Distance Learners' Expactations and Concerns about Educational Social Software

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Introduction

The excessive information movement brought about by the information age leads to a shortening of the information life process, which necessitates the continuation of training activities in order to continuously improve the knowledge and skills (Smit, 2002). The popularity of social software, especially among younger generations (Lenhart, Pew / Internet Research Center, 2011), has been questioning the usability of these technologies in recent years (Williams and Jacobs, 2004; Anderson T., 2005; Alexander, 2006; Anderson P., Mason and Rennie, 2008; Minocha, 2009; Hartshorne and Ajjan, 2009; Brady, Holcomb and Smith, 2010; Poellhuber and Anderson, 2011).

"Social software" used in the study refers to educational social software defined by Terry Anderson (2005). Educational social software is network-based tools that encourage and encourage individuals to learn together- by maintaining control over the times, areas, assets, activities, identities and relationships of individuals (Anderson, 2005: 4).

Social software - especially in distance education - will reduce the loneliness of students (Anderson T., 2005; Kamel Boulos and Wheeler, 2007), and also it will increase motivation by facilitating student-teacher and student-student interaction with active learning (Minocha, 2009). Anderson and Garrison (1998) mentioned the importance of communication technologies supporting continuous interaction in both campus and distance education environments and stated that the quality of learning would increase with the interaction between distance education actors (teacher, student, content). Garrett, Thoms, Soffer, and Ryan (2007), as a result of the design research project carried out in order to increase the online interaction between graduate students and to increase the use of the social software (Elgg Platform) they use for this purpose; that educational social software helps students learn together by reaching each other's work and strengthens the relationships between students; They concluded that this situation increased the social presence and student motivation. Lee and McLoughlin (2010) stated that social software offers excellent opportunities for the possibility of establishing connections and collaborations for distance education programs. Poellhuber and Anderson (2011), in their study about distance education students' readiness to use social media, have reached the conclusion that students are interested in cooperating with their classmates - by age and gender.

In spite of the intensity of the studies aimed at the adoption of social media tools, the inadequacy of studies for the use of educational purposes constitutes an essential

gap in this area. In addition, the technology adopted models require the development of educational technology acceptance models due to the fact that they are generally market-oriented and the social aspects of the information system acceptance (Legris, Ingham and Collerette, 2003). At the point; In terms of the acceptance and continuity of the use of social software in distance education, students' expectations and concerns need to be defined.

This study examines concerns and expectations in the context of the adoption of educational social software, which is presumed to fill an important gap in distance education. At this point, it is thought that the study will contribute to the literature in the context of the theory. Theoretically, the study aims to fill the gap in a specific area such as the use of social media in distance education by defining the expectations and concerns of distance education students for the acceptance of the use of educational communication technologies. The findings in this study were obtained from two open-ended questions directed to 574 distance education students studying at the University of Athabasca in Canada and were reported in this study under the groups of concerns and expectations.

Distance Education

Distance education is all educational processes in which all or most of the learning is realized by means of electronic or print, artificial means, allowing for the difference of space and / or time between the student and the teacher (UNESCO, 2002). Distance learning differs from other educational settings and formats due to some basic qualities. Keegan (1986), which is generally accepted in the literature and also referred to by other definitions, list the characteristics that distinguish distance education from other education as follows:

1) the so-called continuous separation of the teacher and the student during the learning period (this distinguishes distance education from traditional education),

2) the impact of an educational institution on the preparation of both planning and learning materials and the provision of student support services (which distinguishes distance education from private study and self-study programs),

3) to utilize technical environments (print, sound, video or computer) to bring together the teacher, the student and the content of the course,

4) to provide a two-way communication environment which the student can use or even start (This situation separates distance education from the use of technology in other education),

5) the pseudo-continuous absence of learning groups during the learning period -

with the possibility of rarely meeting educational and social purposes - so people are considered not at the level of individuals, but at the level of individuals (This article is criticized for not taking into account the many practices (video conferencing technologies, etc.) carried out on a group basis. (Garrison and Shale, 1987; Verduin and Clark, 1991).

