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The Opinions of Students toward Curriculum of Distance Education Non-Thesis Master

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study is to evaluate the functionality of curriculum Distance Education Non-thesis Master according to students' opinions. Based on the main aim of the research, the sub-problems are how much teaching-learning process is reached its objectives and what the benefits, quality, and gains of the Distance Education Non-thesis Master are according to students' opinions. The study group of the research was consisted of 23 students. Research method is triangulation method. For quantitative data "Non- thesis Master's Program Evaluation Questionnaire" which was developed by researchers. For qualitative data structured interview was used. The following results were obtained: 1- The quality of the program is high. 2- The contribution of the program concentrated mostly on increasing of the student perspective. 3- The students enrolled in the program for the reason of improving themselves. 4- There is no meaningful difference between the quality and gains of the program and the causes of the enrollment in the program in terms of gender, marital status, workplace, age, current status and length of work. 5- The most advantageous feature of the program is that there is no time and place limitation. The most disadvantageous feature is that the program is superficial and it does not give a chance to face-to-face interaction. 6- The participants' views on the expectation and satisfaction level are the increase of educational qualification and gaining more than the expectations. 7- The contributions of the program to the participants are the increase of teaching profession and the increase of the interest to the field.

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Introduction

The evaluation is a crucial process for all of system especially educational system. Human is the main element is education. Therefore, education system is needed evaluation for effectiveness more than other system. Moreover, it is necessary to reveal output of system and give to feedback to policy makers, educators, parents and students. Furthermore, it is necessary to determine to effectiveness and lack of the curriculum. Thus, it can be made revision on curriculum and developed. Besides, it is necessary to make decision about students, to clarify the purposes of education, and to assign students' developmental levels in this way. In conclusion, Evaluation is essential process for educational system and curriculum to updating and to make the system more qualified (Ertürk, 1975; Enginer, 2000; Bilen, 2002 & Demirel, 2007).

In this sense, the program evaluation can be defined as the process of making decision about the effectiveness of the program. Similarly, it completes the process of developing a program and it provides opportunities for new developments (Ertürk, 1975; Erden, 1998). In the process of program evaluation, the teaching process and resources are revised, and the confronted problems are determined and analyzed.

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Moreover, students' gained competence and the quality (performance) of people who work in this area in business life are determined. Those determined competence and qualities are compared with the aims of the program. Hence, those findings are used to develop new programs (Doğan, 1997).

The stage of evaluation procedures can be listed as: 1- The determination of the appropriateness of the program proposal to the principles of the program development, before the implementation, 2- the presentation of the functionality of the program proposal in the application process, 3- the determination of the level of reaching to aims-behaviors after the implementation of the program, 4- the presentation of the fruitfulness of the program, and 5- the detection of the strong and weak aspects of the program (Uzunboylu & Hürsen, 2008; Uşun, 2012; Yüksel & Sağlam 2012).

The evaluation is necessary to define the strong and weak aspects in the processes as well as to define the product as student success. With the help of this, different aspects of the performance of students in the teaching process and their performances at different levels or their current level can be determined. Similarly, the information about the level of the functionality and the effectiveness of the program can be supplied. In this frame work, the aim of the curriculum evaluation is to determine strengths and weakness of the program is providing program developers with the decision about revising the curriculum, maintaining it, and finishing it (Taba, 1962; Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Doğan (1997) also has same opinion. He says, for evaluation, it is necessary to collect data about teaching methods, resources, the program goals, success of students and graduates, and their satisfaction.

Why distance education is rising method in the educational area can explain follows: "Education Programs Distance Education Program" (Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, 2012) indicated that the aim of the curriculum and education, which is the subject of this study can be defined as related to educational science and teacher training, mediating the rearing of employees as Turkish Educational System needs in that quantity and quality, and contributing to the effective and fruitful functionality of the system.

The aim of the distance education non-thesis master's program department can be defined as follows (Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, 2012; Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, 2013):

1- By supporting the interdisciplinary studies, producing new information, introducing that information to the use of educational system and to those who are related to education and to the use of the society. Moreover, transmitting that information to people who want to do new academic studies, and in this regard, providing higher education with variability, and richness. Besides, providing opportunities for the career development of teachers and other people, who have a professional job, supporting the lifelong education, and bringing awareness to new developments?
2- Distance education programs gives to opportunity to students to being expert in curriculum development and educational technologies. Also, it produces new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In this way teaching-learning processing becomes more fruitful and effective.
3- It aims to raise individuals, who have a competence to be a program developer expert or assistant at province national education directorate, the expert/ assistant at private schools or program development assessment and evaluation centers, research assistant or instructor at education faculty of universities, education expert/assistant at every step of armed forces, education expert/assistant at public institutions' education units.

