lower level of learning in the theoretical major courses, and this difference is meaningful from statistical point of view (Table 3).

Table 3 Comparison of learning in the theoretical major courses with science nature

Group	Number of the students	GPA	Standard deviation	Average error of mean	T	Meaningfulness
Traditional	42	14.08	2.16	0.32	5.21	0.092
Distance	36	14.99	3.05	0.12	5.21	0.092

In order to test the level of learning by the students of architecture education of both traditional and distance education systems in the theoretical major courses with science nature, two courses, identification of building materials and geometry 2 were the two samples in this research which the result of the tests in these two courses, separately, are as follow:

a) Science of identifying building materials: The level of learning by the students within booth systems of education in the Science of identifying building materials course does not show a meaningful difference (table 4).

Table 4 Comparison of learning in Science of identifying building materials course

Group	Number of the students	GP A	Standard deviation	Average error of mean	T	Meaningfulness
Traditional	12	15.03	2.09	0.35	1.13	0.092
Distance	13	15.12	1.89	0.29	1.13	0.092

b) Geometry 2 courses: The level of learning in geometry 2 by the students in the traditional education system was lower, from statistical point of view, than the ones in the distance education system (table 5).

Table 5 Comparison of learning in geometry II course

Group	Number of student s	GP A	Standard deviation	Error of mea n	T	Meaningfulness
Traditional	26	13.65	2.41	0.29	3.2	0.103
Distance	24	14.92	2.53	0.22	3.2	0.103

8.1.3 Level of learning by the students in practical major course with the nature of art and science (architecture design 2)

The statistical test shows that the students of architecture education in the traditional system of education have had a higher level of learning in architecture design 2 courses than the ones in the distance education system, and this difference is statistically meaningful (table 6).

Table 6 Comparison of learning in architecture design II courses in traditional and distance education systems

Group	Number of students	GP A	Standard deviation	Error of mean	T	Meaningfulness
Traditional	23	16.03	1.71	.030	1.02	0.073
Distance	21	15.66	2.03	0.28	1.02	0.073

9- Conclusion

1- The results of this research has demonstrated that overall performance of the students within the distance education system, despite the fact that they have attended no classroom and have independently carried out their studies, in comparison with the students within the traditional system of education has been better and their level of learning is higher. Based on the overall level of learning in the distance education system, the students within this system have performed at a higher level in the theoretical courses. Also, in some theoretical courses of science nature, there wasn't any statistically meaningful difference between the members of two groups. Based on the finding of this research which is similar to the finding of the other researches.[10][8][19] It can be concluded that the distance education system can be used as a new method in teaching the architecture education students, but benefiting from this system in offering the theoretical courses with art and basic science nature and the practical courses with basic science and art nature, is different and the type, the method of implementation of the media, and reduction of the face to face contact between the learner and the teacher is influenced by the nature and the difficulty level of different courses.

2- Being content with the text books, which lack the proper instructions for self-education, in teaching the theoretical major courses with basic science content, cannot guarantee the quality of education in these courses. In order to maintain the quality of education, the books and the resources in these subjects, while containing the required educational topics, it is better for them to use proper pictures and diagrams to elevate the quality of the texts designed for self education. In this research, it

has been demonstrated that there is no meaningful difference in the level of learning within both systems of education in some major courses of basic science nature in which the educational sources have completed all of the design and planning processes, scientific editing, literature editing, educational design, and ..., has not been seen. The finding of this section of research is also similar to the finding of the other researches [19]. They, in their research, had shown that if the text book resources go through proper design process, and the proper educational media which is compatible with the content of the course is used, the level of learning by the students can, at least, be kept at the level of the traditional education system.

3- Considering the points made above, it can be concluded that the distance education system possesses the needed criteria and capability for offering the theoretical-major courses in the field of architecture education, but it is not enough to just rely and solely depend on the educational media which only offers the content of the text-books to maintain the high quality of learning among the students, and in teaching some courses, other forms of educational media must be used so that a more dependable and useful form of the relationship between the learner and the instructor can be established. The relationship between the students and the instructor via educational media can not be effective in the courses which the contents of the text-book is not enough by itself to clarify the intent of the author, and it leads to ineffectiveness of such a relationship and makes the joint effort by all of the factors involved in distance education obsolete; whereas, in the distance education while the emphasis is on the learner and the educator being physically separated from one another, a specific and unique property of distance education, existence of a cooperation and coexistence between these two factors of education is a must, but in a form that these two are distant from one another.

4- Of course, by studying the factors which affect the results of the assessment of the practical major courses which are of art and basic science nature such as architectural design, it may be possible to propose an effective and practical method for offering such courses in a more practical and beneficial manner. The factors such as the methods of learning used by the students, the technology by which these courses are presented to the learners and the capability of the instructor in utilizing the technology in teaching the courses can be studied. Evolution of the distance education by using the state of the art communication technology is in dire need of fundamental changes in the role of the instructors in the distance education system. The researcher believes that the role of the instructor needs to change from the only source of knowledge

and information to one of the knowledge sources which are accessible by the learners.