Media, which is the tool of interaction between teacher, student, and content in distance education activities, has shown changes in parallel with technological developments up to now and has been the main factor in the development process of distance education. Today, distance education is mainly carried out via internet based systems. Online learning is a branch of distance education, computer-based learning, Internet-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaborations, such as a wide range of technological applications and learning processes (Urdan and Weggen, 2000).

Online Learning

The development and diffusion of the Internet provide the possibility of eliminating the dependence of time and space on the communication of information transmitted to the electronic environment by digitizing. In the 90s, computer and communication technologies, which are used as educational tools (multimedia tools), are seen as the environments where all the elements of education are provided with the opportunities offered by the internet (Odabaş, 2004). These systems, called online learning, provide students with: Internet-based educational environments that allow access to course materials, classmates, and faculty via online communication tools (Bonk and Reynolds, 1997).

Hybrid Education

Although the hybrid teaching approach covers many different applications, it is generally defined as the combination of face-to-face learning and online resources (Mason and Rennie, 2008). The hybrid teaching approach offers students more interaction with their classmates and faculty members in online or offline types (Allen and Seaman, 2003).

The assumption underlying hybrid teaching is the advantages of using online methods as well as the nature of face-to-face interaction (Clark and James, 2005). At this point, they try to create the most appropriate learning environment by using internet technologies according to the structures and requirements of the courses by going to the differences in the level of utilization of internet technologies in the academic activities of universities.

Table 1. Types of Courses According to Utilization Rates from Internet Technologies

Internet Technologies Benefit Rate	Course Type	Description
%0	Traditional	The courses where the traditional contents are delivered verbally and textually.
%1-%29	Internet Assisted	Internet-based technologies are used in order to relieve face-to-face lessons. Students carry out their activities such as course program and homework submission via a learning management system (LMS).
%30-%79	Hybrid / Mixed	Face-to-face training and online education are combined. An important part of the content is delivered over the Internet. Includes partial online meetings and partial face-to-face meetings.
%80	Online	Courses where the content is delivered entirely online and generally does not hold face-to-face meetings.

Source: Allen, E., Seaman, J., & Garret, R. (2007). Blending In:The Extent and Promise of Blended Education in the United States. p. 5.

In accordance with the learning styles of educational institutions with a student-centered approach, the learning environment, which they try to design by using many different areas of distance education, is the concept of distributed education which is frequently mentioned together with the concept of distance education. In hybrid education, learning activities can be in a campus environment (geographic distribution is not a must), in distributed education, from face to face education to distance education, all educational applications can be used, face to face training is not a must (Mason and Rennie, 2008).

Distributed Education

Distributed education can be defined as a combination of some face-to-face learning interactions simultaneously (synchronous) or asynchronously (asynchronously) through technologies aimed at creating a student-centered learning environment (Lefoe, 2003). Distributed education aims at providing learning environments that enhance interaction and collaboration by changing the learning environment to best suit the learning styles, whether or not students are in the campus environment (Mason and Rennie, 2008: 25).

Student-Centered Learning

In the literature, it is stated that highly flexible course designs should be developed with

a student-centered approach rather than an instructive-centered approach (Motschnig-Pitrik and Holzinger, 2002; Gudmundsson and Mathiasdottir, 2004).

The teaching-centered approach, also known as the traditional paradigm and the most dominant approach to the present, is to offer an educational institution teaching (Barr and Tagg, 2000) and in this context, 50 to 75-minute course deliveries are carried out to carry out the teaching. Finally, the mission of the educational institution is the delivery of the course (Saulnier et al., 2008). In this structure, the instructor and institution that determine the limits of what to learn are at the center of the learning environment.

A student-centered approach is an approach based on individual or solidarity (team-based) learning that gives students responsibility for their learning, rather than active learning for teachers (Felder and Brent, 1996). In a student-centered approach, it is not about transferring knowledge from educational institutions, but for students to discover and create events and environments so that they can access the information they will configure properly (Saulnier et al., 2008). The role of the instructor in this structure is to set up an interaction environment infrastructure for students and help them in their individual or collective sense of meaning (Mason and Rennie, 2008).

