

**Associate Professor Dr. Berrin ÖZKANAL**  
**Anadolu University, Distance Education Faculty**  
**Eskişehir/TURKEY**



Women academicians who work in this field in various universities in our country are welcomed to our journal at every issue. We give their opinions in the field of distance education in terms of women's point of view, their contribution to this field, and their opinions on the topic of "women education and distance education". The guest of this census is Associate Professor Dr. Berrin ÖZKANAL from Anadolu University Open Education Faculty.

**Meeting with Distance Education**

It was 1986, when I first stepped in at known as Anadolu University Open Education Faculty, then today as Anadolu University Faculty of Communication Sciences, Cinema-Television department. Of course I had heard of the Open Education System, but that concept did not have any ground in my mind. During my undergraduate education, the internship with Anadolu University Educational Television and the continuous dialogue with this department introduced me to the system and the television, an important part of this system, and provided me to take part in this field. After completing my undergraduate education in 1991, the path was totally connected me with the Educational Television which is a part of the Anadolu University Open Education System. Television programming, which was my training phase, became my real work at that time.

I worked as a screenwriter and production assistant for 4 years in the production of TV programs. While carrying out these duties, my academic life also started. I completed my graduate education, which I started in 1994, with a dissertation I wrote in the field of television in 1996. In those years, the Open Education System was constantly growing and the number of students is increasing. At that time the target audiences had been differentiated, and the number of both the students and teachers together with offices supporting students were increasing. There was a need for more systematic communication efforts at that point, and an extensive communication was inevitable. In 1996, a public relations unit was established within the framework of the Open Education System and I was asked to support this one. My life, which started this time with television, was intertwined with the public relations, and both my business and academic life met with the public relations then. My involvement in the Public Relations System of the Open Education System let me learn all the details of the distance education system and work at communication and public relations, which was the most important step, especially for open and distance learning. Therefore I was both practicing and learning its theory via my PhD study and trying to apply what was learned at Open Education System. My acquisitions and control about the system increased steadily during this process. My PhD dissertation, completed in 2006 and was about a new model on "the use of the Internet as a public relations tool". In 2008, I obtained the title of

assistant professorship and intensified my studies in this area and started to work as the Public Relations Manager of Anadolu University at the same time. Throughout this position that I continued until 2014, I was involved in workshops, symposium, conferences and many other events in both formal and distance education. I had had enough knowledge about communication studies conducted in the field of open and distance education abroad and I had/have been trying to transfer my experiences to my own university. As an academican, I have been carrying out my studies on corporate communications, social media, web sites, brand communication issues in the field of distance education since then.



### **The Importance of Public Relations at Distance Education**

As we all know, the main features that characterize distance education are; the distance between the student and the teacher, the education technology used, the need for two-way communication in face-to-face communication, and the whole system being implemented with a certain system approach. The biggest disadvantage of distance education is distance and loneliness. However, the important and fundamental problems of the system are that students need to have connection with the institution, get information, establish relations with the teaching staff and improve identity of community membership, in other words feel sense of belonging. The harmonious and supportive support provided by the educational institutions both inside and outside the institution mean a good education and new students coming. Therefore it is possible to carry out these efforts and other communicative actions in education institutions by means of public relations practices. At this point, public relation practices include studies that must be carried out in a planned manner for all educational institutions, and in particular for distance education institutions. In these studies; it is inevitable to use the process of public relations and carry out a two-way communication with the targets in a dialogic communication. In order to achieve this, it is now a necessary to use new communication technologies that provide two way communication in distance education.

That distance education institutions need to take advantage of new communication technologies, in particular, the internet is one of the most important new communication technologies which reflects the mission of an educational institution since education institutions are the ones which getter and disseminate this information. Another reason is that the stagnation of the academic budget and monetary resources in the shrinking world has led to the emergence of new educational programs (distance education) and services (such as online application and online enrollment).

With the develop communication possibilities and especially with the Internet and its tools, it is possible for the students to reach the necessary information instantly and reduce the feeling being away from the campus which is one of the biggest problems of the distance education. Therefore, they will provide important contributions to the institutions/organizations in establishing communication with the audience based on both conventional and new technological design of applications and tools for much better communication between institutions and audiences.

## Future Plans

Open and distance education is now evolving to a very different direction. This adventure, which has started with written and printed materials, is now regarded as the future education system with today's technologies dominate this field. This development and transformation of public relations practices in open and distance education is now under the umbrella of corporate communication and requires large-scale technology-oriented communication efforts. Now we are almost at the point of creating per-person communication studies.

My main aim is to contribute to the field of open and distance education by combining this important experience that I have gained thanks to Anadolu University since I started my undergraduate education. For this purpose, now I'm carrying on a study on the functional and emotional value of web sites of open and distance education institutions. After that, I am planning to carry out a study on intercultural differences in open and distance education institutions

**E-mail:** [bozkanal@anadolu.edu.tr](mailto:bozkanal@anadolu.edu.tr)

**URL:** <https://akademik.anadolu.edu.tr/bozkanal>