In many cases, using computers in distance education in order to establish a face to face connection between the learner and the teacher in some practical courses such as architectural design is recommended, and the importance of benefiting from this educational aid in architecture education is more so felt. However, there are problems in using computers in distance education such as, lack of financial means and other limitations, creating a face to face education opportunity via computers is not possible for every single one of the students in distance education system. Anyhow, to use computers efficiently in distance education requires analyzing and studying some of the methods of teaching and learning. In order to compare and study the effectiveness of architecture education through the traditional and distance education system, the first step is finding the most compatible method of providing architecture education through distance education system which can be gauged against the traditional education system. It is abundantly clear that employing the traditional education method cannot take care of the needs of the distance education; therefore, using some of the methods of learning and teaching which are related to architecture education through the distance education, especially, those which from both aspects of body and content have come close to education and can be beneficial in making the specialized learning in architecture education better are as follow:

9-1 Learner-centered education

It is difficult to precisely determine whether the learner centered instruction in distance education has taken place by the technology or by the instructor! The conducted research supports both points of view [16]. Many of the instructors in the distance education system claimed that they have employed the learner-centered methods in the distance education rather than the traditional methods, and thus, they have been more successful and effective [21 and 22].

The designed educational models which are used for developing education in the traditional classrooms are not appropriate for designing distance education plans via computers [23]. Educational designs in such an environment must include sophisticated communication between the learning tasks, media intricacies and the processes of knowing the learners. Having a two way interactive communication systems provide an opportunity for the students to control the educational systems. we began designing and planning a student centered academic course by concentrating on the studies and the researches of the researchers in on the bachelor

degree program [23]. He found out that in order for him to involve the students and maximize interactivity, he needs to change his role from being a teacher in a classroom to a facilitator whose primary role is guiding and supporting the phenomenon of education. In the massification centered model of education, the learner is not considered to just a robot, instead, he/she is looked upon as a hard working human being who accepts the points of view, has desires and makes decision [24].

In such a system of education (learner-centered), it is important for the instructor to provide enough humane and other supports, so that the learner could have the ability of controlling the learning experiences.

9-2 Interactivity and conversation centered education

Controversial questions such as the following questions come up in distance education: What type of interaction and in what level is effective on learning? How much time is needed for delayed and immediate interaction? What type of interaction does technology provide? Does the interaction achieved by technology worth its economical cost?

The theories on learning and education support interaction as an overall framework of learning and one of the special characteristics of an effective education is interaction [6 and 25].

We have three types of interactions: Interaction between the learner and the content, interaction between the instructor and the student, and interaction between the student with other students [16]. A few points of view for facilitating the interaction between the mass of the students and the content, especially, when the students are adults [3]. He believes that the learners can critically analyze the texts which they read by asking four types of questions. 1- Methodology questions, 2- Experimental questions, 3-Communication questions, and 4- Political questions. And that encouraging the learners to ask these four types of questions during studying will enable them to think critically [26].

Beside the interactions which were mentioned above, in communication systems which employ state of the art technology, another type of interaction called interaction between the learner and the interface is necessary [27]. They are aware of the fact that one aspect of the distance education system which has been quite a bit overlooked is the effect and influence of the technological devices on the interaction. The instructors and the learners have to interact with the technology and have to manipulate the devices in a way that those devices interact in the most effective way with the learners for establishing communication. Anyhow, in communication which

uses the state of the art technology, the learner who does not have any skills in using these technologies, must spend a lot of energy and time for learning how to use and interact with these devices, thus ending up with little to no time to concentrate on the content. To dispose of this problem, some researchers recommend three types of activities to the learners and the instructors: In class practice, explanation sessions, and offering mandatory courses on working with and using these technologies.[9][27]

If the interactive educational technologies in architecture education are to provide an effective education, the instructors need to provide new models and programs for developing of technology-centered education. In order to be able to support learning at higher familiarity, analytic, combinational, and assessment levels, the instructors are to be trained so that they can employ interactive solutions. These solutions need communication between the students, communication between the students and the instructors, classroom and group discussions, group projects and teaching by the people of group who are of the same age.

9-3 Social presence centered education

Some researchers observed that success of distance education beside depending on skills such as classroom management, knowledge, and ability to use the needed technology, depends on skills such as creating an intelligent and emotional social character from distance, and also creating virtual populations from the learners [28]. Social presence is in interaction with the degree of participation of people; in other words, with the degree which an individual communicates with a computer as a real person [29].

The level and/or degree of the closeness of the media and the individual regarding the possibility of social presence of the communication media, and this degree of closeness and friendliness depends on factors such as physical distance, eye contact, laughter, and personal conversations [29]. The friendliness and closeness of the instructor would lead to increased approval by the student and learning in video or television-classroom [30].

One research on the inner feelings of the individuals with regard to communication via computers shows that non-verbal communication in comparison with the face to face communication with regard to the sight of social presence is lower [17]. Anyhow, large scale researches on communication via computers often shows more positive communication behaviors, and development of online populations and close friendships. The conducted research claims that the computer users have developed ability of lost signs of non-verbal, body language, expression via writing.