John Tagg (2003) focused on time and learning dimensions to reveal the difference between these two paradigms. Tagg (2003) states that in the instructional paradigm, time is fixed, but learning is variable, that is, a course hour spent in the classroom is fixed, but at this time, how much students learn is variable. In the student-centered paradigm, it is stated that learning is fixed and time is changing. This shows that the student-centered approach values individuals and individual differences, cooperation, and teamwork as opposed to the instructional approach, and puts learning in the center of all decisions rather than knowledge (Harris & Cullen, 2010).

Education and Social Software

Social software concept, although the idea of supporting the group interaction was based on earlier, was put forward by Clay Shirky in 2002 at the Social Software Summit in order to cover all software intended for this purpose (Allen C., 2004). Despite the expressions available for the software that supports the aforementioned group interaction (group software - groupware, computer-mediated communication, social programming - social computing, etc.), Despite the expressions available for the aforementioned group interaction software (group software - groupware, computer-mediated communication, social programming - social computing, etc.), Shirky claims that these older terms are insufficient to express existing new technologies and cause pollution, and that the term social software includes new generation technologies even though interaction is offline (Boyd, 2006).

Educational Social Software

The popularity of social software, especially among younger generations (Lenhart, 2011), leads to questioning the usability of these technologies for educational purposes in recent years. Ferdig (2007) stated that although social software is not designed for educational purposes, it has features that make them useful for teaching and learning environments. Especially Internet 2.0 based applications; It is seen as quite suitable as educational tools with its features like accessibility, ease of use (Schofield, 2003), functionality and flexibility (Chen et al., 2005). Kamel Boulos and Wheeler (2007: 3-4) stated that the collaborative, flexible, participatory, and interactive structure of Internet 2.0 applications is suitable for educational purposes.

The concept of educational social software was first introduced by Terry Anderson (2005). Anderson (2005: 4) describes educational social software as; network-based tools that support and encourage individuals to learn together - maintaining control over their own times, areas, assets, activities, identities and relationships.

Ajjan and Hartshorne (2009: 72) in response to the question "why internet 2.0 for the educational environment?" indicated that:

1) New generations known as digital natives have already adapted to these systems (Leslie and Landon, 2008) that changing internet structure offers opportunities for higher education to produce, acquire and share information (Maloney, 2007),

2) Internet 2.0 is a social process that takes place through the exchange of interactions and mutual knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978), and constitutes a suitable infrastructure for the social learning approach (Ferdig, 2007), which envisages a structuralist education approach and active participation,

3) Finally, through internet 2.0, students stated that they would be able to publish their work in a global environment, thus gaining many educational achievements as well as motivation.

Studies to demonstrate the suitability of social software tools for educational use show that social software tools, which the new generations are mostly familiar with, have the potential to reduce the time and space barriers in education, as well as to complement the social aspect of education by providing a working environment.

Educational Social Software in Distance Education

In today's higher education institutions, having the best possible performance with

fewer resources obliges universities to be governed by basic business principles (Kozeracki, 1998: 1). The intensely competitive environment in the higher education system, where students are now perceived as some kind of consumer, also requires a meeting or exceeding the needs (Coates, James and Baldwin, 2005). Different communication channels in education and training programs are emerging. All these financial and social constraints lead universities to integrate more flexible and more effective learning processes worldwide (Beller and Or, 2003). In recent years, distance education has come to the fore to respond to the needs of society and universities at this point.

Media, which is the tool of interaction between teacher, student, and content in distance education activities, has shown changes in parallel with technological developments up to now and has been the main factor in the development process of distance education. Today, distance education is mainly carried out via internet based systems. However, the developments on Internet 2.0 technologies force the technologies used in the distance education environment to update once again.

Armstrong and Franklin (2008: 12) base the two main reasons why internet 2.0 is vital for higher education: 1) students are increasingly benefiting from these technologies in their business and social lives, and they expect the educational institutions to have the vision to provide the same opportunities in virtual learning environments, 2) The Internet 2.0 environment provides functions and tools that strongly support the next generation of educational approaches.