According to Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü (2012), the foreseen contributions of Distance Education Non-thesis Master to the field of educational sciences can be described as follows: "improving the research and scientific environment, the acceleration of the information sharing among the academicians and the experts in the field, contributing to the development of academic environment, which gains importance recently, and which is more efficient in higher education, increasing the quantity and the quality of researches and applications about the education, contributing to the studies, which aim to reach international standards, and quality in education.

Department of Curriculum and Instruction Distance Education Non-thesis Master, is the only one in Turkey with its current position. The program continues three semesters. All of the courses are processing in virtual in interactive. Before the beginning of the semester, it is prepared 14 weeks printable Word document, PowerPoint document, and videos for each course. Students can be reached all of these

documents in the virtual system. Those materials are uploaded to the system for students' access. Besides, the instructor makes lessons every week in virtual environment with his or her students in an interactive way. In the evaluation processes, students are responsible to do at least one midterm and one assignment/ project. The examination is done in virtual environment. The assignments and projects are uploaded by students to the system. The final exam is actualized in the department as traditional ones.

The main aim of the study is to evaluate the functionality of curriculum Distance Education Non-thesis Master according to students' opinions. It was thinking that results of the study will provide first reveal of quality of the curriculum in force. Second, how much teaching-learning process is reached its objectives. Finally, in this frame work it can be made revision on the curriculum.

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to determine "What are the benefits, quality, and gains of the Distance Education Non-thesis Master according to students' opinions?"

The research questions investigated were:

1- What level is the quality of the program according to participants?
2- What level is contribution of the Program according to Participants?
3- What are reasons for enrolling of master program according to Participants?
4- What are participants' opinions about advantages and disadvantages of distance-education non-thesis master?
5- What are participants' opinions of expectations and satisfaction level of distance-education non-thesis master?
6- What are participants' opinions about the contribution of distance-education non-thesis master on educational and personal development?
7- Are students' opinions different according to variables of gender, marital status, workplace, age, current status and length of work?"

Method

Research Method

In the current study, variation (triangulation) method was used as a research method. The triangulation is a method in which both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used together (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). As for Bryman (2001: 274), the triangulation technique uses more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena. Also, the triangulation technique uses two or more methods of data collection in order to study more aspects of human behavior. The triangulation technique used in social science is an attempt to figure out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior while examining issues from more than one standpoint offering the researcher greater opportunities to use both quantitative and qualitative date (Cohen & Manion, 1998: 233; cited in Tutkun, 2011).

Study Groups

The study group of the research is composed of 23 students from Distance Education Non-Thesis Master Curriculum in Program in Institute of Educational Science. There is only 23 students enrolled this program. Therefore all of the students have been occurred study group. Demographic information about participants is represented in Table 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the study, for quantitative data "Non- thesis Master's Program Evaluation Questionnaire" which was developed by researchers. The questionnaire includes two parts. In the first part, there is personal information about the participants. In the second part, there are three sub-dimensions. There are 14 items about the quality of the program in the first dimension; 14 items related to the gains of the program; and 8 items about the reasons of students to take part in the program. For the content validity of the questionnaire,

the expert opinion was taken (n=4) and according to feedback, items were given their final state. The reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of the questionnaire, which was filled out by people who were different from participants of the study, for each sub-dimension, was as follows respectively: α_1= 0.65, α_2=0.94, α_3=0.68.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

		Gender		
		Males	**Females**	**Total**
Marital Status	**Married**	7	7	14
	Single	6	3	9
	Total	13	10	23
Age Groups	**21 -30**	6	4	10
	31 -40	7	5	12
	41 -50	0	1	1
	51 and older	0	0	0
	Total	13	10	23
Institution They Work	**State**	11	9	20
	Private	2	1	3
	Total	13	10	23
Current Professions	**Teacher**	10	8	18
	Manager	2	1	3
	Engineer	0	0	0
	Others	1	1	2
	Total	13	10	23
Profession Seniority	**1 year-5 years**	4	3	7
	5 years-10 years	5	3	8
	10 years-15 years	4	3	7
	15 years-20 years	0	1	1
	20 years and more	0	0	0
	Total	13	10	23

For the analysis of sub- problems, (research questions), non-parametric tests were used due to small number of participants (Ural & Kılıç, 2005). For dichotomous variables such as gender, marital status, and the institution they work Mann Whitney U test was used. For continuous variables like age, the current profession, and profession seniority, the Kruskal Wallis H test was conducted.