The researches show that social presence is an influential factor in development and effectiveness of both traditional and distance education. With the help of the communication technologies, are used to non-verbal signs, body language, such as giving feed back in the form of smile, shaking the hands or the head and offering solutions and guidance regarding the corrections on the architectural designs in their communication with their students, the instructors are not able to use the body language as easily. These instructors must adjust themselves with these long distance communication tools, and develop their revolutionary skills in order to be able to make the social presence of their students possible. Basically, it is the skills and techniques which necessarily influence the understanding of the student on interaction and social presence, not the communication devices.

9-4 Shared learning centered education

Before the appearance of the communication technologies which would be able to make a two way interaction possible, shared learning and group work among the mass of the students in distance education was considered difficult, and sometimes impossible. The researches show that team work increases the student's motivation and approval. The instructors, who use computers as a communication device in educating their students, must learn skills in order to be able to teach, because teaching through this media requires a change in role from the giver of information to an active colleague and conversation partner [23]. In other words, in a computer dominated communication environment, the instructor is a facilitator of group communication, organizer of group learning projects and activities and a constant advisor.

9-5 Offering a multimedia model in architecture education [3]

Based on the discussed challenges, this model with the goal of minimizing reduction in the quality of education and the least amount of interaction teachings. When they are using long distance voice communication devices or computers to establish between the educational factor, and more attention to the humane and emotional environment has been

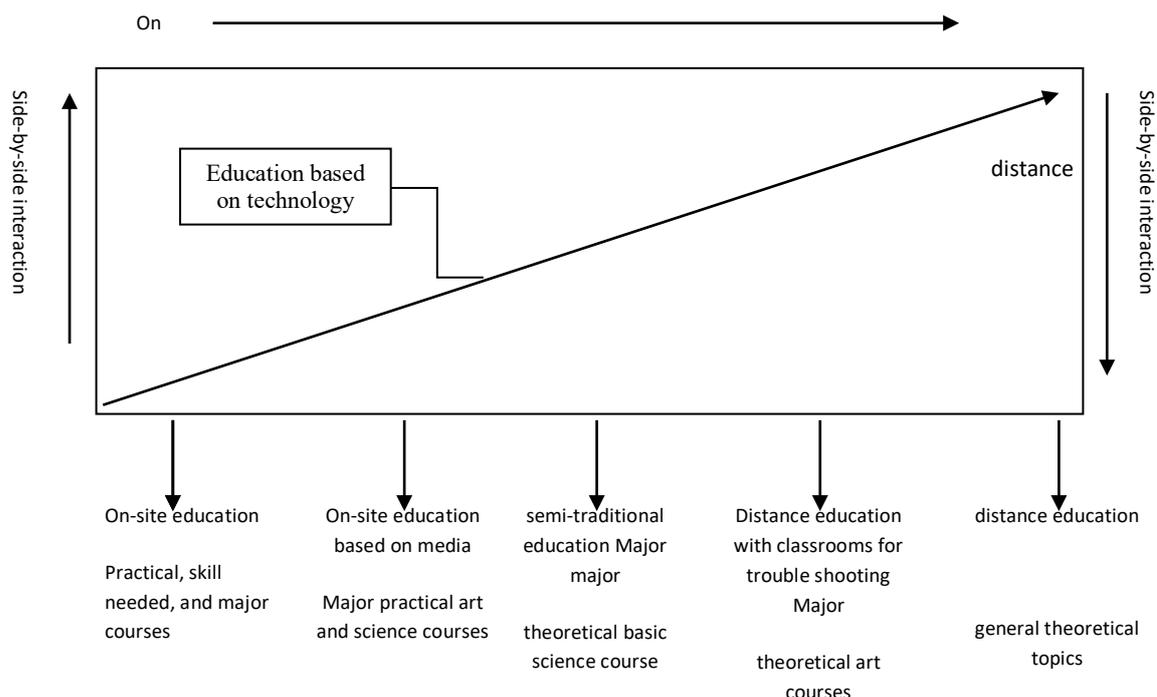


Figure 1 The amount of onsite classes, benefiting from educational media and the level of interaction

discussed in an educational environment which is based on technology. In this method in which a concerned and making them compatible with the styles of learning of the students is responsibility of special value is placed on feed back, bettering the topics as far as their content and organization is the instructor. Moreover, this is a vital and important factor in education which can, by implementing the programs, using examples and related pictures which are appropriate for the time in teaching theoretical subjects and with the knowledge on the abilities of the students and attention to the educational feedback, help make the learning environment more active.

Based on the points discussed, and by reminding that education in different branches of art must be in a way that a more dependable form of interaction between the teacher and the student is created, and emphasis on benefiting from complementary educational media alongside the corrections, books and classrooms, amount of on site classrooms which is a derivation of the nature of the academic topic and its difficulty level, is highly recommended.

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