The popularity of social software, especially among younger generations and the high potential of educational use in the literature, raises the question of how to integrate this software into educational environments. When considered with a student-centered approach, the adaptation of students to these technologies becomes the primary focus. Therefore, it is necessary to reveal the expectations and expectations of the students about educational social software.

Expectations and Concerns for Educational Social Software

Expectations represent the lower expectations that the individual believes will achieve with the use of social software. The belief in expectation determines attitude towards a particular behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Students' expectations for educational social software are categorized in the table below.

Concerns represent the negative expectations or concerns that a person believes will arise with the use of social software.

Table 2. Expectations for Educational Social Software

Category	Sub-category	Description
Interaction	Student - Stıdent	Students want to share information and documents with their classmates and be more involved.
Interaction	Student - Teacher	The students want the faculty members to be more accessible, more interacting.
Social Software Usage	Simplicity	Students want to make the use of social software easy and understandable.
Time Management	Effective Time Management	Students will be able to use homework, exams, etc. they want to accelerate the deliveries and feedbacks of the activities and thus save time in their educational processes.
Time Management	Effective Time Management	The students want the use of social software to offer flexibility in time and space in the training calendar they prepare in accordance with their lifestyle.
Course Quality	Technology Contribution	Students want the use of social software to facilitate learning processes and help them to improve their success.
Course Quality	Technology Contribution	Students want the use of social software to help the distance education environment to achieve the quality of face-to-face education environment and enrich the educational environment.

Source: Akbıyık, A. (2012). *A study on determining the factors affecting the use of social software in distance education*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Sakarya University.

Student-student interaction is a measure of the expectation that the student will increase the possibility of meeting with classmates through social software, changing information, or changing documents. Moore (1989) stated that interaction between the students considered in distance education in the 1990s is sometimes an essential resource for education and sometimes even a necessity. Anderson and Garrison (1998) stated that student-student interaction and cooperative learning should be included in distance education in order to improve the quality of education. According to the results of the qualitative analysis, one of the expectations of students from social software tools is that they offer more interaction with their classmates.

The student-teacher interaction is a measure of the expectation that the student will be able to get in touch with the lecturers through social software, to get advice and support. A student-teacher interaction in which the influence of faculty members on students is frequent and intense is better than the student's interaction with content

(Moore, 1989). However, due to the structure of distance education, the interaction between students and teachers in separate spaces requires an intermediary (Anderson and Garrison, 1998). Social software tools have the potential to see this agent role. According to the results of the qualitative analysis, the students are expected to have more interaction with the faculty members who take their courses from the expectations of social software tools.

The contribution of technology is the measure of the expectation that the educational environment will be enriched by the student through social software, thus improving the learning process and the current success. According to the results of qualitative analysis, students' expectations from social software tools are to enhance the educational environment and to increase the ease of learning and success.

Table 3. Concerns for Educational Social Software

	Category	Sub-category	Description
CONCERNS	Interaction	Perceived Student Obstacle	Students are concerned that the interaction environment with their classmates will delay or prevent their education.
	Interaction	Perceived Student Obstacle	Students are concerned that the use of social software will threaten their personal information and privacy.
	Interaction	Perceived Teacher Obstacle	Students are concerned that they will have more difficulty in reaching the faculty member with the use of social software.
	Social Software Usage	Complexity	Students may find the use of social software difficult and complicated and worry that this situation will delay or prevent their education.
	Time Management	Waste of Time	Students are concerned that more time is needed to keep track of a large number of information flows.
	Course Quality	Intensive Technology Obstacle	Students may be satisfied with the existing structure in distance education and may not want them to change.
	Course Quality	Intensive Technology Obstacle	Students are concerned that the use of social software and the intensive technology in the future will lead to an out-of-class goal and quality.

Source: Akbıyık, A. (2012). *A study on determining the factors affecting the use of social software in distance education*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Sakarya University.