The structured interview was used as a secondary research method. The structured interview is a research method where a person responds to answers within formation about themselves according to definite categories. The greatest advantage of this method is minimizing the differences among the applicants in situations where there is more than one applicant (Türnüklü, 2000; cited in Tutkun, 2011).

In this research, qualitative data was collected from 23 participants by structured interview form. This form has six questions. Interview questions were defined based on sub-dimensions of the questionnaire .After that Questions was submitted for experts opinions (n=4). The data were analyzed by compiling the common components found in the answers given.

Findings

The findings of the "Non-thesis Master's Program Evaluation Questionnaire" which was used to determine students' opinions about the quality, the gains, and the reasons they took part in the Education Programs, Distance education Non-thesis Master was presented as tables below.

In Table 2, the findings derived from students' opinions about the quality of the program were represented.

When Table 2 was analyzed, the students' prominent answers about the quality of the program were as follows: "It is encouraging to be a good example of lifelong learning" (91.3%), "It is encouraging to take education without affecting personal life, and working life" (82.6%), "It is encouraging to be out of working hours" (78.3%), "It is encouraging to be able to attend the program from different departments"(78.3%), "It is encouraging to provide equal opportunities for everyone" (73,9%), "It is encouraging to have no YDS score

(foreign language examination)" (73,9%), "It is encouraging to have no interview (verbal examination)" (65,2%)," It is encouraging to give extra points in manager assignments" (65,2%), "It is encouraging to keep ALES score proportion low" (60,9%), "Courses are given by people who are experts in their field" (56,5%), "The access to learning and teaching is easy" (52,2%), "The installment is encouraging" (39,1%), and "Distance education is more fruitful than traditional learning" (43,2%). The point that students totally disagreed about the quality of the program was "It is price is reasonable" (39,1%).

Students' opinions about the gains of the program were showed in Table 3.

Table 2. Percent and frequencies about quality of the program according to participants

Items	Totally Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Totally Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Its price is reasonable.	1	4,3	4	17,4	7	30,4	2	8,7	9	39,1
2. The installment is encouraging.	9	39,1	8	34,8	4	17,4			2	8,7
3. The access to learning and teaching is easy.	12	52,2	9	39,1	2	8,7				
4. Distance education is more fruitful than face-to-face learning.	6	26,1	6	26,1	9	39,1	2	8,7		
5. Courses are given by people who are experts in their field.	13	56,5	8	34,8	1	4,3	1	4,3		
6. It is encouraging to be out of working hours.	18	78,3	4	17,4	1	4,3				
7. It is encouraging to give extra points in manager assignments.	15	65,2	4	17,4	4	17,4				
8. It is encouraging to have no interview (verbal examination).	15	65,2	6	26,1	2	8,7				
9. It is encouraging to keep ALES score proportion low.	14	60,9	5	21,7	2	8,7	2	8,7		
10. It is encouraging to have no YDS score (foreign language examination).	17	73,9	3	13,0	2	8,7	1	4,3		
11. It is encouraging to provide equal opportunities for everyone.	17	73,9	6	26,1						
12. It is encouraging to be able to attend the program from different departments.	18	78,3	4	17,4	1	4,3				
13. It is encouraging to take education without affecting personal life and working life.	19	82,6	2	8,7	1	4,3	1	4,3		
14. It is encouraging to be a good example of lifelong learning.	21	91,3	2	8,7						

Table 3. Percent and frequencies about contribution of the program according to participants