The perceived student disability is a measure of the student's concern about delaying /

blocking the education of the interaction environment due to social software. Coppola, Hiltz and Rotter (2004) stated that it is crucial for successful online interactions but that virtual classes contain more uncertainty, risk, and expectation than traditional education environment.

According to the qualitative research findings; the interaction environment that will occur as a result of the use of social software may cause problems in the confidentiality of personal information, unauthorized information and document sharing, and this may result in delayed or blocked training.

The perceived teacher disability is the measure of the student's concern about the indifference of faculty members to the interactive environment that will arise due to social software. Heckman and Annabi (2005), in their study on interaction in face-to-face and online learning environments, found that the teacher presence was more common in face-to-face discussion sessions and that the teaching process in the timeless learning networks such as discussion forums was mostly carried out by students rather than teachers.

According to the qualitative research findings, students are concerned that the interactive environment that will be formed as a result of the use of social software will not show enough interest for technical skills or other reasons. Therefore, they will not be able to use the fast return opportunities provided by social software tools.

The intense technology dimension refers to the extent to which the student will be exposed to a high technology environment due to social software and that this situation will harm the quality of education. Brown (2009) stated that the focus group work with students from different educational institutions is that the idea that too much or unfettered technology is terrible and that it directly interferes with the education is frequently mentioned by the students. According to the qualitative study findings, there is a concern that a technology environment, which is too much for students, will hinder education.

As a result of the changes and updates, basic categories and subcategories have been reached. The thematic structure is divided into two as expectations (positive / negative) for the output of the system and for the use of the system. These positive and negative expectations are expressed as expectations and concerns.,

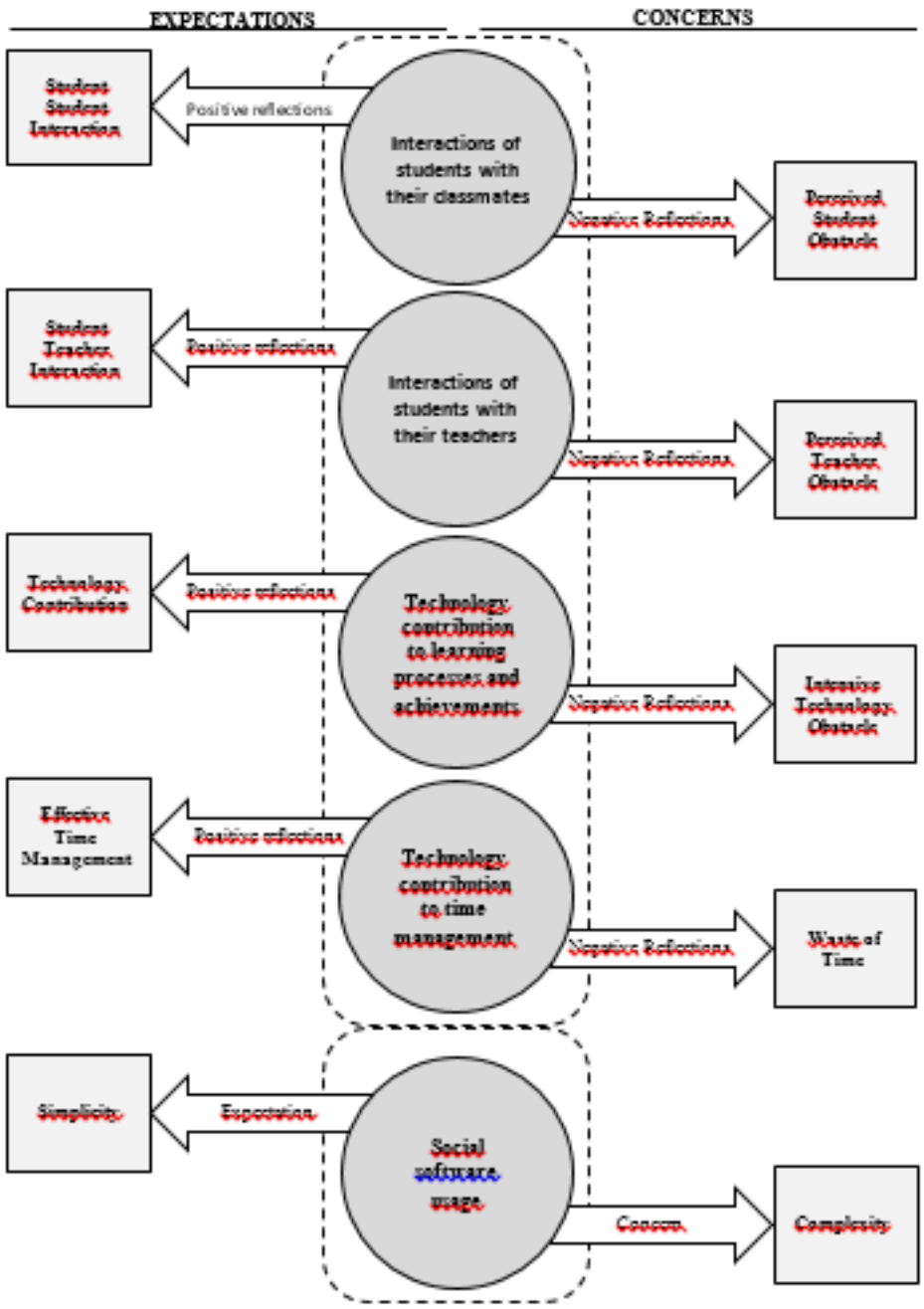

Figure 1. Thematic Structure for Expectations and Concerns

Source: Akbıyık, A. (2012). *A study on determining the factors affecting the use of social software in distance education.* (Doctoral Dissertation). Sakarya University.

Conclusion

The developments in communication technologies and their reflections on daily life have made the Internet one of the most important needs of human beings. One of the most common uses of internet technologies, which offers many different service options, is realized through social software tools. The popularity of social software, especially among young generations, has been questioning the usability of these technologies for

educational purposes in recent years. This study aims to answer the expectations and concerns of distance education students.

Students who use social software in distance education programs expect;

- To share information and documents with classmates and to have more interaction (student - student interaction),
- more accessible, more interaction of faculty members (student - teacher interaction),
- Easy and understandable use of social software (simplicity),
- Use of social software, homework, exam, etc. speeding up deliveries of the activities and their feedback, thus saving time in their academic processes (processing speed),
- To offer flexibility in time and space in the training calendar prepared by the use of social software in accordance with their lifestyles (flexibility),
- To help the use of social software to facilitate learning processes and to increase their success (easy learning and success),
- The use of social software to help the distance education environment to achieve the quality of face-to-face education environment, enrich the educational environment (enrichment).

In general, students; It is concluded that they have more expectations to be more interacting with their classmates and faculty members, easy and comprehensible software to be used, gaining time and flexibility in their academic processes, increasing the ease and success in learning processes, and enriching the educational environment in terms of content.

On the other hand, students are anxious about;

- that the interaction environment that will occur with classmates will delay or prevent the education (perceived student disability),
- they will have more difficulty in reaching the lecturer (perceived teacher disability) with the use of social software,
- The use of social software may find it difficult and complex and will delay or prevent its education (complexity),
- the fact that this situation will leave behind them because of the lack of

knowledge and experience about the use of social software,

- The technical competence and reliability of social software tools may be insufficient and will delay or prevent their education (technical problems),
- Students need to spend more time to track a large number of information flows (loss of time),
- Students will reduce the flexibility of time and space using social software (flexibility),
- Students may be satisfied with the current structure of distance education and change (satisfaction),
- With the use of social software and the intensive technology environment that will occur after the course, the quality of the lessons can go beyond the target (intensive technology),
- the use of social software to threaten personal information and privacy (private life and privacy),
- Compulsory use of social software

In general, students; It has been concluded that the instructors cannot delay their education and that they do not have enough knowledge about these technologies and that they can be irrelevant and that the intensive technology environment can harm the quality of education.

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