Items	Totally Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Totally Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. My ambition to do research increased.	13	56,5	9	39,1			1	4,3		
2. My ambition to read book increased.	14	60,9	4	17,4	3	13,0	2	8,7		
3. My up-to-date information increased.	15	65,2	7	30,4			1	4,3		
4. My academic knowledge level increased.	15	65,2	7	30,4			1	4,3		
5. My professional competence increased.	13	56,5	7	30,4	1	4,3	1	4,3	1	4,3
6. My ability to use information technologies improved.	12	52,2	5	21,7	2	8,7	3	13	1	4,3
7. My perspective extended.	17	73,9	3	13,0	1	4,3	2	8,7		
8. My ambition to build a career increased.	15	65,2	5	21,7	2	8,7	1	4,3		
9. My self- confidence increased.	14	60,9	6	26,1	3	13,0				
10. My acculturation increased.	15	65,2	6	26,1	1	4,3			1	4,3
11. I actualized my dream about earning master's degree.	14	60,9	5	21,7	4	17,4				
12. I benefited from the experience of attendants.	16	69,6	5	21,7			2	8,7		
13. I experienced the excitement of education while I was working.	15	65,2	7	30,4			1	4,3		
14. It gave opportunity to me to attend the learning life again.	14	60,9	6	26,1	3	13,0				

When Table 3 was investigated, students' prominent answers about the gains of the program were as follows: "My perspective extended" (73.9%), "I benefited from the experience of attendants" (69,6%), "My up-to-date information increased", "My academic knowledge level increased", "My ambition to build a career increased", "My acculturation increased", "I experienced the excitement of education while I was working" (65,2%), "My ambition to read book increased", "My self- confidence increased", "I actualized my dream about earning master's degree", "It gave opportunity to me to attend the learning life again" (60,9%), "My ambition to do research increased", "My professional competence increased" (56,5%), and "My ability to use information technologies improved" (52,2%).

The students' opinions about why they took part in the program were represented in Table 4.

Table 4. Percent and frequencies about reasons of enrolled the program according to participants

Items	Totally Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Totally Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. I attended the program to improve and renew myself.	20	87,0	2	8,7			1	4,3		
2. I took part in the program because I was interested in information and learning in different fields.	14	60,9	5	21,7	2	8,7	1	4,3	1	4,3
3. I attended the program in order to have an appellation.	5	21,7	3	13,0	5	21,7	7	30,4	3	13,0
4. I attended the program to benefit the rights of promotion, extra point, and to expertise in my job.	9	39,1	7	30,4	4	17,4	1	4,3	2	8,7
5. I attended because my friends attended also.	1	4,3			4	17,4	3	13,0	15	65,2
6. I attended change my department.	1	4,3	2	8,7	2	8,7	4	17,4	14	60,9
7. I attended for recreation.	4	17,4	2	8,7	3	13,0	2	8,7	12	52,2
8. I attended to actualize myself.	14	60,9	5	21,7	2	8,7	1	4,3	1	4,3

When Table 4 was investigated, students' prominent answers related to why they attended the program were as follows respectively. "I attended the program to improve and renew myself" (95,7%), "I took part in the program because I was interested in information and learning in different fields", "I attended to actualize myself" (81,7%), "I attended the program to benefit the rights of promotion, extra point, and to expertise in my job" (69,5%). Students were disagreed with the following items. "I attended because my friends attended also" (65,2%), "I attended to change my department" (60,9%), "I attended for recreation" (52,2%), "I attended the program in order to have an appellation" (43,4%).

Students' opinions about the quality of the program, its gains, and the reasons of their attendance in relation to their gender, marital status, the institution they work, age groups, their current job, and the profession seniority were presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. The results of Mann-Whitney U test according to variables of gender, marital status, and workplace.

Mann-Whitney U Test		The Quality of the Program	The Gains of the Program	The Reasons of Attendance
Gender	P	,232	,927	,410
Marital Status	P	,477	,336	,477
The Institution	P	,166	,404	,763

According to Table 5, Mann Whitney U test results showed that there was no significant difference between students' opinions about the quality of the program, its gains, and the reasons of their attendance considering their gender, marital status, and the institution they work.

Table 6. Kruskal Wallis test results in relation according variables of age, current status and length of work.

Kruskal Wallis Test		The Program Quality	The Gains of the Program	The Reasons of Attendance
The Current Job	P	,300	,155	,404
Age Groups	P	,389	,144	,149
Profession Seniority	P	,868	,874	,971

According to Table 6, Kruskal Wallis H test results showed that there was no significant difference in students' opinions about the quality of the program, the gains of the program, and the reasons why they attended the program, while considering their age groups, the current jobs they had, and the profession seniority.

Qualitative data, which was collected by structured interview, was presented in Table 7, 8, 9.

Students' answers to the question of "What are the restricted and superior aspects of the program? Moreover, what are the advantages and disadvantages of distance education non-thesis master when you compare it with the traditional master's program?" were described in Table 7.

Table 7. Participants' opinions about advantages and disadvantages of distance-education non-thesis master

Topics (Categories)					
Advantages	**f**	**%**	**Disadvantages**	**f**	**%**
Being suitable for working people. (S1, S3, S5, S8, S9, S10, S12, S15, S23)	9	39.1	Virtual courses are superficial and unfruitful (S1, S4, S6, S17, S23)	5	21.73
Having opportunity to work with people who are experts in their fields (S3, S14, S15)	3	13.04	Too much student responsibility (S1, S2)	2	8.6
Rich content and resource opportunity (S3, S8)	2	8.6	No face to face interaction (S1, S3, S8, S9, S17)	5	21.73
Feedback in a short span of time (S3)	1	4.3	Virtual classes are not same as the real ones (S2, S7, S9)	3	13.04
No time and place restriction (S1, S4, S5, S7, S10, S13, S14, S15, S17, S22)	10	43.47	Malfunctions in computer system (S2, S5, S14, S18)	4	17.39
Being able to provide time management (S15, S20)	2	8.6	Lack of technological information (S2, S19)	2	8.6
Easy access to education (S3, S4, S5, S7, S9, S13, S17, S18, S19)	9	39.1	No enough feedback to the assignments (S1, S2, S4, S5)	4	17.39
Repetition opportunity (S4, S7, S18)	3	13.04	Distance education is not adopted (S14)	1	4.3
Good communication opportunity (S6, S8, S9, S15, S18)	5	21.73	No opportunity in terms of doctorate (S16, S18)	2	8.6
Research opportunity and academic development (S6, S8, S11, S12, S20)	5	21.73	Exam and assignment stress (S5, S13, S20)	3	13.04
			Too much expenditure (S23)	1	4.3
			Lack of motivation (S4)	1	4.3
			In-expression of ourselves (S5)	1	4.3
			No group work (S19)	1	4.3

As Table 7 showed that, distance education non-thesis master students gave those following answers to the advantages of the program question: 43.47% of them indicated that it had no time and place restriction, 39.1% of them mentioned that it was suitable for working people and it was easy to access education, 21.73% of students said that it had a good communication opportunity and it supported research, and academic development, 13.04% of them reported that it had an opportunity to work with people who are expert in their fields and it had a repetition opportunity, 8.6% of them thought that it had rich content and resources and it enabled time management, and 4.3% of them said that it gave feedback in a short span of time.

Some quotations from students in terms of the advantages of the master's program:

"We can rank the superior aspects of the program as having expert and encouraging teachers in their fields, having rich content and easy access to knowledge, and immediate feedback." (S3)
"We can say that the superior thing about the program is it makes distances closer…" (S4)
"Without going to anywhere, you can benefit from the university from your home…" (S5)

"The advantages are to take master's education without time and place restriction. Moreover, we can meet with people who are expert in their fields." (S14)

Students gave these following answers to the disadvantages of the program question: 21.73% of them thought that virtual courses are superficial and unfruitful and it cannot possible to interact face to face. 17.39% of them said that there were some malfunctions in computer systems and the feedback to assignments were not enough. 13.04% of them indicated that virtual classes were not same as real ones, and there were exam and assignment anxiety. 8.6% of them mentioned that there were a huge student responsibility and lack of technological information and no doctorate opportunity. 4.3% of them remarked that distance education was not adopted, the expenditure was high, and there was lack of motivation, and a problem of in-expression, and no group work.

Some quotations from students in terms of the disadvantages of the program:

" … I think that we cannot benefit from virtual classes because they are not same as real ones." (S2)
"… the restricted feature in the program is that we cannot express ourselves in virtual connections, there are technological shortcomings." (S5)
"The restricted characteristic of the program is the weak interaction, and it is far from classroom environment." (S9)
"… restricted things are two-way communication is weak and virtual environment should be used more efficiently." (S17)
"… the high expenditure is drawback and some lecturers do not teach lessons efficiently." (S23)

Students' answers to the question of "What were your expectations before you began to the program? After you began how much those expectations were met?" were showed in Table 8.

Table 8. Participants' opinions of expectations and satisfaction level of distance-education non-thesis master

Topics (Categories)					
Expectations from the Program	**f**	**%**	**Satisfaction of Expectation Rates**	**f**	**%**
To increase education level (S1, S7, S8, S14, S17, S18)	6	26.08	I think that my expectations would be satisfied. (S1, S15)	2	8.6
Contribution to the career (S1, S3, S7)	3	13.04	I gained more than my expectations (S3, S5, S6, S8, S10, S11, S13, S23)	8	34.78
To actualize myself (S2, S15)	2	8.6	My expectations were met (S7, S12, S19)	3	13.04
To learn new information (S5, S12, S15, S17)	4	17.39	I think that it did not meet my expectations (S9, S21, S22)	3	13.04
To improve myself (S5, S7, S14)	3	13.04			
To gain higher order thinking abilities (S9)	1	4.3			
Education level in distance education (S13, S23)	2	8.6			
Independent education (S21)	1	4.3			
Taking courses about the field (S22)	1	4.3			

As Table 8 showed that students' opinions about their expectations from distance education non-thesis master were as follows: 26.08% of them attended the program in order to increase their education level, 17.39% of them attended to learn new information, 13.04% of them took part in to contribute to their career, and to actualize themselves, 8.6% of them to attended to actualize themselves and take education at distance education level, 4.3% of them attended to gain higher order thinking abilities, to take independent education and to take courses about their fields.

Students' opinions about the satisfaction of their expectations were as follows: 34.78% of them thought that they gained much more than they expected, 13.04% of them indicated that their expectations were met,

and their expectations were not satisfied, and 8.6% of them thought that their expectations would be satisfied.

Some quotations from students in terms of the expectations and satisfaction of those expectations are as follows:

"I attended that program to increase my education level and because of its contribution to be a manager. I think that I will reach my expectations." (S1)
"I attended the program in order to learn new subjects, new information and to improve myself. I think that I learned many things. I have read many books, writings, and articles as compared to past. It changed both me and my life significantly." (S5)
"I took part in the program just to earn master degree. However, I realized that I could do lots of things to actualize myself." (S8)
"I think that it did not satisfy my expectations. Course processes do not exceed knowledge and understanding level. Thus, that causes the repetition of undergraduate level knowledge." (S9)
"My purpose was to be well- appointed with contributing new information to me and I fulfilled that with the help of this program. I improved myself by taking new information and doing research." (S12)

Students' responses to the question of "What did the program contribute to your educational development and to your personal development?" question were indicated in Table 9.

Table 9. Participants' opinions about the contribution of distance-education non-thesis master on educational and personal development

Topics (Categories)					
Contribution to Educational Development	**f**	**%**	**Contribution to Personal Development**	**f**	**%**
Updating anterior information and gaining new information (S1, S5, S10, S13, S17, S22)	6	26.08	Increasing general knowledge level (S17)	1	4.3
Contributing to teaching profession (S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S13, S18, S20, S21)	10	43.47	Providing with self- confidence (S1, S5)	2	8.6
Gaining ability to produce solutions for educational problems (S3, S6)	2	8.6	Increasing competence (S1, S15, S20)	3	13.04
Creating profession awareness (S7, S9, S10)	3	13.04	Increasing sense of responsibility (S5)	1	4.3
Gaining abilities for doing research (S8, S10, S15)	3	13.04	Teaching being patient (S6)	1	4.3
Increasing educational awareness (S3, S4, S15, S16, S17, S19)	6	26.08	Improving communication skills (S8)	1	4.3
			Increasing the sense of cooperation (S8)	1	4.3
			Providing with new perspectives (S10)	1	4.3
			Increasing curiosity and interest to the field (S15, S18, S20)	3	13.04

As Table 9 represented that students' opinions about the contributions of distance education non-thesis master to the educational development can be listed as follows: 43.47% of them thought that it contributed to the teacher ship, 26.08% of them indicated that it helped updating anterior information, and gaining new information, and creating profession awareness, 13.04% of them thought that it helped creating profession awareness, and gaining abilities for doing research, 8.6% of them indicated that it enabled to gain abilities to solve educational problems.

Some quotations from students in terms of the contributions of the program to the educational development are as follows:

"We learned new knowledge about the education. We had an opportunity to repeat our anterior knowledge deeply…" (S1)
"It enabled me to say something about our country's educational problems, considering problems in an extended perspective, and developing new solutions." (S3)

"It provided me with looking at the educational environment that I have been in, from outside and it made me gain awareness…" (S7)
"My research skills improved. I think that I improved myself in preparing assignments." (S8)
"It changed my point of view. I gained new academic knowledge. I gained experience in articles and resources." (S10)
"Some knowledge which began to be forgotten since the university was repeated. It helped me evaluate my department and my course structure." (S13)
"I learned lots of things and I used those things in real life." (S15)
"It increased my awareness in education field." (S16)
"My point of view to students changed. I realized that students' positive behaviors are also important during the evaluation process instead of just looking at their exam results." (S18)
"It provided with an opportunity to approach professionally to my profession." (S21)

Students' opinions about the contributions of the program to their personal development are as follows: 13.04% of them reported that it increased competence, curiosity, and interest to the field; 8.6% of them thought that it increased self- confidence; 4.3% of them indicated that it increased the level of general knowledge, the sense of responsibility, it taught to be patient, it improved communication skills, and the sense of cooperation, and it provided with a new perspective.

Some quotations from students in terms of the contributions of the program to their personal development are as follows:

"We became aware of our own competences. Each learned knowledge made us believe in ourselves…" (S1)
"… I think that I made progress individually. Now I feel more responsible, and I am careful at my behaviors because students take us as a model. Furthermore, my personal knowledge increased so did my self- esteem." (S5)
"…when I am thinking about the events, I can find alternative ways. I learned to be more patient…" (S6)
"…my communication skills improved. The sense of cooperation in terms of dividing subjects became more apparent." (S8)
"I learned to consider the events and the conditions in educational field from different perspectives." (S10)
"The program improved my curious and explorer aspect. It encouraged me to do research and produce something." (S15)
"My knowledge, skills, and attitudes changed in a positive way, and improved." (S20)

Discussion and Suggestions

When comparing both the quantitative and qualitative data of the current study together, the quantitative and the qualitative findings supported each other. Thus, findings can be indicated as follows:

In terms of program quality: Positive opinions are as follows: "It is encouraging to be a good example of lifelong learning" and "there is no time and place restriction"; whereas the negative opinions are as follows: "its price is not reasonable, there is no face to face communication between people, and virtual courses are superficial and unfruitful." Özturan, Egeli & Darcan (2000) indicated in their study that the distance education has no time and place restriction as traditional education and this is a positive aspect of it. Tuncer & Taşpınar (2008) and Kışla, Sarsar, Arıkan, Meşhur, Şahin & Kokoç (2010) supported the idea that distance education has unreasonable price. Birişçi (2013) asserted that having no face-to-face communication is a drawback of distance education, and Özturan, Egeli & Darcan (2000) suggested that distance education should be supported by face-to-face education. However, Şahin & Tekdal (2005) pointed out that distance education is more effective than traditional one and Arıkan (2006) showed that web- based education increases positive attitudes towards the courses. According to Dinçer (2006), although application of the distance education has both positive and negative dimensions it should not be give up. Karataş (2006) found that his research, distance education is more effective than face to face education method.

In terms of gains from the program and the contribution of it to the educational and personal development: Positive opinions are as follows: "my horizon expanded, it contributed to the teacher ship, it increased my curiosity and interest to the field, and personal competence. On the other hand, negative

opinions are as follows: "It did not contribute to the development of abilities related to the use of information technologies." Özturan, Egeli & Darcan (2000) founded that distance education improves personal development.

In terms of the reasons of attendance and expectations from the program: "I attended the master's program to renew, improve myself, and increase my education level." In terms of the satisfaction level of expectations, students stated that they gained much more than they expected. In the literature, there was no study, which approves or disapproves this idea.

There was no significant difference in students' opinions about the quality of the program, its gains, and the reasons of their attendance after taking into account all variables such as gender, marital status, the institution they work, age groups, the current job, and the profession seniority. According to Ateş & Altun (2008) the gender, and similarly according to Ağır, Gür & Okçu (2008) the gender and the institution students work did not have an effect on the attitudes towards distance education.

Suggestions based on the results of the study: Distance education programs should be extended in all areas especially for people who have professional job. In addition, its expenditures should be decreased. Moreover, teaching should be done to compensate the lack of face-to-face communication. Suggestions for future studies: Prospective studies should focus on the effectiveness of teaching- learning process of distance education programs. Furthermore, they should investigate whether or not the program reaches its purposes, and whether or not the program meets the expectations of the students.

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